



PEACE, PROSPERITY AND
REGIONAL INTEGRATION



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URGENT ACTION REQUIRED TO PREVENT A MAJOR FOOD CRISIS IN EASTERN AFRICA

IGAD-FAO-WFP JOINT STATEMENT
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The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) region faces an unprecedented triple threat to food security caused by the combined effects of recent severe floods, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and an upsurge of desert locusts. Additionally, there is an increased risk of below-average rains during the upcoming October to December season which could further threaten food security and livelihoods across the region.

Even before these current challenges, Eastern Africa was considered among the most food insecure regions of the world, with nearly 28 million people in Crisis (IPC Phase 3¹) or worse food insecurity² in 2019, or 20% of the total severely food insecure population across the world. An estimated 9 million children under the age of five suffer from acute malnutrition, including 2 million facing severe acute malnutrition³.

The IGAD region is also one of the world's leading sources and hosts of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees and asylum seekers who, due to limited livelihood opportunities and degraded coping mechanisms, are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition. UNHCR estimates that the region currently hosts about 8 million IDPs and 4 million refugees and asylum seekers⁴.

In this context of already high levels of food insecurity, the current triple threat facing vulnerable populations across Eastern Africa is expected to drive significant food security deteriorations in the absence of urgent action that protects lives and livelihoods, strengthens food systems,

¹ The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a set of standardized tools used to classify the severity of food insecurity using a widely accepted five-phase scale: Minimal (IPC Phase 1), Stress (IPC Phase 2), Crisis (IPC Phase 3), Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and Famine (IPC Phase 5)

² FSNWG. Slides from Monthly Meeting. June 2020. <https://bit.ly/2OKXvSa>

³ UNICEF, WHO, World Bank. Levels and Trends in Child Malnutrition: Key Findings of the 2020 Edition. April 2020

⁴ UNHCR. Refugees, Asylum seekers, Refugees, Returnees and IDPs. January 2020.

builds resilience across all vulnerable communities, and improves early warning systems and preparedness.

UNPRECEDENTED TRIPLE THREAT TO FOOD SECURITY

Between March and May 2020, heavy rainfall across the region resulted in widespread flooding and landslides across Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Uganda. According to IGAD, 2.4 million people were affected, including 700 000 who were displaced and over 500 who were killed⁵. This is in addition to previous flooding between October and December 2019, which affected 3.4 million people across the region⁶. Forecasts of above-average rainfall between June and September 2020⁷, particularly across western Ethiopia, eastern South Sudan, Sudan, western Kenya and north and central Uganda increases the risk of additional flooding during the next several months.

Favourable weather and vegetation conditions across the Eastern African region in late 2019 to mid 2020 contributed to the worst desert locust upsurge in over 25 years, affecting all IGAD countries with varying levels of destruction to crops and pastureland. Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia are of the highest concern, with FAO indicating that up to 2.5 million people are becoming severely food insecure as a direct consequence of Desert Locust in the IGAD region.

As of 22 July, the IGAD region has seen over 47 000 COVID-19 cases⁸. Following the first COVID-19 cases in the region in early 2020, governments imposed certain measures which, though necessary, have had food security and nutrition implications. For example, the resulting economic slowdown has led to significant declines in income levels for many vulnerable urban and rural cropping and pastoralist populations, compromising their access to food due to reduced purchasing power. Movement restrictions and border lockdowns are also disrupting food logistics and supply chains, which in turn has reduced food availability and increased post-harvest losses in parts of the region. Additionally, restrictions are impacting the movement and supply of agricultural inputs, including labour, fertilizers, pesticides and equipment, thus posing serious challenges to food production.

In addition to these three current challenges, rainfall for the upcoming October – December season is projected to be unfavourable with forecasts from major regional (ICPAC) and global (NOAA, IRI, UK MET, ECMWF) meteorological agencies all pointing to an increased risk of below-average rains across parts of the Horn of Africa.

Considering the combined effects on vulnerable populations of current and projected shocks, in addition to the protracted impacts of previous hazards, significant food security deteriorations

⁵ IGAD. IGAD Food and Nutrition Security Response Strategy: In the Context of COVID-19, Desert Locust Invasion and Floods. July 2020.

⁶ OCHA. Eastern Africa Region: Regional Floods and Locust Outbreak Snapshot. January 2020.
https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ROSEA_20200117_EasternAfrica_Flood_Snapshot_Jan2020_def.pdf

⁷ ICPAC. GHACOF 55 Summary for Decision Makers, June to September 2020. May 2020.
<https://www.icpac.net/publications/summary-decision-makers-june-september-2020/>

⁸ IGAD. IGAD Member States : Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Situation. July 2020.
<https://igad.int/coronavirus/igad-covid-19-tracker>

across the region are now projected. Ongoing and upcoming food security assessments and IPC analyses will soon provide a better picture of food security outcomes. In the meantime, however, current estimates suggest that the compounding impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, desert locust upsurge, and flooding may drive the population facing severe food insecurity up sharply by the end of 2020, potentially to 50.6 million people, or approximately 20% of the population in the IGAD region. Though the bulk of the food insecure population will remain in rural areas, these estimates assume a significant deterioration in food security amongst the urban poor, who are not often factored into IPC analyses and are driving the steep increases in humanitarian needs.

URGENT ACTION REQUIRED

As of 22 July 2020, the additional humanitarian requirements, on top of government resources, for food security, nutrition and livelihood support are USD3.4 billion for seven IGAD Member States (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda). However, these requirements are just 33% funded, leaving a funding gap of USD2.3 billion, as per country-level HRPs, flash appeals, intersectoral COVID-19 response plans, and the global COVID-19 HRP⁹. Additionally, funding levels vary considerably from country to country across the region (Uganda: 0%, Kenya: 0%, Djibouti: 11%, Ethiopia: 20%, South Sudan: 35%, Sudan: 43%, and Somalia: 56%). This requires urgent attention considering that many governments will likely face significant difficulties responding to this large-scale crisis on their own.

IGAD REGIONAL FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION RESPONSE STRATEGY

Considering the major increases in food insecurity and unprecedented levels of humanitarian needs expected in the context of the current triple threat to food security and nutrition in the region, IGAD has developed a soon to be launched response strategy that proposes guidelines for a coherent approach to supporting all vulnerable populations and their livelihoods. The strategy outlines emergency, as well as medium to long-term, interventions that are required to safeguard livelihoods, sustain gains made so far in relation to food availability and access, treat and prevent acute and chronic malnutrition and ultimately save lives.

Priority strategic interventions should ensure strong collaborations between governments and humanitarian and development actors, providing immediate assistance to protect the lives and livelihoods of vulnerable populations, while at the same time, strengthening production and market systems, building household resilience and enhancing regional preparedness.

Populations facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse food insecurity typically face food consumption gaps, a rapid depletion of their livelihoods and increased rates of acute malnutrition. Immediate assistance is thus required for the millions of people across the IGAD region projected to face

⁹ [2020 Humanitarian Response Plans \(HRPs\) and COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plans \(GHRPs\) Financial Tracking](#)

severe levels of food insecurity to ensure adequate access to food. These activities should include food and cash assistance, scaled up social protection systems and livelihood support programmes. In addition to rural and urban poor populations, assistance is also required for displaced populations (including refugees, asylum seekers, and IDPs) who often are not covered by national social protection systems and are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity due to the complete loss of livelihoods and social networks. Programmes also require a protection-sensitive lens as protection concerns in both urban and refugee and IDP settings have been exacerbated by the crisis, including a lack of access to protection services; increased violence including Gender-Based Violence; child protection issues including increases in child labour and child marriage as coping strategies; challenges to housing land and property rights including widespread evictions; and concerns related to mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS).

Though all governments in the Eastern Africa region have prioritized the continued movement of food and agricultural inputs, observed market and trade disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic illustrate the importance of functioning food systems. Interventions are required to protect and increase agricultural production (including through desert locust control operations) and strengthen transport and trade links. At the same time, measures need to be put in place to prevent COVID-19 transmission along agricultural value chains, ensure safe pastoral livestock movements, build strategic grain reserves, reduce post-harvest losses and support small and medium enterprises along key crop, livestock, and fishing value chains.

The growing frequency and severity of hazards affecting the IGAD region also highlight the importance of improved preparedness and early warning systems so that governments, as well as humanitarian and development partners, have the required information and systems in place to rapidly respond to future food crises.