The humanitarian situation in Sudan has deteriorated rapidly in the first six months of 2020. The devastating combination of recurrent climate shocks, conflict, economic downturn, disease outbreaks, exacerbated by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, has driven rising hunger across the country.

More than 9.6 million people, almost a quarter of the entire population of Sudan, are expected to be severely food insecure during the lean season (June to September), according to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report. The figure, the highest ever recorded in the history of the IPC analysis in the country, represents an increase of 65 per cent compared with the same period last year.

Sudan’s health system was under extreme stress prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and has been further stretched to prevent, contain and treat COVID-19. In addition, 63 per cent of the population do not have access to basic sanitation, 23 percent do not have access to a handwashing facility with soap and water and 40 per cent do not have access to basic drinking water services.

Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19-related restrictions, humanitarian partners provided life-saving assistance to over 7.48 million people in 179 of the country’s 189 localities during the first six months of the year. The number of people reached increased from 2.3 million in the first quarter of 2020 (January to March) to 5.4 million between April and June. The scale up of the assistance was especially visible on the Food Security and Livelihoods Sector, with partners reaching over 4.6 million people between April and June, up from 1.7 million in the first quarter of the year.

The humanitarian response increased in the eastern and central regions of Sudan. In the east, humanitarians reached 360,000 people (4.8 per cent of the total reached across the country), while over 1.6 million received assistance in the central region (22 per cent of the total response). In the first quarter of 2020, these regions had represented 3 and 2 per cent of the response, respectively. In Darfur, 4.3 million people received assistance and 1.6 million were reached in Blue Nile and Kordofan regions.