

The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) issues periodic emergency alerts when a significant food security crisis is occurring, where portions of the population are now, or will soon become, extremely food insecure and face imminent famine. Decision makers should give the highest priority to responding to the situations highlighted by this Emergency alert.

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Chadian IDPs face a deteriorating food security crisis

The food access of refugee and host populations in eastern Chad remains stable and is improving for refugees from the Central African Republic, who have been able to plant crops this season and are already harvesting early crops. However, overall food security conditions for these populations are likely to be considerably stressed during the rainy season, when the rains cut off many areas in southern and eastern Chad, and vulnerability to water-borne disease and malaria increases. Internally displaced Chadians on the Sudanese border who have not been able to plant crops face a deteriorating food security crisis that could last for the next year.

Although food security in refugee camps in southern Chad has been a major concern in recent months, because of ration cuts, food security conditions have improved as a result of increased availability of wild food and access to land, seeds and inputs. Progressive ration cuts over the last four months have occurred due to the limited resources available to the World Food Programme (WFP) and delays in distribution caused by inclement weather. However, many refugees have been making up the deficit through wild food collection and by growing their own vegetables and cereal using land, seeds and inputs provided by humanitarian organizations. Refugees are already harvesting early crops including maize, tubers and peanuts. Despite these improvements in food access, continued food assistance is needed. Moreover, insecurity on the other side of the border – where food security conditions are reportedly dire – may result in a new influx of refugees that would increase needs.

In eastern Chad, the food security situation of displaced persons has deteriorated following a series of clashes between government and rebel forces since April 2006. In May, a joint mission of humanitarian agencies found 35,000 to 40,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), primarily agropastoralists, from Assounga and Dar Sila departments (see map). About two thirds of the IDPs have access to land and seed protection programs that have allowed them to plant for this year's season. However, about 7,000 IDPs from Gouroukoun (Goz-Beida Camp) who refused to be relocated were unable to access land, seeds or seed protection programs and thus unable to plant. These IDPs face a deteriorating food security crisis and will require humanitarian assistance over the course of the next year.

While adequate food aid is being distributed to refugee camps hosting an increasing population of Sudanese refugees from Darfur, water shortages remain critical in some camps (see map). In July water rations stood at 8.01, 9.54, and 11.6 liters/person/day respectively in Touloum, Iridimi and Amnabak refugee camps, all less than the SPHERE minimum standard of 15 liters/person/day. With the onset of the rainy season, shortages of potable water will become even more critical and dangerous as refugees will compensate for shortages using rain water, increasing the risk of water-borne diseases.

While the Sudanese government and the main Darfuri rebel group reached a peace agreement in Abuja, Nigeria, in May 2006, the rebel groups who were not party to the agreement have intensified recruitment inside the refugee camps of eastern Chad. UNHCR estimates that almost 4,500 refugees have been recruited, including some who have been coerced. Although recruitment has decreased, it compromises the civilian nature of camps and makes them potential targets. Conflict in Darfur has intensified in July, increasing the risk of further influxes of refugees.

For more information go to: www.fews.net/chad

