



# **The Impact of the COVID-19 Outbreak on Governance, Peace and Security in the Horn of Africa**

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REGIONAL BRIEF  
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# Foreword

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The novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has spread rapidly around the world since it was first identified in January 2020. This pandemic represents a major crisis for countries across the African continent, not only in the risk to lives. Africa has a young population, which should decrease the numbers of severe cases, but it has large numbers of people with underlying health conditions which make them vulnerable. Perhaps most significantly, health systems have very limited capacity to treat severe cases. Importantly, the economic impacts will be severe. Measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 will inhibit economic activity and could hit the poor hardest, especially those living in cities. The World Bank's bi-annual Africa's Pulse report suggests that sub-Saharan Africa could experience its first collective recession in 25 years.

The consequences of COVID-19 pandemic could be long-lasting. Supporting countries to address the immediate and long-term impact of COVID-19 requires a regional approach. The leadership of the African Union has been crucial and commendable. It will continue to support governments to make extremely difficult choices, rather than make false compromises, to address the impact of COVID-19 across the continent. The Africa Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 provides a clear vision for how the African Union will work with its member states to address the multi-faceted challenges posed by the pandemic.

Whilst the focus has been on mitigating the health and socio-economic impacts, COVID-19 has the possibility of significantly impacting governance, peace and security and reversing gains made in Africa. COVID-19 could delay electoral processes and could affect accountability, service delivery and the quest for improved governance on the continent. In addition, the virus has delayed the implementation of critical peace agreements and hampered our mediation efforts at the local level. Terrorist and non-state armed groups have not ceased their attacks against innocent populations. In West Africa, Boko Haram insurgents launched an offensive against an army base claiming the lives of hundreds of peacekeepers. In the Horn of Africa, Al-Shabaab has continued to pose significant risks to civilian populations in the region, especially in Somalia and Kenya. While the spread of terrorism and extremism on the continent is worrisome, it is even more alarming to see terror groups leverage the outbreak of coronavirus to spread misinformation as a recruitment tactic.

While COVID-19 creates clear challenges to government effectiveness and risks to peace and security, the pandemic may, in place, also present renewed opportunities for enhancing governance or achieving breakthroughs to lasting peace in parts of Africa.

It is against this backdrop that the African Union Commission and Africa CDC, through their partnership with UNDP Regional Service Centre for Africa, has launched reports to assess the impact of COVID-19 on governance, peace and security, with a focus on the Horn of Africa and the Sahel.

This edition on the Horn of Africa consolidates trends with a view to identifying multi-layered responses to COVID-19 in the region. It provides an overview of the epidemiological trends across the region and provides a reflection on how COVID-19 is impacting on governance indicators as well as peace and security trends in the Horn of Africa. The report concludes with a set of recommendations for consideration by the African Union, Regional Economic Communities and member states. It is hoped that the information contained in this brief will enhance our collective understanding of the unfolding consequences in the Horn of Africa and provide the foundation of relevant multi-dimensional interventions to address this crisis for humanity.

**H.E Ambassador Smail Chergui**  
AU Commissioner for Peace and Security

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The report was drafted by Dalberg Advisors.

# Contents

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SUMMARY	7
STATUS OF COVID-19	9
GOVERNMENT RESPONSES TO COVID-19	11
STATE OF THE ECONOMY, LIVELIHOODS, FOOD SECURITY AND PUBLIC HEALTH	14
IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON GOVERNANCE	18
IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON PEACE AND SECURITY	22
IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON BILATERAL COUNTRY RELATIONSHIPS	28
IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE BORDERLANDS BETWEEN COUNTRIES	30
INITIATIVES TAKEN BY AFRICAN REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS	32
RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR REGIONAL ACTION	35

# Summary

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**The COVID-19 crisis has had a moderate impact on governance, peace and security in the Horn of Africa to date**—countries include Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan, and this analysis includes Tanzania in addition to countries in the Horn of Africa. As of 24 July, there were 50,066 cases and 1,392 deaths confirmed of COVID-19; the true caseload is likely understated due to limited testing capacity. No country has experienced significant political instability. Political change and reform processes remain mostly on track. No major conflicts have emerged since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Al-Shabaab remains a threat in the region and could be strengthened by the loss of livelihoods.

**COVID-19 has delayed progress in implementing reforms in some countries and is inhibiting government effectiveness across the region.** The integration of different armed forces in South Sudan has been put on hold and elections in Ethiopia have been postponed. Elections in Somalia were postponed due to internal security concerns and not COVID-19. In most countries, government operations have been constrained due to closures of non-essential services and government workers being asked to work from home. Budgets will be constrained by reduced economic activity, and

the fall in the oil price affecting oil-exporting countries, further affecting service delivery and possibly corruption. The impact of COVID-19 has hampered mitigation efforts to improve stability in the region.

**COVID-19-related containment measures— together with the global recession, lower oil prices and damage to agriculture from locusts and flooding—are increasing poverty levels and jeopardizing livelihoods.** Political stability and progress may be tested as the health, social and economic impacts of COVID-19 grow. Lockdowns, which are now being relaxed in many countries, have strained livelihoods. Food insecurity is expected to deteriorate across the region in the coming months. These stresses are likely to continue to grow and, in some countries, may lead to civil unrest, political instability or violence.

**Bilateral country relationships have been stable and borderland areas in the region have been mostly peaceful since the start of COVID-19.** Except for a few isolated incidents, there have been no major confrontations along the borders. Borderlands in the region are particularly vulnerable during COVID-19: borders have been a prime source of new infections, requiring dedicated health and economic interventions,

and they should be a focus for continued peacebuilding and development efforts. Borderlands have less government oversight, and typically host more rebel activity.

**Regional institutions have taken several initiatives to anticipate and mitigate the health and socio-economic effects of COVID-19.** These include the AU's Africa Joint Continental Strategy, IGAD's Emergency Fund Against COVID-19, COMESA's common guidelines for safe trade during COVID-19 and EAC's post-COVID-19 economic recovery plans. The pandemic will require sustained efforts and resources to be deployed.

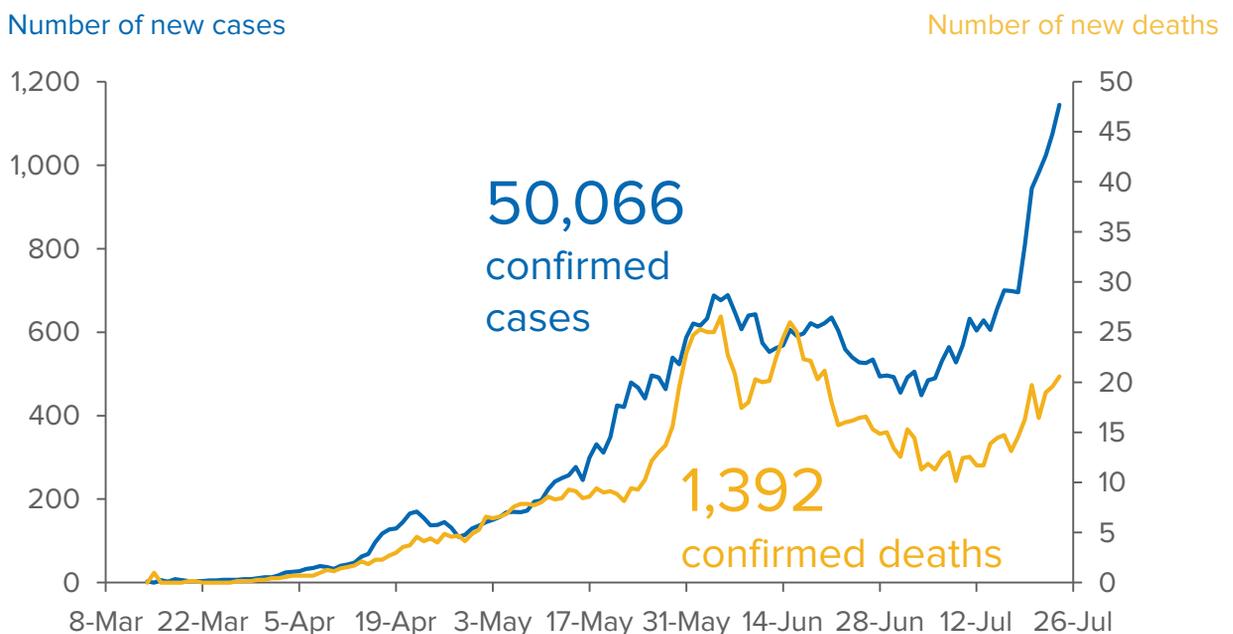
**Regional and international organizations can support governments in the region by** (i) supporting ongoing political reforms and election processes, (ii) prioritizing regional solidarity when implementing health response strategies, (iii) strengthening the social contract by providing healthcare and welfare equitably and transparently, (iv) ensuring the continuation of trade of essential goods, (v) monitoring and addressing food insecurity, (vi) improving the macroeconomic environment, and (vii) supporting efforts in Somalia and regionally to respond to the threat of Al-Shabaab.

# Status of COVID-19

As of 24 July, Horn of Africa countries have confirmed 50,066 cases and 1,392 deaths from COVID-19, with most concentrated in urban centers.<sup>1</sup> Kenya confirmed the most cases and Sudan confirmed the most deaths. Djibouti confirmed the highest cases per capita which is likely a reflection of more testing per capita compared to other countries. Eritrea reports the lowest number of cases and no deaths.

After a rapid acceleration in April and May, rates of new cases and deaths have stabilized but not declined, suggesting that control measures have helped but not stopped the spread of COVID-19. Reported case numbers are likely to be significantly understated due to limited testing capacity across all countries.

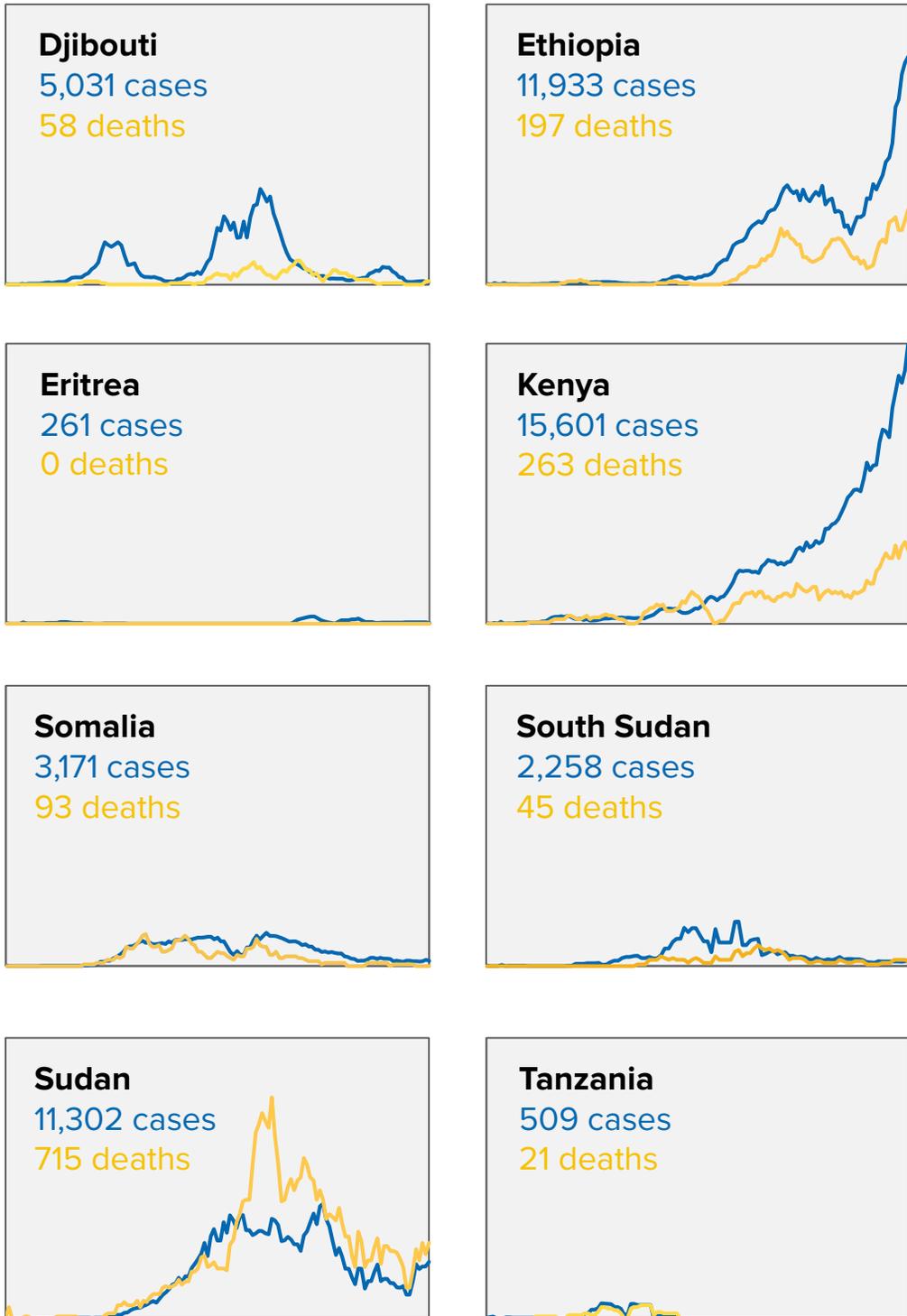
**Figure 1: Daily confirmed cases and deaths of COVID-19<sup>2</sup>**  
7-day rolling average, as of 24 July



Source: <sup>1,2</sup>World Health Organization

**Figure 2: Daily confirmed cases and deaths of COVID-19<sup>3</sup>**

7-day rolling average, independent scales for cases and deaths, as of 24 July



Source: <sup>3</sup>World Health Organization

# Government responses to COVID-19

Most nations in the Horn of Africa enacted measures proactively to contain COVID-19—in some cases before their first case.

Emergency administrative structures were activated in all countries, and each strived to tailor their response to the complexities of their country context.

Interventions have focused on movement restrictions and social distancing, and some

countries have provided limited economic support. Adherence to enacted measures has often been a challenge due to cultural norms and the need to preserve livelihoods.

Early lockdowns have been lifted, and movement restrictions are being relaxed in some countries. This will ease the negative effects on livelihoods but could likely lead to more rapid growth in case numbers and put pressure on already weak health systems.

**Figure 3: Actions taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>4</sup>**

Start to end date, if known

Category	Intervention Category	DJI	ERI	ETH	KEN	SOM	SSD	SDN	TZA
Government Coordination and Legal Authorization	Emergency administrative structures activated or established	No	Yes 20 Mar	Yes 31 Jan	Yes 28 Feb	Yes 16 Mar	Yes 20 Mar 16 May	Yes 16 Mar	No
	State of emergency declaration	No	Unknown	Yes 10 Apr	No	No	No	Yes 16 Mar	No
Lockdowns	Full lockdown of some areas	Yes 19 Mar 17 May	Yes 2 Apr	Yes 26 Mar 23 Apr	Partial 6 May	No	Yes 16 Mar 7 May	Yes 24 Mar 1 June	No
	Full lockdown of whole country	Yes 19 Mar 17 May	Yes 2 Apr	No	No	No	Yes 16 Mar 7 May	No	No

Source: <sup>4</sup>Dalberg Dashboard (Government Actions on COVID-19 in Developing Countries)

**Figure 3 (continued): Actions taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic**

Start to end date, if known

Category	Intervention Category	DJI	ERI	ETH	KEN	SOM	SSD	SDN	TZA
Movement Restrictions	Ban of entry for non-citizens/residents	No	Unknown	No	Partial 17 Mar	No	Yes 24 Mar	Yes 16 Mar	No
	Ban on entry for all non-citizens (including residents)	No	Unknown	No	No	Yes 18 Mar	Yes 3/24	Yes 16 Mar	No
	Ban on entry for all persons	No	Unknown	No	Yes 25 Mar	No	Yes 3/24	Yes 16 Mar	No
	Advice to citizens/residents against travel to other countries	No	Yes 17 Mar	No	No	No	Unknown	Unknown	No
	Suspension of flights to/from affected countries	Yes 18 Mar	Yes 26 Mar	Partial 21 Mar	No	Yes 18 Mar	Yes 13 Mar 7 May	Yes 12 Mar	Yes 11 Apr 18 May
Movement Restrictions - Within Country	Advice against non-essential travel between cities/provinces	No	Unknown	Partial	No	No	Yes	Yes 26 Mar	No
	Ban on travel to/from affected cities/provinces	No	Unknown	Partial	Yes 6 Apr	Yes 29 Mar	Yes 15 Apr	Yes 26 Mar	No
Social Distancing - Closures	Ban on mass gatherings	Yes 19 Mar	Yes 23 Mar	Yes 16 Mar	Yes 1 Mar	Yes 17 Mar	Yes 16 Mar	Yes 30 Apr	No
	Closure of schools and universities	Yes 19 Mar	Yes 27 Mar	Yes 25 Mar	Yes 20 Mar	Yes 17 Mar	Yes 20 Mar	Yes 15 Mar	Yes 17 Mar 29 Jun
	Closure of bars and other social venues	Yes 20 Mar 15 Jun	Yes 31 Mar	Partial 20 Mar	Yes 23 Mar	Yes 17 Mar	Yes 16 Mar	Unknown	No
	Closure of religious buildings and sites	Yes 20 Mar 17 May	Unknown	No	Yes 22 Mar	Yes 17 Mar	Yes 16 Mar	Yes 18 Apr	No
	Closure of government offices	Yes 20 Mar 17 May	Unknown	Partial 24 Mar	No	Partial 17 Mar	Yes 16 Mar	Unknown	No
	Closure of non-essential retail and other businesses serving public	Yes 23 Mar 17 May	Yes	No	No	Yes 17 Mar	Yes 16 Mar	Unknown	No
Social Distancing - Physical Distancing Between People	Advice to stay at home and work from home	Yes 23 Mar 17 May	Yes	Partial 24 Mar	Yes 13 Mar	Yes 17 Mar	Unknown	Unknown	No
	Requirement to stay at home except for purchasing essentials, medical care, daily exercise and work if necessary	Yes 23 Mar 17 May	Yes	No	No	No	Partial 25 Mar	Unknown	No
	Curfew for parts of each day	No	Unknown	No	Yes 25 Mar	Yes 15 Apr	Yes 25 Mar	Yes 24 Mar	No
	Requirement to use surgical masks in high-traffic locations	Yes 10 May	Unknown	Yes 2 Jun	Yes 4 Apr	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	No
	Social distancing indicators and infrastructure	No	Unknown	Yes	Yes 27 Mar	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	No
	Special actions for prisons, military barracks or other high-density settings	No	Unknown	Yes 27 Mar	Partial 2 Apr	Partial 12 May	Yes 20 Apr	Yes 25 Mar	No

**Figure 3 (continued): Actions taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic**

Start to end date, if known

Category	Interventions	DJI	ERI	ETH	KEN	SOM	SSD	SDN	TZA
<b>Strengthening the Healthcare System</b>	Expansion of basic supplies - PPE, masks, hand sanitizers, etc.	Yes	Unknown	Yes	Yes 30 Mar	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
	Additional pay for healthcare workers	Yes	Unknown	Yes	Partial	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
	Accelerated graduation and deployment of healthcare students	Unknown	Unknown	Yes	Yes 26 Mar	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
	Call for volunteers from trained healthcare workers who are retired, working in other positions or working abroad	Unknown	Unknown	Yes 11 Apr	Partial 1 Mar	Yes 17 Mar	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
	Psychological assistance and medical social work	Unknown	Unknown	Yes	Yes 30 Mar	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
<b>Economic and Social Measures</b>	Postponement of cancellation of payments of fees for public services	Yes	Unknown	No	No	No	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
	Postponement of tax payment deadlines	Unknown	Unknown	Partial 14 May	No	No	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
	Allowances for people required to go into quarantine or self-isolate	Yes	Unknown	No	No	No	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
	Special payments or support for people made unemployed due to Covid-19	Unknown	Unknown	No	Yes 23 May	No	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
	Partial coverage of wages by government if businesses don't lay off workers	Unknown	Unknown	No	No	No	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
	Direct payments to people (either payments or tax rebates)	Unknown	Unknown	No	Yes 25 Mar	No	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
	Emergency assistance to most affected business sectors	Unknown	Unknown	Yes 27 Mar	Yes 23 May	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown

# State of economy, livelihoods, food security and public health

## ECONOMY

**The global economic slowdown and the impact of movement restrictions have put high pressure on Horn of Africa economies and on people's livelihoods.** The IMF and World Bank recently revised GDP growth forecasts for 2020 downwards. Lockdowns and border closures have affected farmers who cannot get their products to markets. Exports have fallen drastically, e.g., the leading flower exporting countries—Kenya and Ethiopia—have faced a significant drop in sales of flowers due to the fall in global demand and border closures. Regional trade in goods, although small, has been suppressed by movement restrictions.

**The sharp fall in global oil prices, coupled with COVID-19, has negatively affected South**

**Sudan**, which would limit the government's ability to deliver highly-needed services to its citizens. This will constrain the governments ability to pay civil servants—including security forces, which may lead to unrest and violence.

**Debt distress is hampering some countries' ability to respond to COVID-19.** Although Sudan is eligible for debt relief, it remains on the U.S. State Sponsors of Terrorism List, which blocks progress toward HIPC debt relief. Somalia could become eligible for debt relief, which would reduce its debt obligation from USD 5.2 billion to USD 577 million, if key fiscal stability and governance reforms are implemented.<sup>7</sup> The debt distress further limits governments' ability to offer a social safety net or take other measures to protect the most vulnerable populations.

**Figure 4: Adjusted growth forecasts<sup>5, 6</sup>**

	Djibouti	Eritrea	Ethiopia	Kenya	Somalia	South Sudan	Sudan	Tanzania
Original 2020 forecast	7.50%	3.90%	6.20%	5.70%	3.20%	7.40%	4.90%	7% (est.)
COVID-19 adjusted 2020 forecast	1.30%	0.10%	3.20%	1.00%	2.30%	4.90%	-7.20%	2.50%

Source: <sup>5</sup>IMF; <sup>6</sup>World Bank

**The World Bank and IMF’s debt-service suspension to the poorest countries has helped some countries in the region manage the severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

Djibouti, Ethiopia and Tanzania are participants in the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) and could potentially benefit from DSSI savings of USD 59.2 million, USD 511.3 million, and 148.9 million, respectively.

### POVERTY AND LIVELIHOODS

**Horn of Africa countries have high rates of poverty.** According to the World Bank, about 82% of the South Sudanese population and nearly 70% of the Somali population live below the poverty line of USD 1.90 PPP per day.<sup>8,9</sup>

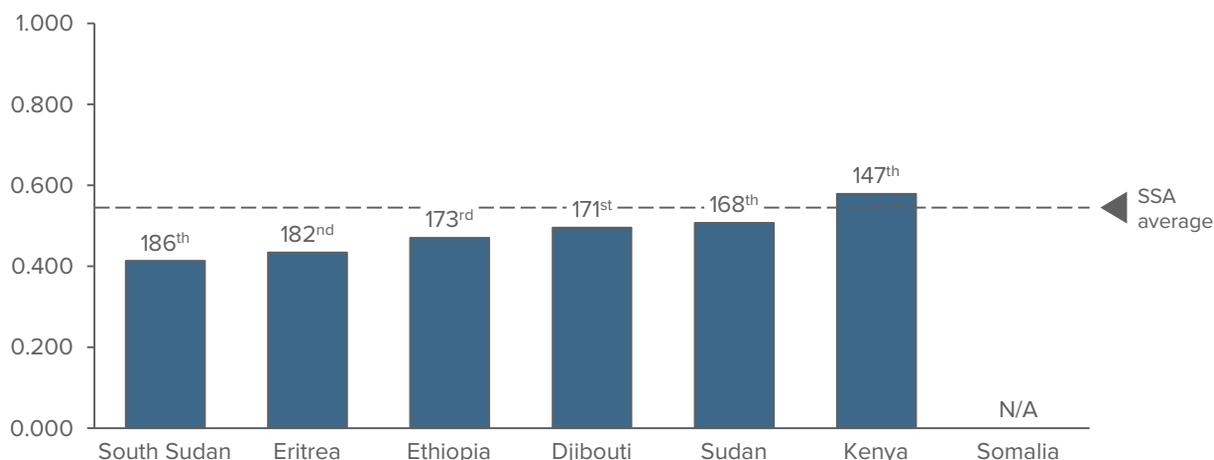
**The COVID-19 induced economic crisis is affecting the livelihoods of informal workers most heavily, who account for a significant portion of workers in the Horn of Africa countries.** Youth, in particular are, most vulnerable, and some may find themselves pushed into crime, violence or extremism.

**COVID-19 could have far-reaching economic consequences for women and girls.** CARE

conducted a rapid gender analysis for COVID-19 in East, Central and Southern Africa that found wide-ranging impacts on women and girls, including:

- The closure of schools and limited access to healthcare increases the burden of care on women.
- Women make up 70% of frontline health-care workers, increasing their risk of contracting COVID-19.
- Access to GBV support and sexual and reproductive health services will be less, and maternal mortality could increase.
- Women are more likely to work in the informal sector which will be disproportionately affected by the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19.
- Data suggests that there has been an increase in GBV during the pandemic.
- Limited engagement of women in COVID-19 decision-making.
- The gender gap in the use of technology and literacy in the region could affect prevention, awareness and access to resources.

**Figure 5: Human Development Index<sup>10</sup>**  
Rank out of 189 countries, 2018



Source: <sup>8,9</sup>World Bank; <sup>10</sup>UNDP

## HEALTH SYSTEMS

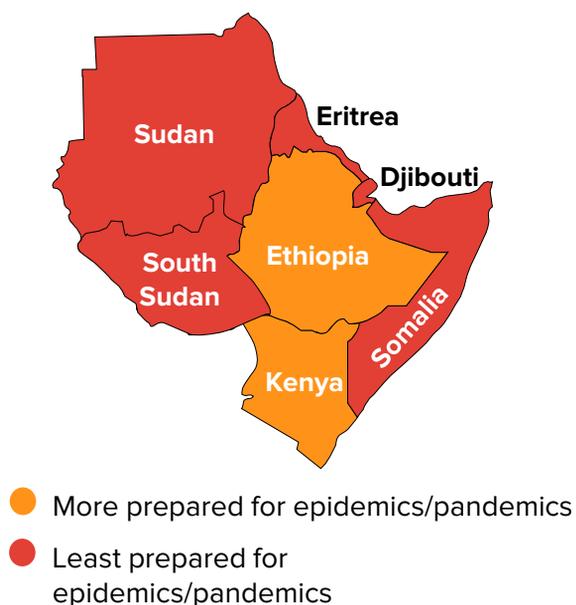
**Horn of Africa countries have some of the weakest health systems in the world.** Kenya and Ethiopia have relatively stronger health systems than the rest of the countries in the region. Kenya ranks 55<sup>th</sup> out of 195 countries in the 2019 Global Health Security Index; Ethiopia is 84<sup>th</sup>, Sudan is 163<sup>rd</sup>, South Sudan is 180<sup>th</sup>, and Somalia ranks the lowest at 194<sup>th</sup>.<sup>11</sup>

**Horn of Africa countries face similar challenges in healthcare systems to each other, but the scale varies across countries.** The health systems suffer from a shortage of doctors and nurses and reliance on the import of medical equipment and medicines. With the disruption of global medical supply chains and the increase in global competition for PPE and other medical equipment, some countries in the Horn of Africa

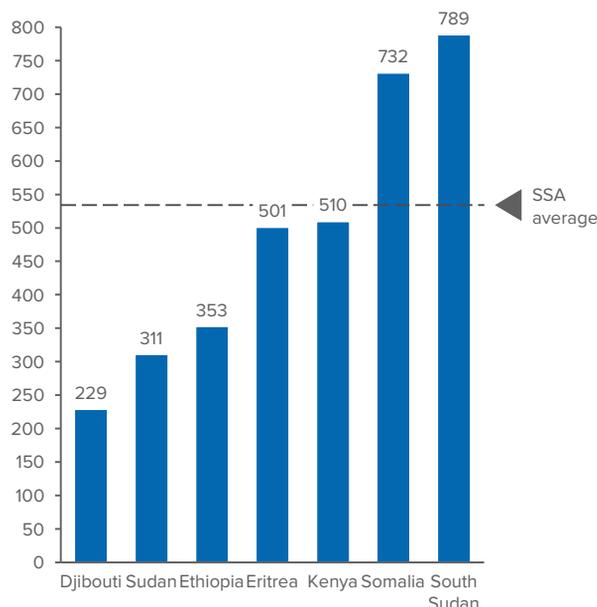
are at high risk of being unable to treat people who are infected with COVID-19 and in a critical condition. For example, as of 9 April, South Sudan reportedly had 4 total ventilators and 24 ICU beds for its 11 million people.<sup>13</sup>

**One of the main health challenges women in the Horn of Africa region face is access to quality maternal health, which could worsen with movement restrictions related to COVID-19.** South Sudan has the highest maternal mortality rate in the Horn of Africa region (789 per 100,000 live births) while Djibouti has the lowest (229 per 100,000 live births).<sup>14</sup> Movement restrictions could affect women's access to maternal and new-born care services. In addition, the pressure that COVID-19 puts on healthcare systems could particularly undermine sexual and reproductive health and rights.

**Figure 6: Global Health Security Index<sup>12</sup>**



**Figure 7: Maternal mortality ratio<sup>15</sup> per 100,000 live births**



Source: <sup>11, 12</sup>Global Health Security Index; <sup>13</sup>Devex; <sup>14, 15</sup>UN Women

## FOOD SECURITY

Nearly 28 million people were already food insecure before COVID-19 in the IGAD region.<sup>16</sup>

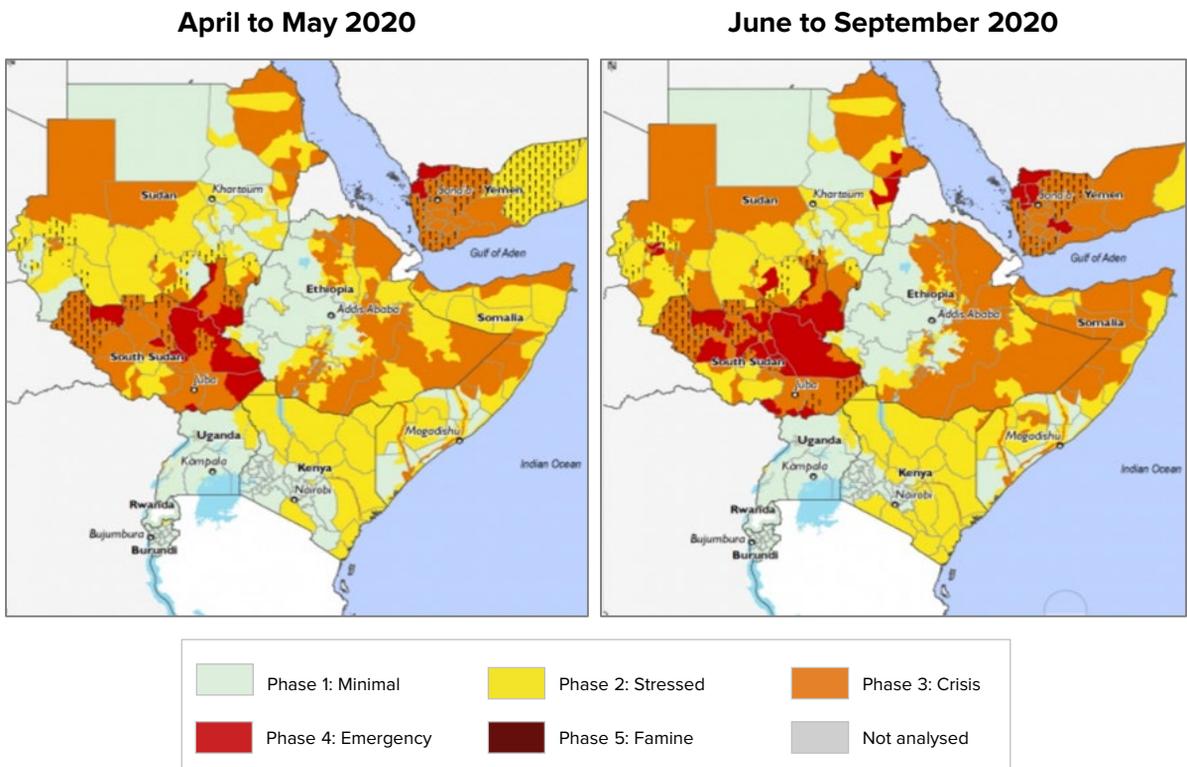
According to the IGAD Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative (IDDRSI), the highest shares of acute food insecurity before COVID-19 were in South Sudan (61%), followed by Ethiopia (27%), Kenya (22%), Somalia (17%) and Sudan (14%).<sup>17</sup>

**The Horn of Africa region was already battling the effects of locust invasions and weather shocks when COVID-19 struck.** Heavy rains followed by devastating floods struck the region during the second half of 2019, which created favorable conditions for desert locusts, whose breeding is now contributing to an infestation

across the region, primarily in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia.

**The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) estimates that COVID-19 will lead to a 25% increase of the number of highly food insecure people in the region.**<sup>18</sup> COVID-19-related border closures, along with locust invasions and extreme weather, will decrease food production and leading to surging prices. With the lockdowns and curfews exposing vulnerable communities to dwindling livelihoods and greater risks of starvation, the level of food insecurity in the Horn of Africa is going to rise even faster—unless urgent action is taken to provide large-scale humanitarian support.

**Figure 8: Projected food security outcome<sup>19</sup>**  
April to September 2020



Source: <sup>16, 17</sup>IGAD Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative, <sup>18, 19</sup>Famine Early Warning Systems Network

# Impact of COVID-19 on governance

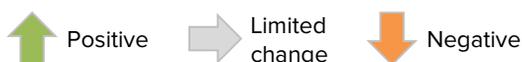
## SUMMARY

Since  
Jan 2020 Outlook

The health and socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 has had limited impact on the state of governance in the region to date, although governance could be affected if the impacts of the pandemic get worse over time. The global economic slowdown and social distancing measures are likely to affect government effectiveness for most countries, with political transitions, public service delivery and judicial effectiveness being the most heavily disrupted elements. Health systems and social safety nets are constrained by limited resources but are under increased scrutiny in light of the pandemic. There have been some positive effects, as COVID-19 has provided opportunities for improved governance in Djibouti and Sudan and could create a common cause for the new unity government in South Sudan to collaborate on.



### Improving or deteriorating - arrow direction



### Impact of COVID-19 and other factors - arrow fill



## PROGRESS ON POLITICAL REFORM



**COVID-19 could delay political transitions in some countries.** Ethiopia’s elections were postponed due to COVID-19. Somalia’s elections were postponed due to internal security reasons, but COVID-19 could contribute to the delay in reforms and related processes. South Sudan formed a unity government as part of a peace deal before COVID-19 reached the country, but social distancing measures led to delays in many of the other 186 steps that need to be taken as part of the peace deal, including the unification of the army and the opposition military. COVID-19 could disrupt Sudan’s transition to a democracy, and challenge the unity between civilian and military leaders in the government.

**The crisis created along multiple fronts could have varying effects on relations between major political parties.** COVID-19 and its impact could lead to tension between the government and opposition parties, especially in instances

where political reforms are hindered. However, the ability of governments in the region to balance the need for addressing the prevailing health crisis without a prolonged delay in the various political processes could prove historic in solidifying unity in some of the countries of the region. For instance, COVID-19 provides a common cause for South Sudan’s new unity government to collaborate on and build trust upon. The same opportunity remains true for all countries, dependent on their success in their response, and the extent of engagement with the opposition.

## VOICE AND PARTICIPATION



**Lockdown and social distancing measures have restricted government engagement with civil society.** Formal processes for civic engagement on parliamentary and other political processes were halted or severely restricted. Civic space was restricted during COVID-19—driven by bans

**Figure 9: Parliamentary and presidential elections**

Country	Parliamentary election	Presidential election	COVID-19 related postponements
Djibouti	February 2023	2021	None
Ethiopia	Initially May 2020, then postponed to August 2020 and postponed again to after COVID-19	2024	Yes – twice
Kenya	August 2022	August 2022	None
Somalia	Initially November 2020, then postponed to December 2021	February 2021	Yes
South Sudan	2023	2023	None
Sudan	2022	2022	None
Tanzania	2020	2020	None

on mass gatherings rather than government intention to restrict freedoms, although the latter could be a risk in the region.

**Despite COVID-19 restrictions, protests did occur.** There were several demonstrations protesting isolated incidents where police used excessive force to enforce COVID-19 restrictions. Vendors protested their loss of livelihoods due to movement restrictions and the mandated closure of businesses. There were protests against some government actions, including perceived unlawful arrests. Across all countries, these demonstrations did not lead to mass scale civil unrest. The protests did indicate that in a region where freedom of speech can be restricted, that there could be an opening of civic space. However, governments used force in response to some of the protests.

## TRANSPARENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE SOCIAL CONTRACT



**The effectiveness of government responses to the health and socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 will depend on its transparency and civic engagement.** Transparency and effective communication are critical to holding the government accountable which should lead to a more effective response. Such actions have varied across the region, with some countries creating new communication and accountability channels that could last beyond the pandemic, and others taking a less transparent approach.

**The response to COVID-19 provides an opportunity to expand civic engagement.**

Differing levels of communication on COVID-19-related restrictions and engagement with civil society could be one reason behind the varying levels of adherence to public health measures in different places. For example, Somalia has worked with religious leaders to spread awareness of the disease and how to control it. The inability to effectively capture civic needs would lead to a response not grounded in reality.

## GOVERNMENT EFFECTIVENESS



**COVID-19 measures have hindered government effectiveness across the region.** During lockdowns in most countries, non-essential government workers worked remotely or were placed on administrative leave, leading to most public services being temporarily halted or severely restricted. The focus of efforts on responding to the pandemic has diverted resources away leading to ineffective service delivery, when public services are most needed.

**The economic impact of COVID-19 will continue to constrain government effectiveness.** Pandemic-related restrictions and the global economic slowdown, and expenditure on the health and socioeconomic response to COVID-19 will exacerbate existing crises, reducing government revenues and constraining their budgets. Public service delivery and the salaries of federal workers will continue to be adversely affected. These impacts could threaten stability in countries that are going through political reforms, where transition processes have less funds available, and new governments are unable to deliver on their agenda.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Since  
Jan 2020

Outlook



**Human rights violations have occurred during the enforcement of COVID-19 restrictions.**

Across countries that implemented lockdown and movement restrictions, there were multiple, yet isolated, incidents of extrajudicial killings by police in the enforcement of curfew and other restrictions. Journalists covering COVID-19-related stories were detained in multiple countries. Protests in response to COVID-19-related killings and other related incidents were sometimes met by force by governments.

**There were a few reported incidents of violence arising from a stigma against those suspected of being COVID-19 positive.**

**Stay-at-home orders coupled with the loss of livelihoods led to increases to domestic violence.**

## RULE OF LAW

Since  
Jan 2020

Outlook



**Access to justice and the effectiveness of the judiciary have been limited by COVID-19.**

Courts were suspended in some instances. Stay-at-home orders restricted the ability of individuals to seek justice. Limits on visits to prisons hindered access to legal counsel for prisoners. However, prisoners in some countries were pardoned to reduce overcrowding.

**The effectiveness of judiciaries could be harmed by reduced government budgets due to COVID-19.** Crime has increased during COVID-19, and could worsen with the increased loss of livelihoods, which raises the need for an effective judiciary that can address the rising number of criminal cases.

**The fairness of the judicial system has not changed due to COVID-19.** There have been instances across countries that highlight the biases of judiciaries, including unlawful arrests.

# Impact of COVID-19 on peace and security

**SUMMARY**

Since Jan 2020 Outlook

COVID-19 has not led to disruptions to peace and security in the region, but protracted impacts from the pandemic could lead to instability in the future. Most countries are experiencing a period of relative peace, especially across borders, which has not been impacted by COVID-19. Inter-communal and inter-ethnic violence continues in some of the countries in the region, which could increase as COVID-19's impact leads to the loss of livelihoods and increased food insecurity. Similarly, civil unrest could worsen with weakened socioeconomic conditions. Lockdown restrictions have led to increased domestic violence. Extremist groups, especially Al-Shabaab, could use the pandemic to improve their standing and increase their recruitment in Somalia and across the region. The impact of COVID-19 could lead to increased political instability if peace deals and reforms breakdown.



**Improving or deteriorating - arrow direction**

Positive
 Limited change
 Negative

**Impact of COVID-19 and other factors - arrow fill**

Primarily driven by non-COVID-19 factors
 Primarily driven by COVID-19

## PEACE AND SECURITY CONTEXT PRIOR TO COVID-19

The Horn of Africa is viewed as one of the most unstable and vulnerable regions in the world. Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan are respectively ranked as the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> most fragile countries.<sup>20</sup>

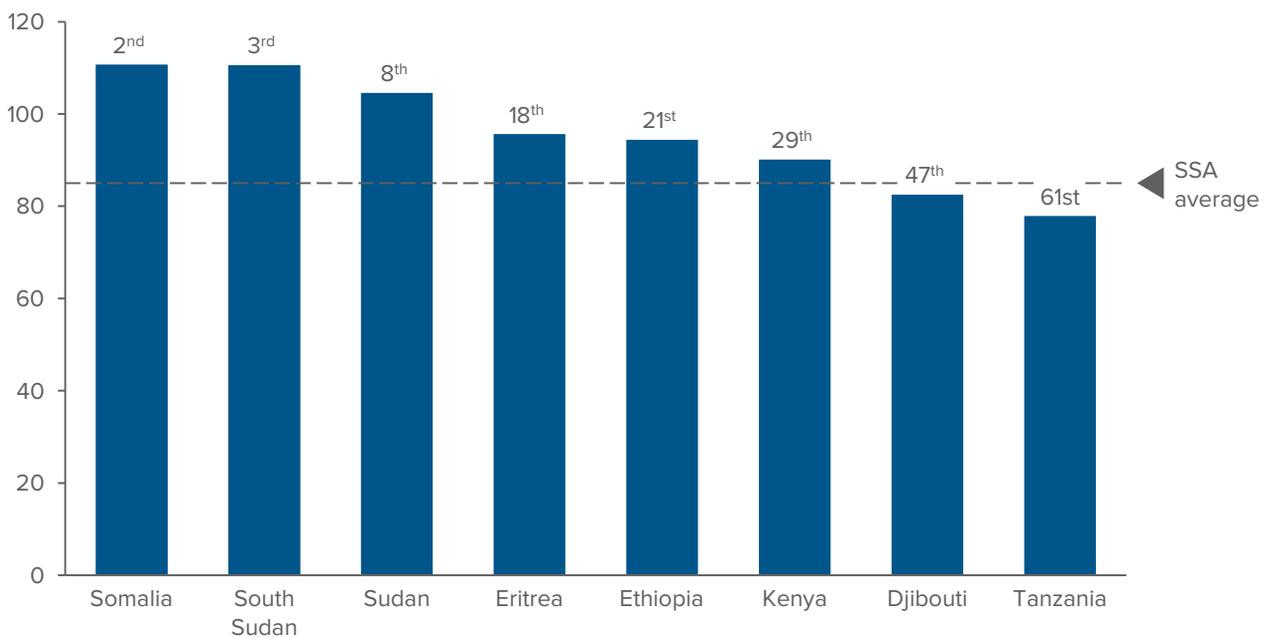
However, the region has seen a period of relative peace compared to recent years. There has been an absence of major cross-border conflict, marked by peace deals being signed and sustained. Internal disruptions to peace do continue, with regular bouts of intercommunal violence, civil unrest, and extremist activity.

## CIVIL UNREST AND CRIME



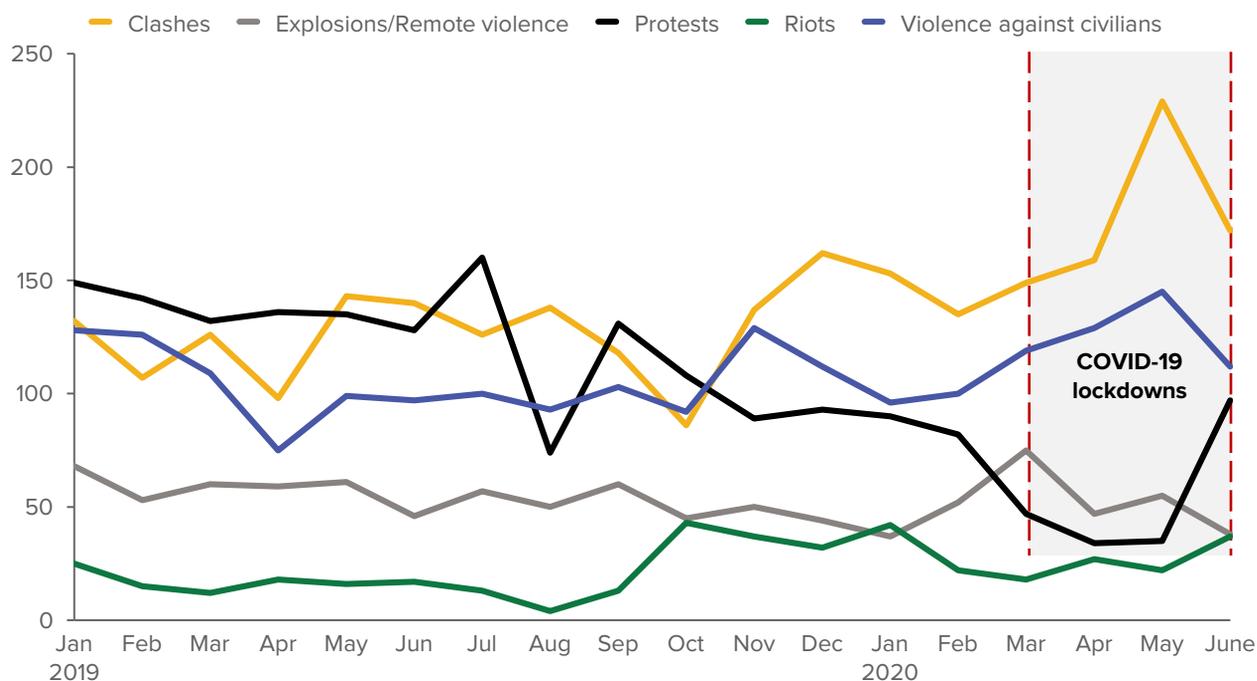
There have been upticks in clashes and violent events in recent months, but only 6% of these were attributed to COVID-19 and lockdowns, according to ACLED.<sup>22</sup> Increases in poverty due to COVID-19, in addition to threats to livelihoods and growing food insecurity, could lead to an increase in protests and possibly in violence, in the months ahead.

**Figure 10: Fragile States Index<sup>21</sup>**  
Index out of 120, rank out of 178 countries



Source: <sup>20,21</sup>Fragile States Index; <sup>22</sup>Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)

**Figure 11: Conflicts, protests and violent events<sup>23</sup>**  
2019 and 2020



**There have been recent protests, some of which were related to COVID-19 restrictions.** Protests have followed extrajudicial killings by police enforcing COVID-19 curfew. Following the increased loss of livelihoods and rising food insecurity, systemic unrest is a threat if governments are not able to effectively contain the impact of the pandemic.

**The socioeconomic disorder that COVID-19 is likely to cause could contribute to possible instability.** In Ethiopia, there has been an increase in protests, clashes and crime, raising concerns over the federal government’s capacity to maintain order and unity in the country. There has been increases in crime across the region.

**There were no major changes to the peace and security situation in Djibouti, Eritrea and Tanzania.** Since COVID-19 has started, there have been no incidents reported within Eritrea, and no incidents along the borders with Djibouti, Ethiopia and Sudan. Djibouti remains peaceful with no major violent incidents threatening its peace and security.

**There has not been systemic political instability across the region, although this could worsen with COVID-19.** Internal politics have not led to large scale violence in 2020. COVID-19 will test political alliances, especially of countries that are undergoing political transitions and those that have more fragile contexts.

Source: <sup>23</sup>ACLED

## INTERCOMMUNAL TENSION



**The region is characterized by recurring bouts of intercommunal violence which has continued in 2020.** Most of the incidents appear to not be related to COVID-19. In May 2020, Sudan witnessed an increase in widespread violence in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states. On 12 and 13 May, the long-running dispute over cattle between members of the Beni Amer and Nuba ethnic groups erupted in South Kordofan, Sudan.<sup>24</sup> In February and March, intercommunal violence between Somali and Oromo communities erupted in several villages.<sup>25</sup> A UN mission to the Somali region was forced to retreat as a result of the violent clashes.<sup>26</sup>

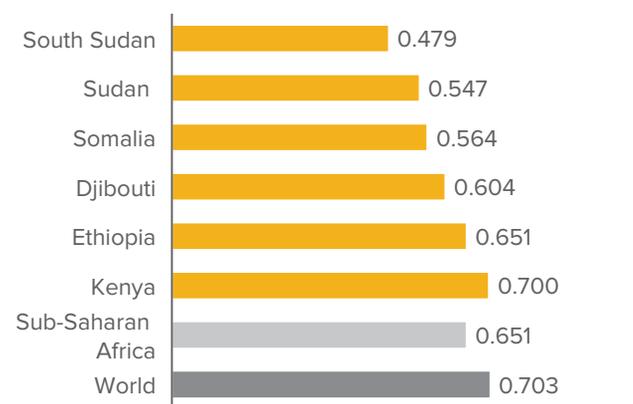
**Intercommunal violence could increase due to the impact of COVID-19.** Clashes tend to be driven by access to natural resources and economic grievances, all of which could worsen given the impact of COVID-19.

## WOMEN, PEACE & SECURITY



**Women and girls in the Horn of Africa region have been subject to conflict-related sexual violence, unrelated to COVID-19.** According to UNFPA, the ongoing conflict in West Darfur has forced thousands of women and girls to flee their homes and camps, putting them at higher risk of sexual violence, abuse, and exploitation.<sup>33</sup> Increased inter-communal violence could be accompanied by conflict-related sexual violence.

**Figure 12: Women, Peace and Security Index<sup>27</sup> 2019**



**Women and girls faced increased risk of gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation.** Lockdowns and the loss of livelihoods driven by COVID-19 have led to increases in domestic violence across the region. According to UNICEF, Somalia has a 98% prevalence of female genital mutilation (FGM) amongst women and girls—the highest in the world.<sup>28</sup> UNFPA which estimates that 290,000 girls will be cut in 2020, reported a spike in the number of girls cut during COVID-19.<sup>29</sup>

## VIOLENT EXTREMISM



**Al-Shabaab continues to carry out attacks in Somalia and could leverage the current crisis to recruit marginalized youth.** Despite the UN's call for a global ceasefire, Al-Shabaab has conducted multiple attacks in Somalia.<sup>30</sup> Youth make up the majority of the Somali, and neighboring countries' population, many of which will face further hardship due to the impact of COVID-19, which could risk to rising extremist recruitment.

Source: <sup>24</sup>Dabanga Sudan News; <sup>25, 26</sup>OCHA Humanitarian Access Situation Report Jan-Mar 2020; <sup>27</sup>Women, Peace and Security Index; <sup>28</sup>UNICEF; <sup>29</sup>UNFPA; <sup>30</sup>Garda News

**Al-Shabaab is likely to disrupt humanitarian aid and could use the current crisis to undermine the legitimacy of the Somali federal government.** The group has a history of killing or abducting aid workers for ransom and ambushing convoys to steal humanitarian aid. Al-Shabaab could seek to use COVID-19, as it has done in previous disasters, to strengthen its standing among the population by providing health services, food aid and other support.

**Al-Shabaab’s recent uptick in activity could have adverse socio-economic effects on the Horn of Africa.** Al-Shabaab poses a threat to Kenyan security—some strategic projects have been suspended due to the threat of Al-Shabaab, such as the Lamu Port that will connect Kenya, Ethiopia, and South Sudan. There are reports that the group is targeting recently discovered oil fields in the region.

**There has been rebel activity by other groups across the region, especially along the borders.** The borderlands in the region have less government oversight and worse socioeconomic conditions and tend to be hotspots for extremist and rebel activity.

## REFUGEES AND IDPS AND THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION



**The East and Horn of Africa region is currently home to 6.3 million IDPs and 3.5 million refugees & asylum-seekers.**<sup>31</sup> Although this has

reduced since 2019, mainly due to 1.3 million Ethiopians displaced by communal violence returning home, the crisis remains dire.

**COVID-19 is projected to increase the need for humanitarian assistance in many countries.** For example, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Rosemary DiCarlo, has warned that “the number of people who need humanitarian assistance across Sudan increased from about 8 million to 9.3 million by the end of 2019, and with the risk of a wider COVID-19 spread, the economic challenges could worsen.”<sup>32</sup>

**COVID-19 poses risks to people in refugee/IDP camps, where containment measures can be difficult to implement due to dense populations.** UNHCR reported nine confirmed COVID-19 cases in the refugee camps in Kenya, with eight in Dadaab and one in Kakuma, as of end of May 2020.<sup>33</sup>

**Movement restriction measures threaten the livelihoods and safety of refugees and IDPs.** Refugees and IDPs in many Horn of Africa countries earn their income by working laborers and are now limited due to COVID-19. Increasing tensions and inter-communal violence coupled with COVID-19 movement restrictions limit the ability of IDPs and refugees to flee violence and access humanitarian aid and essential services. As humanitarian needs increase and movement restrictions continue, aid workers are not able to travel to provide support to communities in need. In Sudan, the border closures have reduced the movement of UNAMID personnel.<sup>34</sup> Migrants who have lost their jobs in the Gulf and other countries could be stranded by movement restrictions and would require assistance.

Source: <sup>31</sup>IOM; <sup>32</sup>UN Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; <sup>33</sup>New Humanitarian; <sup>34</sup>UN press release

## CROSS-BORDER TENSIONS & CONFLICT

Since  
Jan 2020

Outlook



**The region has experienced relative cross-border peace, with no major cross-border conflicts in 2020.** Peace deals in recent years have contributed to this stability, especially the Ethiopia-Eritrea peace agreement, with countries aiming to improve regional stability and benefit from economic gains.

**COVID-19 has led to some tensions, which have not escalated.** Kenya was one of three countries to shut its borders with Tanzania following 200

people testing positive while crossing the border. Border crossings have been a source of new COVID-19 cases and deserves additional attention as this could lead to further tensions between countries.

**There have been isolated incidents of tensions, unrelated to COVID-19, that have not led to conflict.** Two Somali factions fought on Kenyan territory, which raised tensions which did not escalate. There were clashes between the Ethiopian and Sudanese armies along the border, which deescalated following diplomatic discussions. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam which could restrict water flowing along the Nile could exacerbate tensions between Ethiopia and Sudan.

# Impact of COVID-19 on bilateral country relationships

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**COVID-19 has had limited impact to date on bilateral country relationships between most countries in the Horn of Africa.** Most countries are expected to see a continuation of pre-existing trends in their relationships, with only a few exceptions to note, which are unrelated to COVID-19.

**Since January 2020, incidents have taken place at the Kenya-Somalia and Ethiopia-Sudan borders.** Two Somali factions fought with Kenyan territory, which the Kenyan government condemned but this did not lead to instability.<sup>36</sup> On 28 May, clashes between Ethiopian and Sudanese militaries occurred along the shared border—this incident might have an impact on the relationship between the two countries in the

months ahead.<sup>35</sup>

**Eritrea-Ethiopia and Eritrea-Sudan relations appear stable.** In both cases, relationships have improved in recent years, following the election of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in Ethiopia and the removal of President Omar Al-Bashir in Sudan. COVID-19 may provide opportunities for these countries to further collaborate around the pandemic response and strengthen their ties.

**As the COVID-19 outbreak continues, regional initiatives strive to bring countries together to better fight the pandemic.** There is no indication that COVID-19 will adversely impact relationships between neighboring countries in a significant way in the short to medium term.

	Since Jan 2020	Outlook
<b>Ethiopia-Eritrea:</b> Relations remain stable, as highlighted by a recent visit by President Issias Afwerki to Ethiopia.		
<b>Ethiopia-Sudan:</b> On 28 May, clashes between the Ethiopian and Sudanese armies erupted along the border. The Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs urged diplomatic discussions to address the incident and de-escalate hostilities between the two countries. The dispute could complicate Sudan's stand on the ongoing discussions about the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.		
<b>Ethiopia-South Sudan:</b> Relations have been relatively stable, although rebels are reported to continue to operate along the border.		
<b>Sudan-Eritrea:</b> Relations remain stable since Jan 2020 and no major changes are expected in the incoming months.		
<b>Sudan-South Sudan:</b> Relations remain stable since Jan 2020 and no major changes are expected in the incoming months. It remains unlikely that progress will be made in stabilizing the Abyei areas in the short to medium term.		
<b>Somalia-Ethiopia:</b> Relations have improved under Prime Minister Abiy's leadership, and Abiy is now mediating between the leaders of Somaliland and Somalia.		
<b>Somalia-Kenya:</b> On 4 March 2020, two Somali military factions battled on Kenyan territory. Such clashes are likely to worsen maritime disputes between Kenya and Somalia. However, the incident is unlikely to further deteriorate the relations between the two countries in the incoming months.		
<b>Tanzania-Kenya:</b> Over 200 truck drivers and others crossing the border from Tanzania to Kenya tested positive for COVID-19, leading to many being deported. The Kenyan government closed the border with Tanzania to stem the inflow of cases. While this led to tensions, there are no indications that the situation will worsen.		

<b>Improving or deteriorating - arrow direction</b>			<b>Impact of COVID-19 and other factors - arrow fill</b>	
	Positive		Limited change	
			Negative	
				Primarily driven by non-COVID-19 factors
				Primarily driven by COVID-19

# Impact of COVID-19 on the borderlands between countries

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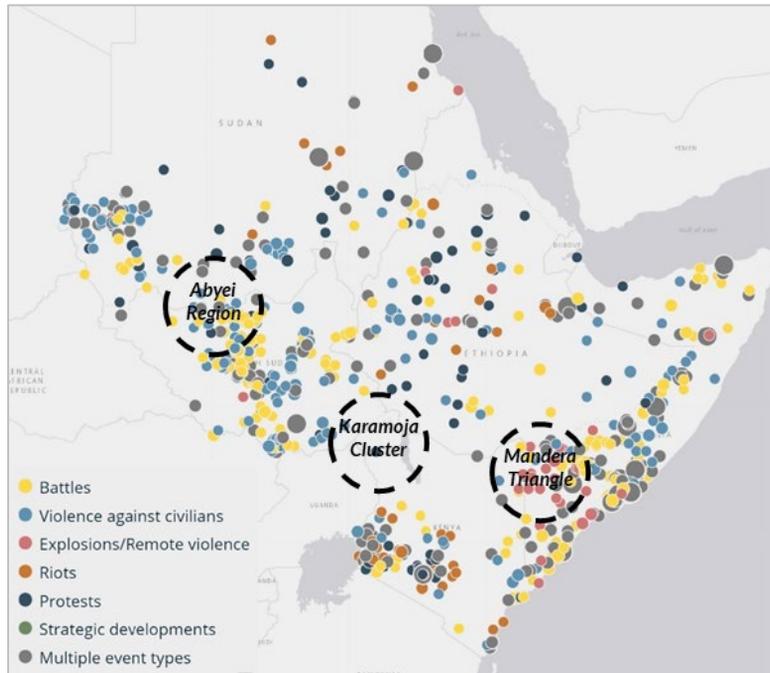
**Borderlands in the region suffer from a combination of inherent risks and challenges,** including weaker government institutions, underfunded health and education systems, greater insecurity and instability (e.g. violent extremism such as Al-Shabaab in the Mandera Triangle between Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia), and a higher prevalence of informal economic activity. This set of constraints has created a history of marginalization, environmental pressures, forced displacement, poverty and underdevelopment.<sup>36</sup>

**During the present crisis, border regions have tended to be significant sources of new COVID-19 cases** due to the extent of cross-border trade and movement of populations, notably truck drivers. Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, Executive Secretary of IGAD, stated that “the COVID-19 pandemic has further compounded the

vulnerability of neglected communities in the face of emergencies along the borderlands of most countries in the Horn of Africa.”<sup>37</sup>

**The sensitive peace and security situation in border areas such as Karamoja between Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, and South Sudan, or the Abyei region between Sudan and South Sudan, may worsen<sup>38</sup>** as a result of regional institutions’ greater focus on COVID-19 priorities, and the decreased interest by parties involved in engaging in peace negotiations.<sup>39, 40</sup> According to Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, the security situation in Abyei remains volatile. Tensions between the pastoral Ngok Dinka and nomadic Misseriya communities continue to rise, and armed groups have emerged, including some that exchanged gunfire with UNISFA troops on 24 April.<sup>41</sup>

**Figure 13: Conflicts, protests and violent events<sup>42</sup>**  
 Since January 2020



**This set of risks and constraints should make borderlands a priority area to mitigate the COVID-19 outbreak in the region.** For example, working with local communities can help better contact-trace people who interacted with truck drivers who might have contracted the virus.

**The current crisis presents opportunities to re-engage with borderland communities in a meaningful way, build economic growth and ultimately have a positive impact on the**

**region's peace and security.**<sup>43, 44</sup> For instance, the peace communities in South Sudan could play a role both in raising awareness of COVID-19 and in delivering peace messages between rival tribes. In addition, greater efforts to legalize informal cross-border trade can help mitigate the economic challenges brought about by the pandemic by securing livelihoods for local communities, which helps to steer them away from crime and extremist groups.

Source: <sup>42</sup>ACLED; <sup>43</sup>UNDP; <sup>44</sup>World Bank

# Initiatives taken by African regional institutions

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**The focus of the initiatives taken by regional institutions since the first cases of COVID-19 in the Horn of Africa has shifted from pandemic preparedness to health response and more recently to economic recovery.**<sup>45</sup> The AU moved early to proactively prepare countries for the initial phases of the outbreak. “I would like to assure you of the firm resolve of the African Union Commission to establish the necessary synergy to maximize the impact of our actions to protect our continent from the ongoing coronavirus disease outbreak,” said H.E. Mahamat during the opening ceremony of the emergency meeting of the African Union Ministers of Health on COVID-19. Subsequently, all regional bodies defined joint strategies and deployed numerous measures to contain the spread of the virus. The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) has played a central role in leading the coordination of health interventions at the pan-African level, notably with regards to capacity building and the distribution of health supplies.

**Regional institutions’ initiatives have been increasingly focused on protecting and improving livelihoods.** As the effects of

COVID-19 on the economy and livelihoods increase, more support will be needed.

**The AU appointed four envoys—Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Donald Kaberuka, Tidjane Thiam and Trevor Manuel—to mobilize international economic support for the fight against COVID-19,** notably by negotiating a moratorium on debt payments for all member states. These regional efforts need to be sustained to assist countries effectively recover from the socio-economic and health consequences of COVID-19.

**IGAD, EAC and COMESA took health and economic measures that accounted for the specificities of the region and its sensitive economic and humanitarian context.** Most initiatives were deployed in a way that prioritized at-risk and vulnerable groups. Emergency food aid and access to emergency healthcare for other conditions than COVID-19 has been provided to IDPs, refugees and migrants. Measures were taken to sustain a decent level of cross-border trade and economic activity with fragile and commodity export-dependent countries such as Sudan and Somalia in order to avoid a food security crisis and potential unrest.

**Figure 14: AU, IGAD, EAC and COMESA initiatives during COVID-19<sup>46</sup>**

Regional organization	Strengthening the healthcare system	Containing the spread	Protecting livelihoods
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribution of a donation of PPE, test kits and medical equipment from the Jack Ma Foundation to member states (except Eritrea)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Africa CDC's partnership with SACIDS on COVID-19 preparedness and response</li> <li>• Africa Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 outbreak</li> <li>• Africa CDC's partnership with UNDP to strengthen Africa's Response to COVID-19</li> <li>• AU and Africa CDC's partnership to accelerate COVID-19 testing: Trace, Test and Track</li> <li>• COVID-19 Response Fund</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special envoys to mobilize international economic support for continental fight against COVID-19</li> <li>• Taskforce on COVID-19 impact on food security and nutrition</li> <li>• Joint Strategy for COVID-19 Response and Recovery for the energy sector</li> </ul>
 <p><b>IGAD</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Donation of PPE kits to refugees and cross-border populations in Djibouti</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional Response Strategy</li> <li>• Emergency Fund against COVID-19</li> </ul>	
 <p><b>EAC</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deployment of mobile laboratories and testing kits to all partner states</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity building for diagnosis of COVID-19</li> <li>• Strengthening capacity of staff at international airports for the prevention &amp; detection of COVID-19</li> <li>• Joint COVID-19 Response Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation of post-COVID-19 economic recovery plans</li> </ul>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common guidelines for safe trade during COVID-19</li> </ul>

Source: <sup>46</sup>AU, IGAD, EAC, and COMESA official websites

**COVID-19 has affected ongoing regional initiatives** such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the launch of which was postponed from 1 July 2020 to 1 Jan 2021, and the IGAD Regional Capacity Enhancement Initiative in South Sudan. Regional institutions are working on continuing these initiatives, as they can contribute to countries' ability to recover faster from the crisis and for fragile states to move towards greater peace and stability.

**The current crisis could present an opportunity to advance some initiatives.** Progress could be made towards realizing the AfCFTA and

maximizing its impact as the current period provides an opportunity to increase local production and manufacturing, and to deploy digital solutions. Coordinated responses to the pandemic could strengthen regional and sub-regional solidarity, effecting new coordination mechanisms.

**The need to focus on addressing the downstream effects of the pandemic is steadily growing**, especially as it comes to political transitions, election preparations, populations' livelihoods, as well as IDPs and refugees' welfare.

# Recommended areas for regional action

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**In supporting governments in the Horn of Africa to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and recover from its effects, international organizations should continue their support to governance and peace and security programs in the region.** The response should ensure that communities and stakeholders are engaged and feel a sense of ownership of the solutions developed. The interventions to prevent violence should address the root causes such as food insecurity, competition over scarce resources and absence of the state in the periphery. Regional efforts should be strengthened to prevent violent extremism.

**Supporting sensitive political transitions in countries such as Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan, with a particular focus on electoral processes.** COVID-19 has delayed political reforms and elections and will continue to do so. UNDP, AU, IGAD and other regional players should support negotiations between rival parties, and provide technical assistance to support key processes, in order to build and sustain trust between governments and opposition parties.

**Prioritizing regional solidarity when implementing health response strategies.** The AU and the RECs should (1) keep focusing on coordinating and mutualizing member country efforts; (2) further strengthen surveillance, testing and tracking capabilities, notably by leveraging data analytics; and (3) develop capacity, including through training and provision of health supplies and protective gear.

**Strengthening the social contract between governments and populations.** In responding to COVID-19, governments can build trust with citizens by acting to provide healthcare and social protections through equitable, transparent and accountable mechanisms. Effective communication is essential to strengthening the social contract. Regional and global organizations can support efforts by deploying assistance, where possible, through governments.

**Supporting Horn of Africa countries with protecting the livelihoods of the most vulnerable socio-economic classes**, notably by facilitating safe cross-border trade of goods and services in order to enable vital goods to get to neighboring countries and to protect the businesses and jobs that depend on exports.

**Monitoring the food security situation within the most vulnerable groups of all Horn of Africa countries and looking for early signs of deterioration.** The goal would be for global humanitarian agencies and regional institutions to move quickly, if required, to supply such groups with the relief they need.

**Improving the macroeconomic environment to counterbalance the effects of the global recession.** The AU and RECs should pursue initiatives that help to create greater fiscal space for member countries, through debt relief and through special funds such as the AU COVID-19 Response Fund.

**Building the capacity of Somali National Army (SNA) and supporting a regional response to the threat of Al-Shabaab.** The international community should provide technical and financial support to restructure the security sector in Somalia, integrating regional and clan militias into the SNA. UNDP should continue efforts to prevent violent extremism through an approach grounded in sustainable development.

