

Kenya Drought Crisis: A Call for Action

Context

The Horn of Africa is experiencing one of the worst hunger crises in recent times due to a prolonged drought. The current drought is worse in a number of ways than in 2011, with some areas experiencing the failure of three rains in a row. In Kenya, 2.6 million people are experiencing crisis levels of food insecurity. The number could increase to 3.5 million in need of targeted assistance by August.¹ In parts of Marsabit and Turkana, where communities are unable to reach sustained humanitarian assistance, they are at risk of sliding in to emergency levels of hunger (IPC Phase 4), one step away from famine, between July and September.²

The March – May rains have been below average and it is likely that the July food harvests will also be below average, leading to a corresponding decline in access to and consumption of food. In addition, the African armyworm infestation has already affected around 69,000 hectares of farming land, prices of basic food commodities, such as maize, in Kenya have soared with overall inflation for the month of May 2017 reaching a five-year high of 11.7 per cent, and livestock prices in pastoralist

- ✓ Parts of Turkana, Marsabit and Mandera counties report malnutrition rates of **30%, double the emergency threshold**
- ✓ Many water points are **non-operational** in drought-affected areas
- ✓ Flash Appeal has received **US\$31.5 million** in funding, representing only **19%** of the total

areas are low due to the poor condition of animals. As a result people are reducing what they eat, with many families eating one meal a day. Food shortages are further compounded by anxiety around upcoming general elections which may politicize the crisis, a lack of access to water due to non-operational water points, and high levels of severe acute malnutrition among children below the age of five.

A Deteriorating Crisis

Despite the Kenyan government declaring an emergency in February 2017, and calling on the international community for financial assistance, Kenya is still experiencing an 81% gap in funding required for the UN appeal to respond to emergency needs. The crisis has also put pressure on key development sectors, including education; schools in the Arid and Semi Arid Areas (ASALs) are either closed or attendance is plummeting due to a lack of school meals being provided, as well as water shortages. Some schools are also experiencing an influx of displaced people fleeing drought, conflict or floods.

3.5 Million

Number of food insecure Kenyans

3,570

UNHCR estimate number of unregistered Somalis displaced into Dadaab refugee camp

Number of Cholera cases reported

509

Kenya currently hosts 486,037 refugees and 309,000 IDPs³, with over 6,500 people recently displaced by floods in coastal areas. UNHCR has identified over 3000 unregistered arrivals in Dadaab camp, many displaced by the drought from Somalia. The physical state of the refugees is likely to be worrying as those heading from Somalia to Ethiopia are displaying critical rates of malnutrition. They live amongst the population without access to humanitarian assistance because they are unregistered, and without immunization, increasing the risk of spreading of communicable diseases.⁴

The drought is exacerbating competition for limited resources such as water. Access to land for farming and grazing is already increasing local tensions and could trigger further inter-communal conflict in parts of Kenya. The migration of thousands of herders with large numbers of cows, goats

¹ <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Kenya%20Sitrep%20No.%203.pdf>

² UNOCHA Situation Report No. 2: 23rd May 2017

³ RMMS Mixed Migration Trends May 2017

⁴ OCHA Horn of African Drought Update 2017

and sheep in search of water and grazing land also has the potential for further triggering localized conflicts. With some herders carrying arms this could lead to deadly consequences.⁵

Women at Risk

Women and children have been hardest hit by this drought. Women and girls are shouldering heavier care burdens and trekking to increasingly remote locations to fetch water, exposing them to greater protection risks. In Turkana, women have to walk an average of 10 kilometers everyday in search of water as traditional water points have dried up. The current food crisis has claimed more animal lives and increased levels of family separation as men and boys leave with livestock in search of pasture, leaving women at risk of sexual and gender based violence⁶ The significant increase of basic commodity prices including milk, maize, pulses and water significantly affects women in their traditional roles as carers for children, the elderly and the sick, providing water and preparing food for the household, while also playing the breadwinner role.

Responding to the Crisis

a) Government of Kenya Response

The Government of Kenya declared the drought a national disaster in February 2017, and made an appeal for local and international support.⁷ The government put in place a national drought response plan, designed in three phases with a funding requirement of US\$242 million. It has funded Phase I and partially funded Phase II with a total of US\$128 million.

Several government and partner mechanisms are providing cash and food assistance programmes in the country – including the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP); the Government’s State Department for Special Programmes; National Drought Management Authority (NDMA); County Governments and the Kenya Red Cross Society. The HSNP, livestock Insurance Programme and off-take programmes are also offering a lifeline to affected pastoralists, enabling them to purchase animal feed to keep their herds alive during drought⁸. The NDMA in Turkana County has, for instance, embarked on a programme to buy livestock from pastoralists and slaughter them to feed hunger stricken families⁹.

“So far we have bought 5,650 goats and sheep at Sh3000 each”.

Emmanuel Malii Kisagau, NDMA Resilience Officer, Turkana County

While these are critical efforts, the number of people being reached with such programmes is still too few and the government’s response mechanism and capacity to respond is overwhelmed. If the Kenya Flash Appeal remains underfunded, the number of people exposed to acute food insecurity will sharply increase.

b) Donor Response

Because the Kenyan Government responded to Phase 1 of the response using its own funds it is possible that donors perceive it is able to manage the crisis on its own. In addition, the dire situation in South Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia, has lead to a lack of attention on the humanitarian emergency situation in Kenya. With upcoming elections in August, donors may also be worried that funding for the drought response may be politicized. With rising food prices the drought has taken centre stage in election campaigns.¹⁰

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/19/kenya-range-war-reopens-colonial-wounds>

⁶ Kenya Flash Appeal March 2017

⁷ <https://www.actionaid.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/emergencies/east-africa-crisis-facts-and-figures>

⁸ <http://reliefweb.int/report/kenya/kenya-s-drought-response-must-be-sustainable-not-piecemeal>

⁹ <http://allafrica.com/stories/201705220993.html>

¹⁰ See: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/jun/02/drought-centre-stage-kenya-election-campaign-food-prices-rise>

Although there is donor funding going directly to support the government response, NGOs are struggling to access funds to scale up their response and secure funding for programme costs for their activities. Funding is concentrated in the food security sector (42.4%) and multi-sector (21.2%), whilst other sectors such as nutrition (1.4%), water and sanitation and hygiene (WASH) (3.7%), emergency shelter and non food items (1.5%), education (0.5%), health (8.6%), protection (1.3%) and child protection are seriously underfunded.¹¹

A recent high level donor visit led by the African Union and the United Nations to Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia resulted in pledges of funding from donors to combat drought and famine in the region.¹² Donors should ensure that sufficient levels of funds also go to Kenya and this funding should be urgently disbursed.

c) Oxfam Response

Oxfam has been an active player in successive drought emergency responses in Northern Kenya. Currently, Oxfam aims to reach 600,000 people in Wajir and Turkana with clean water and sanitation through supporting county governments to maintain and repair water points. Oxfam is aiming to reach a total of 36,000 people with cash transfers so they can access food.

Oxfam has been providing spare parts for repairs for water service providers and the Ministry of Water in the two counties. It will soon distribute non-food items (NFIs) such as aqua tabs for treating water, chlorine and soap. Oxfam has also provided training on gender and protection, as well as building the capacity of WASH committees and other water management institutions.

d) Strengthening Humanitarian Coordination

Coordination of the drought response in Kenya has improved recently, and mapping of actors responding to the crisis, and their activities is in place. Coordination at sectoral levels e.g. WASH, food security, protection etc is progressing well, with WESCOORD (Water and Environmental Sanitation Coordination), one of the most active sectoral groups on WASH being coordinated by UNICEF and chaired by government. WESCOORD has provided a credible platform for information sharing on the general outlook and gaps of the response. International NGOs like Oxfam have also been supporting coordination meetings at the county government levels and providing direct financial assistance to county governments to fill technical gaps like repairs of water pumps and to conduct household assessments. However, coordination between national, county and sub-county levels needs to be strengthened, systematized and regularized to ensure effective targeting of the most vulnerable people – for instance households not receiving payouts through the HSNP.

Conclusion & Recommendations

The hunger crisis in Kenya is critical. 2.6 million lives have been blighted by extreme conditions, and the numbers may continue to rise. Although the Government of Kenya has responded to the crisis using its own resources, it requires further support. The international community must step up support to ensure the situation in Kenya does not deteriorate in the coming months. Not acting now will lead to greater levels of hunger and suffering for vulnerable communities hit hard by drought, climate shocks and other disasters beyond their control.

Recommendations to the Government of Kenya

- Increase funding for the humanitarian response and ensure an effective and accountable response - including cash-based interventions, direct food assistance and emergency support for livestock.
- Release funds to county governments in a timely, transparent way to enable a rapid response.
- At both county and national levels, manage available pasture and water points and mediate between communities to prevent conflict and control the spread of diseases.

¹¹ As of 3rd July. See: <https://fts.unocha.org/countries/116/summary/2017>. Funding by sector, taken from data sheet.

¹² <http://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/international-partners-visit-drought-hit-horn-africa-pledge-support>

- Prioritise a drought response plan for the period July 2017-March 2018 to ensure adequate provision is made for the medium-term response within the national budget.
- In line with the *'Ending Drought Emergencies'* framework, focus resources on long term programmes that support vulnerable communities to increase their resilience and diversify their livelihoods.
- Increase funding to the State Department for Social Programmes and Department of Social Protection to improve resilience.
- Finalize and adopt the *National Disaster Risk Management Policy* to put in place complementary systems for early warning and early action for drought response.
- Mobilize local resources for long term resilience building and direct them to poor and marginalized segments of the society especially women small scale farmers.

Recommendations to the Council of Governors (CoG)

- Strengthen budgetary allocation commitments to the agriculture sector and implement accountability measures that ensure value for money, timely utilisation of the funds and participation of all citizens. Counties should work towards allocation of at least 10% of annual budgets to agricultural development as prescribed by the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).
- Ensure improved protection of women in ASALs by developing or supporting functional protection mechanisms and referral pathways – as in Wajir County Government.
- Implement legislation and interventions to support disaster risk management and resilience to combat drought.

Recommendations to the donor community

- Fully fund the Kenya Flash Appeal which requires US\$134.3 million to plug the 81% funding gap.
- Support the government to scale up social protection mechanisms such as the HSNP and work with government to improve their efficiency, coverage and targeting.
- Prioritise programmes targeting women and girls and protection programmes for children.
- Invest in areas hard hit by drought, and promote linkages between humanitarian and development sectors to maximise the impact of interventions and build communities resilience.
- Support and partner with policymakers, researchers and local communities on the effective uses of forecasting and early warning early response mechanisms.

Recommendations to the UN

- Strengthen coordination between national, county and sub-county levels to ensure effective targeting of the most vulnerable people e.g. households not receiving payouts through the HSNP.
- Develop a resource mobilisation plan and communications strategy to raise the profile of the crisis in Kenya in order to generate funds to further scale up the response.

Recommendations to the Private Sector

- Build long-term relationships with humanitarian actors and strengthen systems to support drought response and resilience - e.g. cash transfer mechanisms (MPESA and banks).
- Put in place infrastructure to complement delivery of critical services (e.g. water) to affected citizens and ensure affordability of key commodities such as water, food.

Recommendations to the African Union

- Ensure improved response of the Africa Risk Capacity facility to extreme weather events and natural disasters – through improved access to drought insurance and encouraging Kenya to fulfil its premium commitments for optimal support.
- Set new timelines for member states to meet the CAADP 10% national budget allocation to agriculture. This should be backed by accountability measures for timely implementation and full participation of all stakeholders especially smallholder farmers and civil society organisations.