

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

KENYA: DROUGHT

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In Brief

This Information Bulletin (no. 1/2004) is being issued for information only. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

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The situation

Kenya has been dealing with the accumulated effects of several years of drought that has affected a large number of people. In the 1991/1992 drought, the arid districts suffered up to 70% loss of livestock and unprecedented high rates of child malnutrition of up to 50% while an estimated 1.5 million people in 17 arid and semi-arid districts of four provinces were entirely dependent on relief food. The failure of rains at the end of 1995 and in 1996 resulted in another drought that affected an estimated 1.4 million people.

In 2000, an estimated 4.4 million people required food assistance in Central, Eastern, Rift Valley, Coast and North Eastern Provinces following what has been described as the worst drought emergency in recent years. Emergency food aid operations began in Turkana district in December 1999 and soon expanded to include Moyale, Mandera and Marsabit. A WFP emergency operation launched in the year 2000 targeting 1.7 million people in 18 districts became operational in 22 districts by January 2000 and provided food aid to over 4.4 million people. A population of between 700,000 to 1 million people has been under relief food in 2003 and 2004.

The distribution of the 2003 short and long rains has been erratic; the amount of rainfall also varied across the region. Generally, most of Western Province, the highlands of Nyanza Province and the main maize producing areas of Rift Valley Province received adequate amounts of rainfall. However, the other parts of the country especially the marginal agricultural areas of Nyanza Province, South Rift, the lowlands of Central Province, the entire Coast Province, most of the North Eastern Province and most of the Northern districts of the Rift Valley Province received inadequate rainfall.

Most parts of the country are currently experiencing dry weather as a result of poor rains in April and May which subsided earlier than usual. This has led to acute food insecurity in several pastoral and agro-pastoral areas particularly in Garissa, Samburu, Mandera, parts of Malindi, Kilifi, Kwale, and Taita Taveta districts. Turkana, Marsabit, and parts of Kajiado, Narok, and Isiolo districts have been worst affected.

Shortages of water and forage are being experienced in the arid and semi arid lands (ASAL) as the dry season progresses, leading to livestock movements. The rainfall deficits in May will further aggravate the situation in pastoral districts of Mandera, Wajir, Northern Garissa, Ijara, Tana River Baringo, Narok and Kajiado. Already the Early Warning System of the Arid Lands Resource Management Programme reports the migration of pastoralists in the worst affected areas into dry grazing areas one month earlier than usual. In Ijara, one out of four water points have dried up; with increased human and animal concentration, the remaining water can only last for another month. These migrations in search of pasture have been a source of conflict among pastoralist communities. Rising tension is already being reported among pastoralists in the western part of Mandera district; an influx of pastoralists into Moyale from the neighbouring districts is also causing pressure on both pasture and water and is likely to cause conflict.

Preliminary results of a rapid assessment to evaluate the impact of food security at district level has established that overall, around 20% of the expected national output is at risk as a direct result of the failure of the 2003 short rains and the 2004 long rains while already an estimated 5% of the initially projected national maize output has been lost. It is also estimated that only 1.35 million metric tonnes of beans will be harvested instead of the anticipated 1.8 million metric tonnes due to crop damage from excessive rains and flooding in April 2004 followed by dry weather in May. Close to 80% of the crop in Coast province has reached the permanent wilting point while the South Rift and the lowlands of Nyanza, Eastern and Central provinces will incur significant crop losses if the rains do not resume in June. The recent flooding in Western, Nyanza and parts of Central Provinces have also had an adverse effect on crop production, particularly in Nyando where the heavy downpour destroyed crops at their seedling stage. These factors suggest that a significant national deficit might emerge in July and August. The Ministry of Agriculture has already reduced its annual production projections for 2004 from 2.3 to 2.03 million metric tonnes.

Food insecurity is usually highest amongst the pastoralists and small-scale agriculturalists in the ASAL and routine administrative reports indicate deteriorating food security situation in these areas. The effects of successive droughts have resulted in a depression of the asset base of communities in these areas thereby increasing their vulnerability to food insecurity. In North Eastern Province, assessment in Mandera and Ijara indicated deteriorating livestock conditions due to inadequate pasture and water supply. Tsetse infestations are rampant in Ijara district and cases of contagious bovine pleuropneumonia (CBPP) and foot and mouth disease have been observed in several areas, forcing pastoralists to purchase expensive drugs; foot and mouth disease is likely to increase with the congregation of animals around the limited water points.

Assessment reports from Laikipia district indicate that pasture and browse land is fast diminishing, resulting to poor physical livestock conditions and subsequent low production of meat and milk. The migration of animals in search of pasture is already underway. Further, all livestock markets have been closed due to foot and mouth disease thereby endangering the residents' source of livelihood.

Almost all able bodied men in Olturot, Forolle and El-hadi sub-locations of Marsabit district have migrated with the livestock in search of pasture, leaving behind children, women, and the aged to depend entirely on the purchases of food commodities. These three sub-locations require urgent food assistance.

A quarantine imposed in Narok district in January 2004 due to foot and mouth disease is still in force in Loita, Mara and Mulot divisions. The closure of the livestock market continues to impact negatively on the community; prices have gone down further because some owners are selling their livestock to buy cereals.

The current drought situation is being experienced within a context of a generally poor health status due to increasing poverty. Assessment reports from the affected districts indicate a general increase in malnutrition rates; as the drought deepens, child malnutrition in some districts is well over WHO's global acute malnutrition (GAM) critical threshold of 15%. In Narok district, high incidences of malnutrition were observed in Mulot, Osopuko and

Loita. Acute malnutrition was evident in Marsabit and Turkana, with GAM going over 20% and 30% respectively. Given the current scenario where nutrition surveys do not use the same cut off points to indicate malnutrition rates, it is difficult to compare within and between districts. In light of the foregoing, a rapid nutrition survey is planned in the worst affected districts in North Eastern province (Garissa, Wajir, Mandera) to determine the health impact of the drought.

Cases of malaria outbreaks have also been reported in some of the drought affected districts areas as well as in area that experienced the recent flooding; this has been confirmed in Nyando district of Nyanza province and in Marsabit.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The [Kenya Red Cross Society](#) dispatched three ICRC trucks to Kitui and Makueni on 9 June 2004 with part of a consignment of 10,000 bags of maize and vegetable oil from the Office of the President in addition to another 450 bags of beans. The two districts suffered human deaths due to relief food poisoning which further exacerbated the overall food crisis in the country. To arrest the situation, the Government of Kenya has replaced the infected foodstuff and called upon the Kenya Red Cross to assist in distribution of relief food.

The Office of the President is coordinating a two week inter-agency assessment in the most severely affected areas. The inter-agency team is comprised of representatives from the Office of the President, WFP, World Vision, UNICEF, Care, OXFAM, AMREF and two members of the Kenya Red Cross national emergency response team based in Tana River and Malindi branches. Branches of the Kenya Red Cross were also part of the district teams who participated in joint assessments with the Kenya food security working group coordinated by the Government of Kenya.

It is estimated that more than 3.3 million people are currently affected by the drought. The Kenya government is likely to declare it a national disaster after the release of the assessment results which is expected to confirm the exact numbers affected.

Kenya Red Cross has continued to maintain good relationships with the Government which has appointed the national society lead role in flood interventions in the past. The national society is likely to receive a request from the government for assistance in parts of the areas affected by the current drought. In view of the aforementioned, Kenya Red Cross is likely to launch an international Appeal targeting the most vulnerable population in areas to be identified after the assessment.

The Federation's Nairobi Regional Delegation disaster management department is working closely with the national society and is ready to deploy members from the regional disaster response team (RDRT) in addition to requesting a Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) allocation should the situation demand.

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