

Information bulletin



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia: Drought and Food Crisis

Information bulletin n° 1

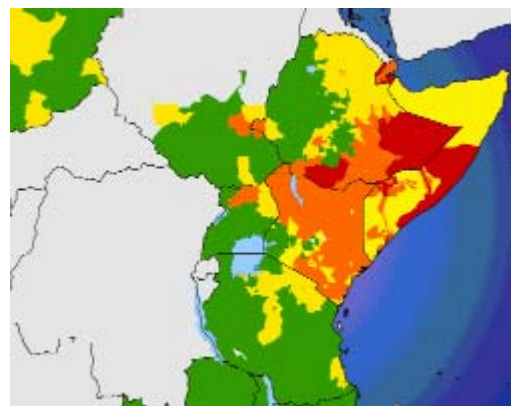
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8 April 2008

The March to May 2008 rainfall forecast released by IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC) and partners during their 21st Climate Outlook Forum indicates an increased likelihood of near normal to below normal rainfall over much of the Greater Horn of Africa during the March to May 2008 season. There is currently a strong La Niña signal, which usually means drier than normal conditions in eastern parts of the Greater Horn of Africa (including most parts of Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia, and eastern Tanzania) during this season.

In addition, sea surface temperatures (SST) in the Indian Ocean waters along the East African coastline are currently cooler than normal, and this usually causes depressed rainfall in-land. The combined effect of the La Niña and cooling of the Indian Ocean SST results in the increased chances of drier than normal conditions in the eastern parts of the equatorial sector of the Greater Horn of Africa during the upcoming rainy season.

The Federation through the four National Societies in the affected areas (Kenya, Ethiopia, Somali and Djibouti), has determined that external assistance will be required after the release of the initial assessment which is currently being organized. The Federation through its Eastern Africa Zone office will consider support through its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) in anticipation of a possible emergency appeal.



Map showing countries affected by drought. Source: FEWSNET, 2008

KEY

Red/Maroon: Extremely Food Insecure

Brown: Highly Food Insecure

Yellow: Moderately Food Insecure

Green: Generally Food Secure

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The Situation

According to an assessment report released by Famine Early Warning System (FEWSNET) for the Greater Horn of Africa and Eastern Africa the following critical observation has been made:

The south-eastern pastoral areas of Ethiopia, including Somali Region and the lowlands of Oromiya, have experienced poor rains in the last two seasons. Water and pasture, the key pastoral resources, are in short supply, and livestock body conditions and production have deteriorated significantly. Livestock prices are below normal in parts of Somali Region. Cereal supplies are low and prices are much higher than normal in many areas though some relief food is available. The terms of trade of the pastoral groups and their food access are poor. In Somali Region, security related restrictions on trade and movement continue to worsen the food insecurity by continuing to restrict food access. In addition, a general inflation exists in the country, making food purchases through the market difficult, and this further aggravates food insecurity.

The Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Agency (DPPA) has announced that 952,053 people require urgent humanitarian assistance, while another estimated 8 million people chronically affected by food insecurity are being assisted through the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP). Poor March to May rains will further restrict national cereal supply and could further increase prices as well as extend the drought in the south-eastern pastoral areas. If drought conditions worsen, trans-boundary movement of livestock between Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya could increase, heightening the potential for the spread of diseases and resource-based conflicts.

In Somalia, food security in most of central and southern regions is precarious as a result of a combination of factors including two successive poor rains, civil insecurity, high-inflation, and trade and market disruptions. The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has increased to more than one million, with 700,000 displaced by the fighting and insecurity in Mogadishu that escalated since early 2007. More than 30 percent of the IDPs are in central regions, which are already experiencing multiple problems of food access, drought, collapsing livelihoods and malnutrition. As a result, the number of people in need across the country has increased from about 1.5 million in mid-2007 to 2 million through to July 2008. This figure does not include the urban poor who are equally hard-hit by hyper-inflation, high food prices, conflicts, and disruption in trade and economic activities. This, thus, indicates a potentially serious humanitarian situation.

If the April to June rains is below normal, it would worsen the already dire humanitarian crisis. Any increase in the crisis in Somalia will increase destitution and the movement of people both internally and externally, necessitating a substantial increase in humanitarian response. There would also be an increased movement of Somali refugees into Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti, among other countries. This would put additional pressure on resources in the existing camps and host communities, besides possibly increasing insecurity in the host countries.

In Djibouti, which is almost exclusively dependent on imports of the main staple foods, high food prices (currently at 20 percent above normal) are severely restricting food access, particularly among the poorer urban and rural households. This trend is likely to be worsened by the increasing global prices of cereals and oil. Pastoral food security is deteriorating due to the failure of the coastal October to February rains, which followed a poor July to September main rainy season. This is reducing the availability of pasture for pastoral households that rely on livestock for food and income, in the face of increasing food prices. In addition, persistent levels of malnutrition (an average of 16.8 global acute malnutrition and 2.4 severe acute malnutrition) are symptomatic of other factors that affect food utilization such as child care, weaning practices and hygiene, which also need to be addressed through a combination of emergency and long-term development approaches. About 55,000 rural people and 25,000 urban people currently rely on emergency food aid, and food deficits are as high as 30 to 40 percent among the worst-affected groups.

In Kenya, the Kenya Food Security Meeting reports that a significant stride has been made to address the political crisis – which has been on-going since December 2007 - through the signing of a political deal under the aegis of the Kofi Annan mediation team. However, most of the 300,000 people displaced during the crisis are likely to continue living in camps for the next few months due to the lag in the implementation of the deal to resolve underlying ethnic problems. The majority of the displaced are from the productive breadbasket areas in the western part, and the crisis has already resulted in the loss of about 300,000 tonnes of the 2007 crop harvests, which will reduce overall food availability both locally and nationally in 2008. In addition, those displaced and confined in the camps may not fully cultivate their farms during the 2008 long-rain cultivation season. Land preparation for the 2008 planting season has been significantly delayed with a significant reduction in prepared land due to tensions, insecurity and high input costs. This is expected to reduce the 2008 harvest of maize, the national staple food, meaning likely food shortages even in 2009. The transport network has been restored, however, food prices are still high and are likely to remain so given the inelastic nature of the demand for essential food commodities. The food security situation in pastoral areas remains fragile as water scarcity continues to intensify, while the terms of trade are declining to more than 30 percent of the long-term mean. According to the government's Arid Lands and Resource Management Project (ALRMP), livestock prices declined by between 5 and 10 percent in most of the pastoral areas during the current January to March dry season due to poor body conditions, the highest decline of 30 percent was reported in the north-western pastoral areas of Turkana.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The four National societies in the affected countries (Kenya, Ethiopia, Somali and Djibouti) have supported community water trucking activities, but due to financial constraints the area covered was limited. Based on the outcome of assessments, the Federation will consider support through its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) in anticipation of a possible emergency appeal.

How we work

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#) for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

Contact information

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