

A delayed onset of the rains increases the likelihood of a deterioration in an already dire food security, WASH, health and nutrition situation across the eastern Horn of Africa

INTRODUCTION

In February 2022, FSNWG issued a [drought special report](#), examining the current food security situation across the eastern Horn of Africa (e.g. Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia) after three consecutive seasons of below-average rains. This report also projected likely food security outcomes through September 2022 under two different rainfall scenarios for the March to May 2022 season: 1) a scenario of average to above-average rains, and 2) a scenario of below-average rains.

Since that special report was published, the following updates have become available:

UPDATES

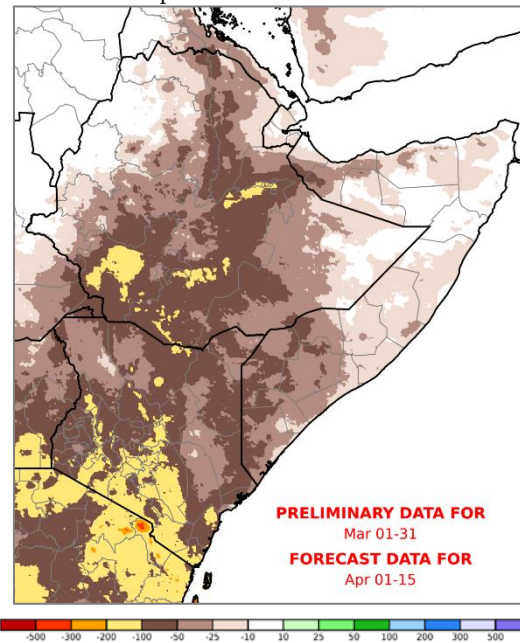
Seasonal progress and rainfall forecasts

During the month of March, weather across the Horn of Africa has been mostly dry, with mild to moderate rainfall deficits appearing across areas where the rainy season should have started, including southern and western Kenya and central and southwestern Ethiopia.

Rainfall across most of the region has not yet been sufficient for planting or for the germination of dry-planted crops. Though it is still early in the season and therefore, this is not a major source of concern yet in most areas, it has delayed planting activities in *Belg*-receiving areas of Ethiopia, located in central and eastern areas of the country. Furthermore, in west Oromia, SNNPR and parts of Amhara that received below-average rainfall, extremely warm land surface temperatures, as well as low soil moisture, Evapotranspiration (ET) and [Normalized Difference Vegetation Index \(NDVI\)](#) indicate the persistence of severe moisture stress.

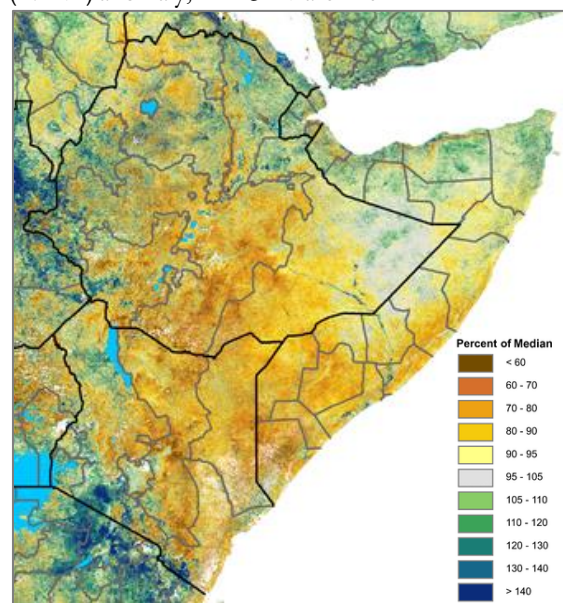
Across pastoral areas, the [Normalized Difference Vegetation Index \(NDVI\)](#) is showing major vegetative deficits that are, in many cases, worse than at the same time in 2011 (when famine was declared in Somalia) and in 2017 (the worst recent drought before the current one). The [FEWS NET/USGS livestock water point monitoring](#) is also showing dry or near dry watering points across Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia. The dry season (January-February) was also exceptionally warm, which contributed to the desiccation of rangelands and the reduction of water availability. For example, in Ethiopia, weather conditions since 1 February in southern and south-eastern pastoral regions were dry. As a result, all climatic conditions and rangeland resources indicators consistently indicate the persistence of a severe drought situation and a significant depletion of rangeland resource in the southern half of Somali and the lowlands of Bale and Borena Zones of Oromia region.

Figure 1. Rainfall anomalies (in mm), including observational data for 1 – 31 March 2022 and forecast data for 1 – 15 April 2022



Source: USGS/FEWS NET

Figure 2. Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) anomaly, 21 – 31 March 2022



Source: USGS/FEWS NET

Large-scale livestock deaths have been reported across the region. For example, estimates from both southern Ethiopia and the ASAL regions of Kenya indicate that more than [3 million livestock have died](#) across the two areas (over 1.5 million in each country). In Somalia, [FSNAU and FEWS NET report](#) that in many areas, up to 30 percent of households' herd have died since mid-2021, with worst-affected areas including Hawd Pastoral, Addun Pastoral, Southern Agropastoral, parts of Southern Inland Pastoral (Gedo and Hiiraan regions), Coastal Deeh Pastoral, Juba Cattle Pastoral, and Togdheer Agropastoral livelihood zones.

Looking forward, [short-term rainfall forecasts](#) for the upcoming two weeks (or through 15 April) are indicating a continuation of below-average rains across parts of the region which, should they materialize, would further deepen rainfall deficits across the region (Figure 1). [Medium-term forecasts](#) for the second half of April also show below-average rains, particularly over Somalia, coastal Kenya, and parts of Ethiopia, while updated forecasts for April from the regional IGAD Climate Production and Applications Centre (ICPAC) point toward dry conditions. Furthermore, longer-term April to June seasonal forecasts from ICPAC¹ and global meteorological agencies ([NOAA](#), [ECMWF](#), [IRI](#), [UK MET](#), [WMO](#)) all show an increased probability of below-average rains in areas already affected by recurring drought and other food insecurity drivers (e.g., conflict, insecurity, displacements and high cereal prices).

Based on NOAA's seasonal forecasts, FEWS NET recently conducted crop modeling for the East Africa region which showed that, should the NOAA seasonal forecast materialize, the 2022 "Belg" and 2022 "Gu/long rains" season would result in below-average cereal harvests with localized instances of crop failure across central and eastern Ethiopia, as well as southern Somalia and eastern, southeastern, and parts of the coastal strip of Kenya, mirroring in many ways the performance of the 2021 "Belg/Gu/long" rains season.

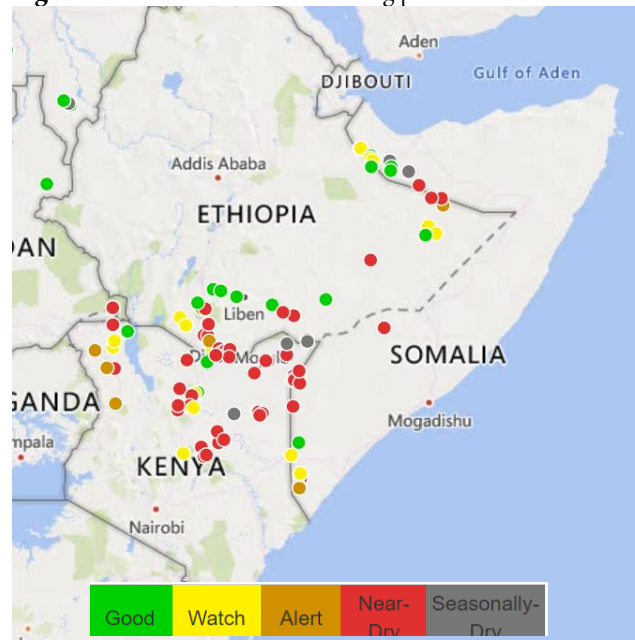
In pastoral areas, a slight improvement in rangeland conditions is expected during the ongoing rainy season. However, given forecasts of below-average rains and above-average land surface temperatures, these improvements are expected to be limited and short-lived, with an earlier-than-normal deterioration across pastoral and agropastoral areas during the upcoming July-September dry season. This would contribute to an earlier than usual deterioration in livestock body conditions, as well as atypical livestock movements, below-average milk production, increased livestock mortality, and livestock prices and livestock-to-cereal terms of trade that could remain unfavorable towards pastoralists and agro pastoralists.

Conflict

Increased resource-driven conflicts have already been observed across drought-affected areas of the region and are expected to persist if the March to May rainy season remains poor. Drought also increases the occurrence of livestock/wildlife conflicts over scarce resources in areas of high concentration.

Drought increases the risk of gender-based violence (GBV) including sexual violence, exploitation and abuse and intimate partner violence (IPV). As water resources become scarce, women and girls often travel further than usual to collect water for domestic use, sometimes using contested water sources. Adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable to GBV with child marriage and other harmful practices on the rise as families adopt negative coping mechanisms for survival.

Figure 3. Status of livestock watering points



Source: USGS/FEWS NET

¹ Please note that the ICPAC forecast showing an increased probability of average to below-average rains during the ongoing rainy season is an update to the previously released GHACOF forecast.

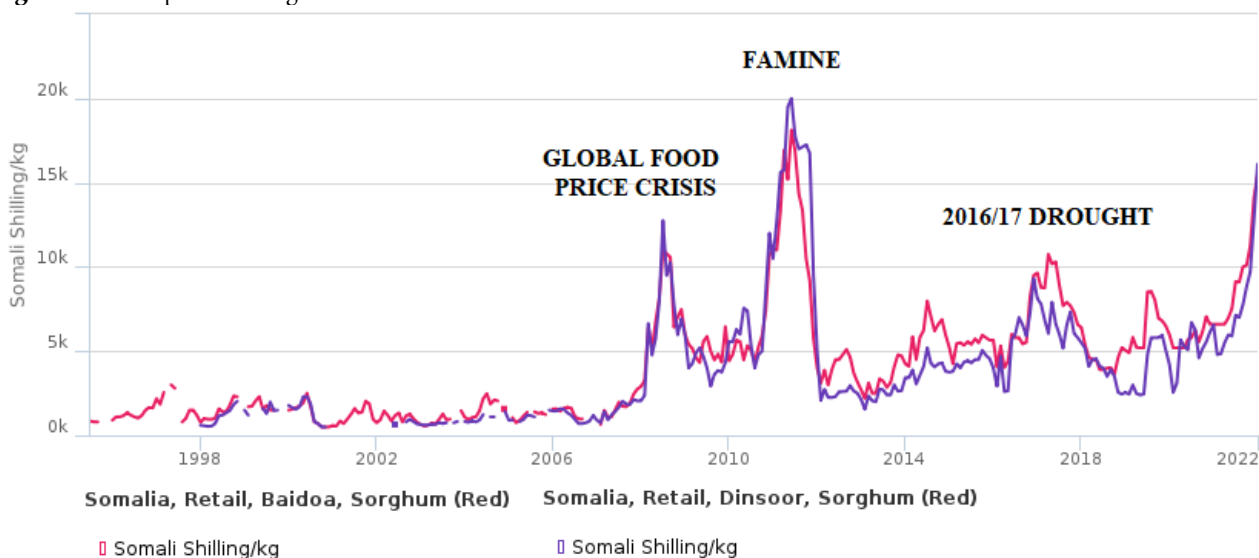
Displacement

In addition to the ongoing conflicts/insecurity in the region, prolonged drought and acute food insecurity are among the contributing factors in increasing trends in displacement, especially internal displacements. [The UNHCR-led Protection and Return Monitoring Network \(PRMN\), implemented in partnership with NRC](#), reported 136,000 new internal displacements in Somalia during the month of February 2022. Of these, 115,000 were caused by drought or a lack of livelihoods while 21,000 were related to conflict/insecurity. The highest numbers of uprooted individuals due to drought were recorded in Bay (40,102), Togdheer (26,129) and Lower Shabelle (22,887) regions. These February figures are in addition 319,000 people displaced in Somalia in January 2022 (310,000 due to drought) and 874,000 displacements during the 2021 year (245,000 due to drought). Displacement also poses additional gender-based violence risks to women and girls.

Markets

Cereal prices across the eastern Horn of Africa are already high, due to the combined effects of macroeconomic challenges and drought. For example, in Eldoret, Kenya, located in the country's grain basket, maize prices in March 2022 were up 31 percent compared to the same time last year and up 14 percent compared to the five-year average. Similarly, in Somalia, sorghum prices in Baidoa and Dinsoor, located in the "sorghum belt, surged by 55 and 105 percent between October 2021 and January 2022. These prices were more than twice their already high levels from the previous year, higher than levels observed during the 2017 drought and the 2008 global food price crisis, and approaching 2011 record levels, when famine was declared. Meanwhile, in Gode in southern Ethiopia, pasta prices are also up 55 percent compared to last year and 101 percent compared to the five-year average.

Figure 4. Retail prices of sorghum in select market of Somalia



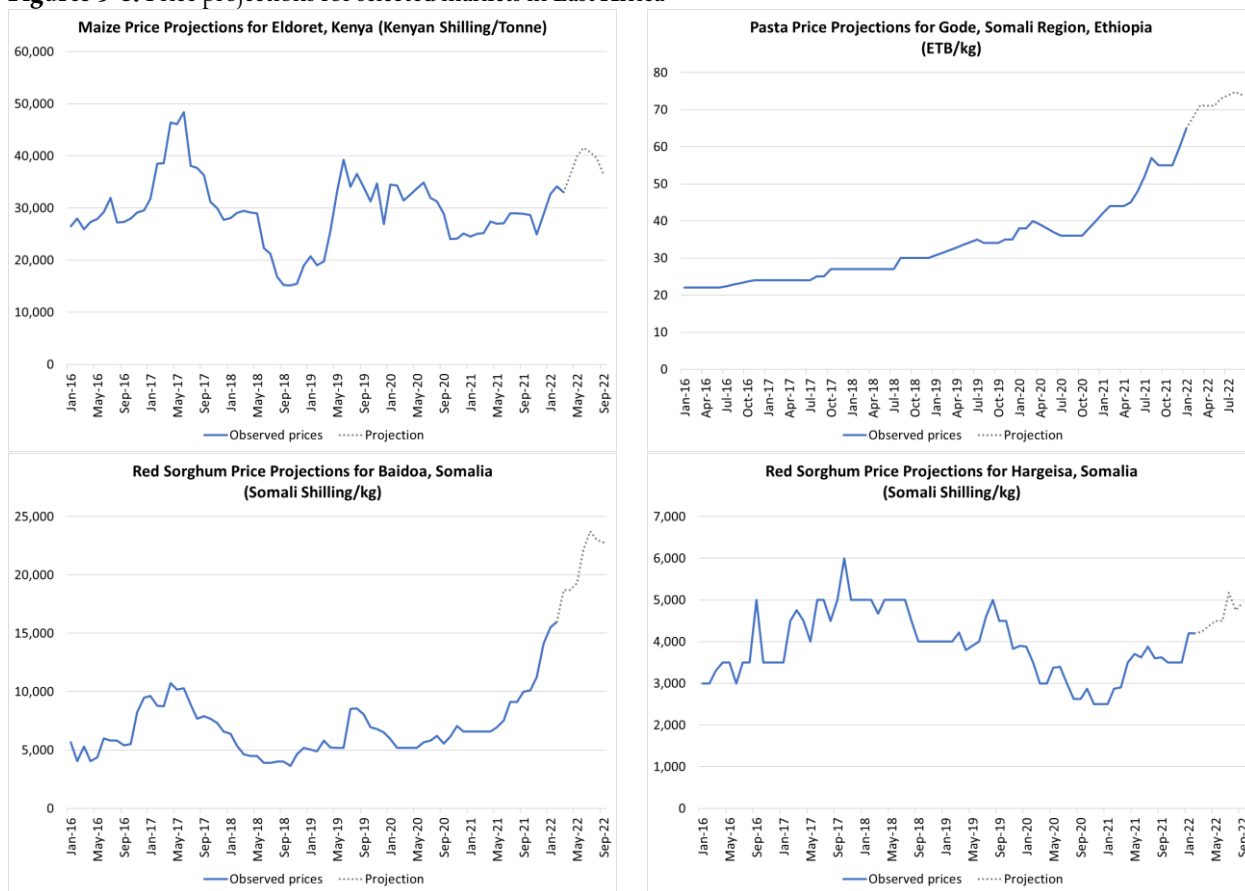
Source: FAO-GIEWS

On the international market, food prices are already high and [FAO forecasts](#) that they will potentially increase by another 8 to 22 percent due to the effects of the Ukraine crisis. Similarly, recent WFP analyses (found [here](#) and [here](#)) found that wheat makes up 25 percent of cereals consumed in East Africa, with 84 percent met by imports with a very high dependency on wheat from Ukraine and Russia (ranging from 67 percent to 100 percent, except for South Sudan that relied on re-exports from neighboring countries, mainly from Uganda). The impacts of the Ukraine crisis on markets in East Africa will depend on the progression of the conflict and sanctions, as well as the ability of traders to find other grain sources. However, given the heavy dependency on wheat from Ukraine and Russia, the conflict could drive increases in cereal prices in East Africa, either directly for wheat products or indirectly through a substitution effect with other cereals, mainly maize, the main staple in the region.

The Ukraine crisis could also affect fertilizer markets as Russia is one of the top exporters of fertilizers globally. As of February 2022, fertilizer prices were already extremely high (up 40 to 120 percent compared to last year's levels, according to data from the [World Bank](#)) and [FAO](#) projects that fertilizer prices will likely increase further by about 13 percent in 2022/23. Though fertilizer usage in sub-Saharan Africa is low compared to other regions of the world, rising fertilizer prices could have negatively impacts on the use of fertilizers in the market-oriented sector, the key producer in several countries during the current agricultural season, driving a decline in crop yields.

Assuming another below-average rainy season between March and May and given the Ukraine crisis' potential impacts on East Africa markets, price projections for the region suggest that cereal prices will continue to rise sharply across Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia, limiting food access for vulnerable households already facing below-average incomes (from reduced crop and livestock sales, agricultural labour work, etc.).

Figures 5-8. Price projections for selected markets in East Africa



Source of historical data: FAO-GIEWS and WFP

Household water insecurity

Beyond the agricultural drought resulting in failed harvests, the cumulative rainwater deficit over the past three years resulted in a severe hydrological drought in the Horn of Africa and alarming water insecurity levels for households and livelihoods. Field assessments show that many of the most reliable surface water points during a “normal drought” are dry. Even the best locally built rainwater harvesting and storage systems (hafirs, berkads) that provide water during the dry season, are dry. Wells and boreholes tapping into shallow aquifers vulnerable to climate variability are also either dry or have reduced yield production. The few high performing boreholes less sensitive to climate variability are over-pumped due to the increased water demand from host and displaced populations gathered around water points with what remains of their livestock herds and for water trucking.

In Somalia, only 15 percent of the 6.4 million people in need of water assistance are being supported due to insufficient resources (WASH Cluster, March 2022). In Somali region of Ethiopia, 2.3 million people in 85 woredas are in need of water trucking services. In Oromia in Ethiopia, 600,000 people need water trucking. Furthermore, 809,000 and 120,000 people have been affected by the hydrological drought in 21 woredas of SNNPR and five woredas of Sidama Region, respectively, in Ethiopia. In Kenya, over a half of the 3.5 million affected by the drought in the ASAL regions could be water insecure (based on water scarcity indicators of the Kenya Drought Management Authority).

Health

Drought conditions have a direct impact on facility-based services – sometimes resulting in full closure or scaling back of services (notably deliveries and related postnatal care) due to lack of water and poor sanitation. In some instances, health workers themselves may be forced to move away temporarily, if facilities continue to lack water. Additionally, those facilities that

continue to function may do so with suboptimal WASH, running the risk of transmission of infections within the facility.

Furthermore, migration and displacement often move communities further away from facility-based services. This means very sick mothers, children, and survivors of sexual violence may not access the required quality of care or referral services when they need them the most.

One of the more significant risks are related to outbreaks of infectious diseases (e.g., measles outbreaks) due to increased vulnerability from poor nutrition and infection, crowding and low routine immunization coverage. Various countries experienced disruption in immunization programmes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and have not yet recovered. In addition, before the outbreak of the pandemic, there has been an almost 10-year stagnation of routine immunization coverage in the region, resulting in a growing number of un and underimmunised children, the majority in Ethiopia and Somalia. In 2020, there were already more than one million and more than 350,000 unimmunized children for diphtheria, tetanus toxoid and pertussis (DPT3) in Ethiopia and Somalia, respectively. These numbers increase every year with new birth cohorts, and especially among nomadic populations which have poor access to health services. Suspected cholera, typhoid and dysentery are already on the increase in Somalia and the Somali region of Ethiopia. Other climate sensitive diseases, including Dengue and Chikungunya, are already affecting Kenya and the Somali region of Ethiopia and though associated with lower mortality, could become a public health problem.

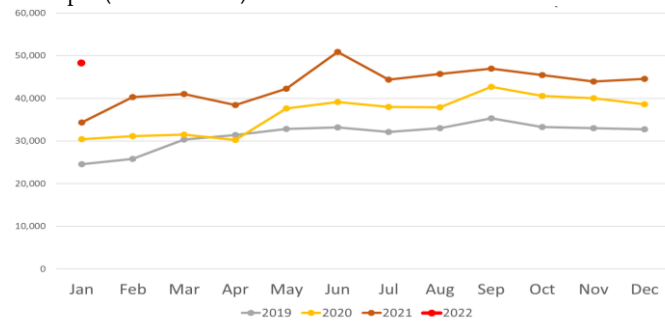
Nutrition

The number of children requiring treatment for severe wasting have shown sharp increase compared to the same time last year in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. The key drivers of increased malnutrition include worsening food insecurity situation with reduced milk production and consumption across drought-affected areas, low food stocks and unfavourable terms of trade related to the drought, conflict and COVID-19.

The IPC acute malnutrition analysis for Kenya found widespread Critical levels of acute malnutrition, with 754,906 children estimated to face acute malnutrition, including 183,513 children facing severe acute malnutrition. In addition, 103,286 pregnant and lactating women require treatment of acute malnutrition.

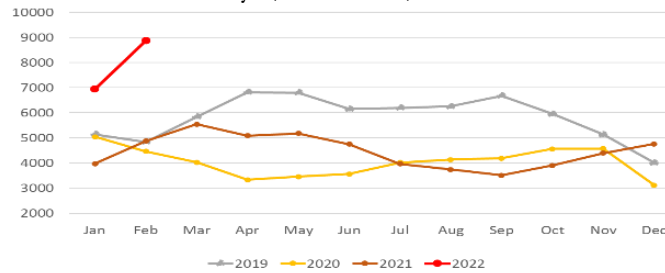
The SMART survey undertaken in Mandera in March 2022 has recorded very critical levels of acute malnutrition with 34.7 percent Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) and 7.9 percent Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) rates, the highest rate recorded for the county. As Mandera borders areas both in Somalia and Ethiopia, the nutrition situation in adjacent areas of both countries is also feared to be in a similar situation given the fact that they are affected by the same acro-climatic condition. The

Figure 9. Severe acute malnutrition (SAM) admission trends in Ethiopia (2019 – 2022)



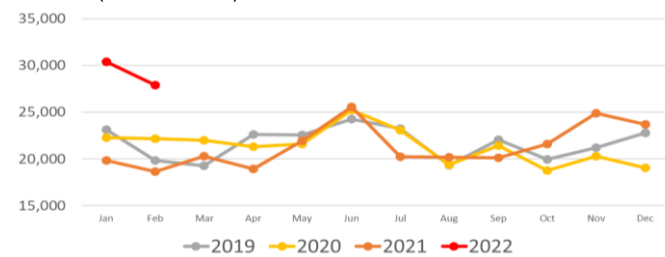
Source: UNICEF

Figure 10. Severe acute malnutrition (SAM) admission trends in ASAL counties of Kenya (2019 – 2022)



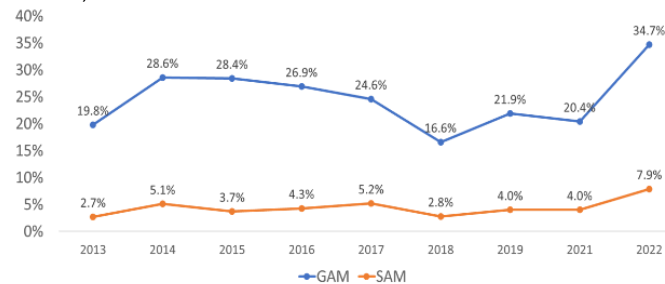
Source: UNICEF

Figure 11. Severe acute malnutrition (SAM) admission trends in Somalia (2019 – 2022)



Source: UNICEF

Figure 12. Trends in acute malnutrition in Mandera County (2013 – 2022)



Source: UNICEF

screening undertaken as part of find and treat campaign in the drought affected Somali, Oromia and Afar regions of Ethiopia resulted in higher admissions compared to the same time in previous years. In Somalia, the government and partners are undertaking a review of latest findings to determine the extent of deterioration in the nutrition situation among children and women.

Food security

Since the FSNWG drought special report was published last month, [new IPC figures from Kenya](#) have been released, indicating that about 3.5 million people across the arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) regions, covering most of the country, will face high levels of food insecurity (in line with IPC Phase 3+) between March and May 2022. Additionally, an Emergency (IPC Phase 4) area classification was projected in Marsabit Country, while the majority of other classified areas were found to be in Crisis (IPC Phase 3).

Considering these new figures, FSNWG now estimates that between March and May 2022, about 13.1 to 14.1 million people are in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse food insecurity due to drought, including 3.5 million in Kenya, 4.1 million people in Somalia, and 5.5 to 6.5 million across southern Ethiopia.

The frequency of drought in the region is eroding resources, and families are taking desperate measures to survive, with thousands leaving their homes in search of safety and assistance, including food, water and shelter, with devastating consequences for women and children. During drought, families are often forced to use children to secure their survival and get money for necessities. For example, child marriage, child labour and children dropping out of school to economically support their families are likely to occur during periods of prolonged drought. Furthermore, due to pre-existing gender inequality, including persisting gender discriminatory norms, women and girls are often worst affected by food insecurity, eating smaller portions, less diverse and nutritious food or skipping a meal for the benefit of their children or spouse.

During the upcoming June to September period, food security outcomes will heavily depend on the performance of the March to May rains. Given that the rainy season has started recently, there is still uncertainty about how it will perform. However, given the observed early-season dryness and updated forecasts, the current situation is leaning towards a situation that is more closely aligned to FSNWG's below-average rainfall scenario outlined in [last month's report](#), with a likelihood of worsening food insecurity situation.

As a reminder, under this below-average rains scenario², widespread Emergency (IPC Phase 4) area classifications are considered likely in the absence of humanitarian assistance, with 15 to 20 million people likely to become highly food insecure (IPC Phase 3+) in drought-affected areas. The nutrition situation would also likely deteriorate, with 6.9 million children expected to be wasted in 2022, about two million of them severely so. In a worst-case scenario where the seasonal rains completely fail and humanitarian assistance does not reach the worst-affected households, it is also possible that some households could face extreme food consumption gaps indicative of Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5).

This regional analysis is in line with updated national analyses within the region, such as the recently published [FSNAU/FEWS NET analysis for Somalia](#), which found that between 4 to 5 million people could face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse food insecurity in 2022, including 1 – 1.5 million people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4). This Somalia-specific analysis also estimated that there was a risk of Famine in a worst-case scenario where the rains fail, household purchasing power reaches record low levels, and food assistance does not reach worst-affected areas.

ACTION REQUIRED

For the three drought-affected countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia), [humanitarian partners have appealed for more than US 4.4 billion](#) to provide lifesaving assistance and protection to about 29.1 million people during the 2022 year. However, at this time, the response across the three countries remains severely underfunded.

² It is worth noting that the East Africa market implications of the Ukraine crisis was not factored into either scenario developed by FSNWG last month, but also points to higher food prices that will restrict food access for vulnerable households. This in turn will drive rising food insecurity, in line with the food security estimates under the “below-average rains” scenario.

Given the magnitude and severity of needs, FSNWG encourages that governments, donors, and the humanitarian community respond with sense of urgency and at scale as the window of opportunity to respond before the region experiences the worst effects of the drought is now only brief. Increased humanitarian funding for the multisectoral response, including the food security, nutrition, WASH, and health sectors, is urgently required to save lives and safeguard livelihoods.

More specifically, the FSNWG recommends the following actions:

Food security and livelihoods

- In the immediate short-term, there is an urgent need to provide food relief to vulnerable populations in the drought-affected areas.
- While providing immediate food access, it is also paramount to safeguard the livelihoods of farmers, pastoralists, and agropastoralists, and support their quick recovery of seasonal food production and self-reliance. Context-specific livelihoods packages should be provided, comprised of cash, productive inputs and subsidies for basic productive services (e.g., tractor and irrigation hours). Additional livelihood support could include animal destocking, animal feed distribution, water trucking, animal health, and protective treatments.
- For cash-based interventions, local market assessments are key to determine the usefulness of the cash, particularly conditional cash transfers, and to determine the value of transfers, considering the current inflationary pressures. Whenever possible, the international response should also support local systems and social safety nets. For example, national social protection systems, such as the Kenya's Hunger Safety Net Programme, the Somalia Shock Responsive Safety Net and the Productive Safety Net Programme in Ethiopia, need to be supported and upscaled.
- Food security and livelihood interventions should also be integrated with other sectors (e.g., WASH, nutrition and health) to maximize impacts and achieve a sustainable result.

Nutrition

- A rapid scale up of life-saving health and nutrition interventions is needed, including scaling up of mass screening and integrated outreaches/mobile health and nutrition teams, Blanket Supplementary Feeding (BSFP) programmes, treatment for severe and moderate wasting, as well as Vitamin A supplementation.
- The health system needs to be supported to cope with increased demand, due to the high number of wasted children as well as rising levels of communicable diseases.
- The timely procurement of nutrition products is critical to secure adequate therapeutic feeding commodities, including RUTF, to cope with the potential increase in the caseload.
- Continued investment is required to strengthen nutrition information systems, including routine reporting systems, to closely monitor the nutrition situation on a continuous basis to allow for evidence informed planning and response monitoring.

WASH

- Although life-saving assistance with emergency water provision for affected families and their livestock is a priority, the WASH sector recommends a 40-60 expenditures approach: not more than 40 percent spent on immediate water supply such as time-bound water trucking with conditions (exit strategy, communities well informed, etc.) and other non-durable actions (hygiene kits), and at least 60 percent to be spent on actions with a durable impact after the end of the projects: increasing capacity of water storage at all levels (household, health care facility, schools, and infrastructure for livestock water and small kitchen garden); fixing technical electrical or mechanical issues and resuming water production of dysfunctional water systems (wells, boreholes); drilling high yield boreholes with support of geophysics surveys in strategic locations with robust crisis-resilient management arrangements; expanding water pipeline to strategic locations, and constructing/rehabilitate sanitation facilities.
- Water trucking at extremely high cost to very remote locations should be discouraged as it creates false expectations among the served communities that it will last, and it absorbs funds that could be better use to fix existing water schemes or build new ones.
- All hardware support should also be accompanied by effective behavior change activities, targeting communities and service providers.
- It is critical that WASH programmes work across the humanitarian-development nexus and prioritize rehabilitations and preventative maintenance where possible, and work actively with other sectors (agriculture, health, nutrition, education).

Conflict management

- Provide support to existing community-based coordination mechanisms to strengthen natural resource conflict management. These interventions could include strengthening regular information sharing and combatting misinformation, sustained engagement between existing natural resource management committees, and accurate monitoring of displacement patterns.
- It is important that emergency drought response interventions also mainstream conflict sensitivity into their approaches. This can be done through using community-based structures to understand evolving context, participatory and community-led emergency response planning, and sustained communication channels with drought-affected communities. Targeting of recipients must be undertaken in way that reduces feeling of disenfranchisement, especially between clans and tribes. An open and inclusive community-based complaints and redress mechanism may mitigate against a latent conflict.
- Building the capacity of local duty bearers and leaders in conflict mitigation remains key given the potential for further increases in conflict incidences and considering their role as intermediaries both between and within communities.

GBV, child protection services, and PSEA

- There needs to be significant investment in static services and mobile teams to provide lifesaving GBV and child protection prevention and response services, as well as improved GBV risk mitigation across all humanitarian sectors. Women and girls are often forced to travel further away from their home for longer hours to bring back water, food, and firewood to their families, increasing their exposure to risks of gender-based violence. Risks of GBV, including sexual violence, exploitation and abuse and intimate partner violence (IPV), are becoming even more acute due to the widespread food insecurity and subsequent displacement. Adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable with child marriage and other harmful practices on the rise as families adopt negative coping mechanisms for survival. Furthermore, capacity and coverage of lifesaving multi-sectoral GBV and child protection services including case management, mental health and psychosocial support and other services, remain scarce across drought-affected areas.
- Engagement with women, girls, and youth organizations, movements, and networks, especially at local level, is encouraged to support appropriate empowerment interventions to strengthen their networks, enable their participation to decision-making processes and their ability to receive increased financial resources.
- All scaled-up programming (e.g., food security, health, wash, nutrition) should include a GBV-risk mitigation component and allocate financial resources for GBV-risk mitigation activities.
- Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), including through the setting up of community-based complaint mechanisms, access to survivor assistance, and capacity building of staff and partners, needs to also accompany all components of humanitarian assistance as risks of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) increase drastically during emergencies.

Food security risk factors monitoring

- Given uncertainty about weather forecasts and future food security and nutritional outcomes, continuous monitoring of the situation, including the regular collection and analysis of food security and nutrition data, is needed across drought-affected areas. When possible, food security and nutrition data should be disaggregated by sex, age, disability, etc.
- In areas where extremely high levels of malnutrition have been observed, data collection including mortality estimates, is highly recommended.
- FSNWG should also continue to provide updates on the situation, including special reports or alerts, particularly if the March to May rains continues to be poor or if data becomes available to suggest a significant food security deterioration.