

PRAGYA ASSESSMENT OF DROUGHT CRISIS IN NORTHERN KENYA

The Horn of Africa has been facing severe drought conditions, and increasing prices of food grains, livestock deaths, and conflicts have exacerbated the situation. The east African countries experienced two consecutive poor rainy seasons with as much as 30-50% below normal precipitation, leading to one of the driest years in the region in over last 60 years. In Kenya itself, over 3.5 million people need humanitarian assistance as per UN-OCHA estimates.

On 30th May 2011 the Kenyan President declared national drought emergency. United Nations has also attributed the drought situation as a "humanitarian emergency" with 2.4 million food insecure population reported in the drought-affected areas.

The calamity has forced a huge fraction of the community to migrate out from their place, and has also affected the livelihood of these primarily agro-pastoralist groups. Water scarcity has reached precarious levels with people having to travel up to 15 km to fetch water against the seasonal average of 3 km. There is marked deterioration of grazing pastures. According to Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWSNET), this, along with severe water scarcity is leading to out-migrations and resurgence of conflicts over the dwindling resources.

Turkana South, Laikipia East and Laikipia West districts in the Rift Valley Province of Kenya are among the high food deficit areas where the drought has left a huge number of people in the grasp of starvation including the children. With low coping capacity, and limited humanitarian response, the situation is likely to deteriorate. Pragma Kenya carried out a rapid assessment of the situation in consultation with the representatives of indigenous communities that we work with. Following is a brief overview of the drought conditions in the districts.

Turkana South

The affected homesteads in Turkana South are located in Kaputir, Katilu and Kainuk location. Over 1,80,000 people have been affected in this district including approx 62,500 children. The education system has suffered, with over 15 primary schools and one-third of the Early Childhood Development Centres (ECDs) unable to provide food. These ECDs support over 2,500 children, who are now suffering from hunger and malnourishment.

People have started disposing their valuable assets to meet food expenses. The drought has forced over 25,200 people to out-migrate; most of them are pastoralists who have moved to Kitale and tea producing areas of Kericho, Nandi hills and Naivasha in search of alternate livelihoods. Over 7,000 people from permanent settlements have also been forced to move to the towns of Lodwar, Kakuma, Kitale in neighbouring districts.

Water availability: Turkana South has 13 boreholes, 3 shallow wells; remaining water requirements are met by the river. Due to drought the water levels have gone down and the water available is not safe for human use, especially in Nabeiye, Kekunyuk, Namakat and Juluk villages. In Kakongu village, one has to walk for 10 km to reach a water source and a distance of over 5 km for water in case of Lokapel village. Water sources have dried out in the villages of Tina, Lomokomol, Naregae, Kangiregae, Nakabosan, Nabeiye, Ekoropus, and Nawoiyaregae. People here have to travel long distances to get water from river. Among these villages, Kalemungorok and Juluk are under severe stress due to their high population.

Agriculture and livestock: The arable land of over 10,000 hectares along the river Turkwell has been affected by the drought and crops (maize hybrid - *katumani*, sorghum, green grams, vegetables, sugarcane, fruits, pawpaw, cassava and sweet potatoes) have been affected. Production has gone down from 2,250 kgs to 900 kgs per acre. Cost of grains and vegetables have gone up sky high rendering it difficult for people to even arrange for one meal a day. Price of maize has gone up from 40 KES per kg to 100 KES, green grams from 120 to 300 KES per kg. Price of cassava, sweet potato, tomato, onions have

all become double. This has meant a reduction in food intake. Overall access to food containing protein and vitamin has gone down which is in stark contrast with the usual food preference of the local community.

The drought has also taken toll on over 9,00,000 livestock of the district leaving them dead or affected otherwise. Food shortage, insecurity and outbreak of diseases have made almost 30% of the nomadic pastoralists to sell their remaining livestock. People have also lost their livestock to people from the neighbouring Pokot district in cattle rustling. Their herds have also been affected by outbreak of diseases such as helminthiasis, Contagious Caprine Pleuro-Pneumonia (CCPP), Contagious Bovine Pleuro-Pneumonia (CBPP), etc.

Current Need: A couple of international organizations are working in this region; however, much needs to be done to address the food security, water access, health and education issues of the drought affected region. Preliminary assessment reveals need for - food supply to ECDs, food for children (Corn Soy Blend - CSB/Nutrimix) and adults (maize, beans, salt, oil etc), water tanks and filters in schools for storing water, cattle dips, veterinary drugs and support to cottage industries.

Laikipia East

Nturkuma is the worst affected location in Laikipia East district. Over 12,000 people in the district have been affected by the drought so far including the children. The children remain starved and malnourished, as almost none of the 100 schools in the district are being able to provide food to their students. The only ones that are providing food to students are the sponsored ones.

The drought has resulted in large-scale out-migration from the district, especially of the local pastoralists. As per the latest reports, the people have moved towards the Mt Kenya ranges and Kahurura forest in Nanyuki. People have also started selling their assets, such as land, for their survival. Most of the land has been rendered unproductive by the drought and people have been selling large portions of land to buy small plots of land that is still productive. Mataya location is one of the worst hit. People in Lamura, Naibo and Ndaiga location have started selling their assets. Most homesteads are now dependent on food for work programmes.

Water availability: People in Laikipia East depend on water from streams and rivers to meet their demands. Earlier they had to walk half-a-kilometer to access water from these sources. With onset of drought, several sources have dried out or become unfit for human use; which means now people have to travel over 5-6 km to look for water.

Agriculture and livestock: The area of productive agricultural land has reduced considerably, forcing people to resort to other livelihoods elsewhere. The people used to grow maize, wheat, beans, potatoes and cassava, though in small quantity. The marginal farmers do not have the resources for pipelines and generators for irrigating their lands. All these crops have suffered due to lack of rains in the last two seasons, eventually leading to scarcity of food grains and vegetables and soaring high prices. Price of maize in the district has gone up from 20 KES per kg to 60 KES per kg. People have resorted to having one meal a day, by skipping either lunch or supper.

The livestock of the Laikipia have suffered brutally and this situation is to worsen as the drought continues. More number of cows have fallen victim to the drought in comparison to goats and sheep. The lands available for grazing are already overgrazed. The droughts have reduced the productivity of the pastures even further. The pastoralists, worried of suffering a loss when their livestock die, are selling off their animals.

Current Need: Government agencies and international aid organizations are working in this region; but much remains to be done. Preliminary assessment reveals need for - access to clean water, scarcity of food in schools, food supply for households, milk products and nutrition supplements for children, storage tank for water and facility to harvest rainwater.

Laikipia West

Several homesteads in Laikipia West district has been affected, particularly the ones depend on irrigated lands for their livelihood. Ol Moran division in the district is the worst hit. Adequate food is not available for the children. The schools are unable to provide food due to the rise in the price of maize and potatoes.

The drought has also forced out migration of around 10% of the district population since February. Most of the people went to neighbouring Nyandarua district in the Central Province of Kenya in search for agricultural lands. In this district as well people have started selling their assets. While there is not much of livestock to be sold, people are regularly buying and selling poultry and a small percentage of other household assets.

Water availability: The major sources of water in Laikipia West are: dams, wells and boreholes. A number of shallow wells have also come up in recent times. However, the drought conditions have meant lowering of water table and drying up of these sources. Dams have become silted and dirty. People are relying on these sources, utilizing water not fit for drinking.

Agriculture and livestock: Productive agricultural lands are founding small isolated patches in the district. Even these have dried up due to lack of water for irrigation. 60% farmers have given up on wheat cultivation and only maize is grown these days. Drought has resulted in crop failure and there is no supply of grains locally. The drought has also resulted in significant rise in the price of the grains/vegetables. People are taking only one meal per day, or half of their usual daily intake. There is also reduction in food variety and nutritional inputs due to low supply of maize, potato, and unavailability of beans. Even the common local crop cassava has become scarce. Beans have been infected by a disease that is leaving them completely dry.

The grazing lands have been over exploited, thus forcing the pastoralists to leave Nyandarua District in the mountains. While there are dams which can be used to source water for livestock, they are too far away. People use bicycles and donkeys to fetch water for their cattle. The villages are getting frequently raided by cattle raiders.

Current Need: Peace building activities are on in this region to resolve the internal conflicts. Addressing the drought hit homesteads still remain a challenge. Preliminary assessment reveals the need to - provide food in schools, provide nutritive supplements for the whole community, help strengthening the irrigation system, provide animal feeds, support income-generating activities for women's groups.

**DROUGHT AFFECTED
TURKANA & LAIKIPIA
DISTRICTS IN KENYA**

