# NEDIA MARCH BULLETIN

## **KENYA** Severe drought projected to leave more than 5 million in Kenya without sufficient food and water

Ongoing humanitarian concerns surround the Horn of Africa as a fifth consecutive failed rainy season deepens the severity of drought conditions in the region. REACH has **covered** the ongoing climate crisis in the Horn over the past year, including **famine projections** in parts of drought-affected Somalia.

The prolonged drought is having a devastating impact on access to food and water, particularly for the largely pastoral and agropastoral areas that comprise much of the affected region. Dry spells at critical cultivation stages can severely limit crop health and growth, whilst for pastoralists, the limited availability of water can result in poor pasture health for cattle. Without sufficient means of food production and sustainable livelihoods opportunities, the drought is directly limiting the ability of people in these areas to consume sufficient food, maintain nutrition levels, and purchase basic household necessities.

While conditions in Somalia have been of highest concern to aid actors due to the compounding effects of decades of insecurity and underdevelopment, attention is turning to northern Kenya, where millions of people are facing alarming levels of malnutrition and food insecurity. In this edition of our REACH Media Bulletin, we zoom in on these worrying conditions in Kenya's Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) counties.

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Conditions in Kenya's Marsabit and Turkana counties were first raised as particularly concerning in late 2022, where elevated malnutrition and mortality rates had surpassed catastrophic thresholds.

Acute malnutrition (AMN) analysis from the IPC\* covering the August to December period depicted a dire situation, with large parts of both Marsabit and Turkana classified at Phase 5 (Extremely Critical) acute malnutrition levels – the most severe level on the classification scale, characterised by 30% or more of children being acutely malnourished, along with widespread morbidity and very large food consumption gaps. In Phase 5 AMN situations, urgent action is needed to reduce acute malnutrition and disease epidemics by all means. In addition, the IPC projected that these two counties would be at Phase 4 (emergency) levels of acute food insecurity over the October-December 2022 period, reflecting "an extremely severe situation where urgent action is needed to save lives and livelihoods."

\* Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC): the global body that determines the magnitude and severity of food insecurity

and malnutrition in major humanitarian crises.

#### WHAT IS ACUTE MALNUTRITION?

Acute malnutrition refers specifically to wasting for children under-5 years of age, and is typically defined by anthropometry, the measurement of different body characteristics like weight, height, arm circumference, etc. The severity of acute malnutrition is an important public health indicator that can help detect an elevated risk of mortality in humanitarian emergencies.

The impact of this crisis is far-reaching, with most households unable to access sufficient food, along with a loss of livestock among households relying on pastoral livelihoods. -Jack Palazzo, REACH Country Coordinator for Kenya and Somalia

Findings from a REACH multi-sectoral drought impact assessment in Marsabit and Turkana counties, where 2,241 households were interviewed in these areas, confirms these alarming projections. **Reduced access to food was commonly reported regardless of the households' main source of livelihood,** although households engaged in crop farming most often reported this. However, only 41% of households reported that they had received food assistance in the six months prior to being interviewed. **Humanitarian assistance generally was not often reported to have been received by households in the six months prior** – for example, only 10% of households reported receipt of water assistance, 24% reported receipt of multi-purpose cash, and 15% reported livestock assistance.

The urgency of the situation continues to spread, as additional ASAL counties in northern Kenya have been found to be experiencing worsening acute malnutrition and food insecurity – in particular, extending to Garissa, Mandera, and Wajir counties.

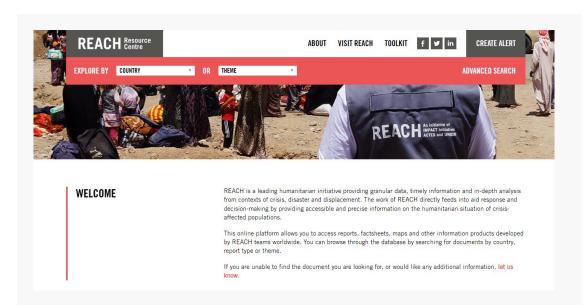
According to the latest IPC projection, 5.4 million people in the ASAL counties are expected to be facing crisis or worse levels of acute food insecurity by June and are in dire need of food assistance. Water insecurity in these counties also remains a concern, as poor rainfall across multiple seasons has exacerbated infrastructural issues with boreholes, wells, and other water points.

Weather forecasts suggest a reasonable chance that the March-May rains will again underperform. Should this happen, it would be an unprecedented sixth poor rainy season, with catastrophic humanitarian impacts. - Jack Palazzo, REACH Country Coordinator for Kenya and Somalia

To help mitigate this impending scenario, immediate lifesaving assistance is required including food assistance, emergency water trucking, as well as a scale-up of malnutrition screening and treatment programmes and livelihoods interventions.

#### Further reading

- Advocacy brief Marsabit and Turkana Alert
- Report Horn of Africa Regional Drought Analysis Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia
- Coming in April: a follow-up advocacy brief that breaks down the latest projections on acute malnutrition and food insecurity in northern Kenya
- Climate Watch Thread blog post summarizing our Horn of Africa regional analysis (March 2023)
- Analysis piece on Somalia famine projections + video explainer of the crisis (September 2022)
- Advocacy brief calling for aid scale-up in Baidoa and Buur Hakaba areas of Somalia (August 2022)
- **REACH Media Bulletin**: In the Horn of Africa, the climate crisis is a humanitarian emergency (June 2022)
- Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) findings from Kenya's Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps (October 2022)



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TYPE OF CRISIS	RESEARCH CYCLE	MANDATING BODY/AGENCY	
DATE RANGE	ONGOING / PAST	LANGUAGE	
KEYWORDS			
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