

14 December 2022, Nairobi

As the Horn of Africa faces its fifth consecutive below-average rainy season and a high likelihood of below-average rainfall again during the March-May 2023 season, the international community must act fast to respond to a rapidly unfolding humanitarian catastrophe and not accept food insecurity as the norm.

The drought currently affecting the Horn of Africa is the longest and most severe in recorded history, and is set to continue well into 2023. Compounded by the effects of conflict, abnormally high food and fuel prices, and COVID-19, the drought has pushed 36.4 million people into Crisis levels of hunger in 2022, including 24.1 million in Ethiopia, 7.8 million in Somalia and 4.5 million in Kenya.ⁱ 214,000 people in Somalia are in Catastrophe (IPC 5), the most severe ranking of hunger.ⁱⁱ Moreover, approximately 5.1 million children under the age of five are acutely malnourished in drought-affected areas.ⁱⁱⁱ In southern Ethiopia, IPC-compatible analyses show widespread Emergency (IPC 4) area classifications and indicate that there are likely households facing Catastrophe.^{iv}

Thousands of families have been displaced across Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya both internally and across borders, more than 1.27 million in Somalia alone.^v Famine^{vi} is projected to occur in pockets of Somalia between April and June 2023 if additional integrated humanitarian assistance is not urgently delivered. The current situation is unacceptable. The international community cannot accept food insecurity as the norm and must not wait for a famine to be declared – or for additional rainy seasons to fail – to act. We must learn lessons from the 2011 famine, during which 260,000 people lost their lives – the majority of whom died before the famine was declared. Crisis (IPC 3) levels of food insecurity should already trigger immediate action. Yet it has come to be accepted as the norm in the region, where even people facing Catastrophe levels of food insecurity do not receive full food rations. Acute levels of food insecurity are not just a by-product of climate events, conflict and the global economic situation, but also of insufficient or inadequate action.

Local authorities, governments, UN agencies and NGOs have been issuing clear warnings of catastrophic hunger levels, and the associated protection and gender-based violence risks, for more than a year. These alerts have been largely overlooked and, despite global commitments to anticipating crises, early action and preparedness funding activities have not reached the scale needed, especially in anticipation of a sixth failed rainy season in March-May 2023. In Ethiopia, attention to meeting humanitarian needs in the northern conflict and recent focus on the cessation of hostilities have undeniably distracted attention from the worsening drought and related displacements in the South, where early warnings about the hunger crisis should have already prompted a more robust response.

The recovery from a crisis of this magnitude will take years, with extremely high humanitarian needs set to increase in 2023. Many people have completely lost their livestock, farming assets and other livelihoods and are relying heavily on assistance to meet basic needs. The ripple effects of emergency levels of food insecurity will affect development gains, community structures, health, peace and security for a generation. Women and girls, in particular, face magnified risks of gender-based violence.

As it currently stands, the funding for the response is not sufficiently diversified, predictable or flexible. It has also been inadequate to meet the needs of the people most in need, especially as international, national, and local NGOs are facing barriers to accessing the funding they need to scale up their response. The bulk of the response is being funded by only a few donors - it is high time for others to step up and share responsibility and support a multi-sectoral response.

As highlighted in the recent COP 27 gathering, high income nations who have contributed most to climate change have a responsibility to most affected countries to respond and adapt to climate change.

This includes immediate support for emergencies such as the current drought, alongside climate finance.

We are far from being sufficiently scaled up to adequately meet immediate needs and to integrate vital resilience initiatives for those displaced or at risk of displacement and their host communities.

As humanitarian needs continue to grow into 2023 and in order to prevent a protracted hunger crisis in the region, we, the undersigned organisations, call on global donors to decisively:

1. Fully fund the Humanitarian and Drought Response Plans for Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia without delay and across all sectors and areas.
2. Provide sufficient resources for both immediate response and resilience programming so that humanitarian, development and peace actors can confidently push out quality and sustainable operations deeper into drought-affected areas.
3. Prioritise funding to local, national and international NGOs and consortia of NGOs who have a demonstrated capacity to respond when supported with direct, fast and flexible funding. In line with the Grand Bargain commitments, 25 percent of funding should be directed to local actors.
4. Urgently convene and engage all relevant stakeholders -- including relevant authorities, as well as local, national and international NGOs -- to better coordinate funding streams. Together, we must find ways to ensure that predictable, multi-year nexus funding can expedite life-saving assistance, enable communities to adapt to climate change, and build resilience to future shocks.

ⁱ OCHA, [Horn of Africa Drought: Regional Humanitarian Overview & Call to Action](#), 28 November 2022.

ⁱⁱ FEWS NET, FSNAU, IPC, [Nearly 8.3 million people across Somalia face Crisis \(IPC Phase 3\) or worse acute food insecurity outcomes](#), 13 December 2022.

ⁱⁱⁱ OCHA, [Horn of Africa Drought: Regional Humanitarian Overview & Call to Action](#), 28 November 2022.

^{iv} [Multi-agency drought alert](#), 7 November 2022.

^v OCHA, [Horn of Africa Drought: Regional Humanitarian Overview & Call to Action](#), 28 November 2022.

^{vi} Three conditions need to be met for famine to be officially declared: a) at least 20 percent of households in a given geographical area face extreme food shortages; b) at least 30 percent of the population is acutely malnourished and c) at least 2 out of every 10,000 adults or 4 in 10,000 children die each day as a result of starvation.