

Climate threats and opportunities in the Horn of Africa
Side-event in the margins of COP 27
Monday, 14 November 2022 13:15-14:45
Hatshepsut Room
Streaming via Youtube

Climate Change Impact in the Horn

From flooding in Pakistan to wildfires in Europe, the fallout of a changing climate is indisputable. Despite our efforts, climate emergencies will continue to increase in number and their impact will grow in severity. In Africa alone, Chad, Nigeria and Niger are experiencing significant flooding that has led to a dramatic increase in displacement. These impacts are further exacerbated in areas experiencing conflict and insecurity, but nowhere has the impacts of climate change been as devastating as the extreme drought plaguing the Horn of Africa.

Despite contributing the least to the global climate crisis—accounting for an estimated 0.59% of global greenhouse gas emissions—communities in the Horn of Africa are bearing the brunt of it. The region has become hotter and drier, and countries in the region report that occurrences of dry spells, seasonal droughts and multi-year droughts are more frequent than in the past, while also highlighting an increase in episodes of torrential rainfall.¹

Right now, communities in the Horn of Africa are facing the immediate threat of starvation, with forecasts indicating that the October-December 2022 rainy season is likely to underperform, marking the fifth consecutive failed season in parts of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia.

The October-December 2020, March-May 2021, October-December 2021 and March-May 2022 seasons were all marred by below-average rainfall, leaving large swathes of Somalia, southern and south-eastern Ethiopia, and northern and eastern Kenya facing the most prolonged drought in recent history, while the March-May 2022 rainy season was the driest on record in the last 70 years.

The 2020-2022 drought has now surpassed the horrific droughts in 2010-2011 and 2016-2017 in both duration and severity and will continue to deepen in the months ahead, with catastrophic consequences.

How are people being affected?

Across the Horn of Africa, at least 36.1 million people will be affected by severe drought in October 2022. Two districts in Somalia are at imminent risk of famine and at least 21 million people are projected to face high levels of acute food insecurity in the region between October and December 2022 with over 4.9 million acutely malnourished children and over 980,000 acutely malnourished pregnant and breastfeeding women. Food prices are spiking due to a combination of macro-economic influences, below-average harvests and meager pastures, and rising global commodity prices. Families are taking desperate measures to survive, with more than 1.4 million fleeing their homes.

The drought is having devastating consequences for women and children. Women and girls are at heightened risk of violence and their exposure to negative coping mechanisms has increased. Many women and girls travel long distances, in some instances 40 km a day, in search of safe water increasing their exposure to physical and sexual violence. In addition, in

¹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/climate-change-profile-greater-horn-africa>

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drought affected communities, women and girls menstrual hygiene needs are worsening. In Somalia, a 60 per cent increase in incidents of intimate partner violence (IPV), and a 21 per cent increase of rape cases has been reported in drought-impacted communities between January and May 2022. In Ethiopia, child marriage has increased by an average of 119 per cent across those regions worst hit by the drought between January and April 2021 and over the same period in 2022. Across Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, the number of children at risk of dropping out of school due to the drought crisis has tripled within three months and there are growing reports of child marriages in drought-affected communities, which is also linked to a rise in female genital mutilation (FGM) that can lead to life-threatening reproductive health outcomes.

The impacts of climate change are, in many parts of the region, compounding needs driven by conflict while increasing the risk of inter-communal violence, as pastoralists travel further afield for forage and food for their livestock.

What is needed now?

Given the predicted fifth failed rains from October to December 2022, and the forecasted possibility of a sixth failed rains in March to May 2023, this crisis will endure well into 2023. Yet, there are inadequate resources available for humanitarian partners to scale-up their response to meet the level and severity of needs. It is therefore critical that donors, governments and multilateral institutions come forward with an immediate and additional injection of resources in order to avert the worst of this catastrophe.

Steps must be taken to scale up the response, mobilize additional resources and to increase advocacy on behalf of affected communities in the Horn.

Where do we go from here?

It is imperative that the world focuses on saving lives now. Urgent funding is needed to mount an integrated (WASH, Health, Food and Nutrition) response in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. If this does not happen, we are faced with catastrophic consequences. In parallel to the immediate efforts to save lives, it is necessary to acknowledge that the increased duration, severity and frequency of droughts in the Horn of Africa means that people do not have time to recover from the shocks. Experience shows that it takes at least five years for a pastoralist family to rebuild their herd after a drought, and yet, many families across the region will not have this time. It is therefore likely that the number of people displaced by this crisis will grow in the months ahead, while more people will be in urgent need of assistance, as they face the terrifying prospect of the complete loss of their historical livelihoods.

In addition, shifting towards more equitable and climate-resilient development is urgently needed to curb the causes of famine. It is critical to scale up risk-informed and shock-responsive programming, coupled with increased resilience capacity of chronically vulnerable populations, and make proactive, consultative and more informative choices about their alternative livelihood strategies. It is also imperative to strengthen the governance mechanisms and the broader safety nets while diversifying the economic opportunities of the youth and

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women and intensifying the investment in resilient and climate-resistant agricultural and livestock market systems.

Developed countries must make good on their promise to provide Africa with the US\$100 billion a year required for climate adaptation. Africa is reeling from the pain of a crisis it did not cause – Africa needs to adapt to climate change now.

The international community must keep at the forefront of the impact of climate-induced crises on women and girls and ensure that strong gender analysis informs humanitarian action. Local women's organizations across the Horn of Africa are leading as first responders supporting their communities affected by drought, their voices must inform policies that are designed to protect them. Marginalized communities and women and girls' meaningful participation, leadership, and decision-making must be promoted in all food security, nutrition, and agricultural interventions to ensure their distinct needs are adequately addressed at all levels of humanitarian programming.

Mitigation and adaptation

The international community must support countries in the region with mitigation and adaptation measures to move towards the management of risks of climate shocks, ultimately breaking the cycle that leads to the threat of famine.

Strong early warning systems are key to activating the use of tools for anticipatory actions to reduce the impact of climate shocks. Services, like the Climate Risk and Early Warning systems Initiative that was recently launched by World Meteorological Organization is meant to provide technical support and capacity building to regional and national entities to produce and use climate, weather and hydrological systems, including early warning systems.²

Other tools, like, promoting and supporting locally led action; direct cash assistance and vouchers; expanding the role of anticipatory action; improving forecast-based action; and others all have a role to play to adapt the international community's posture from response to mitigation.

Objectives:

This session will bring together speakers from across the humanitarian and development sectors, technical experts, local authorities and civil society experts to emphasize the urgent need for global solidarity in support of the Horn of Africa.

The session aims to:

- 1) **Raise awareness, re-energize partners and call for additional and new financial resources to respond to the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Horn of Africa**

² Reference:1

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(humanitarian and development actors including Member States, NGOs, Civil Society and others)

- 2) **Discuss the ongoing challenges of climate financing and identify concrete ways to unlock financing tools, increase the flexibility of climate financing**, and ensure that it reaches the most vulnerable countries, communities and individuals.
- 3) **Explore potential life and livelihoods saving-transformational adaptation measures** from across the humanitarian and development and peace sectors to support resilience building and drought recovery across and within sectors.
- 4) **Identify concrete ways the international community can support effective response to humanitarian crises while also investing in mitigation and anticipation of increasing climate shocks and stresses.**
- 5) **Explain how the international community can and must urgently invest in tackling the root causes of disaster and climate vulnerability** and risk while encouraging locally led adaptation solutions.

To register, please click [here](#). For more information, please contact Ms. Amierah Ismail, Ismail53@un.org.