

REACH MEDIA BULLETIN

MARCH 2023

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.

PS: Did you find this newsletter through social media? Subscribe below to stay in the loop for future editions.

[Subscribe to the REACH media bulletin](#)

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)

The screenshot shows the REACH Resource Centre website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'REACH Resource Centre', 'ABOUT', 'VISIT REACH', 'TOOLKIT', and 'CREATE ALERT'. Below this is a search bar with 'EXPLORE BY COUNTRY' and 'THEME' dropdowns, and an 'ADVANCED SEARCH' button. The main content area features a 'WELCOME' message and a paragraph about REACH's mission: 'REACH is a leading humanitarian initiative providing granular, timely information and on-the-ground analysis from contexts of crisis, disaster and displacement. The work of REACH directly feeds into and informs response and decision-making by providing accessible and precise information on the humanitarian situation of crisis-affected populations. This online platform allows you to access reports, fact-sheets, maps and other information products developed by REACH teams worldwide. You can browse through the database by searching for documents by country, report type or theme. If you are unable to find the document you are looking for, or would like any additional information, let us know.'

As an organisation, we believe that only a free, transparent, and open-access to our information products can yield an evidence-based understanding of the crisis we are working on from all stakeholders involved.

To organise your research efficiently, the **REACH Resource Centre** allows you to filter through our reports and fact-sheets depending on which country you want information on. If you are interested in a wider theme within humanitarian responses, we've got you sorted there too.

Topics range from Food Security, Mixed Migration, Humanitarian Situation Monitoring, and much more. The advanced search also allows you to target your search even further by date, type of crisis, and through keywords.

COUNTRY	THEME	TYPE OF INFORMATION PRODUCT
TYPE OF CRISIS	RESEARCH TOOLS	ANALYSIS
DATE RANGE	REPORT TYPE	SEARCH
RESEARCH		

The REACH Resource Centre has a built-in functionality which enables all **users to subscribe to a mailing alert system**.

How does it work?

Every user can select exactly what country they are interested in receiving updates on, further narrowing their interests by theme, or even type of information product. Subscribed users will then receive an e-mail directly to their inbox whenever an information product is published in line with their interests.

[Access the REACH Resource Centre](#)

About REACH Initiative

REACH facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. All REACH activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. REACH is a joint initiative of **IMPACT**, its sister-organisation **ACTED** and the United Nations Operational Satellite Applications Programme **UNOSAT**.

