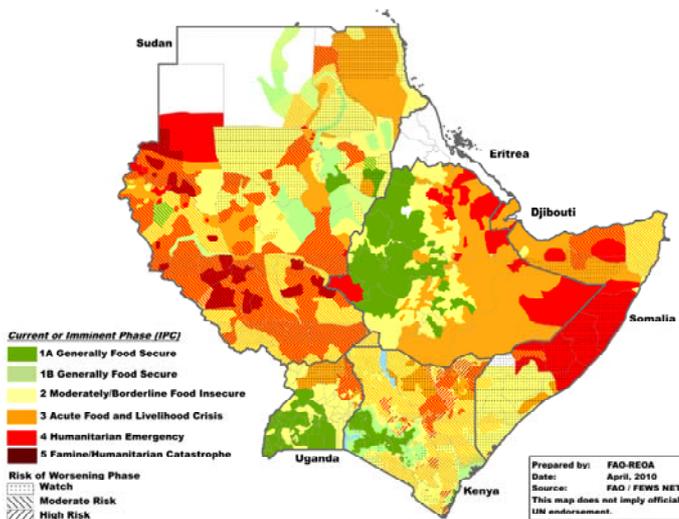


# Food Insecurity in the Horn of Africa



Projections through June 2010: Somalia, Kenya, Southern Sudan, Djibouti (FEWS NET).  
Projections through December 2009: Ethiopia (FEWS NET), Uganda, Northern Sudan.



More than 40 percent of the population in the Horn of Africa (HoA) is undernourished and millions are food insecure. Those suffering most from food insecurity are subsistence farmers, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists whose livelihoods largely depend on agriculture and animal production. Counting between 15 to 20 million people in the HoA, pastoralist communities live mainly in arid and semi-arid low lands and particularly suffer from droughts, as not only do they see their food consumption reduced, they also risk to lose their assets. With limited food and water availability, animals produce less milk, are more prone to diseases and their mortality incidence increases.

The interagency Taskforce on the UN Response to Long-Term Food Security, Agricultural Development and Other Related Aspects in the HoA, that was established by Kofi Anan in 2001, identified *natural hazards* (especially drought or the lack of resilience to it), *conflict* (both armed conflict and resource based) and *population growth* (putting an ever greater pressure on natural resources) as the main underlying causes of food insecurity, adding to other complex factors specific to the region. These include forced displacement, poverty, trans-boundary diseases, poor health, gender inequities, weak infrastructures, poor economies, as well as inadequate national policies and governance

issues, aid failure and weak knowledge and information systems.

## Situation - April 2010

According to the Food Security Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) map published in April 2010 the food security situation in the HoA is of general concern, with many areas classified in phase of Acute Food Security and Livelihood Crisis (Phase 3) in Southern Sudan (northeastern and northwestern), Kenya (northern) and Uganda (northern). The situation is most alarming in Sudan (Darfur) and Somalia (Central) where populations have been in Humanitarian Emergency (Phase 4) for several consecutive years mainly due to armed conflicts. Pockets in Southern Sudan are also in Phase 4 due to conflicts, consequent population displacements, concentration of IDPs and erratic rains.

## Underlying causes

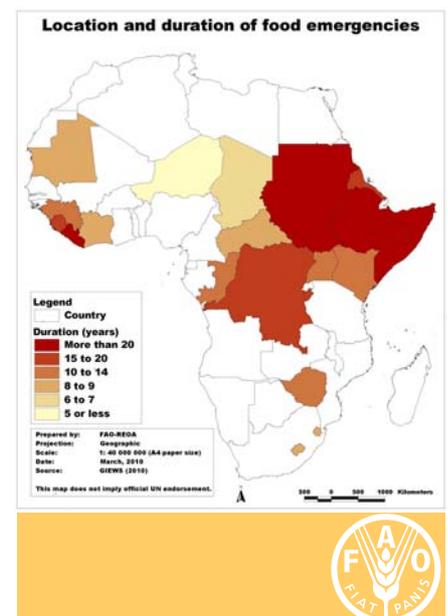
### Natural hazards

Droughts and floods are the two principle natural hazards recurrent in the HoA. Whilst these external shocks may not necessarily have a considerable impact on national food production, they hit the poorest (mostly rural) communities the hardest. Although populations in areas affected by cycles of drought and flooding have developed specific coping

mechanisms, the latter are strained as the climate is becoming more unstable and shocks increasingly severe.

### Population growth

The population in the HoA has more than doubled since 1974 and it continues to grow rapidly, putting further pressure on increasingly scarce natural resources. Arable lands are being degraded as farmers are forced to cultivate intensively and often cannot replenish the soil. Land rights issues and the increasingly limited access to cultivable land, water and other natural resources key to rural populations' livelihoods are recurrent causes for population movements and conflicts both internally and across-borders.





### ***Conflicts***

The region has a long history of conflicts both internal and across boundaries. These conflicts disrupt agricultural and livestock production and marketing systems, and cause mass displacements of already marginalized populations, thereby intensifying hunger and putting vulnerable populations even more at risk of food insecurity. The unpredictable and general political unrest also discourages donors for fear that funds would be used to finance conflict.

### ***Forced displacements***

Due to internal tensions related to natural resources or other causes ( rebel attacks, civil war etc.) massive population displacements at national and regional levels are increasing. Influx of refugees and IDPs are putting further pressure on the already scarce resources of the host populations, thereby affecting their food security and potentially initiating tensions.

### ***Poverty***

More than half of the populations in the region survive on less than USD1 per day. With little or no saving and lacking the capacity or skills to diversify their sources of income, the poorest suffer the most from external shocks ( e.g. drought ).

### ***Trans-boundary diseases & pests***

Animal and plant trans-boundary diseases and pests are common in the HoA ( e.g. locust, mosaics, wheat rust, Rift Valley Fever ( RVF ) and the “ Peste des Petits Ruminants ” ( PPR ) ) and affect food production and marketing both at national and regional levels. Unless timely

vaccinations and other preventive measures are applied, agro-pastoralist and pastoralist communities risk losing their assets.

### ***Poor health***

Countries in the HoA have some of the lowest health standards in the world. Whilst rural communities in general have limited access to adequate health services, the worst served are the nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralist communities. Among them, children and women are the most vulnerable with high child undernourishment and mortality rates related to preventable diseases ( measles, malaria etc. ) and high level of maternal mortality. There are more than 4 million living with HIV ( adult and children ) in the HoA ( UNAIDS, 2008 ); the prevalence rates having reached the ‘ generalized ’ epidemic state in all countries except Somalia. It had been projected by UNAIDS that by 2010, twice as many people in rural areas would be infected compared with those in urban areas.

### ***Gender inequities***

Increasingly, men are migrating to urban areas, to work on larger farms, or to find other income sources, leaving women the burden of taking care of the family farm. Although women are in charge of cooking and collecting water for the household, land rights are often passed on through male relatives. Often lacking sufficient education, women have limited options out of food insecurity and poverty. Gender inequities often translate into gender based violence, affecting food security at household and community level.

### ***Weak infrastructures***

Due to the poor condition or non-existence of roads, populations living in remote rural areas have very limited access to external markets and many farmers and agro-pastoralists are therefore isolated from the national and regional formal economy. Access to safe drinking water is also insufficient. Rural populations in Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia are particularly affected.

### ***Poor economies***

Although it varies on the country ( Kenya being the economic platform of East Africa ) economic growth in the HoA has generally been slow and unequal, widening the gap between the poor majority and the wealthy.

### ***Neglected pastoralism***

Pastoralist communities have benefited from the liberalization of markets in the HoA and are generally better-off than farmers. However, come a natural disaster, they are most vulnerable, as they risk losing all their assets. Little has been done to support pastoralists ’ systems and initiatives that have been taken have not always addressed the situation holistically, thereby limiting their impact.

### ***Governance failure***

Unstable Government institutions in conflict and post-conflict countries, over-centralisation, corruption and insufficient political commitment to address poverty are factors leading to food insecurity, and also represent considerable obstacles for donors and the international community to provide effective emergency relief and sustainable basis for economic growth.



**Aid failure**

Donor response to food and nutrition crises is often limited to relief and short term response, rather than longer term projects. It fails to address the underlying causes of poverty and food insecurity. The impact and the scope of emergency projects on breaking the cycle of food insecurity is therefore limited. The role of women also often goes unrecognized, even though their skills and contributions both at the household and community levels are crucial in preparedness, mitigation and response to shocks.

**Weak knowledge and information systems**

The capacity of Governments at local and national level to collect and analyse data for rapid and effective response to disasters is still very limited despite some early warning systems in place. Response to emergencies is often slow due to gaps in the chain of sequences following the early warning until the targeted delivery of assistance.

**Increased and new vulnerabilities**

**Soaring food prices & global financial crisis**

The dramatic rise of global food prices in early 2008 rapidly followed by the global financial crisis and economic recession had the most drastic consequences on global food and nutrition in decades. Their overlap caused socio-economic, environmental and security related issues worldwide.

Countries in the HoA affected by the 2006 drought had no had time to recover before the soaring food prices and a drought crisis that hit them once more in 2009.

The most devastating effects of these two crises were felt in the agricultural sector and amongst the urban poor and the food insecure. Poor households saw their coping mechanisms strained to their limits and the incidence of hunger and undernourishment increased dramatically.

Whilst food prices have decreased overall in the region, they are still above the five year average and are likely to

remain volatile for some time, putting further pressure on the most vulnerable as remittances are decreasing and both formal and informal economies at local and regional levels are affected.

**Climate change**

Climate change threatens to further exacerbate food insecurity in the HoA. Crop yields in dry, tropical and semi-tropical regions risk to decrease due to global warming.

Extreme climate events such as droughts, flooding and heat stress are increasing both in frequency and gravity which affects food production, stability and availability, especially as their combination and recurrence set the conditions for human, crop, livestock pests and diseases to spread. Increased incidence of water-borne diseases in flood-prone areas, and new diseases will increase human health risks. Access to safe drinking water is also likely to become scarcer.

The resilience of smallholder and subsistence farmers will be increasingly challenged, which may lead to further environmental degradation (over-intensive cultivation), further population movements and increasingly to resource-based conflicts.

Unless adequate action is taken, it is predicted that the food security and nutrition situation will be the most negatively affected in Sub-Saharan Africa. The history of food emergencies in the HoA makes this region a particular concern.

Effects of Climate Change Important for Food Security	
<p><b>CO2 Fertilization effects</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Increase in availability of atmospheric carbon dioxide for plant growth.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Increase in frequency and intensity of extreme weather events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Increase in annual occurrence of high winds, heavy rains, storm surges; and flash floods, often associated with tropical storms and tornados.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Increase in global mean temperatures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Increase in maximum temperature on hot days;</li> <li>⇒ Increase in minimum temperature on cold days;</li> <li>⇒ Increase in annual occurrence of hot days;</li> <li>⇒ Increase in frequency, duration and intensity of heat waves.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Greater weather variability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Greater instability in seasonal weather patterns;</li> <li>⇒ Change in start and end of growing seasons.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Gradual Changes in Precipitation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Increase in frequency, duration and intensity of dry spells and droughts;</li> <li>⇒ Changes in timing, location and amounts of rain</li> </ul>	<p><b>Rise in sea level</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Inundation of human habitats;</li> <li>⇒ Saltwater intrusions.</li> </ul>

# Building long-term food security

Although the underlying causes of food insecurity are comparable across the HoA, programmes are to be adapted both nationally and locally within the framework of a regional approach to the elimination of food insecurity in the region. Priority areas identified are:

## *Protecting the most vulnerable:*

The needs of populations already food insecure or the most vulnerable to food insecurity, namely pastoralists, agro-pastoralists and marginal farmers, as well as women and girls across categories, should be prioritized. Their resilience should be strengthened by helping them diversify their livelihoods, establish safety nets, income generating activities, as well as through improved access to basic services ( education, health, etc. ). Improved infrastructures ( e.g. roads ) would assist marginalized communities access marketing opportunities.

## *Coordinating risk management and crisis response:*

Partnerships between governments, donors, the UN and NGOs are crucial for the success of risk management and crisis response. Joint livelihood assessment methods, rapid assessment mechanisms and response monitoring, capacity building of stakeholders, information sharing ( lessons learnt, best practices etc. ) are key for national, regional and interregional disaster risk identification, mitigation and transfer mechanisms.

## *Bridging the funding gap:*

Although funding for rapid response or long-term development assistance is available and relatively quick to obtain in case of crisis, there is a gap in the funding trend, in which fall people who have survived a disaster but are still vulnerable to future shocks and are food insecure. It is necessary that funds are also allocated to rehabilitation programmes that build local and national capacities to use early warning mechanisms and contingency planning and that help marginal communities recover from crisis and build their capacity to maintain and improve their livelihoods.

## *Building on local institutions:*

Because at times of crisis state institutions are often weak, building on informal mechanisms and customary institutions is more appropriate, and sometimes the only option. Local livelihood adaptation strategies vary according to the vulnerable group targeted and to their respective socio-cultural, economic, political and environmental situation. Men and women from the same community have very different coping mechanisms as they do not have the same opportunities. These differences need to be considered and adequately addressed. Skills training and capacity building, targeting their respective needs are crucial to assist them diversify their incomes and build their resilience.

## *Peace building:*

Food security cannot be achieved in an environment of tensions, armed conflicts and unstable government institutions. Conflict mediation and peace building at local and national level are therefore key to eliminating food insecurity.

## *Responding to the food crisis:*

The high level task force on Global Food Crisis established in 2008 recommends 4 key long-term initiatives: expansion of social protection systems; support to smallholder farmer-led food availability growth; improve international food markets; and develop international biofuel consensus.

## *Addressing climate change:*

Actions to mitigate the effects of climate change are manifold. Amongst them the protection of existing livelihood systems through the dissemination of crop varieties and breeds adapted to changing climatic conditions, effective use of genetic resources, integrated farming systems, improved soil, water and forest management and diversification are priorities to prevent further environmental degradation whilst better ensuring effective use of resources.



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