



Mainstreaming Kenya's National Climate Change Action Plan into Drought and Ending Drought Emergencies

Drought incidences cannot be avoided, but frequent and severe drought emergencies can be mitigated and avoided, which is underscored in the Kenya Vision 2030 Development Strategy for Northern Kenya and Other Arid Lands. Vision 2030 affirms the Government's commitment to addressing the priority of Kenyans living in arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs), which are most vulnerable to the impacts of drought, by focusing on long-term sustainable development of the vast natural and economic potential of the ASALs. Vision 2030 recognizes that development of the ASALs, which make up more than 80 per cent of Kenya's total land mass will enhance shared national prosperity.

Risks and Impacts: In common with the rest of the Horn of Africa, drought is an inherent part of life in the ASALs of Kenya. Kenya has suffered from periodic droughts throughout its recorded history, but their magnitude and severity has increased in the recent past, which has been linked to climate change. The National Climate Change Action Plan Climate (NCCAP) notes that climate change will lead to more droughts, with impacts in terms of lives lost and livelihoods disrupted falling most heavily on the poor. This is particularly true in the ASALs, where communities are vulnerable to climate change and have the highest incidence of poverty in the country. Pastoralist communities remain the most chronically food insecure groups in the country experiencing consistently high malnutrition rates that are habitually above international emergency thresholds.¹

Drought episodes were experienced in 2001, 2003, 2006, 2009 and 2011.² The regular and periodic droughts have major socio-economic impacts, including reduced economic growth. The Government of Kenya's Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) for the extended 2008-2011 drought period estimated the total damage and losses to the Kenyan economy at Ksh 968.6 billion (US\$12.1 billion). The livestock sector accounted for 72 per cent of damage and losses.³ The estimated economic impact of the drought was a slowing down of country's economic

Kenya has made large technological advances in predicting drought and generating credible early warning information. Yet the challenge of effective response has become more urgent as climate change increases vulnerability. Successive drought emergencies are an indicator of chronic vulnerability that can only be ended through investment in the foundations necessary for sustainable development. These foundations include peace and security, climate-proofed infrastructure, and improved human capacities in education, health and nutrition. The PDNA recognized the importance of resilience-building measures to reduce vulnerability; and estimated total disaster risk reduction needs at Ksh 184.8 billion (US\$2.1 billion) from 2012 to 2016.⁶

The NCCAP recommends actions to support climate change adaptation in the highly vulnerable, yet naturally resilience ASALs, including improved management of grazing systems, livestock diversification, improved breeding techniques, and the provision of accessible climate information to farmers and pastoralists. Other actions recommended in various sources to end drought emergencies and reduce vulnerability include:

Actions to Respond to Drought

- Multi-year food and cash mechanisms based on early warning and food security data.
- Emergency water supply.
- Early responses in the livestock sector: Destocking – or purchase of animals by the government for a fixed price, with animals slaughtered and meat distributed among needy families; animal health campaigns; and animal feeding.

Actions to Recover from Drought

- Reconstruction of destroyed assets with improved, climate-resilient standards.
- Establishing resilient community-based water and sanitation systems.
- Rehabilitation of the resource-base in rangelands through reseeding and water development.
- For agriculture, the provision of seeds for drought tolerant crops, fertilizer subsidies, water harvesting, and the construction of water pans, among others.

Actions to Develop Long-term Resilience to D

Conclusion: Drought can seriously undermine Kenya's ability to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets and the goals of Vision 2030. Climate change is expected to increase the frequency and severity of drought episodes; but actions can be taken to respond to, recover from and develop long-term resilience to drought. The latter actions are particularly important responses to build climate resilience.

¹ Corbett, M. and Chastre, C. 2007. *Causal Analysis of Malnutrition, Including the Minimum Cost of a Healthy Diet: El Wak North Eastern Province, Kenya*. Nairobi: Save the Children UK.

² Fitzgibbon, C. 2012. *Economics of Resilience Study – Kenya Country Report*, page 3.

³ Government of Kenya. 2012. *Kenya Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) 2008-2011, Drought*. Accessed at: http://www.gfdrr.org/sites/gfdrr.org/files/Kenya_PDNA_at_a_Glance.pdf, page 1.

⁴ Government of Kenya. 2012.

⁵ Stockholm Environment Institute. *Economics of Climate Change – Kenya*. 2009. Stockholm: SEI

⁶ International Livestock Research Institute. 2010. *An Assessment of the Response to the 2008/2009 Drought in Kenya*. A report to the European Union Delegation to the Republic of Kenya.