

“When the chips are down, it is always the girls who bear the brunt of the drought situation.”

— SADIA ALLIN,
Country Director of
Plan International Somalia

A gendered impact of the hunger and drought crisis

I N T H E H O R N O F A F R I C A

Horn of Africa country context analysis

The current drought and hunger situation in the Horn of Africa is considered the worst in the last 40 years. Ethiopia, South Sudan, Somalia and Kenya are in different stages of Integrated Phase Classification (IPC), facing unprecedented levels of drought and hunger. The maps below show that high levels of acute food insecurity persist in some parts of East Africa, with Famine (IPC Phase 5) projected in parts of Somalia. The maps give a projection of Aug. to Sept. (Figure 1) and Oct. to Dec. 2022 (Figure 2).¹

Ethiopia

Ethiopia is in IPC 3 and in some parts IPC 4. This situation is likely to persist until early 2023. Due to the drought there is prolonged conflict in parts of the country, which has continued to drive elevated levels of acute malnutrition and hunger-related mortalities. Despite ongoing response mitigating food consumption deficits, an urgent scale up of aid is needed to save lives and livelihoods.²

INTEGRATED PHASE CLASSIFICATIONS INCLUDE FIVE PHASES OF FOOD INSECURITY

- IPC 1: Minimal/none
- IPC 2: Stressed
- IPC 3: Crisis
- IPC 4: Emergency
- IPC 5: Catastrophe/famine

FIGURE 1: Aug. to Sep. 2022 acute food insecurity HOA.

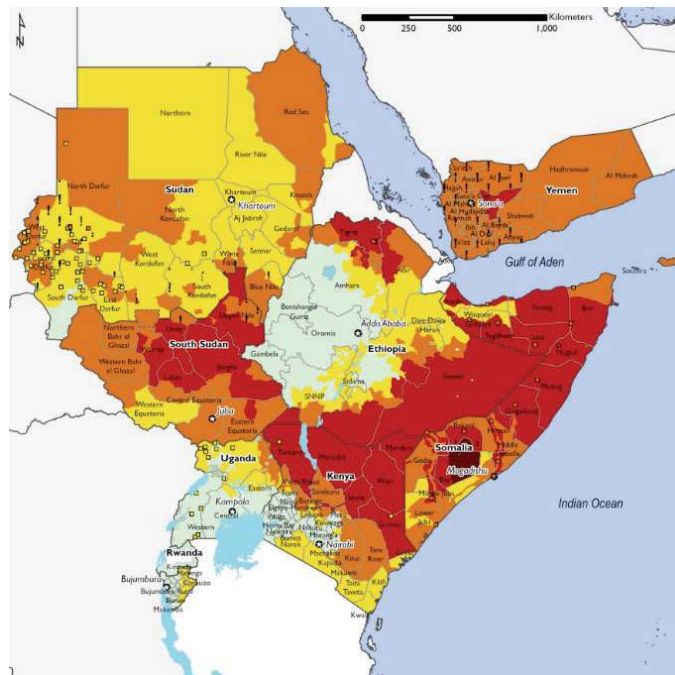
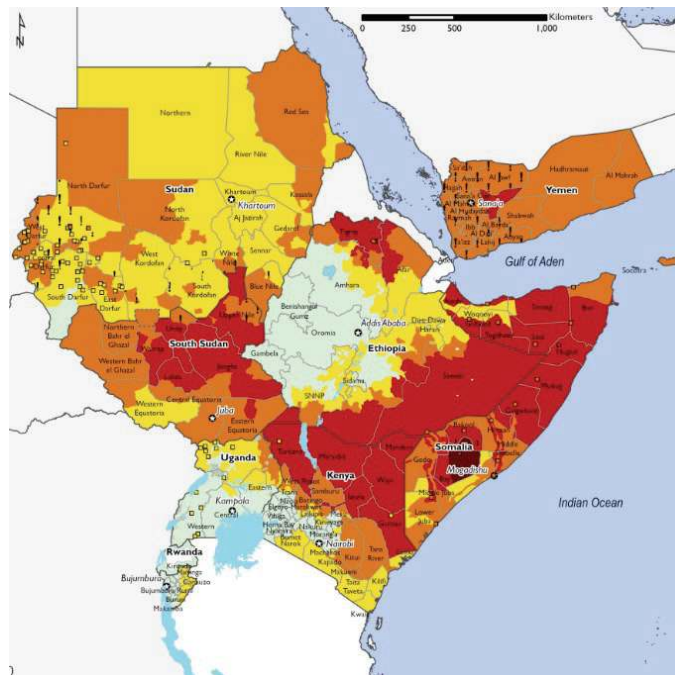


FIGURE 2: Oct. to Dec. 2022 acute food insecurity HOA.



There are 8.1 million people who are affected by the drought. Of these, more than 7.2 million people are classified as highly food insecure, while 4.4 million need clean water³. More than 185,000 children are severely malnourished, and 206,000 pregnant and lactating women are acutely malnourished.⁴ As a result of hunger, more than 286,000 people have left their homes in search of assistance. Over 2,000 schools are closed, affecting more than 682,000 students.⁵

South Sudan

South Sudan is in IPC 4, which is driven by prolonged conflict and adverse weather conditions such as floods. A fourth consecutive year of flooding is expected to result in another year of livestock and crop losses. Probability for a worse scenario where the country will slip into IPC 5 is projected. Levels of acute food insecurity are expected to further deteriorate in most areas between October 2022 and January 2023, during which time widespread emergency (IPC 4) outcomes are likely.⁶

Over 8.9 million people require humanitarian assistance, an increase from 7 million people in 2018. It is estimated that almost 3 million people are likely to face emergency acute-food insecurity, necessitating an immediate scaling-up of humanitarian assistance to save lives. A total of 2.8 million children are already out of school and 52% of girls are married before the age of 18.⁷ An estimated 46% of children aged 10-14 are engaged in child labor.⁸

Somalia

Somalia is in IPC 4 with pockets of the country in IPC 5, in addition to the famine (IPC 5) projection in two districts of Bay Region. Several areas in central and southern Somalia have an increased risk of famine

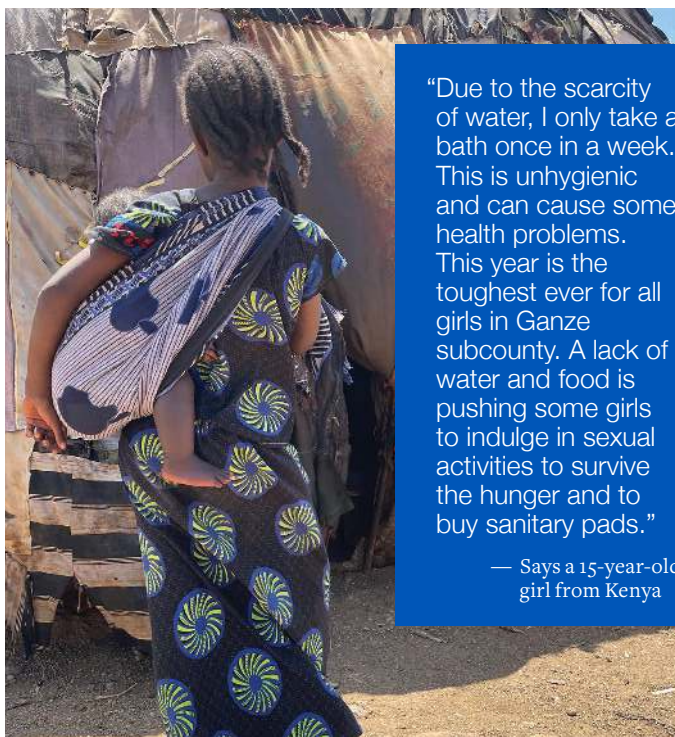
through December 2022. Although humanitarian response has prevented the worsening of food security and nutrition outcomes, Somalia remains at high risk, and the situation will further deteriorate if food assistance is not scaled up and sustained. Persistent drought is expected to worsen the level of humanitarian needs during the January to March 2023 dry Jilaal season across most of Somalia.⁹

Currently, 7.1 million people, nearly 50% of the population, are facing crisis-level food insecurity — or worse. Of those, 213,000 people are classified as being at IPC 5, meaning they face catastrophic hunger and starvation.¹⁰ As of October 2021, drought has forced more than 805,000 people to leave their homes in search of food, water or both.¹¹

Kenya

Kenya is in IPC 3, with pockets of some counties in IPC 4. Across Kenya, acute food insecurity remains elevated due to the impacts of drought conditions experienced in four consecutive rainy seasons. These conditions have affected crop and livestock production and triggered high inflation. As a result, access to food is constrained among poor households given stagnant wages in urban areas, and shrinking income-earning opportunities in rural areas. The food security situation will worsen up to 2023.¹²

The population in IPC 4 remains 1,100,000, while an estimated 3,002,000 are in a crisis situation, a total of 5,088,000 stressed, and 5,962,000 people food secure. More than 942,500 children ages 6-59 months and 134,000 pregnant or lactating women need treatment for acute malnutrition. The latest forecast by The Intergovernmental Authority for Development Climate Prediction and Applications Center 12 Kenya | Famine



“Due to the scarcity of water, I only take a bath once in a week. This is unhygienic and can cause some health problems. This year is the toughest ever for all girls in Ganze subcounty. A lack of water and food is pushing some girls to indulge in sexual activities to survive the hunger and to buy sanitary pads.”

— Says a 15-year-old girl from Kenya

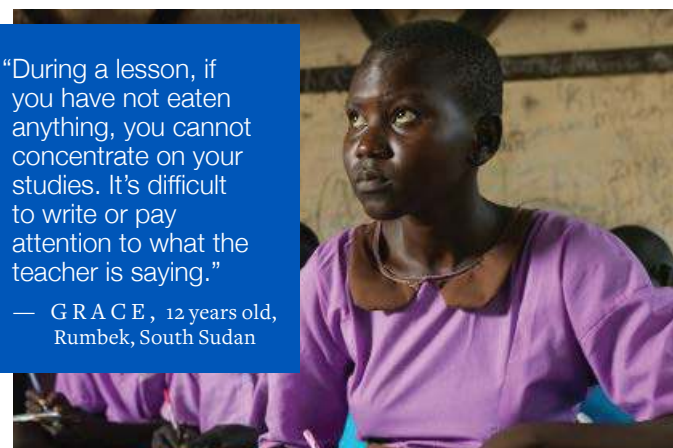
Impact of drought on girls' education

Pre-existing unequal gender norms are more often compounded during crises, including hunger due to drought. The assessment indicates that more girls than boys are dropping out of school due to the increased burden of work and child marriages. In Kenya, reported cases of girls forced to drop out due to a lack of food, transactional sex for food or money and teenage pregnancies are on the increase.

In Somalia, 12% of adult respondents confirmed that they were prioritizing boys over girls to continue with their education while girls are relegated to domestic chores. In Rumbek, South Sudan, a senior woman teacher attributed girls' failure to attend school to the absence of a girl-friendly environment.

“I have a class with not one single girl. These girls are either married or at home. The girls are the ones who do all the household chores, so it becomes difficult for these girls to do all this work, then come to class, so they opt to drop out of school so that they can keep up with their chores.”

— Teacher in Tana River County, Kenya



“During a lesson, if you have not eaten anything, you cannot concentrate on your studies. It's difficult to write or pay attention to what the teacher is saying.”

— G R A C E , 12 years old, Rumbek, South Sudan

Early Warning Systems Network (fews.net) is for a fifth consecutive failed rainy season across the region. A significant number of adolescent girls risk dropping out of school, while risks of gender-based violence, child neglect, exploitation, child labor and abuse are expected to increase.

Impact of the crisis on children, girls and women The Rapid Gender Analyses (RGAs) were conducted in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and South Sudan to identify and understand the impacts of the drought and hunger on girls, women, boys and men. Experiences of girls and women were prioritized to identify their unique needs, as well as capacities to inform the humanitarian response. Through the assessment, it was largely noted that the drought situation, along with existing gendered sociocultural norms have put women and girls in a more vulnerable position as demonstrated in the sessions below.

“Particularly, homeless adolescent girls from 14 to 17 years old and living on the streets are highly vulnerable to SGBV, abuse, exploitation and trafficking. Closing of schools also contributes to an increase in SGBV in this area.”

— A community member in Ethiopia

Impact of drought on gender-based violence

Scarcity in resources during emergencies creates tensions and heightens the risks of sexual and gender-based violence, mostly for girls and women.¹³ The underlying causes of violence are associated with attitudes, beliefs, norms and structures that promote and/or condone gender-based discrimination and unequal power dynamics.¹⁴ In the face of drought and loss of livelihoods, those entrusted to protect girls and young women can be the ones that endanger their lives and wellbeing. Out of desperation, parents and guardians may force girls into harmful practices including child marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting, sex work, exploitation and child labor. All these risks were identified in all the target countries. Findings show the close linkages between children, early and forced marriages and poverty, food insecurity and the economic situation of girls’ families. The results from Sool, Sanaag and Togdheer regions in Somaliland indicate that 48% of sexual and gender-based violence survivors could not access services. For those who reported services as being available (52%), they identified access to medical care (73%), legal services (52%), trauma counseling (33%), referrals (23%) and case management (26%) as the most prevalent available services. In Rumbek, South Sudan, data on school children ages 13-17 show that 52% of women knew of a girl who had not attended school, and 9% knew of a boy. About 79% of men knew of a girl who did not attend school in this age category, and only 4%

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Impact of drought on girls’ sexual & reproductive health and rights

Due to severe hunger, sustained provision of quality sexual and reproductive health and rights, education and services in public institutions has been deprioritized in many of the areas affected by hunger across Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia and South Sudan.

Due to reduced purchasing power at the household level, food is given priority as compared to contraceptives, menstrual hygiene products and underwear, which affects the health and wellbeing of women and girls. Women from Gumbi Boredede, Ethiopia stated that the distance to health centers and health posts limits access to maternal and reproductive health services. Access to health care seems high with 82% respondents indicating accessible health services were available. For those unable to access health services, financial constraint (81%) and lack of female staff (17%) were the main reasons given in Somaliland. The assessment results revealed that adolescent girls and young women cannot afford menstrual products in Kilifi, Kenya.

“As a mother, you just find that the mattress is eaten from inside under and you wonder what happened to it, upon interrogating the girls who confess to use it for their monthly periods.”



Motie Mulu, 16, walks for more than an hour to reach a water source in Ethiopia.

Specific concerns for girls and young women

— Neglecting the SRHR needs of children, adolescents and young women has serious consequences — including unintended early pregnancy and its associated risks, child and early forced marriage and unions, sexually transmitted diseases and psychological trauma. In 2022, 192 ECM cases were reported from 17 regions in Ethiopia — some young girls consider marriage as a coping mechanism to deal with hunger and drought.

- Girls and women face a high risk of sexual violence while collecting water and fuel needed to prepare food, and further risks may occur due to lack of safety and security mechanisms, including during food distributions. Incidences of sexual and gender-based violence were reported to be on the rise by 34%, particularly in Sool and Sanaag in Somaliland.
- When food is scarce, families increasingly resort to negative coping mechanisms to survive. For adolescent girls, this often means that the risk of child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) and with it their risk of early pregnancy, increases.
- Pregnant and lactating women, adolescents and children under five are particularly vulnerable to malnutrition because of the increased rate at which they are growing and their bodies changing. Lack of access to nutritious food during early childhood and adolescence can stunt children’s growth and has significant impacts on brain development, which undermines school readiness, educational attainment, health and economic outcomes. Adolescent girls also have increased need for iron due to menstruation and are particularly at risk of malnutrition during pregnancy. Respondents from Somaliland indicated that most households (61%) did not receive any humanitarian assistance in the past 30 days, with 64% of boys and 46% of girls reporting that their household had not received any assistance in the past 30 days.

— Malnutrition poses particular threats to adolescent girls and women who are pregnant and lactating, increasing their risk of miscarriage and maternal mortality and the risks of stillbirth, newborn deaths, low birth weight and stunting for their children, leading to an intergenerational cycle of malnutrition. Women from Gumbi Boredede and Guba Koricha Woreda in Ethiopia stated that food they are getting from remove humanitarian aid is not adequate to properly feed their families as they only get 15 kilograms of grain per person for a household within a three- months interval.

— As families face mounting food insecurity, girls are increasingly called upon to care for younger siblings so parents can work or seek food, forcing them to miss or drop out of school. As a result, girls' education is likely to be further deprioritized, exacerbating the gender gap in education. Women from the Agiriama community in Kenya must seek consent from their husbands on whether to use contraceptives. The result of this is large families of close to 11, which puts increased pressure on already scarcely available food.

“It is getting harder and harder. It’s difficult for us, with no milk from our animals. Some have died, while others are so weak that they can’t provide milk. The drought is just getting worse and worse.”

— A community member in Somalia

Call to action for governments, donors and other humanitarian actors

Plan applauds the US Government’s \$5 Billion commitment to global food security. That funding has supported a number of critical interventions.

1. Release emergency funding immediately to save millions of lives.

We have not acted early and now face a worst-case scenario, with a \$22.2 billion shortfall remaining if we are to prevent 50 million people from falling into famine. Funds need to be gender-responsive, readily available and immediately provided on a “no regrets” basis to prevent massive loss of life. All donors must contribute their full and fair share now, without diverting resources from remove other pressing humanitarian needs.

2. Prioritize the specific needs of women and children, especially girls.

This includes school feeding programs to help children and young people stay in school, and protection programs to help address child rights violations like child marriage. We call to ensure that all responses to food insecurity are gender-, age- and disability-responsive.

3. Increase efforts to address the underlying drivers of the hunger crisis, including conflict, economic shocks and climate change.

We must see strengthened political leadership to prevent and end conflicts around the world; enhanced protection for girls and women from

economic inequality and shocks; and support to countries experiencing hunger to adapt to and strengthen resilience to ongoing and future climate shocks and stresses, including through improve climate finance mechanisms.

4. Strengthen resilience to anticipate, adapt to and transform in the face of shocks and stresses that contribute to food insecurity. This means increased international and domestic funding for anticipatory action, resilience, adaptation and early warning systems. We call on you to engage girls and young people and to ensure all efforts are gender-transformative, locally-led and child-centered.

5. Ensure accountability for hunger crisis efforts, including through clear and transparently reporting on funding commitments and disbursements, supporting local partners, and consulting with affected populations, such as young people, to shape humanitarian response.

“We last saw precious rain in the area in November 2020; as a result, all the water pans and water reservoirs have dried up. I have asked the government and other well-wishers to help us. We only asked for water, but even that has not been delivered.”

— Y A K U B , a primary school teacher in Kenya



Juqeeriya is a 12-year-old student in Somalia, who sometimes goes to school on an empty stomach.

Plan International USA is a girls’ rights organization. Powered by supporters, we partner with adolescent girls, children and young women to overcome oppression and gender inequality. We provide the resources that are unique to their needs and the needs of their communities, ensuring they achieve their full potential with dignity, opportunity and safety.

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