

DROUGHT SITUATION RESPONSE UPDATE

March 2023



An internally displaced family at Qaboobe durable solutions site in South Galkayo, Somalia. © UNHCR/Samuel Otieno

Situation Overview

The Horn of Africa continues to face a severe humanitarian crisis, with millions of people in need of assistance due to a combination of drought, conflict, and inability to provide for basic needs. The region has been hit by a series of droughts in recent years, leading to crop failure and a lack of water and food. According to [UNHCR's dashboard](#) of displacement affected populations, by the end of March 2023, some 1.94 million had been internally displaced in Somalia and Ethiopia, while over 286,000 new refugee and asylum-seekers have crossed into drought affected areas of Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia since January 2022.

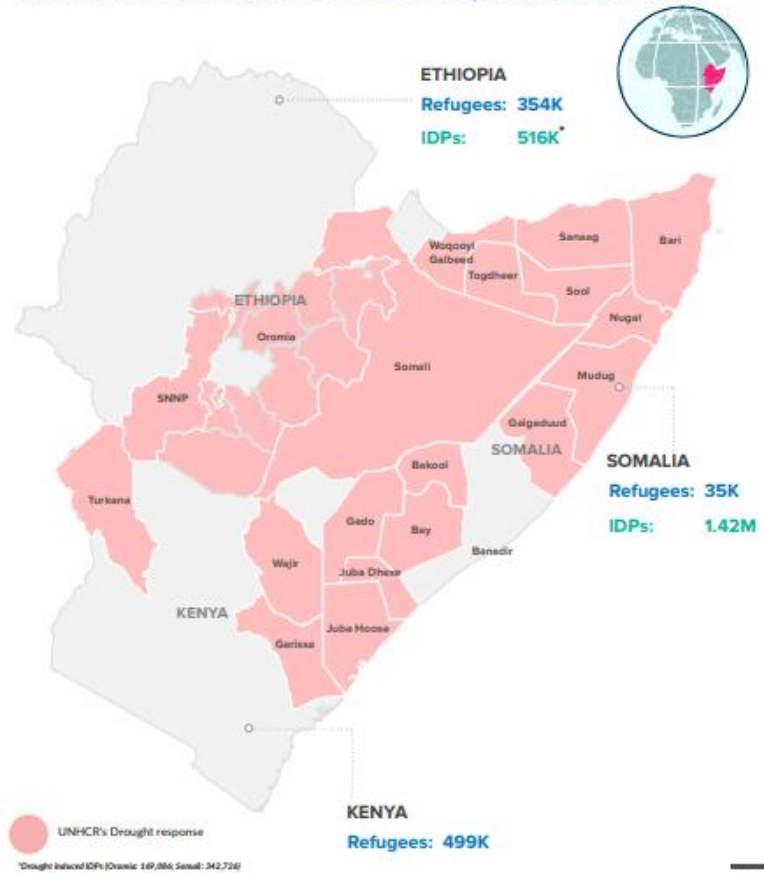
In **Ethiopia** the drought situation has continued to worsen following five consecutive failed rainy seasons and the looming "lean season" (period between harvests), with the southern and eastern parts of the country mainly affected. An estimated 13 million people are targeted for humanitarian response in drought affected areas in the Humanitarian response Plan (HRP) 2023. Over 20.1 million people are food insecure in various regions, including 2.73 million internally displaced people (IDPs) and 1.88 million returnees ([OCHA Situation Report April 2023, Humanitarian Response Plan, 2023](#)). The situation is getting more critical with each failed rainy season and has severely impacted pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities, particularly in the eastern and southern parts of the country, aggravating food insecurity, malnutrition, access to water and a worsening health situation with an increase of disease outbreaks.

Women and children make up two thirds of crisis-affected people. Rainfall in some drought affected areas of Oromia and Somali regions has contributed to the rapid spread of the cholera outbreak in sites with basic or no clean water, sanitation or health services. The ongoing cholera outbreak in Ethiopia is in 23 woredas in the Oromia (19) & Somali (4) regions, with a total of 2,998 cases recorded (2,652 Oromia & 346 Somali) with 61 total deaths.

In **Kenya**, the long rains commenced on 21 March. Flash floods were reported in parts of Lagdera sub-county and Saretho village in Dadaab sub-county affecting 100 households and destroying road networks between Garissa and the two sub-counties. Despite the reported rains in most parts of the country in the last weeks of March, the rains are yet to impact production systems. Turkana West also received traces of rainfall that resulted in isolated incidents of flash floods which destroyed shelters of displaced persons in Kakuma camp and Kalobeyei settlement. However, in general the drought situation remains critical in 22 of the 23 Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) counties of Kenya due to the late onset and poor performance of the much-anticipated October and December short rains. Distances to access water for households is currently above the long-term average and the trekking distance to water sources for livestock from grazing areas is also mainly above the long-term average.

Somalia continues to face the longest and the most severe drought in its recent history, due to the failure of five consecutive rainy seasons, with a sixth failed rainy season predicted. Despite the increased humanitarian response in Somalia, the country is still facing life-threatening food and water shortages due to the destruction of harvests, livestock, and income. Prices of essential commodities remain too high for many people to afford, and the combination of climate change and conflict displacement has left millions in need of food assistance. Despite the recent heavy rains and flooding, shortfalls in humanitarian funding and forecasts of high ground temperature and below-average rainfall suggest the drought's consequences will persist. According to the [UNHCR-led Protection and Return Monitoring Network \(PRMN\)](#), 299,000 displacements within Somalia were recorded in March, a 25% rise from February. Out of the total displacements during the reporting month, 44% were attributed to floods, 34% to the drought, 19% to conflict/insecurity, and 3% to other reasons. The top humanitarian needs of the displaced families were shelter (46%), followed by food (39%), and livelihood (8%).

UNHCR'S DROUGHT RESPONSE IN ETHIOPIA, KENYA AND SOMALIA



UNHCR response

ETHIOPIA

SOMALI REGION

Refugees

As part of the drought response interventions for most vulnerable refugees, one-time cash distribution via Global Distribution Tool (GDT) system was conducted for 2,480 persons with specific needs in Kebribeyah, Shedder and Awbarre refugee camps in Jijiga. The situation of the refugees has deteriorated as a result of the drought, making it more difficult to cope with the in-kind food-ration cuts, limited livelihood opportunities and stretched water resources in the camps.



Following the drought as well as incremental food cuts, UNHCR has started providing cash for nutrition to reach a total of 4,137 refugee households to support the most vulnerable families that face food insecurity in the drought affected Liban zone of the Somali region of Ethiopia. © UNHCR/Adane Tefera

The cash will help them improve their living conditions and food security at household level. This intervention to the refugees targeted older persons at risk, person with disabilities, female heads of household taking care of children under 5 years old, children at risk, persons with serious medical conditions and survivors of Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

In February and March 2023, UNHCR distributed a one-off cash-in-hand assistance for nutrition to 3,900 vulnerable refugee households across the five refugee camps in Melkadida. Each household received 4,000 Ethiopian Birr (about USD 73). The intervention, which was concluded on 28 March is in line with the Ethiopia Humanitarian Response Plan and was designed to improve the nutritional well-being and food security status of refugees in the drought affected Liban zone of the Somali Region of Ethiopia. The nutrition status across the five refugee camps where 207,112 refugees (31,213 households) reside is categorized as serious with more than 15% of children under the age of five suffering from acute malnutrition, over 30% chronically stunted, and close to 40% anemic.

The intervention primarily targeted refugee households with children under the age of two. Given the high number of households within this category and limited funding, UNHCR and partners narrowed down to children under the age of two under the care of older persons living with disabilities, large families (10+ individuals) taking care of children under the age of two, as well as children under the age of two living with disabilities. This intervention is ground-breaking in Melkadida owing to the significant amount of cash-in-hand assistance that was distributed and the large number of targeted households. It is also the first time UNHCR in partnership with the Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS) adopted the Global Distribution Tool for delivery of cash assistance, which enhanced effectiveness.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Protection

UNHCR in Melkadida trained the Disaster Risk Management Bureau of the Somali region and protection partners on protection profiling of IDPs in Dawa, Liban and Afder zones.

Cash Assistance

UNHCR carried out a mission in Erer, Korahe, Nogob and Shabelle zones in the Somali region to verify the list of 3,000 drought induced IDP families identified by the Disaster Risk Management Office (DRMO) and local authorities to benefit from multi-purpose cash interventions. Home visits were conducted on select individuals/families to ascertain their needs and assess whether they meet UNHCR's vulnerability criteria for targeted assistance.

UNHCR held meetings with the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia branch managers in Gode and Fik to brief them on the planned UNHCR multi-purpose cash interventions in these locations and discuss modalities for the transfer of cash to drought-affected families. UNHCR supported a pilot to provide multi-purpose cash to 1,362 internally displaced households in Darso, Dollo Bay woreda of Afder zone to help vulnerable families acquire basic items, and restore some of their livestock, an attempt to soften the shock of the displacement and intense drought. UNHCR is working continuously to identify additional sites where IDPs arrive for further distribution of multi-purpose cash for protection.

OROMIA and SNNP REGIONS

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Protection

The major protection concerns raised during East and West Haraghe protection cluster meetings in March include food assistance delays, water shortage, and school dropouts, especially girls as they leave in search of work and water. In East Hararghe, the increasing number of street children is a major concern. In the drought affected area of West Hararghe, an increase in early marriage and bigamy were reported as coping mechanisms.

In partnership with Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), UNHCR has conducted protection monitoring in 13 kebeles of West Guji zone woredas and managed to organize 13 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). UNHCR organized 20 key informal interviews with IDP representatives and Bule Hora town municipality and identified the protection risk of the IDPs.

In Borena zone, a significant number of schools reported to have been closed due to shortage of water, food, and other basic needs for students. The NGO, Imagine One Day, reported that it is responding to the education problem through school feeding in 8 kebeles. However, the dropout rate is still increasing in these kebeles, especially for girls.

UNHCR, in collaboration with Borana and Konso Zonal Women and Children Affairs, conducted two protection cluster coordination meetings in Yabello and Karat towns of Borena and Konso zones. The meetings were facilitated and chaired by the Zonal Women and Children Affairs and UNHCR. During the meetings, the protection cluster partners reported that there is family separation due to drought as the able-bodied travel to engage in gold-mining and other forms of labour.

Protection cluster partners reported that the prolonged recurrent drought is so severe, it is resulting in the loss of pastoralist and agriculturalist livelihoods particularly in Borena zone where there are 20 IDPs sites and it has created complicated and deep protection risks especially on the most vulnerable segment of the community.

Cash Assistance

From 16-29 March, UNHCR conducted post distribution monitoring in Oromia region for drought response under the Multi-Purpose Cash (MPC) and cash support interventions to IDPs in 4 woredas in the East and West Hararghe zones (Oromia region) namely, Golo Oda, Midega Tola, Oda Bultum and Hawi Gudina. The Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) was done in 13 selected kebeles, where 195 individuals were interviewed. Data analysis is ongoing.

In the East and West Hararghe zones, 2,278 households received assistance through Cash-Based Interventions (CBI). However, the IDPs requested for an increase of the transfer value in light of the rising cost of living and for livelihood opportunities for sustainable impacts. A second round of cash distribution is planned for the 2,300 families targeted during the first round.

KENYA

DADAAB

As of 31 March, some 133,000 new arrivals had been profiled across the three camps in Dadaab. UNHCR and partners work with refugee leadership structures to ensure effective community-based surveillance to identify new arrivals in the camps.

Protection

In Dadaab, UNHCR and partners conducted a vulnerability screening of the undocumented population to enable timely assistance to populations with critical specific needs. A total of 5,196 persons with specific needs were provided with support including 1,553 unaccompanied and/or separated children, 1,421 persons with disabilities, 1,082 older persons at risk, 1,029 people with serious medical conditions and 97 persons with specific legal and physical protection needs. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and Handicap International (HI) are in the process of providing assistive devices and other material assistance.

Screening for cases of gender-based violence (GBV) for new arrivals continued through community leaders and partners, who identify cases and refer to the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) for support. Self-referrals were also received, as well as cases identified by the DRC outreach team and medical partners, International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the Kenyan Red Cross Society (KRCS).

Education

A total of 1,154 newly arrived children were enrolled across the 22 primary schools in the camps for the 2023 academic year. This brought the total number of newly arrived children attending school since 2022 to 1,933 (1,038 male, 895 female). These children continue to benefit from the school feeding programme to enhance their nutrition status and promote class attendance.

Health and Nutrition

Primary and secondary healthcare services were maintained in the camps through the six primary healthcare facilities and three main hospitals. Referral mechanisms continued to support the delivery of specialized healthcare for refugees in need of specialized care at tertiary facilities in Garissa and Nairobi. The six health posts also provided outpatient therapeutic care and supplementary feeding, while three stabilization centres remained operational for the management of severe acute malnutrition (SAM) with medical complications across the three camps. New arrivals in the outskirts of the camps continued to be engaged through outreach interventions for malnutrition screening, immunization, Health education deworming, Vitamin A supplementation and other primary healthcare services.

While a total of 990 cases with moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) were admitted compared to 1,358 in February, severe acute malnutrition (SAM) admissions rose to 626 from 1,225 cases in February 2023.

UNHCR health partners continued to intensify the search for active cases through community screening and outreach services for those settled in the outskirts of the camps, especially for malnutrition screening, immunization, vitamin A supplementation and for linkages to service points in the health system. A total of 819 children under 5 were screened where 44 and 81 were referred for SAM and MAM management respectively. There was regular engagement with UNICEF and the health partners to streamline the supply of therapeutic feeding.

Ongoing Response Activities:

- Community sensitization and health education on utilization of available health services.
- Medical outreach providing malnutrition screening, immunization, treatment of common ailments and referral to health facilities.
- Enhanced surveillance, including yellow fever, chikungunya, measles and polio with the increase in new arrivals.
- Regular blood drives to enhance a safe and adequate supply of blood and blood products.
- Weekly stakeholder coordination meetings to monitor response and review action plans.

Energy and Environment

Firewood was distributed to seven schools with each receiving 2 metric tons, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) hospital received 2.8 metric tons, Isolation Centre received 10 metric tons, and the Protection Area residence received 2.2 metric tons, translating into 29 metric tons. Production and raising of tree nursery seedlings are ongoing in all the three host refugee communities in the three FaIDA nurseries. As of 31 March, 82,700 seedlings were potted, waiting for germination before their distribution for planting.



Halima Hussein, a 28-year-old mother of three fled the drought in Somalia to Dadaab, Kenya. © UNHCR/Charity Nzomo

Water and Sanitation

Water for refugees in Dadaab camps was pumped from 23 borehole water supply schemes, stored in 42 elevated steel tanks, and conveyed through 241-kilometre pipeline network to 827 end user points (tap stands). The daily per capita water available for March was 20 litres. Latrine coverage was 53.1 percent. The replacement Hagadera borehole 9 was operationalized with a safe yield of 45m³/hour. The generator house was also completed. The water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) extensions in the outskirts included five plastic water tanks (10,000 litres), 5,000-metre pipeline, 26 tap stands with four taps each (104 taps) and ninety communal latrines in the three camps. Water was trucked to five plastic tanks trucked with one or two trips per day in the three camps reaching over 375,000 people.

UNHCR through Relief, Reconstruction and Development Organization (RRDO) and the Kenyan Red Cross Society (KRCS) delivered 44 trips water truck to new arrivals in the outskirts of the three camps, there were 100 trips to host community sites such as Bula Banaan, Daidai, and Darusalam with Dadaab township with a population 53,000 people, Haji Aden with 800 residents, Gubakibir hosting 500 individuals, and two police posts of Ege dam and Hagarbul village (40 police officers).

Host Community Support

UNHCR and partners continued to deliver basic services to host communities living around Dadaab and the larger Garissa County. The support provided by these partners included the provision of food, cash transfers to households with specific needs, provision of firewood, and construction of WASH infrastructure.

Under its drought intervention and relocation of host community residing in the now re-gazetted Ifo2 settlement, UNHCR has procured 302 shelter kits comprised of iron sheets, roofing nails, poles, and tarpaulins, for 302 households (1,800 individuals) to meet part of their shelter needs.

KAKUMA

As of 31 March, the reception centres in Kakuma and Kalobeyei were still congested. Kakuma RC was hosting a total of 2,376 individuals and Kalobeyei RC 8,396 individuals. The essential services remain over-stretched.

The number of new arrivals in Kakuma and Kalobeyei increased noticeably during March, bringing the number of unregistered people to over 7,000. Processing and issuance of Refugee identity cards generally progressed well with 1,904 refugee identity cards being issued as of 31 March.

As part of an effort to decongest the reception centres, a total of 168 families of 462 people were relocated from Kalobeyei and Kakuma RC to the community and issued with full relocation packages (Core Relief Items, shelter, food, soap and firewood).

Protection

Since January 2023, a total of 1,214 newly arrived unaccompanied and separated children (UASCs) were received, screened and assessed through Kakuma and Kalobeyei reception centres before relocation to the community and or placement in suitable alternative care. 381 unaccompanied and separated children were successfully reunified with their families during the period of January to March 2023

Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) material were distributed in the communities and key locations. Radio talk shows were utilized during 16 Days of Activism to discuss GBV, SEA and disability. Engaging the host community was challenging at the beginning and required intervention and support from the Youth and Gender Officer in Turkana, especially for the identification of areas of interventions. A total of 472 persons with disabilities (PWDs) were reached through prevention work to the host community.

Health and Nutrition

The number of children presenting with acute malnutrition (severe and moderate) has increased in the treatment centers in 2023. A total 88 children under the age of five were admitted in the stabilization centre in March, 14 of whom were from the host community. The increase was attributed to increased cases of diarrhoea in the camp and settlement due to water shortages and cases among the new arrivals. Four deaths were reported in the stabilization centre. The operation is engaging UNICEF to acquire additional buffer stock for the response.

Health facilities in the camp and settlement received their monthly ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF) supplies from UNICEF through the national supply chain. The operation has 1,000 cartons of buffer stock in the warehouse, which will be enough to cover the needs for the next two months. UNHCR received all medicine and medical supplies under the drought response budget. This will ensure facilities remain well stocked with essential commodities necessary for responding to any upsurge of patients or admissions.

UNHCR supported Turkana County Government Ministry of Health with in-kind donation of essential medicines necessary for the treatment of top five morbidities as well as medical complications in malnourished children. Additionally, a proportion of the host community living in Turkana West continued to access health and nutrition services provided in the health facilities within Kakuma refugee camp and Kalobeyei settlement. However, the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) updates still show that 16.7% of children assessed in the sentinel sites in Turkana County have severe and moderate acute malnutrition. This value is higher than the long-term average of moderate malnutrition by 10.9 %. It is projected that the current trend will persist unless the prevailing drivers are adequately addressed.

Shelter

Cash for the construction of permanent shelters has been delivered to 240 new refugee households, to benefit 1,128 individuals in the Kalobeyei settlement. Refugees are reconstructing their houses and the process is close to completion.

Cash Assistance

UNHCR has not been able to transfer cash assistance consistently for hygiene and energy since September 2022 due to funding gaps. A reduced entitlement covering two months of cash assistance for hygiene items (sanitary materials for women 11-50 years) and parts of cooking energy needs was transferred to 224,374 individuals in early 2023. Funding gaps to cover the remaining need will add to and have serious impacts as basic needs are not met.

Water and Sanitation

UNHCR continued to provide potable water to about 248,929 displaced persons in Kakuma and Kalobeyei including new arrivals at the reception centers. A 50,000 litres of elevated water storage tank will be installed at Kalobeyei reception center. New arrivals in the newly established additional reception center have increased access to WASH facilities through the construction of additional latrines and bathing cubicles. To improve water availability in Kalobeyei settlement (village 1) and Kakuma camp, installation of three elevated steel tanks of 100m³ capacity is ongoing.

Host Community Support

UNHCR and Peace Winds Japan (PWJ) also continued to provide water to about 25,000 hosting population living in seven villages within Kalobeyei ward through trucking 100,000 litres of water. UNHCR completed equipping and the solarization of one borehole at Kamyuyaep village to supply drinking water for the host community. In addition, one cattle trough was constructed for the host community living close to Biashara/Huduma center and the necessary pipe connection work was completed. As a long-term solution, UNHCR and other humanitarian partners planned to extend more pipelines and construct water storage tanks to villages currently served by water trucking.

SOMALIA

The country started to receive moderate rains in the week starting 12 March, with the heaviest rainfall recorded in the Gedo and Bay regions. The rains coincided with disease outbreaks, including acute watery diarrhea and measles in several parts of the country, and there may be little respite due to the risk of people consuming contaminated water and the lack of adequate sanitation and hygiene facilities and services. Although the rains have provided some relief from the drought, the current outlook suggests a 50% chance of below average rainfall this season.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Protection

The IDP profiling exercise conducted in Beletweyne (Central Somalia) by UNHCR and its partner concluded on 28 March. The exercise supported the biometric enrolment in UNHCR's database (proGres v4) of all IDPs aged 5 and above. The effort resulted in the enrolment of 3,471 households (10,620 individuals).

Through the established Protection Helpdesks across IDP sites in Widh-Widh, Yagoori, Erigavo, Kalabaydh, and Buuhoodle of Sool, Sanaag, and Togdheer regions in Somaliland, UNHCR provided psychosocial support, counseling, and referral services. Paralegals and case workers who performed the protection response and referral services supported the help desks.

Cash Assistance

In Baidoa, UNHCR distributed multipurpose cash assistance to cover the basic needs of 800 households (4,800 individuals) and cash in lieu of CRIs for 243 households (1,458 individuals). Beneficiaries were selected from more than 8,000 vulnerability assessments conducted in Baidoa among drought-affected IDPs. Families received a one-time payment of USD 90 for multipurpose cash assistance and a one-time payment of USD 100 for monetized NFI assistance.

In Dhobley, UNHCR distributed cash in lieu of CRI assistance for 200 households (1,671 individuals), with each family receiving USD 100.

In Kismayo, based on the results of the vulnerable assessment, UNHCR distributed multi-purpose cash assistance to 600 households (3,600 individuals), with each family receiving USD 90 to cover basic needs and cash in lieu of CRI assistance to 200 households (1,200 individuals) with each family receiving USD 100.

In Bossaso, UNHCR distributed cash in lieu of dignity kits to 1,000 women and girls from refugee, asylum seeker, IDP, and hosting communities, with each receiving USD 65. Likewise, cash assistance to support individuals with protection concerns and persons with specific needs was distributed to 600 individuals from the aforementioned communities, with each receiving USD 100.

In Garowe and Gardo, UNHCR distributed cash in lieu of dignity kits and cash assistance to individuals with protection and persons with specific needs, assisting 550 and 350 vulnerable refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs, and host communities, respectively. The beneficiaries were selected through a combination of strategies, including vulnerable assessment and linkages with other GBV actors.

In five IDP sites in Abudwak (Central Somalia), UNHCR installed street solar lights to enhance the protection of vulnerable IDP, in particular women and girls, during afterhours.

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