

DROUGHT OF A GENERATION: TACKLING THE HUNGER CRISIS OF EAST AFRICA



MAY 2022



OVERVIEW

One of the worst droughts in a generation is currently unfolding in the Horn of Africa, compounded by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, high food prices, desert locusts, conflict and now a further surge in food and commodity prices due to the conflict in Ukraine.

More than 15 million people¹ are currently acutely food insecure in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. This number is expected to rise to 20 million² this year if the rains continue to fail, prices continue to rise, and significant funds are not surged to meet the needs of those in crisis. Women and children - especially girls - are already bearing the brunt of this crisis, as families face malnutrition, increased susceptibility to diseases, increased risk of early marriage and gender-based violence, and limited access to school.

The response remains significantly underfunded. More funding is needed now. The UN has called for \$1.4 billion in new humanitarian funding to implement the most urgently-needed response in the next six months. So far, just under half has been pledged. Whilst we welcome the UK Government's recent announcement of £25 million³ for Somalia (taking their total support to £40 million in 2022), we are disappointed that this falls well under its fair share of urgent funding to prevent starvation and death for millions.

WE ARE CALLING ON THE UK GOVERNMENT TO:

1. Urgently commit to and disburse £750 million in new and additional humanitarian and development funding to the Horn of Africa, which is in line with allocations made in 2017;
2. Galvanise the international community to act now and commit to providing the necessary funding and attention to tackle this crisis.



WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE HORN?

A humanitarian catastrophe is facing millions in the Horn of Africa due to one of the most severe droughts in recent history. The region has long grappled with the effects of failed rains and is now facing the third severe drought in a decade. Families are being forced to take extreme measures to survive. In Somalia alone, nearly 760,000 people⁴ have already fled their homes in search of food and water since the start of 2022. In 2017, ambitious early action from the UK helped save lives. The UK has the opportunity to show leadership again but must do so urgently.

The outpouring of support and solidarity for people affected by the conflict in Ukraine has demonstrated a strong sense of shared humanity. We now hope to see the same level of urgency, solidarity - and funding - for millions of people in the Horn.

LESSONS FROM 2011 AND 2017 DROUGHTS

We saw the horrific consequences of acting too late in Somalia in 2011, when over a quarter of a million people died as a result of drought and famine. In 2017, however, the Somali government and international community prevented the worst impacts of drought and averted famine through a quick humanitarian response.

The UK Government played a leading role in 2017, by hosting a major international conference and allocating a significant amount to the response. Today, that same leadership is missing for the Horn of Africa.

IMPACT OF THE UKRAINE WAR AND THE GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS

The ongoing Ukraine conflict will further impact food availability and food prices in a number of these countries that depend significantly on grain, oil, and fertiliser imports from both Ukraine and Russia. This region imports around 90 per cent⁵ of its wheat from Ukraine and Russia, with wheat and its products accounting for one-third⁶ of average national cereal consumption in the region.

Cereal prices across the Horn of Africa were already high before the crisis in Ukraine, due to the combined effects of macroeconomic challenges and drought.

In Somalia, sorghum prices in Baidoa and Dinsoor, located in the sorghum belt surged between October 2021 and January 2022, even doubling in one region where this is a diet staple.

Prices are now higher than they were during the 2017 drought and the 2008 global food price crisis, and are approaching 2011 record levels.



WHAT CAN THE UK GOVERNMENT DO?

There is a narrow window to prevent an even worse humanitarian disaster and set the stage for a more resilient future. More funding is urgently needed to prevent the suffering of millions.

We are calling for the Government to:

1. Urgently commit to and disburse new and additional funding for the Horn of Africa region. This includes:
 - Committing funding commensurate to the scale of the crisis. On the basis that the UK provided £700 million⁷ of humanitarian and development funding to stave off famine in the Horn of Africa in 2017, and the UN is requesting for more funding than it did in 2017, we are calling for a funding commitment of £750 million from the UK government in humanitarian and development funding.
 - Ensuring the UK returns to spending 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) on aid as soon as possible, and in the meantime that humanitarian funding for Ukraine is new and additional to the current 0.5% aid budget.
 - Restoring the gender equality development budget to what it was before the ODA cut and recognising the impacts of intersecting forms of discrimination on women and girls, with a strong focus on poverty alleviation as well as its root causes in the upcoming women and girls strategy. Analysis⁸ shows that total gender significant or principal focused ODA is estimated to have fallen by approximately £1.9 billion. Therefore a return for funding to gender equality programmes will require an investment of £1.9 billion.
 - Prioritising investment in food & nutrition, WASH, health, child protection and gender responsive programming and where possible, ensuring that funding is channelled through local NGOs who are best able to respond quickly and access hard-to-reach communities.
2. Galvanise the international community to act now. This includes:
 - Playing a leading and galvanising role to encourage other donors to also commit their 'fair share' of funding and urging them to uphold the UK-led G7 Famine Prevention Compact commitments and the Nutrition for Growth commitments.
 - Lobbying the World Bank and other International Financial Institutions to urgently unlock emergency funding and strengthen their capacity for crisis response.
 - Doubling down on building resilience in the Horn of Africa including by tackling underlying drivers of food insecurity, such as conflict, climate change, and our broken food system.

REFERENCES

1. UN OCHA, Horn of Africa Drought Report 25 April 2022, URL: <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/horn-africa-drought-humanitarian-key-messages-25-april-2022#:~:text=The%20Horn%20of%20Africa%20is,of%20food%2C%20water%20and%20pasture>
2. UN World Food Programme, Worsening Drought in Horn of Africa puts up to 20 million at risk, 22 April 2022 URL: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/04/1116442>
3. FCDO Press release on support to Somalia as Famine Looms, 26 April 2022, URL <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-steps-up-support-as-famine-looms-in-somalia>
4. UN OCHA, Somalia: Drought Situation Report No.6, 20 April 2022, URL: <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-drought-situation-report-no6-20-april-2022#:~:text=The%20number%20of%20people%20affected,to%20services%20such%20as%20health>
5. UN WFP, Implications of Ukraine Conflict on Food Access and Availability in the Eastern Africa Region, 4th March 2022
6. UN WFP Implications of Ukraine Conflict on Food Access and Availability in the Eastern Africa Region, 7th March 2022, URL: <https://reliefweb.int/report/burundi/implications-ukraine-conflict-food-access-and-availability-eastern-africa-region>
7. See DFID Annual Report and Accounts 2017 to 2018, p. 140. In FY 2017-18, the UK government allocated £245,346,000 to Somalia, £322,729 to Ethiopia, and £130,470 to Kenya in humanitarian and development funding. For all three countries, this is a total of £698,545,000. Note that the UK government may refer to its allocation of £170m to Somalia for its humanitarian response to the drought in 2017. We have decided to use humanitarian and development funding as both are needed to address drought and famine. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfid-annual-report-and-accounts-2017-to-2018>
8. Care International and Development Initiatives, UK Leadership on Gender Equality Globally, A Quantitative Review, URL https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/media/k2/attachments/UK-leadership-on-gender-equality-globally_a-quantitative-review.pdf