

# Strengthening Local Humanitarian Action to Respond to Climate-induced Emergencies

## Eastern Horn of Africa Regional Symposium

### Concept Note and Recommended Reading

## Introduction

### Current Context

The people of the Horn of Africa region are no strangers to the ever-increasing impacts of climate change. The 2019-2023 drought in the Horn of Africa has surpassed the devastating droughts of 2010-2011 and 2016-2017, both in duration and severity, and is estimated to continue to deepen in the months ahead, with catastrophic consequences. Scientific analysis has demonstrated that this drought would not have occurred if it had not been for climate change.

With five consecutive failed rainy seasons, the region, especially Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, are facing their most severe drought in the last 40 years. Many have had to leave their homes in search of food, water, pasture and alternative livelihoods, both within borders and to neighbouring countries, increasing the risk of intercommunal conflict and heightening pressure on already limited basic services.

As of December 2022, more than 36.5 million people are estimated to be affected by severe drought, more than 20 million people are estimated to face acute food insecurity and more than 2 million people have been displaced due to the drought. In mid-March 2023, heavy rains resulted in flash floods in Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya affecting nearly 330,000 people.

Similarly, more than 16.3 million people cannot access enough water for drinking, cooking and cleaning across the Horn of Africa which has led to increasing needs for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), nutrition and health assistance. Additionally, protection risks, such as gender-based violence (GBV), have been exacerbated due to the drought, with women and girls having to walk longer distances to access water.

The Horn of Africa includes many pastoral and agro-pastoral communities that are dependent on livestock raising and production. Parts of the region are characterized by their arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) which are prone to recurrent droughts, flash floods and severe climatic shocks.

While resilience-building efforts across the region have made important progress, the frequency and severity of droughts and flooding in recent years, combined with the exceptionally prolonged nature of the 2019-2023 drought, have made it harder for families to recover between shocks.

In the context of growing resource scarcity, especially over the availability of water and associated

livelihood losses linked to climate change, there has been an increase in communal and resource-based conflicts over cattle, crowding at drying waterpoints for livestock, and other limited sources.

Since the onset of 2023 Gu rains, Beletwayne city in Hirshabelle state Somalia, has been witnessing severe floods, the most devastating in years. The scale of the damage caused by the devastating floods in Beletwayne is unprecedented. The river flooding has affected more than 450,000 people and of these over 210,000 have been displaced from their homes. The floods are the latest in a series of climate induced disasters to hit Somalia, where vulnerable communities particularly IDPs are bearing the brunt of this crisis.

The region has also been negatively impacted by the deteriorating macroeconomic conditions and trade disruptions related to the war in Ukraine, at a time when households are still facing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on livelihoods and income sources. This has led to a spike in food prices in many drought-affected areas, causing a serious food insecurity crisis accompanied by high levels of malnutrition.

## Future Impacts

It is highly likely that the current humanitarian emergency will persist until at least late 2023, requiring high assistance levels to prevent further deteriorations. Regardless of the performance of this year's major rainy seasons, the sheer scale, severity, and magnitude of suffering already observed means that the region will take many years to fully recover.

For families who have lost all their livestock, rebuilding herds will be a slow process, if possible, at all. Recovery in cropping zones will also be a challenge, as households have little to no resources left to invest in planting and will require livelihood support to restart activities.

Climate models are unclear on whether climate change will lead to more frequent droughts in the region over the next 10-20 years. However, overall, extreme weather will increase.

Climate models suggest an increase in frequency and scale of flooding in Somalia and the Somali region of Ethiopia: the recent events in the Shabelle river valley, for example, are likely to become more common.

In addition, extreme heat events (combining high heat and high humidity, which lead to greatly increased mortality among the elderly and children, in particular) are forecast to become much more common in the next 10 years in the region.

In all areas, yields from crops and livestock are likely to decrease, even in non-drought years, impacting on food security.

The incidence of disease, and particularly of water-borne (such as cholera) and food borne diseases, is expected to increase with rising temperatures. On the other hand, the incidence of Malaria may

decrease in lowland areas and increase in highland areas.

## Symposium Objectives

In the face of extreme climate shocks and the longer-term impact of climate change, we as a humanitarian community, especially as national and local NGOs, need to step-up and reflect on how we change the way we work so that the communities we support can cope and re-build their lives and livelihoods to in the face of increasing impacts of climate change in the region.

We need to consider how we become more future-forward/thinking, in order to ensure that our programmes are resilient to climate shocks; how we meet new and increased humanitarian needs caused by climate change, and how we limit our own impact on the environment, use nature-based solutions and become more environmentally sustainable in our ways of working.

This 2-day Symposium will bring together 25 NGO participants from local and national NGOs from the region (Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia) to:

- have a better understanding of the climate risks, the nature of threats that are already impacting and will continue to impact communities in the region,
- share lessons learned, best/better practice and peer-to-peer exchange on how organisations (national/local/international) are already addressing threats and humanitarian needs caused by climate change,
- identify challenges and opportunities to further strengthen capacities of local/national NGOs to respond to climate emergencies in the long-run and be more sustainable in our programming, and
- enhance awareness on the latest regional and global policy discussions around climate change and environment sustainability and its relevance to humanitarian action for NGOs in the region e.g., the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organisations, the IASC Roadmap on Climate, relevance of adaptation and Loss and Damage in humanitarian contexts/action, and other topics.

## Suggested Framing for the Symposium:

- Focus on the **specific role of national/local NGOs** where we see our niche and collective common added value.
- **Focus on what NGOs would like to prioritize** - learning needs and challenges they would like to tackle at the Symposium – through the Registration form and/or through Focused Group Discussions with the selected NGOs (if time permits).

## Recommended Reading

Background information for participants prior to attending the symposium:

- The [Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations](#)

The Charter serves as an aspirational guide which sends a clear signal that humanitarian organizations have a key role to play in addressing crises faced by communities due to the climate and environmental crises. We must be a part of the solution by helping people adapt to a changing climate and environment, while also increasing our own environmental sustainability. This needs to be a collective endeavor, as no organization can tackle this alone. The Charter intends to guide humanitarian action in the face of these crises and their humanitarian consequences.

- [ICVA-PHAP Learning Stream on Climate Change and Humanitarian Action](#)

The Learning Stream includes nine webinars that focus on practical ways of applying the *Charter Commitments* and sharing lessons learned on how the commitments can be translated into practice. We **highly recommend that participants listen to the YouTube or podcast recordings of the Introduction session and sessions 1 – 5.**

- [ADAPT Initiative – Climate Change and Humanitarian Action](#)

An overview of evidence related to the impacts of climate change on humanitarian need, and the various approaches that humanitarian agencies are taking in response.

- [International Medical Corps – Evidence Report: Impact of Climate Change](#)

The report considers the impact of climate on humanitarian health; WASH; Nutrition and Food Security and Livelihood.

- [African Union \(AU\) Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan \(2022 - 2032\)](#)

A key instrument in supporting regional collaboration on climate change and more effective international partnerships. It provides a framework for joint action and clearly expresses our needs and priorities. It will unlock Africa's potential in building climate resilient communities and economies, which are an integral component of the continental vision for 'an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens, representing a dynamic force in the international arena'.

- [Southern African Development Community \(SADC\) Regional Climate Resilience Programme for Eastern and Southern Africa: Stakeholder Engagement Plan \(SEP\), March 2023](#)

The International Development Association (IDA) plans to finance the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to implement Phase 1 of the Regional Climate Resilience Program for Eastern and Southern Africa. The Program is envisioned as a regional multi-phase engagement (Series of Projects - SOP) with the higher-level aim of strengthening the resilience of populations to climate-related shocks in Eastern and Southern Africa.

- [Drought in the Horn of Africa – Regional Analysis](#) (February 2023) – REACH

This assessment uses a combination of remote sensing analysis, primary quantitative data, and secondary data review, to understand climatic patterns and recent drought severity at the local level across Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia.

- [Ethiopia – World Bank Climate Risk Country Profile](#)

- [Kenya – World Bank Climate Risk Country Profile](#)

- [Somalia – Weathering Risk Climate Risk Country Profile](#)

- [Ethiopia National Adaptation Plan](#)

- Outlines the Ethiopian government’s plan to build adaptation and resilience to climate change.

- [Kenya National Adaptation Plan](#)

Outlines the Kenyan government’s plan to build adaptation and resilience to climate change.

- [Crisis Group](#)

The relationship between climate change and deadly conflict is complex and context-specific, but it is undeniable that climate change is a threat multiplier that is already increasing food insecurity, water scarcity and resource competition, while disrupting livelihoods and spurring migration. In turn, deadly conflict and political instability are contributing to climate change – including through illegal logging.