

Alert note

Kenya, Drought 2025

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Date completed: 08/12/2025

Forum: ACT Kenya Forum

Type of emergency: Drought

Date of emergency (if rapid onset):

Funding Survey

If the forum indicates a plan to launch an appeal, we request funding members to please fill out this [survey form](#) which will help the **Emergency Steering Committee** assess the funding environment for this response. Please respond to this survey *within 24 hours of Alert publication*.

1. The nature of the emergency

Kenya is facing a severe drought caused by late, below normal, poorly distributed rains during 2025's long rains (March-May) and short rains (October– December 2025). The cause of the drought is attributed to the effects of La Niña and a negative Indian Ocean Dipole, which typically suppresses rainfall in the Horn of Africa ([ACAPS](#)). Initially, Kenya's October -December 2024 short rains were classified as below average overall, severely affecting food security and livelihoods particularly across the 23 arid and semi-arid lands ([UNOCHA](#)).

On December 4th, 2025, members of parliament of the North Eastern Region in Kenya ([Nation](#)), issued public warnings of an escalating drought; calling for the government to declare the current drought as a national disaster to facilitate urgent humanitarian support.

Kenya has also been placed as one of the 16 countries at risk of acute food insecurity between November 2025 and May 2026 according to a [Hunger Hotspots](#) report -the first time the country has reappeared on the list since November 2024. The hunger spot areas are characterised by fragile ecosystems, recurrent drought cycles, pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods, limited water infrastructure, and high dependence on rain-fed livelihoods, making them highly vulnerable to climatic shocks

2. The impact and scale of the emergency

Based on the Forum's initial assessment and current national situation reports, this is a large-scale drought affecting at least 2.1 million Kenyans living with the arid and semi-arid areas. The Arid and Semi-Arid lands (ASAL) cover nearly 90 per cent of Kenya's land and are home to approximately 16 million people ([ReliefWeb](#)).

According to the November 2025 [National Drought Management Authority](#) bulletin, sixteen (16) Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) are in the phase of drought, while seven (7) counties (Mandera, Wajir, Garissa, Tana River, Kilifi, Kwale, and Kajiado) have deteriorated to the Alert phase.

In addition, county situation updates indicate that drought conditions are worsening in Embu/Mbeere, Tharaka Nithi, Meru/Igembe, Isiolo and Marsabit, with a combined 3.5 million people food insecure. As of December 2025, approximately 300,000-350,000 people in Garissa County (about 45% of the county's population) are facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse acute food insecurity, with 20,000-30,000 in Emergency (IPC Phase 4). Over 100,000 children under five face critical malnutrition risks, with GAM rates at 25-35%.

In Tana River, acute malnutrition levels are generally in the Serious (IPC AMN Phase 3) range, with GAM between 10–14.9 percent, driven by inadequate diets, reduced milk intake, poor water and sanitation, and limited access to health and nutrition services.

The drought has led to massive livestock losses (up to 30-50% in pastoral herds), reduced milk production, degraded pasture, drying of water sources, rising food prices, intensified resource-based conflicts, and falling livestock market prices, eroding household incomes and assets. Malnutrition rates remain critical, with global acute malnutrition (GAM) exceeding 15-30% in hotspot sub-counties, particularly among children under five and pregnant/lactating women.

Women, children under five, expectant mothers, the elderly, people living with disability from pastoral households living in arid and semi-arid lands are the most affected([KBC](#)).

These regions support 70 per cent of the country's livestock, primarily through pastoralism and small-scale farming. However, they face chronic challenges including poverty, weak infrastructure, limited services, and frequent climate shocks such as droughts, floods, and land degradation.

Community and Household coping mechanisms, including early or forced marriage, withdrawal of girls from school, child labour, migration of livestock to different areas, including across borders into neighbouring countries such as Ethiopia in search of pasture and water, dietary changes where families eat only one meal a day, resulting in high malnutrition rates ([FEWSNET](#))

In the short term, affected households will continue to face limited access to food, water, and basic services, rising malnutrition, and compromised livelihood assets.

In the long term, prolonged drought will lead to deeper livelihood erosion, especially for pastoralists, further declines in livestock productivity, weakened market systems, and heightened protection risks. Field reports indicate increasing water scarcity, declining pasture, and emerging livestock losses.

3. Local and national capacity

The Government of Kenya, through the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA), has implemented a Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP), which provides USD 20 (KES 2,700) monthly cash transfers to vulnerable households in Arid and Semi-arid lands (ASAL) counties. However, coverage and impact remain limited due to funding constraints. Kenya's national drought contingency plans exist under the National Drought Management Agency (NDMA), though full activation is constrained by financing gaps ([NDMA](#)).

National and international organisations, including the UN, are supporting response efforts. WFP, in partnership with the Government, activated Anticipatory Action measures in targeted ASAL counties where 10,750 poor households in Marsabit and Wajir are currently receiving unconditional cash transfers of 70 USD per household per month from September to November 2025, with additional nutrition top-ups for pregnant and breastfeeding women and children under two ([WFP](#)). The World Food Program is also supporting vulnerable households with social protection systems and food assistance. Though implementation in other countries has been restricted by limited funding.

Humanitarian actors (WFP, UNICEF, FAO, Kenya Red Cross, and others) are providing food assistance, nutrition support, and early warning analysis, but overall coverage in the targeted counties remains below the level needed to address rising drought-related needs.

Local structures, including County Disaster Committees, Ward Administrations, faith-based organisations, and community groups, are active in targeted counties, supporting early warning, assessments, and initial mobilisation of local resources.

There are plans at the country level underway to establish a special multi-sectoral drought response committee outside the County Steering Group (CSG) to strengthen coordination and oversight of the drought situation and response.

ACT Forum members, including ADS Kenya, NCKK, Christian Aid, LWF, World Renew, CWS, and DKH, are present in the affected regions and continue to carry out assessments, monitor the situation, and provide targeted support.

4. Key needs and gaps

Major gaps against Sphere minimums are:

Water — insufficient quantity and sustainable access (many water points depleted; large emergency water funding needs),

Food & livelihoods — immediate food assistance and livestock support insufficient to meet IPC Phase 3+ needs, **nutrition & health** — rising malnutrition risk among children and elderly with constrained treatment capacity, **WASH & sanitation** — hygiene and latrine coverage insufficient where water is scarce, **protection & gender-based violence (GBV)** — protection risks rising due to resource competition and displacement, and **coordination/funding/logistics** — response capacity and funding gaps limit timely scale-up

Humanitarian actors (WFP, UNICEF, FAO, Kenya Red Cross, RACIDA, and others) provide food assistance, nutrition support, and early warning analysis, but overall coverage in the targeted counties remains below the level needed to address rising drought-related needs.

Please indicate whether you are considering:

	Indicate your intention with an X below
Rapid Response Fund (<i>intended for small and medium scale emergencies</i>)	
Appeal (<i>intended for large scale emergencies</i>)	x

If you indicate an intention to launch an appeal, the secretariat will activate an Emergency Steering Committee meeting within two working days on receipt of this alert.

5. Forum Capacity and members intention to respond

Anglican Development Services (ADS)	Mandera, Wajir, Garissa, Kajiado, Turkana, Tana River, Kilifi, and Kwale	Emergency food security assistance, emergency water supply, Cash transfer, Psychosocial support
Church World Service (CWS)	Marsabit and Tana River County, Kenya	Emergency food security, Early Recovery and Disaster Risk Reduction, and sustainable community development
National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCKK)	Turkana County	Emergency food security and cash transfer, Early Recovery and Disaster Risk Reduction, and sustainable community development
Lutheran World Federation (LWF)	Garissa County and Turkana County	Emergency Food Security Support, Emergency Water Supply and WASH Services, Nutrition Support for Vulnerable Groups, and entrepreneurship training
Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church (KELC)	Kajiado and Kilifi County	Emergency food response, Psychosocial support,
Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe (DKH)	Mandera Country	Cash transfer, SCLR, and Psychosocial Support

i) Potential responses

The following ACT Forum members are currently operating in the affected regions: **Church World Service (CWS), Christian Aid, Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe (DKH), Kenya**

Evangelical Lutheran Church, Anglican Development Services (ADS) Kenya, and the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK). These members are conducting assessments and, in some areas, already providing support to affected communities. In addition, church leaders are mobilising resources from various stakeholders to strengthen drought response efforts. Forum members require additional financial support to effectively address the urgent drought-related needs in the targeted regions.