

Third background document of the Drought in Horn of Africa

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Regional overview

**DROUGHT
IN
THE HORN OF AFRICA**

***CONSEQUENCES
AND
IMPLICATIONS***

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**DROUGHT
IN THE HORN OF AFRICA
CONSEQUENCES AND IMPLICATIONS**

Total Drought Affected Population	Food Requirements	Non-Food Requirements
17.57	1,934,345 MT	USD 215,585,522

INTRODUCTION

Unlike the major drought in 1999/2000 which affected at its peak over 14 million people in five countries of the Horn of Africa, the current drought, referred to earlier last year as the “green” drought, has hit hardest the crop producing regions in Eritrea and Ethiopia. Following seasonal rain failure in 2002, up to **11.3 million people in Ethiopia** and **2.3 million people in Eritrea** face immediate food shortages in 2003. An **additional 3.97 million people** (3 million in Ethiopia and over 966,000 in Somalia) will continue to require humanitarian assistance thereby raising the overall number of vulnerable population in the Horn of Africa to **17.57 million**.

To emphasize on the severity of the current crisis, this drought has marked a record in total affected population and food deficit in Eritrea and Ethiopia ever recorded. Consecutive years of poor rain performance in Eritrea and despite the exceptionally good harvest in 2001 in Ethiopia, an estimated total of **1.934 million MT** of food aid is urgently required to avert a major famine in these countries.

The resultant drought and the residual effects of the two-year border war between Eritrea and Ethiopia as well as the non-recovery in many areas from the previous drought, have considerably weakened the coping mechanisms of millions of people as well as food security in the region. Early warning and prompt and generous donor response have so far averted starvation of millions of people affected by the drought in the Horn of Africa. However, the challenge of the international community remains to meet the needs throughout 2003 in order to prevent a major food shortage crisis and ensure sustainable recovery for the years to come.

The latest drought in the Horn of Africa is also symptomatic of a chronic condition that demands a simultaneous approach on **emergency response interventions** and **structural reforms and other development interventions**. Such approach would form a more sustainable basis for recovery.

The drought offers opportunities for enhanced national food security strategies in Ethiopia, Eritrea and to a lesser extend Somalia, including land reforms, disaster management, and a more comprehensive post-war recovery as well as greater inter-state cooperation in the region, on the one hand. On the other hand, it has also heightened inter-communal tensions and competition for scarce natural resources, foremost water and pasture, both within the affected countries and across borders. Scores of people have been killed in clashes between pastoral groups in Ethiopia and there are increased

tensions between Eritrean and Ethiopian communities in areas administered by UNMEE. Furthermore, there are reports that pastoralists from Shinile and Jijiga zones are migrating en masse into Somaliland. If confirmed, this could have the effect of spreading the distress of the drought further into Somalia.

The situation in the Horn of Africa is made more complex because of other non-drought related circumstances, foremost the endemic poverty and widespread political tension. Ethiopia and Eritrea are in the process of consolidating a two-year peace process, with the critical phase of border demarcation only months away. Somalia's civil war continues amidst efforts to bring warring factions to an agreement. The civil war in Sudan remains unresolved as well, as peace talks spasmodically continue. State relations in the Horn of Africa have not provided the inter-state cooperation and synergy that would have offered optimum intra-regional intervention to cope with the effects of the drought.

REGIONAL SECURITY AND THE ERITREA-ETHIOPIA PEACE PROCESS

KEY ISSUES • **Inter-communal tensions/clashes**
 • **Small arms smuggling**

The drought in Ethiopia has heightened fierce competition over scarce water and pasture resources between various communities in which dozens of people have lost their lives. Violent clashes and conflict continue between tribes and ethnic groups in and around Afar region in Ethiopia due to increased distress. Recently, increased tension in the eastern sector of the Temporary Security Zone has been reported by UNMEE. A number of confrontations between residents in the border areas involving cattle rustling and grazing land have taken place. The border areas had been relatively calm over the past year and there is growing concern that the recent developments have the potential for a destabilizing effect on the ongoing peace and reconciliation process. Although it is not expected that they could result into a breakdown of the entire process, they will further require serious attention.

As competition for scarce natural resources increases, illicit cross border **arms smuggling** by communities guarding their traditional grazing grounds against newcomers have been reported in some parts of Ethiopia. The growing availability of small arms may lead to further inter-communal fighting which in view of the high mobility of these communities could result in conflict across borders. Currently this has not yet been observed - partly because many of these conflicts are localized, and also because Ethiopian local authorities have started, for example, in some high risk areas of the Somali region, to enforce an exchange programme whereby "transient" pastoralists deposit their weapons in exchange for access to resources and retrieve them upon their departure. But if distress migration continues further into territories of neighboring countries, as recently witnessed in **Somalia**, and dry-season reserves in Somaliland start to deplete, this could lead to the deterioration of the overall security situation in the sub region.

CROSS BORDER DIMENSIONS

KEY ISSUES

- **Informal Trade**
- **Cross-border population and livestock movement**
- **Repatriation and return of refugees and IDPs**

Over the past months, the closure of the **Sudan-Eritrea** border has manifested a tremendous negative impact on the availability of food in Eritrea. Regular food supplies into Eritrea through **informal imports** from Sudan which has been critical to the survival of its population as it complements its domestic grain production, have literally stopped and cereal prices in some areas have skyrocketed. Overall, local grain prices have doubled over the last four months.

The closure of the Somalia and Djibouti borders by Ethiopia to control **contraband trade** is inadvertently hurting the little left coping mechanisms of communities living in areas around the border. As a result, economic activities in border villages and transit towns have been hard hit by these tight measures and increasing numbers of households have lost their livelihoods.

The large number of refugees in the countries of the Horn and their eventual **repatriation** will certainly be affected by the drought. Currently, the repatriation of Eritrean refugees from Sudan has been put on hold due to the border closure. But if drought conditions in the home country persist, their voluntary return may further delay and tension between the two countries may grow. Similarly, ongoing Somali refugees returning to Somaliland will be facing competition with increased numbers of drought “displaced” Ethiopian pastoralists. Likewise it will have a slowing effect on the recovery efforts of IDPs in Eritrea and Ethiopia.

RECOVERY

KEY ISSUES

- **Food Security**
 - Regional Food Security
 - Drought Management
 - Eritrea: Shortage of Labor
 - Eritrea: Landmines and UXOs

The growing concern of recurrent major droughts in the Horn of Africa at a much shorter cycle (2-3 years) and more so the magnitude of the current drought is increasingly placing on the spotlight a re-assessment of **food security strategies** in the countries of the Horn of Africa.

Within the framework of the **UN Secretary General’s Food Security Initiative for the Horn of Africa** which highlights on addressing food security in the broader context of poverty reduction, the Inter-Agency Taskforce on Long Term Food Security, Agricultural Development and Related Aspects in the Horn of Africa, has been working in the implementation of its recommendations to develop a Country Food Security Program (CFSP) which embraces famine elimination and longer-term food security activities and subsequently to formulate a Regional Food Security Program (RFSP) for the strengthening of inter-regional cooperation and cross border collaboration. The initial consultative process with all concerned partners at regional and national level is ongoing and individual

countries in the Horn of Africa are at different implementation stages. However, the success of any sustainable recovery of these drought-prone countries from a food crisis of this scale and to minimize the future impact of recurrent droughts in the region will require a more coordinated, comprehensive and aggressive approach to food security.

The experiences of **drought management** in all countries of the Horn revealed some hard truths and will need further debate as to how best ensure synergy between investments in emergency life-saving response and longer-term drought mitigation measures that rely on potential victims being transformed into problem-solvers. While encouraging communities to be key stakeholders in this process, the state would require to provide more appropriate incentives for sustainable livelihoods independent of central authority.

This applies, for example, to the **land tenure systems** presently in place in **Eritrea** and **Ethiopia**. In **Ethiopia** land security and agricultural credit schemes are currently a matter of discussions among international development partners and the Government within the ongoing broader national food security dialogue.

In **Eritrea**, the growing number of productive family members being called for national service, in addition to the lost opportunities due to the untimely return of IDPs for planting seasons last year and the slow progress on the demobilization process have inadvertently deprived the country of much needed **labour force** and therefore bitten hard on the food production and livelihood of its population. In order to maximize the benefits of the ongoing recovery/ reconstruction efforts and reintegration of returnees, including IDPs and demobilized combatants, and at a time when labour for agricultural activities and other income generating activities as a coping strategy are most needed, labour issues would need to be further addressed within a broader national economic development framework.

Additionally, key breadbasket areas in Eritrea remain uncultivable due to the presence of **landmines and UXOs**. The border war has rendered in excess of 12,000 hectares of the country's most productive land in Dehub and Garsh Barka inaccessible. Ongoing humanitarian demining activities have been delayed due to the premature removal of key NGOs in this sector last year. This in return will further setback the urgently needed progress in the recovery process.

OVERVIEW OF HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

So far, the humanitarian community, Governments and donors have worked effectively together to mobilize resources and thanks to their rapid response both in terms of pledges and actual disbursement of relief – though to a lesser extent in Eritrea - averted famine. However, neither Ethiopia nor Eritrea have reached the critical level of urgently needed assistance to address the acuteness of their emergency situation and much remains to be done to avoid a major crisis in 2003.

FOOD

Donor response to successive 2002 appeals for food aid in Ethiopia has been generally more favorable for Ethiopia than for Eritrea. Rapid pledges particularly for Eritrea, and prompt delivery of food aid cannot be put off any longer. Much of the required food aid will have to be imported. However, considering the limited capacity of the port of Djibouti, intra-regional movement of grain stocks from neighboring surplus countries such as Kenya, Uganda and Sudan, have been explored.

Non-Food Aid

CRITICAL AREAS

• **Water, Health, Livestock, Seeds**

The acuteness of **water** shortages in Eritrea and Ethiopia would need to be urgently addressed together with other non-food requirements as outlined in the countries' respective Appeals. This will not only alleviate the ongoing human suffering, but also forestall increasing population movements, curb down the high death rate of livestock and stem inter-communal conflict.

In Eritrea, the inadequate recharging of aquifers poses the greatest threat to sustainable recovery, second only to food shortages. Irrigation and drinking water are in seriously short supply, made worse by the country's lack of permanent rivers. Water table levels have fallen by as much as 10 m below pumping levels in some areas of the country and people are walking on average 3-5 hours from their homes to collect drinking water. Overall, up to 70% of villages countrywide require safe water systems and supplies.

In Ethiopia, UNICEF estimates that despite ongoing water interventions across the country, of the 2 million people who need assistance, only 560,000 people are covered. The shortfall in water interventions is most acute in parts of Afar and Somalia regions, some of the most drought-affected areas in the country. Additionally, 20-30% of non-functional water point schemes in Ethiopia are only just being rehabilitated and interventions will run through 2003. In SNNPR alone, a total of 1,115 non-functional water point schemes require funding.

Lack of access to clean and portable water portends increase in incidences of diseases and household as well as livestock migration in search of water and pasture. Low-cost water schemes require urgent funding in rural areas where water supply coverage and water surface are low.

Immediate and increased interventions are required in the **health** sector. Malnutrition rates averaging between 15-28% in Eritrea and 17.9% in some parts of Ethiopia are alarming. Most recent reports from Ethiopia indicate that death toll of children due to severe malnutrition has risen acutely. In Eritrea famine conditions are increasingly apparent in some pockets and acute water shortage in 4 regions are distressing.

HIV/AIDS continues to take a heavy toll on agricultural productivity in Ethiopia and Eritrea as well as diversion of scarce resources that would otherwise be invested in agricultural production.

Malaria, Meningitis and Diarrhea epidemics are potentially real in the most drought-affected areas of Ethiopia. This is made the more likely given alarming malnutrition rates among vulnerable groups especially in areas where the capacity to manage epidemics is either low or absent altogether. The provision of essential drugs, mosquito nets and the establishment of epidemics control as well as disease prevention measures must be urgently undertaken.

The provision of **seeds, crop inputs and fertilizer** should be prioritized before the next planting season in March if the 2003 harvests, assuming good rains, are to be better and to forestall a repeat of the 2002 disastrously low harvest levels and subsequent humanitarian crisis. Farmers in Eritrea have exhausted their seed stocks and are in urgent need of 10,000MT of seeds and basic agricultural inputs for the 2003 planting season. Seeds have highly shriveled in Ethiopia's crop-growing areas and have become unviable for planting. Timely supply of seed supply is therefore critical in both countries if favourable harvests are to be realized in 2003.

Despite ongoing ICRC emergency intervention in Ethiopia targeting poverty-stricken and drought affected through the supply of among others seeds and fertilizer, many farmers cannot access credits for purchase of agricultural packages necessary for the production of sorghum and maize. It remains unclear whether the Ethiopian government will provide farmers with the necessary inputs urgently needed for the forthcoming agricultural season.

Greater interventions will be required in **livestock** sector to stem the rapid stripping of assets base and to stabilize prices through de-stocking. 1/3 of livestock in Eritrea are directly affected by shortages of water and fodder and average livestock costs have fallen by 30% due to distress sales. Wild food production for fodder has dramatically fallen in Eritrea as well as Ethiopia. Worse still, many traditional dry season grazing zones are off-limits to pastoralists due to insecurity and Eritrea's border closures with Ethiopia and Sudan.

A shortfall of 3.7 million MT of fodder in Eritrea necessitates urgent interventions to stabilize the effects of the drought on livestock. Additionally, veterinary health assistance is required in Ethiopia to ensure the survival of livestock herds.

OTHER CONCERNS

- **Emergency versus development: diversion and priorities**
- **Diversion of attention from Humanitarian crisis in HOA**

Southern Africa

Middle East: Iraq

Response to the humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa requires a holistic approach. An appreciation of the complementarity of immediate and pressing **emergency requirements** to **development needs** is imperative if long-term recovery is to be achieved.

Emergency requirements are **additional** needs to that of an affected country's development necessities, and therefore development assistance packages ought not to be affected at the expense of supporting humanitarian activities. Inadequate donor response to relief efforts, on the one hand, could result in the diversion of resources earmarked for development programmes in critical sectors such as health and education toward emergency operations within the affected countries. On the other hand, prioritizing sectors within the emergency requirements by focusing more on immediate life-saving needs (food and water) and to a lesser extent on life-sustaining needs (health, education, agriculture, livestock) not only exacerbates the gap in response between food and non-food sectors but more importantly undermines recovery of affected populations.

The Southern Africa food crisis more or less coinciding the Horn of Africa drought led to growing concerns earlier last year that regions within the same continent have to compete against each other in mobilizing assistance and the humanitarian community being faced with prioritizing one crisis over the other. Fortunately, adequate, timely and balanced response by donors to both crises as well as the UN Initiative that seeks to address all humanitarian emergencies in Africa in one context of an "Africa Crisis" have helped to reduce these concerns within the humanitarian community.

However, at a more global level, Africa may again be faced with growing challenges and "competition" over resources in view of the growing attention to the events in the **Middle East** and possible military action in the "War against Terror." Although the UN believes that **Iraq** will continue to cooperate with the international community in its effort to maintain peace in the region, contingency planning for a possible war in the Middle East have already started and to this end pledges yet to be decided on may be prioritized differently during the course of the first quarter. In the event of war, delays could incur in obtaining further pledges. Such delays may be made worse if the war takes place at a time when it is projected the number of those in dire need of help will dramatically rise and urgent prevention of deteriorating nutritional status will be required.

Logistically, military action in the Middle East and potential involvement of key strategic countries of the Horn could lead to limited access of the seas (Red Sea and Gulf of Aden), port space constraints (Djibouti) or unavailability of some ports altogether (Port of Sudan, Bossasso, Berbera, Assab, Massawa). Given the politically sensitive relations between the countries of the region as well as their relations with the Gulf States, it is difficult to assess the reaction of these countries with regard to port access in the event of a war in Iraq. Nonetheless, it is expected that a war in Iraq will have the effect of considerably slowing down the delivery of urgently needed humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia and Eritrea during the course of the year.