



Horn of Africa

ECHO FACTSHEET

Facts & Figures

13.6 million people need urgent food assistance:

- **7.8 million in Ethiopia**
- **3.2 million in Somalia**
- **2.6 million in Kenya**

Number of displaced people:
1 861 000 in Somalia
1 056 738 in Ethiopia

(source: various UN, govt.)

European Commission humanitarian assistance

- **in 2016: €257M**
- **so far in 2017: €259M**

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Screening children for malnutrition in Somalia ©UNICEF/MKCoursein

Key messages

- Severe **drought** has taken hold in parts of the Horn of Africa (HoA) region following multiple long dry spells. Some affected areas in [Ethiopia](#), [Kenya](#) and [Somalia](#) were yet to recover from the 2015-16 El Niño-drought when rains failed again. The situation is rapidly worsening with early warning information showing emergency levels of food insecurity and malnutrition and severe water shortages. High numbers of livestock have died and cereal prices have shot up. The latest rainy season, from March to May, has again underperformed in many areas. Over 13 million people across the region need urgent food assistance.
- The accumulated effects of consecutive failed rains in 2015-2016 are being compared to conditions in 2010-11 when 260 000 Somalis died and hundreds of thousands sought refuge in Ethiopia and Kenya. The UN has issued a **famine warning** for Somalia where half the population is food insecure and more than 740 000 people have been displaced due to drought since November 2016. Kenya has declared the drought a **national disaster**. Rapid action is required and the UN has launched Appeals for action for both countries.
- Ethiopia, Kenya and [Uganda](#) are among the **world's top 10 refugee host countries**. Uganda is now the largest refugee recipient country in Africa. It hosts 1.3 million refugees. Most [refugees](#) have fled conflict, hunger and water scarcity in Somalia and South Sudan. The number of South Sudanese refugees in the region has passed the 1.4 million mark and 900 000 Somali refugees continue to live in camps and urban centres in Ethiopia and Kenya.
- Kenya has announced its intention to close the **Dadaab refugee camp** where Somali refugees have been hosted for over 25 years. 245 000 Somalis still reside there today. With over 1 million internally displaced, refugees from Yemen and insecurity across swathes of the drought-affected area, conditions in Somalia are however not conducive for a mass return.

Humanitarian situation and needs

The prolonged drought is particularly severe in Somalia, southeastern Ethiopia as well as northern Kenya and parts of its coast. Millions of people are affected by water shortages and food insecurity which are expected to worsen in the coming months as the latest rainy season has underperformed again in many areas. There have been massive livestock losses while high food prices and reduced incomes are being reported.

The drought comes on the heels of the erratic weather caused by the El Niño phenomenon in 2015-16. In Ethiopia, it left 10 million people in need of food aid and prompted the biggest drought response operation in the country's history. Although livestock died massively, a large-scale famine was avoided. Today, some of the same areas continue to experience drought after four consecutive failed rainy seasons.

With water points fast drying up pastoralists are trekking further afield in an effort to keep their animals alive. Competition for pasture and water increases the risk of conflict between different communities. The lack of water also drives people to unsafe water sources and contributes to poor hygiene. Water-borne diseases, including cholera and acute watery diarrhoea, are a major concern. Over 50 000 cases have so far been reported in Somalia in 2017, more than three times the figure in previous years. In Ethiopia, over 37 000 cases, mostly located in the Somali region are also hit by the cholera outbreak. When animals die, children are deprived of milk and become more prone to illnesses and malnutrition in a region with already high acute malnutrition. Assistance is required to provide millions of malnourished children with life-saving treatment in 2017, 3 million and 1.4 million children in Ethiopia and Somalia respectively.

Somalia is facing drought conditions comparable to 2010-11, which led to declared famine, with up to 260 000 deaths and hundreds of thousands of refugees. Emergency financing and early action are needed to prevent a similar scenario unfolding. Emergency food assistance, including cash transfers, is a priority in Somalia and in the drought-affected areas of Ethiopia and Kenya. Ensuring access to safe water and preventing livestock deaths are also vital, together with programmes addressing malnutrition. Increasing numbers of Somalis, including a high percentage of severely malnourished children, are crossing into Ethiopia.

Aid for the drought-affected people is complicated by the remoteness of certain areas as well as ongoing violence in Somalia. The conflict threatens the independent and impartial delivery of humanitarian assistance. All parties to the conflict are therefore urged to provide unimpeded access to people in need.

The Horn of Africa hosts 2.3 million refugees. Ongoing crises in Yemen, South Sudan and Somalia account for the majority of refugees. As there is no end in sight to the conflicts in these countries, which are at the same time experiencing severe food shortages, the mass return of refugees is not an option. On the contrary, more displacement and refugee flows are to be expected. A long-term effort on the part of the international community is needed to help the host countries cater for refugees' basic needs and, where possible, offer them more long-term prospects.

The European Union's Response

In 2016 alone, the European Commission allocated over €257 million in humanitarian aid, including a €163-million package for countries in the Horn most affected by El Niño. In 2017, so far more than €259 million has been allocated to the region (Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia and Uganda). This includes a €135 million top-up in response to the drought crisis and an additional €57 million to deal with the South Sudan refugee crisis.

These humanitarian funds are aimed at delivering food assistance, mostly through cash; health and nutrition care; and clean water, sanitation and shelter to those whose lives are threatened by drought and conflict. Across the Horn of Africa, providing assistance and protection to uprooted populations, either internally displaced, refugees or returnees, is a priority. In addition, increased emergency financing is now required on the part of all donors to allow for immediate action and avoid famine.

The European Commission funded food assistance is increasingly delivered through cash and electronic vouchers. The trucking of water to communities without any water source has become a necessity in some areas. ECHO also supports the treatment of severely malnourished children across the region.



In Ethiopia and Kenya's arid lands, the European Commission is funding consortia made up of different partners, each with a specific expertise. The aim is to help strengthen the resilience of communities against recurrent drought and other climate hazards. Different types of complementary assistance are provided, ranging from early response mechanisms in case of drought or animal disease outbreaks, e-vouchers for water or other goods, the promotion of better linkages with governmental disaster departments, and the creation of livelihood opportunities.

In both Ethiopia and Kenya, the Commission's humanitarian and development aid departments are striving at a more coherent aid approach for acute situations that have become longer-term or predictable, for instance recurrent drought or protracted refugee situations. Humanitarians helping the most vulnerable need to contribute to longer-term resilience strategies, while development partners need to take into account the needs of the most vulnerable groups, including refugees and internally displaced people.

With the high numbers of forcibly displaced people in the Horn of Africa, a priority is to help them to become less dependent on aid and more self-reliant. All returns of refugees to their home countries should be voluntary, informed, safe, dignified and sustainable.

Examples of humanitarian projects in the Horn of Africa



Across Somalia, there is a sharp increase in the number of acutely malnourished children. In 2016, EU support to UNICEF helped the organisation treat 96 000 children who suffered from severe acute malnutrition, a life-threatening condition. The children were given ready-to-use therapeutic foods and those with medical complications were hospitalised. In 2017, UNICEF expects 275 000 children to be severely malnourished. Its teams and partner organisations are further stepping up treatment as well as hygiene and nutrition education, and have already recorded a 58% increase in the number of children admitted with severe acute malnutrition. ©EC/ECHO/Anouk Delafortrie

A consortium of three NGOs lead by Vétérinaires Sans Frontières (VSF) is working to strengthen the resilience of communities in five counties in Kenya's arid north. The programme helps communities prepare for and deal with emergencies such as drought, natural disasters and livestock disease outbreaks. The pastoralist Turkana people are given tools to prevent outbreaks and monitor the health of their livestock through a network of 'community disease reporters' who are linked up with the local veterinary services. In response to the current drought, VSF activated a crisis mechanism and started providing cash assistance to the most drought affected people. ©EC/ECHO/Anouk Delafortrie



The European Commission supports WFP's cash transfer programme to refugees in Uganda. Cash transfers were first piloted in Uganda in 2014. Initially refugees were hesitant, but cash transfers have gained popularity. With cash in hand, refugees are able to buy their preferred food, which gives them more choice and enhances their sense of dignity. Cash transfers also reduce the selling of food aid items at throw-away prices and stimulate the local markets. The European Commission is committed to using the most effective and efficient system in the provision of humanitarian assistance. ©EC/ECHO/Bertha Wangari

In Ethiopia's Siti zone, one of the hardest hit by the drought, 70 000 people were displaced in 2016, after water points dried up and people lost their livestock. OXFAM has worked to provide communities with water by digging and repairing dozens of water boreholes. Each borehole serves an average of 5 000 people. 60% of the water is used to keep the animals alive. The organisation also trucked water as a last resort to communities without any other water source and supported 3 800 households with animal feed.

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