Government unveils more drought mitigation measures

The Government is scaling up drought response interventions to cushion Kenyans, especially pastoralists, from the effects of the current drought in the country.

Recognising that the situation continues to deteriorate and will worsen significantly if the long rains perform poorly, H.E President Uhuru Kenyatta last month declared the current drought situation a national disaster. The prolonged drought in the wider region, including Kenya, has also captured the attention of the United Nations, with Secretary General Antonio Guterres calling on the international community to support national governments to deal with it.

The Government has since unveiled various drought response interventions, which include a Kshs215 million livestock insurance payouts officially launched by the President in Lodwar, Turkana County on March 8, 2017 and which will help vulnerable pastoralists cope with the worst impacts of the drought. Others are an oil-based foot and mouth disease (FMD) vaccine expected to reduce the cost of vaccination by 50 per cent and increase pastoralists’ livestock production, and livestock offtake programme.

The Government is now implementing the second stage of a three-phase response programme approved by the Cabinet in November 2016, for which the National Treasury has approved a further Kshs7.4 billion against total needs of Kshs11.6 billion. The principal areas of response are food and safety nets, water, livestock, agriculture, health and nutrition, education, peace and security, environment, and coordination.

In addition, the NDMA is implementing two response mechanisms - drought contingency finance, supported by the European Union (EU), and scalable cash transfers through the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP), supported by UK Aid. Since July 2016, the NDMA has disbursed Kshs242 million of drought contingency finance in 21 counties, complementing what the county governments and their partners are doing in the key sectors of livestock, agriculture, water, health and nutrition, education and security. A further Kshs526 million has been committed.

A major scale-up of support to the livestock sector is underway, which includes provision of animal feeds, commercial destocking for fattening and slaughter destocking of animals which have lost their commercial value. As part of inter-agency partnership and coordination for drought response, the NDMA is collaborating with the Kenya Defence Forces in the transportation and distribution of livestock feed supplements and other relief supplies.

The drought response measures are being overseen by an intergovernmental and inter agency coordination committee. The committee, which is chaired by Agriculture Principal Secretary Dr Richard Lesiyampe, has recommended standard pricing of livestock under the ongoing offtake programmes. The committee has tasked the livestock sector to guide on standard prices to be adopted by all stakeholders. The committee reiterated the President’s directive that future scale up efforts should be geared towards cash transfers to enhance the purchasing power of beneficiaries.
Part of the funds to go towards cash transfers managed through the Hunger Safety Net programme.

The European Union has provided an additional €23 million (about KSh2.5 billion) in response to the ongoing drought. The additional funding will be managed by the NDMA over the next three years and is part of the EU’s overall contribution to complement Government efforts to strengthen and institutionalise drought management.

“When we look at the impact of drought and climate change, we need to look at the capacity of counties and communities to better respond to disasters, to cope with the crisis in a timely manner, and to invest in strategies that will help them recover,” said EU Ambassador to Kenya Stefano Dejak.

Ambassador Dejak added:

The EU support will meet the most urgent needs of the affected people and help strengthen the capacity of counties and local communities to respond to and prepare for disasters and thus prevent the loss of assets. The programme will build on the existing €10 million Kenya Rural Development Programme Drought Contingency Fund (DCF) through which the EU is supporting the NDMA with drought preparedness and response.

In addition, the EU will provide €10 million to finance the scalability of cash transfers under the HSNP in order to enhance the purchasing power of vulnerable households during drought crises. This will help reduce the loss of assets and protect the livelihoods of vulnerable households. Currently, HSNP is supporting vulnerable households in the poorest four counties of Turkana, Mandera, Wajir and Marsabit. It provides regular payments of Ksh 5,400 to more than half a million people. The money is credited to the beneficiary account every two months. More than half of that money was provided by GoK last year and the rest funded by UK Aid. In February 2017, and with funding from UK Aid, the HSNP made emergency cash transfers totalling Ksh14.8 million to an additional 53,437 households in the four counties of operation, i.e. over and above the programme’s core caseload. The EU contribution will be used to reach an additional 400,000 beneficiaries in the coming months, who will also be receiving Ksh270 every month during the drought emergency period.

“We should learn the lessons from previous droughts and sound the alarm early,” said Ambassador Dejak.

The UN is calling for support to Kenya to deal with effects of the ongoing drought. Speaking separately in the country, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mr Stephen O’Brien challenged the international community to act fast to save lives in Kenya and the larger Horn of Africa where drought is widespread.

“I hope that the international community will be able to match the generosity that Kenyans have always shown, namely in relation to refugees, and support the country now that the drought has been prolonged in such a way that, of course, the resources of the country are themselves in difficulty to face this enormous challenge,” Secretary-General Guterres said in Nairobi after meeting President Uhuru Kenyatta.

President Kenyatta, who declared the drought a national disaster last month, thanked the UN boss for expressing his solidarity with Kenya. The UN and its humanitarian partners are now appealing for $166 million to aid Kenyan pastoralists and farmers whose livestock and crops are suffering amid what the Government declared a “national drought disaster.”

“When with these funds, humanitarian actors will provide life-saving food, health, water and sanitation services to 2.6 million vulnerable Kenyans over the next ten months,” UN Resident Coordinator in Kenya Siddharth Chatterjee in Nairobi on March 16, 2017.

While on a visit to Badan Rero village in Moyale, Marsabit County, UN Under-Secretary-General O’Brien came face-to-face with both the ravages of drought and the mitigation measures being taken by local communities and their partners. It was here that Mr O’Brien witnessed communities in a desperate dash to save their livestock. Badan Rero is a dry-season grazing area which currently holds up to 40,000 livestock. Some animals have moved in from Southern Ethiopia, Wajir County and Walida in Central Marsabit.

“I have the opportunity to see for myself the suffering of the people. These communities, though resilient, are on the verge of survivability. The children under the age of 5 and lactating mothers are bearing the brunt of this drought,” Mr O’Brien said.

Need to avert potential famine

The UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization warned that unless urgent action is taken, the region will be hit by acute famine. Already, famine has reared its ugly head in neighbouring South Sudan, while Somalia is at risk for the second time this decade. In Kenya, more than 2.7 million are facing food insecurity and a further 300,000 from non-ASAL counties are severely food insecure.

"Crops are failing, prices are rising and families are going hungry. There is good leadership. There is need to build the successful track record of saving lives and protecting civilians, who through no fault of their own, have found themselves caught up in the drought,” Mr O’Brien called for financial resources to reverse the situation.

“We need huge financial resources. We must make this money available and ensure that the money is translated into government plans,” he said.

The Under-Secretary-General reassured Kenyans that the international community would stand with them. He also dispelled claims of donor apathy, saying that record amounts were raised for humanitarian efforts last year.

“We thank the generosity of the donor community. However, we have never seen more need than this,” he noted.

While in Moyale, Mr O’Brien witnessed several initiatives supported by the UN, the Kenyan government and the private sector, including schools for children, malnutrition screening, water trucking, cash transfers and livestock support programmes. The Kenyan Government has in place a three-phase response programme spanning November 2016 to July 2017. However, the scale of the crisis is exceeding existing capacity. This is bigger than any of us can manage that is why we need the international community, the United Nations, the international NGOs and local NGOs to come together, coordinated, to make sure we deliver the lifesaving assistance like screening those who are clearly not able to get sufficient nutrition and making sure that we give them both medical and food supplements that is going to avert what otherwise could be an extra ordinarily protracted period of suffering. This drought and the forecast for the necessary rains in a couple of months are not promising and therefore the fear is that this could only get worse. We have an opportunity to act. It requires the international community now to step up,” said the UN relief coordinator.

While reporting his observations to the Security Council after the visit, Mr O’Brien said the international community is “facing the largest humanitarian crisis since the creation of the UN.”
Food-for-fees: Retaining students in school in the face of drought

Schools run risk of losing students when sent away over fees arrears

She was between a rock and a hard place. In another two days, she would have to do the unthinkable – send her girls home. She could no longer keep the school open. Her food supplies store was all but empty: only a sack of maize and half a bag of beans remained.

Ms Florence Achiacho, the Isiolo Girls High School principal, pondered the options, the future bleak. Not just for the students but for the school too. This is the only girls’ National School in Isiolo County. Closing it would reverberate beyond the school’s compound. But the school requires 24 kgs of maize and 15kgs of beans to feed the 220 girls at each meal. “This drought has nearly brought my school to its knees. Parents cannot pay their daughters’ school fees. But we are cautious about sending the girls home. If I am afraid I might lose them for good,” she says. The principal attributes the situation to the Government of Kenya to ensure synergies among all agencies and stakeholders. We appreciate this partnership,” Mr. James Oduor said after the flag off.

Procurement of the feed supplements has been given to the hardest-hit counties that also registered livestock mortalities, such as Turkana, Samburu, Baringo, Mandera, Marsabit, Tana River, Lamu, Wajir, Garissa, Kajiado, Taita Taveta and West Pokot.

Communities have lauded the supply of livestock supplementary feeds which is cushioning livestock, especially small stock, against the worst impacts of drought. “The drought pallets provided by the NDMA and EU are of very good quality and are giving almost immediate results. Sheep and goats start showing improvement in body condition in less than a week,” said Chief Philip Aramaat of Lorumug, Loima Subcounty in Turkana. The KDF trucks are not only ferrying the livestock feeds from the depots in Nakuru, Eldoret and Nairobi to affected ASAL areas, but are also helping deliver other relief assistance at the county level.

NDMA provides highly nutritious livestock feeds to cushion herders

Collaboration with the military is helping to accelerate transportation and distribution

The National Drought Management Authority is providing livestock feeds in ASAL counties as part of a scale-up to support the livestock sector and save pastoralist livelihoods. The intervention includes collaboration with the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) to accelerate distribution to ensure that the livestock feed supplements reach the most needy and vulnerable in the community.

KDF has provided 15 trucks to aid in transportation and distribution and two water bowsers that are supporting water trucking activities in Samburu and Marsabit counties. The first consignment of livestock feeds was flagged off by NDMA CEO Mr. James Oduor on February 21, 2017 at Unga Feeds plant in Nakuru. “This collaboration with the Kenya Defence Forces is part of an elaborate plan by the Government of Kenya to ensure synergies among all agencies and stakeholders. We appreciate this partnership,” Mr. James Oduor said after the flag off.

Procurement of the feed supplements under the European Union funded Drought Contingency Fund started in January following the deterioration of drought conditions across ASAL counties. In order to avert widespread livestock deaths, the NDMA decided on a significant scale up of response in the livestock sector, especially the supply of animal concentrate pallets and urea molasses mineral (UMM) blocks targeted at the core breeding stock left behind as herds migrate to dry season grazing areas. The programme includes the production of 86,898 bags of highly nutritious drought pallets and 41,000 urea molasses blocks at a total cost of about Kshs 180 million. It also includes both accelerated commercial destocking of 3,000 cattle and slaughter destocking of approximately 23,570 sheep and goats and 5,355 cattle which have lost their commercial value. These interventions complement the actions being taken by the State Department of Livestock and County Governments.

Priority in feeds provision has been given to the hardest-hit counties that also registered livestock mortalities, such as Turkana, Samburu, Baringo, Mandera, Marsabit, Tana River, Lamu, Wajir, Garissa, Kajiado, Taita Taveta and West Pokot.

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Food-for-fees: Retaining students in school in the face of drought

Schools run risk of losing students when sent away over fees arrears

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### DCF BUSINESS PROCESS

1. Review & evaluation of drought response activities
2. Reporting & accounting for funds
3. Implementation of drought response activities
4. The NDMA approves the requests and transfers funds to County accounts
5. The NDMA reviews the action plans against the county contingency plan.
6. The CSG initiates a request through the County NDMA for DCF by submitting an action plan and budget in line with the contingency plans
7. DWF signals a drought, escalating the situation to the sectoral working groups of the CSG undertaking rapid food security assessments.
8. County NDMA & County Planning Units prepare county contingency plans
9. Contingency plans approved by NDMA
10. EWS signals a drought response

### DCF QUICK FACTS

- DCF complements resources available to county level sectors.
- Allocation of contingency finance is guided by drought contingency plans and the early warning system.
- Contingency plans are approved in advance of a drought and describe, sector by sector, what should be done during each phase: ‘normal’, ‘alert’, ‘alarm’, ‘emergency’ or ‘recovery’.
- Once ‘alert’ or ‘alarm’ phase is reached, the contingency plan is quickly reviewed and an operational response plan developed to address the particular features of that drought. It is these response plans that are financed with contingency funds.
- All 23 ASAL counties are eligible for funding under DCF based on drought severity as signalled by the drought early warning system.
- DCF also supports preparedness (long term development) projects in ASAL counties to build community resilience to drought.