

KENYA - SECTORAL BULLETIN WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE

Publication: October 2026 - Data Collection: June 2026

Context & Rationale

Populations in Kenya's Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) counties continue to face Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) challenges linked to drought, flooding, water shortages and displacement.¹ The March - May, 2026 long rains temporarily improved water availability in some areas, but gains were uneven and short-lived, with continued reliance on seasonal sources, long distances to water points and infrastructure constraints.² In refugee settings, funding cuts and fuel shortages have also affected water services, with some households receiving below the recommended minimum water quantities.^{3,4}

REACH's 2026 Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA) provides household (HH) level findings on water access, water insecurity, sanitation, hygiene and access barriers, supporting geographic and sectoral prioritisation. These conditions may be compounded by the anticipated above average October - December rains,⁵ which could worsen existing WASH gaps through flooding, contamination of water sources and damage to sanitation infrastructure.⁶

Bulletin Overview and Intended Use

The bulletin covers five assessed counties, Garissa, Mandera, Marsabit, Turkana and Wajir, and refugees in Dadaab and Kakuma camps and the Kalobeyei settlement. The counties covered in this bulletin were prioritised for inclusion in the 2026 MSNA following consultation with the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA).

To provide an overview of WASH conditions across these locations, the bulletin triangulates findings from the MSNA and Multi-Sectoral Needs Index (MSNI) analysis, Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI) data, and National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) sentinel-site monitoring.

The bulletin is intended to support WASH prioritisation and collective planning across the assessed areas. It is limited to assessed locations hence, findings should not be interpreted as representative of WASH needs and conditions across the ASAL region.

Key Messages*

- **WASH needs were widespread across assessed locations, with severe needs higher in Mandera and Dadaab.** Overall, 66% of host and affected households and 89% of refugee HHs had WASH needs (MSNI severity score 3+).
- **High use of improved water sources did not necessarily translate into sufficient and reliable water access.** Household water insecurity was particularly high in Kalobeyei (89%) and Kakuma (86%), despite 95–100% of households in refugee settings reporting use of improved water sources.
- **Reliance on surface water and limited household water treatment highlight potential drinking water safety concerns.** Overall, 16% of households relied primarily on surface water, particularly in Mandera (42%) and Wajir (26%) however, water treatment was limited, potentially increasing exposure to unsafe drinking water.
- **Sanitation gaps varied between host/affected communities and refugee settings.** Open lack of sanitation facilities was particularly prevalent among host-community households in Turkana (57%), compared to 25% overall. While less common in refugee settings (0–8%), reliance on unimproved sanitation facilities remained a concern, particularly in Dadaab (34%), highlighting gaps in sanitation access and infrastructure quality.
- **Limited access to functional hand-washing facilities remained a major hygiene concern across assessed locations.** The absence of designated hand-washing facilities was particularly widespread in Dadaab camp (88%), Marsabit (87%) and Turkana (77%). Even where facilities were available, soap and water were not consistently present.

* Findings drawn from the 2026 REACH MSNA

MSNI – A composite measure used by REACH to assess the severity of household needs across multiple sectors and identify households experiencing multidimensional needs using MSNA data.

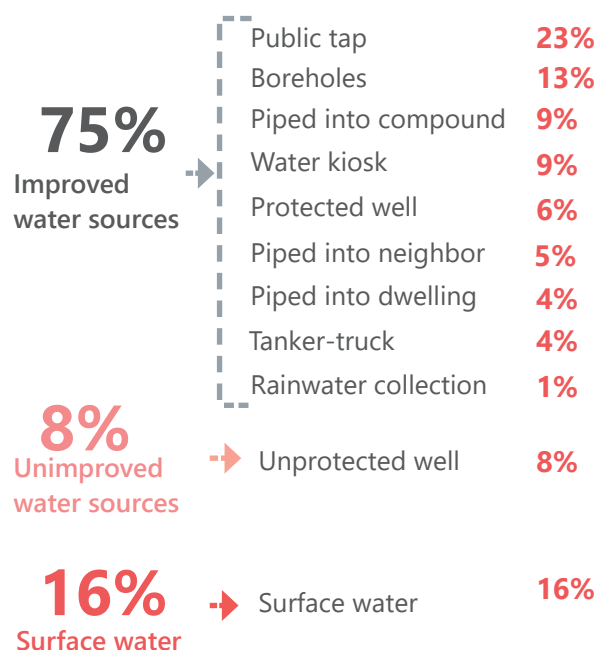
JMMI – A market-monitoring initiative that tracks prices, availability and affordability of essential goods and services to support humanitarian cash and market-based programming.

NDMA sentinel-site monitoring: Monthly monitoring conducted by the NDMA across all ASAL counties.

MSNA FINDINGS: WASH Conditions at the Household Level

Access to Drinking Water

Main drinking water sources (% of households)*



Average Round-Trip Water Collection Time, by Location

35% of households spent over 30 minutes collecting drinking water

Assessed Counties

Location	On premises	Under 30 min	Above 30 min
Garissa	36%	45%	19%
Mandera	17%	53%	30%
Marsabit	11%	54%	35%
Turkana	29%	41%	30%
Wajir	19%	47%	34%

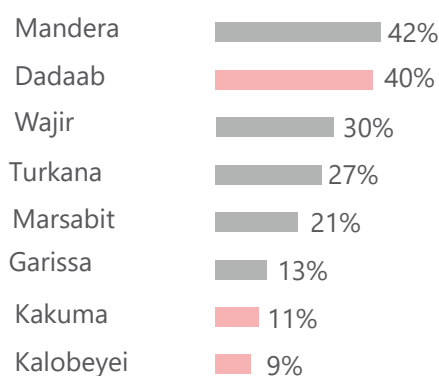
Refugee locations

Dadaab	4%	27%	70%
Kakuma	2%	50%	48%
Kalobeyei	0%	59%	40%

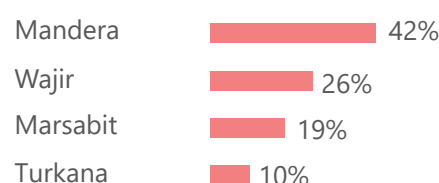
Reliance on surface water was particularly high in Mandera (42%) and Wajir (26%). Long drinking water collection times remained a notable access constraint, with 35% of assessed households spending more than 30 minutes collecting water. The highest proportions were mainly among refugee population and Marsabit and Wajir among the affected populations, highlighting continued physical barriers to accessing drinking water.

Households Reporting Treatment of Drinking Water, by Assessed Location

Assessed Locations

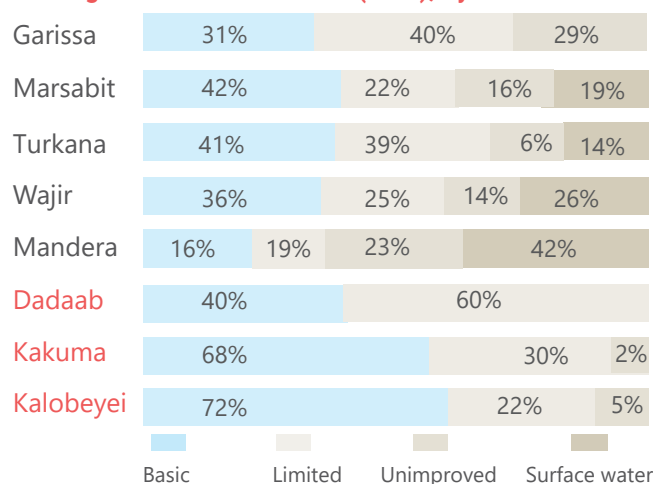


Households Using Surface Water as their Main Drinking Water Source (%)



Reliance on surface water was highest Mandera and Wajir while drinking water treatment was reported by 42% and 30% of households. This suggests potential water quality risks, particularly during flooding, and highlights the importance of source protection, water quality monitoring and household water treatment.

Drinking Water Service Levels (JMP), by Location*



Drinking water access constraints varied across assessed locations. In Mandera and Wajir, high reliance on surface water points to gaps in access to improved water sources, while in refugee locations, limited service levels suggest that collection time remains a major constraint despite widespread use of improved sources. These differences highlight the need for context-specific interventions, including expanding access to improved water sources in affected counties and strengthening water supply capacity to reduce collection times in refugee locations.

JMP drinking water service levels: Basic refers to drinking water from an improved source requiring ≤30 minutes for a round trip, including queuing; limited refers to an improved source requiring >30 minutes; unimproved includes unprotected wells and springs; and surface water includes rivers, lakes and other surface sources.

* Drinking water sources refer to the main source usually used by households for drinking. Only the most commonly reported sources are reported; therefore, percentages do not sum to 100% Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding

HOUSEHOLD WATER INSECURITY AND CONSTRAINTS

The HWISE-4 scale captures four household experiences over the previous four weeks. It is not a direct measure of drinking water quality, litres available or system reliability.

Households reporting water-related difficulties on three or more days (%)

18%

Insufficient drinking water

16%

Worried about water sufficiency

15%

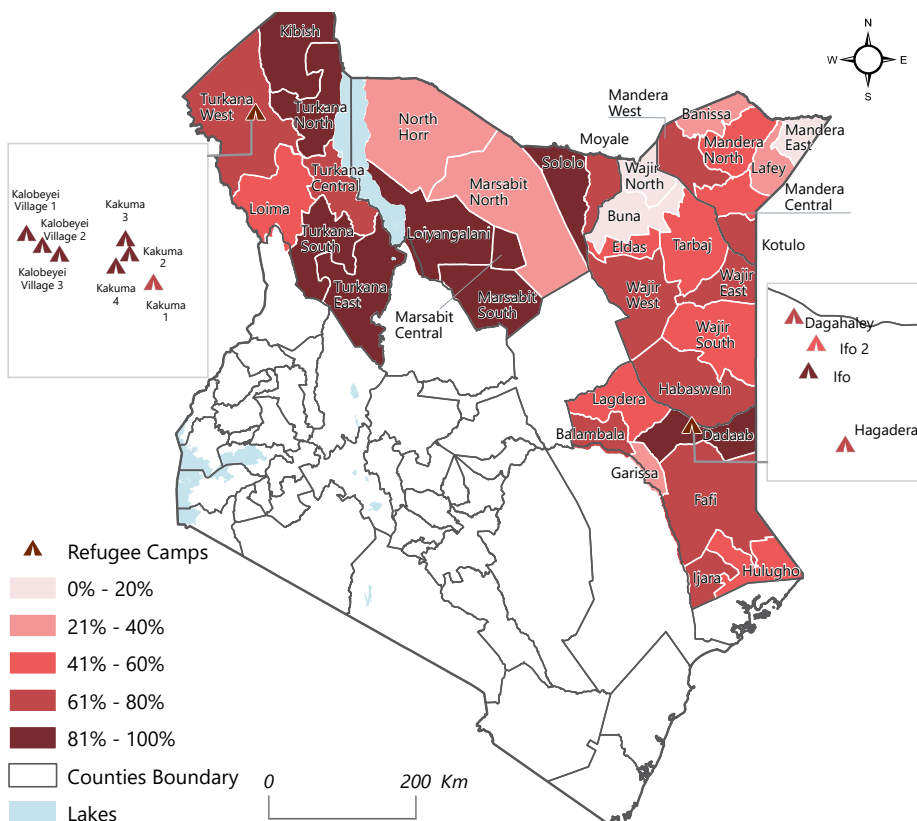
Changed schedules or plans

14%

Missed hand-washing

Percentages represent households reporting each experience on three or more days, combining Sometimes (3–10 days), Often (11–20 days) and Always (more than 20 days).

Households Experiencing Water Insecurity (HWISE-4 ≥4), by Sub-County (%)



The HWISE measures household experiences of water insecurity, including concerns about water availability and insufficient water for drinking and hand-washing. The findings showed geographic differences in household water insecurity, measured using HWISE-4.

Water insecurity was particularly prevalent in Kalobeyei (89%), Kakuma (86%), Turkana (81%) and Marsabit (77%). Sub-county findings indicate pronounced geographical differences, with high levels in parts of Turkana, Marsabit and Garissa. These patterns highlight priority areas for further assessment of household water access, availability and reliability.

Water Access Challenges and Unmet Needs*

Water point too far

Overall	27%	
Host and affected HHs	28%	
Refugee Population HHs	22%	

Long waiting time

Overall	13%	
Host and affected HHs	8%	
Refugee Population HHs	36%	

Water source not functional

Overall	11%	
Host and affected HHs	8%	
Refugee Population HHs	20%	

Water access challenges also differed across population groups. Distance to water points was more commonly reported by host and affected households (27%) than refugee households (22%), while refugee households reported longer waiting times (36%). These indicate that challenges extend beyond water quality to include physical access and infrastructure reliability, potentially affecting households' ability to obtain sufficient safe drinking water.

43% of assessed households identified insufficient safe drinking water as a priority need.

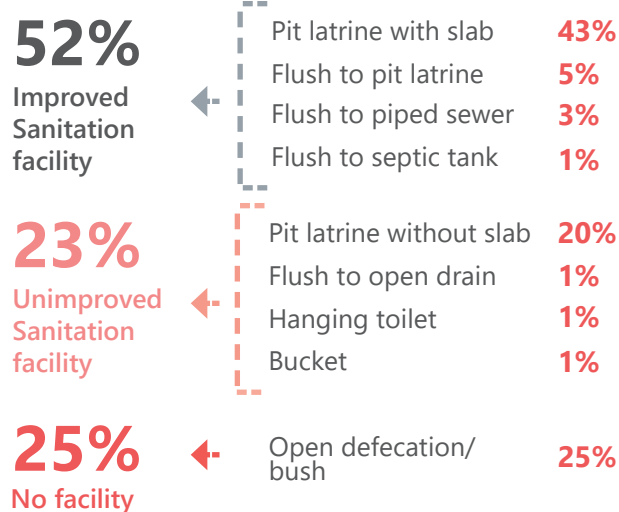
This may reflect persistent access challenges, including long distances, waiting times and non-functional water sources, alongside widespread household water insecurity and the dependence on unimproved and surface water.

*Households could report multiple water access challenges; percentages may therefore exceed 100%.

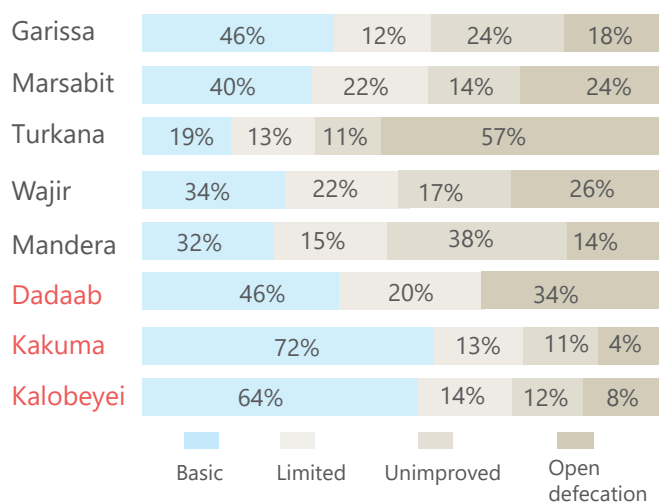
2026 MSNA data was used to report the findings on page 3

Sanitation and Hygiene: Access, Conditions and Practices

Sanitation Facility by % of Households



Sanitation Facility Service Levels (JMP), by Location

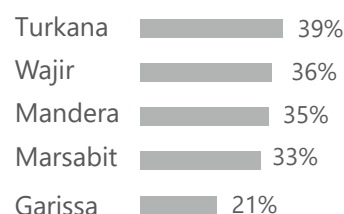


Open defecation was particularly high in Turkana (57%), Wajir (26%) and Marsabit (24%). In refugee locations, open defecation was less common (0%–8%), although unimproved sanitation remained a concern in Dadaab (34%). These findings highlight the need to expand sanitation access in areas with high open defecation and improve facilities where unimproved sanitation is widespread.

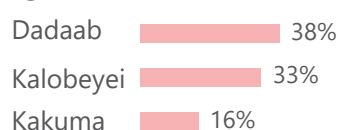
Household Sharing Sanitation Facilities with Non-household members

32% of households shared sanitation facilities with other households with shared facilities used by an average of four households.

Assessed Counties



Refugee locations

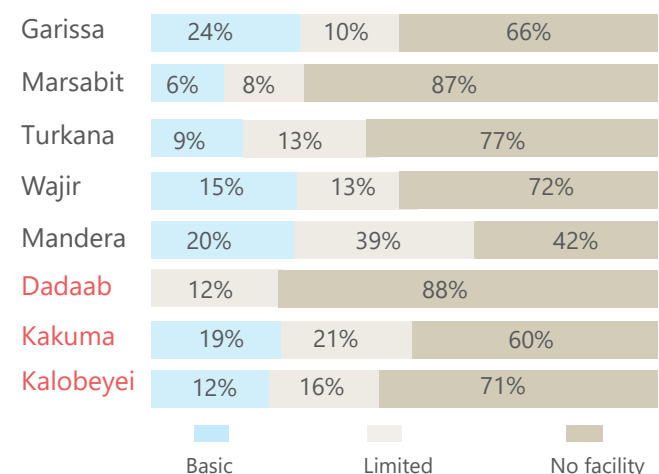


Household Sanitation Facility Feature

Location	Has a Door	Door has a lock	Walls for privacy	Inside light
Garissa	68%	30%	28%	11%
Mandera	73%	49%	54%	18%
Marsabit	77%	68%	67%	17%
Turkana	80%	57%	61%	5%
Wajir	61%	25%	22%	11%
Dadaab	80%	64%	54%	19%
Kakuma	77%	60%	85%	5%
Kalobeyei	67%	55%	82%	4%

Shared and inadequate facility features may present barriers to safe and dignified use. Overall, 32% of households reported sharing sanitation facilities with other households. Privacy walls were reported for only 22% of facilities in Wajir and 28% in Garissa, while internal lighting was uncommon across assessed locations. These highlight the importance of considering privacy, accessibility and usability alongside facility coverage

Hygiene Service Levels (JMP), by Location



Most assessed households had no hand-washing facility (69%), particularly in Dadaab (88%), Marsabit (87%) and Turkana (77%). Where facilities were observed, many lacked soap and/or water: in Mandera, which had the highest coverage (58%), only about one in three had both, and in Dadaab none did. This points to two distinct gaps, missing infrastructure and poorly supplied facilities, with water availability likely a factor, as 57% of households went without water for hand-washing in the previous four weeks.

JMP basic sanitation refers to improved facilities not shared with other households, while limited sanitation refers to improved shared facilities. Basic hygiene requires a hand-washing facility with soap and water available on premises; limited hygiene indicates a facility without soap and/or water.

Affordability of WASH items JMMI (April-June 2026)⁷

Household Expenditure on Water in the Previous 30 Days, by County

Location	HHs reporting water expenditure (%)	Monthly expenditure among HHs paying for water (KES)*
Garissa	40%	1,711
Mandera	34%	1,806
Marsabit	78%	1,572
Turkana	29%	1,206
Wajir	16%	682

Household water expenditure varied alongside differences in drinking water sources and reported access barriers. In Marsabit, where boreholes were the most commonly reported source (29%), water expenditure was widespread (78%), while 10% of households cited water being too expensive or unaffordable as an access constraint. In Wajir, surface water was also the most common source (26%), but only 16% reported water expenditure, while 34% cited long distances to water points.

Mandera recorded the highest mean monthly expenditure among paying households (KES 1,806), alongside substantial reliance on surface water (42%). This may suggest affordability barriers to accessing improved water sources, potentially contributing to reliance on alternative sources. These findings highlight the need to consider affordability alongside the availability and accessibility of improved water sources.

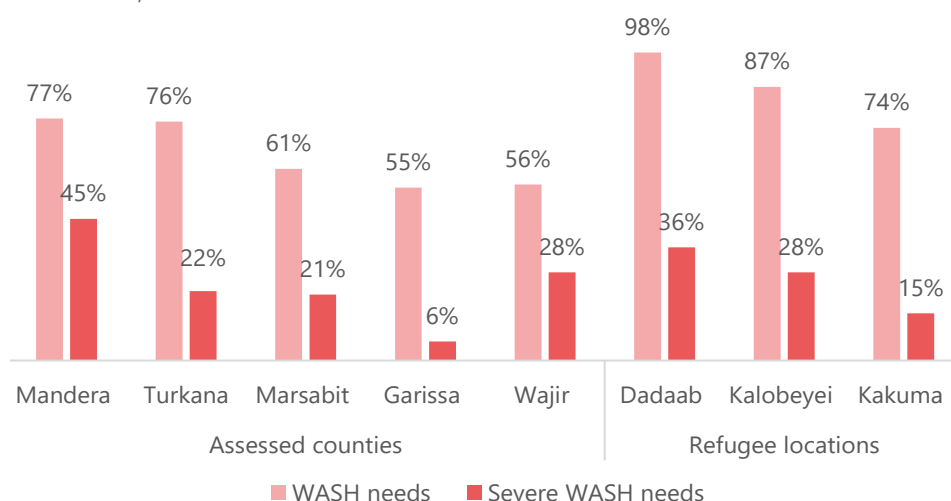
Estimated Monthly Soap Cost as a Share of Mean Household Income

Location	Estimated soap price per 250 g (KES)	Estimated monthly soap cost, 6-person HH (KES)**	Mean monthly HH income (KES)	Cost as % of income
Garissa	104	625	12,080	5.2%
Mandera	104	625	13,205	4.7%
Marsabit	125	750	13,232	5.7%
Turkana	104	625	11,452	5.5%
Wajir	104	625	6,917	9.0%
Dadaab	62.5	375	12,902	2.9%
Kakuma	62.5	375	8,281	4.5%
Kalobeyei	62.5	375	3,483	10.8%

The estimated monthly cost of multipurpose soap represented a notable share of mean household income, particularly in Kalobeyei (11%) and Wajir (9%). This suggests potential affordability constraints that may compound existing challenges in maintaining soap availability for hand-washing. However, these estimates do not reflect actual household expenditure or establish a direct relationship with soap availability.

Households with WASH Needs and Severe WASH Needs⁸

The MSNI uses selected WASH 2026 MSNA indicators covering water quantity, water quality, sanitation and hygiene to classify household WASH needs on a severity scale of 1–5. Households scoring 3 or above are classified as having WASH needs, while those scoring 4 or above are classified as having severe WASH needs. Severe WASH needs are a subset of overall WASH needs.



WASH needs were widespread across assessed locations, with the highest proportions of households in need recorded in refugee locations. However, severe WASH needs were most prevalent in Mandera (45%), followed by Dadaab (36%), highlighting differences in the severity of needs across locations and the importance of geographically targeted WASH responses.

*Mean water expenditure is calculated among households reporting expenditure on water in the 30 days prior to data collection.

** Soap prices were standardised to 250 g per person per month, referencing the [Sphere Handbook](#) (2018) bathing soap recommendation. Monthly costs were estimated for a six-person household (1.5 kg) using JMMI-monitored multipurpose soap prices and expressed as a percentage of mean monthly household income reported in the 2026 MSNA. Estimates are indicative and do not represent actual household expenditure or the full soap requirement.

NDMA Water Access Situation and Priority Areas as of June 2026

Water source availability and functionality	Average round-trip distance to water source (km)	Cost of water at source (KES/20 litres)	Average waiting time at water source (min)	Average water consumption per person per day
GARISSA⁹ Permanent sources include boreholes, but supply reliability was affected by pump, generator and pipeline failures. Seasonal sources were declining and were expected to dry earlier than expected.	6–8 km pastoral; 5–6 km agro-pastoral. Dadaab/Liboi reached about 10 km; Benane and Baraki exceeded 8 km	Strong geographical variation: KES 5 in Modogashe and Dadaab/Liboi; KES 30 Benane; KES 40 Sabena/Goreale/Baraki; KES 50 Danyere.	15–20 min agro-pastoral; 30–50 min pastoral, rising to 60–100 min during peak livestock watering.	30–35 L/person/day agro-pastoral; 20–25 L/person/day pastoral. Below 10 L/person/day reported in Sabena, Goreale and Baraki.
TURKANA¹⁰ Boreholes accounted for 28% of use, traditional hand-dug wells 23% and rivers 17%. Open sources were expected to last only 1–2 months, while about 287 boreholes and shallow wells were non-functional, mainly in pastoral areas.	About 4 km pastoral, 3 km agro-pastoral and 2 km fisherfolk. Extreme cases included Kaapeduru 20 km and Loru 50 km.	Water cost was around KES 5 per 20-litre jerrycan. Higher prices reported in water scarce areas where households relied on private water vendors, including parts of Turkana North, South, Aroo and Loima.	About 50 min pastoral, 30 min agro-pastoral and 20 min fisherfolk. Kakong'u reported waits of up to 12 hours.	Approximately 10 L/person/day pastoral, 20 agro-pastoral, 30 fisherfolk and 40 urban; declining consumption in several low-yield borehole areas.
MANDERA¹¹ Water access was stable; 49 infiltration galleries, 240 boreholes, 181 water pans and 149 berkads were operational	0–5 km across the livelihood zones, while distances could increase to 20–50 km in hotter pastoral/ agro-pastoral areas as temporary sources dry.	Average KES 5/20L, although vendor dependent areas faced higher prices, particularly around mining locations	60 min pastoral/ agro-pastoral and 30 min irrigated cropping	Average approximately 15 L/person/day across the three livelihood zones.
MARSABIT¹² Less than 10% of surface sources remained available in pastoral areas of Laisamis and North Horr. Boreholes had become the main source; about 12 boreholes were non-operational.	Within normal ranges, but 10–15 km reported in Bubisa, Burgabo, Thekuku, Boqe and Dabel; distances above 30 km were anticipated in some locations as sources depleted	Generally 2–5 km; 10–15 km in hotspots including Bubisa, Burgabo, Thekuku, Boqe and Dabel. Distances above 30 km were anticipated in some areas as surface sources depleted.	30–45 min pastoral; 40–60 min agro-pastoral. 1–2 hours in Laisamis and 4–6 hours in Bubisa.	10–15 L/person/day pastoral; 15–20 L/person/day agro-pastoral. Several hotspots recorded only 8–10 L/person/day.
WAJIR¹³ Around 60–80% of boreholes were operational, but 54 boreholes, >3,800 shallow wells and 92 water pans were non-functional. Water pans were expected to last about one month.	5–10 km pastoral and about 5 km agro-pastoral; pastoral distances were above normal.	Generally KES 2–10; around KES 10 in Wajir town.	Around 30 minutes across livelihood zones.	15–20 L/person/day

Water access challenges were particularly pronounced in pastoral areas of Marsabit, Turkana, Wajir and parts of Garissa, where declining seasonal sources, infrastructure failures and long collection distances constrained access. These findings reinforce the MSNA observation that improved water sources do not necessarily translate to reliable access, with potential implications for household health, livelihoods and well-being.

NDMA monitors drought conditions across Kenya's Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) counties through regular sentinel-site monitoring and monthly early warning bulletins. Monitoring captures indicators related to water availability, access and costs, including water-source conditions, collection distances, waiting times and household water consumption.

WASH Response Priorities and Areas of Concern

Seasonal Response Context

The contrasting seasonal outlook may place WASH programmes under two successive forms of pressure.

Drier conditions during July–September could reduce water availability, increase demand on permanent systems and raise operational and emergency water-supply costs.¹⁴

Wetter conditions during October–December may replenish sources but could also damage infrastructure, restrict field access and increase contamination and water-borne disease risks.¹⁵ WASH partners should therefore plan simultaneously for water scarcity, flood preparedness, water quality monitoring and rapid system repair.



Estimated cost of recommended water-sector interventions

August 2026-January 2027)

KES 14.8 Billion

According to the 2026 Long Rain Assessment National Report, NDMA estimates that more than KES 14.8 Billion is needed to cater for water-sector interventions during the August 2026-January 2027. This is not an approved budget or confirmed funding gap.¹⁶

NDMA Recommended Water-Sector Interventions

- 1 Rehabilitate and climate-proof water systems, including green energy.
- 2 Desilt water pans and dams ahead of the OND rains and protect critical sources from flooding.
- 3 Pre-position water-treatment chemicals and protect critical sources from flooding, maintain emergency water access during acute shortages and scale up point-of-use water treatment

ABOUT REACH

REACH Initiative facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and in-depth analysis, and all activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. REACH is a joint initiative of IMPACT Initiatives, Acted and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research - Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT).



Selected WASH Areas of Concern

Garissa – High household water insecurity among refugee and host communities, alongside long water-collection distances and declining water consumption.

Turkana – selected high-HWISE sub-counties: High household water insecurity, with NDMA also reporting extreme collection distances, congestion and prolonged waiting in locations such as Loru, Kaapeduru, Kakong'u and Nakalale.

Marsabit – Laisamis: High household water insecurity, alongside borehole breakdowns and prolonged waiting times.

Mandera – selected pastoral/agro-pastoral areas: High household water insecurity and increasing reliance on permanent sources as seasonal water sources decline.

Wajir – selected high-HWISE areas: Household water insecurity coincides with increasing pressure on permanent water sources as water pans become depleted.

Refugee locations- High household water insecurity persisted despite near-universal use of improved water sources, with waiting times and non-functional water points pointing to continued reliability and supply constraints.

Endnotes

1. CARE, [Flood emergency and drought crisis](#), March 2026
2. NDMA, [Long Rains Assessment National Report](#), August 2026
3. UNHCR, [Kenya Annual Results Report 2025](#), March 2026
4. The star, [Shrinking funding vs rising needs](#), April 2026
5. WMO, [El Niño impacts Greater Horn of Africa](#), August 2026
6. OCHA, [Eastern Africa: El Niño Preparedness Alert](#), August 2026
7. KCWG, [Joint Market Monitoring Initiative](#), June 2026
8. REACH, [MSNI, 2026](#)
9. NDMA, [Garissa Drought Early Warning Bulletin](#), June, 2026
10. NDMA, [Turkana Drought Early Warning Bulletin](#), June, 2026
11. NDMA, [Mandera Drought Early Warning Bulletin](#), June, 2026
12. NDMA, [Marsabit Drought Early Warning Bulletin](#), June, 2026
13. NDMA, [Wajir Drought Early Warning Bulletin](#), June, 2026
14. FEWS NET, [Key message Update](#), July 2026
15. ICPAC, [FSNWG Special Report on El Niño](#), August 2026
16. NDMA, [Long Rains Assessment National Report](#), August, 2026