

# KENYA DROUGHT

## Garissa, Mandera, Marsabit, Turkana and Wajir Alert | April 2023

### Key messages

- **Kenya has experienced five consecutive failed rainy seasons. This has resulted in the most severe and persistent drought consequences.** A high number of people (5.4 million up from 4.4 million in February 2023 in the ASAL counties of Kenya) are facing Crisis or worse levels of Integrated Phase Classification acute food insecurity (IPC AFI) phase 3 or above) as projected in February 2023.<sup>1</sup>
- **The population in Garissa, Mandera, Marsabit, Turkana and Wajir currently face food consumption gaps of Emergency levels** indicative of IPC AFI phase 4 as projected during the February IPC AFI analysis. The Projection period starting in March 2023 until June 2023 includes five counties (Turkana, Marsabit, Mandera, Wajir and Garissa) in IPC AFI phase 4 indicating an increase in food consumption and livelihoods gaps.<sup>1</sup>
- **Turkana South (Turkana County), and Laisamis (Marsabit County) are at extremely critical levels of malnutrition**, with General Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rates over 35.2% and 32.6% respectively denoting **IPC Acute Malnutrition (AMN) Phase 5**, and therefore potentially catastrophic outcomes for populations in these sub-counties.<sup>2</sup>
- **High levels of water insecurity were witnessed in most of the ASAL counties.** Barriers to water access include poor recharge/drying up of surface water sources, poor rainfall performance in the previous five consecutive failed rainy seasons, reduced yield in boreholes and shallow wells, breakages in strategic boreholes and overconcentration of livestock at watering points.<sup>1</sup> **When households lack access to adequate water they cannot obtain enough to drink or observe proper hygiene, hence exposing them to the likelihood of contracting water-borne diseases such as diarrhoea and cholera.**

### Context & Rationale

Kenya has experienced five consecutive failed rainy seasons, and despite the reported rains in most of the parts of the country in March and April 2023, the rains are yet to impact on production systems. Therefore, the severe consequences for people living in drought-affected areas are persistent. Particularly in the arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) counties of Kenya, the population is experiencing limited access to improved water sources, and long water trekking distances due to the drying of seasonal water sources<sup>i</sup>

According to the July-September 2022 IPC AFI analysis, covering the lean season, about 3.5 million people (24% of the ASAL population) were in need of food assistance, i.e. IPC Phase 3 or above, and 785,000 people were in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency).<sup>3</sup> Crop failure due to the delayed onset of the October to December 2022 short rains, and significant seasonal cumulative rainfall shortfalls were also reported between October 2022 and March 2023.

In addition, livestock body conditions are extremely poor due to lack of pasture and water, leading to low livestock production and livestock mortalities. The price of both food and non-food items is relatively high, due to the below-average harvest and high demand, compounded by food stock shortages (particularly vegetable oil, maize flour, and sugar), reported by retailers during the December 2022 Joint Market Monitoring Initiative across the assessed ASAL counties.<sup>4</sup> The inflation rate, which stood at 9.2% as of February 2023 has been considerably higher than the average long-term and acceptable rate range of 2.5% – 7.5% since June 2022, further exacerbating the price of commodities.<sup>5</sup>

These factors have compounded the impacts of the prolonged drought. Following the IPC AFI analysis in February 2023, around 4.4 million people were estimated to face 'Crisis' or worse levels of acute food insecurity. Of these, about 774,000 people are in IPC AFI Phase 4 (Emergency).<sup>1</sup> The population experiencing severe food consumption gaps has significantly increased by more than a quarter (26%), from 3.5 million people in July 2022.<sup>3</sup> In addition, critical levels of malnutrition were experienced in almost all of the assessed counties (6 out of 8) IPC AMN phase 4, during the February 2023 IPC AMN analysis.<sup>2</sup>

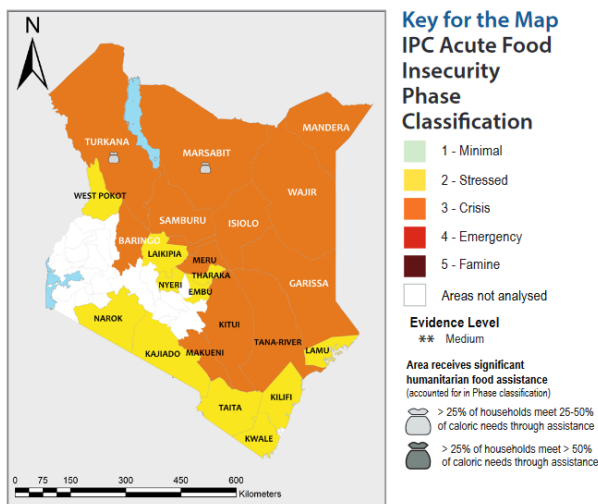
## Emergency levels of food insecurity in Garissa, Mandera, Marsabit, Turkana and Wajir

The situation in Garissa, Mandera, Marsabit, Turkana and Wajir is extremely concerning. Over half of the population (55%) in these counties are experiencing severe food consumption gaps and are classified to be in IPC AFI Phase 3 or higher. A considerable proportion of the population in these counties (15%) are already in IPC AFI Phase 4 (Emergency).<sup>1</sup> In November 2022, over three quarters of households in Marsabit and a quarter of households in Turkana were already reporting reduced access to sufficient and nutritious food.<sup>6</sup> While Mandera, Marsabit, Turkana, and Wajir were classified in IPC AFI Phase 3, FEWSNET’s analysis on the food security outlook in January 2023<sup>7</sup> classified both Marsabit and Turkana in IPC AFI Phase 4, a situation where more than 20% of the population experiences large food consumption gaps.<sup>7</sup>

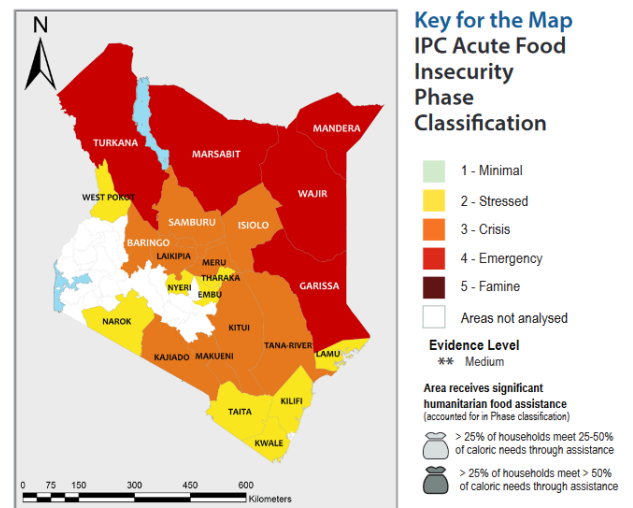
Due to the prolonged drought, a major shift in the main source of income was reported at the end of the lean season

in November 2022, from livestock and crop farming to humanitarian assistance. For example in Marsabit county, 41% of households were reporting humanitarian assistance as a main income source of income in the pre-drought period (i.e. 2019), compared with 72% of households reporting this in the REACH drought impact assessment in November 2022.<sup>6</sup> This data indicates an increased reliance on humanitarian assistance, likely driven by a broader erosion of households’ resilience and depleted livelihood opportunities. Increasing dependence on aid poses a concerning risk to adequate food consumption among these households, as potential gaps or reductions in assistance make this an unpredictable income source. For example, in November 2022<sup>6</sup>, over half of households in both Marsabit and Turkana reported not having received any assistance since June 2022, despite humanitarian assistance reportedly being the main source of livelihood in Marsabit (72%) and Turkana (28%).

### February 2023 Acute food security:



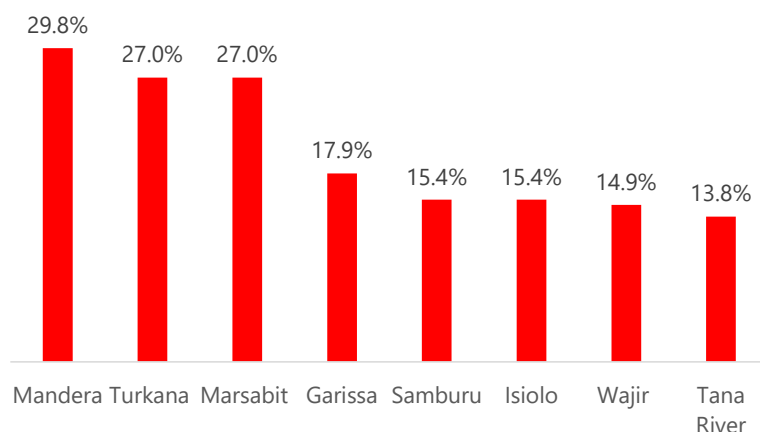
### Projected Acute food security, March - June 2023:



## Extreme levels of malnutrition in Garissa, Mandera, Marsabit, Turkana and Wajir

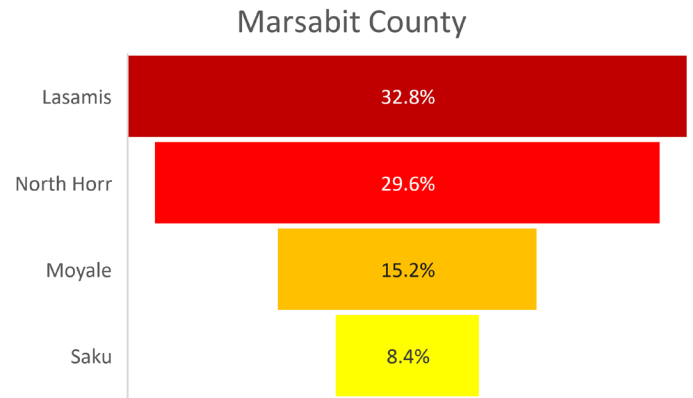
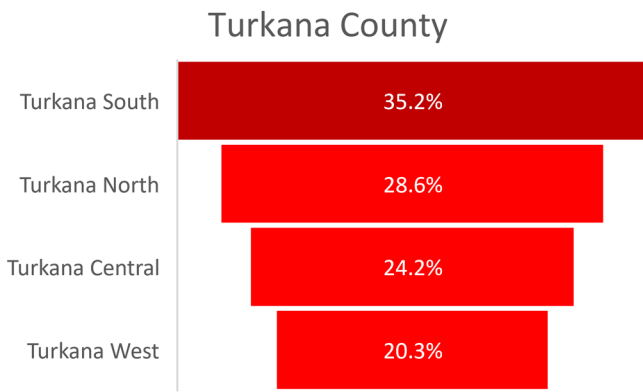
The malnutrition situation in these areas is deeply concerning. Critical levels of malnutrition were identified across the five counties during the February 2023 IPC AMN classification.<sup>2</sup> With Turkana South in Turkana County, and Laisamis in Marsabit County found to be at extremely critical levels of malnutrition- IPC AMN Phase 5,

### GAM rate per county, February 2023:



with GAM rates of (>35.2% and (>32.6%)) respectively. Unless emergency aid is delivered, these populations are at a high risk of excess mortality between March and June 2023 since the nutrition situation is projected to deteriorate further.

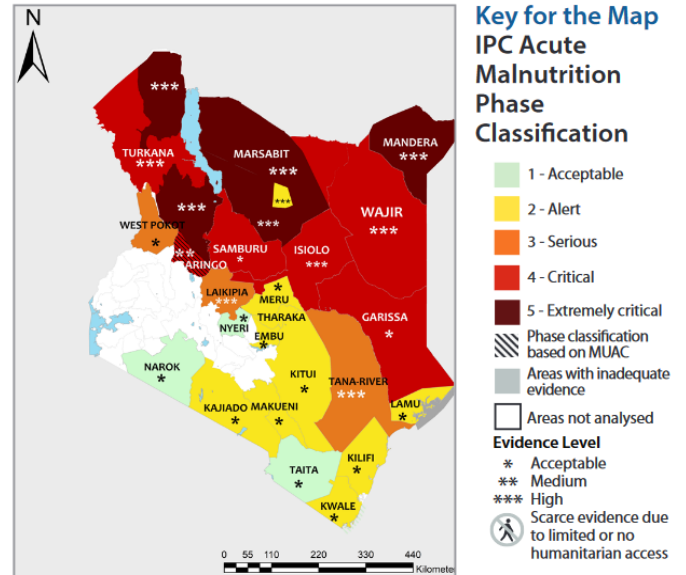
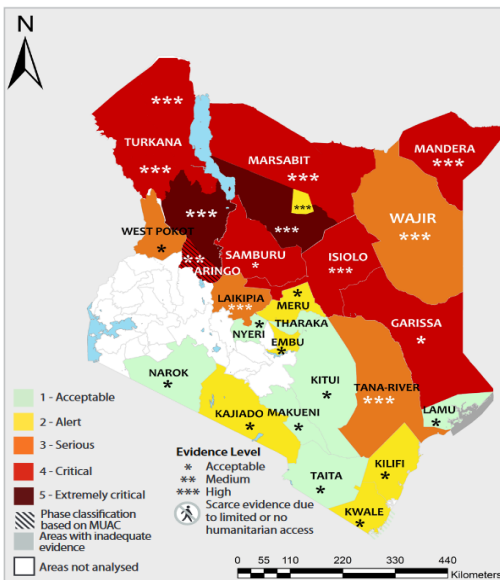
**GAM rate per sub county, February 2023:**



The critical levels of nutrition situation is attributed to the worsening food insecurity, characterized by low milk availability, increasing food prices, unfavourable terms of trade and insufficient water. Other contributing factors include poor infant and young child feeding practices, high disease burden, the below national target on immunization and micronutrient supplementation coverage and sub-optimal coverage of multi-sectoral interventions. Between March and June 2023, the nutrition situation in Turkana, Mandera and Marsabit counties is projected to deteriorate further and display catastrophic nutrition outcomes ((GAM>29.9%) IPC AMN Phase 5).

**February 2023 Acute food security:**

**Projected Acute food security, March - June 2023:**



**Key for the Map**  
**IPC Acute Malnutrition Phase Classification**

- 1 - Acceptable
- 2 - Alert
- 3 - Serious
- 4 - Critical
- 5 - Extremely critical

**Evidence Level**

- \* Acceptable
- \*\* Medium
- \*\*\* High
- Scarce evidence due to limited or no humanitarian access

**Phase classification based on MUAC**

- Areas with inadequate evidence
- Areas not analysed

**Water insecurity in Garissa, Mandera, Marsabit, Turkana and Wajir**

The proportion of water insecure households as of November 2022<sup>6</sup> (61% and 55% in Turkana and Marsabit Counties respectively) was considerably high. Similar situation was reported in all other ASAL counties during the February 2023 AFI IPC analysis.<sup>1</sup> Water insecurity was reportedly driven by poor recharge and drying up of surface water sources, poor rainfall performance in the previous five consecutive failed rainy seasons, reduced yield in boreholes and shallow wells, breakages in strategic boreholes, overconcentration of livestock at watering points and insecurity being witnessed in some parts of the counties. Trekking distances will likely remain longer than normal in the next three months. For instance, as of November

2022<sup>6</sup> over 40% of households in Marsabit and Turkana had to trek for at least 60 minutes to get to a water source, fetch water and walk back. In addition, trekking distances were reportedly between 3.5 to 10 kilometres in the ASAL counties with the longest distances recorded in Mandera and Marsabit for household and livestock access to water respectively.<sup>1</sup>

With the late onset of the March to May 2023 rainy season<sup>8</sup>, and the expected persistence of drier-than-usual conditions, the situation is expected to worsen, with a higher proportion of the population likely experiencing severe water insecurities.

## Conclusion

The projection period of March to May 2023 rainy season is expected to fail, which will further aggravate food insecurity and malnutrition. In addition, drought response has been largely underfunded.

Options for isolated communities particularly in areas already considered in IPC AMN P5 (Turkana South and Laisamis) are potentially running out. **If there is no tangible response to this ongoing and now protracted emergency, already vulnerable populations may be at severe risk of extremely critical levels of malnutrition.**

**Therefore, the Kenya non-governmental organisations ASAL working group suggests that:**

In the short term (April, May and June 2023):

- **Immediate lifesaving humanitarian assistance is required for the population in IPC AFI phase 3 or above** to meet basic food needs and prevent further food consumption deterioration.
- Scale up and strengthen treatment and prevention activities to reach the population experiencing critical acute malnutrition to help address widespread acute malnutrition

and disease epidemics.

- Intensifying livestock support, including the provision of livestock feeds, water, commercial livestock off-take, and slaughter destocking will be key considering the projected deteriorating drought situation to prevent livestock deaths and enhance milk production, a great component for nutrition.
- Provision of clean and safe water to communities affected by drought and with limited access to water and provision of water storage containers to help them in water storage.

In the medium to long term:

- Investigation into adaptive measures of water management to ensure access to and adequate quantity of safe water, especially in relation to climate change. For example, some research has suggested groundwater may increase in Turkana and Marsabit in the future, due to more intense rainfall events, potentially making boreholes and rainfall retention more suitable and sustainable water sources.
- Continue monitoring and surveillance of the impact of drought and investigate drought mitigation measures in the ASAL counties. To ensure early warning actions are taken to prevent severe consequences of drought.

## ENDNOTES

1. [Acute food insecurity classification, February 2023.](#)
2. [Acute malnutrition phase classification, February 2023.](#)
3. [Acute food insecurity classification, July 2022.](#)
4. [October-December 2022 Joint market monitoring Initiative.](#)
5. [Kenya inflation in February 2023.](#)
6. [Impact of drought assessment in Marsabit and Turkana Counties, REACH Initiative, November 2022.](#)
7. [FEWSNET key messages update, January 2023.](#)
8. [The Kenya meteorological forecast for the march-April-May rainy season, 2023.](#)
9. [Ground water exploration in Turkana and Marsabit counties, New water Science Centre, May 2022](#)

## About Kenya NGO ASAL sub-group

The Arid and Semi-Arid Lands sub-group (ASAL sub-group) is a working group that is part of the wider INGO group in Kenya. The ASAL sub-group has three main objectives: to share information and knowledge, best practices among agencies working in the ASAL areas in Kenya, act as a coordination body among INGOs in Kenya regarding drought preparedness, response, and resilience building and develop and disseminate advocacy messaging relating to issues affecting the ASALs in Kenya.

## PARTICIPATING PARTNERS

This brief was prepared by REACH Initiative in close collaboration with members of the the Kenya NGO ASAL sub-group:

