

# **CEWARN Situation Brief: Ethiopia**

**Deteriorating Food Security**

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## Deteriorating Food Security situation in the Somali and Karamoja Clusters

### Introduction

The aim of CEWARN Briefs is to provide readers with an overview of new developments in and around the areas that CEWARN monitors. It shall report on current situation, impact and implications of these events on the general conflict dynamics of the area and provide implementable steps that could be taken to reduce or prevent possible opportunities of conflicts.

### Background

Reports from FEWS NET and other sources well as from CEWARN Field monitors indicate the food security situation among the pastoral and agro-pastoral communities in the greater Horn of Africa remain extremely precarious. This is mainly because of the delayed onset or the total absence of the short rains (October- December) which are crucial in rejuvenating pasture and water in the long dry spells before the main rain season (March – May). This year's short rains would have been crucially important because they would have broken the cycle of successive dry spells of the recent three years. However, the rains have failed and the resulting drought has affected 1.7 million in Ethiopia, 3.5 million in Kenya, 1.4 million in Somalia and 60000 in Djibouti.

### Implications

In Ethiopia the worst affected region is Somali National regional State, particularly Afder, Degahabour, Warder, Korahi, Fik and parts of Gode zone. It is worth noting that Afder and Liben zones are parts of the Somali cluster on the Ethiopia side. Owing to the total absence or poor performances of the rains and the fast depleting pasture and water resources, ominous signs of pre-famine conditions have been reported: early and widespread human and livestock distress migration,...livestock deaths from lack of pasture and water, significant decrease in milk and other products, signs of severe malnutrition and spread of diseases, distress sales of livestock and deteriorating terms of trade, conflict over scarce resources. The pre-famine conditions are particularly worrying given the delays in the onset of the jilial (dry) season (January-April) rain.

There have also been reports of acute shortage of forage and water in Borana zone of Oromia due to the failure of the Hageya (dry) season rain. The drying up of water holes and ensuing water shortages in areas of Dire,Teletel, Moyale and Dagda Dawa wereda has been particularly worrying. Because of lack of pasture cattle are heavily concentrated around few water holes and others have migrated in search of both water and pasture. Reports from Field Monitors in Moyale, for example, have indicated that the livestock and camels are being sold at less than half of the normal price in markets in the hinterland and across the border in Kenya. It is also reported pastoralists have also migrated northward to Yabello and the surrounding areas in search of pasture and water.

The situation in Kuraz Wereda of Southern Omo, SNNPR is less alarming although the area is still flagged as food insecure. Performance of the rains was better than last year but the amount and distribution is less than average.

It is also reported that drought-affected regions in Kenya have been declared Natural disaster areas and humanitarian relief efforts are underway to alleviate the problems of the pastoral and agro-pastoral population. The areas severely affected include districts of Kenya- Marsabit and Mandera as well as Kajado,Raikipia and parts of eastern province in the hinterland. There have also been various reports by the Media and FEWSNET that thousands of livestock have perished because of lack of pasture and water.

The consequences of the disaster and deteriorating food security situation in Ethiopia have been characterized as pre-famine necessitating massive relief effort to avoid loss of large number of human lives and livestock. The communities in the border regions are feeling the ramifications of the drought and attendant upheavals in the area. Recent reports from the field monitors in Kuraz wereda and media report from Kenya (east African standard 17, 18, 23 January 2006) have indicated there is an escalation of the conflict because of the environmental pressure.

According to the reports the Dassenech from Ethiopia have mounted a series of raids on the Turkana, which led to many losses of lives and looting of large number of livestock. Similarly the Turkana have mounted raids on the Dassenech and Nyangatom which are captured in CEWARN update for September-December, 2005. The raids and attacks were precipitated by the drought and may have been timed to settle old scores. The attacks will be accompanied by reprisals and counter-reprisals that will lead to further escalation of the conflict.

The same media reports have also indicated people in drought affected areas of Kenya are extremely worried that the conflict between the Boran and the Gabra might erupt again because of the intense competition for resources.

### **Recommendations for action**

In view of the gravity of the drought and the urgent need to avoid massive human catastrophe we urge the national authorities at various level and the international community to take the following immediate measures:

1. Mobilize the necessary resources to carry out immediate relief to avoid human and livestock death from starvation and lack of pasture and water
2. Put in place the requisite security and humanitarian measures to prevent escalation of conflict precipitated by environmental pressure
3. Minimize or prevent internal displacement or livestock migration by provision of emergency fodder and water wherever practically possible
4. Establish *ad hoc* emergency consultative mechanism through which government authorities, traditional leaders and civil society work together to coordinate humanitarian and conflict prevention activities.