Ethiopia

Drought and food insecurity

Need for international assistance

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Expected impact

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Crisis overview

Since June 2015, Ethiopia has been affected by the worst drought in the last 30–50 years, with over 10.2 million people in need of food assistance as of December 2015, compared to 2.9 million in the beginning of 2015. In 2016, the number of people in need is expected to reach over 15 million. Most of the regions of Amhara, Oromia, and SNNPR are reported to be in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) food insecurity. In the most affected areas, over 75% of meher cropping production has been lost, one million livestock have died, and over 1.7 million are reportedly at risk due to bad body conditions. Meher cropping represents 90% of the country’s total grain production, which accounts for 80% of Ethiopian agriculture.

Food security projections for Ethiopia, October 2015-March 2016

Source: FEWSNET 12/2015

Key findings

Anticipated scope and scale

El Niño is expected to last at least until June 2016, exacerbating the food insecurity caused by the incoming lean season. Over 15 million people are expected to be in need of humanitarian assistance throughout 2016, with poor households in East and West Hararghe, Oromia region, in Emergency food insecurity (IPC Phase 4) and projected to remain in such situation up to March 2016.

Priorities for humanitarian intervention

Food is a priority with 10.2 million in need of humanitarian assistance at the end of 2015, compared to 2.9 million at the beginning of 2015. Projections indicate that the number of people in need of assistance might reach over 15 million in 2016.

Nutrition support is also increasingly necessary as forecasts indicate an SAM-treatment target for 2016 of 435,000, compared to 350,000 in 2015.

WASH interventions, in terms of restoration of non-functioning water sources, water treatment, and purification of wells and ponds are also primary needs given the severe impact of the drought over the food harvesting and pastoral activities.

Humanitarian constraints

Main constraints caused by the lack of adequate transportation and water infrastructure. In some areas the deterioration of the security situation, and increasing terrorism concerns, might also hinder the access to the affected populations.

Limitations

Quantitative information about IPC Phases in the most affected regions is lacking. Numbers of refugees in the country vary according different agencies and organisations.
Crisis impact

Since June 2015, Ethiopia is currently facing the worst drought in 30 or even 50 years according to different sources (NPR 01/01/2016; IBI Times 09/12/2015; FEWSNET 31/12/2015; All Africa 15/08/2015). The failure of *belg* rains between March and May, and *kiremt* rains between June and September, together with other effects of El Niño, have worsened the food insecurity situation (IFRC 04/01/2016). See calendar at the end of this report for more information on seasonal patterns.

Over 8 million people are suffering from food insecurity and over 10.2 million are in need of humanitarian assistance as of 23 December 2015, compared to 2.9 million in February. Projections indicate that the number is likely to rise to around 15 million in 2016, as El Niño is expected to last at least through the first half of the year. (Africa News 30/12/2015; BBC 30/12/2015; IFRC 04/01/2016; OCHA 28/12/2015)

**Food:** Projections indicate that food stocks will likely be depleted in January 2016, with the situation rapidly deteriorating (Al Jazeera America 04/01/2016). Worst-affected areas of *meher* cropping – in eastern and central Ethiopia – have recorded harvest losses of up to 75%. According to forecasts, poor households in the zones of East and West Hararghe, Oromia region, are facing an Emergency food security situation (IPC Phase 4) and will maintain it at least up to March 2016. Most areas of Amhara, Oromia, and SNNPR are projected to be in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) throughout the same period. At least half a million livestock have died in the last months, with over 1.7 million more considered at risk as of the end of 2015, entering in the lean season for pastoral areas (FEWSNET 31/12/2015).

**Health:** The impact of drought is exacerbated by the outbreak of several diseases, for example an epidemic of watery diarrhoea in Moyale, Oromia, and Somali regions (All Africa 31/12/2015; OCHA 04/01/2016).

**Nutrition:** Over 435,000 children are expected to be in need of treatment for severe acute malnutrition in 2016 (UNICEF 20/12/2015).

**WASH:** Severe water shortages are reported throughout the country, but especially in Amhara, Oromia, and in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples’ region (SNNPR). Water treatment and rehabilitation of non-functioning water supply systems are key priorities. In Oromia water trucking is being provided since October 2015 (OCHA 04/01/2016).

**Education:** The drought has caused thousands of schools to close and many children to drop out of school. 1.3 million people need education supplies (Government 11/12/2015).

**Protection:** Violent clashes over access to limited resources were also reported (ECHO 23/12/2015). Food insecurity is also reported to increasing child marriage in Ethiopia, pushing many families to force girls to marry so they no longer have to provide for them.

In Ethiopia two in five girls get married before they are 18, and one in five before they are 15 (Population Growth 30/12/2015; Girls Not Brides 2015).

**Impact on critical infrastructure**

The lack of a constant waterflow, might affect the hydroelectric power generation in the country (All Africa 31/12/2015).

**Vulnerable groups affected**

- Women are at risk of being pushed to survival sex, in order to obtain food. In addition child labour and child marriage are increasing as livelihoods are strained, and many children have to walk longer distances in order to fetch water, increasing the rate of school dropouts (Government 11/12/2015).
- Refugees and IDPs are particularly exposed to food insecurity issues (ECHO 12/2015). According to ECHO, over 682,000 refugees are being hosted in 24 camps in Ethiopia, making it the country hosting more refugees in Africa, due to continued influxes generated by the unstable security situations in neighbouring countries (ECHO 16/12/2015). UNHCR, instead, indicates the number to be over 730,000 (UNHCR 30/11/2015).
- Over 80% of new refugee arrivals are women and children, with many children being unaccompanied and vulnerable (ECHO 16/12/2015).
- Over 425,000 people are in a situation of protracted displacement, with at least 123,000 newly displaced between July and October. Drought is reported to be among the main causes for displacement, as people move to find resources (IOM 14/12/2015).

**Humanitarian and operational constraints**

Growing insecurity, together with poor infrastructure and challenges in transportation, regularly affect humanitarian access to areas of the country (SIDA 01/2015; UNHCR 29/05/2015).

**Aggravating factors**

**Lack of adequate water infrastructure**

Despite large water resources, water supply to the population and for agricultural purposes is limited due to a critical lack of infrastructure (All Africa 31/12/2015).
Political stability and security

Ethiopia has relative political stability, however in several areas insecurity is still widespread. For example, clashes between government forces and Ogaden National Liberation Front have persisted since 1994 in Somali region. Additionally, the country is exposed to increasing civil unrest. In mid-December, violent protests broke out in Oromia region, against the urban planning strategy of the government. Over 80 civilians were reported to have been killed by government forces as of 23 December. The approach of Ethiopian government towards the respect of civil rights and freedom of expression was often criticized (All Africa 20/04/2015; UNPO 01/06/2015; US News 23/12/2015; The Guardian 18/12/2015; International Crisis Group 01/01/2016).

Poverty

Despite great economic progress since 2000, over 40% of the population still live below the poverty line (World Bank 01/2015; BBC 16/04/2015).

Key characteristics of host population and area

Demographic profile: Population 96.96 million; 78 million in rural areas. 42% of the total population is under 14 years old, 55% is between 15 and 64 years old. 50.2% of the population is female (Trading Economics 2010; World Bank 2014).

Food security: Poor households in pastoral southern Afar and Sitti zone in Somali region and in the agricultural lowlands of East and West Hararghe Zones in Oromia are facing Emergency (IPC 4) of food insecurity outcomes. Tigray, Amhara, Afar, Oromia, Somali and SNNPR regions are in Crisis (IPC 3) of food insecurity outcomes (FEWSNET 12/2015).


Health: Infant mortality rate: 47/1,000 live births; Under-five mortality rate: 68/1,000 live births; Maternal mortality ratio: 350/100,000 live births (UNICEF 2012)

WASH: Access to improved sources of drinking water: 57%; Access to sanitation facilities: 28% (WASH Alliance 2015)

Lighting and cooking: In rural areas, kerosene, fuelwood and candles are used for lighting (Lighting Africa 08/2012). Wood is the most important energy source for cooking (World Vision 2011).

Literacy: Total adult literacy rate is 39% (UNICEF 2012).

Response capacity

Local and national response capacity

Government and international organisations are providing humanitarian response. National humanitarian response is coordinated by the National Disaster Risk Management Coordination Commission (NDRMCC), formerly the Disaster Risk Management and Food Security Sector (OCHA 2015; Government 11/12/2015). The Multi-Agency Coordination is led by NDRMCC and coordinates international and national actors and provides guidance to effective response at all levels. The government has also established structure at kebele level, the smallest administrative unit, in order to be able to respond quickly to local situations. The government is distributing emergency food assistance, and supplies water and animal feed to the zones affected by drought. In November, the government also planned to start distributing seeds to the drought-affected people (All Africa 18/11/2015; Government 11/12/2015).

At least 13 local NGOs are involved in the emergency response (Government 11/12/2015).

International response capacity

Currently, over 50 humanitarian organisations, including UN agencies, INGOs, ICRC, IFRC, IOM, and the Ethiopian Red Cross, are operating in the country and supporting the government-led response (Government 11/12/2015).

Population coping mechanisms

Households’ resilience to drought has been stretched by the belg failure and by the erratic meher rains (Government 11/12/2015).

Traditional coping mechanisms used by rural households include livestock sales, requesting grain loans, sale of wood or charcoal, small-scale trading, selling crop residues, reduction of food consumption, consumption of wild plants, relying on remittance from relatives, selling of clothes and dismantling of parts of their houses for sale (Science Alert 07/04/2015).

Information gaps and needs

Quantitative information on the IPC Phases of food insecurity in the different regions seems to be lacking.
Lessons learned

• The response to the 2011 drought proved that the strategy of relying on the Productive Safety Net System, which enables the chronically food insecure rural population to resist shocks, worked well for a scaled-up response to a particularly bad drought shock.

• Although water trucking proved inefficient in 2011, it saved human lives and livestock.

• Every time a drought hits, there seem to be few alternatives once surface and underground water stores are used up (Tufts University 05/08/2014).
Seasonal Calendar

Source: FEWSNET 30/01/2015
Food security projections for Ethiopia, October 2015-March 2016

Near Term: October-December 2015

Medium Term: January-March 2016

Source: FEWSNET 12/2015