A Dangerous Delay

The cost of late response to early warnings in the 2011 drought in the Horn of Africa

The pastoralist communities of Turkana, Kenya are experiencing one of the worst periods of drought in living memory and are now increasingly reliant on food aid. Here, people come to collect water, Lokitaung district, March 2011. Photo: Andy Hall

More than 13 million people are still affected by the crisis in the Horn of Africa. There were clear early warning signs many months in advance, yet there was insufficient response until it was far too late.

Governments, donors, the UN and NGOs need to change their approach to chronic drought situations by managing the risks, not the crisis.

This means acting on information from early warning systems and not waiting for certainty before responding, as well as tackling the root causes of vulnerability and actively seeking to reduce risk in all activities. To achieve this, we must overcome the humanitarian–development divide.

Foreword by Jan Egeland

We live in a world where we know how to prevent extreme hunger, yet people still die from a lack of food. 2011 saw the worst hunger crisis this century in the Horn of Africa. More than 13 million people, most of them women and children, have been affected. Lives and livelihoods have been devastated, pushing people into poverty that will cause them suffering for years to come. The crisis continues into 2012.

The greatest tragedy is that the world saw this disaster coming but did not prevent it. Across Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti and Somalia this crisis has played out very differently, but common to all of them was a slow response to early warnings. Early signs of an oncoming food crisis were clear many months before the emergency reached its peak. Yet it was not until the situation had reached crisis point that the international system started to respond at scale.

As the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator I saw how vulnerable communities and humanitarian field workers were denied the tools and resources necessary to save lives before it was too late. It was incomprehensible. How come, more than a generation after man walked on the moon, we would let fellow human beings die needlessly because we would not give priority to meeting their most basic human needs in time? That the needless haemorrhage of human lives took place again in the Horn of Africa in 2011, in spite of all our knowledge and all our experience, is an outrage.

We know that if we take the right steps we can prevent the suffering of millions and the deaths of thousands of people from hunger and the crushing and sustained poverty that these crises bring. In the long term, the answers lie within developing countries themselves, including supporting local food production, protecting the poorest and most vulnerable, making food affordable and ensuring a strong national response to impending crises.

We also need to improve how the humanitarian system responds when warnings of a crisis are given and communities need help. This report makes valuable recommendations for how to achieve that.

Ultimately, we know the steps we must take to tackle these crises – they are outlined in the Charter to End Extreme Hunger. We have the power to prevent thousands of deaths. What we need is the will.

Jan Egeland
UN Emergency Relief Coordinator 2003–2006

Summary

The 2011 crisis in the Horn of Africa has been the most severe emergency of its kind this century. More than 13 million people are still affected, with hundreds of thousands placed at risk of starvation. One estimate suggests that 50,000–100,000 people have died. This crisis unfolded despite having been predicted. Although brought on by drought, it was human factors which turned the crisis into a deadly emergency.

Tragically, the 2011 crisis is not an isolated case. The response to drought is invariably too little too late, representing a systemic failure of the international system – both 'humanitarian' and 'development'. The result of this failure is that the people affected – this time in the Horn of Africa: Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia* – lose their livelihoods and potentially their lives. Women are often worst affected, as they generally eat last and least. And hunger threatens children's health and development, and thus the well-being of future generations.

This briefing examines the factors that allowed a drought in the Horn of Africa to develop into a full-scale crisis of hunger and livelihoods. While recognising the ultimate importance of enhancing the resilience of communities themselves, the primary focus of this briefing is the response of the international system.

We argue that all members of the international system must improve their ability to prevent the worst effects of hunger crises before they happen. In particular, national governments must fulfil their responsibilities to people caught up in crises and demonstrate leadership.

This should include endorsing the Charter to End Extreme Hunger – a new initiative generating increasing state support that outlines key ways to reduce the impact of these crises (see Annex 1).[1] If they are acted on, extreme hunger events can be averted in the future. It is a major challenge, but the knowledge exists to address it. One of the key recommendations of the Charter is earlier response to early warnings.

This briefing outlines how, in the Horn of Africa, there were indications that a crisis was coming from as early as August 2010. In November 2010, these warnings were repeated and they became more strident in early 2011. Some actors did respond, but full scale-up only really happened after the rains had failed for a second successive time. By this time, in some places people were already dying. Many had lost their livelihoods, and many more – particularly women and children – were suffering extreme hardship. The scale of death and suffering, and the financial cost, could have been reduced if early warning systems had triggered an earlier, more substantial response.

Why was the international system so slow in responding to accurate

* Djibouti was also severely affected; however, this briefing focuses on Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia.

early warnings? One reason is that raising large sums for humanitarian response currently depends on getting significant media and public attention – which did not happen until the crisis point was reached. But this misses the point. Waiting for a situation to reach crisis point before responding is the wrong way to address chronic vulnerability and recurrent drought in places like the Horn of Africa. Instead, the international community must change how it operates to meet the challenge of responding to recurrent crises in regions such as this.

Decision makers are often not comfortable with uncertainty and forecasts, requiring hard data before initiating a response. So, while many people 'on the ground' in the region – representatives of many agencies and institutions, and communities themselves – were aware of the impending crisis and trying to set alarm bells ringing in January and February 2011, they were not always able to get traction 'further up the chain' from those who needed to act to avert another crisis.

This needs to change. All actors need to adopt standard risk management approaches – so if there is a high probability of a high-impact event occurring, interventions must begin immediately. Of course, forecasts can be wrong, but managing risk to reduce the impact of a crisis is better than hoping one will never happen. Risk management and disaster risk reduction (DRR) must be an integral part of both emergency response and longer-term development programmes. These principles of risk reduction and management are well accepted in other fields, such as insurance, where paying money upfront is regarded as a responsible approach to prevent high losses in the event of a crisis.

There also has to be a fundamental shift to integrated, long-term, flexible programming that aims to reduce the risks faced by people whose livelihoods are extremely vulnerable. Long-term development work is best placed to respond to drought – with established programmes, experienced staff, an understanding of vulnerabilities – and should adapt interventions quickly as drought conditions worsen.

All actors – governments, donors, NGOs, the UN – need to change the way they do things to make a bigger difference to people who will be affected by the next drought.

There are already commitments to address these ongoing problems. Governments of the Horn of Africa region committed to prepare and deliver on national strategies at the Nairobi summit in September 2011.[2] The crisis has reinvigorated the Horn of Africa Plan of Action,[3] and many are considering the lessons from the UK's Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) evaluation and others.

Together, the international community and national governments must seize the momentum and commit to change now, so that next time more is done, more quickly, to protect vulnerable people and to fulfil the objectives of the Charter to End Extreme Hunger. Another food crisis is already looming in the Sahel, with millions of people across at least five countries at risk of serious food insecurity, so there is an urgent need to put what has been learned in the Horn of Africa crisis into practice.

Recommendations

The lessons from the drought in the Horn of Africa in 2010/11 show that national governments and the international community must improve their response in a number of areas, in line with the Charter to End Extreme Hunger.

1 Manage the risks, not the crisis

- *All actors* need to review their approach to drought risk reduction and **not wait for certainty** before responding.
- *All actors* and early warning specialists need to develop a common approach to **triggers for early action,** to be used by both humanitarian and development actors.

2 Earlier drought response

National governments should

- recognise their primary responsibility to meet food security needs, providing **political leadership** for a drought response;
- endorse the Charter to End Extreme Hunger and act on its principles.

The international aid community should

- embed a risk reduction approach in all its work, thus allowing **long-term development interventions to adapt** to the changing context;
- undertake **preventative humanitarian work** on the basis of forecasts: including livelihood protection and 'no-regrets options'; and assisting communities to prevent, mitigate, prepare and respond to crises;
- ensure that systems are in place to integrate risk management into work throughout the development and humanitarian cycle – through **investing significantly in people** and partner organizations and **reviewing organizational structures** and systems.

Donors should

- provide **more agile and flexible funding** – by including crisis modifiers in multi-year development grants to build recurring-crisis response into development programming; and by ensuring that humanitarian funding can support pre-emptive or early response. Funding needs to be able to respond to uncertainty.
- endorse the Charter to End Extreme Hunger and act on its principles.

1 Introduction

The 2011 crisis in the Horn of Africa has been the most severe emergency of its kind this century. More than 13 million people are still affected, with hundreds of thousands placed at risk of starvation.[4] This crisis unfolded despite having been predicted. Although brought on by drought, it was human factors that turned this crisis into a deadly emergency.

This crisis unfolded primarily in the drylands of Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya. Here marginalization, chronic underinvestment and poor provision of basic health, education and other services for pastoralists and agro-pastoralists have contributed to very low development indicators, lack of political influence and few viable livelihood options.

All three countries were almost equally affected by the total failure of the October–December 2010 rains and the poor performance of the March–May 2011 rains, resulting in crop failure and animal deaths. The situation was much worse in southern and central Somalia, where conflict further impeded traditional drought coping mechanisms, and reduced access for humanitarian agencies.

This briefing is principally concerned with how the international system responded to early warnings of the oncoming crisis, and why it was allowed to spiral into a disaster. An effective aid system is essential for averting the worst effects of hunger crises. Before looking in detail at how this system has operated in the Horn of Africa, though, it is important to acknowledge that in an ideal world an aid response would not be necessary.

In the long term, the focus for avoiding hunger crises like this one lies in enhancing the resilience of communities themselves, and national governments have a central role to play. More than aid, government policy, practice and – crucially – investment, are vital to build people's resilience by reducing disaster risk and protecting, developing and diversifying livelihoods. Many of these measures are outlined in the Charter to End Extreme Hunger, and include: greater investment in infrastructure and services; adapted land use policy and practice to protect viable pastoralist lands; increased social protection; protecting and diversifying livelihoods; and greater capacity for national disaster prevention and humanitarian response.

Communities must be at the heart of decision making. To achieve sustainable and resilient livelihoods it is essential to facilitate effective participation, especially from women, so that people living in the drylands are enabled to make better-informed choices, at both individual and communal levels. International agencies should work with governments and communities to support these measures.

It should be noted that the countries affected by this drought were in very different situations. For example, in Ethiopia, there has been considerable effort to build resilience: through the development of the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP); investment in new health posts which enabled huge increases in access to nutrition responses; investment in pastoral areas through the Pastoral Community Development Programme (PCDP) and

through the promotion of disaster risk management policy and practice. While there is still some way to go, this work should be recognised as having reduced disaster losses from drought. This contrasts with Somalia, where such work has been largely absent, due to access restrictions, a complex environment and the unwillingness of donors to invest.

Oxfam and Save the Children strongly support approaches to develop resilience to mitigate the effects of cyclical hunger crises. But until resilience is considerably improved in many drought-prone regions, there will still be a need for an effective international emergency aid system. While emphasising the importance of building resilience, therefore, this briefing is mainly concerned with how to improve the response of the international system when faced with an oncoming crisis like the one that engulfed the Horn of Africa in 2011. Thus this briefing focuses on long-term development programmes that are working with affected communities and that adapt as the situation begins to deteriorate; and also on pre-emptive humanitarian action to protect livelihoods, mitigate the impact of the drought, and ensure the situation does not deteriorate to crisis levels.

2 The unfolding crisis: early warnings, but an inadequate response

The warnings

The emergency in the Horn of Africa in 2011 was no sudden-onset crisis. Thanks to sophisticated early warning systems (EWS), there were clear indications of the impending drought and its consequences.[5] Forecasts of the impending crisis started in August 2010, as changing weather conditions linked to the La Niña phenomenon were confirmed.[6] These predictions became more strident in early November 2010,[7] when the October to December short rains were forecast to be poor. This prediction was accurate, prompting the Food Security and Nutrition Working Group for East Africa (FSNWG) to set up a La Niña task force. In December 2010, it stated that 'pre-emptive action is needed to protect livelihoods and avoid later costly lifesaving emergency interventions' and called on the humanitarian community (donors, UN, NGOs) 'to be prepared **now** at country level.'[8]

Early action is more cost-effective. In the 2004–2005 Niger emergency, WFP's initial food deliveries in February 2005 cost $7 per beneficiary, but the response to the appeal was weak; by August the Niger situation had reached crisis, money began to flow, but the cost per beneficiary had risen to $23. [9]

Multi-agency scenario planning took place in February 2011. A Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET) food security alert dated 15 March made it clear that the current situation was already alarming and would deteriorate further if the March to May rains were as poor as expected. It stated that even average rains would lead to a critical food security situation until May or June, and predicted 'localized famine conditions [in southern Somalia], including significantly increased child mortality… if the worst case scenario assumptions are realized'.[10] The FSNWG also warned that 'failure of the March to May rains is likely to result in a major crisis'.[11] At this stage, humanitarian actors were advised to begin large-scale contingency/response planning immediately, and to implement expanded multi-sectoral programming.

Yet this call was not adequately heeded.

The national response

In Ethiopia and Kenya, major investment in national early warning systems over the past decade has improved the quality of information available. The governments in both countries play leading roles in identifying needs and co-ordinating the overall response. Arguably, the response was more efficient than the response to previous droughts, reflecting learning and investments made since the last drought, but challenges remain.

In Ethiopia, early action did take place across a number of sectors. For example, the government's Agricultural Task Force, supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), developed a roadmap for interventions in early 2011.[12] However, government figures on the number of people needing assistance published in February 2011 were among the lowest in recent years (2.8 million). These figures were revised upwards in April, and again in July, to 4.5 million people. Donors have expressed concern that this underestimated the actual numbers of people in need, particularly in

the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples (SNNP) region, and that the lack of timely, accurate information on the scale of need makes it more difficult to access resources from headquarters.[13]

Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) used its 20 per cent contingency budget, and the Risk Financing Mechanism was also triggered in September 2011 to extend the food provision period for PSNP beneficiaries. The NGO consortium Joint Emergency Operation Plan (JEOP) was scaled up and extended through 2011. This allowed for an increased number of beneficiaries (more than 300,000 'additional transitory' beneficiaries) as well as extended help to 6.5m existing PSNP beneficiaries.

Between 1997 and 2007, Ethiopia lost on average US$1.1bn to drought every year; this almost eclipses the US$1.3bn per year that Ethiopia received in international assistance to tackle poverty and emergencies over the same period.[14]

In Kenya, too much weight is given to the food aid system (as opposed to the national early warning system), which is unwieldy and unable to respond quickly to an emerging crisis; assessments are only carried out twice a year and by the time the reports are produced, the figures of those needing aid are already several months out of date. The Kenyan government only declared an emergency on 30 May 2011, with government-led interagency coordination mechanisms put in place three months later, in August.[15]

Political distractions, with a new constitution and corruption allegations for major government and donor-funded projects in the drylands, reduced the national capacity for response, although the response of the Kenyan public was substantial.[16]

The World Food Programme (WFP) in Kenya had major problems meeting its commitments on food deliveries. Kenya's Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) was only in the pilot phase, and attempts to scale it up rapidly were not successful.[17]

In the different regions of Somalia:

In **South Central Somalia**, there is no effective central government that has full control; therefore the UN, international and local NGOs coordinated the majority of the response. Most agencies started responding at some level after the first failed rains at the end of 2010, but substantial scale up only really occurred after the famine declaration in July. Access for scale-up was a significant challenge. As in Kenya, the WFP faced major problems with meeting its commitments on food deliveries in South Central Somalia for a number of reasons, including the fact that they did not have access to the majority of the famine affected areas.

In the regional autonomous state of **Puntland**, the President of Puntland announced a drought emergency in November 2010, and called on the international community and aid agencies to provide humanitarian assistance. The Humanitarian and Disaster Management Agency (HADMA) worked with the Puntland regional government, UN bodies and NGOs, as well as the private sector, to coordinate the emergency response. The Puntland regional government released funds set aside for responding to droughts and emergencies and these were supplemented by contributions from the private sector and the diaspora. However, the response in Puntland was largely overshadowed by the situation in South Central Somalia, despite some areas of Puntland suffering malnutrition rates well over and above emergency thresholds.

In **Somaliland**, there was a late response to early warnings overall. When

response did take place, the president of Somaliland formed a National Drought Emergency Relief Committee to work with the National Environmental Research and Disaster Preparedness and Management Authority (NERAD). These agencies raised funds to supply emergency food and water to drought-affected populations. NERAD made an assessment and recommended the declaration of a 'National Disaster' and the launch of an appeal.

The international response: primarily humanitarian

According to a key evaluation of humanitarian response in Ethiopia and Kenya,[18] there was ‘both (i) a general failure of earlier preventive action from late 2010, and (ii) a collective failure to respond with adequate relief from the time it was needed in early to mid-2011.’ The evaluation notes that while mortality did not reach catastrophic levels in Ethiopia and Kenya, except among refugees, the result of the failure was far greater malnutrition, suffering and damaged livelihoods than would have been the case with more concerted preventive action and early relief.

The evaluation notes that greater flexibility between development and humanitarian work is required; adjusting the scale and priorities of existing programmes to reflect the prevailing realities, and providing the necessary technical and surge capacity to allow this and any necessary expansion to happen effectively. While there are good examples of this, it is not widespread. USAID's Pastoralist Livelihood Initiative (a long-term programme) in Ethiopia has a ‘crisis modifier,’ whereby the programme can switch from development interventions to humanitarian interventions, but it remains relatively small. Individual programmes, such as Oxfam’s integrated work in Turkana, is another example, and ensures that response to acute needs is embedded with long-term programming (see Boxes 2 and 3). Both Oxfam and Save the Children have also worked on alternative approaches to food aid programmes, including using vouchers through the EC Food Facility. This enabled a rapid scale-up to reach additional households.

On the humanitarian side, some donors and agencies have performed better than others, but overall, the response at scale was too late. It certainly did not reflect the principles of disaster prevention enshrined in Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles, or the NGO Code of Conduct.

Donors: The donor response at scale was too slow. Figure 1 shows the level of humanitarian funding to Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia in the lead-up to the crisis. We see an increase after the first warnings in late 2010 and the UN Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) appeal (November 2010). But it was only after major media coverage in June/July 2011, and after the UN declared a famine in Somalia, that donors drastically increased the funds available.

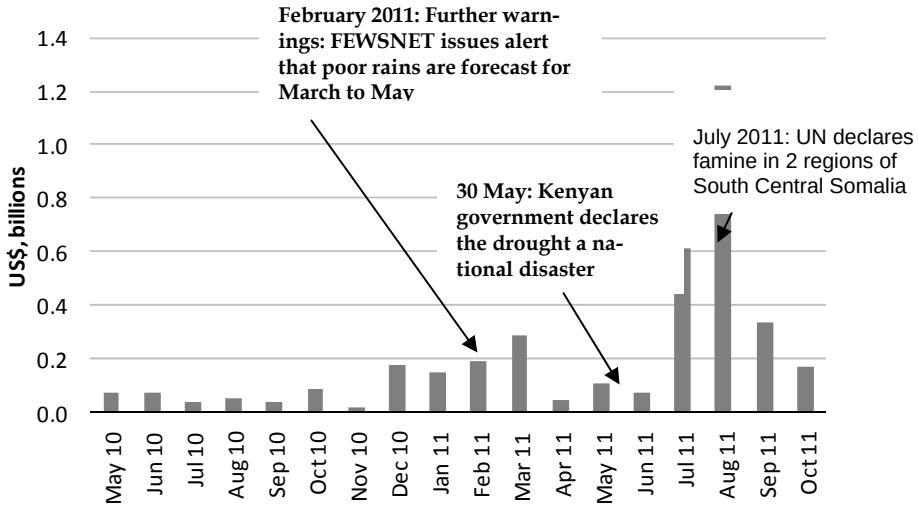
Many donors are already acting to invest in longer-term solutions to hunger crises. Some donor representatives in the region were also aware of and acted on the impending crisis much earlier. For example, key donors in Kenya (European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), UK Department for International Development (DFID) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID)) met in December 2010 to co-ordinate their initial response. Indeed, Oxfam accessed ECHO funding for work in Turkana, Kenya, in April 2011, and this was quickly scaled up in July. Nevertheless, the situation persists that most donors were not able to access funding at scale from their headquarters until malnutrition rates were at dangerous levels and media

Late response has higher impacts on women. Family caring responsibilities become more onerous; women frequently eat last and least. There are reports of women in Kenya tying rope or cloth around their stomach to stave off hunger, which exposes them to further health problems. [19]

attention broke the story.

In Somalia, a further complicating factor was present: the international community failed to prioritize growing humanitarian concerns over political considerations; Oxfam and Save the Children struggled to find funding for work in South Central Somalia.

Figure 1: Humanitarian funding for Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya, May 2010 to October 2011



Source: OCHA Financial Tracking Service[20]

UN: The UN's humanitarian appeal in November 2010 seriously underestimated the number of people in need of emergency aid. This is partly because the timeline of UN appeals is not aligned with the seasons in the Horn of Africa: assessments were carried out in September, before the failure of the short rains (which normally start in October) and did not take into account the future weather predictions. And for Somalia, recent appeals have been based more on what programming can be achieved (within the constraints of access and partners) rather than what funding would be required to avert disaster, thus potentially giving a misleading picture of needs within the country. The Consolidated Appeal – a key document for marshalling donor resources – was only fully revised at the end of July 2011. This was clearly a factor in the failure to scale up the response early on. In Somalia for example, the original 2011 Consolidated Appeal (CAP) was set at $530m in late 2010.[21] This was revised to more than $1bn by August 2011.[22]

National and international agencies: Many agencies, including Oxfam and Save the Children, had begun a small-scale response by December 2010, and tried to focus international attention on the impending crisis. [23] But while some performed better than others, most agencies did not adapt their programming on a sufficient scale to meet the level of need over the following six months, and did not begin to respond at scale until after the 2011 rains failed in May. Some agencies declared the situation a corporate priority as early as February,[24] but this only happened in Oxfam and Save the Children at the end of June and early July respectively.

Temporary malnutrition shocks can have permanent impacts on development. One key study found that the loss of stature, schooling and potential work experience from children in Zimbabwe due to drought and conflict resulted in a loss of lifetime earnings of around 14 per cent. [25]

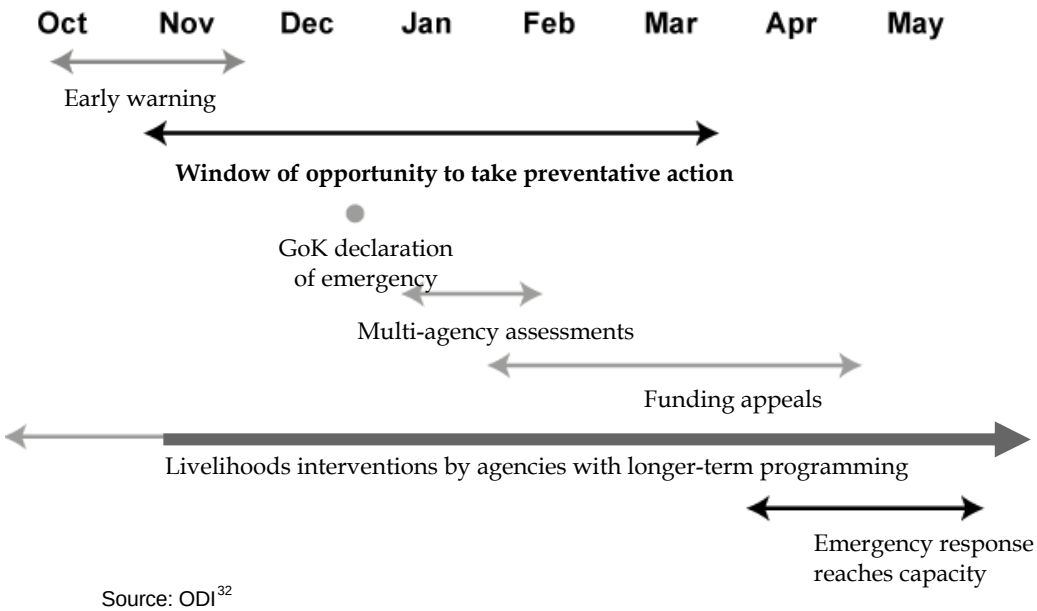
Window of opportunity missed

It was only when the crisis reached a tipping point – when the March–May rains had definitely failed and the only possible trajectory was towards increased hunger – that the humanitarian system began to respond at scale. Arguably, the system then responded adequately, at least in Ethiopia and Kenya. But why did we miss the window of opportunity for an early effective response?

Pressing domestic, regional, and international developments, including the conflict in Somalia, the Arab Spring uprisings, global recession, other crises such as the Japan earthquake/tsunami, or donor fatigue, may have delayed the international community's response to the drought. But the international community has generally been slow to respond to emergencies caused by drought; for instance, in the Sahel in 2005[26] and 2010,[27] and in Kenya in 2005–6,[28] and 2008–9.[29]

It is clear that the opportunity to avert a crisis was missed. Figure 2 shows the response to the 2005–6 drought in Kenya; and while the months are different, the pattern is identical to the 2010–11 drought. The emergency response was only starting to scale up in July, by which time malnutrition rates had increased substantially. The eastern parts of Turkana, Kenya reported 37 per cent global acute malnutrition rates in May, which is far above the emergency threshold of 15 per cent[30] and the highest recorded there in the last decade.[31]

Figure 2: Response to the 2005–6 drought in Kenya



Source: ODI[32]

Box 1: Estimating the cost of late response

While it is impossible to calculate exactly how many people have died in this crisis, one estimate suggests that it could be between 50,000 to 100,000 people, more than half of them children under five.[33] An earlier response which supported livelihoods, preserved household income, and supported markets would have reduced rates of malnutrition. And more substantial provision of food, nutrition, clean water and health services would have reduced the number of deaths.

According to UN OCHA, the median rate of acute malnutrition in southern regions of Somalia rose from 16 per cent in August 2010 to 25 per cent in January 2011 to a record of 36 per cent in August 2011.[34] This means that malnutrition rates were already significantly above the 15 per cent emergency threshold and trigger for humanitarian response in late 2010. Yet UN figures illustrate that this did not translate into increased funding.[35] Indeed, funding for the Somalia CAP in the first six months of 2011 was lower than each of the preceding three years, and only increased rapidly when the UN declared the situation to be a famine. Save the Children and Oxfam both struggled to find funding for work in Somalia in the early months of the crisis.

If an early response had saved even a small proportion of these lives, then thousands of children, women and men would still be alive. Ongoing conflict and lack of access in southern and central Somalia would have made early action difficult, but not impossible. Save the Children, for example, has reached more than 280,000 people in Somalia, in addition to more than one million in Ethiopia and over 440,000 in Kenya. And Oxfam has reached 1.5m people in Somalia, 300,000 in Ethiopia and about one million in Kenya.

3 Managing the risks, not the crisis

Did the EWS do their job?

The early warning systems analyse a range of factors, including weather, agriculture, livestock, markets and nutrition, and are becoming more sophisticated and predictions more reliable. They produce a wealth of information on a regular basis, which is widely accessible. Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), for example, has been a major step forward in regional EWS in the Horn of Africa. This information can be used to stimulate a response both in terms of scaling up long-term programming, and pre-empting the need for emergency intervention. Why did this not happen?

There may be scope for fine-tuning the EWS to look at chronic vulnerability. However it is clear that the EWS provided accurate and timely information that enabled those in positions of power to plan and respond.[36] FEWSNET and FSNWG reports were graded as 'very good' to 'excellent' in terms of their accuracy in predicting the severity and onset of the crisis.

While the early warnings were clear, the scale (numbers of people) and depth (severity) of the crisis still caught many by surprise. This is partly because needs assessments carried out by UN agencies or governments – which are a key driver for donor interventions – are published several months after the assessment is done and critically, do not incorporate forecasts or predictions based on a changing situation. Thus the UN appeal for Somalia, launched in November 2010, had relatively low figures for those in need of assistance in 2011 and failed to sufficiently reflect the La Niña predictions.

Ultimately, the early warning systems performed, but decision makers chose not to respond. There are perhaps some adjustments to be made to the EWS – experience suggests that the EWS is more likely to be used appropriately if the decision makers have a stake in it[37] – but the fundamental problem is not the system. Decision makers must be challenged to develop a system that they will respond to.

The need to incentivise early response

Why is there such reluctance for early response? There may be

- fear of getting it wrong – with both financial and reputational risk at stake;
- fear of being too interventionist – undermining communities' own capacities to cope;
- fatigue – 'there are droughts every year' – encouraging an attitude of resignation to the high levels of chronic malnutrition, and an inability to react to the crisis triggers.

These factors can be compounded by political and security issues.

The decision to respond is ultimately a political one. National governments often see an emergency declaration as a sign of weakness, especially if there is a drive for food self-sufficiency. This can make it difficult for humanitarian agencies to declare an emergency themselves. Early response is more likely when there are clear links with those directly affected by the food crisis – thus

multi-party democracy and a free press are necessary, but not always sufficient for the politically marginalized.[38] A strong, vibrant civil society voice is required to ensure that there is a political price for failure to respond.

For the donors, their relationship with national governments is a key determinant of early response. Although humanitarian aid should be exempt from political conditionality, political differences can seriously delay the response, as in Somalia in 2011.

Decision makers must understand and make explicit the consequences of either responding early and committing resources on the basis of forecasts, thus taking a modest financial risk; or waiting for certainty, thus risking the loss of lives and livelihoods and ultimately spending more money on response.

Early response requires acting on uncertainty

'In order to use early warning information most effectively, decision-makers have to be comfortable with… uncertainty — and it's difficult to be comfortable with it.'

Chris Hillbruner, food security early warning specialist with FEWSNET[39]

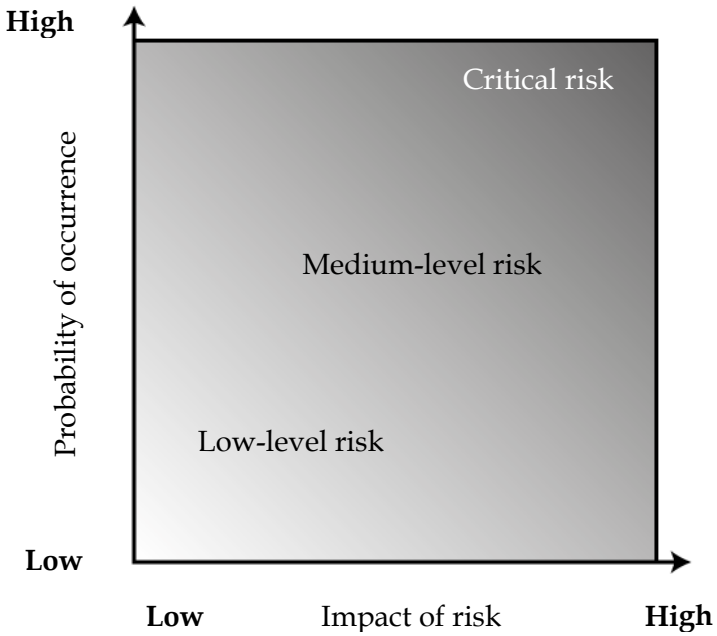
All humanitarian actors – governments, UN agencies, donors, implementing NGOs – want to be certain about the scope and depth of a looming food crisis before responding at scale. The international humanitarian system only becomes fully operational when Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) phase 4 – 'emergency'[40] – has been reached.[41] But it is well understood that saving livelihoods as well as lives requires an earlier response. High levels of mortality and malnutrition are clearly indicators of an existing crisis; they do not constitute early warning.

Crucially, waiting until the emergency is fully established means that the risks and consequences of inaction are borne by vulnerable people themselves.

Responding on the basis of forecasts instead of hard data requires a shift in dealing with uncertainty.[42] Currently, uncertainty too often stifles action; one study in Kenya found that while forecasts allow for prepositioning of food stocks, national decision makers often do not rely on them for scaling up a response.[43]

Forecasts involve uncertainty: they are inevitably based on data which is not totally comprehensive and are tinged with judgement; the earlier the warning, the less accurate it is likely to be. Yet this uncertainty is not unquantifiable – standard risk management techniques allow us to convert this uncertainty into risk, which can then be managed and minimised. Figure 3 shows a typical risk impact/probability chart, which plots the probability that a hazard will occur against its impact. Clearly, the most dangerous risks are those with high impact and high probability; these are the risks that should be prioritised for action, and require the closest attention.

Figure 3: Typical risk impact/probability chart



Source: Mind Tools[44]

'The [early warning] technology has outpaced the response systems.'

Chris Funk, a climatologist with FEWSNET[45]

Using this logic, it would have been clear from around January 2011 that the high probability of poor March–May rains in the Horn of Africa, magnified by the failure of the previous rains in late 2010, would constitute a critical risk that needed to be addressed immediately.

The Government of Kenya has explicitly recognised that response is reactive and dominated by crisis management, rather than anticipatory and focused on preventive risk management.[46]

The principles of risk reduction and management are well accepted in other fields, such as insurance (where paying money upfront is regarded as a responsible approach to prevent high losses in the event of a crisis) and public vaccination campaigns (to prevent epidemics and reduce medical costs). These principles must be embedded in short-term emergency response, longer-term development work and government investment programmes.

Agreeing triggers for earlier response

While many people on the ground, particularly communities themselves, were aware of the impending crisis in January/February 2011, they were not able to get traction further up the chain from the people with the power to make decisions about funding and other resources. What should the process be?

Once the EWS has flagged a potential problem, this should immediately activate a process of further investigation – detailed monitoring which can be used to design interventions – and the operationalization of emergency plans. These plans need to be clear on who should do what, and when, but currently there is no shared understanding of this. USAID promotes the use of triggers, but leaves their development to individual implementing agencies.[47] We need a common approach to using triggers, so that decision makers know exactly what they ought to be doing as the situation deteriorates, and the consequences if they fail to act on those triggers.

Malnutrition and mortality have been shown to follow an exponential curve, rising steeply as a crisis unfolds, rather than at a steady rate.[48] *This means that once the necessary thresholds of crisis are reached, further rapid deterioration is likely and the emergency response risks being overwhelmed.*

All actors need to work together to develop a system of triggers that

- recognises the national government (where possible) as primary duty-bearer for meeting citizens' food needs;
- reflects the high levels of chronic malnutrition in some areas;
- reflects the exponential rather than linear development of malnutrition (see side bar);
- does not lead to interventions that undermine communities' capacity to cope;
- is context-specific for different livelihoods zones;
- is agreed between different actors, just as the IPC has developed a standardized approach.

Agreeing triggers for response is not likely to create an automatic warning–response system – this is not a panacea – but it will be one important tool to press for early response. It is expected that there will be a range of triggers for different sorts of response. So, for example, at an early stage the trigger might be for advocacy, but as the situation deteriorates, it might be for a livelihood response, and subsequently for a food/nutrition response.

4 What does early response look like?

Adapting long-term programmes

Long-term programmes are in the best position to respond to forecasts of a crisis: there are established links with communities and thus the vulnerabilities and the complexities are understood; there are staff and/or partners in place; they are in a trusted position with donors with funding available; and their work has been negotiated with government bodies.

A drought is likely to derail development work and development gains will be lost. Yet too often development work is not disaster-proofed and monitoring and evaluation is not based on risk reduction. Instead, long-term programmes should become more sensitive to drought risks and seek to reduce vulnerability by reducing the underlying risk factors.

Global expenditure on DRR reached US$835m in 2009 – a mere 0.5 per cent of total annual ODA.

Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2011[49]

When risk analysis is made integral to long-term programme design – by using Drought Cycle Management (DCM) or similar tools – droughts can be seen as an integral part of the livelihood system, rather than as an unexpected shock. The impact of different drought scenarios on the programme can be assessed, and a range of interventions planned which allow the programme to adapt to the changing context.[50]

The following two case studies provide examples of how longer-term work can adapt to a worsening drought situation.

Box 2: Case study: Oxfam's integrated programming in Turkana

Oxfam has worked in Turkana, Kenya for decades, and undertook a strategic shift in programming in 2007 to combine both humanitarian and development work. The key elements of the programme are:

- **Livelihood promotion** for increasing resilience to shocks and for poverty reduction through enhancing the power of pastoralists in markets by organizing and strengthening Livestock Marketing Associations. This not only provided collective strength to bargain for better prices for products but it also enhanced pastoralists' skills in financial management and better animal husbandry practices. Advocacy was also a key element, to promote government support for livelihoods in these politically marginalized areas.
- **Social protection:** The depth of poverty in these areas meant that working on livelihoods promotion was not enough on its own. The state needs to provide a cushion to allow pastoralists to take risk, to absorb shocks and also to cope with the effects of chronic food insecurity. Advocacy to extend social protection and implement effective programmes are key. Oxfam works with the Kenyan government and DFID to implement the Hunger Safety Net Programme in two out of the four districts.

- **Responding to acute food insecurity needs in a way that supports and sustains the local economy:** Cash transfer programmes are designed using Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis (EMMA) in order to support the local market system and allow for a faster and smoother recovery after the crisis. In 2011, it was found that the combined effects of reduced purchasing power (due to loss of livestock) and more expensive food required cash payments to the most vulnerable to boost purchasing power and a one-off working capital grant to traders to support them to restock at times of high food and transport costs.[51] Cash payments can and must be used to strengthen women's role and status in both households and communities.[52]

Box 3: Case study: Save the Children's work with crisis modifiers in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, Save the Children leads a consortium of agencies implementing USAID's Pastoralist Livelihoods Initiative II programme, which uses a crisis modifier, funded by OFDA. Once triggered, this releases funding for humanitarian work to respond to the crisis, thus making the programmes flexible.

This enables the application of approaches such as Drought Cycle Management (DCM), which includes four distinct phases: 'normal development and preparedness', 'alert', emergency response' and 'recovery'. Save the Children has found that, rather than having distinct interventions in each phase, it is important to continue with normal development interventions throughout all of the phases, with projects such as health, education and protection providing complementary impacts and improving resilience.

Many funding mechanisms only fund a specific phase of this cycle, for example, only response or only rehabilitation. While it is possible for agencies to combine different donor sources to cover all four phases, it is better to receive flexible funding that includes crisis modifiers, making it possible to cover different phases where necessary.

Early humanitarian response

Early humanitarian response, which seeks to reduce disaster risk, is both effective and cost-effective in addressing the underlying factors that make people vulnerable. While it is too simplistic to assume an overarching cost-benefit ratio (often quoted at 1:4 or 1:7), studies have shown that appropriate prevention saves lives and money.[53] For example, one study in northern Kenya found that it was three times more expensive to restock a core herd than to keep animals alive through supplementary feeding. And in the Afar region of Ethiopia, restocking sheep and goats cost at least 6 times more than supplementary feeding, and restocking cattle cost 14 times more.[54] Providing support to people in their homes – rather than in camps – is significantly cheaper and can also reduce their vulnerability.

A risk reduction approach requires the humanitarian system to develop a package of measures that can be implemented in response to early triggers for action. The IPC has produced a simple table which outlines a strategic response framework appropriate at each of the five phases,[55] and provides a useful baseline. Ethiopia's roadmap of food and agricultural interventions for

different stages of the drought in 2011 also offered a useful guide. More work like this, involving donors, would improve donor confidence and encourage them to shift from the familiar food aid response.

The right interventions at the right time: trucking 5L of water per day (basic survival quantity only) to 80,000 people in Harshin, Ethiopia for five months costs more than US$3m, compared with US$900k to rehabilitate all the non-operational local water schemes.[56]

Humanitarian interventions which should be started on the basis of forecasts:

- Livelihood protection interventions, in order to safeguard key assets. This includes vaccination and healthcare of animals, livestock water-point rehabilitation and maintenance, and destocking.
- Interventions involving a significant time lag: if food distributions are likely to be necessary, the process of mobilising resources and arranging logistics should begin on the basis of early assessments, with quantities being revised at a later stage.
- 'No regrets' options: Measures that build capacity and disaster preparedness but have no negative effect even if the worst forecasts are not realised (either because the cost is very low or because they will build resilience). This would include activities such as
    - putting human resources systems in place: drafting job descriptions; assessment of staff needs; advertising potential vacancies; developing and strengthening technical, business support and leadership capacity;
    - talking to existing and potential donors and drafting outline proposals for response, based on ongoing monitoring and trend analysis;
    - building links with private sector partners: e.g., developing standing agreements with money transfer companies, starting tender processes;
    - building and strengthening the capacity of local partners;
    - starting to engage with all relevant stakeholders: partners, local authorities and the women, men and children in communities;
    - practical measures like assessing borehole operations, prepositioning stocks, market assessments, mapping the capacity and coverage of traders, etc.
- Flexible funding measures that involve a level of expenditure commensurate with the probability of the crisis occurring. Projects could be designed and initiated with limited but sufficient start-up funding, with a commitment to more substantial resources as the crisis develops. Donors could commit to a certain project on given conditions, with a ceiling on what can be spent before the situation is declared an emergency. This will require careful management of expectations among potential beneficiaries.

Gender-sensitivity is key to the success and sustainability of these interventions: for example, supplementary feeding of animals needs to be targeted to ensure that poorer members of the community, including women, benefit, and cash/food for work must consider women's other tasks.[57]

5 Adapting systems for early response

Early response requires us to move away from the traditional distinction within the aid system between development and humanitarian work. This approach, with different staff, mandates, skillsets, timescales, budgets and beneficiaries, is not valid in regions like the Horn of Africa. To increase the effectiveness of the aid system, this artificial gap must be bridged.

Investing in people ...

Skilled and experienced staff and partners are needed who are able to build risk analysis into their work and are thus able to adapt what they do, and how they do it, as the situation and needs change. All humanitarian and development actors need to invest in people so they can analyse data, identify risks, assess trends, undertake assessments and use this information to judge whether the situation is deteriorating – thus triggering an earlier response and getting decision makers to act.

Implementing agencies need to develop a state of readiness or preparedness in their teams, to be more dynamic in their approach to risk management and adaptable to whatever crisis occurs. Just as managing security risks is a key element of day-to-day work in insecure environments, so should be discussing and managing other types of risks.

This may sound straightforward, but it requires a major change in the way staff, especially senior staff, are recruited and their capacity strengthened. Very few senior managers have strong experience in both emergency and development contexts. They and others may need significant ongoing training and mentoring to maximise their skills and understanding, as well as appropriate systems in place to support them. These efforts should build on existing initiatives including ELRHA[58] and the Emergency Capacity Building project.[59]

Building national government capacity is also a key challenge and one that requires substantial long-term investment and new forms of partnership. Unfortunately, the ongoing provision of one-off training workshops delivered by NGOs or the provision of finance without sufficient technical support that sometimes characterises UN or large-scale donor interventions are failing to deliver the required capacity.

Much greater investment is needed in long-term joint efforts to strengthen government capacity, both in disaster risk management and coordination, but also in improving the ability of long-term development work in all sectors to build resilience. This will not happen without concerted action: UN, governments, donors and implementing agencies need to commit substantial resources for an intensive organizational and staff capacity development plan as part of a long-term strategy.

... structures, strategy and systems

In order to be successful at risk-sensitive programming, other organizational aspects need to change, including structures, systems and strategy.[60]

Clearly structures are a major block: typically, organizations separate development and humanitarian work. What can be done proactively to overcome the silo approach? Humanitarian and development strategies are often developed separately, whereas a risk management approach requires common thinking and planning. Where structures are institutionally divided, an effective coordination and integration approach with various mechanisms for direct cooperation, joint programming and implementation (in combination with shared learning cycles) can help to merge development and response.

More agile and flexible funding

Neither humanitarian nor development funding streams are ideally suited to the situations of chronic vulnerability that occur regularly in the Horn of Africa, where the situation is often in transition between humanitarian emergency and development.

- Humanitarian programmes are short-term, which doesn't allow for longer-term planning, but they are usually fairly flexible in terms of programme approach and the ability to change expenditure. For example, a recent ECHO grant in Kenya allowed Oxfam to switch between livestock vaccinations, destocking and supplementary feeding, enabling a flexible response to the changing context.
- Development programmes are long-term but less flexible. Implementing agencies are required to predict their expenditure at the start, with often only a small contingency (for the EU, this is a maximum of five per cent). This is designed to boost accountability, but it does hinder flexibility and agile programming.

Some emergency aid donors have made considerable efforts to be more flexible, with innovative funding mechanisms to support recovery and resilience. ECHO, for instance, has explicitly recognised the value of early response in its Regional Drought Decision for the Greater Horn of Africa.[61] On the development side, USAID's highly innovative crisis modifier in Ethiopia allows a long-term programme to switch gears, accessing Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) emergency funding for humanitarian work, in order to protect development gains in times of shock. Other donors should emulate these models.

There have been debates concerning a third funding stream – distinct from humanitarian and development funding – precisely for situations of chronic vulnerability like the Horn of Africa. However, there is a possibility that this would create new boundaries between programming approaches and contribute to a lack of ownership and responsibility for working in these contexts. A better solution is for donors – including the UN for the Central Emergency Response Fund – to revisit their mandates and protocols for funding streams and continue to push the boundaries, so that they can disburse sufficient funds quickly to support early response. The Principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship require this.[62]

Swift funding processes are critical to reduce start-up times and promote agile programming, and there are a number of examples of good practice. These include ECHO's flexibility in 2011, guaranteeing finance at an early stage and enabling swift scale-up with the minimum of proposal review; and SIDA's Rapid Response Fund, which allows funds to be disbursed swiftly and with a great degree of flexibility after programme approval, reducing paperwork. But donors could still do much more to streamline and standardize the funding process.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

The predictions about the impact of the 2010–11 drought in the Horn of Africa were clear, and unfortunately, much of what has happened was preventable. The scale of death and suffering, and the financial cost, could have been reduced if early warning systems had triggered an earlier, bigger response.

There have been many commitments: governments in the region committed at the Nairobi summit in September 2011 to prepare and deliver on national strategies;[63] Arab and Islamic actors together with the UN met also in September to redefine the vision for Somalia; the crisis has reinvigorated the Horn of Africa Plan of Action;[64] and many are considering the lessons from the DEC and other evaluations.

Together, the international aid community and national governments must use the momentum and start implementing changes now, so that next time we do more, more quickly, to protect vulnerable people and fulfil the objectives of the Charter to End Extreme Hunger. Another food crisis driven by drought and high food prices is already looming in the Sahel, so there is an urgent need to put what has been learned into practice.

Recommendations

1 Manage the risks, not the crisis

- ***All actors*** need to review their approach to drought prevention and **not wait for certainty** before responding. A wait-and-see approach may be devastating in terms of lives and livelihoods.
- ***All actors*** and early warning specialists need to develop a common approach to **triggers for early action** to be used by both humanitarian and development actors that prompt quick action by those higher up the decision-making chain.

2 **Earlier drought response**

National governments should

- recognise their **primary responsibility** to meet food security needs, providing **political leadership** for a drought response;
- endorse the Charter to End Extreme Hunger.

The international aid community needs to move away from short-term responses and 'quick in and out' programming. We need to

- embed a disaster risk reduction approach in all our work, using drought cycle management and other tools, thus allowing **long-term development interventions to adapt** to the changing context;
- undertake **preventative humanitarian work** on the basis of forecasts, including: livelihood protection; no-regrets options; and flexible measures with a level of expenditure commensurate with the probability and impact of the hazard;
- ensure that our systems are in place to integrate risk management into work throughout the development and humanitarian cycle, through **investing significantly in people** and partner organizations and **reviewing our organizational structures** and systems;

- work closely with traditional community structures based around elders and religious leaders, as well as with strong women's and other community-based groups.

Donors should

- provide **more agile and flexible funding** by including crisis modifiers in multi-year development grants to build recurring crisis response into development programming, and by ensuring that humanitarian funding can support pre-emptive or early response;
- endorse the Charter to End Extreme Hunger.

Annex 1: The Charter to End Extreme Hunger

In 2011, over 13 million people in East Africa were affected by the worst food crisis of the 21st Century. Into 2012, the first clear signs are emerging of a growing crisis in West Africa. These crises, like those in Southern Africa, Central Asia, and beyond, leave a legacy of poverty, suffering, and the loss of livelihoods. Malnutrition is responsible for 2.6 million child deaths each year – one third of the global total. Urgent action is needed right now to prevent further hunger crises.

Hunger crises are predictable, predicted – and preventable: we already have the knowledge to stop this kind of tragedy from unfolding; we know the steps that must be taken to prevent suffering on this scale.

Women, men, and children dying of hunger is not acceptable. We all have a responsibility to prevent this from ever happening again.

1. Fix the flaws of the international emergency system

Early warning systems are already in place across East Africa. There were early indications that this crisis was growing but the warnings went largely unheeded – just as in so many previous disasters. Large-scale action to prevent the worst of these crises did not come in time. The delay in waiting for a disaster to unfold before acting costs both lives and money. It is wrong to see a crisis coming and do nothing to prevent it. The system, including national governments, donors, UN agencies, NGOs, and funds like the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), must be flexible enough to respond to changing situations with the right interventions at the right time.

There is no single solution, but together these commitments – when enacted – will improve the system to break the cycle of crisis.

- We commit to link non-political, needs-based early warning signs of disasters with a timely and appropriate response.
- We commit to support a UN General Assembly resolution that requires that CERF funds are released at the first warning signs to meet the emerging needs and support immediate intervention – with transparent processes to ensure funds reach those affected as quickly as possible.
- We commit to support national and community preparedness plans, capacity, and activities in line with humanitarian principles to avert disasters' worst effects, such as acute malnutrition.

2. Supporting local food production

Decades of under-investment in small scale food producers and ineffective management of natural resources, have contributed significantly to the crisis in East Africa, with livestock farmers particularly hard hit. Globally, long-term investment in agriculture and adapting to the risks of climate-related disasters has been inadequate to support the poorest in feeding themselves and contributing more to national economies. Putting adaptation to climate change and the reduction of disaster risk at the heart of development approaches must be a top priority. Failure to act is costing lives every day as people struggle to deal with shocks such as the changing climate and rocketing food prices. This has to

change.

- We commit to fulfil urgently and rapidly the pledges we made to the l'Aquila Food Security Initiative (AFSI).
- We commit to agreeing a longer-term plan for after the AFSI expires in 2012, to fight food insecurity and malnutrition, that includes ensuring disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation are placed at the heart of development approaches.
- We commit to support signatories to the Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security in accelerating fulfilment of their pledges to spend 10% of national budgets on agriculture development.
- We commit to implementing the global and regional policies that already exist on investment in agriculture, livestock farming, and pastoralism to promote maximum food security for all.

3. Services and protection for the poorest

Millions of people around the world are living on the edge of survival, always close to disaster. We can help those people move back from the brink with two changes: social safety nets, and fairer investment. Safety nets can protect millions of people from the worst of the crisis: they stabilise families' income throughout the year so they are not forced to sell what little they have to feed themselves. Fairer investment is simply respecting the right that everyone has to essential services such as health care and education. Whether it is between regions or between women and men, injustice and inequality is a matter of life and death.

1. We commit to investing in development strategies that see fair provision of essential services and investment in livelihoods in every country by 2015.
2. We commit to protecting at an absolute minimum the poorest 10% of the population from the impact of food crises with safety nets. This will include direct cash payments based on need alone, specifically addressing the food and nutrition needs of women and children.

4. Food everyone can afford

Spiralling food prices have contributed to tipping some areas of East Africa towards disaster. We cannot stop acute food crises unless everyone can access food at a price they can afford. The number of people without enough to eat is increasing. Food price spikes are also a major part of the problem. We have waited too long to fulfil the simple right of every person to affordable food.

- We commit to scaling up strategic and emergency food reserves at local, national and regional level, ensuring the governance of these reserves is accountable to the people they are intended to serve.
- We commit to tackling the causes of high and volatile food prices by taking action to end biofuel mandates and limiting governments' use of food export bans.

5. Reducing armed violence and conflict

It is impossible to end mass death by starvation without reducing the violence that is one of its principal causes. The world has not only tolerated the fact that hundreds of thousands of women, men, and children live without help or protection during times of conflict. It has done too little to address the vicious mix of poverty, poor governance and violence that sustain conflicts. This must be replaced by urgent action to protect and assist people now – and to tackle the fundamental cycle of violence and poverty.

- We commit to providing – and allowing unfettered access for – timely, appropriate, and sufficient humanitarian assistance based on need where insecurity is destroying the chances of life and sustainable

development.

- We commit to press for, and support, practical measures to protect people affected by conflict, including more vigorous and sustained diplomatic engagement to help all parties involved to local and national conflicts find just, sustainable, and secure solutions.

Annex 2: Country-specific recommendations

In Ethiopia, the government is responsible for leading and co-ordinating disaster risk management (DRM) programmes and providing an enabling environment (policy, funding mechanisms and institutions) to support this work. Through the draft National Policy and Strategy on Disaster Risk Management and the draft DRM Strategic Programme Investment Framework (SPIF), the Ethiopian government has signalled its intent and must now follow through with specific actions:

- The new National Policy and Strategy on Disaster Risk Management – developed by the DRM and Food Security Sector – was expected to be ratified in 2010, but is still under review by the Council of Ministers. It should be approved swiftly and the government should work with donors, the UN, NGOs, and civil society groups to ensure robust implementation. There should be increased contingency funding at the local level and the capacity of local officials should be strengthened, in particular to use early warning information effectively and to deliver non-food response and recovery activities which protect livelihoods and contribute to resilience. Ongoing NGO efforts to provide contingency finance directly to communities should also be studied and replicated, if effective.
- The government should work with partners to adopt a clear methodology for implementing participatory risk reduction and adaptation planning at *kebele* and *woreda* levels. It should ensure that it involves communities at risk in decision making around development planning and spending. Communities must be able to use risk analysis in their decision making and to lead DRM processes and activities.
- There should be increased capacity and knowledge for appropriate interventions at each stage of the drought cycle to strengthen the technical quality of non-food responses to protect livelihoods and promote early recovery. For example, the Agricultural Task Force demonstrated good practice in this regard as early as October 2010 by developing a roadmap for early interventions. This should be mainstreamed across all relevant sectoral task forces, at federal and regional level.
- Government and development partners should invest in more innovative approaches to build appropriate skills and capacity within local and federal government bureaus for implementing the DRM-SPIF. In particular, new approaches to building *soft* skills should be sought. This might include using early warning information for decision making; implementing new approaches which require facilitation skills such as commercial de-stocking; or implementing better systems for supporting community groups to maintain water infrastructure.

The Productive Safety Net Programme has been vital in ensuring that chronically food-insecure households have access to predictable support, and the Risk Financing Initiative is an innovative contingency financing approach which is to be commended. Monitoring and evaluation systems should highlight implementation challenges and feed into the design of the next phase, from 2014.Given the challenges faced by some NGOs implementing cash transfer programmes as part of the response, there is also a need to ensure a clear strategy for appropriate targeting when NGOs make humanitarian responses in PSNP areas.

The DRM Strategic Programme and Investment Framework provides a clear mechanism for the development of larger-scale and more systematic investment to DRM activities in Ethiopia. This includes a possible move away from the biannual assessments to a more decentralized approach relying on early warning and local-level decision making and a commitment to mainstream DRM considerations more systematically. This will also require greater coordination of financial and technical support from development partners as well as a commitment from both government and development partners to engage in a high-quality programme development process which will follow the launch of the DRM-SPIF.

In Kenya, the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) and National Drought and Disaster Contingency Fund (NDDCF) were approved in November 2011.[65] This innovative approach views drought as very different from rapid-onset disasters, and requires management which has far more in common with sustainable development than with disaster response. The NDMA will need the political will and the efforts of all stakeholders to make sure that it is established as quickly and effectively as possible, while ensuring it stays true to its original intention of bringing new thinking to tackling drought in the drylands. It also requires the urgent approval of the Sessional paper on the National Policy for the Sustainable Development of Northern Kenya and other Arid Lands to provide a complete policy framework for the NDMA.

There are constraints around capacity and co-ordination. The District Steering Groups (DSGs) have considerable potential for action, yet they often lack capacity and can be subject to political pressures. The UN cluster system must also be strengthened; only the nutrition cluster is functional. While all clusters are meant to be led by the Kenyan government, its input into the process remains largely ceremonial, without clear performance deliverables.

There needs to be increased clarity on mandates and responsibilities under the new Constitution. The relevant bodies responsible for emergency management and early warning systems – the Kenyan Food Security Steering Group, the National Crisis Centre, and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – should be brought under the same roof.

There is a pressing need for greater transparency and urgency in tackling corruption. The Government of Kenya allocated KSH10bn (approx $11m) for response to the drought.[66] But it is not clear where the money was reallocated from, or how (and whether) it has been spent.

In terms of the Kenya Country Programme Plan under the Nairobi Strategy, there needs to be a realistic costing of planned activities and a sufficiently timely resource allocation to guarantee its implementation. The coverage of the telecommunications network should be prioritised.

In South Central Somalia, the lack of effective central government in full control means that recommendations towards government are moot. However, there are traditional community structures based around elders and religious leaders, as well as strong women's and other community-based groups. These leaders can play a vital role in facilitating services and inputs for their communities, negotiating for access where necessary. Donors and multilateral institutions should support implementing agencies to work with these structures, acknowledging the challenges and high costs of working in certain areas, helping them to support women's voice, and to develop disaster preparedness and response activities, as well as longer-term plans to enhance resilience.

In **Puntland,** the Humanitarian and Disaster Management Agency should be supported, while in **Somaliland,** donors and agencies should continue to work with the National Environmental Research and Disaster Preparedness and Management Authority, as is already happening with the Joint Disaster Risk Management Project for 2012–2014, which includes establishment of a Drought Mitigation and Contingency Fund.

Notes

[1] See http://hungercharter.org/

[2] 'The Nairobi strategy: Enhanced partnership to eradicate drought emergencies', adopted at the Summit on the Horn of Africa Crisis, 9 September 2011, Nairobi, Kenya.

[3] Developed by Oxfam, FAO and WFP at the request of the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator.

[4] OCHA, Horn of Africa Snapshot, 16 December 2011.

[5] For a comprehensive list of the key EWS and their predictions, see http://www.acaps.org/img/documents/annex-1---early-warning-and-information-systems-in-east-africa-acaps---annex-1---early-warning-and-information-systems-in-east-africa.pdf

[6] FEWSNET (2010) 'Executive Brief: La Niña and Food Security in East Africa', August 2010.

7 FEWSNET (2010) 'East Africa Food Security Alert', November 2, 2010. Pre-emptive livelihood support could mitigate likely La Niña impacts in the eastern Horn.

8 FSNWG La Niña task force presentation, 2 December 2010 http://typo3.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/drought/docs/La per cent 20Nina per cent 20FSNWG per cent 20update per cent 202.12.10.pdf, p. 4

[9] See Chantaret *et al*. (2007) 'Using Weather Index Insurance to Improve Drought Response for Famine Prevention', *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*.

[10] FEWSNET FSNAU, WFP, KFFSG, FAO, FSNWG: East Africa Food Security Alert March 15, 2011. 'Below-average March to May rains forecast in the Eastern Horn – current crisis likely to worsen', see http://www.fews.net/docs/Publications/East_Regional_Alert_03_15_2011.pdf, p. 2

[11] FSNWG update, March 2011 http://typo3.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/drought/docs/FSNWG per cent 20Update per cent 20March per cent 202011.pdf

[12] Unfortunately efforts to support the government to engage in large-scale commercial de-stocking did not get past the feasibility stage, but did raise awareness of the potential for the Ethiopian Milk and Meat Marketing Board to be involved in this in the future.

[13] Issue raised by USAID and DFID representatives at the public launch of July Humanitarian Requirements Document, Addis Ababa.

[14] Oxfam (2009) 'Band Aids and Beyond: Tackling disasters in Ethiopia 25 years after the famine', Oxfam Briefing Paper No 133, http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/conflict_disasters/downloads/bp133_band_aids_beyond_161009.pdf

Recognising this, the Government of Ethiopia now has ambitious targets for investment in food security and agriculture, building to a projected expenditure of $1.5bn by 2014 (according to the Growth and Transformation Plan).

[15] Minutes of the Government of Kenya-led Technical Coordination Secretariat on Drought Mitigation dated 17 August 2011.

[16] http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/InsidePage.php?id=2000039809&cid=4

[17] Scale-up was hindered primarily because this was a pilot project that was not designed with rapid scale-up in mind. These problems have been resolved for Phase 2. The cash distribution was raised in October but this was part of the longer-term planning. The Turkana scale-up is underway based on longer-term development figures, not on the basis of humanitarian needs.

[18] Disasters Emergency Committee (2011) 'Real Time Evaluation; Response to the crisis in East Africa', Synthesis report, 1st Draft, December 2011.

[19] http://thinkafricapress.com/gender/more-victims-horn-africa

[20] Note that the Financial Tracking Service figures should be taken as a good indication of the broad picture, rather than precise figures, due to the way in which data is captured. Also note that as reporting to the FTS is voluntary, it does not capture all contributions.

[21] UN OCHA, 'Somalia 2011 Consolidated Appeal'.

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/B33BBEAC2E6346E1852577FF007EC7A8-Full_Report.pdf

[22] UN OCHA, 'Consolidated Appeal Emergency Revision', August 2011

[23] http://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressrelease/2011-01-24/drought-worsens-crisis-somalia; http://www.voanews.com/english/news/africa/Oxfam-Somali-Drought-Could-Be-as-Serious-as-92-114575174.html ; http://www.disasterriskreduction.net/fileadmin/user_upload/drought/docs/REGLAP-Will_Kenyas-drought_crisis_ever_ per cent 20end.pdf

[24] For example, World Vision declared a Category III emergency in February. This mobilises World Vision's Global Rapid Response Team and requires the highest level of Partnership relief and disaster response, see http://www.wvafrica.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=464:world-vision-responds-to-the-horn-of-africa-drought-and-hunger-crisis-&catid=57:latest-news&Itemid=86

[25] H. Alderman, J. Hoddinott and B. Kinsey (2004) 'Long Term Consequences of Early Childhood Malnutrition', Households in Conflict Network, Working Paper, available at: http://www.hicn.org/papers/wp09.pdf

See also S. Dercon, and J. Hoddinott (2003) 'Health, Shocks and Poverty Persistence', United Nations University Discussion Paper. Available at:http://www.economics.ox.ac.uk/members/stefan.dercon/Derc_Hodd_v5.pdf

[26] Trench et al. (2007) 'Beyond Any Drought: Root causes of vulnerability in the Sahel', ALNAP, see http://www.alnap.org/resource/3577.aspx

[27] Peter Gubbels (2011) 'Escaping the Hunger Cycle: Pathways to resilience in the Sahel', Sahel Working Group, see http://community.eldis.org/sahelworkinggroup/.5a337e1b/.5a338083

[28] ODI (2006) 'Saving Lives Through Livelihoods: critical gaps in the response to the drought in the Greater Horn of Africa', HPG Briefing Note, available at

http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/1381.pdf

[29] Few interventions occurred in mid-2008, when the drought was already at its height. The majority of interventions took place in 2009 – 63 per cent took place after June. ILRI: 'An assessment of the response to the 2008–2009 drought in Kenya', 12 May 2010.

[30] KENYA Dekadal Food Security Monitoring September 7, 2011.

http://www.fews.net/docs/publications/ke_dekadal_report_2011_09_07.pdf

[31] http://www.unocha.org/cap/appeals/emergency-humanitarian-response-plan-kenya-2012

[32] ODI (2006) op. cit.., see http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/1381.pdf

[33] http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/press-releases/9000%20tonnes%20of%20UK%20aid%20for%20Horn%20of%20Africa.pdf

Another estimate made by the US government was that more than 29,000 children under age 5 died in 90 days from May to July. See http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2011/08/04/501364/main20088015.shtml

[34] UN OCHA, CAP 2012 Somalia, p. 13, available at

http://ochaonline.un.org/somalia/AppealsFunding/CAP2012/tabid/7602/language/en-US/Default.aspx

[35] *Ibid*., p. 31

[36] Mija-tesse Ververs (2011) 'East Africa Food Security Crisis – an overview of what we knew and when before June 2011', see http://www.acaps.org/img/documents/early-warning-and-information-systems-in-east-africa-acaps---early-warning-and-information-systems-in-east-africa.pdf

[37] M. Buchanan-Smith (2000) 'Role of early warning systems in decision-making processes', ODI, http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/docs/4943.pdf

[38] Myhrvold-Hanssen (2003) 'Democracy, News Media, and Famine Prevention: Amartya Sen and The Bihar Famine of 1966-67', see www.disasterdiplomacy.org/MyhrvoldHanssenBiharFamine.rtf

[39] http://www.scidev.net/en/agriculture-and-environment/food-security/news/forecasters-warned-of-horn-of-africa-drought-last-year.html

[40] Even Phase 4 does not always lead to significant response – parts of Somalia have been classified as Phase 4 for two years or more.

[41] Phase 4, the 'Emergency', is characterised by the following: when the household group experiences short-term instability; and the household group has extreme food consumption gaps resulting in very high acute malnutrition or excess mortality; or the household group has extreme loss of livelihood assets that will likely lead to food consumption gaps. See 'IPC Acute Food Insecurity Reference Table for Household Groups', http://www.fews.net/ml/en/info/pages/scale.aspx

[42] Forecasters 'warned of Horn of Africa drought' last year, 14 July 2011, http://www.scidev.net/en/agriculture-and-environment/food-security/news/forecasters-warned-of-horn-of-africa-drought-last-year.html

[43] Hellmuth et al. (eds) (2011) 'A better climate for disaster risk management', *Climate and Society* No 3.

[44] www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newPPM_78.htm

[45] http://www.scidev.net/en/agriculture-and-environment/food-security/news/forecasters-warned-of-horn-of-africa-drought-last-year.html

[46] Government of Kenya (2011) 'Ending drought emergencies in Kenya: A commitment to sustainable solutions', Country Programme Paper, 7 September 2011.

[47] USAID (2007) 'Trigger indicators and early warning and response systems in multi-year title II assistance programmes', Office of Food for Peace Occasional Paper 5, November 2007.

[48] For more extensive discussion of the role of IPC nutrition and mortality indicators in decision making see S. Jaspers and H. Young (2009) 'Review of Nutrition and Mortality Indicators for the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC): Reference Levels and Decision Making'.

[49] Development Initiatives (2011). 'Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2011', http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/gha-report-2011.pdf

[50] Oxfam (2011) 'Disaster Risk Reduction – fundamental to saving lives and reducing poverty', Briefing on the Horn of Africa Drought 2011, August 2011. http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/fullreport_132.pdf

[51] Oxfam (2011) 'Turkana, Kenya Market Analysis: August – October 2011: An assessment of the Maize Market's Capacity to respond to cash programming', Oxfam Research Report: (Report Version 2: 22 Sept 2011).

[52] See for example, 'Outcome Review Report of cash programming on gender in the pastoralist community in Wajir, Kenya', Tess Dico-Young, Oxfam Regional Humanitarian Gender Adviser, October 2011.

53 Irin Analysis: 'Horn of Africa aid must also build long-term resilience', http://reliefweb.int/node/436319

[53] See for example World Bank (2010) 'Natural Hazards, Unnatural disasters; the economics of effective prevention'; and Oxfam America and Tearfund (2010) 'Cost benefit analysis for community based climate and disaster risk management: synthesis report', July 2010.

[54] Pastoral Livelihoods Initiative (2007) 'Food for thought: livestock feeding support through drought', Policy Brief Number 2, November 2007; Aklilu and Wekesa (2002) 'Drought, livestock and livelihoods: lessons from the 1999–2001 emergency response in the pastoral sector in Kenya', HPN Paper 40.

[55] http://www.ipcinfo.org/attachments/ipc_ref_table.pdf

[56] Oxfam calculations. See Oxfam (2009) 'What drives Emergency Water Trucking in the ASALs of Kenya? Should it be funded by donors or not? What better role can the government play in emergency water trucking?', Policy Briefing Paper No.01, September 2009.

[57] F. Flintan (2011) 'The changing nature of gender roles in the drylands of the Horn and East Africa', REGLAP report, http://www.disasterriskreduction.net/fileadmin/user_upload/drought/docs/Gender%20and%20DRR_FINAL_Dec%202011.pdf

[58] http://www.elrha.org/

[59] http://www.ecbproject.org/

[60] A popular management model – McKinsey 7S Framework – suggests that for an organization to perform well, seven elements need to be aligned and mutually reinforcing. These include so called 'hard elements' – strategy, structure and systems – and 'soft elements' – staff, skills, style and shared values.

[61] See figure on page 10 of: AGEG (2009) 'Mid Term Evaluation of DG ECHO's Regional Drought Decision in the Greater Horn of Africa March–May 2009', http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/evaluation/2009/GHA_2009.pdf

[62] Good Humanitarian Donorship website, 23 Principles and Good Practice, http://www.goodhumanitariandonorship.org/gns/principles-good-practice-ghd/overview.aspx

[63] 'The Nairobi Strategy: Enhanced partnership to eradicate drought emergencies', Adopted at the Summit on the Horn of Africa Crisis, 9 September 2011, Nairobi, Kenya.

[64] Developed by Oxfam, FAO and WFP at the request of the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator.

[65] Legal Notice 171 National Drought Management Order, November 2011 http://www.kenyalaw.org/klr/index.php?id=831

[66] http://allafrica.com/stories/201107201148.html

© Oxfam International and Save the Children UK January 2012

This paper was written by Debbie Hillier (Oxfam) and Benedict Dempsey (Save the Children). Oxfam and Save the Children acknowledge the assistance of Elise Ford and Emily Speers-Mears in its production, as well as the contributions of a large number of Oxfam and Save the Children staff in Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia and worldwide.

This publication is copyright but the text may be used free of charge for the purposes of advocacy, campaigning, education, and research, provided that the source is acknowledged in full. The copyright holder requests that all such use be registered with them for impact assessment purposes. For copying in any other circumstances, or for re-use in other publications, or for translation or adaptation, permission must be secured and a fee may be charged. E-mail publish@oxfam.org.uk.

For further information on the issues raised in this paper please e-mail advocacy@oxfaminternational.org.

The information in this publication is correct at the time of going to press.

Published by Oxfam GB for Oxfam International and Save the Children under ISBN 978-1-78077-034-5 in January 2012. Oxfam GB, Oxfam House, John Smith Drive, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 2JY, UK

Save the Children

Save the Children works in more than 120 countries. We save children's lives. We fight for their rights. We help them fulfil their potential.

www.savethechildren.net

Oxfam

Oxfam is an international confederation of fifteen organizations working together in 92 countries to find lasting solutions to poverty and injustice.

Please write to any of the agencies for further information, or visit www.oxfam.org. Email: advocacy@oxfaminternational.org

www.oxfam.org