MEF SCHOOLS MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2026

“Achieving SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) in line with the 2030 United Nations agenda."

Committee: UN Security Council
Agenda Item: Horn of Africa Drought Crisis
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Position: Deputy Chair

Introduction

Between 2020 and 2023, parts of Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya experienced five consecutive failed rainy seasons, a rare pattern that left soils dry, rivers and water points depleted, and grazing land unable to recover. As a result, the drought crisis in the Horn of Africa worsened. The effects grew over time: families had to travel farther and pay more for water, pastoralist herds shrank as animals died or were sold off, and crops frequently failed. The La Niña pattern in the Pacific, which is frequently linked to less rainfall in the area, and abnormally high temperatures connected to larger climate trends exacerbated the situation.

Other real-world pressures added to the human cost of the drought. In Ethiopia and Kenya, the crisis affected areas already dealing with poverty and inadequate water infrastructure, while in Somalia, insecurity and displacement combined with the drought. Following the economic strain of the pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine, rising food and fuel prices worldwide after 2022 increased the cost of imported staples and transportation, making it even harder for families to purchase food or get to markets. As clinics reported increasing caseloads, humanitarian organizations issued repeated warnings that millions of people were suffering from acute hunger and that children were particularly vulnerable to malnutrition. Due to the severe depletion of herds, savings, and local food production, recovery was sluggish even when rains started to return in some areas in late 2023. The weather events are imposing long-lasting threats to health, sustainability and peace amongst nations.

Definition of Significant Terms

Drought:
A prolonged period with much lower than average rainfall, resulting in serious water shortages and negative impacts on agriculture and daily life.

Failed Rainy Seasons:
Periods in which the expected seasonal rainfall does not occur or is far below normal levels, leading to poor harvests and insufficient water supply.

The La Niña:
A climate phenomenon marked by cooler sea surface temperatures in the Pacific Ocean, which can influence global weather patterns and reduce rainfall in East Africa.

Food Insecurity:
A situation where people do not have regular access to enough safe and nutritious food necessary for a healthy life.

Pastoralist Communities:
Communities that depend mainly on raising and moving livestock for their livelihoods, often in dry or semi-arid regions.

Water Scarcity:
The condition in which the availability of fresh water is insufficient to meet the needs of a population.

Humanitarian Crisis:
A serious situation in which large numbers of people face threats to health, safety, or well-being and require urgent external assistance.

Detailed Background of the Issue

Degradation of the Environment and Climate Change

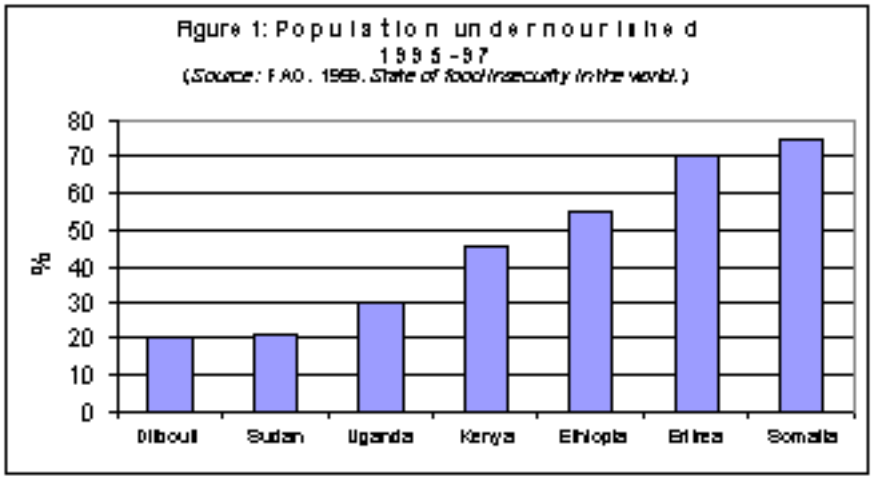
The last few decades have seen a worsening of drought conditions in the Horn of Africa due to the impacts of climate change. With rising average temperatures, the flow of water is likely to be more rapid due to the increased evaporation following rainfall. Rainfall is more erratic and unpredictable, and scientific observations noted consecutive years of drought due to the absence of short rains, weak rains, or any rains at all. Environmental degradation also triggered the crisis. Insufficient water and dry recovery spells have been further worsened by land deforestation, overgrazing, and the erosion of soil. These elements make persistent droughts turn into prolonged ecological crises.

Following the last several decades, drought conditions in the Horn of Africa region have escalated significantly, largely as a result of climate change and its correlated environmental issues. Rising average temperatures over the region have dramatically accelerated evaporation, causing surface water and earth-based moisture to be lost more quickly after rainfall events. As a result of this occurrence, the lands tolerance to drought has dropped, as rainfall events aren't consistent and sufficient enough to replenish groundwater reserves or sustain traditional agriculture. Simultaneously, rainfall patterns have become increasingly unstable and erratic; conducted observations collectively yielding lack of rainfall in both long and short rainy seasons. Consecutive years were seen to pass without strong rains and proper rainy seasons, often having delayed or no rainfall at all. These climate related issues are further aggravated by overall environmental degradation, which has severely disrupted farming activities and pastoral livelihoods in long term. Widespread deforestation, overgrazing, and soil erosion also play key roles in drought; as they harm and diminish vegetation coverage, compact soils and reduce plant regeneration, and strip away fertile topsoil essential for moisture maintenance respectively. Together these factors assist the recurring droughts in becoming a permanent ecological crisis, undermining ecosystem resilience and increasing the vulnerability of communities that depend heavily on natural resources for survival.

Socioeconomic Vulnerability and Food Insecurity:

A large part of the population in the Horn of Africa relies on agriculture dependent on rainfall and livestock, making it one of the world's most economically at-risk areas. Drought causes the death of livestock and failure of crops, and this leads to food insecurity, malnutrition, and loss of income. Added to this are the weak social safety nets, the unsustainable systems of irrigation, and the poor infrastructure. Losing livestock in pastoral societies is difficult to recover from, as it not only puts food at risk, it also eliminates structures, culturally and economically.

Socioeconomic vulnerability is further intensified by limited access to markets, credit, and alternative livelihoods, which prevents households from adapting when agricultural production fails. Many families located in rural areas lack savings or insurance, forcing them to sell essential assets such as livestock or tools, deepening long-term poverty. Food insecurity is worsened by rising food prices and disrupted supply chains, making even basic staples unaffordable for vulnerable populations. Malnutrition increases not only due to food shortages but also because of reduced income, which limits access to healthcare and clean water. In this context, drought functions as a poverty enhancer, transforming environmental stress into prolonged socioeconomic decline rather than a short-term shock.

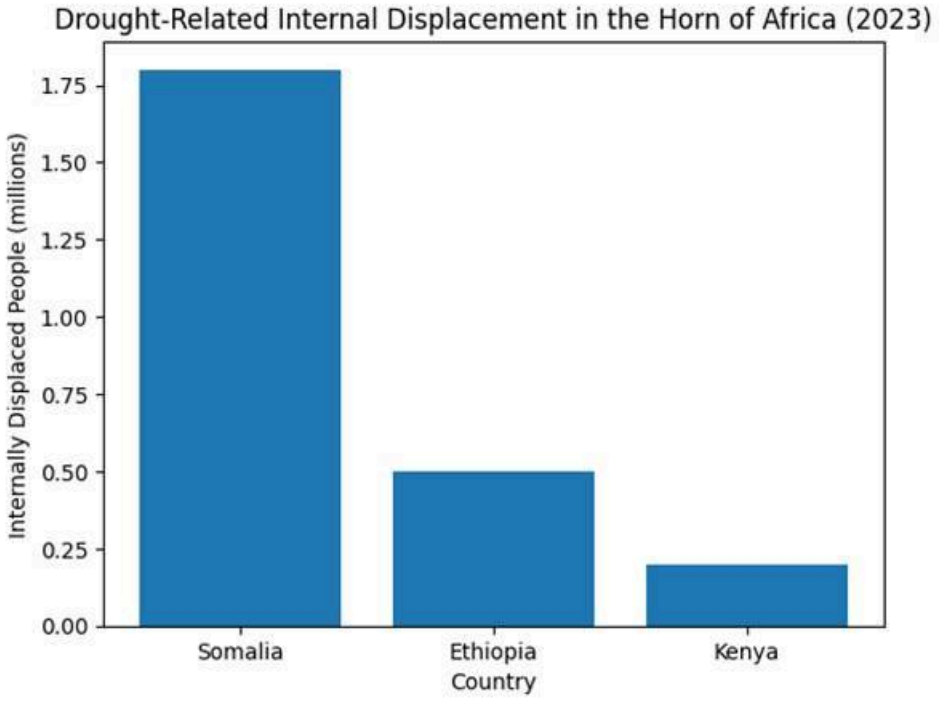


A graph showing livestock losses and livelihood vulnerability caused by drought in Ethiopia, northern Kenya, and Somalia, based on data from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Political Instability and Humanitarian Challenges:

Political instability and armed violence, particularly in Somalia and parts of Ethiopia, have worsened the impacts of drought. Due to the conflicts, millions of people are internally displaced and are trapped in camps without enough food and potable water. This situation also causes market disruptions and humanitarian access bottlenecks. Poor governance and insufficient regional collaboration also worsen the preparedness for drought in the long term. Although international support has been crucial for the emergency response, the region continues to depend on temporary humanitarian assistance over sustainable solutions.

Political instability and armed violence, particularly in Somalia and parts of Ethiopia, have significantly worsened the impacts of drought across the Horn of Africa. These compounded crises have uprooted large segments of the population, with an estimated 2.3 million people displaced due to drought as of mid-2023 and tens of millions more requiring urgent humanitarian assistance across Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia. Due to ongoing conflict and recurrent climatic shocks, many of these internally displaced persons (IDPs) are trapped in camps with inadequate access to food, potable water, and basic services, further deepening their vulnerability. The combined effects of climate-related displacement and insecurity also disrupt local markets, inflate commodity prices, and create serious humanitarian access bottlenecks that constrain the delivery of aid. Poor governance, fractured institutions, and insufficient regional collaboration have further weakened both preparedness and long-term resilience to drought. Although international support has been crucial in supporting emergency responses, the region continues to rely heavily on temporary humanitarian assistance rather than sustainable solutions that could reduce dependency and strengthen adaptation to future climate extremes.



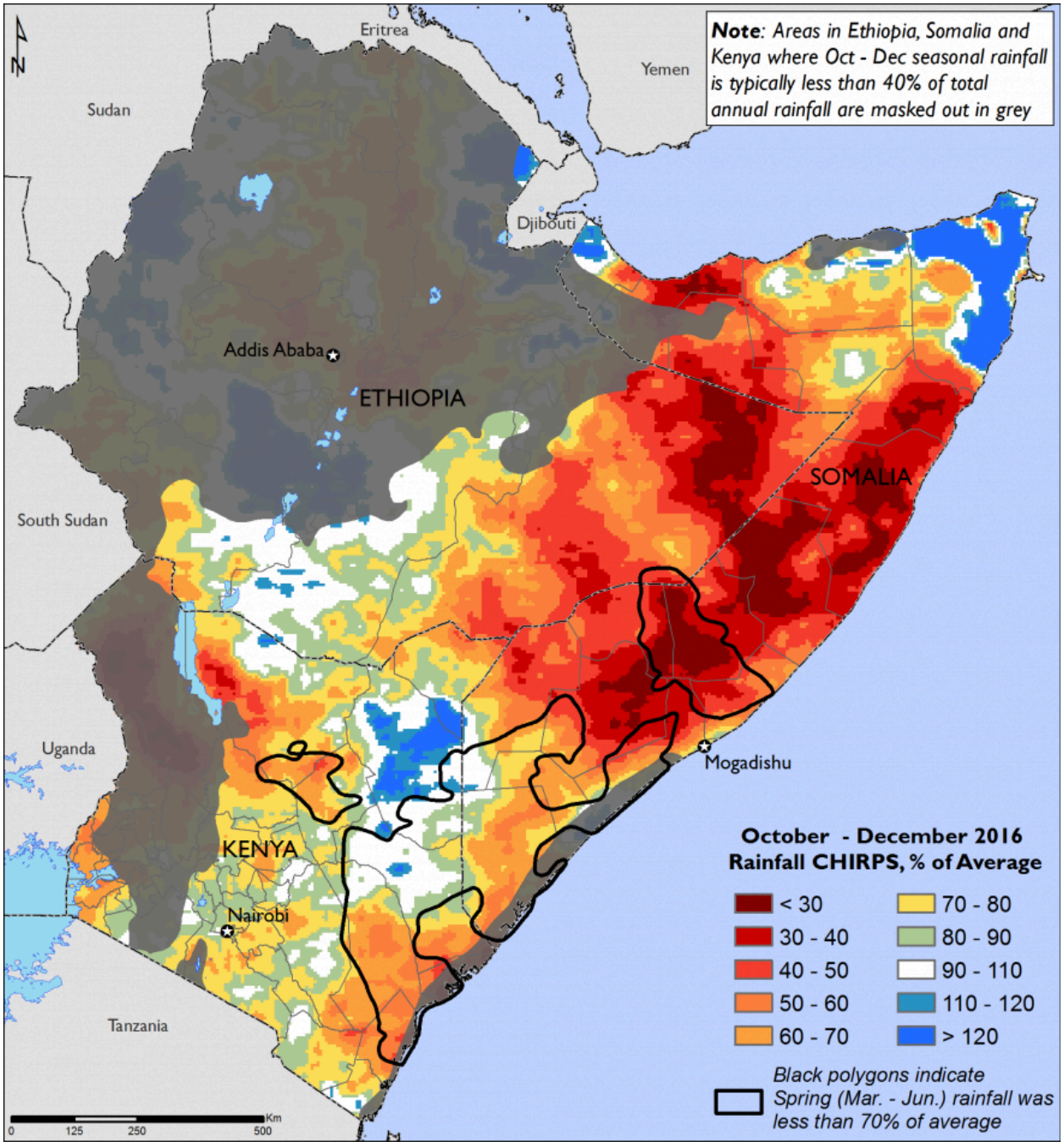
Horn of Africa's drought-related internal displacement graph.

Current Situation and Regional Implications

The drought crisis in the Horn of Africa is currently considered to be one of the worst in a long time, as it has resulted in a series of rainy seasons that have failed one after the other. Acute food insecurity has affected millions of people, and famine is still a high possibility in some regions. The crisis has repercussions not only in the region but also globally, as it has led to factors such as cross-border migration, competition for resources, and long-term development delays.

Thus, the drought in the Horn of Africa does not only pose a threat to the environment but also raises a very complex issue of humanitarian and security which the world cooperatively has to tackle by making arrangements for different types of actions like climate adaptation, and development policies that are sustainable among others.

Furthermore, the ongoing drought exacerbates existing inequalities both within and between countries in the Horn of Africa. Rural and pastoral communities, already marginalized in terms of political representation and access to services, are disproportionately affected, widening the gap between urban and rural populations. The strain on water sources and arable land increases the likelihood of disputes between communities and across borders, particularly in regions where governance and conflict resolution mechanisms are weak. At the same time, the diversion of national resources toward emergency relief limits investment in education, infrastructure, and economic diversification, undermining long-term development goals. In this way, the drought crisis becomes a self-reinforcing cycle in which environmental stress, humanitarian need, and political fragility interact to produce enduring regional instability.



A map showing rainfall deviation from the long-term average in the Horn of Africa during late 2016, illustrating the severity and geographic extent of drought conditions, as reported by the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET).

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of Event
January - February 2020	Climate monitoring agencies and the UN began warning of irregular rainfall patterns because of the unusually wet conditions of 2019 but got intense in 2020. The irregular rainfall pattern has weakened soil stability and agriculture planning.
March 2020	The Horn of Africa experienced their first failed rainy season of the crisis known as the Gu Rainy Season, which was expected to be a shed of life to the region.
July 2020	Combined with COVID-19 movement restrictions, a major desert locust infestation struck the area. The infestation significantly reduced agricultural activities and disrupted food supply chains.
October-December 2020	The region's second rainfall season, Deyr, was below yearly average once more, failing to recover wastelands and replenishing the water sources before the dry season.
January 2021	Agricultural communities reported early wild and private owned livestock migration and the absence of water wells, and sources.
March-May 2021	The second Gu rainy season failed consecutively in a two year row, intensifying drought and damaging the soil.
June 2021	Humanitarian agencies and UN organs revised food security classifications, with millions entering IPC Phase 3 or above.
October-December 2021	A third rainy season failed consecutively, further intensifying the gravity of the crisis.
December 2021	Reports started showing internal displacement has been increased as communities moved toward urban centers and refugee camps in search of water and resources.
January 2022	The UN issued formal warnings describing the situation as a rapidly escalating humanitarian emergency.
March- May 2022	The fourth rainy season failed for the fourth time consecutively, likely due to the La Nina heatwave which also struck the region.
June 2022	Reports showed mass livestock deaths, severely damaging the agricultural communities.
July-August 2022	Malnutrition rates among children skyrocketed and surpassed emergency threshold in several districts.

September 2022	Famine risk assessments warned of famine like conditions in parts of Somalia.
October-December 2022	The fifth rainfall season (Deyr Rainy Season) showed partial improvement, but was uneven and insufficient to restore water resources.
January-March 2023	Seasonal rains returned to parts of the region however because of the damaged soil and infrastructure flash floods occurred which ended up with casualties in some sections.
April- June 2023	Rainfall levels showed improvement in several zones helping agricultural recovery though losses from previous years remained irreversible.
July 2023	Humanitarian operations held by multiple organisations began shifting from emergency relief to early recovery and resilience building operations.
September-December 2023	Rainfall rates started turning normal however food insecurity continued due to displacement and highly weakened local economies.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Somalia:

As one of the most severely affected countries Somalia declared drought emergency as millions faced hunger during the crisis. The October 2022 drought affected 7.8 million people, equivalent to 46 percent of the country's population. Funding shortfalled due to corrupt government officials and as of November Somalia's own Humanitarian Response Plan was only 23.7 percent funded, forcing major reductions and cut-off in assistance. Because of this out of 7.8 million people affected only 1.1 million people were receiving emergency food aid but this number also plunged to just 350.000 because of the shortfall.

Kenya:

An estimated 6.4 million people will require humanitarian assistance in 2023, including about 602,000 refugees, up 35 percent from 2022. This is Kenya's highest recorded number of people in need for at least 10 years. The drought has severely impacted communities' access to water, with nearly 95 percent of water pans drying up in 2022. People had to walk between 8.6 and 17.6 kilometres to access water, an increase of at least 38 percent above the three-year average, the National Drought Management Agency says.

Ethiopia:

In March 2022, IFCR reported that 6.8 million Ethiopians were in need of humanitarian assistance marking one of the biggest humanitarian crises of the country. The drought furthermore expanded to areas already affected by conflict, including the Afar, Oromia and Southern Nations. Also the drought was a surprising factor in the reported increase of child

marriages in 2022. 1.4 million children had their education disrupted by migration, school closure, marriage, or simply because of the drought.

WHO:

WHO played a crucial role in the crisis by addressing the immediate needs of the region and public health concerns which included increased malnutrition, diseases and weakened health systems. WHO supported national health institutions by strengthening disease surveillance, responding to outbreaks, medical supply shortages, and the continuity of essential health services.

WFP:

WFP (World Food Programme) addressed the immediate humanitarian consequences of the drought. As food insecurity intensified across the region they provided a large-scale emergency food assistance, including food distributions and economic assistance where markets were accessible. The organization furthermore prioritized populations classified under severe food insecurity levels, particularly displaced persons, children, and elderly. WFP also supported logistics and supply chain coordination, ensuring the delivery of food assistance packages to those in need.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

There were multiple attempts to solve the issue coming from states, NGO's, and international organisations.

The Kenyan government particularly has taken steps to protect agricultural communities against the drought, allowing them to sign up to $120 million dollars of insurance that will help them when drought hits, backed by the World Bank.

The Somalian government on the other hand had full scale plans to prevent drought and help those in need by food packages or agricultural assistance, however this plan failed due to corrupted government officials stealing the funds or misconduct.

There were also UN organized meetings and conferences to discuss and solve the issue such as;

High-Level Pledging Conference on the Horn of Africa (May 2023)

United Nations General Assembly/UN System Reports on Climate & Extreme Weather

UNSC resolution 2678 (June 2023)

Name of Resolution, Treaty, Agreement, etc.
(Conference, Year)

Alternative Solutions

One possible approach could have been strengthening early warning systems and early action mechanisms way before the drought hits. Improving climate monitoring, data sharing, and risk perception at both national and regional levels could allow governments to act before drought reaches emergency thresholds. Early intervention possibilities (such as positioning food aid or protecting livestock before the drought) arguably are more cost-effective and reduce humanitarian and outer dependence. However these early warning systems require continued funding and a strong economy which are near non-existent in the region.

Another alternative approach focuses on enhancing regional cooperation and cross border coordination. Since drought does not see borders and impacts the communities in the region as a haul, regional frameworks led by supervisors such as the UN could coordinate responses to water shortage displacement, and agricultural damage. This approach prioritizes joint planning, shared data (lookout for national consent) and collaborative policies among affected states. This approach may improve efficiency but political tensions among the states are one thing to look out for.

Useful Links

1. https://www.wfp.org/publications/regional-drought-response-plan-horn-africa-2023
2. https://www.who.int/emergencies/funding/health-emergency-appeals/2022/2023/2023-appeals/appeal-horn-of-africa
3. https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/99254

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2. https://www.who.int/emergencies/situations/drought-food-insecurity-greater-horn-of-africa
3. https://crisisresponse.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl1481/files/appeal/pdf/2023_East_and_Horn_of_Africa_Regional_Drought_Response_2023.pdf

4. https://www.unicef.org/documents/horn-africa-dashboard-drought-situation-march-2023

5. https://www.ungeneva.org/en/news-media/news/2023/06/82385/horn-africa-around-60-million-urgent-humanitarian-need

6. https://www.fao.org/newsroom/detail/drought-in-the-horn-of-africa-fao-appeals-to-help-avert-famine-and-humanitarian-catastrophe/en

7. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/25/un-conference-pledges-fall-short-of-7bn-goal-for-horn-of-africa

8. https://www.africanews.com/2023/01/30/horn-of-africa-drought-drives-over-22-million-people-to-hunger//