

# DANGEROUS DELAY 2

THE COST OF INACTION





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

COVER PHOTO:

In Budunbuto, Puntland, the homestead of many pastoralists, the drought has killed many of their herds. Photo credit: Petterik Wiggers/Oxfam/March 2022

# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
THE WARNINGS WERE THERE	7
1 INTRODUCTION	8
2 TEN YEARS ON: SOME LESSONS LEARNED AND GLIMMERS OF HOPE	10
3 THE HORN OF AFRICA 2020–22: A PREDICTABLE CRISIS	14
4 PREPARING FOR THE NEXT CRISIS	23
5 CONCLUSIONS	28
6 RECOMMENDATIONS	29

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASAL	Arid and Semi-Arid Land
ASAP	Anomaly Hot Spots of Agricultural Production
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FSNAU	Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit
FSNWG	Food Security and Nutrition Working Group
FEWS NET	Famine Early Warning System Network
HEA	Household Economic Analysis
HSNP	Hunger Safety Net Programme
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IDA	International Development Association
ICPAC	IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre
MAM	March-April-May rains
NDMA	National Drought Management Authority
OND	October-November-December rains
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Programme
SNCHP	Safety Net for Human Capital Project
SPARC	Supporting Pastoralism and Agriculture in Recurrent and Protracted Crisis
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNOCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN)
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme



Diyaara stands among the carcasses of her family's livestock in Wajir, Kenya. [Photo: Khadija Farah/Oxfam/February 2022]

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Around the world, 181 million are forecast to be in crisis levels of hunger in 2022.<sup>1</sup> Oxfam and Save the Children estimate that across Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, on average one person is likely dying every 48 seconds<sup>2</sup> from acute hunger linked to conflict, COVID-19, the climate crisis and inflationary and market pressures accelerated by the current conflict in Ukraine. Hard-won progress on the Sustainable Development Goals and millions of children's lives are now at risk if urgent action is not taken to avert famine. But preventing people from dying of starvation without political action to tackle underlying drivers – including inequality, conflict and the climate crisis, will not stop the cyclical – and predictable – crises experienced by millions of people around the world. Starvation is a political failure.

In 2011, Somalia experienced a devastating famine that killed over a quarter of a million people – half of them children under the age of 5.<sup>3</sup> The international community failed to act in time, despite repeated warnings of an impending crisis. In the wake of the tragedy, leaders in the region made a commitment to end drought emergencies by 2022. The international community sought to ensure that there would be no repeat of the failures that led to

famine. Next time, the world would heed the warnings and act early, in anticipation, to avoid the crisis.

Yet, just over a decade since the 2011 famine, and despite various warnings and alarms over the past two years, the commitment to anticipatory action has proven half-hearted. We are once again responding too late and with too little to avert the crisis. Nearly half a million people across Somalia and parts of Ethiopia are facing famine-like conditions, with women being particularly affected.<sup>4</sup> In Kenya, 3.5 million people are suffering crisis levels of hunger, and UN predictions suggest that 350,000 Somali children may die by the summer of 2022 if governments and donors do not tackle food insecurity and malnutrition immediately.<sup>5</sup> The number of people facing crisis levels of hunger in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia has more than doubled since last year, from over 10 million to over 23 million people.<sup>6</sup>

The failure to accelerate progress on addressing the climate crisis and preventing conflict around the world is now perpetuating a system of reliance on humanitarian aid that was not designed – and is not resourced – to respond to cyclical and predictable shocks at such scale.



With such rising needs we can no longer afford to wait for emergencies to develop, we must act early and pre-emptively to prevent predictable shocks from turning into crises. This requires far greater collaboration between governments, development, humanitarian, peace and climate actors.

Oxfam and Save the Children have partnered with the **Jameel Observatory** to examine the changes in anticipatory action and response since 2011 in the Horn of Africa. The research team consulted national and local actors, communities and international actors on decision making and action in response to early warning information. The research highlights the impact of investment by national governments and local administrations in social protection, early warning systems, and the role of community members and local organizations in taking anticipatory action. However, it also shows that governments and international actors are still responding to the impacts of the drought, instead of managing the risk ahead of the drought, and are struggling to take action at sufficient scale in response to early warning information.

The research's key findings are not unique to the Horn of Africa. Communities and local actors are always the first to take action to protect their livelihoods and prepare for the impact of drought and floods, but funding to local organizations remains terribly low. Government-led social protection systems designed to shield people from shocks often offer both more cost-effective and earlier responses, but more needs to be done to ensure they are inclusive, child-focused and gender responsive, and linked with humanitarian cash systems. New initiatives to anticipate the impact of crises on communities show promise, but are not financed or integrated within humanitarian, development and climate action at the scale required to protect communities before a crisis unfolds. Entrenched bureaucracies and self-serving political choices – locally, nationally and internationally – also continue to curtail an anticipatory response.

It may be tempting to view the COVID-19 pandemic or the war in Ukraine as one-off events. However, both shocks to the global system demonstrate the deep fragility and interconnectedness of the systems that millions of people rely on to survive. As we move deeper into the climate crisis, shocks from extreme weather and related factors – including the interplay between climate and conflict – will increase further. If current trends continue, the number of disasters each year



Ahlam, 28, arrived in one of the recently established camps near Kismayo in Southern Somalia in October last year with her seven children, aged from 9 months to 16 years old, travelled two days and two nights on foot to get to the camp. [Photo: Belinda Goldsmith / Save the Children / March 2022]

globally may increase from approximately 400 in 2015 to 560 by 2030.<sup>7</sup> A purely responsive system will not be able to prepare or respond to challenges in the years to come. For the 2022 hunger crisis we have once again been largely too late for anticipatory action – communities are now in the teeth of the crisis and only urgent funding for humanitarian response can save lives – but for the next crisis we must do better. This report recommends changes in both the systems around anticipatory action and how it is financed. This includes more direct funding to local and national organizations, consultation with community leaders, increased coordination between climate, development, government and peace actors, and a significant expansion of shock-responsive social protection systems and anticipatory action. Crisis modifiers and contingency budgets must be increased, but also simplified so as to allow the rapid disbursement of funds. Flexible, reliable, multi-year funding remains key, as does the genuine inclusion of women in decision making on responses at local, national and international levels.

A decade ago, we said never again to famine. To the millions of people who are once again on the edge of starvation we have failed in that promise. We must respond now, at scale, to avert further tragedy, but we must also learn the lessons of the past decade to ensure that next time we act pre-emptively to avoid the crisis. As climate catastrophe threatens a future of increased crises, we dare not fail that promise again. ■

## THE WARNINGS WERE THERE

- The 2020 March-April-May (MAM) rain performance was poor in southern Somalia. By June or July 2020 anticipatory action could have been triggered.<sup>8</sup>
- In August 2020, the Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWS NET) alert projected that the coming two seasons would be poor, and were likely to drive high food assistance needs.<sup>9</sup>
- In mid-May 2021, the Food Security and Nutrition Working Groups (FSNWG) called for urgent action and FEWS NET issued an alert that a multi-season drought would likely persist until late 2021.<sup>10</sup> In northern Ethiopia, FAO, WFP and UNICEF reported in June that the conflict had led to over 350 000 people facing catastrophic conditions (IPC 5) – the highest number of people classified in IPC 5 in a single country in the last decade.<sup>11</sup>
- On 8 September 2021, Kenya officially declared drought in parts of the country a national disaster.<sup>12</sup>
- On 31 October 2021, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) warned of an 87% probability of La Niña – for the second year in a row.<sup>13</sup> This follows La Niña in 2016–17, when East Africa last faced a hunger crisis. FSNWG issued an alert of the risk of severe outcomes in Kenya and Somalia given the previous two poor seasons and the poor start to the current season. Rainfall through mid-November was predicted to be the lowest since 1981 in some areas.<sup>14</sup>
- On 23 November 2021, the Federal Government of Somalia declared a state of emergency due to the drought.<sup>15</sup>
- In November 2021, FEWS NET issued a warning that an unprecedented drought was imminent in the region if the rainfall remained poor.<sup>16</sup>
- In February 2022, FAO and WFP issued an early warning that acute food insecurity was likely to deteriorate further across multiple countries.<sup>17</sup>
- In April 2022, an IPC Acute Food Insecurity Projection Update for Somalia warned of the risk of famine in some parts of the country, noting that food insecurity has drastically worsened since the beginning of 2022 and that ‘further and faster deterioration’ was expected through until at least June 2022.<sup>18</sup> The World Meteorological Organization issued a stark warning:  
*“The very real prospect that the rains will fail for a fourth consecutive season, placing Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia into a drought of a length not experienced in the last 40 years...”<sup>19</sup>*





Dehabo Hassan is a mother of eight and carer for her son who has an intellectual disability. She has lived at the displacement camp in Oog, Somaliland since 2017, when a terrible drought started. [Photo credit: Petterik Wiggers / Oxfam / March 2022]

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The 2011 Horn of Africa crisis affected 13 million people. Many received life-saving humanitarian assistance<sup>20</sup>, but the late response combined with the scale of the famine in Somalia resulted in over a quarter of a million deaths.<sup>21</sup> Reacting in shock as images began to stream in of women, men and children dying of starvation and malnutrition, governments, donors and aid organizations scaled up an urgent humanitarian response. However, to those experiencing the crisis first hand, it was clear that the response had come too late. By the time the international community responded at scale to early warnings issued by national systems, people had exhausted the last of their coping mechanisms, livestock had died, farmers had eaten the seeds they would need for the next planting season, savings were gone, children had stopped going to school and the long-term impacts of malnutrition – particularly on children – would be irreversible.<sup>22</sup>

In 2012, in the aftermath of the crisis, Save the Children and Oxfam authored 'A Dangerous Delay: the cost of late response to early warnings in the 2011 drought in the Horn of Africa'.<sup>23</sup> The report analysed the failure of the international community to respond to early warning information in time to prevent the loss of lives and livelihoods. It outlined a series of recommendations aimed

at managing risk of predictable crises, particularly drought. The foreword remains crushingly accurate 10 years later:

*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.<sup>24</sup>*

A decade later, Somalia is now at risk of famine and recent UN predictions suggest that 350,000 Somali children may die by the summer if action is not taken immediately.<sup>25</sup> According to IPC data at time of writing, across the Horn of Africa approximately 23 million people are facing crisis and above levels of hunger,<sup>26</sup> and 5.7 million children are currently acutely malnourished.<sup>27</sup> The crisis has a highly gendered impact as women and girls are responsible for 85-90% of household food preparation<sup>28</sup>, in addition to shouldering more than 75% of the world's unpaid care work<sup>29</sup>, including food provision.





Leylo\*, 28, arrived at a camp in Baidoa in the South West State of Somalia with her seven children – aged four months to 12 years - with four other families on the 8th March 2022. They walked for three days and got lifts on donkey carts for two days travelling a total of 90 km from their homes in Dinsor to this camp. [Photo: Michael Tsegaye / Save the Children / March 2022]

The Horn of Africa is not the only region facing unprecedented food insecurity and malnutrition. Globally, climate shocks, conflict and economic shocks, including COVID-19, have led to crisis or worse levels of acute food insecurity for 193 million people in 53 countries by the end of 2021.<sup>30</sup> Women and children have been especially hard hit, with an estimated additional 47 million more women falling into extreme poverty in 2021,<sup>31</sup> and an additional 150 million children living in multi-dimensional poverty.<sup>32</sup> The impact of the war in Ukraine on global food systems, energy prices and the global economy could drive these numbers even higher.<sup>33</sup> It may be tempting to view the impact of the war in Ukraine or of COVID-19 as one-off events, but both demonstrate the deep fragility of the food and economic systems that millions of people rely on. As we enter deeper into the climate crisis, shocks from extreme weather and related factors, including the interplay between climate and conflict, will increase further.

How can it be that, with another decade of experience, governments and international institutions alike are still unable to sufficiently prepare for and respond to predictable shocks? Governments and the international community have the warning bells – and they have been ringing for over two years. The fact that tens of millions of people are experiencing crisis levels of hunger shows that hunger is not about a lack of knowledge, hunger is a political choice. ■

## KEY TERMS

**Anticipatory action** is taken in anticipation of a crisis. This includes forecast-based action, but also includes actions taken after a shock, with the goal of preventing a shock from developing into a crisis.

**Forecast-based action** is triggered before a shock strikes, based on a forecast (usually of an extreme weather-related event).

**Early action** refers to humanitarian or emergency responses that are taken earlier in a crisis than the main scaling-up of humanitarian support. It would usually – but not necessarily – be later than anticipatory action, and tends to refer to actions taken as part of a humanitarian response.

**Humanitarian–development–peace nexus – or ‘Triple Nexus’** - refers to the interlinkages between the humanitarian, development and peace sectors to take into account both the immediate and long-term needs of affected populations, and enhance opportunities for peace.<sup>34</sup>

**Disaster risk reduction** aims at preventing new, and reducing existing, disaster risk and managing residual risk, all of which contribute to strengthening resilience.<sup>35</sup>

**Shock-responsive social protection** describes systems which adapt routine social protection programmes, or develop independent systems, to cope with changes in context and demand following large-scale shocks that affect a large proportion of the population simultaneously.<sup>36</sup>

**Cash and voucher assistance** refers to all programmes where cash transfers or vouchers for goods or services are directly provided to recipients.<sup>37</sup>

A crucial aspect of all these concepts is that they place a responsibility for action on a much wider range of agencies and institutions than only the humanitarian sector. They can, and must, complement local and national action, adapt how international development actors engage, and how government planning, design and delivery of services (including social protection) are managed in dealing with shocks and potential crisis, and are an important catalyst that – if applied across the Nexus – could contribute to significantly reducing needs.



Amina moved to Baidoa, Somalia, seven years ago from a village about 60km away. She is the eldest of 10 siblings and her parents live in the camp but there are no jobs for them to be able to support their children. [Photo credit: Michael Tsegaye / Save the Children / March 2022]

## **2 TEN YEARS ON: SOME LESSONS LEARNED AND GLIMMERS OF HOPE**

*While droughts may be an unavoidable natural phenomenon in the Horn of Africa, their impact can be mitigated by human action. Droughts need not, and should not, lead to famine and other disasters.*<sup>38</sup>

The scale and severity of the 2011 crisis in the Horn of Africa propelled action and policy change at national, regional and global levels in a key dimension: a shift to manage risk, not crisis and support the resilience of communities to predictable shocks. The crisis unfolded despite having been predicted, but in its wake regional and international actors were united in vowing that the next crisis would not lead to famine in the twenty-first century: next time, the international community would respond on time to early warning information from national systems and avoid a late-stage humanitarian response to predicted and forecasted risk of drought.

National governments and the international community agreed that, while the drought had created the risk, it was failure to tackle the underlying causes of chronic poverty, conflict and failure from human factors, including late-stage decision making, that led to a deadly crisis. In the future, political commitment to invest in social protection and national disaster risk management, and act early, could prevent drought cycles leading to crisis levels of acute food insecurity and a risk of famine. By managing the risk, crises could be averted before they began.

At the regional level, national leaders pledged to end drought emergencies by 2022. At the global level, donors and aid organizations committed to a range of reforms designed to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian

assistance, including greater collaboration between humanitarian and development actors to act before crisis overwhelmed development systems.

The failure of the international community to prevent famine in Somalia during the 2011 crisis played a formative role in developing technical approaches on how future shocks to food security and livelihoods should be managed. A combination of cash and voucher assistance, support to livelihoods, and expansion of the social protection systems in line with early warning systems were designed to support people to manage the periods before, during and after shocks.

### **2.1 Cash and social protection**

The challenges with distributing food aid in Somalia during the 2011 crisis demanded a new approach from the humanitarian community, who worked with a network of informal *hawala*<sup>39</sup> agents to reach 150,000 households with cash. Prior to 2011, several organizations piloted the use of cash transfers as part of the response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. Since 2011, emergency cash and voucher assistance has become one of the primary response modalities in the humanitarian sector and has shifted the power to decide on spending priorities to the individual and household, instead of the donor. Cash and



voucher assistance supports people's own planning, so they can select and prioritise the items they need to prepare for shocks and can – if appropriately designed – target the specific needs of women and girls.<sup>40</sup> Cash and voucher assistance has also been shown to have a positive impact across a wide range of child development outcomes, including nutrition, health, education and child protection.<sup>41</sup>

Governments in Ethiopia and Kenya have established social protection systems and have expanded the coverage of the Productive Safety Net Programme (in Ethiopia) and Hunger Safety Net Programme (in Kenya) in the intervening decade to include more households that previously had been supported primarily with emergency relief. Once the connection between predictable needs depending on the seasonal performance of the rains and chronic poverty was established, it transformed responses to acute food insecurity. Social protection systems are also now in place in Somalia, and in all three countries these can expand in response to shocks when properly resourced.

Social protection systems can strengthen resilience, and – when configured to be shock responsive – can release payments directly to households before a shock arrives. As people are pre-registered on the systems, they can also reach greater scale, faster. While such systems have limited coverage in some countries, nationally-led systems are in place to release money directly to people at risk of acute food insecurity and – more recently – economic shock experienced during the pandemic. Too many vulnerable populations are still excluded from, or unable to access, government social protection, but humanitarian responses can also serve as an entry point for longer-term social protection assistance to such populations.<sup>42</sup>

## 2.2 Early warning

The growth of social protection and humanitarian cash systems have made a significant difference, but such systems can only respond to shocks before a crisis develops if they are connected with early warning systems. Over the past decade, there has been substantial investment in early warning systems at national, regional and global levels, as well as in modelling weather and climate systems. Agencies who predict food security outcomes, including the Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWS NET) and Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU), can draw on modelling and climate forecasts to fine-tune predictions of the potential implications of forecasted droughts and risk of flooding on food security and livelihoods. The accuracy of those predictions for 2020 to 2022 has proven their value.

## 2.3 Anticipatory action and resilience

In order to manage the risk, not the crisis, governments, donors and aid agencies have focused efforts since 2011 on supporting the resilience of communities to shocks, so as to avoid shocks leading to crises. A number of multi-year resilience programmes have been implemented in countries that are highly vulnerable to chronic food and nutrition crises.

At the global level, donors and aid organizations agreed to resolve persistent and well-evidenced barriers to effective and accountable humanitarian responses through the Grand Bargain.<sup>43</sup> The quality financing agenda includes commitments to increase the quality of humanitarian financing by changing to flexible and multi-year approaches to allow for greater predictability and continuity, both of which are essential to anticipate, prepare, respond and support recovery from crisis. The recognition of the key role of local and national organizations in responses to community needs in the Agenda for Humanity propelled the localization agenda to the forefront of aid reform. In 2016, Grand Bargain signatories agreed to a target of 25% of funding to go as directly as possible to local and national organizations, and the inclusion of local and national organizations – including women-led organizations – in leadership and decision-making. Aid organizations and donors also agreed to significantly increase 'prevention, mitigation and preparedness for early action to anticipate and secure resources for recovery'<sup>44</sup> and establish new ways of working between humanitarian and development communities.

The World Bank and IMF have also increased their engagement in early action. The International Development Association (IDA) 19 Crisis Response window has a \$2.5bn envelope to respond to shocks, and Early Response Financing – valued at \$1bn – allows the reallocation of development programming in anticipation of a shock without this posing a threat to the overall programme budget.

Since 2011, humanitarian agencies have begun to collaborate around how to take action in anticipation of a shock. The START Network of national and international NGOs developed a number of member-specific funding facilities. Most recently, START-Ready aimed at strengthening the partnership between member agencies and national governments. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) implemented

a succession of forecast-based anticipatory pilots for both sudden and slow onset shocks. At the country level, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)-managed country-based Pooled funds (CBPF) in a number of countries – including Ethiopia and Somalia – started to allocate funding to anticipatory action. At the global level, OCHA has coordinated anticipatory action pilots in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Somalia and Niger, funded through the Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF).

## 2.4 For all the progress, in 2022 needs are still higher than ever

Despite all the progress noted above, 10 years on 274 million people<sup>45</sup> are still in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, and less than 10% of the necessary funding for responses has been provided by government and donors.<sup>46</sup>

Since 2011, governments, donors, aid organizations and local actors have invested in warning systems, resilience-building and efforts to improve collaboration between the nexus of humanitarian and development action. However, a series of evaluations of responses to slow onset crises in the region have consistently found that early warning systems did not lead to early action, that local organizations were not funded or included in the leadership of the response, and that humanitarian access remains subject to political constraints. The research in this paper has once again found that communities and local organisations took preventative action, but aid organizations often could not access flexible, predictable or multi-year funding to prepare, act early or support the recovery of communities through a decade of concurrent – and foreseeable – slow onset crises. A large step forward over the past decade has been that it is now accepted that anticipatory action is more cost-effective than late-stage humanitarian response, but this still has not translated to sufficient action at scale; the agreements have not translated into political will.

Anticipatory action pilots have largely taken place within the humanitarian system against the backdrop of funding shortfalls. Continuing this approach will not bring the step change that is required. Anticipatory action is the nexus between humanitarian and development action because – in its simplest form – it is designed to protect development gains and protect communities from the impact of predictable shocks. But this also makes it vulnerable to failings across the nexus, including failures to

complement national and locally-led response capacity, invest in development and resilience, the exclusion of communities, access and funding constraints, and a lack of coordination and integration. To truly make the impact that is required from anticipatory action it must be paired with investment in development, resilience and accountability, as well as long-standing commitments to support local and national response capacity and quality financing – including flexibility, predictability and multi-year cycles. ■

### COMPOUND SHOCKS: THE WAR IN UKRAINE AND COVID-19

The climate-related shocks now hitting the East Africa region directly follow the socio-economic turmoil from the COVID-19 pandemic, which increased the number of undernourished people globally by 132 million.<sup>47</sup> While wealthier nations were able to leverage substantial government support programmes, poorer nations had little support and many people were forced to drain what little savings they had to weather the economic impact of the pandemic. As crops, livestock, and pastureland were increasingly affected by failed rains in 2020 and 2021 and food prices rose, one crisis compounded the next.

At a time when aid should have been increasing rapidly to save lives, war erupted in Ukraine. Both Ukraine and Russia are major food exporters, cumulatively supplying nearly 90% of the wheat for East Africa.<sup>48</sup> This has caused wheat prices to soar by 19.7%.<sup>49</sup> Russia and Ukraine also account for nearly three-quarters of the global export of sunflower oil – a key cooking ingredient in the region. In Ethiopia, a week after the conflict began, the price of sunflower oil rose by 215%,<sup>50</sup> while in Somalia, the price of a 20-litre jerry can of cooking oil increased from \$25 to about \$50.<sup>51</sup>

Russia is also the world's largest exporter of nitrogen fertilizers, leading to additional price spikes in already soaring fertilizer prices. In Kenya, the price of a bag of fertilizer increased from approximately \$60 to \$70 in March 2022.<sup>52</sup> Many smallholder farmers will not be able to afford such a price increase, and thus less fertilizer may result in a poorer yield.





Abdulahi Farah Isse, 27, is a pastoralist in Puntland. His livestock has been heavily affected by the drought, and he is now worried about the future of his family. [Photo: Oxfam / Petterik Wiggers / March 2022]

*“Droughts used to happen, but I never encountered one as severe as this. I used to have a big herd. We have already lost 30 head of cattle. I have transported the remains of 17 cows this morning. You can see the remaining herd grazing khalas [fodder] there. They have been consuming this and human food for the past five months. The khalas stock is almost finished. I am afraid that we will lose the remaining livestock unless Allah graces us with rains.”*

ABDILAH I FARAH ESSE, 27, PASTORALIST FROM CADAY-DHEERE TOWN, NUGAAL, SOMALIA



### 3 THE HORN OF AFRICA 2020–22: A PREDICTABLE CRISIS

The current crisis in the Horn of Africa has been unfolding for more than two years. It is neither new, nor a surprise. Drought in the Horn of Africa has been a common and costly feature over the past 10 years and worsening climatic conditions are considered by many to be the new reality.

- Despite clear, repeated, and credible early warnings for more than two years, millions of people are struggling just to eat, rates of child malnutrition are soaring, and parts of Somalia are at very real risk of famine from one of the worst droughts in decades. The number of people facing crisis levels of hunger in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia has more than doubled since last year, from over 10 million to over 23 million.
- Food assistance needs are over 70% higher than during the 2016–17 drought, mostly driven by the impacts of conflict in northern Ethiopia and drought in the Eastern Horn and reduced resilience after the impacts of Covid 19, locusts and floods.
- Across Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, 5.7 million children are expected to be acutely malnourished in 2022, of which more than 1.7 million could be severely acutely malnourished.<sup>53</sup>
- A total funding requirement of \$4.4bn is needed to provide life-saving assistance and protection to just under 30 million people in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia.<sup>54</sup>
- Recent UN predictions also suggest that 350,000 Somali children are at risk of dying by the summer if governments and donors do not tackle food insecurity and its root causes immediately.<sup>55</sup>
- Oxfam and Save the Children estimate that across Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, on average one person is likely dying every 48 seconds from acute hunger-related causes linked to conflict, COVID-19, the climate crisis and inflationary and market pressures exacerbated by the conflict in Ukraine.

This is not a failure of the warning systems; this is a failure of political will.

Research by the Centre for Humanitarian Change in Kenya and Somalia,<sup>56</sup> and by VNG Consulting in Ethiopia for this report, shows there were at least three windows for action to anticipate rather than respond to the crisis. Communities, and in some cases local governments, did respond to what they saw coming more than 18 months ago, and there were some promising CERF anticipatory action pilots in Somalia and Ethiopia. However, national governments and the international aid sector largely failed to act pre-emptively or to support locally led, appropriate action. Worse still, they have failed to respond at sufficient scale in the face of the immense human suffering that is now unfolding across many parts of the region.

#### GENDER DIMENSIONS OF HUNGER

Our failure to respond in time to the food crisis in East Africa is exposing the existing flaws in food systems, many of which stem from gender inequalities and unjust treatment of women and girls. Women, men, girls and boys, transgender and non-binary people living in poverty face multiple, interconnected shocks and stresses - yet they have differentiated vulnerabilities, meaning that they are exposed differently to risks and uncertainties and are affected differently by them. It also means that the distinct capacities of individuals to face and cope with risks and shocks are shaped – and often limited – by a system of power and privilege. Existing gender-based discrimination and inequalities limit women's and girls' access to key information, economic, strategic decision-making opportunities, and the resources they would need to adequately adapt to changes, including education, employment, and financial resources. This is no accident: it is due to deep-rooted gender-based inequalities and unequal power relations.<sup>57</sup>

Food insecurity affects women in all its dimensions: availability, access, utilization, health and stability. Women suffer the most from macro- and micronutrient deficiencies, especially during reproductive years, with long-term negative development impacts for society as a whole. Food-



price spikes have particularly negative repercussions for female-headed households. Gender inequalities are very visible in the agricultural sector, where women farmers are particularly at risk of hunger and landlessness which is increased when crisis strikes. Women living in rural areas account for nearly half the agricultural workforce in developing countries.

Despite their crucial roles in household food security, women face discrimination, violence, and limited bargaining power, which deepens their poverty and undermines their right to food. This position within the household means they frequently eat last and eat least. In times of crisis, they frequently reduce spending on nutrition and family well-being, and shift to cheaper, less diverse diets. Women tend to buffer the impact through extreme strategies: reducing their own consumption to feed others, collecting wild food, selling assets, and taking on insecure jobs or migrating which place them at higher risk, especially of gender-based violence as conflict increases over resources. Women who own land are often pressured sell it to pay for food and other needs of the family. Many times, the sale land is done by their spouses and male relatives without their consent, leaving women without land.<sup>58</sup>

Economic violence exists at an interpersonal level as an aspect of gender-based violence, but also at a structural level in ways that lead to women, girls, transgender and non-binary people being the most undervalued members of society. Gender based and economic violence is present in all societies in all corners of the globe. The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated this - and adding humanitarian crisis to the mix results in increased levels of gender based economic violence and death of women, girls, transgender, and non-binary people.<sup>59</sup>



Nimco is one of the displaced children living in a camp near Burao in Somaliland. The drought has forced her and her family out of their home. [Photo: Petterik Wiggers / Oxfam / March 2022]

### 3.1 Timeline of the crisis

Signs of an impending drought in the Horn of Africa were already visible by mid-2020, with indications of a poor outlook for the October-November-December 2020 (OND) rains, and some long-term forecasts showing increasing risks of poor March-April 2021 (MAM) rains. This coincided with the emergence of COVID-19 and, as part of control measures, restrictions were placed on large-scale gatherings and travel, including the cancellation of the annual Hajj to Mecca, the single largest live meat sales opportunity for pastoralist populations in the Horn. The economic impact of COVID-19 also affected remittances, estimated to constitute 40% of household income in Somalia. This was against a backdrop of a locust plague, which posed a huge threat to the livelihoods of millions of people across the region, together with ongoing conflict in some parts of the region. Growing evidence of a strong La Niña event was behind concerns of poor rains in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia.

The timeline on the next page show that, from mid-2020 until the time of writing, there have been repeated alerts and confirmation of three failed rains, with potential for a fourth, that have plunged parts of Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia into crisis.

## TIMELINE OF THE CRISIS:

Detailed analysis of early warning projections in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia, 2020–22.

**2020**

March-April-May  
 Season (MAM) 2020

The 2020 MAM rainfall was relatively favourable for most areas except southern Somalia, where floods, desert locusts, and erratic late-season rainfall resulted in a below-average harvest.



**ALERT**  In August 2020, FEWS NET published a Climate Alert forecasting consecutive below-average rainfall periods for October–November–December 2020 and MAM 2021.

Anticipatory action could have been triggered between July and September 2020 in Somalia due to the below-average harvest coupled with a forecast for consecutive below-average rainfall seasons on top of highly food insecure and vulnerable populations, particularly in Somalia.

October/November/December  
 Season 2020

Despite a better-than-expected start to OND 2020 season, rainfall was poorly distributed and insufficient from mid-November to December 2020. In Ethiopia, the rains were late or poor in some areas, and the second half of the season was forecast to be below average.

By November 2020, consecutive below-average harvests in Somalia and a below-average harvest in northern and eastern Kenya were expected. An atypically dry season was forecast for January to February 2021 for both countries.



**ALERT**  In December 2020 Somalia was identified as an agricultural hotspot country by the European Commission's Anomaly Hotspots of Agricultural Production (ASAP) system – a designation that has remained in effect to the time of writing.

Anticipatory action could have been triggered between mid-November 2020 and January 2021 in Kenya and Somalia when the initial OND rainfall forecast was confirmed, combined with an atypically harsh dry season, weakening market dynamics, and a significant year-to-year increase in current acute food insecurity estimations and worsening food security outcomes projected through mid-2021.



## 2021

### March-April-May Season 2021

In January 2021, the MAM forecast was for below-average rainfall. By April 2021, rainfall was significantly delayed in both countries. In Somalia, FSNAU seasonal monitoring briefs warned of worsening conditions.

In February 2021, FEWS NET warned that in southern and south-eastern Ethiopia, below-normal pasture and water availability had led to deteriorating access to food and income for pastoralists – with further declines expected due to the second consecutive poor rains forecast in the upcoming MAM season, with worsening outcomes expected through until at least September in pastoral areas. Conflict that began in November 2020 had also severely affected farming, trade, markets and humanitarian access in northern Ethiopia.

April 2021



**ALERT** In April 2021 FEWS NET revised initial February to September 2021 acute food insecurity projections for Somalia, indicating a worse than expected deterioration in food insecurity outcomes for April through September 2021.

April 2021



**DECLARATION** At the end of April 2021 the Somali Federal Government and Humanitarian Community declared a drought.

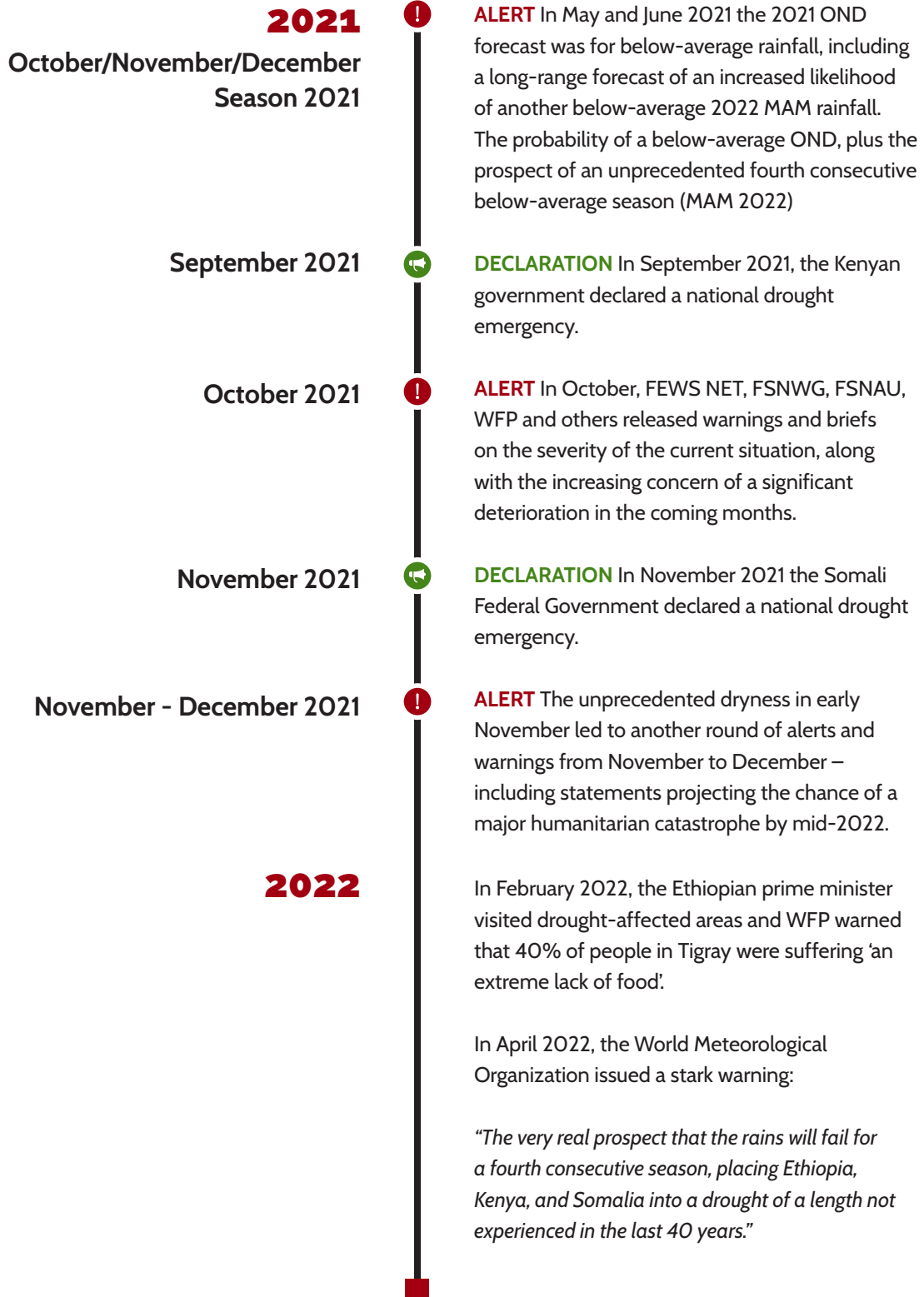
May 2021



**ALERT** In May 2021, alerts from FSNAU, FEWS NET, and FSNWG highlighted the ongoing poor rainfall season and warned of deteriorating conditions in the coming months. NDMA (Kenya) and SWALIM (Somalia) classified multiple counties/districts as mild to severe drought conditions and worsening.<sup>60</sup>

**Anticipatory action could have been triggered between January 2021 and April 2021 in Kenya and Somalia, given the below-average MAM forecast following a poor OND season, when delayed rainfall led to worsening conditions.**

A brief period of above-average rainfall in May provided temporary but insufficient relief; harvest was poor, and worsening livestock conditions and water availability continued and were forecasted to persist through August 2021.





## 3.2 Credible early warnings are not enough

A detailed analysis of the crisis timeline shows that the early warning system largely performed on time and was largely correct – as was the case in 2016–17 and even in 2010–11.<sup>61</sup> There were three windows for anticipatory action in 2020 and at least two windows in 2021, but anticipatory action was not taken at sufficient scale. Factors contributing to this failure to anticipate are presented below.

### 3.2.1 Overgeneralization of Early Warning information at national levels leads to uncertainty

Systems for forecasting climate shocks have greatly improved since 2011, as have the national-level systems for forecasting or projecting the impact of climatic shocks on food security. However, the ways in which a climatic shock translates into negative impacts on food insecurity are complex. The performance of a season is highly variable temporally and geographically. The impact of the seasonal shock on food insecurity, livelihoods, health, WASH, nutrition and excess mortality, is influenced by the history of previous shocks and livelihood zone. Therefore, the timing and type of anticipatory action taken is also context specific both temporally and geographically. Since forecasts and alerts are not generally available at local levels, there remains a lack of sufficient links between temporal, geographic and livelihood zone variability, and localized data for analysis and triggers. National-level early warning systems tend to overgeneralize the situation and as a result there is a high level of uncertainty about triggering anticipatory action at a national level. This contributed to national-level decisions on triggering anticipatory action being mostly delayed at the end of 2020 and throughout 2021 in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia.

### 3.2.2 The need for locally-led triggers for Anticipatory Action

While forecasts and projections are available below the national or sub-national level, doing more specific local-level analysis would involve significantly more analytical capacity and data collection than are currently available. Triggering of anticipatory action at localised levels will require stronger collaboration with local actors with the best localised knowledge and experience in support of locally-led anticipatory decision-making and action. Household economy analysis (HEA)<sup>62</sup> offers a potential tool to support, given its ability to project food security outcomes at a relatively local level (sub-livelihood zone).

### 3.2.3 Conflict, disease and global shocks

Early warning systems give significant weight to the impact of climate shocks and concentrate primarily on food security issues and threats to rural livelihood. They focus, less on the risk of internal conflict, disease, or cross-border and geo-political factors, or on the differential impacts on specific population groups, including women, and children. During 2020–22, the Horn of Africa has also experienced macro-level shocks including the COVID-19 pandemic, conflict in Ethiopia, and emerging impact of the war in Ukraine on food prices, energy and debt, which have direct consequences at the household level on more than just food insecurity and livelihoods.

## THE IMPACT OF HUNGER CRISES ON CHILDREN

*'Hunger has many effects on our families and communities. The most obvious is family breakdown due to fighting. It can also have an impact on children and cause things such as school dropouts, as our families are unable to provide our essentials, let alone send us to school, which then results in child labour.'*

(13-17-year-old boy from Janayo IDP camp, Baidoa)

In September 2021, Save the Children's Somalia country office consulted 124 children about the impact of hunger and the climate crisis on their lives. The findings revealed the multi-dimensional impact of hunger on children, their families and communities.<sup>63</sup>

Both boys and girls, irrespective of their age, indicated that hunger affected their appearance, and that their bodies became thin and pale. Most children mentioned dehydration and poor nutrition as another side effect of hunger. The majority also mentioned that they experience emotional and psychological distress. Children's attendance at school has also suffered. Hunger deprives them of the energy needed to walk to and from school, and while in school, they lack focus. In some instances, their families migrate in search of food and water, causing them to miss or drop out of school. Economic violence through

poverty affects children: at the peak of school closures from the Covid-19 pandemic, 369 million children were missing out on crucial school meals.<sup>64</sup>

Children mentioned that their community also lost their livestock, and their crops did not yield as much as expected, leading to acute food shortages. This results in inflated food prices, meaning families struggle to meet their basic needs and are forced to sell their assets or relocate to camps for people forced to move from their homes, or cheaper towns.

Girls shared that they were more likely to be forced into work or early marriage as a result of hunger. Some girls resorted to working as a 'home help' for wealthier families. Boys mentioned that they felt pressured into joining armed groups, and were more likely to need to find work, such as shining shoes or washing cars.

When asked for ideas to strengthen responses to hunger, children recommended monthly food distributions for the most vulnerable families, more school feeding programmes to make it easier for children to stay in school or to start going to school, and providing financial support for school fees and education materials. They also suggested raising awareness on the impact of the climate crisis, ending early marriage, and prioritizing children with disabilities. They strongly felt that children should be allowed to participate in decision making and that their voices should be taken seriously.

### 3.3 Lessons from key informant interviews: missed opportunities for anticipatory action and limited response at scale

The huge increase in the number of people facing hunger, malnutrition, and the risk of famine in Somalia stands as evidence of the failure of government and international aid systems to act sufficiently early or at sufficient scale. Key informant interviews with government officials, staff from international, national and local NGOs, as well as community representatives, offer some indications as to why the opportunities for anticipatory action at scale were largely missed

**Knowledge of early action.** Knowledge of anticipatory action, how to implement it and what funds and resources can be used for anticipatory action, were noted as one stumbling block. Many actors were unclear what action

was appropriate in anticipation of a crisis as opposed to early response to the impacts of the crisis, perhaps further complicated by the protracted nature of the crisis. In Somalia, the type of action taken by most stakeholders was considered appropriate to relieve the impacts of the drought but did not sufficiently protect assets and strengthen systems to prevent or lessen the impact. In Kenya, aid organizations consulted indicated that they had not taken anticipatory action but had reacted to the early warning from NDMA and seasonal forecasts to respond to the impact of the drought. A number of stakeholders did however highlight examples of anticipatory action to re-orientate existing resilience activities, including support to pastoralist communities to grow fodder so that livestock could be fed if rains performed below average.

**Social safety nets have been used to respond to shocks, not anticipate them.** There are promising social protection systems in place, including the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) in Kenya, the Somalia Shock Responsive Safety Net for Human Capital Project (SNCHP) - also known as Baxnaano - Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in Ethiopia. However, respondents noted that these have largely been used to respond to shocks rather than ahead of them, and still lack sufficient scale. In Somalia, key informants felt that the scale up of the pilot safety net programmes in 2020 and 2021 had been insufficient. In Ethiopia, the PSNP recently began its fifth round since its initiation in 2005, which includes a new early warning dashboard which will be updated on a quarterly basis to make the system more responsive to shocks.<sup>65</sup>

**Funds still lack the flexibility and speed to be genuinely anticipatory.** Many stakeholders commented on the long-standing challenges around accessing flexible funds for anticipatory action, both within donor-funded projects and Government budgets. **There are limited ear-marked funds for anticipatory action and limited flexibility to repurpose existing funds using modalities like crisis modifiers.** **Where they are in place, the trigger for release of funds is the emergency not the forecast.** Although donors have demonstrated willingness to invest more in anticipatory action and introduced crisis modifiers and flexible budget lines in programme grants, respondents noted that more engagement with donors is needed to reduce bureaucracy.

Although the trigger for action in the CERF anticipatory action pilot in Ethiopia was met in December 2020,



implementation was delayed. The CERF released funding again in 2021 but by that time only early – not anticipatory – action was possible. The pilots in both Ethiopia and Somalia in 2020 and 2021, while very promising, were felt to have largely focused on relieving the impact at local levels and – as yet – lack sufficient resources and scale to have a widespread impact on vulnerable populations.

In Somalia, stakeholders reported there was some flexibility to access contingency funds within international projects. However, **timeframes to negotiate the use of contingency funds meant that the funding was only available in the early response phase.** There were also examples of budget reallocation – including from the Government of Somalia. However, **stakeholders experienced challenges with the approval and speed of disbursement of reallocated budgets,** which pushed the timeframe for implementation to the response – instead of anticipatory – phase. In Kenya, funds were requested and disbursed from the drought contingency funds managed by the NDMA but, again, were used for early response and not anticipatory action.

In both Kenya and Somalia, stakeholders tended to talk about preparedness or early responses. **Even where early action and anticipatory action mechanisms are present in individual agencies, there was little evidence of these functioning at the implementation level.** Furthermore, few stakeholders were able to identify a systematic process for triggering either anticipatory action or early action based on the theoretical models for such a process. Instead, stakeholders noted that the preference was to rely on early warning information verified by assessments and that **action was dependent on whether or not funding was available.**

***Local communities and diaspora initiate anticipatory responses before governments or aid agencies.*** Critically, **the most common source of early finance for anticipatory action in line with early warning information was from members of the community and diaspora.** The experience, knowledge, capacity and agency to take contextually appropriate anticipatory action is found at a local level, from sub-national to community, and in the informal system. Sub-national and local anticipatory actions were taken in 2020 and 2021 as communities saw what was coming, but within the formal aid system and government, uncertainty around systems such as funding and contractual flexibility reduced the scale of these initiatives. **Many respondents reported that they knew something should be happening late in 2020 or early 2021 but were not sure how to trigger**

**action, or felt constrained to use a system which lacked the flexibility to incorporate local triggers.** The response by communities and local organizations did not rely on international and national formal structures. **Anticipatory actions that were taken but the international system, for the most part, did not engage community and local organizations in decision making and are still largely operating separately from the response by communities and local organizations.** ■

### LOCALLY-LED ACTION: INDIVIDUALS, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL ADMINISTRATIONS THE FIRST TO ACT

In Wajir county in Kenya, which borders both Somalia and Ethiopia, local communities and local government, acting on both official and traditional forecast information, combined to take action in late 2020 and early 2021. This included scouting missions to gauge the condition of pasture elsewhere; collaborative efforts with local businessmen to provide water storage and water on credit until conditions improved; and farmers grew fodder to sell at water points when pasture failed. Local government officials also undertook a number of initiatives, including the provision of water storage; rapid borehole repair and maintenance; fuel subsidies for borehole pumps; fodder purchase from local farmers; and livestock vaccination and off-take initiatives.

Action at the individual and community levels was later supported by local NGOs and ASAL Humanitarian Network started distributing cash transfers to the value of \$1.8m, reaching 5,000 households in eight counties, including Wajir. The county government took action in advance of the declaration of the drought emergency at the national level by scaling up payments via the HSNP and delivering water trucks to at-risk households and communities. Early action at the county level was financed through the 2% emergency budget allocation and recourse to NDMA for additional drought contingency funds. Most of the action was still to relieve the existing drought impact, rather than anticipatory action to prevent future impacts.



Sankus, 70, sits in front of his home in Wajir county, Kenya, which he shared with his wife who recently passed away due to thirst. [Photo: Khadija Farah/Oxfam/ February 2022]

***'Elders, businesspeople, religious leaders have supported the drought committee in communicating the severity of the drought. They have been the core pillars in advocating for action. People are much more likely to donate when local leaders are part of this initiative.'***

**ABDILAHİ FARAH ESSE, 27, PASTORALIST FROM CADAY-DHEERE TOWN, NUGAAL, SOMALIA**

In Somalia, riverine farming communities in Middle Shebelle worked collectively to shore up river banks against the threat of floods. They had created community funds, but well aware that their resources were far too limited to tackle the root of the problem, the disrepair of river management structures that had functioned before the civil war in the 1990s. They often received warnings by phone from relatives living upstream in Ethiopia, giving them time to take last-minute action to protect livestock and other possessions. Other farming communities had set up early warning systems for locusts, allowing those working in towns to rush back to protect the crops in their fields.

In Puntland in Somalia, individuals, local leaders and community groups were the first to take action. Funds were mobilized through diaspora networks and local fundraising initiatives and used mostly for trucking water to allow pastoralists to keep livestock

in grazing areas and relieve the burden of water collection for women.

In Gedo in Somalia, the local administration responded first and, while there were insufficient resources for a full intervention, its rapid action raised the alarm with national authorities and organizations as well as international response agencies working in the region.

Sitti zone in Somali Region in Ethiopia was hit particularly hard by a drought that lasted from 2014 to 2016. Local businessmen, including from the diaspora, and civil servants (who contributed a portion of their salary) combined to provide assistance to communities more than a year before official assistance began.<sup>66</sup> Traders and the diaspora again provided assistance in parts of the region from the time of the failed rains in 2020; again, a full year before the scale-up of assistance from humanitarian agencies.





Ibado (in purple) is a local community leader who lives in the village of Oog, near Burao in Somaliland. She assists people who have been displaced by the drought. [Photo: Petterik Wiggers / Oxfam / March 2022]

## 4 PREPARING FOR THE NEXT CRISIS

Analysis of anticipatory action in the Horn of Africa over the past decade offers a series of lessons which can be implemented not just regionally, but at a system-wide level. One of the most prominent issues is that, despite proof of its effectiveness – both financially and in protecting lives and livelihoods – anticipatory action is still struggling to achieve system wide implementation, and is too often relegated to small projects which are unable to act at the scale needed. Furthermore, this research underlines the need to develop a common vision and strategy for anticipatory action in different contexts. The lack of clarity around the definition and objective of anticipatory action results in missed opportunities to realize its full value, including establishing its wider use.

As testament to the effectiveness of early action, numerous case studies have demonstrated that local actors act in anticipation of crises. However, this has not led to concerted efforts by national and international actors to connect and learn from locally-led early action when designing anticipatory action pilots, which are imperative for ensuring appropriate and timely action. Similarly, local triggers for action are often not well incorporated into national and international triggers. The large-scale funding mechanisms which are required for implementing anticipatory action at scale are constrained by their lack of

flexibility and underdeveloped systems to use local-level triggers for anticipatory action, and to scale anticipatory action at the national level.

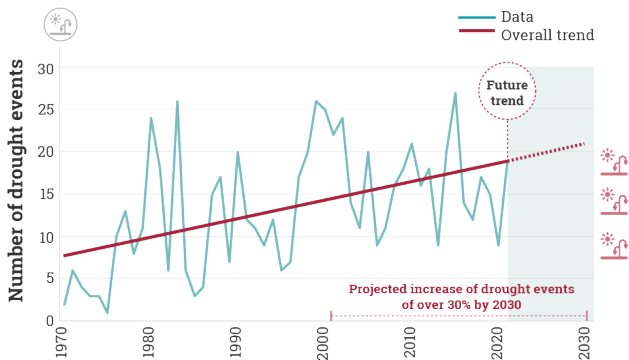
### 4.1 The climate crisis makes resilience building and anticipatory action essential

East Africa highlights the profound inequality of the climate crisis. It is one of the regions least responsible for the climate crisis – collectively emitting less than 0.05% of global CO<sub>2</sub> – yet over the past decade it has been repeatedly struck by climate-related shocks. It is increasingly apparent that such shocks also act as a threat multiplier, spurring conflict and fragility.

By 2030, more than 100 million people in low- and middle-income countries may be pushed below the poverty line by increasingly frequent extreme events and the climate crisis.<sup>67</sup> The climate crisis will both exacerbate existing conflict and reduce people's capacity to cope with its effects. Increased exposure to shocks also widens inequalities within communities, suppresses economic growth, and compromises the impact of long-term poverty reduction efforts. While the level of needs in 2022 are staggering, the latest UNDRR analysis indicates that far worse is yet to come (Figure 1 overleaf).

**Figure 1. Drought and Disaster Events**

**Figure 2.2. Number of drought events 1970–2020 and projected increase 2021–2030**



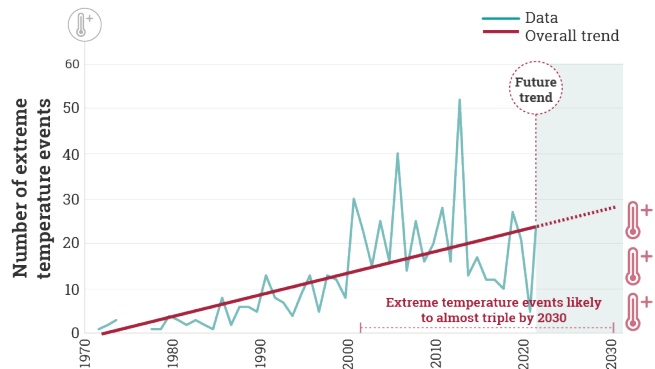
Source: Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2022<sup>68</sup>

Research has found that investing \$1.8tn globally in five areas of adaptation from 2020 to 2030 – strengthening early warning systems, making new infrastructure climate-resilient, improving crop production, protecting mangroves, and improving the resilience of water resources management – could generate \$7.1tn in total net benefits.<sup>69</sup> Within adaptation funding, prioritization of locally-led initiatives can also ensure that immediate needs are met and that investments contribute to building the decision-making power and social capital of communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis.<sup>70</sup> Scaling up climate finance is therefore not only a matter of spending more, but spending better and more justly to reduce the financial inequalities between those who have contributed most to climate catastrophe and those who have contributed least. Without a significant increase in investment in anticipatory action and adaptation, millions of people will suffer from the irreversible impacts that have already been set in motion.

**4.2 Anticipatory action: still the exception not the norm**

Anticipatory action has been largely developed in response to a challenge in the humanitarian sector: how do we reduce the need for humanitarian responses by acting in advance of crisis? To date, anticipatory action has largely been tried in pilots by humanitarian actors with a limited budget, and typically implemented as one or more projects. Humanitarian and development actors have struggled to effectively break down barriers between sectors, including within individual agencies. Research for this paper suggests that anticipatory action currently sits in a silo within a silo,

**Figure 2.3. Number of extreme temperature events 1970–2020 and projected increase 2021–2030**



certainly in the humanitarian sector, and is viewed as a product attracting funding rather than a process engaging the array of actors in governments, humanitarian and development system and climate actors.<sup>71</sup>

This 'projectization' of anticipatory action is one of the issues that limits its effectiveness in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. It has too often been constrained to humanitarian projects and pilots but wherever possible it can, and should, be part of government systems and development assistance packages. Anticipatory action needs the scale of national development programmes and government systems. In this regard, nationally-led social protection systems may be far better placed for anticipatory action at scale than reliance on programmes managed predominately through the humanitarian response.

Anticipatory action has enormous potential to reduce the impacts of an impending shock on at-risk communities, when it is adequately resourced to operate at a sufficient scale. However, crucial changes are needed to unlock this potential:

- Move from pilots and distinct projects to system-wide approach.
- Shift from a wait-and-see position which relies on confirmed early warning information, to a 'plan ahead/pre-position no-regrets' approach which acts in anticipation of potential shocks.
- Embed anticipatory action in ongoing interagency efforts to shift towards a nexus



approach between humanitarian, development and peace action. To be effective at scale it must directly support locally-led action; form a core component of government and development actor plans, and link with early action humanitarian responses.

- Build upon the interventions by the World Bank and IMF that offer scope for anticipatory action financing that is embedded in crisis management and disaster risk management capabilities at the country level.
- Scale up flexible and multi-year funding to support anticipatory action in advance of shocks and cascade benefits of quality financing to local actors

### 4.3 Local action: those who are most affected act earliest, but are not met with sufficient funding or participation

As noted in the key findings above, action is regularly taken first at individual and community levels, reinforced by action by county and sub-national authorities. Individuals and communities faced with threats have repeatedly shown that they invest both in anticipatory actions to mitigate looming crises and in early responses, offering assistance within their own communities many months before the government or international humanitarian community becomes active.

Due to the strongly gendered aspects of food insecurity, local women are often the first to provide support to their neighbours and community members, but are still seldom included in decision-making structures. Significantly more needs to be done to ensure that anticipatory action and other responses are women-led, where women-led organizations have a seat at decision-making tables at local and national levels, as well as in humanitarian and donor discussions.

Much also remains to be done in relation to how national and international investment and decision-making directly supports locally-led anticipatory action, and places local actors in the lead. Despite such impressive action taken on the ground, funding for localization remains low: less than 5% of global humanitarian funds in 2020 was allocated to local and national responders.<sup>72</sup> Within the Grand Bargain,

donors and aid organizations committed to provide 25% of global humanitarian funding directly to local and national actors but only 13 out of 53 signatories have met or exceeded the target of 25% after five years.<sup>73</sup>

### 4.4 Forecast-based action has improved, but is not matched with sufficient change in financing systems to integrate the use of development, humanitarian and climate financing

The evidence for anticipatory action and action based on forecasting has proven convincing over the past decade and is a significant achievement, but there are still gaps in how triggers link to the flow of funds, and particularly in how forecasting and funding can work where conflict or other factors exacerbate vulnerabilities.

Evidence shows that early interventions using forecast-based financing have an immediate and significant return on investment. FAO's work in northern Kenya demonstrated that every \$1 spent on early action gained a return of almost \$3.50.<sup>74</sup> This value was attributed to the extra milk produced, and the cost of livestock saved or their improved condition. A study by Save the Children explored a wider understanding of beneficiary outcomes and included the social impact alongside the economic benefits of forecast-based financing. Findings showed that early action assisted beneficiaries in avoiding the worst and most damaging effects of shocks, with a positive return on investment of £1.61 for every £1 spent. Importantly, early action also benefited households even if the predicted crisis did not materialise.<sup>75</sup>

Since 2011, systems for forecasting climate shocks have greatly improved, as have national-level systems projecting the impact of the climate shock on food security. However, the processes by which a climate shock translates into negative impacts on food insecurity are complex and context specific. Furthermore, current forecasting systems predominately rely on climate and food security analysis and miss other critical outcomes, including the additional impacts of conflict, gender disparities, water scarcity or disease outbreaks on the resilience of communities, protection, and specific risks to women and children.

As the climate crisis grows in severity, our approach to managing risks must shift to recognize this new threat and prepare accordingly by linking more closely with

development and climate finance initiatives. Currently, climate finance to fragile and extremely fragile countries is just \$11 and \$2 per capita, respectively,<sup>76</sup> yet climate finance to non-fragile developing countries was \$162 per capita between 2014 and 2021.<sup>77</sup> If countries most vulnerable to the impact of the climate crisis could access the same per capita amount this would translate to \$20bn in Ethiopia and \$2.6bn in Somalia, funding which would also support the financing of climate-related impacts in humanitarian response plans.<sup>78</sup>

The humanitarian system is already stretched beyond capacity: humanitarian appeals have steadily grown year-

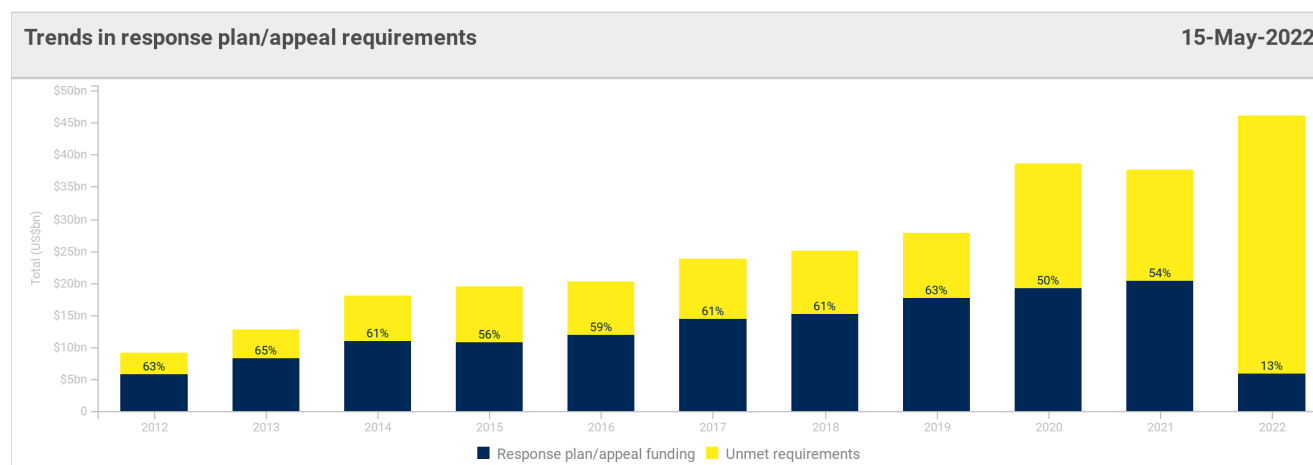
from leading to increasing crises. It also offers a way to address shocks in a more cost-effective manner, but to be effective at scale it is essential to bridge the gaps between humanitarian, development and climate finance, and invest sufficiently in resilience and anticipatory action.

### 4.5 Shock-responsive social protection

Social protection systems can release resources at speed and scale in advance of a declared emergency, especially when systems are designed to be responsive to shocks. Shock-responsive social protection programmes allow governments to quickly and simply expand benefits to new beneficiaries on a temporary basis, or temporarily increase the level of the benefit to those who are already receiving



Figure 2. Trends in response plan/appeal requirements



The percentage labels shown in each bar represent the tracked global appeal coverage for each year. Amounts shown in the latest year (far right bar) are figures for the year to date.

Source: Financial Tracking Service (2022)<sup>79</sup>

on-year, but they typically receive little more than half the funds called for (Figure 2) and the typical disbursement timeline of donor funding further complicates planning, timely responses. The upward trend of needs has continued in 2022, with global humanitarian appeals now totalling over \$46bn, but less than 10% of these funds had been pledged as of May 2022.<sup>80</sup>

A purely responsive system will not be able to handle the challenges posed by the climate crisis. Anticipatory action offers an approach to mitigate the increasing shocks

it. However, many are limited in scale and duration and in some countries vulnerable populations are still excluded from, or not able to access, government social protection. There is growing evidence that the delivery of assistance through existing social protection programmes, particularly if designed to be shock-responsive, can be significantly more efficient and effective. Until recently, humanitarian actors have tended to operate in isolation from national social protection systems and – in some contexts – this distinction is required to ensure that humanitarian assistance remains needs-based and impartial. In most



countries where international humanitarian responses have taken place, there has been little coordination between emergency cash transfer programmes and national social protection systems. Since 2021, social protection and humanitarian experts have started to convene to strengthen coordination and exchange lessons learned. Several key informants from both the humanitarian and social protection communities spoke frankly about the challenges of improving understanding and coordination.

Social protection systems are still far from being capable of identifying all those facing crisis and deploying flexible financing mechanisms that can tailor levels of assistance to match needs. Urgent attention is needed to expand social protection systems, including universal child benefits, to ensure they are inclusive and meet the needs of the most vulnerable. The inclusion of women is particularly important, as research indicates that gains in women's and girls' household decision-making power regresses during crises.<sup>81</sup> Nonetheless, the language of risk financing, shock-responsive social protection and adaptive social protection represents a huge advance in the way in which acute need is addressed.<sup>82</sup> ■

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

### It is not about early warning: hunger is a political failure

A decade after governments, donors and aid organizations said they would not let famine return, 181 million are forecast to be in crisis levels and above of hunger. The warnings came early enough; the systems developed over the last decade – including government social protection systems, locally-led responses and humanitarian cash and food systems – are capable of preventing crises, but only if they have sufficient resources and access to the affected population, and support from political decision makers to act on the warnings. Fundamentally, the reason that millions of children and families still suffer from hunger and malnutrition, and lose their assets and their livelihoods, is lack of political will. It is a failure to address conflict, to open humanitarian access, to act with the urgency needed on the climate crisis, to shift power to local organizations and to provide the resources we know are necessary to address poverty and prevent crises.

### Still responding to crisis not the risk

Ten years ago, we called on all actors – including our own organizations – to manage the risk not the crisis and support resilience of communities. Despite some progress and cause for optimism, the international community is once again waiting until the situation has already reached crisis level and above before committing resources that are now urgently needed to scale-up life-saving response. Promising developments in early warning systems, the expansion of social protection mechanisms and stronger drought risk management capacity within governments, are all progress in the right direction, but the levels of acute food insecurity and malnutrition now faced in the region make it clear that more action is needed by all actors.

Governments, donors, and agencies still only scale up action when the crisis has hit. Waiting until millions of children are malnourished, removed from school and families have lost vital assets and livelihoods, is unacceptable when the warning signs are visible so much earlier and when we know all the benefits – both financial and in terms of human lives – of acting pre-emptively.

### Failures to invest in tackling underlying chronic vulnerability and preparing for climate risks

The fact that acute food insecurity conditions (IPC 3 or worse) have persisted for over a decade in the Horn of Africa, despite

interventions, indicates that not only have we failed to build an anticipatory system, we have failed to fully address the underlying conditions that drive chronic food insecurity and erode the sustainability of livelihoods even in 'good' years. Humanitarian and development programmes in the Horn of Africa, as elsewhere, remain chronically underfunded. While much progress has been made in developing better systems over the past decade, there has been underinvestment from both governments and donors in addressing food insecurity and the climate crisis, including investment in adaptation programmes that support the most vulnerable to cope with the increase in climate-related shocks already happening. We cannot allow crisis levels of acute food insecurity (IPC 3) to be the norm; we must support the resilience of affected populations and systems and act earlier to support people before crisis conditions take hold.

The climate crisis is exacerbating needs and multiplying risks – both of extreme weather events such as drought as well as through conflict and displacement. Strengthening early warning systems, making new infrastructure climate-resilient, improving crop production, and improving the resilience of water resources management are essential to lessen the impact of the climate crisis. Within adaptation funding, prioritization of locally-led initiatives can also ensure that immediate needs are met and that investments directly contribute to supporting decision-making power and social capital of communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis.<sup>83</sup> Linking climate finance to anticipatory action is therefore not only a matter of spending more, but spending better and more justly to reduce the financial inequalities between those who have contributed most to climate catastrophe and those who have contributed least.

### Local actors lead anticipatory action

As testament to the effectiveness of early action, numerous case studies have demonstrated that local actors prepare and take action to manage risks well ahead of national or international bodies. However, there have not been concerted efforts to connect and support locally-led early action when designing anticipatory action pilots, nor is sufficient funding flowing to local organizations to respond at scale. Similarly, international and national triggers for action are not designed to support local triggers for action. A particular challenge was found in the large-scale funding mechanisms which are required for implementing anticipatory action at scale, which are constrained by their lack of flexibility and underdeveloped systems to use local-level triggers – and local actors – for anticipatory action. ■

## 6 RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 System change for anticipatory action

#### 1. Move from pilot to scale:

The pilot projects have served their purpose, and the evidence for anticipatory action is clear: it is time for anticipatory action to be deployed strategically and system-wide at scale, building on lessons learned from pilot initiatives and resourcing capacity strengthening.

#### 2. Implement a nexus approach to anticipatory action:

Boundaries between disaster risk reduction, resilience building, climate adaptation, anticipatory action and early action must be removed and replaced by a common strategy to manage the risk, rather than the crisis, and to build resilience.

- Increase the scale and interoperability of climate, development and humanitarian funding to address immediate and predicted needs, as well as to build longer-term resilience to crises.
- Governments, communities, humanitarian, climate, peace and development actors, and in some cases the private sector, including insurance agencies, must share the objective of, and responsibility for, preventing predictable shocks from becoming crises, and be held jointly accountable.
- Develop standard operating procedures and technical guidance on anticipatory actions that can be taken in each sector.

#### 3. Support locally-led early warning and action:

Engagement with, and leadership by, local communities is essential to developing appropriate early warning triggers, and interventions that reflect the priorities and recommendations of local communities.

- Donors and governments should increase funding to gender-inclusive local responses, and ensure marginalized groups, including

women, have access to the resources needed to respond early to crises.

- Governments and donors must establish layered triggering systems with both higher-level and local information to better incorporate the complexity of multi-level factors that determine the shape of crises and support contextually appropriate anticipatory action
- Aid organizations must increase collaboration with communities in the development of early warning triggers and strengthen two-way feedback and monitoring mechanisms so that programmes can be quickly adapted in line with community feedback.

#### 4. Streamline analysis of projections and forecasts to anticipate the impacts of complex crises and reflect multi-sector outcomes of risks:

Anticipatory action and triggers are currently heavily focused on specific shocks or hazards, most often rainfall, but crises are rarely caused by a single shock and their impact extends beyond food security and livelihoods. Governments, UN agencies, international NGOs and local organisations must work together to improve the integrated use of data and analysis of seasonal forecasts and projections, including conflict analysis, as well as analysis of the projected and gendered impacts on food security, nutrition, health, protection and education outcomes.

#### 5. Urgently expand inclusive and shock-responsive social protection systems to enable food-insecure and marginalized people to cope with multiple shocks:

- **Social protection at scale:** The rise of national social protection systems offers one of the best hopes for protecting children and families threatened by forecasted shocks and experiencing chronic poverty. The coverage of social protection systems needs to be urgently expanded, including universal child benefits, with improved targeting to ensure they are



inclusive and meet the needs of the most vulnerable.

- **Shock-responsive social protection:** Emergency cash transfers must be coordinated and linked with national social protection systems to enable earlier anticipatory deployment, and more effective response to shocks.

### 5. Promote women's participation and leadership:

Women must have the opportunity to participate in and lead on decisions on how to address our broken food system, on the triggers and activities needed for anticipatory and early action, and in designing more inclusive, appropriate social protection systems at scale. Action is also needed to address discrimination faced by women food producers on issues that have an impact on the resilience of their livelihoods and ability to adapt to the climate crisis, such as access to land, information, credit, and technology.

## 6.2 Finance for anticipatory action

### 1. States must meet their commitment to 0.7% GDP funding to aid:

Despite years of urging, only a handful of states have met their agreed commitment to 0.7% GDP funding to aid. Needs have grown steadily in the past decade, with increasing crises expected due to climate catastrophe. It is vital that states increase their aid funding so as to save lives, but also to act early to prevent crises.

### 2. Crisis modifiers and contingency budget mechanisms must be:

- Increased in size and usage;
- Simplified for fast deployment;
- Clarified to be accessible at all levels of decision making;
- Applied in contexts of recurring crises and cyclical shocks; and
- Triggered based on forecasts wherever possible.

These apply to both donor and government budgets, and aid organizations must provide the same flexibility to local and national organizations. Processes to use

these funds must be simple to avoid delays: lives and livelihoods quite literally depend on it.

### 3. Localize funding:

The current funding system benefits organizations in the global North and often fails to even attempt to address unequal global–local power dynamics. More money must flow more quickly to communities, local and national civil society organizations and local government. Local actors are typically best placed to act, and to act first.

- Donors should urgently increase funding to pooled funds, including country-based pooled funds and START that are already directly accessible to local and national organizations.
- Donors and aid organizations should expedite commitments made in 2016 to provide flexibility and multi-year funding to local and national organizations. This should include significant increases in direct cash transfers to vulnerable households, through both national social protection systems and humanitarian cash before and during emergencies.
- Donors and aid organizations should adopt a more flexible approach to compliance requirements which limit the role of local organisations in cash programming.

### 4. Reduce national debt burdens:

This helps to free up greater government revenues to invest in shock-responsive social protection systems.

- International financial institutions should work with developing countries to develop a food import finance support mechanism based on zero-interest loans that countries can repay over a long period of time. This should allow countries to import basic food commodities and key agricultural inputs (e.g. fertilizer) while not adding to unsustainable debt levels.
- Cancel unpayable debts, including all debt payments in 2022 and 2023, for all low- and lower-middle-income countries that are highly vulnerable to the compound shocks of drought, conflict, climate and rising food prices.

## Annex: Research methodology

This report's findings are drawn from two pieces of commissioned work. The first was research commissioned under the Jameel Observatory for Food Crisis Early Action, with Save the Children and University of Edinburgh, between November 2021 and February 2022. This aimed to generate a detailed understanding of enablers of anticipatory action on the slow onset crises in Kenya and Somalia through the real-time and historic tracking of data sharing (from March 2020 to December 2021), decision making, and action from the failure of OND rains in 2020.

Conducted by the Centre for Humanitarian Change, based in Nairobi, the research explored the timeline of the release of information, and the decisions and actions of government, UN, international NGO, national and local civil society organizations in Kenya and Somalia, as well as mapping the roles of different actors and coordination mechanisms in place to support forecast-based action in each context. Secondary data were collected through a comprehensive desk review and analysis of drought-related databases that included climate/drought updates, rainfall forecast and remote sensing maps; food security updates and IPC maps; market and food prices monitoring bulletins; WASH and conflict data; and grey literature on early/anticipatory action, media and advocacy reports, drought funding and appeals, and media and early warning timelines.

Primary data were collected from 57 interviews with key informants,<sup>84</sup> purposively sampled through a stakeholder mapping exercise in Kenya and Somalia at national and sub-national levels. The second phase used a case study approach to explore examples of barriers and enablers to anticipatory action in the two countries. A forthcoming report from the Jameel Observatory will provide the full findings and detailed methodology of this research. The second commissioned research was a review of changes in policy and practice at national, regional and international levels following the 2011 crisis, conducted by VNG. The methodology included a literature review, research data from the Supporting Pastoralism and Agriculture in Recurrent and Protracted Crises (SPARC) project, and 32 key informant interviews with a range of international and regional stakeholders.<sup>85</sup> Interviews were largely conducted remotely, except for 14 face-to-face interviews during a five-day visit to Ethiopia with

stakeholders from the federal government, UN and international and national NGOs who were able to make themselves available at short notice.

For both pieces of work, all the interviews were transcribed and anonymised. Interview quotes from all sources, where used, were similarly anonymized.

## Limitations

The primary limitation was that while the intention was to track how anticipatory action was being used, the drought conditions had already worsened and a full-scale emergency had been declared in both Kenya and Somalia, while there was conflict in Ethiopia. It is important to note that, in the midst of a humanitarian response, actors in Kenya and Somalia struggled to distinguish anticipatory action, early action and early response.

There were also significant challenges with engagement with some stakeholders between December 2021 and January 2022, partly due to the escalating drought crisis in the counties. Detailed information on the timing of the release of funds release and drought action was very difficult to obtain.<sup>86</sup>

## Calculations

### Calculation of hunger-related deaths:

- The researched used the crude death rate of 0.5-0.99 per 10,000 people in IPC 3 of food insecurity as specified in The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Global Partners (2021), Technical Manual Version 3.1: Evidence and Standards for Better Food Security and Nutrition Decisions, accessible at <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipcinfo-website/resources/ipc-manual/en/>.
- The paper then subtracted the normal daily death rate of 0.22 per 10,000 people per day; this figure is based on data from the UN and from national, EU, and Pacific Community statistical offices.
- Across the three countries, the crude death rate in April 2022 was at least 627-1,802 per day, 0.44-1.25 per minute, i.e., between one every 2.5 minutes and one every 48 seconds. These figures are conservative, since they are based on the crude death rate for IPC 3, and do not take into account the higher crude death rates for IPC 4 and 5.
- The Ethiopia figure of 5.5 million is for Afar, Amhara, and Tigray only, based on the May 2021 analysis, and covers May-June 2021;
- The Kenya figure of 2 million is from the February 2021 assessment and is a projection covering March-May 2021;
- The Somalia figure of 2.6 million is from the January 2021 assessment and covers April-June 2021;
- We are not including the Belg + Meher projections for Ethiopia, which cover January-June 2021 and are based on an assessment from October 2020.

Hunger figures in 2011 are based on UNOCHA 4 June 2011 report.<sup>90</sup>

Comparative data between the 2011 famine and 2022 shows that 9 million people in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia experienced acute hunger (IPC 3+), today that figure is between 22.4 and 23.4 million people, according to UNOCHA and IPC, and FAO-ICPAC (April 2022 estimates). Data on UN humanitarian appeals and donor funding are from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Financial Tracking Service.<sup>91</sup>

According to IPC (see IPC Population Tracking Tool<sup>87</sup>) and the FAO-ICPAC Food Security and Nutrition Working Group,<sup>88</sup> 22.4 - 23.4m people across Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia will face high levels of acute hunger (IPC3 and above), including almost half a million in famine-like conditions. This includes: 7.4 million people across Ethiopia (as per the projection for July-September 2021) – including over 400,000 living in famine-like conditions (IPC 5); 5.5-6.5 million people in South East Ethiopia (April 2022 estimate), 3.5 million people from Kenya (March-June 2022 projection); and 6 million people are from Somalia, including 81,100 at IPC5 (April-June 2022 projection). Children malnutrition figures from April 2022 Horn of Africa Drought are based on the Horn of Africa Drought: Humanitarian Key Messages.<sup>89</sup>

We estimate that in May 2021, 10.2 million people were at IPC 3 or higher in the three countries, based on the following assessments and projections from IPC (see <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/population-tracking-tool/en/>):



## Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)

### IPC Acute Food Insecurity Scale

Phase name and description	Phase 1 None/Minimal	Phase 2 Stressed	Phase 3 Crisis	Phase 4 Emergency	Phase 5 Catastrophe/ Famine
	Households are able to meet essential food and non-food needs without engaging in atypical and unsustainable strategies to access food and income.	Households have minimally adequate food consumption but are unable to afford some essential non-food expenditures without engaging in stress-coping strategies.	Households either: • Have food consumption gaps that are reflected by high or above-usual acute malnutrition; or • Are marginally able to meet minimum food needs but only by depleting essential livelihood assets or through crisis-coping strategies.	Households either: • Have large food consumption gaps which are reflected in very high acute malnutrition and excess mortality; or • Are able to mitigate large food consumption gaps but only by employing emergency livelihood strategies and asset liquidation.	Households have an extreme lack of food and/or other basic needs even after full employment of coping strategies. Starvation, death, destitution and extremely critical acute malnutrition levels are evident.  (For Famine Classification, an area needs to have extreme critical levels of acute malnutrition and mortality.)
Priority response objectives	Action required to build resilience and for disaster risk reduction	Action required for disaster risk reduction and to protect livelihoods	<b>Urgent action required to:</b> Protect livelihoods and reduce food consumption gaps		
			Save lives and livelihoods		Revert/prevent widespread death and total collapse of livelihoods
<p><b>First-level outcomes</b> refer to characteristics of food consumption and livelihood change. Thresholds that correspond as closely as possible to the Phase description are included for each indicator. Although cut-offs are based on applied research and presented as global reference, correlation between indicators is often somewhat limited and findings need to be contextualized. The area is classified in the most severe Phase that affects at least 20% of the population.</p>					

### IPC Acute Malnutrition Scale

Phase name and description	Phase 1 Acceptable	Phase 2 Alert	Phase 3 Serious	Phase 4 Critical	Phase 5 Extremely Critical
	Less than 5% of children are acutely malnourished.	5-9.9% of children are acutely malnourished..	10-14.9% of children are acutely malnourished.	15-29.9% of children are acutely malnourished. The mortality and morbidity levels are elevated or increasing. Individual food consumption is likely to be compromised.	30% or more children are acutely malnourished. Widespread morbidity and/or very large individual food consumption gaps are likely evident.
	The situation is progressively deteriorating, with increasing levels of acute malnutrition. Morbidity levels and/or individual food consumption gaps are likely to increase with increasing levels of acute malnutrition.				
Priority response objective to decrease acute malnutrition and to prevent related mortality. <sup>2</sup>	Maintain the low prevalence of acute malnutrition.	Strengthen existing response capacity and resilience. Address contributing factors to acute malnutrition. Monitor conditions and plan response as required.	<b>Urgently reduce acute malnutrition levels through</b>		
			Scaling up of treatment and prevention of affected populations.	Significant scale-up and intensification of treatment and protection activities to reach additional population affected.	Addressing widespread acute malnutrition and disease epidemics by all means.

## ENDNOTES

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## ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS



The **Jameel Observatory for Food Security Early Action** is an international partnership led by the University of Edinburgh collaborating with the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Save the Children, the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) and Community Jameel.

Based at ILRI in Nairobi, Kenya, the Jameel Observatory combines the local knowledge and concerns of communities facing on-the-ground threats of hunger with innovations in data science and humanitarian action; teaming up to devise solutions that can predict, prepare for, and overcome climate-related food security and malnutrition challenges in dryland areas. For further information please visit [www.jameelobservatory.org](http://www.jameelobservatory.org)



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