

UN says 13 million face hunger in Horn of Africa as drought worsens

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**Dead livestock belonging to the pastoralist community of Higlo Kebele in Ethiopia
Families are being forced from their homes, leading to increased conflict between communities
[Michael Tewelde/WFP]**

United Nations, February 8 (RHC)-- An estimated 13 million people in the Horn of Africa are facing severe hunger, the United Nations' World Food Program (WFP) has said.

Drought conditions have affected pastoral and farmer populations across southern and southeastern Ethiopia, southeastern and northern Kenya and south-central Somalia, with forecasts of below-average rainfall threatening to worsen already dire conditions in the coming months.

"Harvests are ruined, livestock are dying, and hunger is growing as recurrent droughts affect the Horn of Africa," Michael Dunford, regional director in the WFP Regional Bureau for Eastern Africa, said in a statement on Tuesday. "The situation requires immediate humanitarian action and consistent support to build the resilience of communities for the future."

Shortages of water and pasture due to three consecutive failed rainy seasons have decimated crops and caused abnormally high livestock deaths. Additionally, hikes in staple food prices, inflation, and low demand for agricultural labour have reduced people's ability to buy food.

The WFP said families are being forced from their homes, leading to increased conflict between communities. Malnutrition rates also remain high across the region and could worsen if no immediate action is taken.

The UN has repeatedly raised alarm over prolonged drought in the fragile region prone to armed violence. Earlier this month, its children's agency UNICEF said more than six million people in Ethiopia are expected to need urgent humanitarian aid by mid-March.

In neighbouring Somalia, more than seven million people need urgent help, according to the Somali NGO Consortium. Experts say extreme weather events are happening with increased frequency and intensity due to climate change.

In October last year, the UN warned that more than 100 million "extremely poor" people across Africa were being threatened by accelerating climate change that could also melt away the continent's few glaciers within 20 years.

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