Cash transfers Provides lifesaving assistance to 17,500 drought-affected households in Kenya

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Severe drought is again ravaging parts of Kenya and other countries in the Horn of Africa, where 12 million people now require immediate humanitarian assistance. According to Kenya National Drought Management Authority (NDMA), in Kenya, an estimated 2.6 million people face acute food insecurity. This number is likely to increase to an estimated 3.1 million people in the 2019 August to October lean season, based on the October 1st food security nutrition working group estimates.

In an urgent response to address growing humanitarian needs, the European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) has released 3.15 million euros to the Kenya Cash Consortium, led by ACTED in partnership with Oxfam, Concern Worldwide, and members of the ASAL Humanitarian Network including: Arid Land Development Focus (ALDEF), Pastoralist Community Initiative Development and Assistance (PASIDA), Pastoralist Integrated Support Program (PISP), Pastoralist Girl Initiative (PGI), Sustainable Approaches for Community Empowerment (SAPCONE) and Turkana Pastoralist Development Organization (TUPADO).

The Kenya Cash Consortium is providing cash assistance of KES 4,711 a month, quantified from household food needs, for a duration of three months, to 17,500 families who face acute food and nutrition insecurity~~, i~~n the hard-hit counties of Tana River, Turkana, Baringo and Marsabit. The action is aligned with the Government's response plan, but more needs to be done.

In light of this, Ahmed Ibrahim, convener of the ASAL Humanitarian Network and CEO of ALDEF, said:

"*The support from ECHO is much needed to meet some of the immediate and growing humanitarian needs in Kenya. However, it is essential that the Government of Kenya now provides sufficient and timely resources – as the primary duty bearer – to meet the humanitarian needs of its citizens. The KES.5.4 billion that the government has set aside in its budgets for the comprehensive drought response plan needs to materialize and be fully accounted for. At the same time, more sustainable resilience focused - interventions need to be scaled-up to address the persistent vulnerability of people to drought in the ASALs of Kenya. Our country has sufficient resources, what's missing is political will."*

According to an assessment of over 17,000 individual households in the counties of Baringo, Marsabit, Turkana, and Tana River, the Kenya Cash Consortium found that almost 77% of households still fell within "borderline" or "poor" categories for the Food Consumption Score (FCS). Meaning they had extremely reduced quantity and diversity of meals.

Based on the NDMA long rains assessment released in August 2019, in each of the targeted sub counties a significant proportion of the population were categorized as having poor or borderline food consumption scores (FCS); Marsabit (29%); Turkana (50%), Baringo (50%) and Tana River (82%). In total, the consortium has reached 17% of the food insecure populations within these sub-counties, as per the following breakdown; Marsabit (18%); Turkana (11%), Baringo (19%) and Tana River (32%).

Almost 12% of households in pastoral livelihood zones reported having migrated to new areas in search of water and pasture. This displacement has put significant strains on resources for all hosting communities and has also triggered land conflicts in areas like Tana Delta, where water for pastoral use is still available. 43% of all households surveyed needed to purchase of food on credit or borrow food from others. With an average monthly income of KES 2,936 this will be a significant burden for these

populations to recover from, especially for women and girls, who disproportionally bear the negative impacts of drought.

Scale up to reach those still in need is urgently needed. In the immediate term, the national and county government drought response plans must be prioritized and funded. Where the government cannot do so, it should make the funding gap clear, and request assistance from development partners. Responsibility also lies with county governments with the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), 2012 requiring counties to allocate up to 2% of their budgets for climate change adaption, disaster risk management and other contingencies. These funds must be utilized, and, in consultation with affected citizens and their representatives, prioritized to ensure a timely, efficient and effective humanitarian response.

The current drought is a terrifying portent of things to come. The climate crisis is increasing the frequency and intensity of drought and floods. Drought cycles are now occurring every 2-3 years instead of 5-7 years historically. Communities cannot recover before a new drought again decimates their livelihoods. Urgent action is needed by national authorities and the international community to strengthen resilience to climate shocks and address extreme inequalities. All counties should adopt the climate adaptation and disaster risk management legislation which have provision for increased revenue mobilization, improved governance and accountability of funds for this very purpose. Such action requires the participation of all citizens, especially women and youth, community structures, county and national authorities, the private sector and development partners.

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