



Kenya Drought Response 2011/2012

The food security crisis that unfolded in the Horn of Africa in 2010 and peaked mid-2011, following two seasonal rain failures, affected 13 million people, 4.3 million of whom were in Kenya. At the same time, nearly 200,000 refugees from Somalia sought humanitarian assistance at the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya. This prolonged drought, in a context of chronic poverty and escalating food and fuel prices, resulted in a situation that was finally recognised in June 2011 as a major humanitarian crisis. Oxfam responded to early warning signs in Turkana and Wajir to mitigate the effects of failed 2010 short rains in April 2011. Throughout 2011 it increased efforts to raise the profile of the food security crisis and lobbied for assistance for Somali refugees in Dadaab. Immediately following the Government of Kenya's declaration of an emergency and additional funding, Oxfam scaled-up its work, with a target of assisting 1.3 million people to access food, water and sanitation, as well as enabling 90,000 people in Dadaab to access safe water, sanitation and hygiene.

Evaluation method

The evaluation was carried out by an external evaluator that applied Oxfam's Humanitarian Indicator Tool (HIT). This tool is designed to help evaluators assess the degree to which a humanitarian response meets recognised quality standards. The HIT consists of 12 quality standards, each with defined benchmarks. In applying the tool, the evaluator reviews the available evidence and rates the extent each standard was 'met', 'partially met' or 'not met'. Scores are then assigned against each standard and a cumulative total calculated. Three standards – timeliness, coverage, and measuring adherence to Sphere and Oxfam quality standards – are given twice the weight of the others, given their greater importance.



Figure 1: Map of Kenya, credit Oxfam Ireland.
Photo credit: Jo Harrison

Results

The overall HIT score indicates the Kenya response was of high quality. However, areas of weakness were also identified. Although Oxfam responded to early warning signs, scope was limited to a single new mitigation project funded by one of the few donors that was prepared to intervene early. Despite intensifying advocacy to donors for funding to prevent the predicted crisis, it was not able to implement necessary measures before severe impacts were widespread. Moreover, while the design of its longer-term development programme is well placed to detect and respond to hazards, it needs clearer triggers to enable more responsive decision-making. That being said, the effectiveness review found that relevant technical standards were largely incorporated into programme tools, contextualised appropriately and used consistently for reference, but with gaps in the use of technical standards for livestock activities. In addition, while no formal accountability strategy was defined, the programme in Turkana and Wajir systematically used well communicated and transparent participatory processes and beneficiary feedback mechanisms, including establishing helpdesks for feedback, complaints and resolution. Community-based targeting was also used to ensure that assistance reached the most vulnerable but where a gender analysis in Wajir subsequently resulted in some re-registration for cash interventions. However, accountability was less clearly documented in Dadaab. A range of specific modifications to standard approaches were also incorporated in the response to meet the needs of elderly and disabled people and increase their participation. There are, however, no documented accounts of how specific needs of people living with HIV/AIDS were assessed or met.

Standard	Level of achievement	Rating
Timeliness	Partially met	2/4
Coverage	Met	4/4
Technical aspects of programme measured against Sphere and Oxfam quality standards	Partially met	2/4
Indicators (both process and impact) in place and being measured	Met	2/2
Feedback/complaints system in place and functioning and documented evidence of consultation and participation	Partially met	1/2
Partners fully engaged in all aspects of the project cycle	Met	2/2
Programme reflects measures to address dignity and protection issues	Met	2/2
Programme delivery addresses gender and specific needs of vulnerable groups	Partially met	1/2
Exit strategy/recovery plan in place	Met	2/2
Evidenced utilisation of contingency plan in last humanitarian response	Met	2/2
Programme addresses advocacy issues	Met	2/2
Programme is linked to/will be linked to DRR interventions in area	Met	2/2
Final rating		24/30

Good practice & enablers

The quality of the response and its ability to meet fully eight of the 12 standards is derived from the experience of Oxfam's long term programme in the affected area and the largely appropriate preparedness measures that were undertaken. As the situation worsened, Oxfam continued limited pre-drought livestock, food security and water interventions while at the same time lobbying others to take action. In particular, an advocacy and media plan was developed quickly after the failure of the 2010 short rains that targeted the Government of Kenya. The strategy evolved in 2011, as fears of an impending crisis grew, urging the international community to react while retaining pressure on the Government to meet its responsibilities. In January 2012, Oxfam launched a Policy Paper 'A Dangerous Delay' which is likely to have impacts beyond Kenya.

Going forward

The effectiveness review identified accountability and gender as areas of weakness. The country team are committed to improvements and will work with the regional gender lead and refine the monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning framework to strengthen gender and accountability mainstreaming. In recognition that timeliness remains an issue not only for Oxfam in Kenya but also across the sector, a post drought assessment was commissioned in July 2012 and shared with Government of Kenya, UN and NGO partners seeking to maintain momentum and reinforce the case made in 'A Dangerous Delay'. It is proposed that work takes place with the country programmes to create an organisational framework and triggers to enhance the programme's abilities to raise the alarm in a way that is more likely to elicit a response.