

POLICY BRIEF / JANUARY 2021

Food Security, Climate Challenges and Resilience Building in the Horn of Africa (HoA)

1. Executive Summary

Food insecurity is one of the major challenges in the Horn of Africa (HoA). It is becoming structural through time as most of the poor are concentrated in the arid and semi-arid ecosystems and, as a result of population growth, have been forced to cultivate increasingly marginal land more intensively. This coupled with low level of diversification into non-farm economic activities leads to unsustainable exploitation of the fragile ecosystem which exacerbates environmental degradation and low agricultural productivity. This calls for establishment of Integrated Climate-Response System (ICRS) to build resilience as opposed to different standalone programmes.

The ICRS for resilience building will overhaul resilience building interventions and programs and this helps boost overall risk-management capacity by reducing fragmentation of programmes and institutions. It should also be able to deliver a range of programmes in accordance with country needs and link with early warning and emergency systems. It aims additionally to foster participatory planning and social accountability throughout the system in order to strengthen the voices of all stakeholders towards more responsive programming. It also paves the way for countries in the region to collaborate on joint actions and investments on institutional capacity building and resilience building measures that benefit communities in similar eco-systems across borders.

1. Introduction

The Horn of Africa has been facing a wide range of interconnected and mutually reinforcing negative conditions for many years. The environmental challenge in these countries, compounded by limited institutional capacity, conflict, scarce financial resources to cope with emerging challenges and a high degree of vulnerability to systemic shocks, undermines efforts to reducing rural poverty, hunger and malnutrition, and the need to radically transform the food system into more sustainable, nutritious and efficient system.

Climate Change (CC) has emerged as one of the most important environmental and development challenges in the region. It is already impacting agriculture and food security and will make the challenge of ending hunger and malnutrition even more difficult.

Understanding food security vulnerability to climate change is not only key to understanding net climate impacts on food security, but also to framing ways to adapt when climate risks occur, i.e., to reduce the net climate change impact by reducing vulnerability.

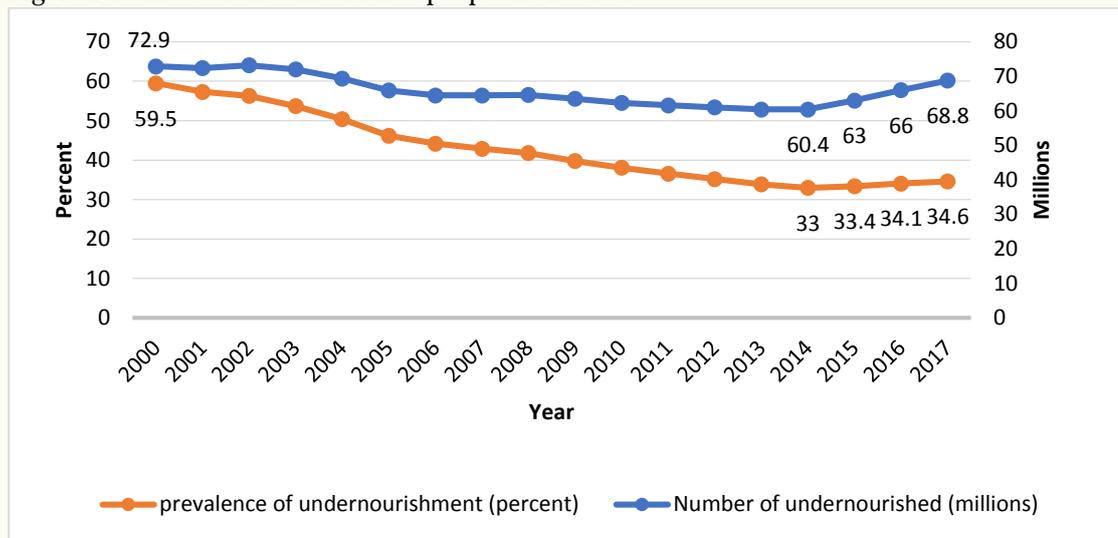
2. Food security/insecurity in the Horn of Africa

Although globally increase in crop yields and production led to increase in absolute supply of food over the last five decades¹, agricultural productivity in the HoA has not changed significantly. As a result, the overall food supply in the region has remained low – below the minimum food required leading to prevalence of undernourishment and hence food insecurity.

¹ IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), 2019. Climate Change and Land: An IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems

Figure 1 shows the level of Prevalence of Undernourishment (PoU) in the HoA. Over the last one and a half decade, the prevalence of undernourishment has shown a decline but this decline seems to have ended and hunger was slowly on the rise starting 2014. The PoU in the HoA is well above 30 percent which is more than three times the global level of PoU which has remained virtually unchanged at a level slightly below 11 percent². As of 2017, close to 70 million people suffered from hunger, corresponding to about one in every three people in the HoA. This is much higher than the one in every nine people for the global level of hunger and one in every five people for the level of hunger in Africa³ indicating the immense challenge posed in the HoA to achieve the Zero Hunger target by 2030.

Figure 1: Number of undernourished people in the HoA



Source: Computed from FAOSTAT

Climate change is one of the driving forces of food insecurity in the region. It primarily affects production in the agricultural sector especially crop and livestock production. Beyond production losses, medium and large-scale disasters can lead to significant impacts across the food value chain, with negative consequences on sector growth, food and non-food agro-industries and ultimately national economies. Hence, the accumulated costs of the climate change on agriculture could be much more significant than the immediate production losses. A study by FAO found that after each medium and largescale disaster there is an average loss of 2.6 percent of national agriculture value-added growth, with a much more significant impact likely at subnational levels⁴.

3. Building resilience of people, and economic and environmental systems

Climate change-induced food insecurity in the Horn of Africa can have substantial development implications and the stakes are high. Achieving a resilient society that adapts to changing environmental conditions is an important part of meeting national development goals. It is critical to take a long-term perspective on how to reduce vulnerability and to increase drought-resilient human and socioeconomic development efforts among the Horn's poorest communities. Designing interventions based on a fundamental and far-reaching approach is, essentially, a matter of building the resilience of people, and of economic and environmental systems. However, interventions made

² FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2019. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World: Building climate resilience for food security and nutrition. Rome, FAO.

³ FAO, et al. (2019), The State

⁴ FAO, 2018. The Impact of disaster and crises on agriculture and food security, 2017 report, Rome.

in the countries of the Horn to build resilient livelihood system were not only highly fragmented but were also small in coverage and most were at pilot level implemented by different government and non-government organizations. The approach lacked systemic view where interventions can be coordinated, lessons learned and possibly streamlined to existing development programs. This calls for an integrated response to build resilience. The critical dimensions to enhance adaptation to climate change and build resilience in an effort to enhance food security include risk sharing and risk acceptance, social protection, market stabilization and livelihood diversification. The four dimensions not only influence the resilience of livelihoods and food security but also complement or support each other.

4. Institutional Challenges for Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Building

Given the expected increase in the magnitude of climate change impacts, it is becoming likely that robust adaptation in the countries of the Horn of Africa will require strong institutions, cooperation and harmonization of activities of concerned institutions and support from concerned development partners considering the insufficient resources available for adequate responses by the governments and the intertwined complexity of reducing poverty. Despite the critical role that institutions play in adaptation, national adaptation planning efforts may easily leave out steps that would strengthen institutions critical to helping countries adapt to climate change. The underlying causes of institutional challenges in the HoA include

Lack of coordination for policy implementation: Policy documents in many of the countries of the Horn always stipulate key actors and their roles although linkages among the different actors is largely unstructured and weak. Lack of awareness of potential synergies, misconceptions about each other's approaches and priorities, and different conceptual frameworks limit the potential for greater collaboration among sectors and other stakeholders working on resilience building. The lack of coordination fails to promote lessons captured from resilience building efforts and the scaling up process.

Limited technical capacity: there is limited technical capacity at all levels including government, NGOs and other actors which is mainly reflected in the lack of long-term planning in climate change adaptation and mitigation. Moreover, there is low integration of research evidence in the planning process. This led to what is perceived as poor strategic planning and ineffective policies. Related to limited technical capacity is inadequate staff numbers, a constraint at all policy implementation levels but significantly reflected at the local level.

5. Policy recommendations

- When strategies to build resilience are designed, they should consider potential effects on other vulnerable sectors or communities to avoid the situation where adaptation in one place adds stress in another.
- Coordinate on joint actions and investments at regional level: though significant power and responsibility rest with national governments, which will need to considerably strengthen their understanding of climate change and their climate related policies, the countries of the horn should find ways to collaborate on joint actions and investments. Institutional capacity building to strengthen analytical capacities and mechanisms needed to support decision making process on food security, climate change and resilience building is an area that requires particular attention. Moreover, since similar eco-systems extend across borders in the HoA (some 70 percent of the region is made up of Arid and Semi-Arid Lands - ASALS), joint and participatory resilience building systems that involve and benefit bordering communities can be designed for

the region. Regional bodies such as the AU and IGAD play a key role in promoting and implementing such joint actions and investments.

- Coordinating risk management and crisis response: Partnerships between governments, donors, and NGOs are crucial for the success of risk management and crisis response. Joint livelihood assessment methods, rapid assessment mechanisms and response monitoring, capacity building of stakeholders, information sharing (lessons learnt, best practices etc.) are key for national, regional and interregional disaster risk identification, mitigation and transfer mechanisms.
- ***Integrated climate-response system (ICRS) for resilience building:*** to minimize impact of climate change and variability on the development efforts of local communities in the Horn of Africa, it is essential that synergies among the multiple objectives of sustainable development, poverty reduction, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation are harnessed for greater adaptation and mitigation. This calls for establishment of integrated climate-response system (ICRS) for resilience building as opposed to different standalone programmes. The following are some of the recommended policy actions or programmes to be considered under the ICRS.
 - **Holistic and flexible resilience building programmes:** Given the complexity of impact of climate change, designing holistic and flexible resilience building risk management strategy—with a range of policy instruments appropriate for different sections of the society affected by climate change enhances livelihood resilience. The holistic approach entails a way of enhancing agricultural production supported by sharing risks associated with production related to climate change, stabilizing markets and reducing negative impacts when climate change occurs, and diversifying livelihood bases.
 - **Use existing government structure:** By building on existing government systems, integrated climate response system needs to be strengthened and placed within a ministry or agency that has political clout and convening power to enable it to facilitate integration across other ministries and agencies. Lack of coordination clearly seen in almost all countries in the Horn is due to absence of coordinating unit. Even in the countries that have set up units or agencies to coordinate climate change responses at the national level, coordination tends to be undermined by a lack of political clout or convening power. Building the coordination system under the powerful ministries helps not only to coordinate the climate response activities but also creates opportunity to streamline climate change responses to existing development programmes.
 - **Integrate ICRS with lower level government structures:** The success of climate change impacts will depend on the extent to which impacts are felt on the ground and resilience is enhanced at the local level. This renders the role of local institutions critical. The ICRS must be integrated into the planning frameworks of decentralised governance structures and adaptive capacities built at that level.
 - **Improve access to information and awareness creation:** Access to information and public awareness is critical for climate change adaptation capacity. Communication strategies need to be developed so as to respond to the information needs of stakeholders at various levels. Lack of information on projected impacts of climate change at the local level will undermine the adaptive capacities of the local communities, particularly because they depend on climate sensitive resources for their livelihoods. Timely availability of information is therefore critical in facilitating decision-making by groups such as farmers.



- **Capacity building:** For a long-term planning in climate change adaptation and resilience building, availability of human resource in adequate number and technical capacity is one of the critical issues. Poor staffing and lack of technical capacity have been identified as one of the main challenges in climate adaptation and resilience building efforts. This has often resulted in poor strategic planning and ineffective policies and low integration of research evidence in the planning process. For implementation of ICERS and appropriate adaptation and mitigation technologies, advancement in both staffing and technical capacity should be a prior agenda.