

## CORRUPTION IN KENYA

### POLITICIANS ARE DRIVING THE COUNTRY TOWARDS HUNGER

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#### Overview

#### Lack of water not the only cause of famine

*Kenya has barely started to recover from the effects of its last drought in 2006, now the next disaster threatens. In the past two years, there has been too little rainfall in the country's rural low-lying regions. The last rainy season failed completely. The devastating consequences are severe crop failure, overuse of grazing land and a lack of drinking water supplies for the population. Furthermore, conflicts triggered by the water shortage are also on the increase.*

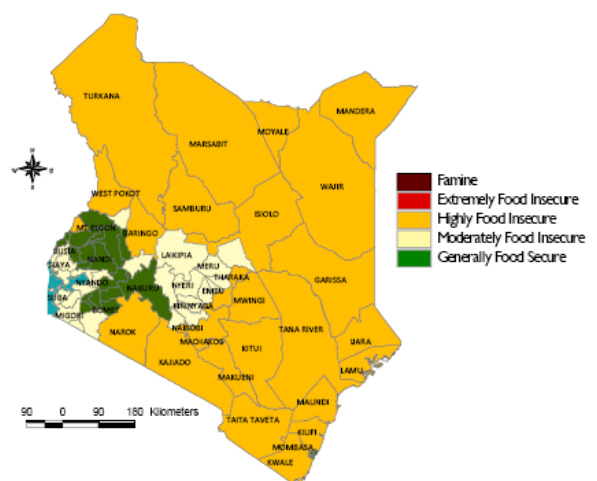
*As with most disasters, the causes of the famine in Kenya are complex. The climate change is quite possibly key to the increasingly frequent droughts. But the natural causes are also accompanied by political, economic and social factors. A complex mixture of corruption, the consequences of political crises, the riots following the last elections and the still comparatively high food prices in Kenya are preventing effective drought management. This fact makes one thing particularly clear: to guarantee sustainable disaster prevention in Kenya, action has to be taken on all levels. On the one hand, donors need to invest in sustainable rural development to cushion the effects of climate change. On the other hand, Kenya itself must get to grips with the corruption of its politicians and systematically enforce existing and effective approaches in its development policy. Before this occurs, donors should support the country more intensively through civil society organisations.*

There hasn't been enough rain in Kenya for years. In most regions, farmers are facing extensive crop failure. The deficit is already noticeable at markets in rural regions and will probably reach a climax between May and August. Almost 10 million people in Kenya – over a quarter of the country's total population – do not currently have enough to eat (Fig. 1). Most families live on just one meal a day, and this almost always leads to serious malnutrition because the meals usually consist only of maize porridge.

While crops will still be harvested in the west of the country later this year, the next big harvest in the east is not due until February 2010. This is not enough for the country.

The Kenyan government anticipates a cereal deficit of 190,000 tons at the end of the market year, which means large parts of the country face a humanitarian crisis likely to last at least twelve months. This is an extremely unusual situation in Kenya: the country usually has sufficient food to feed everyone. The majority of famines in the country in the past have occurred because food failed to reach affected regions.

Fig. 1: Food security in January r



Source: ALRMP and KFSSG

Because of the climate change, it can be assumed that water scarcity will become an even more acute problem in Kenya in the next few years. According to the "Emergency Disasters Databank" (EmDat), the number of natural disasters around the world has increased steadily since the seventies. While just under 100 natural disasters were recorded in 1974 (EmDat 2004), well over 400 (EmDat 2008) occurred in 2007. Although the number of deaths directly associated with these disasters has decreased, the livelihoods of more and more people are threatened by drought, storms or flooding. Between 2000 and 2004, an average of 262 million people were affected by natural disasters per year – around twice as many as in the first half of the 1980s (UNDP 2008).

The increasing prevalence of droughts, which the "International Panel on Climate Change" (IPCC) predicts will persist in already arid regions, and the greater risk of flooding in wetlands will increase the risk of famine in many developing countries. According to the IPCC, crop yields from rain-fed agriculture could decline by 50% in some African countries as a result of the climate change by 2020 (IPCC 2007). Around 90% of agricultural production occurs in Africa in rain-fed agriculture. In just eleven years, the climate change could affect precipitation to such an extent that the already precarious food situation in sub-Saharan Africa could develop into a long-term disaster.

### The causes are complex

However, the famine cannot be blamed solely on climatic factors. As is the case with many crises, the causes of the famine in Kenya are complex. Rain failure and poor harvests are only partly responsible. In fact, the crisis is attributable to an explosive cocktail of political, ecological, economic and social factors. With the right instruments, the worst effects of drought could be overcome politically.

Yet the Kenyan government is at present barely in a position to do this. The country is still suffering from the after-effects of the bloody clashes that occurred after the last elections. The conflict between the Kalenjin and Kikuyu, which has been smouldering since the early nineties and culminated in riots following the controversial elections, is still far from being resolved and is turning the country into a political powder keg. The roots of the conflict go back as far as colonial times. Like in most African states, British colonial power brought together heterogeneous regions and groups of the population in one territorial state. By only partially integrating these regions, however, it intensified their heterogeneity. From the very beginning, the political and economic structure of independent Kenya was characterised by ethnic disparities, which were sometimes intensified and instrumentalised by politicians. Back in the 60s, fierce competition arose between the main ethnic groups, the Kikuyu, Kalenjin and Luo. Because of their proximity to the politi-

cal heart of the country, but also because of the important role they played in the Kenyan struggle for independence – the Mau Mau rebellion, which paved the way to independence, was led by the Kikuyu – and because of their high level of education, the Kikuyu occupied strategically important political and economic positions in the country. The feeling among the Kalenjin of being discriminated against for decades, which was fuelled in particular by the settlement policies of the Kenyan government in Rift Valley, ultimately led to the post-election riots.

More than 1,300 people perished in the pogroms after the election. Over 500,000 people were internally displaced. The majority came from the Rift Valley region. Many have found shelter with relatives, but their households are burdened further by more mouths to feed. Of over 500,000 internally displaced persons, 150,000 still live in temporary camps. These displaced persons are returning to their homes only very slowly. Because of crop failures following the displacement of farmers, the loss of livestock, the closure of businesses and the destruction of homes, it will take years before enough food can be secured for the refugees again.

### Food prices still high

The situation in Kenya is compounded further by still high prices of food. While the price of cattle and goats is plummeting with the rapid deterioration in the condition of the animals, food prices soar. Only a short time ago, a goat fetched around 3,000 shilling (30 Euro), today a goat costs no more than five Euro. A cow, which previously cost around 8,000 to 12,000 shilling (80-120 Euro), is now worth only half as much.

By contrast, basic food staples are barely affordable for many Kenyans. Although food prices are dropping throughout the world again following the rapid increase in 2008, the price of maize in Kenya is still far higher than before the increase. Even the fact that a slight stabilisation has been in evidence in the country's breadbasket - Eldoret - and in the principal market area of Nairobi in 2008 gives no cause for hope. In the drought-hit rural regions in eastern and northern Kenya, maize prices are continuing to rise, and stocks are becoming increasingly scarce because of the lack of purchasing power and availability.

### Corruption is responsible

One of the causes of the high food prices is widespread corruption among Kenyan politicians. Although the government under President Kibaki has achieved some success, including the abolition of primary school fees and the development of rural market structures, it has failed completely to eliminate corruption. In Transparency International's Corruption Index, which lists 159 countries, Kenya ranks 144. The two anti-corruption commissions – the parliament's Public Account Committee (PAC)

Fig. 2: Wholesale prices for maize in Nairobi



Source: Kenya Food Security Update January 2009

under the leadership of Uhuru Kenyatta and the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission (KACC) – are powerless in the face of corruption. One of the reasons for this is that they are only able to carry out investigations against those suspected of corrupt practices. They are not empowered to initiate criminal proceedings.

Kenya continues to be in the "possession" of a small number of families, the majority of south Asian origin or Kikuyu. They own the most lucrative businesses, and they dominate the country's politics. They have benefited most from Kibaki's reforms. Despite high economic growth in the last few years, the number of poor people has not decreased significantly. According to the Kenyan government, the number of poor people dropped from around 52 percent to around 46 percent between 1997 and 2005/6. Other studies, such as those of the World Bank or the EU, suggest that poverty has actually increased to 60 percent of the population. Social inequality has increased especially in towns.

The country is repeatedly shaken by corruption scandals. In the first two months of 2009 alone, Kenya's newspapers have reported three major scandals. The state-owned pipeline company, for example, sold oil reserves. There is no trace of the 76 million Euro generated by the deal. The national tourism authority is also implicated in fully-fledged scandals, recently having paid over four million Euro to two private enterprises without receiving any significant services in return. But it has been the maize scandal that caused the biggest outcry. It was recently disclosed that a cartel of politicians and businesses deliberately fuelled the maize shortage in order to drive up food prices. Thousands of tons of maize were retained and then sold at exorbitant prices, which few Kenyans are able to afford. Despite the strained situation on the domestic market, huge amounts of maize were also exported to southern Sudan and sold to humanitarian organisations that are trying to satisfy their demands at local markets.

### Deterioration of situation

Welthungerhilfe predicts an escalation in the food crisis in the coming months. The people are urgently in need of aid. To alleviate the worst effects of the drought, Welthungerhilfe has provided resources for

the so-called "water tankering" scheme: tank vehicles are transporting drinking water to regions most severely affected by drought to ensure the survival of the people there. But these measures are literally only a drop in the bucket. They can temporarily alleviate suffering, but they do nothing to solve the structural causes of the problem. To overcome the suffering, quite different approaches are necessary. In general, more money has to be invested in Kenya's agriculture and in development projects that support long-term solutions to the increasing droughts.

In view of conditions, the Kenyan government has declared a state of emergency and is hoping for around 350 million Euro from international donors. But bilateral assistance in the form of budget support will not bring about the desired results in a country like Kenya. Current monitoring and evaluation systems regulating the allocation of funds are still inadequate. There are no reliable control mechanisms. This lack of control became particularly apparent in Kenya when the EU Commission paid 40.6 million Euro in financial aid to Kibaki, who is believed to have rigged election results, on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2007, one day after the elections.

The attitude of donors in the past has only served to intensify corruption and the poor governance of the Kenyan government. Donations are failing to reach those who need them most. Even Kenyans themselves are adopting the view that bilateral aid is not the answer this time.

### Demands

In view of the different causes of the disaster, one thing is especially clear: like many other disasters in Kenya, this one could have been avoided, and it is attributable for the most part to social and political factors. With the right instruments and measures, the devastating effects of the increasingly frequent droughts could be prevented.

The following demands should be made of the German government and international donors:

- There is an urgent need to prepare farmers for periods of drought in the long term and help them overcome droughts, for example by introducing drought-resistant types of cereal.
- Instead of investing only in short-term emergency programmes, the German government should focus on sustainable rural development in Kenya, and not just in Kenya's high-yield regions.
- Neither political and pragmatic reasons nor commitments from the Paris Agenda should lead to development funds being recklessly allocated to corrupt regimes.
- Because of widespread corruption in the Kenyan government, available funds should be channelled through civil society. Many NGOs have worked in Kenya for decades and have contacts to reliable local partners.

## IN BRIEF CORRUPTION IN KENYA

- Diplomatic pressure should continue to be exerted on the Kenyan government to fight corruption in the country more effectively.

The Kenyan government should:

- take corruption elimination seriously and grant the relevant commissions (PAC and KACC) authority to bring corrupt politicians and businessmen to justice
- acknowledge the right of every citizen to food and, in accordance with the voluntary directives for the implementation of the right to food (FAO 2004), include guarantees for the enforcement of this right in its legislation;
- assume responsibility for inadequate food security policies on a national level, and approve and systematically enforce in parliament promising political approaches such as the "DRAFT ASAL Development Policy" for the development of arid and semi-arid land in Kenya.

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