



# REPORT ON CHILDREN'S CONSULTATION ON HUNGER **KENYA**



Save the Children

*“Consult us  
on what  
concerns us”*



## Acknowledgements

Save the Children Kenya is very grateful to the children of Northern Kenya- Wajir, Garissa, Mandera and Turkana, who generously shared their insights and recommendations with us. We are committed to ensure that your voices continue to inform our humanitarian response to hunger and climate change as well as other issues that you mentioned.

We specifically acknowledge you for being honest and providing your honest views, we also acknowledge your families who gladly provided consent for you to be consulted. This report was written by Sarah Mukisa and Adan Hussein with support from Dr. Samuel Mburu, Moses Emalu, Edward Korir, Rumana Issack, Mathew Sisa, Victor Murunga, who facilitated the success of this activity. The report reflects the views of children affected by the drought in Northern Kenya consulted in November 2021. We also would like to thank Eline Severijnen, Prashan Thalayasingam, Meg Elizabeth Moran and Cat Carter who reviewed the report and provided useful feedback.

Published by Save the Children  
St Vincent's House  
30 Orange Street  
London  
WC2H 7HH  
United Kingdom

+44 (0)20 3272-0300

[www.savethechildren.net](http://www.savethechildren.net)

First published 2022

© Save the Children 2022

This publication is copyrighted, but may be reproduced by any method without fee for teaching purposes, but not for resale. For copying in any other circumstances, prior written permission must be obtained from the publisher, and a fee may be payable.

Front cover photo credit: Save The Children

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction &amp; purpose of The Children’s Consultation</b>	<b>4</b>
Children’s right to Participation	5
<b>Overview of the Context and Challenges facing Children</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>7</b>
Description of the approach of the consultation	7
<b>Safeguarding, Inclusion &amp; Gender Sensitivity</b>	<b>10</b>
Specific measures taken to ensure safeguarding, inclusion, gender sensitivity	11
Accountability to children consulted	11
<b>Key findings of the Children’s Consultation</b>	<b>12</b>
Impact of hunger on health and nutrition	12
Impact of hunger on livelihoods	14
Effects of hunger on children’s right to education	16
Summary of effects of hunger on children, their families and their communities	20
Coping Strategies of Children to Hunger and Climate Change	21
Perception of children on Save the Children and wider humanitarian response	22
Recommendations of children to tackle hunger	23
How children want to be involved in decision making around humanitarian response	24
Recommendations for humanitarian actors, from children	25
Additional recommendations from Save the Children’s technical specialists, in response to children’s input	26





## INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE OF THE CHILDREN'S CONSULTATION

***“We have nothing to eat at home, so we have to rely on wild fruit for us to survive”*** Boy – 6 years old

**Every day children in Kenya are dealing with the effects of hunger on their lives. They do not only suffer from a lack of food, or not enough nutritious food, but hunger impacts every part of their existence – their health, their home, their education, their safety and their future.**

In recent years, multiple shocks and stresses, including extreme weather events, have exacerbated food insecurity and disease outbreaks in the North Eastern region of Kenya, including Wajir, Garissa, Mandera and Turkana Counties. Recurrent droughts in particular have forced nomadic communities, who rely on rearing livestock to make a living, to move in search of pasture and water which are crucial for their survival. The drought spell in 2021

led to the death of more than 1.4 million livestock in at least 15 counties.

Two seasons of heavy rains in 2020 and 2021, have been followed by swarms of desert locusts ravaging crops, leaving people fighting over the few resources available. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on people in the region, with restrictions of movement and safety measures resulting in job losses and drastic reductions in household income.

All these conditions have eroded the resilience of communities and families when faced with shocks and stresses. There are no alternative or viable means to earn a living and families are currently struggling to provide enough nutritious food for their children. According to the National

Drought Management Authority<sup>1</sup> the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance increased from 2.1 million in August 2021 to 2.8 million in December 2021 as a result of the below-average rains from October to December. The situation is expected to continue to deteriorate over the coming months.

To address the worsening nutrition situation and the increase in the number of households with poor food consumption scores Save the Children conducted an integrated emergency response comprising of cash transfers to the most vulnerable families, alongside Agriculture, Nutrition, and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene activities, with the aim of meeting families' basic needs while supporting them to become more resilient in the long-term. It is in line with this vision that Save the Children launched a consultation with children in Kenya to understand from them what the impacts of hunger have been and what their recommendations towards tackling hunger are. 160 children participated in this consultation coming from communities in the Save the Children project areas of Garissa, Mandera, Turkana and Wajir.

## Children's right to Participation

Save the Children is committed to upholding children's right to participation in all contexts, as enshrined in the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child. Supporting children's right to participation in our humanitarian work is crucial for children to understand that their views are important and that they inform the decisions that Save the Children makes.

The consultations help us to ensure that our interventions are meeting children's and their families' needs, are based on recommendations from children themselves, and that children are able to play an active role in decision making on issues that affect them.

We will use the information collated to influence national clusters and ensure that children's inputs are considered. These findings will also inform advocacy efforts with national and county governments including donors and other actors.

## OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the Children's Consultation is to hear directly from children about the effects of hunger to:

- ✓ Explore and document children's insights into the effects of hunger and other issues on them and their community
- ✓ Explore children's views of Save the Children's response so far (and the wider humanitarian response) and whether we are focused on the right things
- ✓ Identify how children could be more involved and received the adequate and timely assistance they need in this humanitarian response, and in medium and long term activities
- ✓ Identify recommendations from children for humanitarian actors – e.g. what to prioritise, or identify specific needs that are not being met

1 Short rains assessment report, December 2021





# OVERVIEW OF THE CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES FACING CHILDREN

**The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET) 2021<sup>2</sup> reported that the short rains that usually occur in October to December of every year failed, and this marked the third consecutive below average season across the Eastern and Northern Kenya. These are areas that typically practice pastoral and marginal (i.e. farming on land with little potential for profit) agriculture, where earning a living is a challenge. Drought, combined with the closure of livestock markets in 2020 due to Covid-19 suppressed the trade in livestock, exacerbating farmers' struggle to survive.**

The national Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) has provided safety nets to the people in the arid and semi-arid lands of Kenya, which, supported by delivery of water and livestock feeds, are helping to stop these communities from slipping into severe food insecurity. However, despite all these efforts, widespread crisis still persists, with areas classified on the IPC scale as in Crisis (Phase 3) or Emergency (Phase 4). FEWSNET predicts a fourth consecutive below average season during the long rains (March to May 2022) and at least 3-4 million

people, including children, will be in need of humanitarian food assistance in Kenya. This means that large-scale humanitarian assistance and livelihoods support will be urgently required to cover current needs in Northern and Eastern Kenya, and this assistance needs to be sustained throughout 2022.

A UNICEF 2021 report<sup>3</sup> highlighted that between June 2020 and June 2021 5,453 cases (51.1 per cent) of child protection related to neglect and 1,195 cases (10 per cent) related to child pregnancy indicated that COVID-19 and drought led to an increased state of vulnerability for children and adolescents. There has also been an increase in poverty levels, especially in urban households, due to the measures instituted to control the COVID 19 pandemic, preventing households from recovering economically. Due to drought, the levels of malnutrition have surpassed the emergency threshold, with global acute malnutrition rates of between 15 to 30 per cent in the 8 arid counties of Kenya. Meanwhile at the national level, 652,960 children aged 6 to 59 months (71% of whom or 465,000 are in the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) of Kenya) and 96,480 pregnant or breastfeeding women, require treatment for acute malnutrition.

<sup>2</sup> Kenya Food security alert- December 20, 2021

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF Kenya Mid year Humanitarian situation report, June 2021



PHOTO: SAVE THE CHILDREN

## METHODOLOGY

### Description of the approach of the consultation

The study was qualitative in design. The main methodology used were focused group discussions and other child friendly methods such as body mapping, and H-Assessment. Prior to adaptation of the data collection tools, a secondary data review was conducted to understand the impacts of hunger on families and children and this provided a background to the report. Primary data that was collected during the consultations with children (using the participatory child friendly methods) explored what children see as the effect of hunger in all areas of their life, including education, health and nutrition. We also gathered information regarding their perceptions of Save the Children's responses to hunger in their communities, what children think their role should be, and how they

can play a bigger role in the work done by humanitarian organizations such as Save the Children.

**Sample size:** This consultation was conducted in at least one sub-county within each of the 4 counties where Save the Children is responding i.e. Mandera, Garissa, Wajir in the North East and Turkana in the North West. One village was selected in each of the sub counties and respondents were children who had received at least one intervention from Save the Children. The selection of the villages represented a mix of peri-urban and more rural context, in order to benefit from a diversity of views.

The selection of sub counties and villages was done through random sampling, where all the sub counties that received an intervention were listed and one sub county was randomly selected. The second stage showed a listing of villages that were receiving Save



the Children interventions within the sub county and a random sample was conducted to select one village where the consultation would happen.

The next stage of sampling was purposive; for each of the villages that had been selected above, a list of children was obtained to be the children that were consulted. These children had to belong to households that had received a Save the Children cash transfer intervention.

A total of 160 children were selected from the 4 counties, and 16 focus group discussions (FGDs) consisting of 10 children each were conducted. In each county girls were separated from boys, and younger

children (9-12 years old) were separated from the older ones (13-17 years old). Thus 4 FGDs were conducted in each county – two with girls (one with girls aged 9-12 years and one with 13-17 year olds) as well as two with boys of the same age groups. Separation between girls and boys was to ensure there would be maximum participation from both as research has shown that sex and gender are important in decision-making, communication, and stakeholder engagement. 50% of the participants were boys and 50% were girls so there was an equal representation of both. Each of the sessions took between 45 minutes to one hour.

County	Girls		Boys		Total Number of FGDs
	9-12 years	13-17 years	9-12 years	13-17 years	
Garissa	1	1	1	1	4
Mandera	1	1	1	1	4
Wajir	1	1	1	1	4
Turkana	1	1	1	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>16</b>

This consultation was as inclusive as possible, children that were not able to speak clearly, especially the younger ones, were encouraged to draw pictures instead. We also ensured that the facilitators and note takers were trained to be able to handle such differences and support children from marginalized groups.

**Data collection and analysis:** The children’s consultation took place over 10 days between 19th to 30th November 2021. This included 3 days of training to support data collection, 1 day of community mobilization and venue preparation,

and 2 days of data collection and data verification. Data entry and final verification were conducted during an entire day. The supervision of data collection was done by Save the Children staff, while data collection was conducted by qualified and trained research assistants. All tools were translated into the local language prior to the field data collection. Afterwards a report was written which highlighted the steps taken during the data collection process. This report enabled staff to monitor the process taken in each of the counties and understand any challenges faced during the consultation.



Research assistants were arranged in pairs of 2 – with one facilitator and one note-taker per group. The facilitators used different approaches to encourage everyone’s participation, such as encouraging children to “speak in turn” where the last child talking had to choose who takes their turn next. Facilitators also used approaches such as singing and drawing what’s on their mind, to make the exchanges engaging and to encourage children to participate . At the end of the day, the note-taker, facilitator and Save the Children staff reviewed the notes to ensure that all discussions had been captured accurately.

After the consultation, the audio recordings were transcribed and analysis was done by Save the Children staff. The transcripts guided the analysis and a plan was drawn. Content and thematic analysis was done using Excel for recording the responses. Where there were similar thematic responses these were grouped together and used to form themes, which were then used to provide answers based on the objectives of the consultation. Direct quotes of children were used to give specific evidence of the consultation.







PHOTO: SAVE THE CHILDREN

## SAFEGUARDING, INCLUSION & GENDER SENSITIVITY

**In consultation with child safeguarding focal points, the team ensured that a child safeguarding risk assessment was conducted before data collection. This was done to minimize any risks to children associated with the consultation. Children's full names were captured although not used in any of the reporting, and where children wanted to remain anonymous this was respected.**

Appropriate referral mechanisms were put in place prior to the process of data collection and the team adhered fully to the COVID-19 protocols. Children with disabilities were supported to take part in the consultations and the team ensured that venues for the consultations were accessible and safe for all children with range of disabilities. For instance, venues were child friendly, mainly located close to where the children live, and reaching them did not involve travelling on

any dangerous routes. Informed assent was obtained from all children who participated, and informed consent for their participation was also sought from their parents or caregivers.

We provided all necessary information for the children to make an informed decision on whether they wanted to participate in the consultation, and let the children know that participation was by choice and completely voluntary. They were also informed that the consultation would not lead to any negative consequences for them since they were already receiving support from Save the Children. They were free to air out their views (whether positive or negative) and these views would only be taken for up for the purposes of improving humanitarian interventions, and not to implicate them in any way.

## Specific measures taken to ensure safeguarding, inclusion, gender sensitivity

- **Experience:** The team of enumerators selected had already completed initial training in qualitative data collection with Save the Children and were therefore experienced in conducting qualitative data collection using participatory and child friendly methodologies, including training in safeguarding.
- **Training:** Although the enumerators selected had previous experience with Save the Children, for this particular activity a three day training course was still conducted to enable them to understand the tools necessary for this particular consultation. They were still taken through child safeguarding and ethics of research, and other topics, such as the objectives of this specific consultation, were also covered. A pilot training course on peer to peer interviewing was conducted after the three days training.
- **Translation of tools:** The consultation was conducted across different counties representing different contexts and languages, therefore we needed to translate the consultation questions into local dialects. During the training, each of the teams agreed a standard translation of the questions into the local languages and this is what was used during the exercise.
- **Supervision during data collection:** During actual data collection, the moderator and note-taker were supervised by a Save the Children Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) officer to ensure that the interviews were conducted in an ethical way.
- At the end of each data collection day, the MEAL staff member met with the enumerators to review the day and discuss any challenges. The note-taker reviewed their notes with the facilitator and Save the Children's supervisor to ensure that all discussions had been captured accurately and that they were in agreement with what had been written. At the end of the consultation, the enumerators wrote field reports which were submitted to Save the Children MEAL staff. These reports highlighted the experience of data collection and gave insights into some of the emerging issues.

## Accountability to children consulted

The results of this consultation will be summarized in illustrated posters. This will be presented mainly to the communities and the children, as a means of closing the feedback loop and ensuring quality and meaningful participation.

In addition, the findings of this consultation will be shared with other entities (the public, NGOs, UN organizations) to meet our

intention to i) influence national clusters and ensure children's inputs are considered in these platforms and to ii) inform advocacy efforts with national and local governments as well as other actors and donors.

Save the Children's drought response plan will also be reviewed and updated based on the children's recommendations and insights. Consequently any program development efforts for the response will be informed by the same results.





PHOTO: SAVE THE CHILDREN  
PHOTO: SAVE THE CHILDREN

## KEY FINDINGS OF THE CHILDREN'S CONSULTATION

**Hunger has had an impact on all dimensions of children's lives, putting many of them at risk physically and mentally. Children's rights to health, education, protection and their livelihoods have all been affected by hunger, as we will describe in the findings below. This section also provides insights into what children believe their role in decision making for humanitarian situations should be and their recommendations for policy makers and humanitarian actors, which they believe will reduce the risk of hunger and its impacts on them and their families.**

***"If a goat dies from hunger we slaughter it and eat"***

Boy – 16 years old

### Impact of hunger on health and nutrition

The consultation took place from October to November 2021, a season that should have produced short rains. However the rains were delayed and experts noted that they would not come<sup>4</sup>. This was the third season in a row that the rains had failed in these counties and the children reported being distressed from such a long period of hunger.

All children of all ages reported high incidences of symptoms related to hunger, such as lack of energy, losing a lot of weight, and becoming very small for their age. They also mentioned that many children – both boys and girls – have been admitted to hospital with these hunger related symptoms. In some cases children mentioned the deaths of both animals and people.

<sup>4</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/kenya/kenya-drought-hunger-crisis-2021-emergency-appeal-mdrke049>

**“Some of my community people die because of prolonged hunger during drought season, if you don’t eat for three consecutive days a person might die due to starvation”**

Boy – 9 years old

**“Hunger causes children to be sick and when children visit the health facility they will decide to stay there because there is no food at home or school. And some of the children will decide to drop out of school because of their hunger”**

Girl – 17 years old

**“During hunger season, we usually eat palm tree fruits (eng`ol) and this fruit can cause sickness but it is the only thing available to eat”**

Girl – 16 years old

**“We collect and eat palm tree fruits but these fruits also have bad effects. It leads to children’s tummies sticking out and sometimes leads to watery poo [diarrhea] and other illness. It is hunger that is forcing us to eat it”**

Girl – 9 years old

**“Turkana Right now, the routine is that when you wake up in the morning, you have to visit the near bushes to gather palm tree fruits (eng`ol) which is dangerous to eat and has some effects on your health”**

Girl – 10 years old

**“Hunger leads to lack of energy, and children are unable to do work”**

Boy – 10 years old



The children consulted come from pastoralist families and the lives of animals are perceived as important as their own, hence the deaths of their animals was a major concern for them. In Mandera boys and girls aged 9-12 reported the lack of enough food to eat as a concern because children become very thin and have too little energy to go about their work, but also because they may be exposed to diseases that could lead to death or severe harm. In Turkana children of all ages

mentioned that during the hunger season they go to bushes to gather wild fruits on their way to school, so that they can eat them and get a little energy for the day.

Children often have to share meals with friends and other relatives in order for everyone to have a little to eat. This means the children are eating smaller portions which affects their growth, an issue that was reported by all children but was especially highlighted by the older ones.

## Impact of hunger on livelihoods

***“The hunger has caused my father to sell the cows so that we can get food to eat”***

Boy – 10 years old

***”Hunger has led to family arguments – where one person goes to ask for food from their [extended] family, without knowing that another family member has also asked for help, and perhaps been fed. This creates chaos among them as there is not enough food for all in the family”***

Boy – 15 years old

***“The hunger and drought brought us to lose our animals and also left us without food for animals and water”***

Boy – 8 years old

***“Hunger makes children have to work regardless of the kind of work. Someone can even burn wood to make charcoal or make some mats. They can also sell a goat so that they can buy some food”***

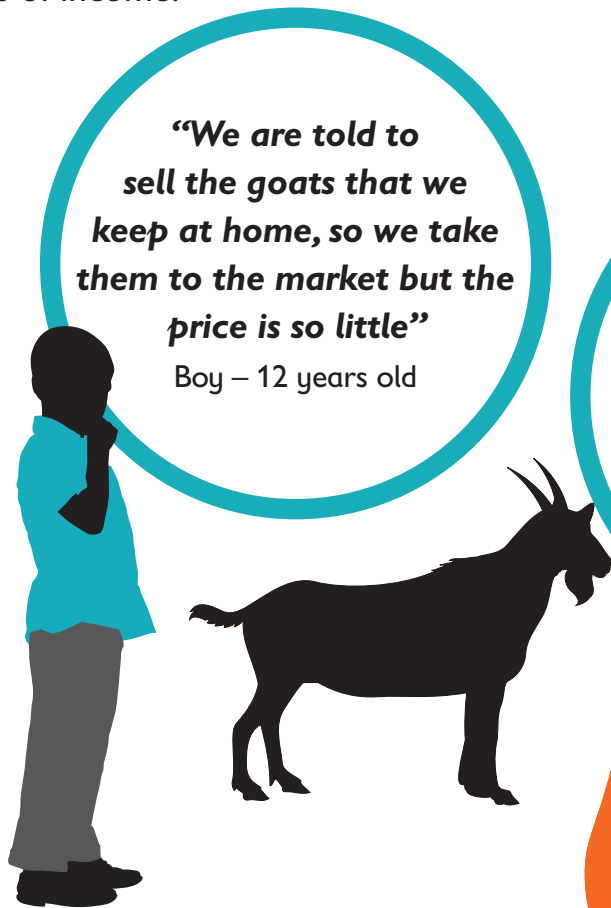
Girl – 14 years old

***“We have lost a lot of animals”***

Girl – 13 years old



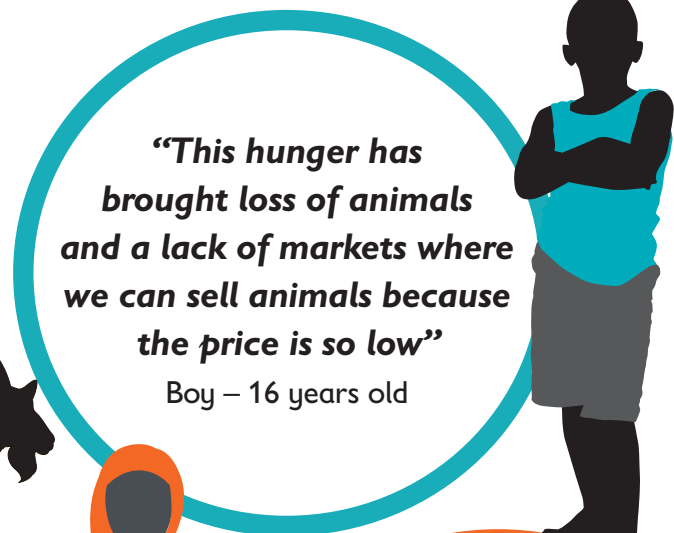
Boys and girls of all ages consulted discussed the loss of pasture and animals becoming weak from lack of food. They described how this can lead to the death of their animals, or have an impact on their pricing in the markets, because the animals are too small to fetch a high price, meaning a loss of income.



***“We are told to sell the goats that we keep at home, so we take them to the market but the price is so little”***

Boy – 12 years old

Due to the impact of hunger and COVID-19, some markets are no longer open and even in the markets that are running, the prices offered for animals are so low that owners prefer not to sell. Even if they do choose to sell, the return is so low that it cannot sustain them during periods of hunger. The children requested need extra support from humanitarian organizations like Save the Children.



***“This hunger has brought loss of animals and a lack of markets where we can sell animals because the price is so low”***

Boy – 16 years old

Parents are unable to buy food for their animals so they sell their assets to feed their families. Lack of animal feed was amongst the biggest concerns that the children had, particularly as it can lead to conflict as communities struggle to find pastures for their animals. This struggle can also lead to negative coping strategies such as theft and burglary. Girls mentioned that due to the lack of grazing land, all communities have fenced off their land to protect their animals from intruders and thieves.



***“This place has been affected much by lack of rain and hunger. There is no source of food, it has dispersed people also, even us now, we will be relocating anytime”***

Girl – 12 years old

Hunger has led to migration and the dispersal of families as people relocate to look for jobs and pasture for their animals. Most girls aged 13-17 expressed this as a concern because when families move their farms are left untended, making it difficult to cultivate the land when the season is due, either because they lack the necessary equipment or because the bushes have overgrown.

Hunger has also created community conflicts and disagreements, even among families. One of the ways many households cope with the lack of food is to visit relatives who are better off and can provide them with meals. It becomes complicated

when another set of relatives seeks the same help and families cannot stretch their budgets to help everyone, causing resentment among different branches of the family.



***“We may find nothing is left for us to eat at home, so we normally go and eat from neighbours and friends”***

Girl – 10 years old

***“Also hunger might lead to conflict within the neighbouring community because of minimal animal feeds available for livestock”***

Girl – 13 years old

## Effects of hunger on children’s right to education

***“We just drink water and go to sleep or go back to school when there is no food. What else can we do?”***


Boy – 13 years old



A lack of food has a dramatic effect on children’s education. It impairs their day-to-day learning, their development, and their achievement in school. Hungry children have lower grade scores and are more likely to repeat a grade, and some even drop out of school to search for wild fruits for their families, or because they are so hungry they lack the energy to continue learning. Meanwhile older children usually engage in some form of work to earn money to complement any income their parents’ provide. Younger children, aged 9-12 shared that children who do not have enough food to eat struggle at school, exhibit behavioural problems, and find it difficult to follow what is taught in class. They also spoke about the longer term impact of hunger on their ‘brains’ [i.e. their cognitive development].


Children in these communities have a nomadic lifestyle hence their families move from one place to another. This means that once the family migrates in search for pasture and water, the children have to leave their school and have to find a new school, but the move may mean that children drop out of school altogether.

School feeding is a huge factor in motivating children to go to school and therefore, in periods of hunger like these, they are forced to relocate to schools that provide food for students. When they break for lunch, most children do not usually return to school in the afternoon because they need to spend time looking for food or doing small jobs to earn money for food. For many children the food that they receive at school is the only food they eat all day.



***“Pupils living in poor communities are likely to have dropouts since they are involved in nomad life, moving from one place to another in search for pasture and water”***


Boy – 14 years old



***“Some days when we don’t have meals to eat in our homes we rely on the food in school. We don’t eat again that day, and for breakfast we have a cup of strong tea”***

Girl – Mandera,  
6 years old


Teachers have also left the teaching profession due to hunger, to search for better paid work to support their families. The few teachers that are determined to continue teaching are not able to do so regularly, because they are also very hungry and need to spend time finding other work to supplement their income. The lack of consistent teaching has an impact on the children’s motivation to attend school.



***“Missing meals and hunger affect children’s development and achievement in school. Children get lower grade scores and some repeat a grade and others drop out from our school.”***


Girl – 13 years old






**“We have a challenge with teachers, we don’t have enough teachers that are teaching us, and also, we have a problem with food. At noon when we break for lunch, a lot of children do not get back to school for afternoon classes because of lack of food, some of them decide to miss classes and gather wild fruits due to lack of food at school and even at home”**

Boy – 14 years old




**“Hunger can cause children to be undisciplined in school, leading to suspension from school, because they don’t want to do what the teacher tells them”**

Boy – 12 years old



**“We need school fees because don’t have money to pay. Hunger is also giving us difficult time, including our teachers”**

Girl – 9 years old



**“These days there is a lot of hunger because of no rain, which causes a lot of problems. Among them are a lack of teachers because our parents pay our fees but because of drought they can’t afford to pay a Kenyan sum of three hundred shillings every end month, so we leave school”**

Girl – 11 years old

**“We are making mats to survive and some of the people are burning charcoal also”**

Girl – 14 years old

Children as young as 9 years old have been forced to increase the amount of harmful work they do – such as burning wood by the roadside to create charcoal for selling. This has a negative effect on the environment, and also puts the children at severe risk of illness from burns and inhaling the fumes. However they have to engage in such work so that they can make some money to help to feed their family.

Children aged 13-17, mentioned that their friends and neighbours, who are also young girls, have been married due to the effects of hunger, both so that they are no longer a burden to the family and so that the dowry money can be used to feed the rest of the family.

Lack of food means that one or both parents move away with their animals to

look for grazing pasture. This creates a vacuum as children remain home with their mothers or elder siblings, or sometimes alone with no one left to take care of them. This can lead to the complete breakup of the home, or children left alone without the care of a parent may resort to negative coping mechanisms such as stealing in order to survive.

***“The main cause of hunger is poverty in our society, many people are unable to buy food for their families, thus school going girls like us are married at a young age”***

Ifrah, Girl – 13 years old

***“When the relatives or any other close person asks you to fetch water for them, you refuse. A mother might tell you to go for the palm fruits but you definitely refuse because the sun also is hot and when its hotness reduces, you forget about going for the palm fruit”***

Boy – 13 years old

***“As we are speaking our parents put a lot of effort into our animals rather than us, so we miss out on parent’s love and care. Some who are sitting here now spend more time with their elder brothers and sisters [than their parents]”***

Boy – 12 years old



In Garissa, it was common for most of the children, especially girls, to mention separation of families or even divorce. If a father is unable to provide for their family, as the breadwinner of the home, some have chosen to escape this responsibility by getting divorced so that they can live alone and focus on finding enough food for just themselves. This leaves children alone in the care of their mothers who struggle to meet all their needs, as they will also often have fewer resources. To support their mothers,

children are either forced to leave school to take care of their younger siblings, or they miss out on periods of school to help at home – impacting their school attendance. This is particularly common among girls if they are older in the family.

Sometimes the situation is just too overwhelming and children shared that people in their communities have committed suicide due to the stress of failing to provide for their families.

# Summary of effects of hunger on children, their families and their communities

Impacts on children	Impact on families	Impact on community
<p>Children mentioned missing meals which impairs children's development and achievement in school resulting in lower grade scores and a higher likelihood of repeating a grade or dropping out of school</p> <p>Children get malnutrition and other opportunistic diseases</p> <p>Children cognitive understanding deteriorates making it harder for them to understand what is being taught in class</p> <p>Lack of money for fees affects their learning</p> <p>Lack of money to buy school uniforms</p> <p>Dropping out of school due to nomadic way of life, moving from one place to another in search for pasture and water</p> <p>Behavioural changes and lack of discipline among children, leading to suspension from school</p> <p>High death rate in children</p> <p>Children engage harmful work to support the family income, as a result of the hunger they are facing at their households</p>	<p>Family separation within the communities is high because there are few employment opportunities, meaning that families cannot afford to meet their basic needs</p> <p>Created a vacuum of parenthood between children and their parents who have left with the remaining animals in search of pasture. Children are left feeling lonely in their homes</p> <p>Breakdown of marriages leaving children in the care of their mothers who often do not have sufficient resources to take care of them. This leads to children dropping out of school to support their mothers</p>	<p>Conflict with the neighbouring community because of shortages of food for animals</p> <p>Deaths in the community because of prolonged hunger during drought season</p> <p>The death of animals, which help support the family income</p> <p>Small scale farmers struggle to afford seeds and fertilizers</p> <p>Lack of pasture</p> <p>Lack of animal markets</p> <p>Theft and burglary within the community has increased</p> <p>People are unable to buy food for their families</p>

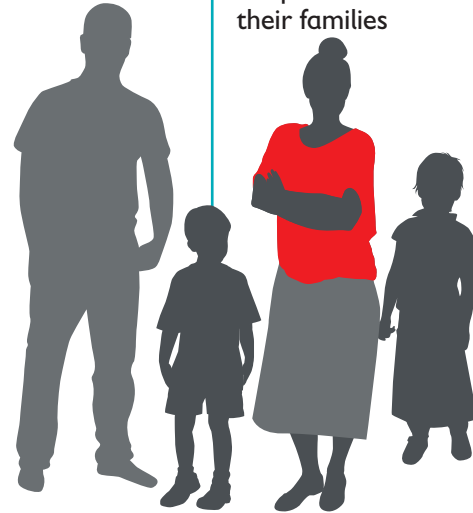


PHOTO: SAVE THE CHILDREN



## Coping Strategies of Children to Hunger and Climate Change

Coping strategy	Quotes from children
<b>We eat one meal in a day</b>	<p><b>“Somedays when we don’t have meals to eat in our homes we rely on the food at school. We won’t eat again that day and for breakfast the next day only have a cup of strong tea.”</b></p> <p>Girl – Mandera, 6 years old</p>
<b>We reduce the amount of food cooked</b>	<p><b>“The amount of food we eat is reduced, it is not the same as we used to cook when there is enough food. Also getting water is a problem.”</b></p> <p>Girl – 11 years old</p>
<b>We eat wild foods</b>	<p><b>“We have nothing to eat at home, so we have to rely on wild fruit for us to survive”</b></p> <p>Boy – 6 years old</p>
<b>We get credit from shops</b>	<p><b>“When our parents don’t have enough money to maintain our family we usually depend on taking credit from shops and then they clear later when they get money. We also sell livestock and clear debts during rainy season. But sometimes the shop owners refuse to give foods on credit leaving us hungry.”</b></p> <p>Boy – 16 years old</p>
<b>We share meals with friends and relatives</b>	<p><b>“We go and eat with friends and relatives when we don’t have enough meals in our homes. But sometimes this can cause disagreements with some relatives who are tired of getting visitors to come and eat food.”</b></p> <p>Boy – 15 years old</p> <p><b>“We may find nothing is left for us to eat at home, so we normally go and eat from neighbours and friends.”</b></p> <p>Girl – 10 years old</p>
<b>We rely on food provided at school</b>	<p><b>“Due to hunger in our community we mostly depend on feeding at school.”</b></p> <p>Girl – 12 years old</p>
<b>We eat dead animals</b>	<p><b>“If a goat dies from hunger we slaughter it and eat.”</b></p> <p>Boy – 16 years old</p>
<b>We drink water instead of eating</b>	<p><b>“We just drink water and go to sleep or go back to school when there is no food. What else can we do?”</b></p> <p>Boy – 13 years old</p>
<b>We work to earn money</b>	<p><b>“We are making mats to survive and some of the people are burning charcoal also.”</b></p> <p>Girl – 14 years old</p>

## Perception of children on Save the Children and wider humanitarian response


Children appreciated the support received from Save the Children and other humanitarian organizations. Among the most popular interventions is the unconditional cash transfers, which almost all the children mentioned as this helps their caregivers to not only buy food but also pay fees and acquire other basic necessities such as clothing. Food rations were of welcomed by children because food is given to them directly and they do not have to go to the market.

Older girls also mentioned the sanitary towels that they receive which help them to continue going to school during their periods. Many girls in Kenya struggle with feelings of shame and secrecy while they are menstruating, especially if they cannot afford sanitary towels and have to rely on

using rags. These rags can leak, causing them to feel shame. As a result lots of girls stop attending schools during their periods, preferring to remain at home unless they have sanitary pads.


Concerns were raised by older boys (aged 13-17) about how much support goes to women compared to men. They felt that much attention is given to women even though they are not the breadwinners.

Generally, children were happy with the support they had received, which improved their lives as their parents or caregivers were able to buy them food as well as other household basic needs. However, some of the children's families did not receive the cash support. This is because it was targeted to only those that met specific criteria, for example pregnant and breastfeeding women, or women who had a malnourished child, which was then explained to all the children.



***“This organization is supporting breastfeeding mothers by providing them with porridge. Men are not supported. We don’t have livestock that can produce milk to support these young children during hunger season and it is that porridge that we are provided by this organization that is supporting us. If they can introduce aid that will support men also, it will be better”***

Boy, 15 Turkana



***“They are supporting young children that is why we are happy about this organization. Save the Children supports us with food, and cash. We also have water in trucks during such seasons of drought which is being supported by county government and well-wishers”***

Girl 12, Mandera County

***“Humanitarian community is addressing the right problems because there is nothing more important than food and health and this is exactly what is being addressed by the wider humanitarian society”***

Girl – 16 years old

Apart from Save the Children's support, some families received support from the County governments, in the form of food distribution, water trucking and provision of animal feed. Some children also mentioned they received water trucking support as well as emergency food from COCOP<sup>5</sup> and Arda respectively (Community Based Organisations operating in Mandera).

The children appreciated the work of partners in addressing hunger and commended them for their quick response. Generally children were in agreement that the humanitarian community are addressing the problems, and show their concern for the community by prioritizing the needs and improving their food security, health, and water interventions. However they felt that a lot more needs to be done to ensure more communities are supported.

## Recommendations of children to tackle hunger

**1. "We want to be supported by assisting us with chickens and livestock because livestock is used to pay our school fees".**

Children asked that their families are supported to ensure their livestock do not die. They also asked for support for small business initiatives that households have at home e.g. small-scale farming, and poultry rearing, as another means of generating an income. Children said that this boost could improve their families' ability to get food.

**2. "We need to plant more trees"**

*Girl, 13 years old, Mandera*

Children asked to be supported to plant more trees because they understand that this would help to bring rain.

**3. Give us seeds and farm tools"**

Encourage and support agriculture during rainy season by providing seeds so that families will be able to plant enough food. Children also noted the need to be supported to purchase farm tools to help farming, for instance hoes and machetes; others requested help to purchase tractors. During the hunger season every coin goes to feeding their families, and some families

are forced to eat their seeds, leaving them with nothing to plant when the rainy season begins.

**4. "Government should provide school feeding in all schools"**

Almost all the children mentioned support for school feeding programmes, which would tackle hunger and motivate children to stay in school. To avoid any disruptions to children's learning as they move around, feeding programmes should be regular and in all schools.

**5. "Ask us what we need by visiting farms where we can be asked"**

*Boy, 16 years old*

There is a need for representation when decisions are being made. This was highlighted as the children mentioned they would like to be represented by children or adults from their own community.

**6. "Teach people how they can manage hunger"**

*Girl, 14 years old*

Children recommended increasing the community's knowledge of how to prepare for and manage periods of drought.. This is important so that communities can practice safe ways of managing the environment such as avoiding cutting down trees, or planting more trees.




## 7. “Give cash transfers to everyone”

Girl, 11 years old

Continue to provide cash transfers to all households, rather than a selection, because every home has been affected by hunger. Food and non-food items were suggested, especially for the elderly.

## 8. “Get jobs for youth and women so that they will stop depending on you”

Support economic independence by creating employment for young people and adults so that they can be self-dependent.



*“I believe that if we are provided with enough seedlings, we can cultivate and fight hunger. You cannot depend on somebody every day, we need to depend on ourselves”*

Boy – 17 years old

*“Let them give us seeds and crops that mature in a short time and don’t need a lot of rainfall”*

Girl – 17 years old

## 9. “We want to be supported with school fees and materials”

Children also mentioned that it is hard to pay school fees during the hunger period and would be happy to be supported with fees and other school materials, such as school uniform.

## 10. “We want access to water in order to ensure that families and their animals survive during this drought”

There are usually challenges getting water during the drought and families need support to get access to clean water. Children mentioned options such as drilling more boreholes, water trucking, and the repair of water points.

## How children want to be involved in decision making around humanitarian response

### 1. “We girls should be empowered during school clubs days so that our opinions can be considered”.

Many children (mostly older girls) expressed the need to be consulted when matters concerning them are discussed. This would enable them to actively participate while also building a foundation for them to play an important role in their society and become better leaders in the future. In schools, for example a student government could act as a link between the school teaching staff and the pupils, and give children a chance to play a role in decision making.

*“Involve boys and girls in matters decision making on the table where those decisions are reached creating such a forum and platform will strengthen the ability of boys and girls making an informed decision.”*

Girl, 16 years old

2. Children felt that training and support to build their confidence in speaking up would help them participate in decisions that affect them. Over half of the children mentioned that some of them are unable to voice their opinions because they feel their views are not important.

### 3. “Formation of girls youth groups for decision making in our community”

Girl, Mandera, 13 years old

4. “We Fincharo boys need to form our football club, and then, as a club, be empowered to be included in all community dialogues and make sure our voices are heard” Boy, 16 years old

**5. “We need to create a boys club at school and youth group so that we can speak and participate in the community’s dialogues and be empowered to know our rights”**

*Boy, 15 years old*

**6. “We can raise awareness on the effects of the drought through poems and songs and support the airing of the drought through television and radios, by speaking on these channels”**

*Girl, 16 years old*

## Recommendations for humanitarian actors, from children:

### Health and Nutrition and WASH

- Distribute enough food to all households in every village during drought season
- Provide clean water to every household by drilling boreholes and building dams in order to sustain families and communities in time of drought
- Distribute products [hygiene kits] to girls to provide them with sanitary products during their periods

### Livelihoods

- Help communities with cash [transfers] for all vulnerable households, so they can afford to meet their basic daily needs i.e. food, shelter and water
- Support employment for young people so that they can be more economically independent
- Provide livestock with feed, and enough water and pasture during the drought season so that communities can continue their normal activities
- Support small-scale farming as a way to eradicate poverty and tackle hunger
- Vaccinate animals so that they survive longer

- Carry out animal offtake during drought season. [The government livestock offtake programme seeks to cushion pastoralists against a severe drought ravaging pastoralist areas. The government partners with the Kenya Meat Commission to buy their animals during drought so that instead of losing their animals, they sell them and get an income from them]
- Find ways to tackle the desert locust swarms to prevent the destruction of crops.

### Education

- Ensure schools receive sufficient supplies of food and safe water during drought periods; as school feeding programmes are much needed
- Construct more classrooms for children, so that all children can attend school

### Accountability to children & communities

- Travel to the places children are to seek their input in the humanitarian response
- Support children to set up clubs to represent themselves to humanitarian agencies and input into their decision-making
- Provide training and places for children on how to speak up and share their inputs with humanitarian agencies

### Campaigning

- Form a global partnership between humanitarian agencies to promote activities that tackle global hunger
- Create mass movements of children and communities and humanitarian programmes that are aimed at eradicating poverty globally

## Climate Change

- Conduct global awareness campaigns on the impact of climate change, enhancing activities such as re-forestation by planting more trees and supporting communities to plant trees

## Additional recommendations from Save the Children's technical specialists, in response to children's input:

### Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

- Support water projects, including rehabilitation of water points, and water trucking to communities as an emergency intervention

### Child Protection

- Support programmes aimed at eliminating child marriage
- Conduct an assessment on child labour and its impact on girls and boys
- Raise awareness with parents and communities on child protection issues such as child marriage, child labour, positive parenting, as well as Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF)
- Strengthen community based child protection mechanisms to address early marriage and child labour at village level

### Education

- Address the fluctuation of school attendance and dropout rates for girls and boys
- Work with the government and communities to provide schools with water, and support the school feeding programme

- Improve the efficiency of social protection mechanisms (safety nets) to support families at risk (e.g. support such as school fees to ensure school attendance)

### Accountability to children & communities

- Organize consultations or discussions with children more frequently to get their views to inform programming

### Livelihoods

- Ensure gender sensitive programming; and seek to find ways to provide support to men as well as women; and communicate the reasoning behind the focus on support to women

### What will Save the Children in Kenya do next?

- Share the findings of this consultation back with the children who participated, and agree an action plan
- Disseminate the findings of this consultation widely and use children's inputs to influence our strategy, planning and humanitarian decision-making
- Share findings at the global level and connect with colleagues working on climate change, education and other campaigns
- Share children's recommendations with humanitarian colleagues via humanitarian clusters and seek to influence programmes



# REPORT ON CHILDREN'S CONSULTATION ON HUNGER **KENYA**



Save the Children

*“Consult us  
on what  
concerns us”*



For more support, please contact the Global Accountability to Children & Communities Task Team, via the co-Chairs **Cat** ([Cat.Carter@savethechildren.org](mailto:Cat.Carter@savethechildren.org)) & **Eline** ([Eline.Severijnen@savethechildren.org](mailto:Eline.Severijnen@savethechildren.org))

[www.savethechildren.net](http://www.savethechildren.net)