

UN Humanitarian Coordinator warns of silent crisis in Mandera and reaffirms commitment to work with County Authorities

Nairobi, 5 May 2014 -- The United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in Kenya, Mr. Kanyankore Marcel Rudasingwa, has warned that Mandera County in north-eastern Kenya is undergoing a ‘silent humanitarian crisis’. One of the poorest regions in northern Kenya, Mandera has suffered decades of marginalization and underdevelopment, resulting in poor transport and communication infrastructure, and extremely low access to basic services such as water, health care, education and markets.

Speaking in Mandera town, Mr. Rudasingwa said that the humanitarian community remains committed to working with the county governments in northern Kenya in order to improve lives and lessen human suffering. However, security constraints must be addressed.

“International humanitarian and development organisations have stayed away from Mandera County due to heightened insecurity. The safety of our workers must be guaranteed,” he said. The eastern region of the county bordering Somalia, where Mandera town is located, is particularly prone to bouts of sporadic clan and terrorist-led attacks, which have undermined economic progress and investment in the area.



The Humanitarian Coordinator was visiting together with ECHO, OCHA, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNDSS, ACTED and INSO.

Ms. Isabelle D’Hautd, representing the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO), noted that the central and county governments and development partners must prioritize investments in building the infrastructure in the north of Kenya. “While emergency and life-saving assistance must be dispensed today, we must focus on building a stronger future through actions aimed at preparing communities for disasters and strengthening their resilience.”

The County Government of Mandera is working closely with partners to solve some immediate problems such as the erratic water supply. The County Governor, H.E. Ali Ibrahim Roba, stated: “The lack of water is a potential trigger for conflict, and increasing access to water is an urgent priority.” He also noted that Mandera is the first county to establish security as a ‘shared’ function with the County Commissioner and County Police Commander, and has taken steps to professionalize the Kenya Police Reservists (KPR) in collaboration with the National Police Service.

The mission, the first high-level visit to Mandera in at least two years, reiterated the need to coordinate aid work effectively. “At a time when resources are increasingly becoming scarce, we must coordinate efforts in order to attain best results possible,” said Mr. Rudasingwa.

Background

Mandera County in north-eastern Kenya continues to post alarming humanitarian indicators amid heightened insecurity and low presence of humanitarian and development organisations. 3,795 women out of 100,000 die while giving birth – compared to a national average of 360. The rates of malnutrition are beyond the emergency level of 15 per cent year-round; and 90 per cent of the population is illiterate, with secondary school enrolment falling far behind the national average.

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