



Save the Children

MITIGATING ETHIOPIA'S DROUGHT IMPACTS ON CHILDREN THROUGH EDUCATION



THE IMPACT OF ETHIOPIA'S DROUGHT ON CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

A snapshot of the current situation

- Nearly **6 million school children's education could be affected** by Ethiopia's worst drought in 50 years.¹
- The **root cause of school dropout is food and water scarcity**. If food and water is restored to schools, children will return.
- **20 NGOs are ready to scale up** and support the Government of Ethiopia's education in emergency response but, to date, dedicated funding from Ethiopia's Humanitarian Response Fund has not been allocated to NGO education partners.

Introduction

The key impacts of Ethiopia's worst drought – food and water scarcity, devastation of livelihoods, forced migration and increased child malnutrition – are **having significant knock-on effects for children's education**, just at a time when Ethiopia has made significant strides in improving children's access to a quality and inclusive education.

Across the drought affected areas, children are no longer attending school on a regular basis, if not dropping out altogether, as a consequence of the drought. While children are out of school for a myriad of reasons, two common factors – **a chronic lack of food and water – are pushing children away from their classrooms and placing their protection and development at risk.**

In times of emergencies, particularly during drought, schools can provide a platform for an integrated emergency response for children. When children are in school, they can access food, safe water, sanitation, nutrition and psychosocial support while at the same time be protected and continue to learn and develop.

In the long term, if children continue to access an education during times of drought, particularly one that incorporates disaster preparedness and adaptation, their chances of reaching their potential and their capacity to cope and adapt when faced with future

droughts increases. This will have positive impacts for their communities and Ethiopia's overall social and economic prospects.

Yet the power of schools to sustain and protect Ethiopia's children during the current drought crisis and the role it can play in mitigating the impact of cyclical droughts on children's long-term development remains to be realised.

Ethiopia's worst drought in 50 years

More than 80% of Ethiopia's population depend on rain-fed agriculture for food and income. Crop failures and heavy livestock losses caused by the chronic lack of water has placed considerable strain on families' food baskets and incomes. It is estimated that 10.2 million people, including 6 million children, will require emergency food aid and 450,000 children will become severely malnourished in 2016 as a result of the drought. There is a high likelihood that this number will increase significantly and child malnutrition will spike if the key rains and harvests fail during the course of 2016 and WFP's food pipeline breaks, as anticipated, in June.

The scale of the out of school problem

Ethiopia's 2016 Humanitarian Requirements Document (HRD) estimates that 1.3 million children are currently unable to access quality education opportunities as a result of drought and that this number could rise to 2.5 million over the course of 2016. Considering an estimated 6 million schoolchildren are enrolled in 182 drought "hotspot" districts, the number of children whose education is affected due to drought is likely to be significantly higher. In our areas of operation, we are witnessing first-hand a steady decline in attendance rates, an increase in periodic absenteeism for both learners and teachers and large numbers of closed or partially functioning schools. Currently, over 9,000 primary schools in 6 regions are open less than full time.²

Why are children out of school?

Many schools have run out of water: at least 75% of all schools do not currently have water for children's safe drinking and sanitation. In the Afar region alone, over 750 schools with 100,000 students did not have access to safe water at school in April 2016. Many schools in drought-affected regions are closing without water - in one district of the Somali region, 10% of the schools are closed with nearly 19,000 students affected.

School feeding programmes have stopped: with chronic food shortages in drought-affected areas, schools are struggling to continue their school feeding programmes – a key government strategy to encourage children to attend school and support their learning. 65% of schools in Afar are no longer providing school feeding, affecting over 68,000 students.

Children have to help their families search for food and water, tend and care for drought-affected livestock or undertake income-generating activities to supplement their families' earnings. Many children are now going to school irregularly or dropping out altogether as a result.



The pressure on pastoralist children, especially girls, to help with livestock and collect water rather than go to school is acute. A recent assessment in Afar gives a snapshot of the possible scale of the situation for pastoralist girls - over 50% are absent in most schools with rates as high as 80% in some areas.³

Children and their families are migrating to different areas in search of food and water. Displaced children either do not return to school or are unable to re-enrol in the new areas they have moved to due to lack of services or classroom overcrowding. This is having a significant impact on pastoralist

children, who traditionally have limited access to education and require targeted support and specialised services.

Children are struggling to concentrate and learn due to hunger and dehydration: in a recent Save the Children assessment in the Tigray region, teachers reported that children had low attentiveness due to hunger and thirst with 37% of School Directors reporting students have been fainting in class due to a lack of water and food. Many are also tired from walking long distances to fetch water, sometimes at night.



Scabies – a contagious skin disease which is prevalent in times of drought – is becoming a serious health factor affecting children's learning: some students who have developed scabies no longer go to school because they feel ashamed or struggle to keep up as they cannot hold pens and pencils or write with infected hands.

Loss of assets and livelihoods has compromised the capacity of parents and caregivers to send their children to school as covering costs of uniforms, school materials and food is proving too much.

Teacher absenteeism: some teachers are also absent from class in order to search for food and water or have moved to different areas. Others are overstretched due to increased class numbers due to displacement.

Key impacts on children

Undernourished and thirsty children are missing out on the opportunity to access food and water from schools. Families are struggling to feed their children with many surviving on only one meal a day.⁴ For those that are receiving food aid, rations are often limited to grains and lack protein. As a result, many children are not accessing adequate or nutritious diets and 450,000 children are expected to be severely malnourished and 2.2 million children and pregnant and lactating mothers moderately malnourished this year.⁵ As families enter the traditional lean season and with food aid likely to run out in June (due to underfunding), the food situation for children will become acute. Providing children with access to food and water, as well as health and nutrition services, through a targeted school feeding and water response must be prioritised to meet the likely scale of need and ensure as many children are reached as possible.

The longer Ethiopia's children are out of school, the more likely it is they will never return. With less education, Ethiopia's children will earn less and are more likely to live in poverty. Not only will this have a significant impact on children futures, it could also put Ethiopia's development trajectory and aspiration to become a middle income country by 2025 at risk. In addition to the economic consequences, lack of education also has follow-on health and social impacts, particularly for out of school girls who become more vulnerable to early marriage and pregnancy.

In addition to losing out on learning, Ethiopia's out of school children are exposed to heightened risks to their protection. As demonstrated in a recent child protection rapid assessment, high percentages of people report children are now at increased risks of sexual violence, child labour, early marriage and other harmful practices as a result of the drought.⁶

Drought-affected children are also suffering psychologically and need targeted support. As we are seeing in our own programmes, many drought-affected children are exhibiting behavioral changes such as uncertainty, disturbance, hopelessness, fear and anxiety due to prevailing shortage of food,

water, lack of rest and insufficient sleep. In the child protection rapid assessment, 56% of respondents believe these changes are due to children's inability to go back to school. A key step to responding to these problems, as recommended in the assessment, is to ensure children return to school



Why invest in education during drought

As already emphasised throughout this paper, there are a **multitude of benefits that come from ensuring children continue to go to school during drought** – they can continue to progress, be protected and also access essential services while they are in school.

The current drought in Ethiopia is also unlikely to be a one off event. **Droughts have come before in Ethiopia and they will come again**, and probably be more regular, severe and prolonged due to the El Nino effect, and so it is highly likely Ethiopian children's education and development will be interrupted a number of times over the course of their lives.

By prioritising children's continued access to education during crisis however, **the impact of cyclical drought on children's learning and future development can be mitigated.**

Children who are taught environmental education, information on better and more sustainable farming practices and other relevant disaster risk reduction subjects will also be **better equipped to help their families and communities adapt in the face of drought.** If well educated, children can also pursue a wider range of livelihoods, diversifying their communities' income

generation activities and **reducing dependency on drought-affected sectors**, like agriculture.

Taking a long term view, ensuring children continue to go to school during times of drought will also protect Ethiopia's hard-won development gains. As a result of concerted efforts since 1996, the number of primary schools in Ethiopia has trebled and student numbers have grown from less than 3 million to over 18 million with national enrolment sitting at 87% before the drought.

Ensuring children have consistent access to a quality education will also have a positive impact on Ethiopia's economic prospects in years to come. **The more education a child receives, the more they will earn and contribute to the economy** – in fact, some economists estimate that for every additional year of schooling a child receives, their future income is boosted by 10% and their country's GDP increases by 18%.⁷

Putting schools at the centre of a humanitarian response for Ethiopia's children – it's working



With Save the Children's support, drought-affected children in Somali, Afar and Amhara regions are currently accessing a range of essential services while they are at school.

As a result of our multi-sector response targeting over 200 schools, 18,000 children are fed every school day with nutrition-enriched porridge and, as a result of targeted school water trucking, pipeline extensions and water tank installations, over 100,000 children have access to safe water and sanitation facilities. Save the Children health teams regularly visit school communities following referrals of malnourished children, whilst also training

teachers on how to identify malnourishment, raising awareness of better hygiene practices, and monitoring outbreaks of key communicable diseases, such as scabies and measles.

In addition to health and nutrition services, children – and their teachers – are also receiving psychosocial support when they are at school to help them better cope with their current situation. Child protection student clubs, case workers and referral mechanisms to child protection services are also being established within these schools – important mechanisms for children at risk of early marriage, exploitation and abuse.

Beyond the school gates, children's families, younger siblings and communities are also being supported through assistance with under-5 nutrition support, livestock veterinary treatments, cash transfers and borehole creation or maintenance.

We are already seeing the benefits of prioritising a school feeding response in Afar – **attendance rates have increased in all targeted schools and almost doubled in some schools**; whereas, there has been little increase in student attendance at schools that are not receiving school feeding support.

The education response to date

While Ethiopia's 2016 humanitarian response plan does include specific targets for school feeding and water provision, these are conservative estimates and, even if fully funded, will only reach a small proportion of drought-affected schools and students.

As the number of affected schoolchildren is likely to be significantly higher than current estimates, there remains an urgent need to revise the current humanitarian response plan as it relates to education and increase beneficiary targets and funding asks.

When it comes to school feeding, the Government of Ethiopia has recently committed over US\$10 million to school feeding in drought-affected areas to ensure 2.1 million children's education can continue, which is a significant and welcome development. It is crucial that this announcement is translated into action and

quickly and effectively implemented so that children can benefit and return to school as soon as possible.

When it comes to water in schools, with 75% of schools without water in drought-affected areas, a much more comprehensive school water plan than is currently provided in the HRD is required. In particular, school water trucking and specific interventions for remote and inaccessible schools (such as donkey transport) will need to be prioritised and funded.

It will be equally important to ensure that children have access to quality and relevant learning opportunities, and not just food, water and health and nutrition services, when they are at school. A comprehensive and ambitious quality education response plan, in line with Ethiopia's Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies,⁸ must also be developed.

The funding picture

On paper, education is the best funded sector in the Ethiopia response with 94% of funds requested covered. While this appears to be positive, if not record, result at first glance – as on average education sector funding is only 40% covered under humanitarian appeals⁹ – it is important to emphasise that the total funding ask for education under Ethiopia's humanitarian appeal (US\$16.7 million) is very small.

The bulk of funding that has been committed to education is not “new” money and has not

come from international donors. Rather, the Government of Ethiopia, which is placing a high priority on the continuation of Ethiopian children's education during the drought crisis, has provided this funding to the appeal through a reallocation of education money from its development budget.

To date, no additional, “un-earmarked” funding from Ethiopia's Humanitarian Fund¹⁰ has been allocated specifically to education projects as it has not be prioritised as “lifesaving” or “critically enabling” sector despite its power to protect children in times of crisis and ensure they can access essential services. 20 NGOs are ready to implement or scale up their education response in Ethiopia but their ability to do so is severely hampered without a funding allocation from the EHF.

Recently, education was recognised as an urgent priority for donor funding in the Government's Prioritisation Statement and the current funding ask for education was doubled to US\$33.4 million.¹¹ This is a very positive step towards recognising the important role education can play in the drought response. Substantially more money will be required to meet the education needs of up to 6 million drought-affected children however and scale up the level of EiE response required. It will therefore be important to revisit and revise this figure again during the mid-year review of the HRD in late June and before the start of the new school year in September.

KEY ACTION REQUIRED

The time is now to recognise education has an instrumental role to play in helping Ethiopia's children to survive and progress during the current drought and future droughts.

With Ethiopia's traditional hunger season due to start in May and new school year in September 2016, donors and humanitarian response partners must:

Donors

- Recognise schools are an effective platform from which to holistically meet children's humanitarian needs and that scaling up the education response in Ethiopia is key to ensuring drought-affected children not only survive but continue to progress.
- Encourage OCHA Ethiopia and humanitarian partners to take a multi-sectoral approach to meeting the needs of drought-affected children, which has schools at its centre.
- Earmark funding committed to Ethiopia's humanitarian appeal for education and specify that a proportion of the money it commits to the food, water and nutrition sectors must also go to schools-based programming, where appropriate.

Humanitarian response actors

- Recognise education as a key, if not critically enabling, component of an integrated approach to sustaining and protecting Ethiopia's children during the current drought crisis.
- Support a scaling up of the education sector response by working with the Government of Ethiopia to ensure the HRD reflects the true scale of education need, describes the level of response required and requests enough funding to ensure a much greater proportion of drought-affected school children are supported to return to school, receive a quality education and access key services.
- Ensure education is prioritised in EHF allocations, either through dedicated allocations to the education sector or by specifying EHF applications that take a multi-sector approach and incorporates education or schools will be prioritised in funding allocation decisions.
- When it comes to food and water response programming and decision-making, sector working groups and clusters recognise that providing food and water through schools will enable partners to reach a critical mass of

children while also supporting them to continue their learning and development.

- Commit to undertake more regular assessments to ensure the impact of the drought on children's education is better understood, particularly in respect to pastoralist children and girls, and to enable the development of targeted responses to ensure their rapid return to learning.
- Introduce systems to monitor food and water levels in schools and track student attendance to enable a more timely and targeted response and ensure schools stay open and children continue to learn.
- Plan for increased student population in areas where people are likely to migrate by ensuring more classrooms and teachers are in place. Coordinate with partners to ensure that semi-permanent classrooms are built to accommodate larger student enrolment in certain areas.
- Incentivise the households of vulnerable children to support their children's continued education by providing them with targeted and relevant assistance, including food and livelihoods support.
- Provide incentives, additional support and training to drought-affected teachers so they stay in their posts and continue to teach and support children's learning and wellbeing.
- Before the start of the next school year, roll out 'back to school' campaigns to ensure children and their families know classes have resumed, what level of support they will receive if they return to school and why it is important for children to keep going to school.

ENDNOTES

¹ According to Ethiopia's Education Management Information System (EMIS), 5.3 million children are enrolled in school in 182 priority 1 hotspot districts. However, out of the 12,990 schools in areas, over 2,000 schools have no enrolment data. Consequently, the Education Cluster estimates true enrolment figure could be up towards 6 million children in grade 1-8.

² Ethiopia Education Cluster's Humanitarian Situation and Sector Priorities document, May 2016.

³ Save the Children, *The Impact of Drought on the PAGES Implementing Schools of Afar National Regional State*, December 2015.

⁴ WFP, *WFP Ethiopia Drought Emergency Household Food Security Bulletin*, February 2016.

⁵ Government of Ethiopia/OCHA, *Ethiopia: Drought Response, Situation Report No. 1*, 4 April 2016.

⁶ UNICEF, *Ethiopia: El Nino Driven Drought Child Protection Rapid Assessment (CPRA): Summary of Findings from Dec 2015*.

⁷ Save the Children, *What Do Children Want in Times of Emergency and Crisis: They Want an Education*, July 2015, p.13.

⁸ See

http://toolkit.ineesite.org/toolkit/INEEcms/uploads/1154/Ethiopia_MS_for_Education_v1.0_LowRes.pdf

⁹ See

<http://educationcluster.net/?get=001687%202014/06/Education-Cannot-Wait-2013-Analysis.pdf>

¹⁰ Formally known as Ethiopia's Humanitarian Response Fund or HRF.

¹¹ See

<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/node/125414>