Drought Resilience in Northern Kenya

Strengthening drought resilience and food security in Northern Kenya through the provision of climate-adapted infrastructure

At a Glance

The Drought Resilience Programme in Northern Kenya (DRPNK) aims to strengthen the climate change adaptation capacity and drought resilience of pastoral and agro-pastoral production systems and livelihoods in a sustainable manner by expanding the necessary infrastructure. This shall contribute to increased food security and drought resilience of the target population in selected areas of Turkana and Marsabit.

Project name	**Drought Resilience in Northern Kenya (DRPNK)**
Commissioned by	**German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)**
Implemented by	**KfW Development Bank**
Project region	**Kenya**
Lead executing agencies	**National Treasury and State Department for Economic Planning; Ministry of Water, Sanitation and Irrigation; Governments of Turkana and Marsabit**
Implementation period	**2018–2027**
Funding	**EUR 13 million grant (IGAD) + EUR 8 million loan (German FC)**

Challenges and Opportunities

Although agriculture plays a critical role in Kenya's economy, large parts of the country (80%) are characterised by arid or semi-arid conditions, where agricultural production potential is limited.

The pastoral and agro-pastoral populations in these areas account for about 30% of Kenya's total population and are affected by a high level of poverty. More frequent droughts at shorter intervals, as a likely consequence of climate change, have devastating effects on the production potential, income, willingness to invest and – as a consequence – the food security of this population. In addition, the lack of water supply and the carrying capacity of rangelands are key development constraints.

This situation is particularly serious in the arid regions of Northern Kenya. More than 90% of the population in the two counties of Turkana (1,050,000 people) and Marsabit (300,000 people) live below the national poverty line. They are also the two counties ranked lowest nationwide in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In addition to low production potential with high production risks, poor access to transport and marketing infrastructure and to public and private services are responsible for the precarious situation of the counties' populations.

Due to the negative impact of climate factors, population growth and resource degradation, water availability is under increasing pressure: the infrastructure for supplying water to humans and livestock is underdeveloped. Available water resources cannot meet the demand.

Water from rainfall and occasional floods often infiltrates the soil or drains e.g. into Lake Turkana. Recurrent droughts have reduced the quantity and quality of the vegetation, thus reducing the carrying capacity of the grasslands. Pastoralists must migrate over longer distances with their animals. Traditional migration corridors which often stretch across borders should normally ensure the vital access to water and pasture for their livestock, but now increasingly give rise to conflicts. Lack of, or poorly maintained, rural roads and inadequately equipped markets increase costs and reduce the ability of pastoralists to respond to external factors.

Highlighted project regions, Turkana and Marsabit. Source: KfW

Project Design and Approach

The project aims to strengthen the drought resilience and climate change adaptation capacity of pastoral and agro-pastoral production systems and livelihoods in a sustainable manner by expanding appropriate infrastructure, thereby increasing the food security of the target group. The programme builds on a catalogue of pre-identified investment options, e.g.: water harvesting and storage, water supply and sanitation, irrigation, animal health, rangelands and fodder production, livestock marketing and other marketing facilities and rural roads.

Site review and involvement of the Bori community for water storage project in the Moya-le Cluster, Marsabit. Source: Government of Marsabit; GOPA

As an “open programme”, the counties and communities will select their preferred investments from these “eligible measures” during programme implementation. Four implementation cycles are planned. For the identification and selection of the investment options, a participatory approach is being applied. As a principle, investments shall be included in the counties’ integrated development plans (CIDPs) and comply with relevant local, national and regional strategies, programmes and sector principles.

Project Aims

- Access to water for humans and livestock is improved
- Livestock mortality is reduced
- Access to market infrastructure is improved
- Rural transportation is improved
- Fodder and crop basis is improved

Underground water tank to extract surface water during the rainy season at Kubi Adhi. Source: GOPA

Implementation and Outlook

The project is being implemented in the neighbouring counties of Turkana (Kakuma, Kalokol, Lodwar, Loima) and Marsabit (Moyale, North Horr, Loiyangalani, Laisamis, Saku). With the establishment of Annual Investment Plan I+II of the project, 46 and 35 activities have been identified in Marsabit and Turkana, respectively. The individual measures are selected within these Annual Investment Plans in cooperation with the counties.

Efficiency is ensured due to an innovative, participatory implementation model in combination with capacity building efforts and a geographical focus on selected clusters. In addition, the involvement of the target group in the selection process and, thus, the prioritisation of investments strengthens ownership and creates incentives for their long-term maintenance. The implementation of first activities began in January 2025.

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