

KENYA Food Security Emergency

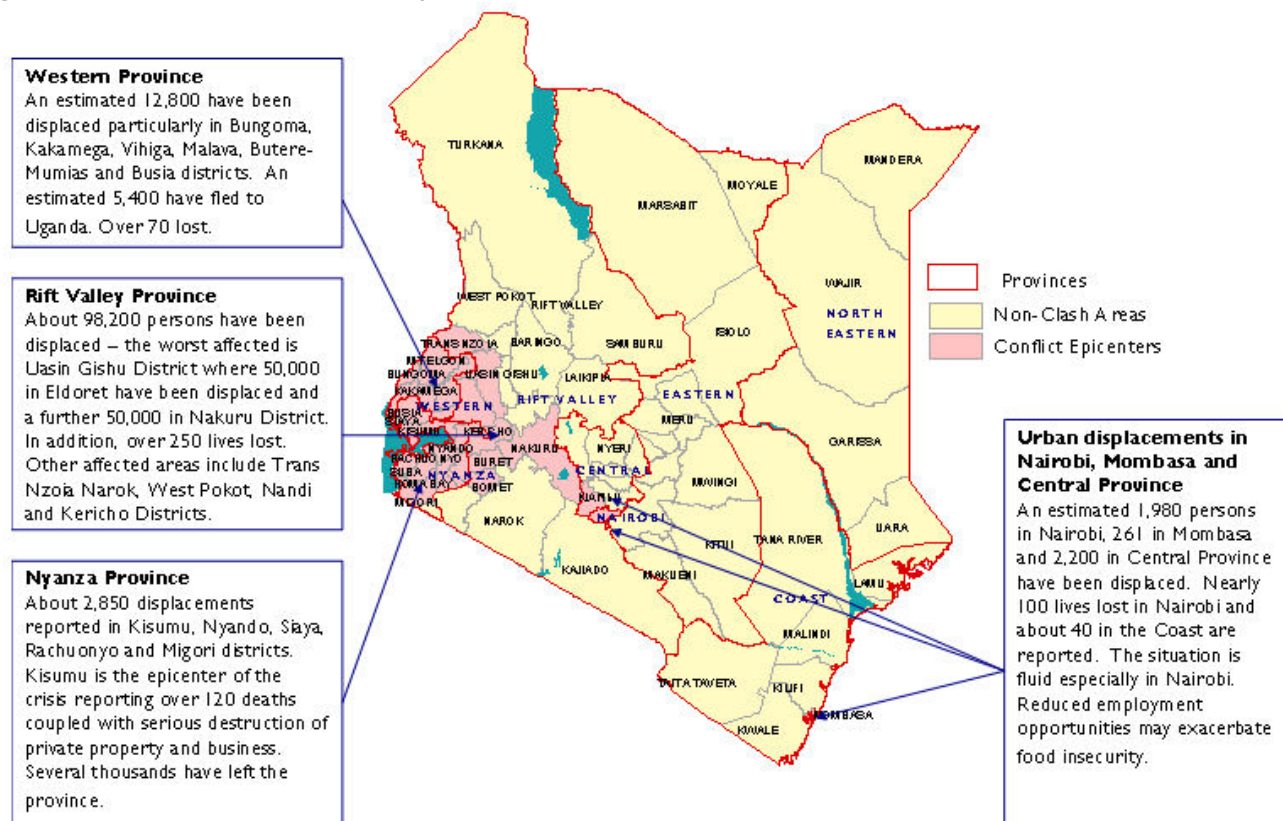
January 15, 2008

Post-election conflict causes extreme food insecurity in rural areas, urban centers

Post-election violence since December 27, 2007 has precipitated a humanitarian crisis, resulting in a food security emergency for normally food secure populations in the Rift Valley, Western, Nyanza and Nairobi provinces as well as among the urban poor. The Government of Kenya (GoK) estimates that 257,000 people – mostly pro-government supporters – have been displaced from their homes in the opposition’s stronghold areas. Of these, about 118,000 are taking shelter in churches, schools, prisons and police stations. The remainder, especially those from Rift Valley Province, has integrated with family in Central Province and other areas. An estimated 5,400 people from western Kenya have also fled to Uganda. Most of the displaced are fleeing Kenya’s breadbasket and urban slums, and have little or no means to sustain their livelihoods, and there is significant concern about the capacities of host families to support the food security of those who are displaced in the medium and long term.

The food security impacts of the political crisis have reverberated across the country (Figure 1). Nearly 20 percent (300,000 MT) of the maize crop in the country’s unimodal, long-rains (mid-March through August) dependent grain basket had not been harvested at the onset of the crisis, and some of this maize is likely to be lost after households fled their farms. The crisis has also forestalled the National Cereals and Produce Board’s (NCPB) cereals purchases, and grain harvested before the crisis may degrade in storage at the household level, as most input stores that supply storage chemicals are not

Figure 1. Conflict-affected areas of Kenya



Source: GoK, KRC, and the UN; Graphic: FEWS NET Kenya

The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) issues periodic emergency alerts when a significant food security crisis is occurring, where portions of the population are now, or will soon become, extremely food insecure and face imminent famine. Decision makers should give the highest priority to responding to the situations highlighted by this Emergency alert. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

functioning. Should the stores fail to re-open within the next three months, a significant portion of the already-harvested crops could be lost, eroding part of the current national surplus and likely precipitating price increases. Such price increases would negatively impact consumers throughout the country, for whom maize from the Rift Valley highlands is a major food source, especially after the failure of the short-rains crop in the lowlands of Eastern Province, an alternative supply of maize during this period.

Substantial output losses are also being reported in crisis-affected areas, as perishables (milk and vegetables) begin to rot because of the closure of key markets. Shortages of gasoline and the disruption of key institutions and services (such as the NPCB, milk delivery depots, grain milling and veterinary services) have paralyzed many other income-earning opportunities, including agricultural production, the main driver of the rural economy. Even if the unrest ends soon, it is unlikely that the displaced will be able to resettle immediately as most of their homes have been destroyed and their productive assets lost. However, aggregate domestic supply of cereals will not likely be seriously affected if these institutions and services begin to function quickly.

Urban food insecurity has also increased in cities such as Kisumu, Mombasa and Nairobi. In Kisumu City, the epicenter of urban clashes, many businesses have been burnt down or looted, and the majority of the working population no longer has income-earning opportunities. Even after unrest ends, these populations will face a long recovery period, as reconstruction of businesses is likely to take a significant period of time.

An estimated 600 persons have died in the crisis, and hundreds more have been injured. Most of the deaths are reported in Nyanza, Rift Valley and Nairobi provinces. Some deaths have also been reported in the Western and Coast provinces. Food insecurity is likely to increase for the foreseeable future for households that experienced the death of a productive member.

The Kenya Red Cross has appealed for US \$15.4 million to address needs, including public health; water and sanitation; capacity building; security; food relief; non-food relief; and communication. The GoK has provided an estimated \$7.5 million to the on-going relief effort. The United States Government, DFID, the Australian Government and several other international donors have also made substantive contributions. The GoK is coordinating multi-agency sectoral working groups to intervene in health and nutrition; water and sanitation; agriculture and livestock; education; relief food; and peace-building.

While the GoK and aid agencies will likely avert a catastrophe in the short term, food insecurity will remain extremely high for households that have been displaced or lost their livelihoods until they resettle into normal productive activities. Food insecurity for farm and urban households outside crisis areas is also accentuated because prices of foodstuff and other commodities have increased dramatically. A political resolution is urgently required to ensure that the medium- and long-term food security of the displaced is speedily restored to its pre-election status.