

DROUGHT MONTHLY BULLETIN, AUGUST 2008

Samburu District

Warning Stages

SEASONAL CALENDAR

Drought period Continental rains (Plateau)	Long rains Short rains
(Jan-March) (June-end of August)	(Apr-end of May) (Oct- end of Dec.)

Livelihood Zone	Warning stage	Trend
Pastoral-all species	Alert	worsening
	Alert	Worsening
Agro pastoral	Alert	Improving
	Alert	Worsening
Formal Employment/ Casual labour/ Business	Alert	stable
	Alert	Stable

Situation Overview

- Average rainfall recorded was 18.7mm, a drop from last month's 32.3mm. Light erratic showers with poor temporal and spatial distribution were recorded in the upper parts of the plateau.
- The lowlands experienced hot, windy and dry weather conditions throughout the month, exacerbating the prevailing drought.
- Quality and quantity of natural vegetation improved substantially in the upper parts of the plateau that received rains, which triggered forage rejuvenation.
- Water sources in the lowlands continued drying up due to higher rates of evaporation and increased use. However, water sources in the plateau recharged following the light rains recorded.
- Distances to water points for both households and livestock increased. Average distance to water sources for households increased to 7.6 kms from last month's 4.7 kms, while average grazing distance to main sources of water increased to 13.5 kms from last month's 11.7 kms.

- Household members, particularly women and children, spent more time in search for water.
- Average grazing distance to main sources of water increase to 13.5 kms from last month's 11.7 kms.
- Acute water shortage was reported across the lowland areas including Lorruko, Kawop, Nachola Marti, Maskita, Lpus, Lerata and Kiltamany.
- Livestock body conditions ranged from good to fair across all species. However, cattle body conditions in Nyiro division ranged from fair to poor.
- Availability of milk at the household level in the lowlands declined, which was attributed to scarcity of forage and low birth rates in cattle. Milk production, however, improved in the upper parts of the plateau, where light rains improved quality and quantity of pasture.
- An outbreak of *peste des petits ruminants* (PPR) was reported in Sessia area of Lodung'okwe in Wamba division.
- The most common human diseases remained malaria and upper respiratory tract infections but at manageable levels.
- Nutrition status rates of children under five years improved compared to the previous month.
- Poor livestock prices were further compounded by rising prices of food and non-food commodities. This impacted negatively on the pastoralists' economy and food security.
- Prices of shoats dropped drastically compared to the month before.
- Cases of insecurity were reported in the western parts of the district, hampering access to pasture in the area.

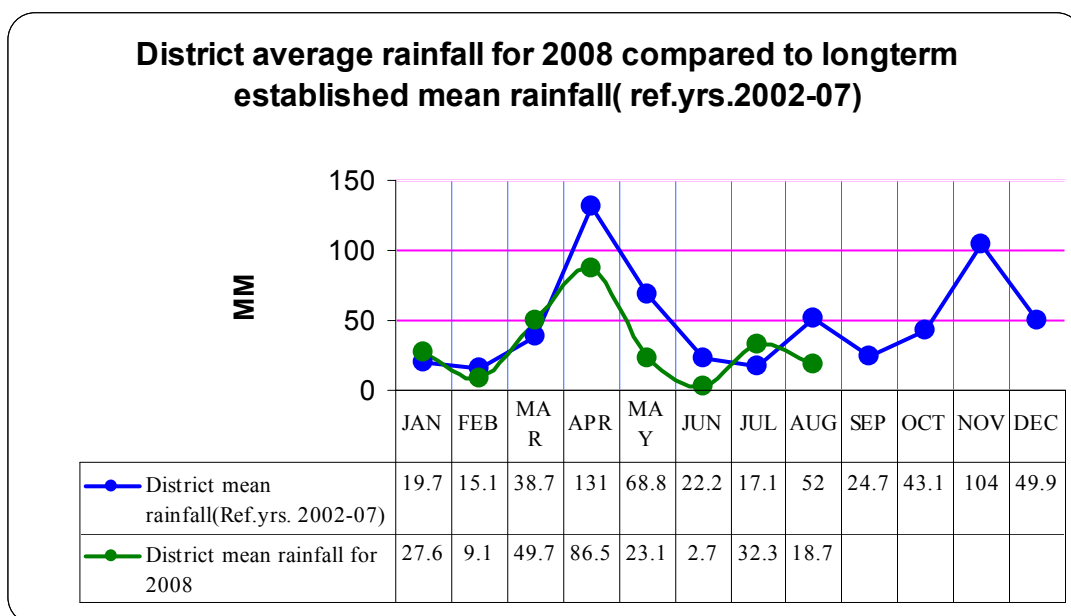
Current interventions

District-wide livestock disease surveillance and strict quarantine imposed by the Veterinary Department.

1.0 Environmental Indicators (Stability)

1.1 Rainfall

- Average rainfall recorded was 18.7mm, a drop from last month's 32.3mm. Light erratic showers with poor temporal and spatial distribution were recorded in the upper parts of the plateau.
- The lowlands experienced hot, windy and dry weather conditions throughout the reporting month exacerbating the already felt drought stress further amplified by insecurity.
- The long term established threshold during this period of the year is 52mm.



Source: District agriculture field weather stations

1.2 Forage (pasture and browse)

- Quality and quantity of natural vegetation improved substantially in the upper parts of the plateau that received rains, which triggered forage rejuvenation.
- Hot, windy and dry weather conditions persisted in the lowlands throughout the month, leading to scarcity and poor quality forage.
- Though pasture was available in the conflict corridors, access was hampered by insecurity.
- The availability of pasture and browse was lower than normal, apart from the upper parts of the plateau and insecure areas.

1.3 Water sources and availability

1.3.1 Use of water sources

- The main sources of water for both livestock and households changed slightly compared to the month before. They included traditional river wells, natural rivers, pans and dams, boreholes and shallow wells.
- Water sources in the lowlands continued to get depleted rapidly particularly in natural ponds, catchments pools, springs, boreholes and seasonal streams due to high rates of evaporation and increased use.
- Acute water shortage was reported across the lowlands(Lorruko, Kawop, Nachola Marti, Maskita, Lpus, Lerata, Kiltamany among others)
- Water sources in most parts of the plateau recharged following the rains received.

3.2 Average distance (Kms) to water sources

- Average distance to water sources for households increased to 7.6 kms from last month's 4.7 kms. This was attributed to drying up of the water sources available during the wet season in many lowland areas.

- Household members, particularly women and children, spent more time in search for water.
- Average grazing distance to main sources of water increased to 13.5 kms from last month's 11.7 kms.

1.4. Emerging issues

1.4.1 Insecurity/ conflict

- Cases of insecurity in the western parts of the plateau reduced substantially compared to last month.
- Fighting also subsided in Baragoi and Nyiro divisions following a combined police operation last month.

1.4.2 Migration

a) Livestock migration

- Scarcity of pasture caused livestock migration from the lowlands and the lower parts of the plateau towards Kirisia forest and the upper parts of the plateau.

b) Human migration/displacement

- Displaced families remained in parts of Baragoi and Nyiro despite cessation of tribal skirmishes which erupted in the area in the previous two months.
- Some displaced families remained in the western parts of the agro-pastoral livelihood zone, with concentrations mainly in the lower parts of the plateau and cluster villages in Lalmolog sub-location.
- The displacement deprived families of their main source of livelihood (subsistence farming), reducing a large number to pastoral destitutes.

1.5 Implications on food security

- The failure of two successive major rain seasons impacted adversely on household food security in the lowlands. However, higher than normal continental rains in the upper parts of the plateau impacted positively on household food security in the area.
- Insecurity continued to frustrate efforts to attain food security in the affected areas within the district.

2.0. Rural economy indicators

2.1 Livestock production

2.1.1 Livestock body conditions

- Livestock body conditions ranged from good to fair in most areas, apart from parts of Nyiro, where cattle body conditions were poor.
- Long trekking distances to water and pasture, coupled with susceptibility to diseases such as PPR, impacted negatively on the body conditions in the lowlands.
- Birth rate in cattle improved to 6.5 per cent from last month's 4.9.
- Compared to a normal year, livestock body conditions were below normal in the lowlands.

2.1.2 Livestock diseases

- Peste Des Petit Ruminants (**PPR**), which was first reported in the western parts of Baragoi division that border Turkana, engulfed the whole district despite spirited efforts by the veterinary department to contain the deadly viral disease.
- The disease is still concentrated in Sessia area of Lodung'okwe in Wamba division.
- The other diseases affecting livestock species include; ECF, naplasmosis, and trypanosopmiasis in cattle, worm infestation, eterotoxaemia and PPR in sheep and PPR, diarrhoea, and CCPP in goats.

2.2 Implications on food security

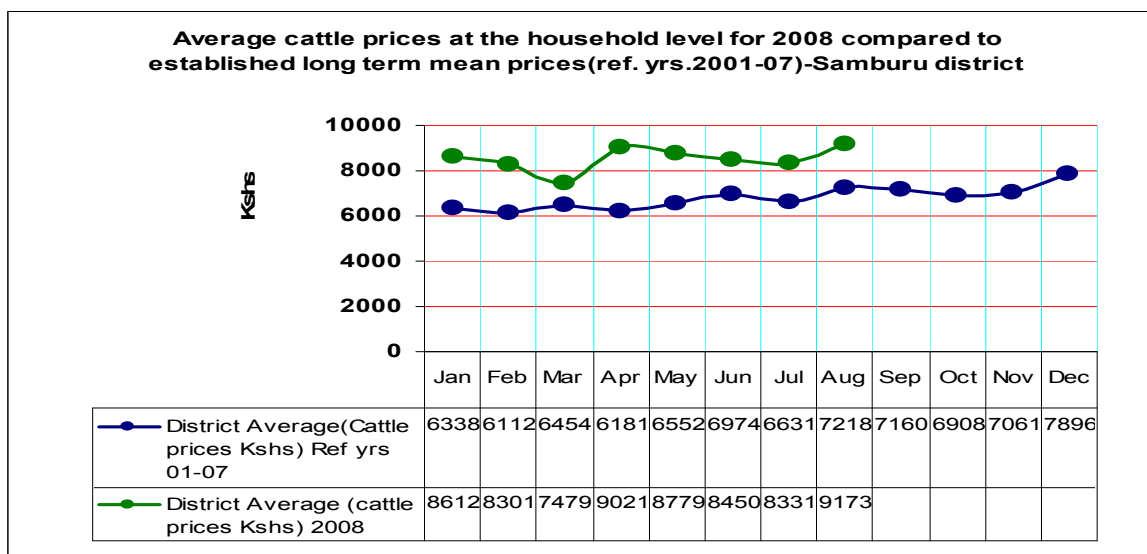
- Deteriorating livestock body conditions impacted negatively on pastoralists' returns and economy.

3.0 Access to food

3.1 Livestock marketing

3.1.1 Cattle prices

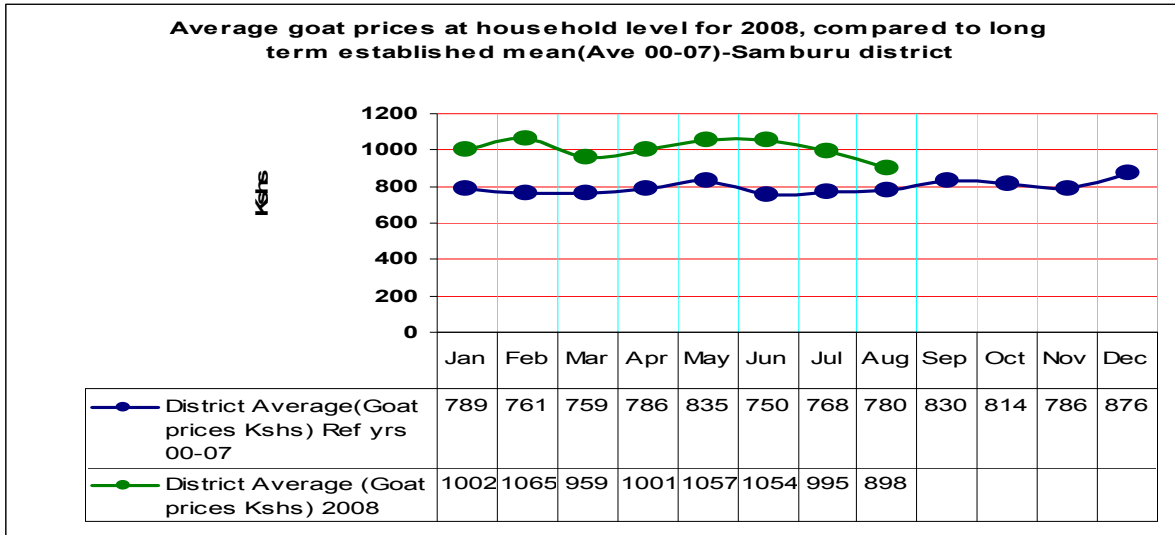
- Average cattle prices appreciated slightly to Ksh 9173 from last month's Ksh 8331.
- Average cattle price was higher than normal by 27 per cent.
- The situation was attributed to good to fair cattle body conditions, particularly in the plateau.
- The prices were higher in the plateau and lower in the lowlands.



Number of households (N) = 398

3.1.2 Goats prices

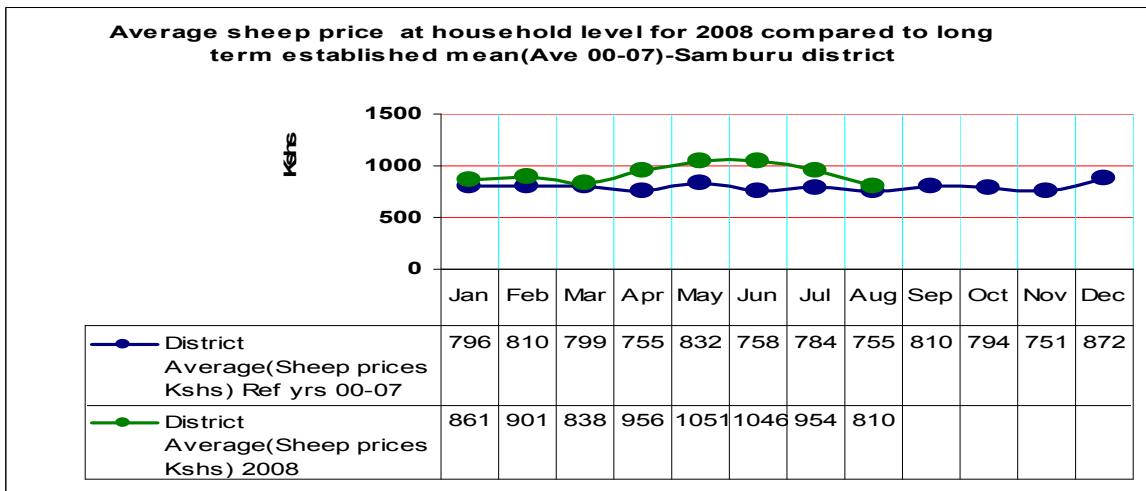
- Average goat prices declined to Ksh 898 from last month's Ksh 995 due to low demand.
- The situation was further aggravated by the outbreak of PPR, especially in Sessia area of Lodung'okwe.



Number of households (N) =398

3.1.3 Sheep prices

- Average sheep prices dropped to Ksh 810 from last month's Ksh 953 due to low demand.



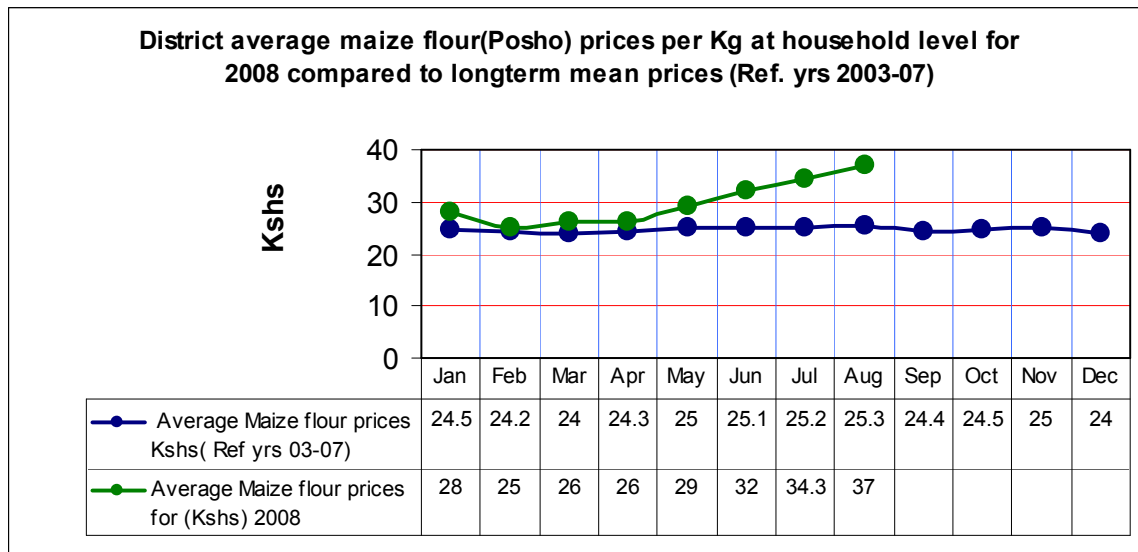
Number of households (N) =398

3.2 Milk consumption

- Milk availability at the household level diminished in the lowlands. This was attributable to scarce forage and low birth rates in cattle.
- However, availability improved in the upper parts of the plateau.

3.3 Food prices

3.3.1 Posho (maize meal)



Number of communities (N) =35

- Prices of locally milled maize rose steadily to Ksh 37 per kg from last months' Ksh 34.30.
- Compared to the long term mean, posho prices were above normal by 36 per cent due to limited supply and high demand of maize in the local markets across the district.
- Added transport costs led to high cereal prices in many lowland areas compared to the plateau.

3.4 Income

3.4.1 Livestock income

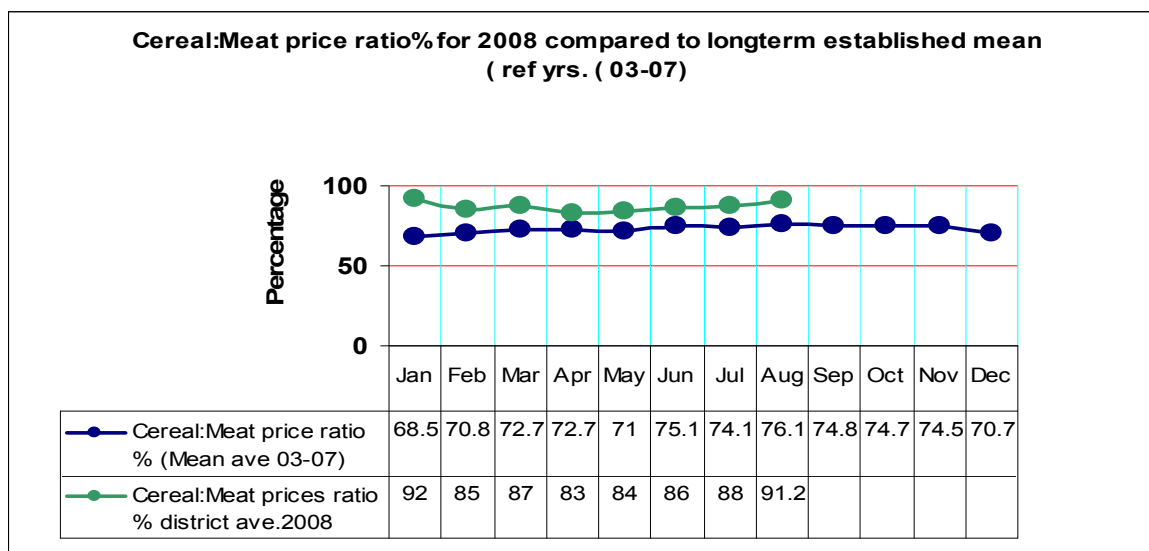
- Sale of livestock remained the main source of income for many households across all the livelihood zones. Other income was generated through the sale of livestock products such as milk.

3.4.2 Other income

- Other income sources for many households within the district include casual labour, petty trade, sale of charcoal, sale of wood products, formal employment and remittances.

3.5 Cereal/ meat price ratio (%)

- Pastoralists' purchasing power declined due to soaring cereal, other food and non-food commodity prices at the household level, compounded by falling livestock prices.
- Cereal/meat price ratio was below normal as pastoralist households required 0.91 kg of meat in exchange for a kg of cereals. The exchange rate was exorbitant as the established long-term mean average is 0.76kg of meat for a kilo of cereals.



Number of households (N) =345

3.6 Implications on food security

- Poor livestock prices were further compounded by rising prices of food and non-food commodities. This impacted negatively on the pastoralists' economy and food security.

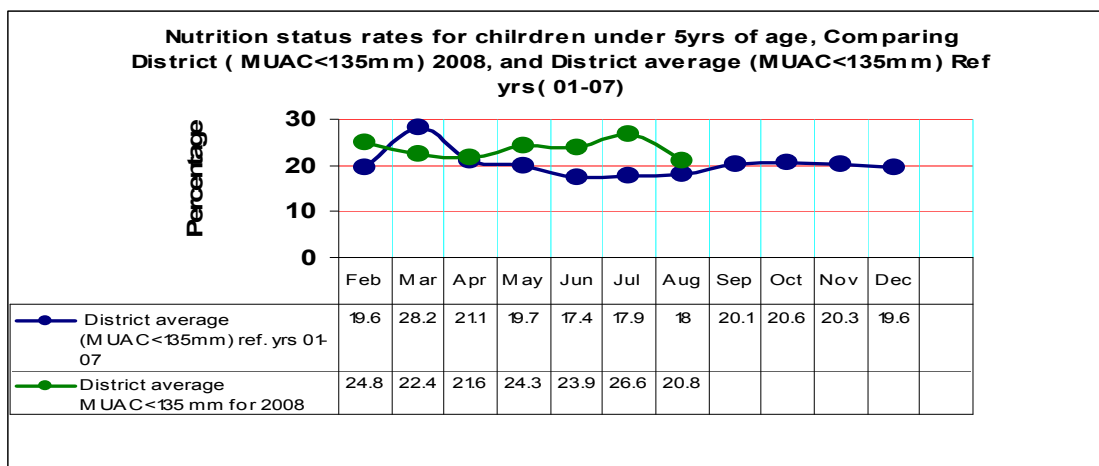
4.0 Welfare indicators (utilisation of food)

4.1 Human Health

- Malaria and upper respiratory tract infections (RTIs) remained the main human ailments reported in various parts of the district but within manageable levels.
- The ailments were countered at the household level through medical assistance from public health centres/ dispensaries, private clinics and use of local herbs/concoctions.

4.3 Nutrition (MUAC) rtes

- Nutritional status of children less than five years measured using the middle upper arm circumference criteria (MUAC) improved. The percentage of children rated as being at risk of malnutrition dropped to 20.4 per cent from last month's 26.6). The improvement was linked to availability of livestock products such as milk in the plateau.



Number of children (N) =1771 from 398 households

5.0 Current interventions and coping strategies

5.1 Non-food interventions

- District-wide livestock disease surveillance and strict quarantine for shoats imposed by the Veterinary Department.
- Enhanced patrols comprising Kenya Police Reservists (KPR) and ASTU in the western parts of the plateau.

5.2 Food aid

- Supplementary feeding programme (SFP) in 9 health facilities in all divisions targeting approximately 1,400 beneficiaries.
- District-wide general relief food distribution targeting 20 per cent of the population in the plateau and 40 per cent of the population in the lowlands.

5.3 Other coping strategies

- The household coping mechanisms were generally normal, ranging from 0 to 4 in all sentinel sites, against a coping strategies index of 0 to 10.

6.0 Recommendations to KFSSG and other District Authorities

- The GOK, donor agencies and the pastoral population should put measures in place to prepare for an imminent food shortage in the district.
- The newly introduced FFA programme should target more beneficiaries both in the lowlands and the plateau to mitigate food shortage in many households.
- Supplementary feeding to the vulnerable categories should be increased, targeting more beneficiaries particularly in the lowlands and in areas facing insecurity. **(Action: WFP, KFSSG, ALRMP II, UNICEF and other donors)**
- Neighboring districts should be on high alert for PPR and should put all necessary measures in place to counter the deadly viral disease. **(Action: Vet department, ALRMP II, KFSSG and other DA's)**

- Malaria and respiratory tract infections (RTIs) continue to be reported across the district. The MOH should staff and stock all the rural health facilities with adequate drugs to improve access to basic health services. **(Action: MoH, SAIDIA, Catholic Mission, ALRMP, and other donors)**
- Insecurity in the plateau and Baragoi/ Nyiro divisions is still a major challenge and requires immediate attention by all stakeholders.
- GoK/District Security Committee should identify all the relevant stakeholders and forge a way forward towards restoring calm in areas currently facing insecurity.
- KFSSG should continue to facilitate peace committees in warring communities to promote dialogue. **(Action: DSC, District Peace committees, Pastoral associations, KFSSG and Communities)**
- There is need for water trucking and other emergency water sector interventions following acute shortage reported in many lowland areas due to the prolonged drought.