

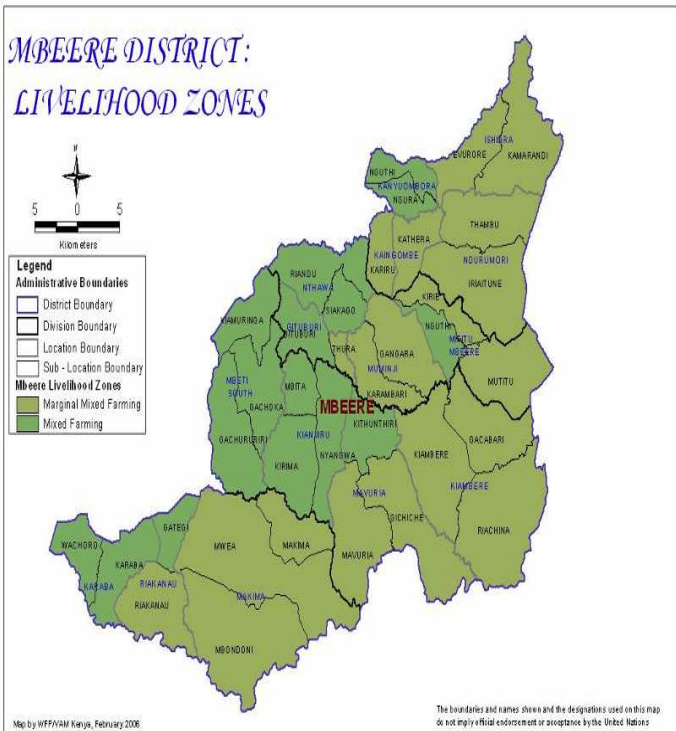


**OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER  
MINISTRY OF STATE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORTHERN KENYA AND OTHER ARID LANDS  
ARID LANDS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROJECT II**

**DROUGHT MONTHLY BULLETIN, SEPTEMBER 2008**

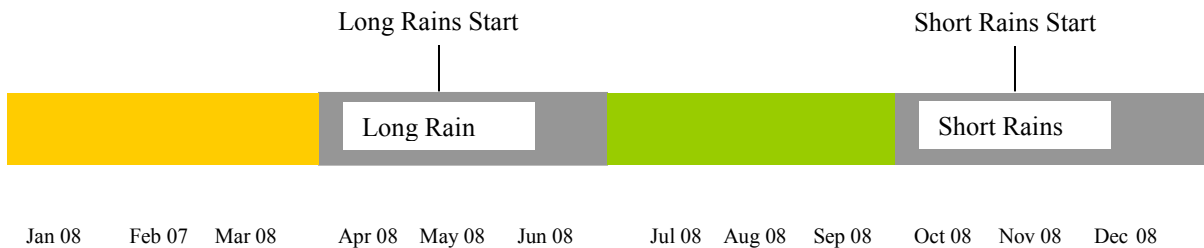
**Mbeere District**

**Warning Stages**



Livelihood Zone	Warning stage	Trend
Mixed farming – food crops	Alert	Worsening
Mixed farming – coffee/dairy	Alert	Worsening
Marginal mixed farming	Alert	Worsening
	Alert	Worsening

**TIMELINE ACTIVITIES**



### **Situation overview**

- No rainfall was recorded during the month and relatively hot and dry weather conditions prevailed across the entire district. The absence of moisture was a below normal trend during the time of the year.
- Absence of precipitation persisted for the fourth consecutive month, rapidly reducing pasture and water availability. The district was devoid of precipitation for the entire month of September.
- The main water sources during the month were natural rivers, bore holes, traditional river wells, pans and springs for both domestic and human consumption.
- Availability and accessibility of water deteriorated significantly following the persistent dry spell as reserves in various water catchments declined drastically, with some drying up completely. This resulted in congestion and pressure on various focal water points.
- Distances to water points for households and livestock increased and availability and accessibility was expected to fluctuate further as the dry spell persists.
- Pasture and browse quality was fair within the district, while availability also remained fair. However, the quality was expected to deteriorate further as the dry spell persists and the marginal mixed livelihood zone was the worst hit.
- Livestock body condition remained good across the entire district. Livestock health remained good for goats but incidences of cattle and sheep mortality increased. Birth rates decreased for all livestock species.
- Livestock prices remained favorably high for all animal species, accompanied by stable sales rates.
- Food prices remained high, especially cereals. Household food reserves got exhausted, with the following pockets experiencing low food reserves; Kiambere, Mutuovare, Makima, Gichiche, Mavuria, Mutitu, Ndurumori, Ishiara and Riakanau.
- Land preparation was the predominant agriculture activity during the period under review.
- The nutrition status of children deteriorated during the month, with percentage of those rated as being at the risk of malnutrition rising to 21 from 18 in August. Gachoka Division registered the highest rate at 26.3 per cent. The situation has been deteriorating 24.4 in July. The poor status was attributable to inadequate and poor feeding and the decreasing milk consumption at household level.
- Following the absence of rainfall, there was significant deterioration in environmental, rural and welfare indicators. The situation was at 'Alert' stage in both mixed farming and marginal mixed farming livelihood zones.

### **Current interventions**

#### **Non-food interventions**

- Rehabilitation of critical boreholes within the district.
- Completion of fencing of Karura water pan.

#### **Food aid**

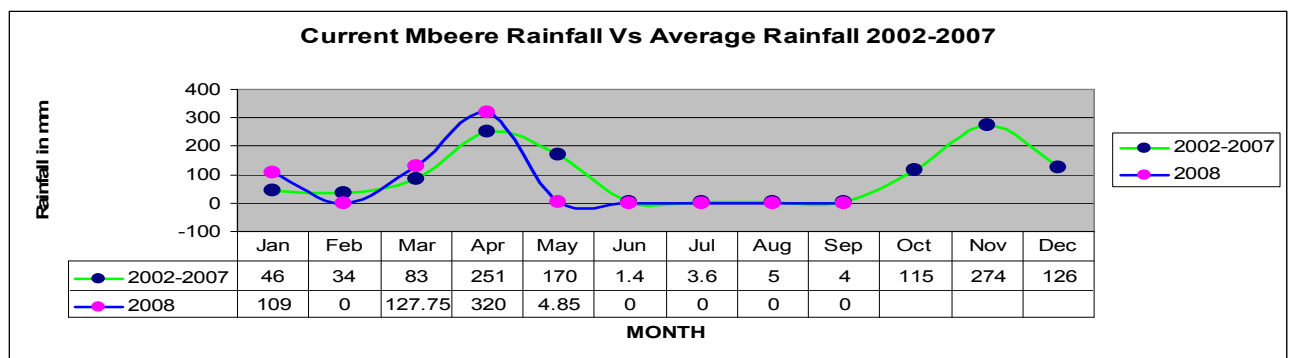
- Regular school-feeding programme.

### **Recommendations**

- Rehabilitation of critical water points to ensure optimum water availability and accessibility.
- Promotion of drought-tolerant such as sorghum, millet, pigeon peas and pest control.
- Food for work targeting 15 per cent of the population in marginal mixed farming livelihood zone including Riakanau, Karaba, Makima, Mavuria, Gichiche, Kiambere, Mutuobare, Mutitu, Ndurumori and Ishiara.
- Livestock disease surveillance, especially PPR, in the entire district.
- Expanding school-feeding programme to 29 primary schools.
- Provision of relief seeds, especially green grams, sorghum, millet, maize and beans.

## 1. Environmental indicators (Stability)

### 1.1 Rainfall



- The district was devoid of precipitation for the entire month of September.
- The absence of moisture was a below normal trend during the time of the year.

### 1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture

- Pasture and browse quality was fair within the district, while availability remained fair.
- However, the quality was expected to deteriorate further as the dry spell persists, causing excessive dryness. The marginal mixed livelihood zone was the worst hit.
- The prevailing situation was normal at the time of the year.

### 1.3 Water sources and availability

#### 1.3.1 Water sources

- Water availability and accessibility deteriorated significantly following the persistent dry spell.
- The situation was not normal at the time of the year. Water reserves in various water catchments declined drastically, with some drying up completely.
- The main water sources during the month were natural rivers, bore holes, traditional river wells, pans and springs for both domestic and human consumption.
- There was congestion and pressure on various focal water points.
- The Marginal mixed farming livelihood zone experienced the highest water scarcity.

#### 1.3.2 Livestock access to water

- Distances from grazing areas to main water sources remained stabilised at 3.5 km from August to September.
- The prevailing distances were not normal at the time of the year.
- Levels in water reservoirs such as catchments pools, earth dams and water pans declined drastically due to lack of precipitation within the month.
- Distances covered in search of water were expected to increase further as the dry spell prevails and some of the water points dry up.

### **1.3.3 Household access to water**

- Average distance from households to main water sources increased from 3.1km in August to 3.3 km.
- The prevailing distances were normal at the time of the year.
- Water volumes in various water reservoirs such as catchments pools, earth dams and water pans remained fair, although they were on the decline due to congestion and pressure on the various water points.
- Distances covered in search of water were expected to increase further as the dry spell persists.

### **1.4 Implications on food security**

- Favourable availability of pasture and browse resulted in acceptable livestock sales rate, fair milk production, good livestock body conditions and favourable livestock prices, increasing food security.
- However diminishing water availability and accessibility increased time and energy spent in search of water, contributing to food insecurity.

## **2.0 Rural indicators (Food availability)**

### **2.1 Livestock production**

#### **2.1.1 Livestock body condition**

- Livestock body condition remained fair on all animal species. The prevailing body conditions are normal at this period of the year. The physical conditions could be attributed to the fair availability of forage and water for livestock consumption.

#### **2.1.2 Livestock diseases**

- Livestock health condition remained fairly good among all animal species.
- Goat mortality remained stable at 0.4 per cent, while sheep mortality increased from 0 per cent in August to 3.8 per cent.
- Cattle mortality increased from 0 per cent in August to 2.3 in September.
- Gachoka Division recorded the highest goat mortality at 0.5 per cent, while Mwea Division recorded the highest mortality of cattle and sheep at 2.3 and 3.8 per cent respectively.
- The increased mortality was attributed to East Coast Fever in cattle and CCPP in sheep.

#### **2.1.3 Milk production**

- Average milk production declined by 0.48 per cent compared to the previous month.

- Decreasing milk production could be attributed to the diminishing quality and quantity of pasture and browse within the district, the scarcity of water and the decreasing livestock birth rates.
- The number of households accessing milk also decreased significantly.
- Gachoka and Evurore divisions had the highest milk output, while Siakago Division had the least.
- Output variation was influenced by livestock population density, distribution per household and varying degrees of pasture and browse availability.

## 2.2 Crop production

### 2.2.1 Timeliness and condition of various crop production activities

- Farmers were preparing their farms in preparation for the planting season in mid October when the short rains are expected to begin.
- Planting also began in some of the farms in anticipation of the rain within the month.

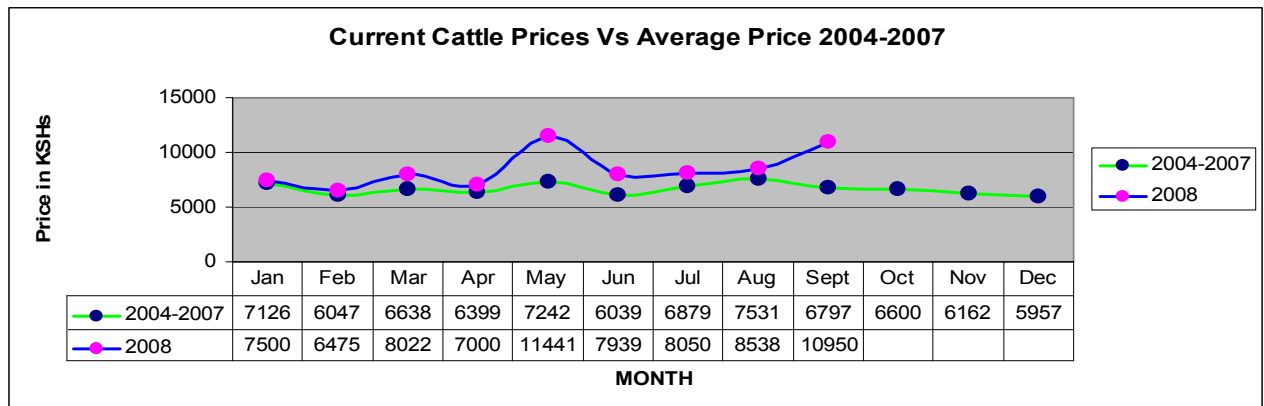
### 2.2.2 Implication on food security

- The fairly good livestock body conditions and health translated into improved food security, while the poor crop performance was an indication of food insecurity.

## 3.0 Access to food

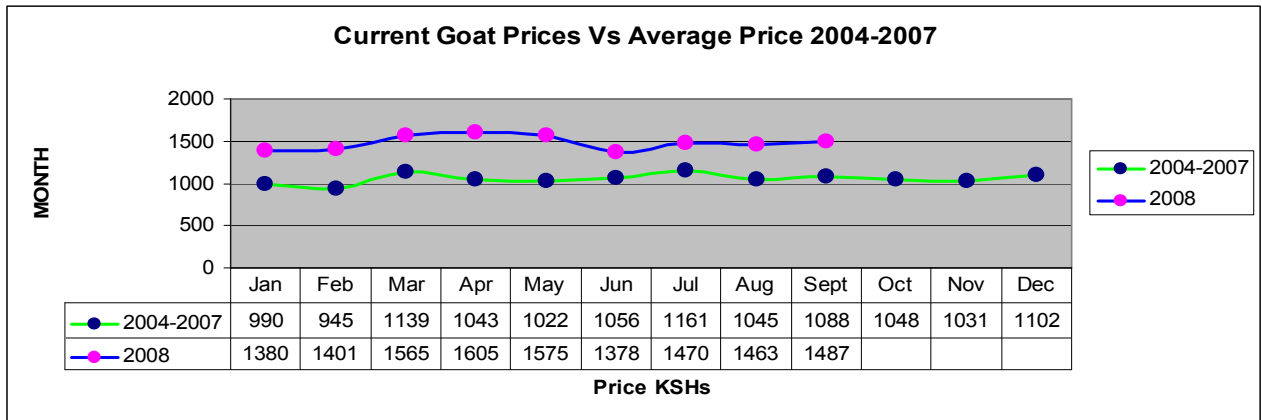
### 3.1 Livestock marketing

#### 3.1.1 Cattle prices



- Cattle prices increased within the entire district with average price standing at Ksh 10,950 from Ksh 8,535 in August.
- The prices were above normal at the time of the year. The increase in cattle prices could be attributed to the fair body conditions declining sales rate.
- The sales rate declined from 1.9 per cent in August to 1.1.
- Mwea Division had the highest sales rate of 2.4 per cent, while Gachoka Division had the lowest at 0.4 per cent.
- The highest price was recorded in Gachoka Division at Ksh 15,000, while the lowest was recorded in Siakago Division at Ksh 6,000.

#### 3.2 Goat prices



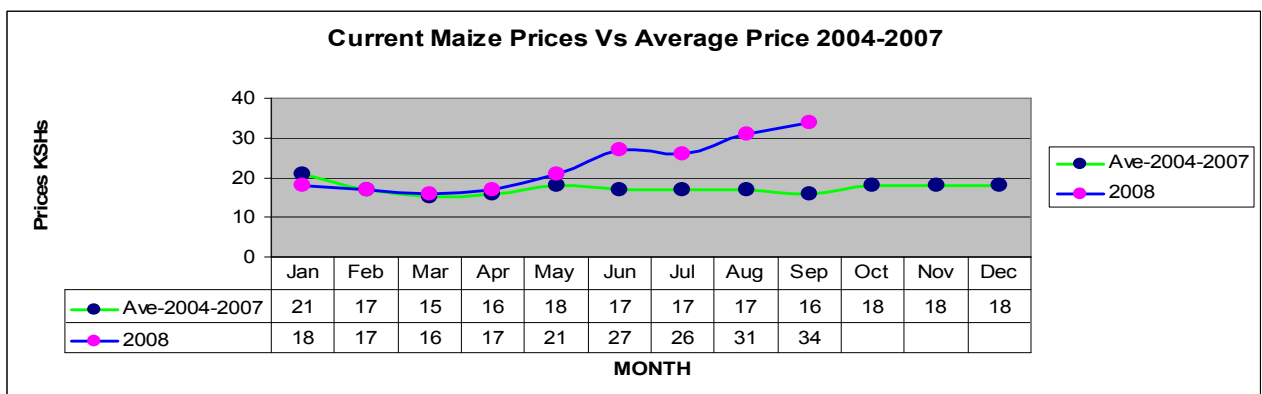
- Goat prices increased slightly from Ksh 1,462 in August to Ksh 1,487 in September.
- The prevailing prices were above normal at the time of the year.
- The prices could be attributed to the good body conditions of the goats within the district.
- Sales rate declined from 4.8 per cent in August to 3 in September.
- Gachoka Division had the highest price per goat at Ksh 1,775, while Mwea Division had the lowest goat prices at an average of Ksh1,275.

### 3.3 Milk consumption

- Average milk consumed per household declined to 32 bottles (750ml) during the month.
- The decline was attributed to the decreasing milk production due to the diminishing quantity and quality of pasture and browse within the district.
- However, milk consumption varied from one division to the next.
- Gachoka Division had the highest milk consumption level, while Siakago Division had the lowest.

### 3.4 Crop prices

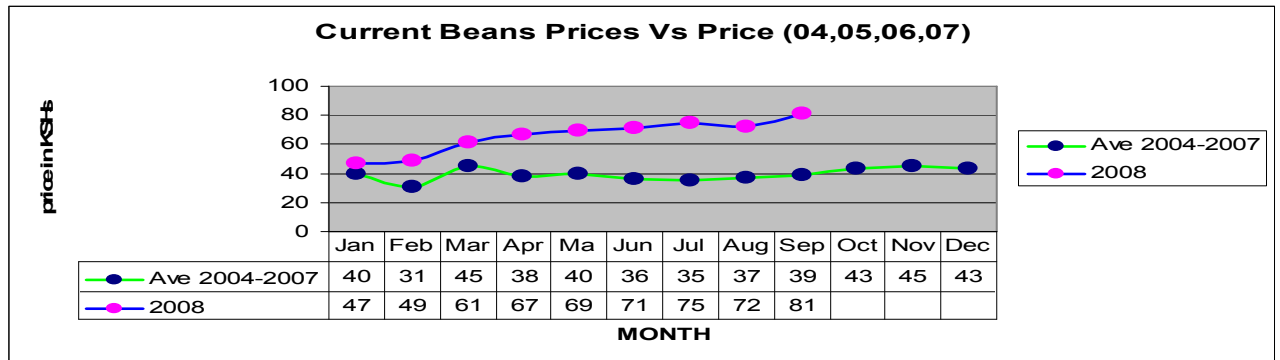
#### 3.4.1 Maize prices



- Maize prices increased from Ksh 31 per kilogram in August to Ksh 34.25per kilogram.

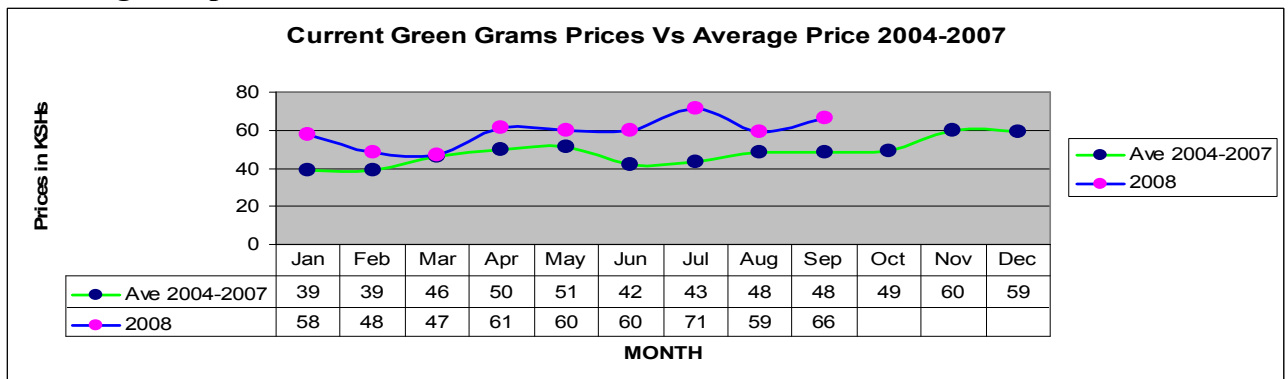
- The price was above normal at the time of the year.
- The increase in maize prices could be attributed to the poor harvest of the crop within the district and the depleted reserves of the crop at household level.
- Gachoka Division had the highest maize price at Ksh 36 per kilogram, while Mwea division had the lowest at Ksh 31 per kilogram.

### 3.4.2 Beans prices



- Beans prices increased from Ksh72 per Kilogram in August to Ksh 81 per Kilogram.
- The prices were above normal at the time of the year.
- High beans prices could be attributed to poor crop performance during the season.
- Gachoka Division had the highest beans price at Ksh 87.5 per kilogram, while Evurore Division recorded the lowest at Ksh77 per kilogram.
- Price variance could be attributed to disparities in output and availability of beans and other legumes and pulses within different livelihood zones.

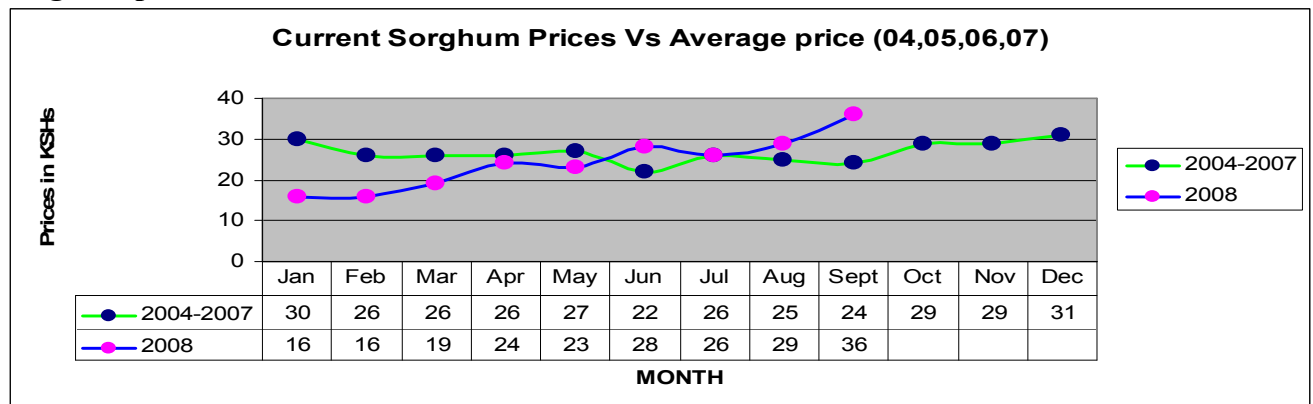
### 3.4.3 Green grams prices



- Green gram prices increased from Ksh 59 per kilogram in August to Ksh 66 per kilogram.
- The prices were above normal at the time of the year.
- The increase could be attributed to the diminishing reserves at household level.
- Mwea Division had the highest green gram prices at Ksh 70 per kilo, while Evurore Division recorded the lowest at Ksh 60 per kilo.

- Price variance could be attributed to level of output within different livelihood zones.

### 3.4.4 Sorghum prices



- Sorghum prices increased from Ksh 29 per kilogram in August to Ksh 36.
- The prices were above normal at the time of the year and the increase could be attributed to the diminishing reserves within households in the district.
- Mwea Division had the highest sorghum prices at Ksh 40 per kilogram, while Evurore Division had the lowest at Ksh 30 per kilogram.

## 3.5 Income

### 3.5.1 Crop income

- Income from crop sales increased from 10.7 per cent in August to 12.3 per cent.
- The increase was due to sale of miraa (khat), although the crop is mainly grown in parts of Siakago and Gachoka divisions.

### 3.5.2 Livestock income

- Livestock sales increased from 12.5 per cent in August to 15.3 per cent.
- This was attributed to households exhausting alternative sources of income and turning on livestock sale as a coping strategy.

### 3.5.3 Other income

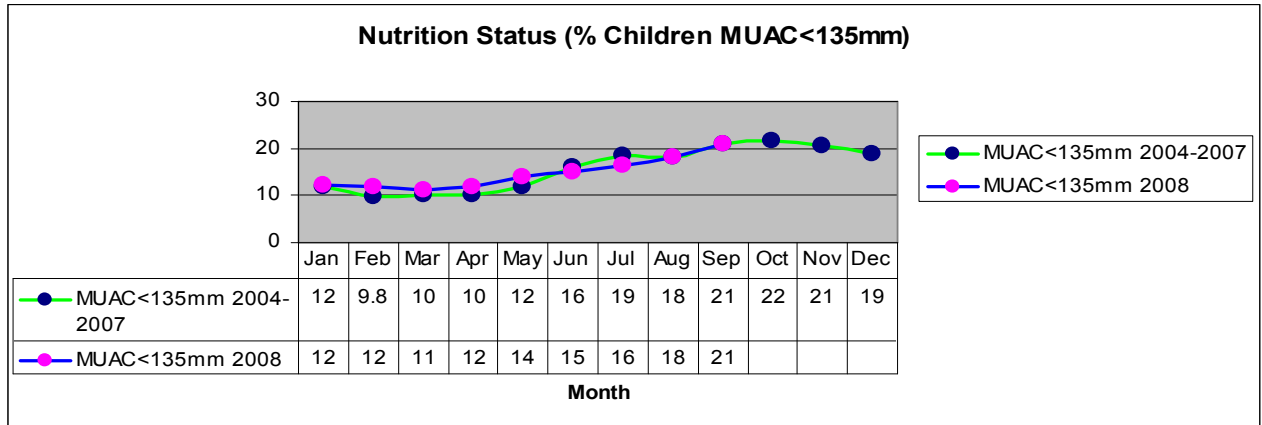
- Casual labour was the major source of aggregate household income in Mbeere District at 40 per cent.
- Residents embarked on casual jobs as a coping mechanism, with the Mwea rice fields and the miraa (khat) farms providing the bulk of the casual jobs.

## 3.6 Implications on food security

- Fair livestock prices and the opportunities for casual labour were an indication of improving food security in the district.
- The high food prices reflected declining food affordability and accessibility, leading to increased food insecurity.

## 4.0 Welfare indicators (Utilisation of Food)

### 4.1 Nutrition status



- The nutrition status of children deteriorated during the month, with percentage of those rated as being at the risk of malnutrition rising to 21 from 18 in August.
- Gachoka Division registered the highest rate at 26.3 per cent. The situation has been deteriorating 24.4 in July.
- The poor status was attributable to inadequate and poor feeding and the decreasing milk consumption at household level.
- The nutrition status was normal at the time of the year.

## 5.0 Current interventions

### 5.1 Non-food interventions

- Rehabilitation of critical boreholes within the district.
- Completion of fencing of Karura water pan.

### 5.2 Food aid

- Regular school-feeding programme.

## 6.0 Recommendations

- Rehabilitation of critical water points to ensure optimum water availability and accessibility.
- Promotion of drought-tolerant such as sorghum, millet, pigeon peas and pest control.
- Food for work targeting 15 per cent of the population in marginal mixed farming livelihood zone including Riakanau, Karaba, Makima, Mavuria, Gichiche, Kiambere, Mutuobare, Mutitu, Ndurumori and Ishiara.
- Livestock disease surveillance, especially PPR, in the entire district.
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