

# Drought and Food insecurity in Rachuonyo North Sub-County

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**R**achuonyo North in the county of Homa Bay is one of the areas which face famine periodically due to drought and erratic rainfall. Although the area is traversed by several rivers such as River Awach and Sare and also borders Lake Victoria, the community members hardly get enough water for their domestic and agricultural use. During dry season, the shallow wells in the area dry up leaving the community members without water for domestic and livestock use.

In East Africa, Kenya is one of the countries with diverse economy and agriculture forms about 18% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Although agriculture is important to the country's economy, most of the farmers cultivate their land in small scale with minimum farm input due to low economic status. Food security is important for community growth and development. It is usually anchored in agricultural productivity and economic wellbeing. Food production in most parts of the country depends entirely on the environment with most of the farmers relying on rain fed agriculture. Changes in climate patterns due to climate change impacts negatively on farming activities.



**At the background, women in Rachuonyo North fetching water from a shallow well; on the right hand side, a man directing cattle to the well to drink water.**

Climate variability in the area has contributed to periodic crop failures with most of the community members depending on neighbouring counties like Kisii for food supply. Agricultural productivity is on a steady decline in Rachuonyo making many households to be food insecure. The situation has been aggravated by rampant drought which has been

realised in the past decades. According to Mr. Oduya, there are hardly any harvests made from the farms due to drought.

In the recent past, Lake Victoria fisheries sector was highly productive and cushioned the farmers from famine as they would use resources from the lake. With the dwindling fisheries resources in Lake Victoria and erratic rainfall pattern, the community members are finding it difficult to earn a living as their crops are destroyed by the rampant drought.

The community members are asking their leaders to put emphasis in environmental conservation and formulate policies which can improve their resilience to climate change effects. The interventions which have been put in place by civil society organizations such as Community Rehabilitation and Environmental Protection Program (CREP) and OSIENALA (Friends of Lake Victoria) in the area can be strengthened by the government to increase the adaptation of the community to the effects of climate change. In some areas, farmers are growing crops which are known to be drought tolerant such as sorghum, peas and cassava. In some places, the farmers have adopted rudimentary technology to conduct irrigation along the rivers in order to grow vegetables.

The leaders in the area need to come up with systems to ensure sustainable supply of water and encourage farmers to participate in climate smart agriculture. This will be able to help the farmers to get enough food to reduce their dependence on food aid. It will also contribute to their adaptation to climate. Effective natural resource conservation is important towards ensuring climate change resilience.

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