

Floods, greatest contributor to food insecurity in Budalangi Constituency

The agricultural sector is the backbone of Kenya's economy and accounts for over 70 per cent of the rural population. The sector contributes 26 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), directly and another 25 per cent, indirectly. It also accounts for 65 per cent of Kenya's total exports and employs over 40 per cent of the total population.



Pic: Mr. Namanja from Igigo village during an interview

Although Kenya has a well developed agricultural research system, dissemination of research findings to the smallholder farmers, who are the majority of farmers in Kenya has remained a big challenge. Climate Change has also been a big threat in food production systems and has hit a majority of farmers as is the case in Igigo community in Budalangi.

Currently, over 100 thousand people in Igigo Community suffer from chronic food insecurity and poor nutrition due to the effects of Climate Change as well as degradation of natural resources such as soil and water, loss of biological biodiversity, diminishing arable land and extreme weather events including intensive floods. Nearly half of those affected require emergency food assistance at any given time. At the same time, about 40% of those affected are children and are characterized as malnourished. Food insecurity has a high cost to individuals, school learners, teachers and to society as a whole and has been a consistent pattern in all groups of people regardless of the income level, gender, age, marital status, race/ethnicity, or religion.

The effects of climate change being experienced by the Igigo residents have hindered the ability of smallholder farmers within this community to effectively participate in crop production and market systems.

In addition, food production in this community has also been characterized by low yields per land unit, minimal use of inputs, high cost per unit production resulting in low farmer revenues, which can also be attributed to weak integration into input and output markets.

“This year alone, over 90% of crops planted in this community were destroyed by floods which are normally experienced in the 3 consecutive seasons. When floods came early this year, all crops that had been planted were swept away, livestock too were swept while other lost their lives and we were all forced to seek refuge to higher places. Food became a problem and communities were forced to eat poor quality diets as a result of limited food options. The Government also came to our rescue by offering relief foods but still that wasn't enough.” says Mr. Namanja an Igigo community member



Nearly three quarters of class 4 pupils at Igigo primary school interviewed reported that they do not always have breakfast. These pupils also do not go home during lunch breaks. They reported that they cope with the situation by depending on wild fruits or even by stealing food from the younger pupils.

Due to the inadequate supply of quality food; the physical, mental, spiritual, social health and wellbeing of these learners and their teachers has also been challenged resulting in fatigue and illness.

Generally, the entire community suffers higher rates of diet related diseases throughout the life cycle including low birth weight babies, childhood and infant anemia, lowered immunity from infectious diseases and dental carries. Climate change poses a complex environmental and socioeconomic challenges that cuts across multiple and highly interdependent domains and areas of jurisdiction.

There is a need for the Government to act on the Climate Change Adaptation strategies focusing on concrete and realistic intervention priorities that emphasize a comprehensive, collaborative approach, working closely with all partners and always seeking sustainable development. The climate change adaptation strategic directions must therefore take into account the very close links between human, ecological and socioeconomic systems.



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