

Food and nutrition security in Marsabit County and Turkana County in Kenya



Context

In 2014, 18 percent of the Kenyan population (some 1 million people) lived in permanent food and nutrition insecurity. The situation is particularly serious in the dry regions in the north of Kenya, which is also where the counties of Marsabit and Turkana are located. The inhabitants of these counties primarily rely on extensive livestock-keeping for their livelihoods and are strongly exposed to the root causes of food and nutrition insecurity. Factors such as drought, overgrazing, difficult access to water and pastureland as well as insufficient veterinary care for livestock contribute to downturns in livestock production and periodically also to declines in livestock numbers. This poses a serious threat to both income sources and food supply lines for the local

people who traditionally rely on nutrient-rich, livestock-based foods, especially during the dry season. A significant proportion of the population is facing increasing poverty, forcing families to resort to cheap and unbalanced diets low in nutrients. Women of childbearing age (15 to 49 years) are particularly vulnerable. They suffer from undernourishment and malnourishment, not just acutely during the cyclically recurring droughts over the past ten years but also in their chronic forms. The poor health and nutrition situation of mothers in Marsabit and Turkana also results in generally poor food and nutrition security for children less than 5 years of age who also suffer from under- and malnourishment.

Activities in Kenya

- GIZ assists the County Nutrition Coordinators in Marsabit and Turkana in their implementation of action plans on food and nutrition security in cooperation with a range of political sectors.
- Multipliers are being trained, who in turn assist advisers at the state and decentralised levels in the areas of health and agriculture, mother and infant health, and dietary improvements and diversification. The prime beneficiaries of this work are mothers and their children.
- Successful activities and experiences in the implementation of dietary improvements are made accessible to the international and professional community and the national Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) process, thus mainstreaming these successful approaches.

Our objective

The project's aim is to make lasting improvements to the nutritional situation of, primarily 8,700 women of child bearing age and 1,800 young children.



Region(s)

Turkana County and Marsabit County, Kenya

Duration

4/2015 – 12/2019

Budget

EUR 5,100,000

Implementation partners

In Marsabit: World Vision International and Food for the Hungry Kenya

In Turkana: Save the Children International and Kenya Red Cross Society

Lead executing agency

Ministry of Health

Target group

Women of childbearing age (15 to 49 years) and infants (6 to 23 months)



How we work

While in the past the Kenyan Turkana County received 500 mm of rainfall per year, precipitation can now be as low as 120 mm. The increasing drought is deeply damaging for the people who primarily rely on nomadic livestock-keeping. The food and nutrition security programme assists the local population in dairy processing. This not only makes their staple milk more durable, processed products such as soured milk can also generate additional income.

However, droughts are not only a serious problem for the people of Turkana. Long periods of drought also threaten the existence of countless people in the Kenyan county of Marsabit. While the men may move with their herds for months at a time, women and children remain at home. During these periods the programme assists the women in obtaining goats, thus allowing them to produce food when the men are far away from home.

Women's groups learn how to generate income from enterprises such as the buying and selling of goats, the selling of braided items etc. Moreover, the women pay money into a joint credit union which allows them to jointly invest in larger items and which also provides them with a fall-back in times of crisis.

Trainings are an essential component of the programme and are conducted specifically for women in both counties.



Results

Women's groups in Marsabit learned, for example, how to establish home gardens in which they grow various crops such as kale, watermelons, spinach, amaranth and cowpeas. Poultry keeping is another component of the trainings. Women's groups are also trained in turning excess milk during the rainy season into dairy products such as yoghurt, cheese and butter, so as to preserve the milk for a longer time.

So their families have a more nutritious and varied diet in dry season as well.

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