Strengthening Drought Resilience for Smallholder Farmers and Pastoralists in the IGAD Region.



Country Profile
Kenya

Under the **Strengthening Drought Resilience for Smallholder Farmers and Pastoralists in Eastern Africa (DRESS-EA)** project, interventions in Kenya are being implemented in Kitui and Samburu Counties. The project supports Kenya to strengthen drought preparedness, improve climate resilience and promote sustainable natural resource management through enhanced early warning systems, institutional capacity strengthening and community-led adaptation initiatives.

The project is targeting over **423,169** beneficiaries across the project intervention areas.

Challenge

Kitui and Samburu Counties are among Kenya's Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs), where communities face increasing climate variability and recurrent droughts that threaten livelihoods, food security and water availability. The project intervention areas are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including:

- Recurrent droughts
- Increasing rainfall variability
- Rising temperatures and prolonged dry spells
- Land degradation and declining vegetation cover
- Water scarcity for domestic, livestock and agricultural use

Most households depend on rain-fed agriculture and pastoralism as their primary sources of livelihood. Repeated droughts, deteriorating rangelands, declining soil fertility and limited water resources continue to reduce agricultural productivity, weaken food security and increase pressure on fragile ecosystems





Kitui County

Kitui County covers approximately 30,496 km² in eastern Kenya and has an estimated population of 481,282 people within the project intervention areas. The county experiences low and erratic rainfall, making farming highly vulnerable to drought.

Communities primarily practice mixed crop and livestock farming, producing drought-tolerant crops such as:

- Sorghum
- Millet
- Green grams
- Cowpeas
- Pigeon peas
- Cassava

Livestock production—including cattle, goats and sheep—provides an important source of income and food security.

Samburu County

Samburu County covers approximately 21,000 km² and has an estimated project population of 224,000 people.

Livelihoods are predominantly pastoral, with communities relying on cattle, sheep, goats and camels. Increasing drought frequency has significantly reduced pasture availability and water resources, affecting livestock productivity and household incomes.

Together, the two counties comprise an estimated 705,282 residents, of whom approximately 423,169 people are expected to benefit directly from DRESS-EA interventions.

Key Development Challenges

Communities in Kitui and Samburu face several interconnected challenges:

- Recurrent droughts and increasingly erratic rainfall.
- Water scarcity affecting households, livestock and agriculture.
- Degraded rangelands and declining ecosystem health.
- Heavy dependence on rain-fed agriculture and pastoralism.
- Reduced agricultural and livestock productivity.
- Weak integration of climate and early warning information into planning and budgeting.
- Limited institutional capacity for drought preparedness and response.
- Increasing climate risks that threaten livelihoods, food security and sustainable development.



DRESS-EA Response

The DRESS-EA project is helping communities strengthen resilience by promoting integrated approaches that improve livelihoods while restoring natural ecosystems. Key interventions include:

- Improving water resource management.
- Promoting climate-smart and drought-resilient agricultural practices.
- Restoring degraded rangelands and ecosystems.
- Supporting sustainable natural resource management.
- Strengthening the resilience of smallholder farmers, pastoralists, refugees and host communities to climate-related shocks.

By addressing both immediate livelihood needs and long-term climate risks, the project contributes to improved food security, reduced vulnerability and more sustainable management of natural resources.

Recent implementation activities have further strengthened institutional capacity through early warning systems, climate information services and community-based drought resilience interventions that promote proactive rather than reactive drought management.



Project Implementation Villages

Project interventions are being implemented in selected wards and communities within:

- Kitui County
- Samburu County

The project document identifies the counties as the primary implementation areas but does not provide an equivalent list of villages (as it does for the Sudan profile).

If you have the Kenya implementation plan or annual work plan, this section can be expanded with the specific wards, locations or villages where activities are taking place.

Project Milestones

- Assessment of early warning status in the two counties
- Development of the early warning information-sharing framework
- Procurement of a project vehicle
- Procurement and installation of two automatic weather stations
- Assessment of surface water utilization potential/availability and development of water management plans
- Assessment of groundwater utilization potential/availability and development of groundwater management plans
- Development of Drought Management Plans
- Development of an emergency response plan for drought disasters at regional and national levels
- Support to Kitui County Government in development of the Climate Change Bill
- Support to Samburu County in development of the Rangeland Management Plan for Kalama Conservancy

420,000+

beneficiaries across the project intervention areas.

This project is funded by the Adaptation Fund through the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS), with the Global Water Partnership Eastern Africa (GWPEA) serving as the Regional Executing Entity, while Uganda's Ministry responsible for Water and Environment leads implementation nationally.

