

## OXFAM MEDIA BRIEFING

### 23 September 2019



## Who takes the heat?

*Untold stories of climate crisis in the Horn of Africa and Mozambique*

### Background

*Battered by cyclones and ravaged by extreme drought, poor communities in the Horn of Africa and Mozambique have found themselves on the front line of a climate crisis they did little to create. Yet the international community has largely abandoned the world's poorest countries – providing support worth an average of just \$3 per person per year – or less than a cent a day – to protect themselves from the devastating impacts of crisis. As world leaders gather for the UN Climate Action Summit in New York next week, Oxfam is calling for more than hot air and empty promises. We need ambitious emission reductions, more money to help poor communities to adapt, and action to tackle existing problems – including the debt crisis – that make people more vulnerable.*



# Introduction

The burning Amazon and devastation wrought by Hurricane Dorian have brought global attention to the climate crisis. Yet for every headline-grabbing catastrophe there are millions of people and places where the daily impact of the climate crisis goes largely unreported.

Minate Amede, 29, husband and father of two children, Mozambique:

*'The rain brought down a tree on our house and destroyed one side of the wall. Water was all over the place. Before we left, we had placed most of our items on top of cupboards in case water got in the house. But when we returned a week later, everything was destroyed and unusable: our television, the bathroom and the latrine. It's only last week that the water started subsiding.'*



Minate Amede (29, right) speaks to community health volunteer Fatima Mowade at his home.

This brief focuses on the extreme weather and humanitarian crises that have hit the Horn of Africa and Mozambique, which, like the sinking Pacific Islands, should serve as dire warnings of what is to come, as our climate becomes more extreme, unpredictable and deadly. It shows how the countries that have done little to fuel the climate crisis – the emissions of one American are equivalent to 330 Somalis – already face its worst impacts.

In the last year, the drought in the Horn of Africa has left more than 15 million people in need of humanitarian aid in Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya. Repeated cyclones in Mozambique have left 2.6 million people in need of assistance and caused [US\\$3.2 billion](#) worth of loss and damage – equivalent to 22% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or approximately 50% of its national budget – proportionally this is roughly equivalent to the impact of 23 Hurricane Katrinas hitting the US.<sup>1</sup>



These two crises are their own unique emergencies, but are also an example of how interconnected our climate is – with moisture pulled into the Southern African cyclones [exacerbating the drought](#) in the Horn.

Hunger is rising, with the latest figures from the UN indicating that up to 2.1 million people are facing severe hunger in Somalia, bringing the total number of Somalis expected to be food insecure by the end of the year to [6.3 million](#). In Mozambique, escalating food insecurity has left [2 million people without enough food](#).

This brief details how these countries are made more vulnerable to climate shocks because rich countries have failed to deliver on their promises of finance for adaptation. It also explores the existing problems – including a growing debt crisis, poverty and inequality – that make the poorest countries and communities increasingly vulnerable in a changing climate.

As global leaders gather for the 2019 United Nations General Assembly, including the Climate Action Summit, Oxfam and its partners – Save Somali Women and Children, Arid Lands Development Focus-Kenya (ALDEF) and Mozambique's Associação dos Jovens e Amigos de Govuro – are calling for a concrete programme of action to cut emissions, help the poorest communities adapt to climate shocks, and tackle the problems – including debt crisis – that are barriers to adaptation.

- Rich countries must at least double their pledges to the Green Fund compared to what they gave in the previous round, and double the overall financial assistance provided to support adaptation in developing countries. Governments must also target financial support at the poorest and most vulnerable communities who need the most help to adapt.
- Increase their woefully insufficient targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions so that they deliver on promises – made in the Paris Climate Agreement – to keep global heating below 1.5°C. This would require global emissions to be cut by 45% below 2010 levels by 2030, in order to reach net zero emissions by mid-century.
- Governments must tackle the underlying problems of poverty and inequality – including through debt cancellation – that make poor communities and poor countries more vulnerable to both climate shocks as well as to the slow-onset changes to the climate.

## Climate crisis: here and now

Oxfam and our partners see and respond to the havoc wreaked by the climate crisis every single day and it is the poorest people who are paying the heaviest price. Vulnerable women, men and children have had their homes, livelihoods, and loved ones ripped from them by increasingly frequent and dangerous floods and droughts or storms made worse by a climate crisis they did least to create.

Hamisi Hussein Yusufu (36) in Ibo island in northern Mozambique:

*'Trees were split into two. Roofs were being blown off. We wanted to run but there was nowhere to run. No one was even around to help. Everyone was saving their own lives.'*

*'We are flock without a shepherd. We are unsettled so it's difficult to have hopes for the future. We don't want to bother anyone so we'll do what we can, and hope God helps us.'*



Hamisi Husseini Yusufu (36) constructing a temporary shelter for his neighbours after cyclone Kenneth

Extreme weather has devastating consequences, and climate change means we will only see more of them. So far this year, more than 5,000 people have died because of extreme weather with more than 38 million people in need of emergency assistance or humanitarian aid according to data from the [Centre of Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters](#).<sup>2</sup> CRED put the [direct economic loss for 2018 at US\\$100 billion](#) in terms of damage, reconstruction and insured loss.

This economic impact has been greatest for poorer countries. [Between 1998 and 2017](#), low income countries reported climate-related disaster losses of US\$21 billion, or an average of 1.8% of GDP. Over the same period, high income countries reported climate-related disaster losses of US\$ 1,432 billion, or 0.41% of GDP.

**Table 1: Proportion of GDP spent on climate-related disaster losses between high- and low-income countries, 1998-2017**

1998-2017	Low Income Countries	High Income Countries
Climate-related disaster losses	\$21bn	\$1,432bn
Climate-related disaster losses as a % GDP	1.8%	0.41%

# Canaries in the climate coalmine

Jamac Caabi Axmed, Somaliland:

*'I'm pessimistic because if the current situation continues and drought reappears, it will just get worse. If there are no solutions and the situation doesn't improve, we will lose everyone here. I'm afraid of losing people.'*

A [deadly drought in the Horn of Africa](#), exacerbated by armed conflict, has left over 15 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and 5.6 million people displaced – and the numbers are rising. Drought is now the new norm in the region with studies suggesting that [increased sea temperatures](#) off the coast have [doubled the likelihood](#) of drought. [Ten out of the past 21](#) March to May wet seasons in the Horn have failed – an average of one every second year.

Average temperatures in Somalia have [already increased](#) by one degree, from 32.8 to 33.8 Celsius, in the past 30 years. The combination of higher temperatures and drier weather means livestock and agricultural production is declining. [devastating communities already struggling to survive](#) in a country where 80% of people depend on natural resources for their livelihoods. In the past, communities had longer periods to recover from droughts. Today the increasing regularity of droughts destroys even basic levels of resilience.

In the current 2019 drought, there was substantial rain during May to July, with 'average' levels of rainfall being recorded in some areas. However, this rainfall came in short, intense bursts, causing extensive flood damage in many areas, and not providing the predictable, steadier rain that is critical for agricultural and pastoral production. This resulted in the situation where, for the same country, the UN [launched an US\\$80 million](#) flood appeal on the very same day as [launching a US\\$710.5 million](#) drought response plan (20 May 2019).

Village Elders, Somaliland:

*'We can't describe the drought with words. It was so hard. Where we are sitting now, it was full of dead animals. Everyone was devastated. The birkhads (waterholes) were empty and wells were broken. It was so difficult. It affected all of us, but families survived with support from family members in Burao or other urban-based relatives provided some cash. It kept us alive.'*

In addition to recovering from a severe drought between 2016 and 2017, northern Somalia in 2018 had to clean up the trail of destruction from [Cyclone Sagar](#), that occurred during a peak time for agricultural production, worsening existing food crises. [Sagar was most intense cyclone](#) to ever hit Somalia and the furthest west a cyclone has ever been in the northern Indian Ocean.

Fatuma (30), Mozambique [speaking after her house was severely damaged by Cyclone Kenneth]:

*'We have read about cyclones in school and watched on TV sometimes, and we see how it kills but we didn't really know what it was. When the winds started, everyone was looking for a tree to hold on to so that you're not blown away. When the rain hit your face, it was like being hit by a stone. I grabbed*



*my kid's bag that had a sweater and some clothes because I didn't want them to be cold.'*



Fatuma walks with her son through her destroyed house after Cyclone Kenneth.

Less than a year after Sagar, an unparalleled combination of cyclones swept across Southern Africa: Cyclones Idai and Kenneth wreaked havoc most acutely in Mozambique, the [first time](#) on record the country had ever been hit by two cyclones of Category 2 strength or higher in the same year.

While Cyclone Idai [made the Horn drought worse](#), the second, Cyclone Kenneth, was the strongest cyclone to ever hit Mozambique. Similar to the Horn, communities were still recovering from El Nino-induced drought in 2016, and drought caused by delayed rains in 2018. In the most affected areas, [80% of housing](#) was damaged or destroyed.

## Climate Justice

Rich countries have reaped massive economic benefits from emissions-intensive development that has fuelled the climate crisis. And while no country will escape the impacts of the rapidly escalating climatic shocks, rich countries' wealth means they are better able to adapt to its impacts – with droughts mitigated by expensive irrigation schemes, and insurance to help communities rebuild after floods.

By contrast, poorer countries that contributed little to the climate crisis now find themselves facing the intense impacts with far fewer resources for recovering from the shocks and adapting to a changing climate.

Oxfam has shown that the richest 10% emit half of global emissions [while the poorest 50% emit about 10% of global emissions](#). The average footprint of the richest 1% of people globally could be 175 times that of the poorest 10%.

Somalia's annual per capita emissions are [0.05 tonnes](#), Ethiopia [0.12 tonnes](#), and Kenya and Mozambique [0.31 tonnes](#) – a fraction of the [16.5 tonnes](#) per capita emissions in the USA. Put another way the average carbon emissions of just one American are equivalent to those of 330 Somalis or 53 Mozambicans.

Despite doing least to fuel the crisis, people in the world's poorest countries are more at risk of being forced from their homes by climate-related disasters, with [research](#) showing that they are five times more likely to be displaced by sudden-onset extreme weather disasters than people in high-income countries over the period 2008-2016.

This comparison is if anything an understatement of the disproportionate incidence of displacement linked to climate change, as the numbers do not cover people displaced by drought and other slow-onset events which have a severe impact on low-income countries due to the numbers of people whose livelihoods depend on the land.

Back in 2009, rich countries agreed to reach US\$100 billion per year in climate finance by 2020 to help poorer countries to cut their emissions and adapt. For countries such as Somalia and Mozambique, this money would ideally help farming communities diversify their crops or conserve water, it could expand renewable energy provision for communities who don't have access to the electricity grid, or put in place effective weather monitoring and early warning systems to ensure remote communities can prepare for weather shocks.

However, rich countries are failing to deliver on their promises, largely abandoning poor countries to their fate. The amount of money available to help communities adapt to the impacts of climate change remains woefully inadequate. The United Nations Environment Programme estimates that adapting to climate change will cost developing countries between \$140-300 billion per year by 2025/30. Yet, a mere fifth of [the \\$52.5bn rich countries reported](#) as annual public climate finance (2016/2017 annual averages), was dedicated to adaptation – and just 15% of the overall sum went to the 48 least developed countries. The amount of support available is [much lower than reported figures suggest](#). For example, the figures include the full face value of loans that need to be paid back, while the programmes they fund often have much less climate-relevance than claimed. Taking that into account, Oxfam estimates that in recent years, least developed countries – including Mozambique and Somalia – have received on average as little as \$3 per person per year in net assistance specifically targeting adaptation. This equates to less than a cent a day to protect themselves from floods, severe droughts and other climate extremes.<sup>3</sup>

## Fuelling vulnerability – the debt crisis

Both Mozambique and Somalia are countries with immense debt burdens that prevent their governments investing in measures which would help communities adapt.

Somalia's debt accrued before the 1991 collapse of government. It now stands at [US\\$4.6 billion](#) or approximately 75% of GDP. The figure is crippling, yet pales in comparison to the US\$700 billion spent bailing out Wall Street Banks in 2008 (US\$834 billion in [2019 adjusted terms](#)).

This debt burden is [a noose](#) around the Somalia's neck, [preventing the country from accessing international loans](#) that could help chart a new trajectory for the country – including climate finance loans that support vulnerable countries to adapt to the impacts of climate change and develop in a low-carbon way.

Debt cancellation for Somalia would support the country to recover from the compound catastrophes of drought and famine in 2011 that killed [more than 260,000 people](#) – the single biggest loss of life in any country in a single year this millennium. It was hit again by drought in 2016-17, Cyclone Sagar in 2018 and now another debilitating drought that has left a third of the population, 6 million people, in need of humanitarian assistance.

Halima Adan, Chair of the Nexus Platform in Somalia and Somaliland

*'How can vital infrastructure and government services be rebuilt if the country is kept on its knees with unjust debt? We need to be able to deliver more than humanitarian assistance, we need long-term, bold thinking that will get the country back on its feet. The only way we are going to do this is with immediate, large-scale debt relief.'*

Dhudi, Somaliland.

*'The drought is still affecting us today. We still lack water and have no livestock. We are all very idle. Some displaced people don't have shelter. Most of the displaced people are pastoralists with no formal education, so there are no opportunities for them.'*



Portrait of Dhudi Ismail Saeed Mohammed

Mozambique's debt stands at [110% of GDP](#). Most of it was [transferred in 2015](#) from the private sector to the government, in breach of UNCTAD Principles on Responsible Lending and Borrowing. This resulted in austerity policies that ravaged basic public services and cut investment in critical sectors such as agriculture, health and education.

Yet following Cyclone Idai in March, the Government of Mozambique was not granted debt cancellation – but instead forced to borrow another \$118.3 million from the IMF in order to respond to and rebuild after the emergency, pushing it deeper into debt.



While government accountability and transparency is essential, keeping Mozambique and Somalia heavily indebted hurts the poorest and most marginalized people. Without debt cancellation both Somalia and Mozambique are trapped in a vicious cycle unable to secure further funding because of their outstanding debts and using public funds to service debts rather than helping poor communities prepare for and recover from disaster. And if adaptation assistance is given as loans rather than grants it simply adds to these countries' mounting debt burdens.

## Fuelling vulnerability – poverty and inequality



Fitina in one of her rooms in her damaged home after Cyclone Kenneth

Fitina Maua (37) from Ibo island where Cyclone Kenneth hit:

*'I can't even think of repairing my house. Where do I get the money? I have to find a solution because there's nowhere else for me to go. In 1998, I fled my hometown in Bukavu, eastern DR Congo because of the fighting and came to Mozambique. This is where I've been married and started a family. This is home for me.'*

*'This disaster has really taken us many steps back. Just when we thought we were truly settling down; we experience the cyclone. It is hard to have hope for tomorrow when today you are hardly surviving.'*

When a disaster happens, not everyone is hit equally. The poorest people often live in flimsy homes built on marginal land that is typically more at risk of flooding and have fewer assets to fall back on when shocks happen. The richest in society are better able to cope because they can buy land on higher ground, pay higher prices for their food, or take out insurance in the event their crops fail or to recover from weather-related disasters.

In Somalia, Mozambique and elsewhere in poor and rich countries alike, deeply embedded and persistent inequalities mean the poorest, most marginalized people are [hardest hit](#) by climatic shocks.

There are [many dimensions to these inequalities](#). Cyclone Idai hit some of the poorest areas of Mozambique which were least equipped to cope with its impacts. The port city of Beira had already suffered heavily during the war, with the poorest people living in flimsy shacks of tin, their slums invariably in places where no one else wanted to live – on marginal land vulnerable to problems such as flooding. Provinces that were hit hard such as Zambezia and Sofala had poverty rates above the national average (62% and 50% respectively – according to a [World Bank post-disaster needs assessment May 2019](#)).

Women are [systematically marginalized compared to men](#). Even after the response to Cyclone Kenneth was underway in Mozambique, women in temporary relocation sites were less able to access information on the relocation process and the kind of help they were entitled to than men.

There are many other examples. A legacy of discrimination means that minority clans in Somalia are excluded from political decision-making processes, and displaced communities in Mozambique are stuck in areas without adequate livelihoods. The consistent theme is that all of these people have the least access to political voice, government services and infrastructure, and decent livelihoods leaving them more vulnerable when disaster strikes.

These same people are often the last to receive support to rebuild their lives, and so become even more marginalized afterwards. In Mozambique, almost five months after the Cyclone, the power grid is still damaged, roads are in disrepair and people have lost their fishing boats and tools on the northern coast; in some areas where people have resettled, farmers are collapsing in the fields because they are subsisting on a poor diet of just tomato soup, made from the only crop they are harvesting.

Unless these inequalities are more comprehensively addressed, millions of people will become increasingly vulnerable and will require humanitarian assistance year after year, at a continuously increasing cost.

### **Kenya: Marginalization and Drought**

The pastoralist communities living in the arid and semi-arid lands in northern Kenya are historically marginalized, with little voice to affect national decision-making, extremely high poverty levels, and health, education and economic infrastructure that pales in comparison to the rest of Kenya, which reached middle-income status in 2015. Despite government-led initiatives such as the Hunger Safety Net Program (HSNP), designed to address repercussions of drought in northern Kenya, [2.6 million people](#) are facing acute food insecurity and need urgent humanitarian assistance.

*‘More comprehensive interventions are essential to address the persistent marginalization of people in northern Kenya and reduce their vulnerability to drought. Our country has sufficient resources, what’s missing is political will.’*

Ahmed Ibrahim, CEO of ALDEF

# Climate Action

As global leaders gather for the 2019 United Nations General Assembly, including the Climate Action Summit, Oxfam and its partners are calling for more than just hot air and empty promises. We need a concrete programme of action to cut emissions, help the poorest communities adapt to climate shocks and tackle the problems – including debt crisis – that are barriers to adaptation.

## Recommendations:

### **International community**

- Rich countries must at least double their pledges to the Green Fund compared to what they gave in the previous round, and double the overall financial assistance provided to support adaptation in developing countries. Governments must also target financial support at the poorest and most vulnerable communities who need the most help to adapt.
- Governments must increase their woefully insufficient targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions so that they deliver on promises – made in the Paris Climate Agreement – to keep global heating below 1.5°C. This would require global emissions to be cut by 45% below 2010 levels by 2030, in order to reach net zero emissions by mid-century.
- Governments must tackle the underlying problems of poverty and inequality – including through the provision of debt cancellation – that make poor communities and poor countries more vulnerable to both climate shocks as well as to the slow-onset changes to the climate.

### **Governments in Horn of Africa and Southern Africa**

- Ensure the voices of women, marginalized groups and others that face the brunt of the impacts of climate crisis inform and influence government policy and practice.
- Take action to address the poverty and inequalities that make communities more vulnerable to climate shocks. This includes building fairer tax systems, introducing universal social protection, and increasing transparency and accountability of government spending and decision making.



# NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Hurricane Katrina, the most damaging climate disaster to hit the United States, cost an [estimated US\\$125 billion](#) in 2005, when US GDP was US\$13.037 trillion, meaning damage equated to just under 1% of GDP (0.96).

<sup>2</sup> EM-DAT: The Emergency Events Database - Université catholique de Louvain (UCL) - CRED, D. Guha-Sapir – [www.emdat.be], Brussels, Belgium.

<sup>3</sup> The estimate is based on Oxfam analysis of climate finance figures reported for 2015-2016 which identifies net assistance specifically for adaptation. [https://www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file\\_attachments/bp-climate-finance-shadow-report-030518-en.pdf](https://www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/bp-climate-finance-shadow-report-030518-en.pdf). It estimates that LDCs received 48% of total grant funding for adaptation in 2015–16 and uses 2015-2016 population figures from the World Bank.

## Oxfam [www.oxfam.org](http://www.oxfam.org)

Oxfam is an international confederation of 19 organizations working together in more than 90 countries: Oxfam America ([www.oxfamamerica.org](http://www.oxfamamerica.org)), Oxfam Australia ([www.oxfam.org.au](http://www.oxfam.org.au)), Oxfam-in-Belgium ([www.oxfamsol.be](http://www.oxfamsol.be)), Oxfam Brasil ([www.oxfam.org.br](http://www.oxfam.org.br)), Oxfam Canada ([www.oxfam.ca](http://www.oxfam.ca)), Oxfam France ([www.oxfamfrance.org](http://www.oxfamfrance.org)), Oxfam Germany ([www.oxfam.de](http://www.oxfam.de)), Oxfam GB ([www.oxfam.org.uk](http://www.oxfam.org.uk)), Oxfam Hong Kong ([www.oxfam.org.hk](http://www.oxfam.org.hk)), Oxfam IBIS – Denmark ([www.oxfamibis.dk](http://www.oxfamibis.dk)), Oxfam India ([www.oxfamindia.org](http://www.oxfamindia.org)), Oxfam Intermón ([www.oxfamintermon.org](http://www.oxfamintermon.org)), Oxfam Ireland ([www.oxfamireland.org](http://www.oxfamireland.org)), Oxfam Italy ([www.oxfamitalia.org](http://www.oxfamitalia.org)), Oxfam Mexico ([www.oxfammexico.org](http://www.oxfammexico.org)), Oxfam New Zealand ([www.oxfam.org.nz](http://www.oxfam.org.nz)), Oxfam Novib ([www.oxfamnovib.nl](http://www.oxfamnovib.nl)), Oxfam Quebec ([www.oxfam.qc.ca](http://www.oxfam.qc.ca)), Oxfam South Africa ([www.oxfam.org.za](http://www.oxfam.org.za)). Observer: KEDV (Oxfam Turkey).