DROUGHT | Famine blamed on low agricultural development

Region will become drier, warns report

Global temperature rises are likely to cause more frequent drought in Eastern Africa

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Kenyans should prepare for low rains between March and May, a new study warns.

The food crisis in the region can only get worse, the report says, putting an estimated 17.5 million people at the risk of hunger in Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia.

This comes as the government steps up relief efforts in parts of Eastern, North Eastern, Rift Valley and Coast provinces facing acute food and water shortages.

The measures are largely short-term and comprise supply of water, distribution of food and buying livestock from pastoralists to mitigate losses due to drought.

On Friday, the US blamed the famine on low agricultural development and rapid population growth.

It also warned, in a statement from the Interior department, of increased frequency of drought in Eastern Africa due to rising global temperatures.

The study, More Frequent Drought Likely in Eastern Africa, was published last week and dashes hopes created earlier by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicating that the region may become wetter in coming years.

“Global temperatures are predicted to continue increasing, and we anticipate that average precipitation totals in Kenya and Ethiopia will continue decreasing or remain below the historical average,” said one of the scientists, Chris Funk, in the statement.

The main reason given for the reduced rain was the warming of the Indian Ocean.

This was linked to human activities, particularly greenhouse gas and industrial emissions.

Kenya is estimated to have warmed by one degree Celsius since 1960.

The Kenya Meteorological Department has also predicted erratic long rains.

17.5m

Number of people facing hunger in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia