

The Institutional Geography of a Very Strong El Niño

A three-minute briefing on the forecast, its limits and the preparedness decisions due before the expected October onset.

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Finding **El Niño is now a planning condition, not an impact prediction.**

Kenya **County preparedness decisions precede the expected October onset.**

Decision test **Can an earlier forecast trigger authorised, funded action before impact?**

Limits of the evidence **Seasonal outlooks cannot specify local timing or damage.**

The finding

The forecast has strengthened; evidence of preparedness remains incomplete

The World Meteorological Organization reported on 3 September that El Niño was firmly established, likely to become very strong and highly likely to persist through February 2027. Regional and Kenyan outlooks place that global signal within a wetter-than-normal October–December season. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC) assigns a 90 per cent probability of enhanced rainfall over north-eastern Kenya, while the Kenya Meteorological Department expects above-average rain across most counties and allows for heavy events.

These are planning signals, not local flood predictions. Indian Ocean conditions, local topography and shorter-range weather will still shape where rain falls and what it does. Counties and national agencies nevertheless have a narrowing interval in which to test drainage, road access, health and veterinary supplies, water structures, food storage and contingency finance against updated guidance.

Public consequence

The forecast now requires named decisions, funding and county action

The Addis Ababa Call to Action, issued during the reporting period, asks African states to treat early warning as national infrastructure and connect forecasts to pre-arranged finance. For Kenya, the key test is what happens between publication of a forecast and action by counties. Who recognises the threshold, who authorises preparedness, what money is available, and what delivery can later be verified?

North-eastern counties face the clearest near-term planning question, but exposure is differentiated. Urban drainage, lake and river basins, coastal services, pastoral mobility, disease surveillance and transport continuity require different acts. A single national message is therefore insufficient. The next useful evidence will be dated preparedness instructions, county or national financing, procurement, deployment and shorter-range guidance that changes the assessment.

Principal evidence

Four sources supporting this briefing

World Meteorological Organization El Niño update, 3 September 2026 [source address: <https://wmo.int/news/media-centre/el-nino-set-become-very-strong-raising-risks-of-extreme-weather-2027>]

ICPAC Greater Horn October–December outlook [source address: <https://www.icpac.net/news/the-greater-horn-of-africa-is-expected-to-experience-a-wetter-than-normal-october-december-ond-2026-season-as-el-ni%C3%B1o-strengthens/>]

Kenya Meteorological Department October–December 2026 outlook [source address: https://meteo.go.ke/documents/4790/OND_2026__Seasonal_Forecast.pdf]

Addis Ababa Call to Action on Early Warnings in Africa [source address: <https://wmo.int/media/news/addis-ababa-call-action-early-warnings-africa>]

Direct-overlap disclosure

The author serves as County Executive Committee Member for Health in Garissa County. This edition discusses Garissa and county health preparedness. It is independent personal analysis, uses public sources and is not an official county communication. Read the full disclosure statement →