

# PITCHES IN PERIL: FOOTBALL PITCHES IN MATHARE DEEMED UNPLAYABLE AS NEW DOCUMENTARY HIGHLIGHTS CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

*A new documentary and climate analysis highlights growing threats to grassroots football in Kenya and the opportunity to invest in climate adaptation.*

NAIROBI, KENYA, June 26, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- With one year to go until AFCON 2027, a new analysis shows that extreme rainfall is already capable of making grassroots football pitches in Mathare unplayable, with climate change projected to intensify future risks through heavier rain and rising temperatures. The sharpest warning is on rainfall: by 2100, the level of rainfall in major storms affecting Mathare could be 68% higher than today.



Mathare, Kenya, 2024. Copyright: Jesper Houborg/DanChurchAid

The analysis highlights growing heat and water pressures. Heat stress – a measure of how extreme heat is experienced by people – is projected to double by 2040. By 2100, rising temperatures could result in 17 days each year when extreme heat disrupts football activity, while water stress is projected to increase by 345%, creating additional challenges for maintaining community pitches.

The findings were presented in the documentary 'Pitches in Peril: Mathare 4A', screened on 23 June by UK not-for-profit [Football for Future](#) and Danish humanitarian organisation [DanChurchAid](#), at an event hosted by the [British High Commission Nairobi](#). The event brought together a unique mix of climate experts, football leaders, and representatives from the Governments of Denmark, Kenya and the UK to kick-off discussions about how climate adaptation could be the legacy of AFCON 2027.

The documentary focusses on the severe floods that swept through Nairobi's Mathare community in 2024, which damaged homes, claimed lives, and left one of the area's most important football pitches under water.

The Mathare community consistently produces players across a range of sports who go on to compete at national and international level. Community pitches such as Mathare 4A are essential to nurturing that talent - offering young people a social anchor, a way to stay healthy, and develop the skills they need to compete for sports scholarships.

The documentary follows Meschack Ochieng, a professional footballer in the Kenyan Premier League who currently plays for Sofapaka FC. Meshack and other community leaders reflect on the impact of flooding and the growing challenges facing the Mathare community, who are already on the frontline of climate change.

Meshack Ochieng, professional footballer, said:

"For many of us, pitches like Mathare 4A are where everything begins. It's where young people find purpose, build friendships and believe in themselves. Communities like Mathare are strong and resilient, but when those spaces are affected by extreme weather, it's not just football that is lost - it's opportunity. Protecting these pitches means protecting the next generation of talent."

Elliot Arthur-Worsop, Founder, Football for Future, said:

"Mathare 4A reminds us that the future of football is not only decided in stadiums. It is shaped on community pitches, in local neighbourhoods and through the opportunities football creates for young people every day. As East Africa prepares to host AFCON 2027, we have a unique opportunity to ensure the tournament leaves a legacy that strengthens and protects the places where the game begins."

Jonas Vejsager Nøddekær, Secretary General of DanChurchAid, said:

"The story from Mathare reminds us that adaptation is not an abstract concept. It is about protecting people's lives, opportunities and futures. Climate impacts are already affecting communities around the world, and adaptation needs far greater political attention and financial support. Whether we are protecting homes, schools, farms or football pitches, investing in adaptation is investing in people's ability to live safely and with dignity in a changing climate."

Matt Baugh, British High Commissioner to Kenya, said:

"Tonight's event is about a very simple question: how can a football pitch help drive climate action in Kenya? A pitch is more than a place to play. This event reflects the UK's commitment to work with Kenya to support communities adapt to climate change. We have brought together governments, sport, and community foundations in partnership to help shape a legacy: of how these pitches, the grassroots and foundations of our sport, are protected for the future."

It is not just Kenya that is under threat. As the world turns its attention to the FIFA World Cup 2026, Football for Future's 'Pitches in Peril' report reveals that 14 of 16 World Cup stadiums had exceeded safe-play thresholds for at least three major climate hazards in 2025: extreme heat, unplayable rainfall, and flooding.

The event was attended by Elijah Mwangi CBS, , Principal Secretary, State Department for Sports; Hussein Mohammed, President of the Football Kenya Federation; and Kenyan footballing legend Victor Wanyama.

## EDITOR'S NOTES

### About the data

The analysis was produced by Football For Future in collaboration with climate risk and resilience analytics firm Jupiter Intelligence.

- The analysis is based on Jupiter Intelligence's ClimateScore platform, which uses global climate models from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to assess future risks at a local level.
- It examines how key hazards, including extreme rainfall, heat and water stress, could change over time under a high-emissions scenario.
- The data models conditions for today, mid-century (2050) and end-century (2100) to show how climate risks may evolve for specific locations such as Mathare 4A.

Football for Future's 'Pitches in Peril' report for the FIFA World Cup 2026:

<https://online.flippingbook.com/view/565610231/>

Photos from the event can be found here:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1LvAURSfQIm8-JSYX-rJnOI9JLbLo\\_vZ?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1LvAURSfQIm8-JSYX-rJnOI9JLbLo_vZ?usp=sharing)

### About the film

Pitches in Peril: Floods in Mathare was produced by Football for Future and DanChurchAid in partnership with community organisations in Mathare, Nairobi.

The documentary tells the story of how severe flooding affected the Mathare community and damaged the Mathare football pitch, a vital grassroots sporting facility and community hub. Through the voices of footballers, community leaders and residents, the film highlights both the human impacts of climate change and the urgent need for adaptation.

### About DanChurchAid

<https://www.danchurchaid.org/>

### About Football for Future

<https://footballforfuture.org/>

About the Kenya-UK Strategic Partnership

Link to the Kenya-UK Strategic Partnership Joint Statement:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/kenya-uk-strategic-partnership-joint-statement>

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