REPUBLIC OF KENYA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND FORESTRY
State Department of Environment & Climate Change
KENYA METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT
Dagoretti Corner, Ngong Road, P. O. Box 30259, 00100 GPO, Nairobi, Kenya
Telephone: 254 (0) 20 3867880-7, 0724 255 153/4
E-mail: director@meteo.go.ke, info@meteo.go.ke **Website:** http://www.meteo.go.ke

TECHNICAL STATEMENT FROM THE TWELFTH NATIONAL CLIMATE OUTLOOK FORUM (#NCOF12)

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1.0 CLIMATE OUTLOOK FOR THE MARCH-APRIL-MAY 2026 RAINFALL SEASON

The March to May period is the major rainfall season (Long Rains) over most parts of Kenya and much of equatorial Eastern Africa. The highest seasonal rainfall amounts (greater than 300mm) are normally received over the Lake Victoria Basin, the Highlands West of the Rift Valley, the Central and South Rift Valley, the Highlands East of the Rift Valley (including Nairobi County) and the Coastal Strip. **Figure 1** illustrates the rainfall climatology during the March to May rainfall season.

The climate outlook for the March–April–May (MAM) 2026 season (**Figure 2a**) indicates that **near-average to above-average rainfall** is expected over the Lake Victoria Basin, the Highlands West of the Rift Valley, the Highlands East of the Rift Valley (including Nairobi), the Rift Valley, and parts of North-western Kenya. **Near-average to below-average rainfall** is expected over the Southeastern Lowlands, Northeastern, and parts of Northwestern Kenya. **Below-average rainfall** is expected over the Coastal region.

During the season, several areas are likely to experience a generally poor to fair temporal and spatial distribution of rainfall. The season is expected to be characterised by a normal to late onset, with intermittent dry spells. However, occasional heavy rainfall events are likely to occur in some parts of the country.

The peak of the rains is expected to occur in April over most regions, except for the Coast, where the peak is expected in May.

In **Figure 2a**, the areas projected to receive **near-average rainfall with a tendency toward above-average** amounts are depicted in **light green**. Regions expected to receive **near-average rainfall with a tendency toward below-average** amounts are shown in **yellow**. Meanwhile, the areas forecasted to experience **below-average (depressed)** rainfall are highlighted in **orange.**

2.0 DETAILED OUTLOOK FOR PARTICULAR REGIONS

The Specific Rainfall Outlook for the March-April-May 2026 "Long-Rains" Season is as follows:

2.1 The Highlands West of the Rift Valley, the Lake Victoria Basin and the Rift Valley (Nandi, Kakamega, Vihiga, Bungoma, Siaya, Busia, Baringo, Nakuru, Trans-Nzoia, Uasin-Gishu, Elgeyo-Marakwet, West-Pokot, Kisii, Nyamira, Kericho, Bomet, Kisumu, Homabay, Migori and Narok Counties):

Rainfall is likely to be near-average to above-average. Occasional heavy rainfall events are likely to occur in several parts of the region.

2.2 North-western Kenya (Turkana and Samburu Counties):

Rainfall is likely to be near-average to above-average. Occasional heavy rainfall events are likely to occur in a few areas.

2.3 The Highlands East of the Rift Valley (Nyandarua, Laikipia, Nyeri, Kirinyaga, Murang'a, Kiambu, Meru, Embu, Tharaka-Nithi and Nairobi Counties):

Rainfall is likely to be near-average to above-average. Occasional heavy rainfall events are also likely to occur in several parts of the region.

2.4 North-eastern Kenya (Marsabit, Mandera, Wajir, Garissa and Isiolo Counties):

Rainfall is likely to be near-average to below-average. Occasional heavy rainfall events are likely to occur in a few areas.

2.5 The South-eastern lowlands (Machakos, Kitui, Makueni, Kajiado and Taita-Taveta Counties as well as the inland parts of Tana-River County):

Rainfall is likely to be near-average to below-average. Occasional heavy rainfall events are likely to occur in a few areas.

2.6 The Coast (Mombasa, Kilifi, Lamu and Kwale Counties as well as the coastal parts of Tana-River County):

Rainfall is likely to be below-average during the forecast period; despite the depressed rainfall over the Coast, occasional heavy rainfall events are likely to occur in a few areas.

NB: Intraseasonal drivers of variability, such as tropical cyclones and the Madden–Julian Oscillation (MJO), are only predictable at shorter lead times and can significantly influence the expected seasonal outcome. It is therefore imperative to stay up to date with subsequent forecasts and updates.

3. EXPECTED DISTRIBUTION OF THE MAM RAINFALL, ONSET AND CESSATION DATES

3.1 Onset, Cessation and Distribution of Rainfall for the March to May 2026 "Long-Rains" Season

Distribution

The predicted onsets, cessations, and distribution of rainfall were derived from dynamical climate model runs as well as statistical analyses of past years which showed similar characteristics to the current year and are as indicated in **Table 1**. The analogue (similar) year is 2023. The season is expected to have a normal to late onset over most parts of the country.

The rainfall outcomes of the analogue years should not be interpreted as forecasts for the season. Rather, they provide a sense of the possible rainfall outcomes under broadly similar global climate conditions. They also offer indicative information on the temporal distribution associated with specific seasonal rainfall totals.

Onset and Cessation Dates

The expected onset and cessation dates for the various counties are as indicated in **Table 1 and Figure 2b**.

Table 1: Onset, Cessation and Distribution

Region	Onset Dates	Cessation Dates	Distribution
Counties in Highlands West of the Rift Valley, Lake Victoria Basin, Central, and South Rift Valley: *(Bungoma, Trans Nzoia, Uasin Gishu, West Pokot, Elgeyo-Marakwet, Nandi, Kakamega, Vihiga, Bomet, Kericho, Kisii, Nyamira, Homa Bay, Migori, Kisumu and Busia, Baringo, Nakuru, Western Laikipia and Narok).*	Continues from February	Continues into June	Fair to good
Highlands East of the Rift Valley including Nairobi County: *(Nyeri, Kirinyaga, Murang'a, Embu, Meru, Kiambu, Nyandarua, Nairobi and Eastern Laikipia)*	2nd to 3rd week of March	3rd to 4th week of May	Fair to good
Southeastern Lowlands: *(Kajiado, Kitui, Makueni, Machakos, Tana River and Taita Taveta)*	3rd to 4th week of March	2nd to 3rd week of May	Poor
North Coast: *(Lamu, Malindi, Coastal parts of Tana River, and Kilifi)*	2nd to 3rd week of April	Continues into June	Poor
South Coast: *(Mombasa, Kwale)*	1st to 2nd week of April	Continues into June	Poor

Region	Onset Dates	Cessation Dates	Distribution
The Northwest: (Turkana, Samburu)	4th week of March to 1st week of April	3rd to 4th week of May	Poor
The Northeastern *(Wajir, Isiolo, Garissa, Mandera and Marsabit)*	4th week of March to 1st week of April	3rd to 4th week of May	Poor

NB: Updates on the onset, distribution, and cessation of rainfall will be provided regularly through weekly, monthly forecasts as the season approaches. These updates will offer detailed insights into any changes and developments in rainfall patterns to keep stakeholders informed and support timely decision-making.

4. MAM 2026 TEMPERATURE FORECAST

Warmer than average temperatures are expected over the whole country, with increased probabilities over parts of the Lake Victoria Basin, the Coast, the South-eastern Lowlands and parts of North-eastern Kenya as shown in **Figure 3**.

5. POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF THE 'LONG RAINS' (MARCH TO MAY) 2026 SEASON

The expected rainfall during the 'Long rains' (March to May) 2026 season is expected to have both negative and positive impacts across various sectors. The most likely impacts on various sectors will be highlighted by the sector leads.

NB: This outlook should be used together with the 24-hour, 5-day, 7day, monthly, special forecasts and regular updates/advisories issued by this Department as well as Weekly and Monthly County forecasts developed and availed by County Meteorological Offices.

Edward M. Muriuki

Ag. DIRECTOR OF KENYA METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

6. Annexes

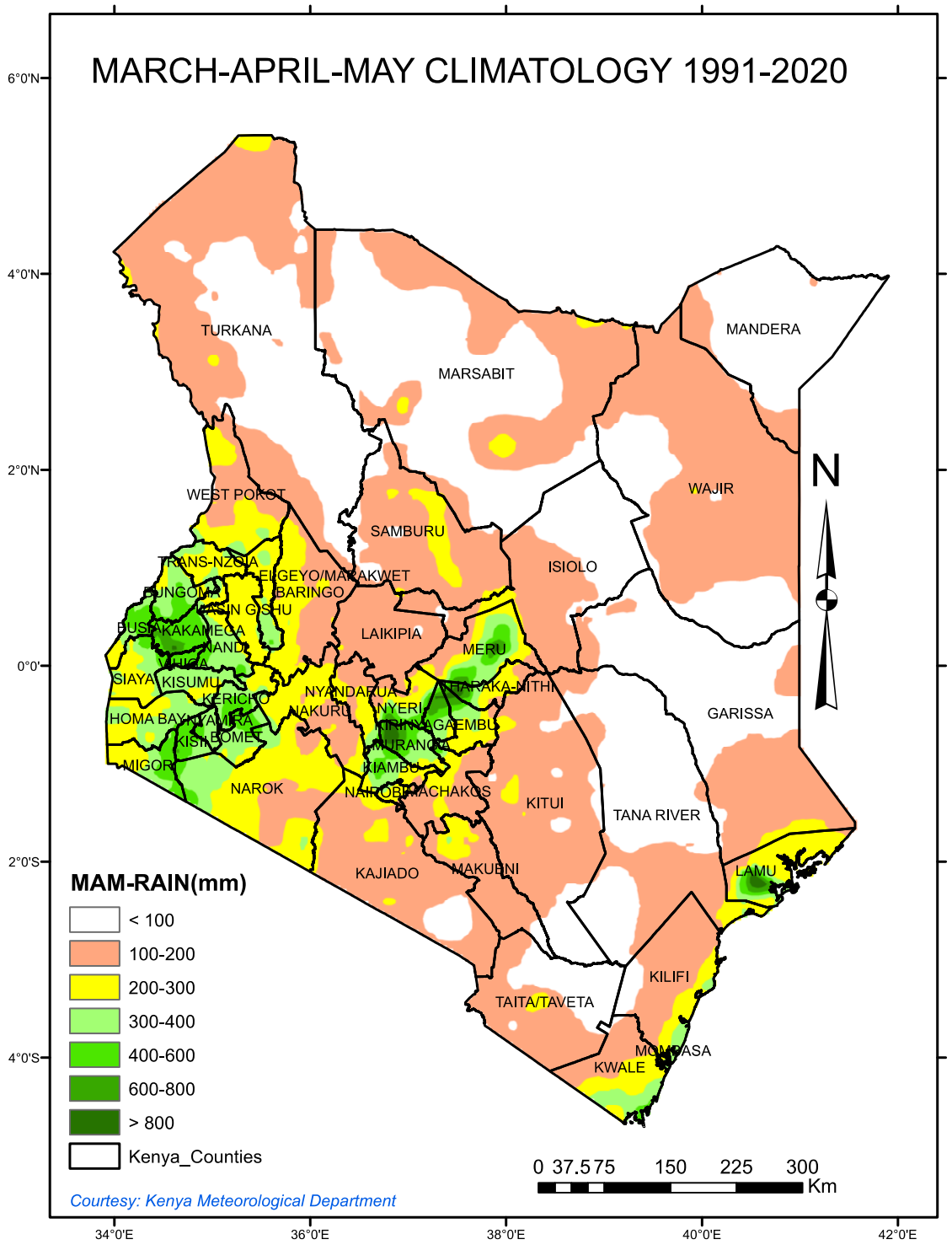

Figure 1: Rainfall climatology (1991-2020) for the March to May "Long-Rains" season

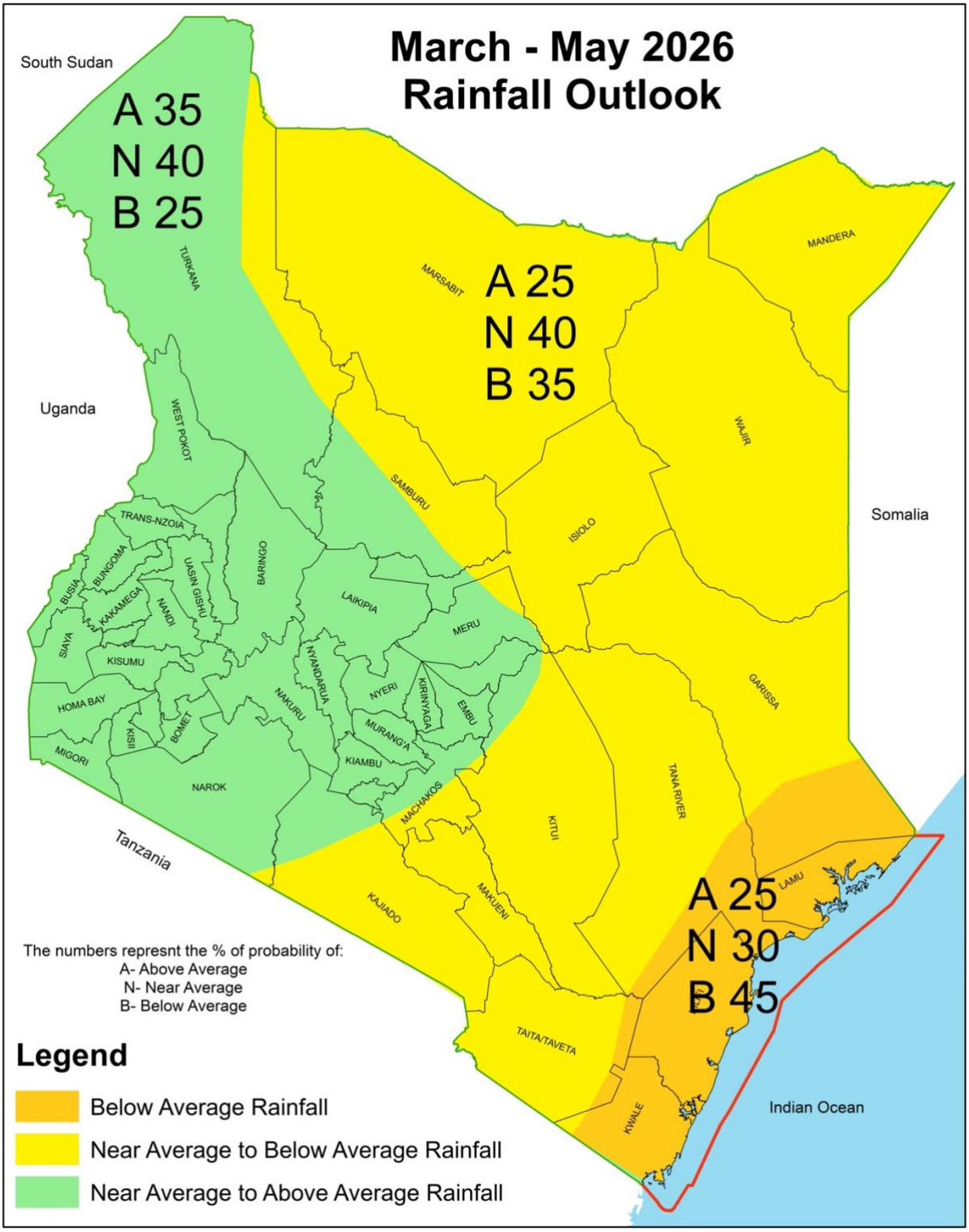

Figure 2a: MAM 2026 Rainfall Outlook

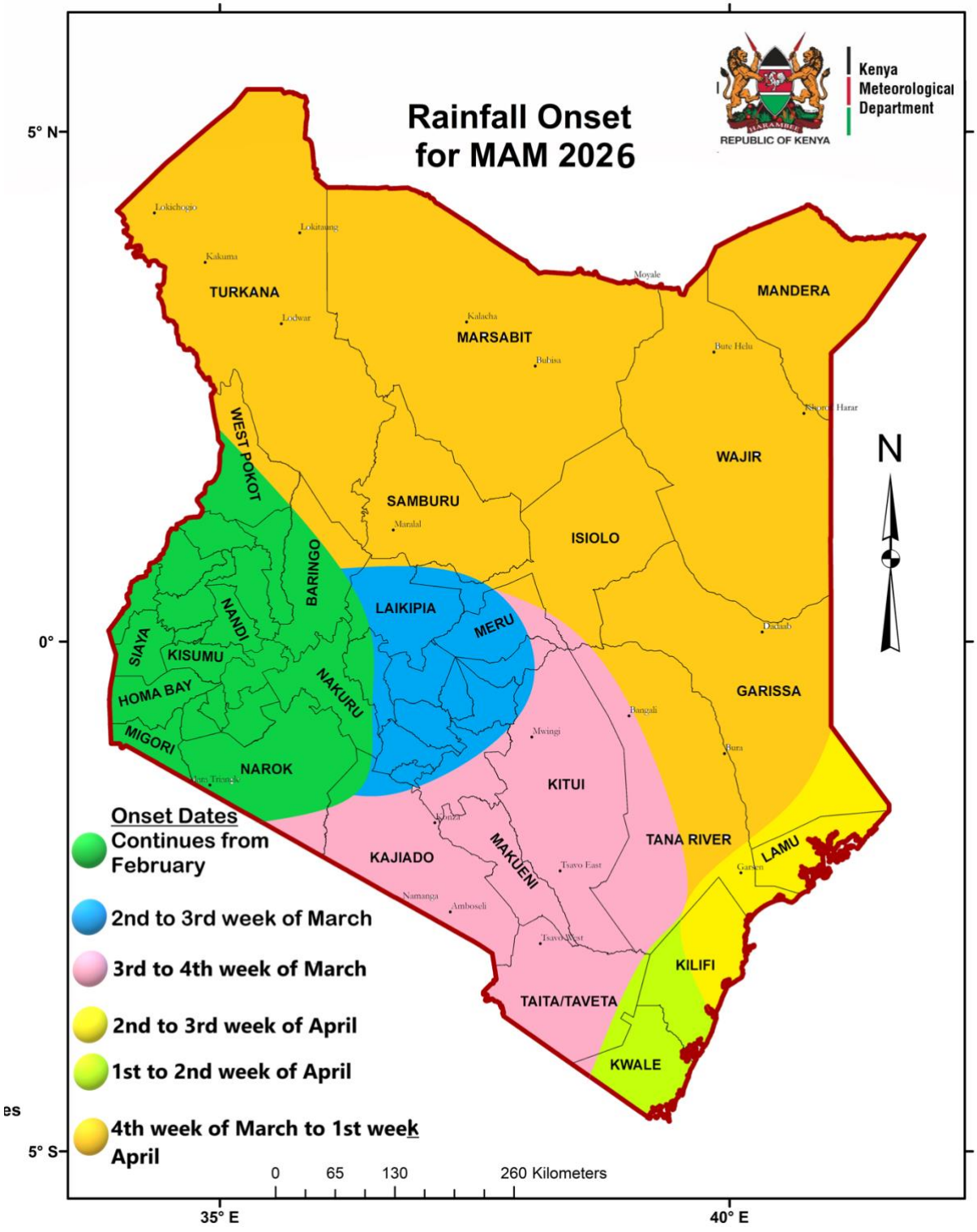

Figure 2b: MAM 2026 Rainfall Onset

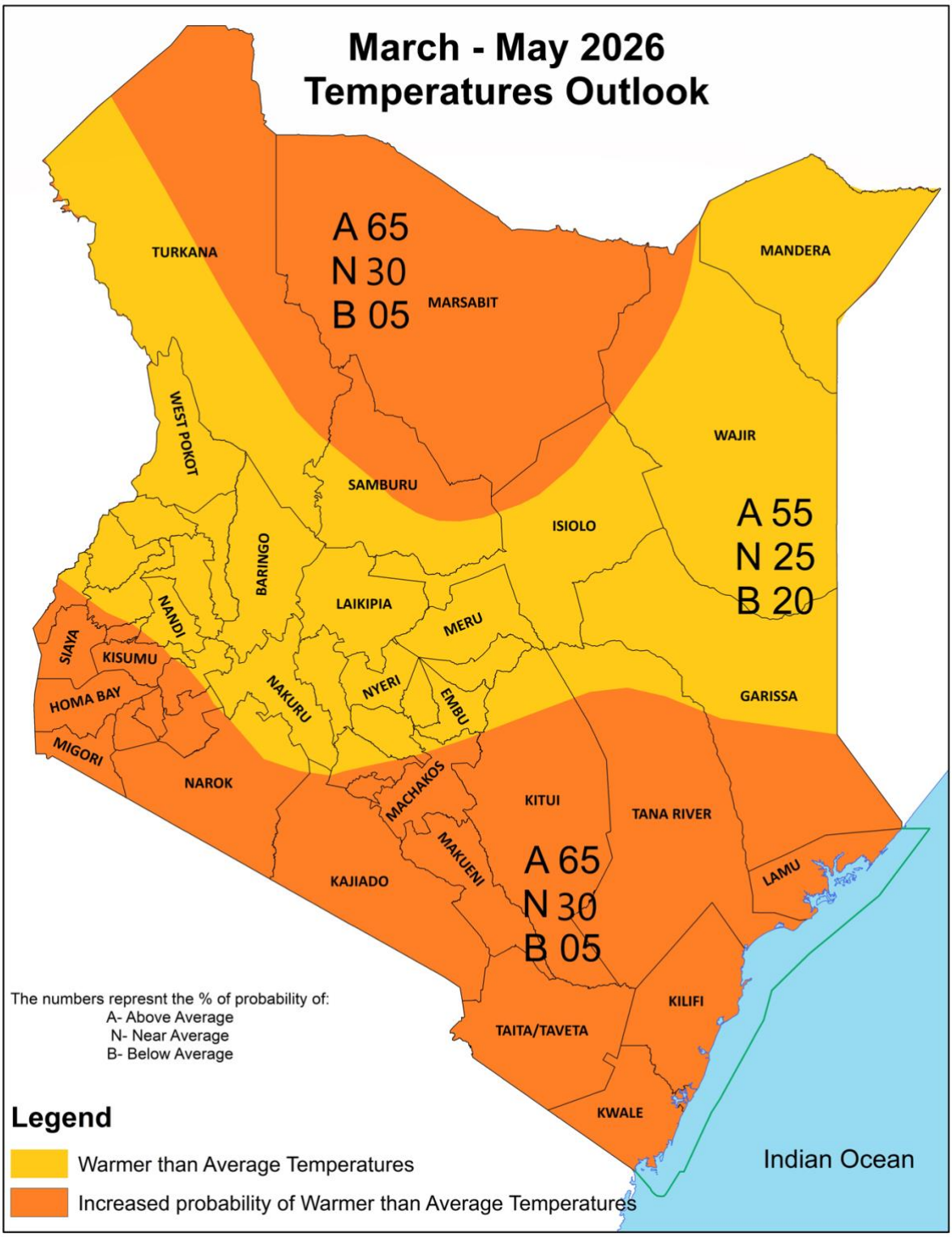

Figure 3: MAM 2026 Temperature Outlook