

CONSEQUENCES OF DROUGHT IN SOMALIA

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1. OVERVIEW

The humanitarian situation in Somalia has become increasingly fragile towards the end of 2016, especially in the northern regions. Drought conditions are deepening in Puntland and Somaliland, and have expanded to southern and central regions, including Gedo, Hiraan, Galgaduud and Lower Juba. The Deyr rainy season, which usually extends from October to December, has so far been poor, and high temperatures combined with limited amounts of rain in October 2016 that have led to drought conditions in most of Somalia, ranging from moderate to extreme. During the month of October, most regions registered less than half of the usual rainfall. Crop and pasture losses are widespread, and water shortages common. Substantial increases in water prices are being reported in the majority of regions, with price hikes of as much as 66 per cent in Xudur, Bakool region, and 58 per cent in Laas Caanood, Sool region. No significant rainfall is expected in the coming weeks and the drought conditions are likely to intensify until the next rainy season expected in April 2017. Water levels in Juba and Shabelle rivers are below normal for this time of year due to limited rain in the Ethiopian highlands. Water levels are expected to decline further, putting further stress on communities dependent on irrigation for growing crops.

Two out of five Somalis are already acutely food insecure and prospects for the Deyr season cereal production is bleak, with crop failure expected in many areas. A scale-up of humanitarian assistance is required to prevent further deterioration of the situation. If it continues at current levels, with around 1.6 million people reached per month, the number of people who will be in 'crisis' or 'emergency' is likely to increase, potentially to a drastic scale. A 20 per cent increase in number of people who cannot meet their daily food requirements was already registered in September 2016, up from 935,000 to 1.1 million in six months, according to the FAO-managed Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU). The nutrition situation has also deteriorated with over 320,000 acutely malnourished children in need of urgent nutrition support, including treatment for more than 50,000 who are severely malnourished and far more vulnerable than any other group. Water shortages may also trigger further outbreaks of water borne diseases. This follows a major outbreak of AWD/Cholera in the region in early 2016, with Somalia hit most severely, at a scale not seen in recent years. More than 13,600 cases of AWD/Cholera were registered from January to September 2016, up from 5,300 registered cases in 2015.

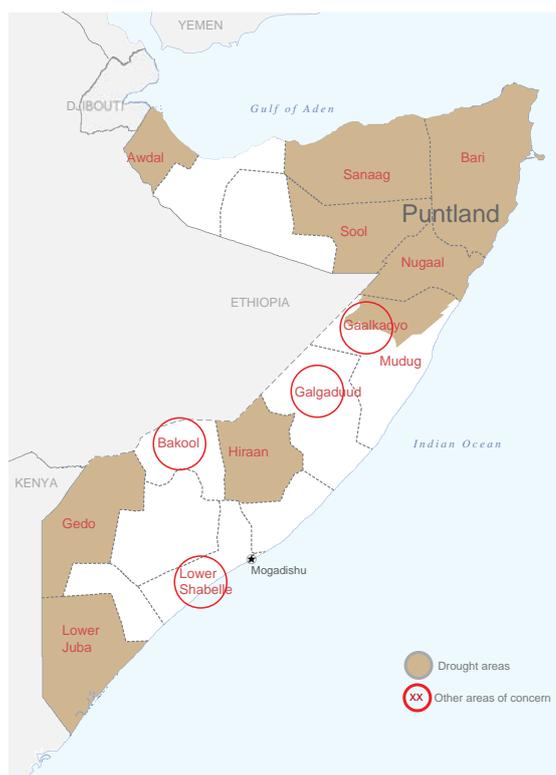
On 12 November 2016, the President of the Federal Government issued an appeal to all Somalis and the international community for support to drought stricken communities throughout the country. Appeals have also been issued by authorities in Jubaland (2 October), Puntland (5 October), and Somaliland (17 November).

The impact of the drought and the demand on humanitarian resources has been further magnified by a number of emerging crises, including an increase in conflict-related displacements and refugee returns from Kenya.

2. DROUGHT IN PERSPECTIVE

2.1 Puntland

Severe drought in Puntland is directly affecting approximately 150,000 people and has displaced an additional 12,000 people, according to an inter-agency assessment conducted in September 2016. The continuing drought has led to severe shortage of pasture and water, for humans and livestock, and consequently deterioration in livestock body conditions, declining livestock production and increased livestock deaths. Livestock prices have been steadily declining since February 2016 as has the terms of trade between goats and cereals, thus impacting people's access to food. Milk prices have more than doubled in the same period which is putting the lives of vulnerable people such as children and elderly people at risk. Large numbers of livestock are likely to perish in Bari and Nugaal regions as the situation deteriorates further due to poor Deyr rains, which could undermine the majority of people's livelihoods and food sources. Terms of trade between goats and cereals are also declining in some main markets. The decline is likely to be worsened in more remote rural markets. An extreme water shortage prevails, resulting in a 300 per cent increase in the cost of water since June 2015 from the equivalent of US\$5 for a 200 litre barrel of water to \$15 in some parts of Puntland.



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In some locations such as Himilisdiye, Hursaale and other remote pastoral settlements, the price of water has spiked from \$5 to \$30. If the drought continues to deteriorate, community coping mechanisms are likely to be abandoned putting vulnerable households at risk of acute watery diarrhoea (AWD)/cholera by drinking unsafe water. According to SPHERE standards, the maximum distance from households to the nearest water point is half a kilometre. However, the ongoing drought has increased the distances to available water points. Pastoral households interviewed reported that they trek an average distance of 60 km to access water points for both human and livestock consumption. In Nugaal region, some communities such as Meyle and Xaarxaarka reported that villagers travel up to 100 km in search of water for humans and livestock, often resulting in the wasting of their animal assets. The long distances to water sources mainly affects women, impacting on their other household duties. Lack of water supply has also increased hygiene and sanitation-related health problems, such as AWD. The rising prevalence of malnutrition and low availability of nutrition programmes have put children at risk, especially in Bari region where findings showed general acute malnutrition rates of 33 per cent for children, with 5 per cent being severely malnourished. Approximately 38 per cent of the assessed households indicate that children are not in school, undercutting the effectiveness of centers of learning as a catchment, especially for school feeding programmes to support children at risk of malnutrition.

Displacements have occurred, particularly amongst pastoralists, who have abandoned the search for better pastures and water sources to settle in among more sedentary populations. Families that cannot migrate or construct shelters on their own because of high cost put up make-shift settlements adjacent to land owned by relatives. 99 per cent of people displaced as a result of the drought reported that they have not received shelter/non-food items (NFIs) from humanitarian partners in the past year. Financial constraints, caused by protracted drought, have reduced the

ability to buy basic goods from markets.

2.2 Somaliland

After two consecutive failed rainy seasons in 2015, recovery from drought has remained elusive and short-lived across Somaliland, despite five regions receiving average to above average Gu rains in mid-2016. The FSNAU and the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET) reported in September 2016 that 31 per cent of the population, or more than one million people, will be in need of humanitarian assistance in Somaliland until the end of 2016. Acute malnutrition has worsened and 248,000 people face acute food security crisis. The poor performance of the Karan (August - September) rains and poor performance of the Deyr rains in October with poor prospects for the remainder of the season signal that a longer and deeper crisis will persist. In the Guban pastoral livelihood zone along the Gulf of Aden, which has been affected by persistent drought since early 2014, the prevailing food security crisis in the area could deteriorate to 'emergency' levels.

Preliminary findings of the inter-agency assessment conducted at the end of October 2016 indicate that 84 per cent of households have had their main sources of income affected by drought, with 62 per cent of these households reporting significant to complete loss of income. Some 86 per cent reported that they have lost livestock in the last season, which represents the main source of livelihood. Loss of livestock undermines existing sources of income and food while the resilience of drought affected families is seriously undermined. The assessment noted that drought-affected families are resorting to a range of negative coping strategies, including reducing the number of meals per day. Further, an increasing number of households obtain credit where available to purchase food and migration to other areas in search of pasture for livestock. Over 600 respondents participated in the assessment, which was stratified by the key social characteristics in the population, including region, livelihood zone and residential



A weak goat in Dharoor village of Bari region left at a nearby hut @UNFPA

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locality including urban, rural and IDPs.

Some 71 per cent of respondents identified lack of water as a major problem facing their family at this time. The majority of households obtain water from a singular source, water trucking. The drought has had implications for other aspects of water availability and quality. Nearly half of the people assessed reported that the distance to an available water sources has increased as a result of the drought. Protection concerns associated with the collection of water have been reported as the task mainly falls to women, who are vulnerable to harassment and abuse when unaccompanied. Prevalence of illness amongst children has increased as the quality of water has diminished with no available alternatives. Limited water for washing, cooking and cleaning also affects hygiene, raising the risk of AWD/ cholera outbreaks. As many as 92 per cent of respondents said that they did not have access to nutrition programmes since the onset of the drought, despite efforts by humanitarian actors to scale up services in early 2016 with support received through the 'Call for Aid', launched in March 2016.

Although the majority of households reported the presence of a learning space or school in their village or in close proximity, less than half of respondents reported that their children attend school. Reasons for non-attendance in school include the impact of the drought and inability to pay school fees. This also affects other programmes where schools are used as centres for food and water distribution, as well as hygiene awareness.

Protection concerns as a result of the drought were highlighted in the assessment. Some 24 per cent of households reported the separation of family members as a result of drought, particularly children separated from immediate family or guardians.

Nearly 22 per cent of those interviewed indicated they had no available health facilities within 50 km of their residence. Further, 33 per cent of the assessed population reported an increase in illness and disease among children, including malnutrition, since the onset of the drought. The highest reported increases were recorded in Togdheer (26 per cent), and Waqooyi Galbeed regions (14 per cent). Even for those who had health facilities within reasonable distance, almost half reported access was constrained due to increased cost of care.

The prolonged drought has had severe impacts on livelihoods, with low agricultural harvests, depleted food stocks, increased market prices for food commodities, livestock deaths, migration of livestock and/or people, lower market prices for livestock, depleted pasture and water resources, and lack of employment opportunities. This has significantly increased indebtedness and indicates a long road to recovery should the rains resume, and a possible quick spiral into further crisis if they do not.

2.3 Disputed regions of Sool and Sanaag

The Gu rains were sporadic throughout the north, with well below average rains recorded in the eastern parts of the disputed Sool and Sanaag regions.

There are clear indicators of increased vulnerabilities in these regions in the preliminary findings of the inter-agency assessment undertaken in October/November 2016. As in other parts of the north, large numbers of livestock are dying in both regions as the situation worsens. Similarly to neighboring Bari region in Puntland, assessments in Sanaag region have found general acute malnutrition rates of 33 per cent among children. Long distances to water sources and displacement as a result of drought are impacting people. However, humanitarian partners face limited access to the two disputed regions.

2.4 Gedo

In Gedo region, locally significant poor Gu rains and poor Deyr rains in October coupled with conflict have affected nearly 76,000 people, including 3,000 who left their homes in search of water, according to the inter-agency assessment report conducted in September 2016. An estimated 89 per cent of the pastoralists have lost at least one animal, while 77 per cent of animal deaths are attributed to the drought. Over 18 per cent of people living in Belet-Xaawo, Doolow and Luuq have been receiving cash assistance over the past 12 months while 43 per cent accessed cash through borrowing. Some 89 per cent of households have reduced meals to two per day while seven per cent have reduced to one meal. General acute malnutrition has worsened with over 95 per cent of those interviewed indicating eroding nutrition levels, with rates highest amongst internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Doolow, as well as in north Gedo riverine and agro-pastoral areas. An estimated 90 per cent of villages assessed rely on unsafe water sources for drinking and domestic purposes while most of the respondents travel between 15 and 35 km to source safe water. Some 74 per cent of households reported the absence of any sanitation facilities, which could help reignite the AWD/ cholera outbreak faced earlier in the year, which was brought under control through interventions by partners. Drought-induced displacement, though limited to date, but likely to increase due to poor Deyr rains in October, is poised to contribute to increasing family separation, gender-based violence (GBV) and possibly child recruitment as families implement negative coping mechanisms to survive.

2.5 Lower Juba

On 28 September, due to a worsening drought situation, the Jubaland authorities appealed for urgent humanitarian interventions in areas near Afmadow, Badhaadhe and Kismayo districts. Based on a WASH assessment in Afmadow town, an estimated 90,000 people, consisting of 14,750 households, including 800 newly arrived IDP households, have limited access to water as a result of the drought. The town depends mostly on one borehole and 35 unprotected shallow wells, of which 30 have run dry because of a lack of rainfall. Of the water available, high salinity rates, exposure to household waste and a lack of storage capacity further limit quality and access. The arrival of a large number of a large number of refugees returning from Dadaab in Kenya

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is also putting pressure on limited resources available in urban areas and IDP settlements in the region. A full inter-agency assessment is scheduled for the second half of November 2016 in Lower Juba region to identify comprehensively needs and gaps.

3. OTHER HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

3.1 Local conflicts and displacement

One year on from violent conflict and associated displacement, conflict in Gaalkacyo has again displaced an estimated 90,000 people. Based on the inter-agency rapid assessment, up to 60 per cent of IDPs residing in the town have been forced into secondary displacement, with over 80 per cent of the displaced being women, children and the elderly. All schools in the town have remained closed for more than a month affecting over 20,000 learners. Health services have also been severely disrupted with the scaling down of south Gaalkacyo hospital services to emergency response teams. Humanitarian partners are providing food, health, WASH, NFIs/Shelter nutrition and protection support services. It is expected that displaced people will return to their homes if the current peaceholds.

Conflict in Lower Shabelle region displaced an estimated 29,000 people in October. Reports also indicate that non-state armed actors directly targeted civilians, ordering residents of some 30 villages in Afgooye, Qoryoley and Marka districts to vacate the area. A majority of the IDPs have settled with host communities, while some have joined existing IDP settlements. Rising insecurity and access challenges prevent the safe delivery of humanitarian supplies. Health and nutrition supplies are needed in areas hosting IDPs, as well as the delivery of emergency NFI/shelter kits.

The withdrawal of international and national security forces from at least eight locations in Bakool, Hiraan and Galgaduud regions has resulted in non-state armed actors seizing vacated areas. This has triggered the displacement of some 5,000 people to date with additional withdrawals possible. Non-state armed actors reportedly subjected civilians to apprehension, torture, arbitrary killings and forced recruitment. The withdrawals have also further reduced humanitarian access in areas that are already hard to reach, disrupting ongoing humanitarian operations in these areas, many of which have only benefited from assistance since 2014.

3.2 REFUGEE RETURNS

According to UNHCR, nearly 26,000 Somalis have voluntarily returned to Somalia from Dadaab camp, Kenya, since the start of 2016. The majority have returned since the announcement by Kenyan authorities issued in May 2016 to close the camp. The principle areas of return are urban areas, predominantly to Kismayo, Baidoa and Mogadishu. Since mid-2016, the package that returning refugees receive was augmented to include cash allowances, six months food rations, NFIs and up to \$1,000 conditional shelter package per family. Due to the limited

capacity of host communities and to avoid more returnees joining IDP settlements, reintegration and livelihoods support are crucial. Furthermore, an inter-agency assessment for Gedo region highlighted the importance of ensuring sufficient protection to vulnerable and marginalized groups, including female-headed households, children, the elderly and people with chronic illnesses. An estimated 60 per cent of returnees are women and children, who may encounter risks related to family separation, GBV and forced recruitment. Additional returns of Somali refugees from Yemen are also expected due to the ongoing conflict.

4. FUNDING

Humanitarian funding for the remainder of the year is at critically low levels, with the 2016 Somalia Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) funded at just 41.5 per cent (\$367 million) of \$885 million requested. In March 2016, the Somalia Humanitarian Country Team launched the 'Call for Aid', to fund \$127 million of HRP activities required to respond to drought conditions in the Puntland and Somaliland. The deteriorating drought conditions in the north resulted in an urgent need for life-saving assistance and emergency livelihood support. The 'Call for Aid' response strategy focused on the assistance to the most vulnerable, restoring and strengthening livelihoods to build resilience to recurrent shocks. This strategy is in line with the 2016 HRP objectives, extending from the El Niño contingency plan developed in September 2015. The response outlined in this plan is coordinated through the usual coordination mechanisms led by the Humanitarian Coordinator and the Somalia Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), in close consultation with relevant authorities. In Somaliland, where clusters and sectoral working groups have been increasingly closely aligned since 2011, the authorities have requested OCHA to take a lead role in coordinating sectoral emergency sub-groups to assist the government and partners in responding to the drought. Three months after the launch of the appeal, only \$49 million was received and only a fraction of the \$61 million that could be implemented in the second half of the 'Call for Aid's' implementation period was received. The front-loading of drought response without sufficient contributions later in the year has limited the response capacity towards the end of 2016, with partners sharply curtailing all but the most basic life-saving activities.

Due to underfunded 2016 HRP and 'Call for Aid', partners have not had sufficient resources to maintain the appropriate scale and scope of the humanitarian response until the end of the year. At the moment, the humanitarian outlook for the remaining of 2016 is grim, with growing humanitarian needs particularly due to prolonged drought conditions and a large funding gap. While the HRP is grossly underfunded, the humanitarian needs, particularly those related to drought, are growing.

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5. CONCLUSION

The worsening and expanded drought, poor Deyr rains in October and poor prospects for the remainder of the season is likely to further worsen food insecurity countrywide to the point where isolated areas could descend into profound need on a scale not seen since the end of famine in early 2012. The humanitarian situation is likely to continue to worsen until the start of the spring/Gu rains in April 2017. Further displacement and increased risk of protection violations and conflict, as well as the return of Somalis from Kenya and Yemen, add additional burden and accentuate the immediate life-saving humanitarian needs, while reversing some of the gains in recovery so far. To avoid the escalation of the crisis, the Somalia HCT is urgently appealing for funding to enable response activities through the end of 2016 and for timely and robust support for the 2017 HRP.

