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PRESS RELEASE

Three years since Somalia famine, aid agencies fear high risk of relapse

It took 16 warning for the international community to respond to the last catastrophe; lessons must be learnt from past to avert another crisis in the Horn of Africa.

Nairobi, July 20, 2014. Three years ago today, a famine was declared in Somalia. During the famine, 260,000 lives were lost to hunger, malnutrition and disease. Aid agencies today caution, again, that the signs of a drought are re-emerging in Somalia and urge for these not to be ignored in order to avoid a relapse into the conditions of the 2011 catastrophe.

“Responding after a food crisis costs at least three times more than taking preventive action. If we continue to ignore the warning signs, this crisis will cost donors and governments significantly more than acting now,” said Enzo Vecchio, Oxfam Somalia Country Director.

In the three years since the famine was declared in Somalia, the population in need of urgent assistance has reduced from 4 million to 2.9 million thanks to moderate improvements in funding, access and general conditions on the ground. Aid agencies have stepped up their support to affected Somalis to not only help them recover but also to avert another crisis, and achieve sustainable, flexible and long term solutions to the cycles of drought and food crisis.

But those gains are now at risk of being reversed because of an extremely poor rainy season, inadequate and less flexible funding levels, conflict and displacement.

Tanja Schuemer, the Director of Somalia NGO Consortium reiterates by saying, “These precious gains, made since 2011, must not be lost because the world no longer considers Somalia as a priority. NGOs' call to all actors is to listen to the warnings flagged and work with us to address the urgent needs of Somali people. Somalia must never go back to another famine.”

There are currently over 300,000 malnourished children and 2.9 million people needing urgent life-saving and livelihood support in Somalia. The number is expected to rise as conditions continue to worsen. Those who will be hardest hit in the coming months are the 1.1 million internally displaced people across the Somali region.

“Most affected people are still recovering from the massive losses of the 2011 drought and famine. This time, we must not fail the people of Somalia.” Says Francois Batalingaya, World Vision’s Country Director for Somalia.

In May 2014, agencies warned of the risk of relapse in the humanitarian situation.¹ At the time, only 12 percent of Somalia’s annual humanitarian needs had been funded² out of the required USD 933 million. The percentage has since risen to 27 percent - still well short of target for the half yearly

¹ [Reference link to the Risk of Relapse report](#)

² <http://fts.unocha.org/pageloader.aspx?page=emergencyDetails&appealID=1037>

point. The current funding gap means that programmes addressing these needs and delivering vital basic services are at risk of shutting down.

Agencies are calling for urgent and consistent support in the next three to six months to avoid a relapse to the 2011 catastrophe³.

In the 2011 famine, it took 16 early warnings and finally a declaration of famine, before action and adequate funding was finally made available. To date, **eight** warnings of an impending food crisis across Somalia have been issued since January 2014. In order for humanitarian organizations to continue lifesaving and resilience work in Somalia, it is critical that international and national leaders remain fully committed to supporting humanitarian and development work by increasing access to isolated communities and providing sufficient funding.

“Though the number of afflicted has declined, Somali men, women and children still need more donor commitment to funding humanitarian assistance long term. Principles of International Humanitarian law need to be upheld by all parties to the conflict, ensuring unhindered humanitarian access to populations in need to avert this imminent humanitarian crisis.” Says Degan Ali, executive director of Adeso.

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Adeso	ARC
CARE	CISP
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Islamic Relief Worldwide	Jubbalandese Charity Centre (JCC)
Medair	Mercy Corp
Muslim Aid	NRC
Oxfam	Solidarites International
WASDA	World Relief Germany
World Vision	

³ [Reference to Risk of Relapse Call to Action](#)