

Famine thresholds surpassed in three new areas of southern Somalia

NAIROBI/WASHINGTON AUGUST 3, 2011 – **New evidence indicates that both the prevalence of acute malnutrition and rates of crude mortality have surpassed famine thresholds in the agropastoral areas of Balcad and Cadale districts of Middle Shabelle¹, the Afgoye corridor IDP settlement, and the Mogadishu IDP community. Food access indicators in these areas surpassed the famine threshold earlier this year. As a result, FSNAU and FEWS NET have now classified these areas as IPC Phase 5 – Famine. These three areas join the Bakool agropastoral livelihood zone and the Lower Shabelle region, where famine was declared on July 20th.** A humanitarian emergency persists across all other regions of southern Somalia, and tens of thousands of excess deaths have already occurred. Despite increased attention in recent weeks, current humanitarian response remains inadequate, due in part to ongoing access restrictions and difficulties in scaling-up emergency assistance programs, as well as funding gaps. As a result, famine is expected to spread across all regions of the south in the coming four to six weeks and is likely to persist until at least December 2011. Continued efforts to implement an immediate, large-scale, and comprehensive response are needed. Nationwide, 3.7 million people are in crisis, with 3.2 million people in need of immediate, lifesaving assistance (2.8 million in the south).

The current crisis in southern Somalia is driven by a combination of factors. The total failure of the October-December *Deyr* rains (secondary season) and the poor performance of the April-June *Gu* rains (primary season) have resulted in crop failure, reduced labor demand, poor livestock body conditions, and excess animal mortality. The resulting decline in maize and sorghum availability has subsequently pushed local cereal prices to record levels and, in combination with reduced livestock prices and wages, substantially reduced household purchasing power in all livelihood zones. Large-scale displacement and significant limitations on humanitarian access have further exacerbated the situation.

Based on the Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) scale, version 1.1, famine exists when at least 20 percent of the population has extremely limited access to basic food requirements, global acute malnutrition exceeds 30 percent, and the death rate exceeds 2/10,000/day for the entire population. In regard to the current situation:

- Local cereal prices across the south are far above average, more than double and triple 2010 prices in some areas, and continue to rise. As a result, both livestock-to-cereal and wage-to-cereal terms of trade have deteriorated substantially. Across all livelihoods, poor households (~30 percent of the population) are unable to meet basic food needs and have almost no ability to cope with these food deficits.
- During July, FSNAU conducted 18 representative nutrition and mortality surveys across southern Somalia, 16 among local populations, and two among internally displaced populations. **Across all 18 surveys, the average GAM prevalence was 38.3 percent and the average SAM prevalence was 16.9 percent.** GAM exceeds 35 percent in 14 of the 18 survey areas. The highest recorded levels of acute malnutrition are in Bay and Gedo (agropastoral) where the GAM prevalence exceeds 50 percent. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has verified these findings.
- Population-wide death rates are above the alert level (1/10,000/day) across all areas of the south, above the Famine threshold (2/10,000/day) in the Bakool and Middle Shabelle (Balcad and Cadale) agropastoral livelihood zones, and more than double the famine threshold in Lower Shabelle and among IDPs in the Afgoye corridor and Mogadishu. Tens of thousands of people have died in the past three months. **Under-5 death rates are higher than 4/10,000/day in all areas of the south, peaking at >13/10,000/day in riverine and agropastoral areas of Lower Shabelle and among Afgoye and Mogadishu IDPs. An under-5 death rate of 13/10,000/day is equivalent to 10 percent of children under five dying every 11 weeks.**
- Information on food access, malnutrition, and mortality in the Dadaab (Kenya) and Dolo Ado (Ethiopia) refugee camps is limited. However, available data indicates that households have difficulty accessing adequate food, especially for those who have arrived recently. Surveys indicate that the prevalence of acute malnutrition exceeds 30 percent among new arrivals and under-5 mortality rates and crude death rates reportedly exceed 4/10,000/day and 2/10,000/day, respectively, in some areas.



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



EUROPEAN COMMISSION



The current situation represents the most severe humanitarian crisis in the world today and Africa's worst food security crisis since Somalia's 1991/92 famine. Further deterioration is considered likely given the very high levels of both severe acute malnutrition and under-5 mortality in combination with an expectation of worsening pasture and water availability, a continued increase in local cereal prices, and a below-average *Gu* season harvest. During the 1991/92 famine, a significant "wave" of mortality occurred following the start of the October rains, despite widespread food assistance, because health interventions were inadequate to prevent major disease outbreaks.

A massive multisectoral response is critical to prevent additional deaths and total livelihood/social collapse. Most immediately, interventions to improve food access and to address health/nutrition issues are needed. In the medium term, interventions to rebuild and support livelihoods are critical. Extraordinary measures to provide these responses should be implemented. These assistance needs will persist through at least December 2011.

FSNAU and FEWS NET will continue to monitor conditions and outcomes, update analysis, and report on current and projected levels of food insecurity and malnutrition. Joint food security and nutrition updates are released every ten days and the results of the 2011 Post-*Gu* seasonal assessment, which will cover the entire country, will be released on August 19th. Repeated nutrition and mortality surveys will begin across southern Somalia in the next week and will continue for the foreseeable future. All information will be made available through www.fews.net and www.fsnau.org.

ⁱ Results from a representative survey of all agropastoral livelihood zones of Middle Shabelle indicate that levels of acute malnutrition and mortality have crossed famine thresholds. However, the cases of malnutrition and deaths identified by the survey are not evenly distributed across the region. Instead, there is significant clustering in Balcad and Cadale districts. This geographic distribution is supported by the proximity of these districts to Mogadishu, information from field staff, and the relatively better service availability in Jowhar District. Therefore, the current famine declaration applies to only these two areas of Middle Shabelle.