Over 3,000 people a day fleeing drought in Somalia

The Norwegian Refugee Council’s (NRC) latest data shows that 438,000 people in Somalia have been displaced since November, by the worst drought the country has experienced in 20 years.

“Over 3,000 people a day are being forced to abandon their homes in search of water and food. This is the highest displacement we’ve witnessed since the 2011 famine, and it’s spiralling higher each day,” said NRC’s Country Director in Somalia, Victor Moses. “The indicators are lining up dangerously with what we saw in the lead up to the 2011 famine.”

NRC’s Protection and Return Monitoring Network, which is supported by UNHCR, has 39 partners working across Somalia gathering information on the drought. The latest data indicates that two-thirds of all those displaced have fled from Mudug, Bay, Shabelle and Sool regions. Over half of people displaced are fleeing to three regions – Banadir, Mudug and Bay. A total of 63,000 people have arrived in Baidoa, Bay Region’s capital, since January. Almost 85,000 people have arrived to Mogadishu since November.

Families have told us harrowing stories of abandoning their weak cattle, of being forced to leave their homes to search for food and water. Halima, a young mother with 11 children, told NRC of the devastation she experienced firsthand in Belethawa, Gedo province: “I lost ten goats. One day they just started falling and dying. I decided to move away, as I feared that my children would start falling and dying too.”

The drought is inflaming an already dire humanitarian situation in Somalia. Half the population - over 6 million people - face acute food insecurity. This is 1 million people more than just 6 months ago. Children are now dying of malnutrition, while many more continue to be exposed to severe acute malnutrition if support is delayed.

Where food is available, prices continue to surge. They are expected to spike further in the months ahead, according to the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization. Abdia, a 48-year-old mother from Dogob village in south-central Somalia told NRC she had resorted to begging for food to survive: “We beg for food, sometimes we take credit from shops. Now I owe some shopkeepers more than US$50. I’ve been borrowing water, rice, sugar and cooking oil.”

To make matters worse, forecasts indicate that below to near average rainfall is expected across most parts of Somalia between April and June. Cholera is hammering communities too. The drought is forcing people to drink unsafe water. Some 11,000 cases of cholera have been confirmed so far, while 268 people have been confirmed dead this year in areas where aid agencies have access.
“These are clear hallmarks of a catastrophe in the making, with devastating impacts to displaced families,” said Moses. “Now is our last chance to avert a famine. Donors have been generous and the money has started to come in. We are in a race against time to turn the situation around.”

NRC is currently on the ground in affected areas. We have reached over 175,000 people hit by the drought so far this year. We plan to assist over 240,000 people with cash support by mid-April. NRC is also leading a DFID/IRF-funded drought response consortium of five partners who are collectively reaching 450,000 people with a combination of food security, water and sanitation support. We are also coordinating an ECHO-funded cash support alliance to drought-affected Somalis, which will reach some 350,000 people. These two efforts will collectively reach an estimated 800,000 Somalis in the next three months. “I just hope that this will be enough,” said Moses.

Facts about the humanitarian situation in Somalia
- An estimated 1.1 million people are internally displaced.
- Another 1.2 million people are living as refugees outside the country.
- Over 1 million children are forecast to be acutely malnourished this year, including 185,000 who could die soon if they do not receive urgent medical treatment.
- Somalia is one of the poorest countries in the world. Over 73 per cent of the population live below the poverty line, on less than US$1.25 per day. Life expectancy is just 51 years.

Note to editors:
- NRC has spokespeople in Somalia and Kenya available for interview.
- Photos and stories of people affected by the drought are available [here](#) free to use.
- The Norwegian Refugee Council is a humanitarian organisation working in more than 25 countries globally, including Kenya, South Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia and Eritrea. It has been working in Somalia since 2004. For more information log onto [www.nrc.no](http://www.nrc.no).

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