

Humanitarian partners relieving suffering and scaling up assistance in Somalia to avert famine

Mogadishu, 20 February 2017 — In view of the serious humanitarian situation, and the risk of a famine unfolding in Somalia, humanitarian partners are scaling up assistance and protection and have issued an Operational Plan for Famine Prevention to immediately scale up humanitarian response to save lives and protect livelihoods. The plan reflects a significant shift from the drought response, which has been ongoing since late 2015, to scaled-up famine prevention. Humanitarians in Somalia are now seeking \$825 million to reach the most vulnerable with life-saving assistance until June 2017, as drought conditions continue to worsen. Malnutrition and drought-related disease outbreaks and distress migration are already on the rise.

“The drought situation is deteriorating rapidly. We are at a critical phase and we need to act fast and efficiently to avoid the worst. Accelerated scale-up of assistance is required to avoid a dramatic rise in the number of malnourished children and a spike in mortality similar to that seen in April and May 2011, several months before the last famine was declared in July 2011. It is critical that everyone, including the international community, Somalis in-country and in the diaspora, lines up behind the Somali leadership to help prevent another famine. Humanitarians are further scaling up the response, but we need all hands on deck and strong partnerships,” said Peter de Clercq, the Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia.

Out of 12.3 million Somalis, over 6.2 million are now in need of humanitarian assistance, up from five million in September 2016. Of these, nearly 3 million need urgent life-saving assistance, a drastic increase from 1.1 million six months ago. Children are among the most vulnerable and bear the brunt of the drought. It is expected that 944,000 children will be acutely malnourished this year. As many as 133,000 school going children are at immediate risk of dropping out of school.

Humanitarian donors have moved quickly to generously provide additional funding and allow NGOs and UN agencies to step up assistance. By scaling up humanitarian response early, humanitarian partners intend to treat 200,000 severely malnourished children by June. Food security partners plan to reach 5.5 million people with life-saving emergency food assistance, while nutrition partners will target 2.2 million people, and water and sanitation will be boosted to reach an estimated 4.5 million. Health partners will expand their reach to nearly 4.5 million people. Nutrition partners are scaling up support to acutely malnourished women and children, and providing pregnant and lactating mothers with critical life-saving nutritional activities. Food security activities are being scaled up in the most affected areas and are expanding into hard-to-reach areas. WASH partners are providing water to some schools and to the most severely affected areas. Emergency health supplies have been prepositioned in AWD/cholera-affected areas.

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