Areas in the north face high levels of food insecurity

Severe drought conditions continue to compound the humanitarian situation in several parts of Somalia. While the risk of famine has reduced, humanitarian needs are worryingly high and the fragile gains which have been made in 2017 could easily be reversed. Areas in northern and central pastoral parts of the country are experiencing a deterioration in the humanitarian situation as they face high levels of food insecurity.

Somali and authorities, through the National Disaster Preparedness and Food Authority, declared a drought emergency on 31 January calling for urgent humanitarian assistance in areas facing acute food crisis. In Puntland, on 27 February, the Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management Agency (HADMA) issued an appeal for urgent humanitarian assistance for over 600,000 drought-affected people. This appeal follows an earlier warning by HADMA on 15 February, regarding the worsening impact of the drought conditions. Priority needs include food, water, health and nutrition assistance.

In these areas, with the majority of people (62 per cent) in Emergency (IPC Phase 4), the need for assistance remains high and urgent, particularly among internally displaced persons (IDPs) and those in rural livelihoods zones. Pastoralists in northern and central regions lost a large percentage of livestock in 2017, and the recovery of herds to pre-crisis levels will require several consecutive favourable seasons.

The post-Deyr analysis by the FAO-managed Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU) and the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET), projects that the expected deterioration of the current poor pasture and water shortages during the dry Jilaal (January – March) season will almost certainly adversely affect livestock reproduction, access to agricultural employment, and water and food prices. Several areas face acute humanitarian needs, mainly those with numerous population groups classified as Crisis
and Emergency (IPC Phases 3 and 4). In particular, Galmudug and regions of Sool and Sanaag in the north face large basic food gaps. The situation in Sool and Sanaag has been compounded by renewed military tension between Somaliland and Puntland.

The drought, spanning four consecutive below-average rainy seasons, has eroded households’ livelihoods and coping mechanisms, caused mass displacement, and exhausted the resilience of many families across the country. Recovery for the most vulnerable populations will be extremely challenging and slow. Due to these underlying vulnerabilities, seasonal improvements are fragile, with a likely rapid deterioration of the humanitarian situation in many areas, unless the assistance levels seen in 2017 are sustained.

Nearly half a million people in Somalia are in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and a further 2.2 million are in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and are in urgent need of life-saving assistance as their situation will deteriorate by June 2018. Pastoralists are amongst the hardest hit by drought, but crop-dependent areas will feel the impact much earlier than livestock zones. Hotspots, especially where crop failure and livestock deaths are being reported, need to be prioritized for assistance.

The current forecast is for an average to below-average rainfall during the Gu (April – June) rainy season, when most of Somalia’s staple food is grown. According to the latest Climate Outlook, the 2018 Gu season will result in depressed rains in many parts of the country. This might further exacerbate the existing drought conditions in some areas, as well as aggravate the situation of people in Crisis and Emergency.

Several areas experience water crisis

Water shortages have been reported in different parts of the country as drought conditions continue to deteriorate. According to humanitarian partners, some areas are already experiencing stress induced migration of pastoralist communities in search of water and pasture. Affected communities are also being forced to dig trenches along riverbeds in search of water that is not contaminated. This has raised concern among humanitarian actors, regarding the possible outbreak of waterborne diseases.

In the eastern parts of the Mudug region, particularly in the Hobyo and Jariban districts, shortage of pasture and water has reportedly resulted in the movement of pastoralists to others areas in the region in search of pasture. In the Lower Juba region, acute water shortages have been reported in the Afmadow and Badhadhe districts. Water pans in these rural areas have dried up and shallow wells are depleted. The towns of Kulbiyow and Afmadow are among the hardest hit, since their only
Severe water shortages have been reported in different parts of the county as drought conditions deteriorate.

Malnutrition rates countrywide are at ‘serious levels’ and are amongst the highest in the world.

Sources of water are shallow wells and water pans, respectively, which depend on rains for re-supply.

Similarly, humanitarian partners have reported that widespread water shortages are affecting communities in different areas along the Shabelle River. The river and the seasonal water catchment areas have reportedly dried up, while existing boreholes and shallow wells are not producing enough water. The price of water in most areas has increased by almost 50 per cent.

Partners have raised concern over water shortages among IDPs in the Ceel Akhwan settlement, some 10km south of Gaalkacyo town. The settlement hosts over 500 drought-displaced people. Humanitarian partners are providing assistance to affected communities, but additional resources are required to avoid a deterioration of the situation.

Urgent assistance required for acutely malnourished children.

Malnutrition rates among children remain at ‘serious levels’ and are amongst the worst in the world. Despite a slight improvement in overall nutrition rates countrywide, according to the post-Deyr analysis by FSNAU and FEWSNET, treatment and support are still urgently needed for an estimated 301,000 acutely malnourished children below the age of five, including 48,000 severely malnourished children.

More than half of the 5.4 million people in need of assistance are children. Over 1.2 million children are projected to be malnourished in 2018, a majority of whom are amongst displaced communities.

Out of 30 nutrition surveys conducted by FSNAU and partners between November and December 2017, eight showed ‘Critical’ levels of Global Acute Malnutrition (15-30 per cent GAM). In June and July 2017, 20 out of 31 nutrition surveys showed ‘Critical’ levels of Global Acute Malnutrition.

Countrywide, the median prevalence of acute malnutrition has improved from ‘Critical’ (17.4 per cent GAM) in June-July 2017 to ‘Serious’ (13.8 per cent GAM) in November-December 2017. Mortality rates have declined compared to previous seasons. However, Crude Death Rate (CDR) is still Serious (0.5 - <1 per 10,000 per day) in 14 out of 30 population groups surveyed. Under-Five Death Rate (U5DR) is also Serious (1- <2 per 10 000 per day) in 5 out of 30 population groups surveyed.

Humanitarian partners were encouraged by a letter dated 17 February 2018 signed by the acting Minister of Health of the federal government directed to the Somali police forces calling for the seizure of contraband aid supplies in local markets, particularly nutritional supplements for malnourished children. There were some reported seizures of stocks held by merchants in response to the letter, though it is unclear if state level administrations will follow suit to safeguard humanitarian supplies.

Funding Update

London conference draws attention on Somalia humanitarian crisis

The United Kingdom, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) and the Federal Government of Somalia will hold a high level event on the humanitarian situation in Somalia on 6 March in London.

The meeting will be a key milestone in an ongoing process to build and sustain attention on Somalia and ensure that early funding is available to maintain critical famine prevention and recovery efforts. It will seek to highlight the scale of the humanitarian situation in the country and to generate political and financial momentum for the 2018 response. Senior decision makers and partners will come together to agree on how to prioritize and fund that
response, and how to address priority gaps. Another key outcome of the meeting is to review lessons learned from a successful 2017 famine prevention response and how these can be applied to best effect in 2018.

**The SHF to allocate $22 million, but resources are urgently needed**

The Somalia Humanitarian Fund (SHF) has issued a call for proposals to eligible partners to allocate US$22 million towards a response boost in areas with a high concentration of IDPs, high levels of malnutrition and limited access to basic services. The SHF funds will mainly target areas in southern Somalia’s Baidoa, Mogadishu and Afgooye IDP settlements, as well as underserved rural areas in Lower Shabelle and Bakool, in order to prevent further rural to urban migration. It is hoped that the allocation will be complimentary to a possible Rapid Response allocation by the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) managed by OCHA New York. The CERF has been a consistent and timely supporter of humanitarian action in Somalia.

A third of the $22 million will support integrated response, mostly in IDP settlements, while the remaining funds will be used to kick-start critical interventions across nine clusters. Activities have been strategically selected to help address food insecurity and improve nutrition outcomes through key interventions, such as the provision of agricultural input in preparation for the next rainy season, cash transfers to ensure immediate access to food and scaling up treatment of malnutrition including preposition of emergency lifesaving nutrition supplies.

These interventions will also improve health and WASH outcomes while education facilities and other basic services will be used as key entry points for service delivery to the most vulnerable. Additionally, protection risks will be addressed and mitigated through multiple activities including community psychosocial support, provision of emergency shelter/NFI kits and establishment of referral pathways for GBV survivors. Persons with special needs or heightened vulnerabilities will be also be supported.

While the support from SHF is vital, further sustained funding is required to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance and livelihood support to millions of Somalis in need. Frontloading sufficient funds for the response in Somalia early in the year is a critical part of keeping the situation from deteriorating further in the coming months. By the end of February, the 2018 HRP was only 3.6 percent ($51.9 M) funded.


For further information, please contact:
Tapiwa Gomo, Head of Communication, gomo@un.org, Tel. +252 616 548 007.
Antonette Miday, Public Information Officer, miday@un.org, Tel. +254-731 043 156.
OCHA humanitarian bulletins are available at [www.unocha.org/somalia](http://www.unocha.org/somalia) | [www.unocha.org](http://www.unocha.org) | [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)