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HIGHLIGHTS

- Food insecurity is expected to worsen in Somalia in 2021 with 2.7 million people likely to face acute food insecurity or emergency by mid-year.
- Parts of Somalia face critical water shortages, particularly Puntland, Galmudug and Jubaland, where drought conditions have already been reported.
- Spike in cases of female genital mutilation linked to the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures that have forced girls to stay at home.
- Humanitarian situation in Bakool region worsens due to insecurity, disruption of economic and commercial activities, and restricted access.
- Plight of IDPs worsened by upsurge in forced evictions, lack of opportunities, harsh livelihood conditions, water shortages and inadequate health-services.



DSRSG/RC/HC Adam Abdelmoula (right) meeting IDPs in Baidoa. Photo: HC's office.

KEY FIGURES

5.9M

People in need of humanitarian assistance

2.6M

People displaced by conflict and natural disasters

73K

People affected by Deyr floods

2.7M

People food insecure through December, including 839,000 acutely malnourished children

25

Children infected by polio in 2020

FOOD SECURITY OUTLOOK FOR 2021 IS BLEAK

Food insecurity is expected to worsen in 2021 across Somalia, driven by the effects of localized floods, below-average rainfall and a worsening Desert Locust infestation. In the absence of humanitarian assistance, over 2.7 million people are expected to face crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity by mid-2021, according to the findings of the 2020 post-Deyr seasonal food security and nutrition [assessment](#). An additional 2.9 million people are expected to be under food stress, bringing the total number of people facing acute food insecurity to 5.6 million. Approximately 840,000 children under the age of 5 are likely to be acutely malnourished, including nearly 143,000 who are likely to be severely malnourished.

While large-scale humanitarian food assistance and government support since July 2020 is likely to have mitigated the magnitude and severity of food insecurity, the situation is expected to deteriorate towards mid-year among poor rural, urban and displaced populations. The situation will likely be exacerbated by erratic weather patterns which are expected to continue in 2021, including La Niña in the first quarter of the year, with drought conditions forecast due to a harsh *Jilaal* dry season (January-March 2021) and possible delayed or poor *Gu* rains (April-June 2021). Already, pre-drought conditions have been recorded in Somaliland, Jubaland, Galmudug and Puntland, characterized by widely depleted *berkeds* and shallow wells, loss of livestock, as well as extensive critical loss of pasture. In addition, the Desert Locust infestation is expected to remain serious until at least March 2021, particularly as control measures are a challenge in the south due to limited ground and aerial access.

Climate-related disasters – especially floods and droughts – have increased in Somalia over recent years, with severe droughts seen in 2007/2008, 2011/2012 and 2015/16/17. The latest food security and nutrition assessment found that delayed and erratic rainfall distribution in October to December 2020 resulted in below-average showers across most of Somalia. This led to inadequate replenishment of pasture and water resources and below-average crop production. In addition, Cyclone Gati caused significant damages and livestock deaths in northeastern coastal areas in November. Furthermore, recurrent floods between July and early November displaced people and damaged crops in riverine areas of Hiraa, Shabelle and Juba regions.

The assessment recommends that humanitarian assistance be sustained through mid-year to prevent Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes for 2.7 million people.

Overall, humanitarian partners estimate that in 2021, 5.9 million people will need humanitarian assistance, an increase from 5.2 million in 2020. This includes 4.3 million non-displaced people and 1.6 million people displaced by conflict, insecurity, drought and floods.

Water shortages reported in several regions

Somalia is likely to face critical water shortages and scarcity in several regions. A January 2021 inter-agency Drought Risk Assessment in Puntland, Galmudug and Jubaland compiled by OCHA found that out of 1,250 shallow wells, only 238 (19 per cent) reportedly contained water.

In Puntland, 50 per cent of the assessed communities reported outward displacement from their community in the last month, with 79 out of 84 communities (95 per cent) citing water shortages as the main driver of displacement. Of the communities assessed, only nine reported the presence of shallow wells, of which three were depleted. In addition, 81 per cent of the communities reported that the majority of community members had reduced water intake in the previous four weeks due to water shortages, particularly in Bari (94 per cent), Nugaal, and Sool (89 per cent).

In Galmudug, over half of communities assessed (49 out of 62) reported that people had left their community in the last 4 weeks due to drought conditions having developed in the two to three months prior. Some 39 out of 61 communities also reported that the majority of community members had reduced water consumption in the previous four weeks due to water scarcity. Five communities (Afweyne Banaan, Baladul Amiin, Mirawled, Qalqalooan and Shaxshaxley) reported having neither functional boreholes, shallow wells with water nor a water trucking/piped network.

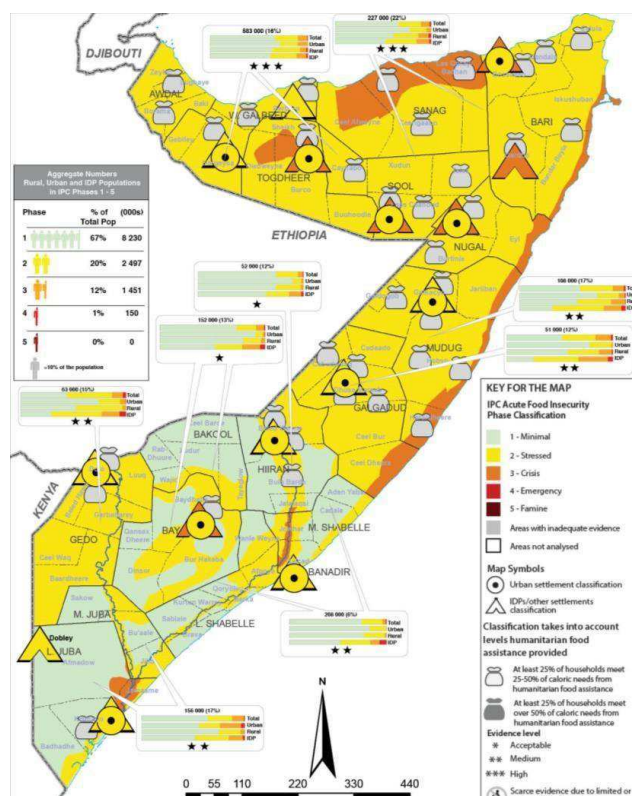
In Jubaland, 34 out of 40 communities assessed (85 per cent) reported that the majority of community members had reduced water consumption in the previous four weeks due to water scarcity. Twenty communities reported very limited access to water while all assessed communities reported that much of their pasture had dried out as a result of the shortages. Due to the situation, a majority (98 per cent) of the assessed communities reported either a significant (50-80 per cent) or critical (over 80 per cent) reduction in crop production over the previous four weeks.

The conclusions of the assessments called on authorities and partners to establish emergency preparedness mechanisms to mitigate the likely impact of drought-related shocks. It urged the humanitarian community to explore the possibility to mobilize resources for anticipatory and early actions as well as to adapt current programming to contribute to drought preparedness.

SPIKE IN FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION LINKED TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Confirmed cases have reduced by outbreak is far from over

Somalia continues to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic despite reports of fewer cases in the recent period. As of 1 February, Somalia has recorded over 4,780 confirmed cases including 3,700 recoveries and 130 deaths since the onset of



Acute Food Insecurity Situation Overview. Source: FSNAU

the pandemic in March 2020. While the number of positive COVID-19 cases has dropped by 90 per cent since April-June 2020 (the peak of the outbreak thus far), the outbreak is far from over. In 2021, an estimated 20 per cent of Somalia's population will suffer from direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19.

Among other impacts, the pandemic has reportedly caused a spike in Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). According to a [report](#) by Plan International, the pandemic has forced girls to spend more time at home, placing many at greater risk of gender-based violence. Based on an assessment carried out in Hargeysa and Burao in Somaliland in 2020, the INGO found that 42 per cent of adults believed that being out of education increased a girl's risk of undergoing FGM, which traditionally took place during the school holidays. Some 61 per cent of respondents said they believed FGM had increased as a result of the pandemic. Likewise, CARE Somalia has also [reported](#) that COVID-19 has made the FGM situation worse, noting reports of door-to-door FGM occurring during the period schools were closed and girl children were at home.

Prior to the pandemic, Somalia already had the highest rate of FGM in the world, with around 98 per cent of women aged 15 to 49 having undergone the practice, according to the findings of the national demographic survey.

Response to the spike in FGM cases

Since September 2020, WHO has been working with the reproductive health department in the Somali Federal Ministry of Health and Human Services to build capacity for strengthened response to FGM by addressing both the medicalization of FGM and the quality of care provided by health providers to survivors of FGM. Guidelines on the prevention of FGM have been translated into Somali to ensure that information on FGM is available at the grassroots level.

According to WHO, a review of several key Ministry documents, including the pre-service midwifery curriculum, has been undertaken to ensure that emerging issues on the medicalization of FGM are covered. The WHO Country Office has worked together with the Federal Ministry of Health to formulate specific terminology on FGM to use in health documents, including the Code of Ethics for Healthcare Professionals and the National Professionals Council Act. WHO is also exploring ways to enhance surveillance of FGM within existing reporting systems.

In addition, WHO and the UN Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction are supporting national partners in Somalia, among other countries, by training health workers on baseline FGM prevention and care. According to WHO Somalia, midwives and nurses have a double perspective on FGM. At work, they see girls and women living with the health and psychological consequences of undergoing this harmful practice. As community members, they understand the social norms that sustain FGM as a rite of passage, whether through traditional practitioners of FGM or even sometimes by health workers themselves.

WORSENING HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN BAKOOL REGION

Bakool region of South West State (SWS) has an estimated population of 320,000, with over 75 per cent living in rural settings as pastoralists or agro-pastoralists. While the region has faced food insecurity for many years, the humanitarian situation has significantly worsened recently, largely due to insecurity, intimidation and a blockade, as well as disruption of economic and commercial activities, and restricted humanitarian access owing to insecurity related to the presence of armed non-state actors. A blockade imposed by non-state actors in many areas of the region has significantly reduced livelihood opportunities, forcing people to rely on humanitarian support and casual labour.

A recent inter-agency assessment, conducted with the support of the SWS authorities in Xudur district, found that the majority of people can only afford one meal a day. Only about 5 per cent of the population had enough food to eat. Acute



Humanitarian partners are concerned over an upsurge in FGM during the COVID-19 pandemic. Photo: SOYDA.

malnutrition was noted among children and access to nutrition services was difficult. Xudur district is home to nearly 22,000 IDPs living in 16 IDP sites.

Compounding the various challenges, food prices have rapidly increased. According to food security partners and local authorities in Xudur town, imported food items such as sugar, pasta, dates, rice and vegetable oil now cost almost 100 per cent more compared to Baidoa town. Local sources attribute the high prices of food items to increased costs of transporting goods from Belet Weyne to Xudur as a result of potential security risks during transportation.

OCHA has coordinated a rapid needs assessment by partners operating in Xudur and is advocating for a scale up of interventions, where circumstances allow. In early January, the SWS Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management appealed for humanitarian assistance for 43,000 people; priority needs include food and non-food items. On 26 January, a UN delegation led by DSRSG/RC/HC Adam Abdelmoula visited Baidoa town to discuss the humanitarian situation with authorities as well as assess overall needs.

PLIGHT OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN SOMALIA

Upsurge in displacement and evictions of internally displaced persons

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Somalia are struggling to cope with forced evictions, lack of opportunities, harsh livelihoods, water shortages and inadequate health-services. The country is a home to over 2.6 million IDPs. There are close to 3,000 IDP settlements, with the vast majority of IDPs living in overflowing and under-serviced sites where access to basic services is very difficult and malnutrition is high.

Across the country, displacement tends to be large-scale, protracted and concentrated in informal settlements around urban and peri-urban areas. From January to December 2020, an estimated 1.3 million people were displaced in Somalia, of whom more than 200,000 were new and secondary displacements due to conflict and violence, while more than 930,000 were displaced due to natural disasters. In 2021, more than 60 per cent of the total IDP caseload (about 1.6 million) are considered to be the most vulnerable and require life-saving humanitarian assistance.

Banadir region, which hosts about 500,000 IDPs living in close to 700 congested settlements, has recently seen an increase in numbers as more IDPs arrive into Mogadishu from neighbouring regions, including Lower and Middle Shabelle. In late January, humanitarian partners reported the arrival of more than 500 new IDPs from Lower Shabelle region, most fleeing military activities in Janale and Awdheghe districts. On the other hand, about 3,500 IDPs were evicted from settlements in Daynile, Kahda and Garasballey districts of Banadir region in January. According to partners, 1,200 of those IDPs have settled in two sites in Daynile while 2,300 have settled in Kahda district.



IDPs in Somalia are struggling to cope with myriad challenges. Photo: OCHA

In Gedo region of Jubaland, more people continue to flee the volatile Belet Xaawo town as fear increases over renewed clashes between Jubaland State forces and the Somali National Armed Forces in the area. According to the latest assessment conducted by humanitarian partners and led by OCHA, a total of 8,759 households (52,554 people) have been displaced by the clashes. Close to 80 per cent of those displaced are women and children.

Due to the lingering effects of the drought in Jubaland, humanitarian partners have recorded the movement of IDPs and pastoral communities since late 2020. In Hiraan region, reports from local authorities indicate that displaced villagers had arrived in the town and settled in the IDP settlements over the past seven weeks after the loss of their farms (including different types of crops) due to devastation caused by the Desert Locusts.

The majority of newly displaced people, according to the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster, complain of lack of food and poor shelter conditions. Across the country, about 80 per cent of the IDP sites lack accessible water points especially in Banadir, South West and Jubaland State. Food, water and shelter remain top priorities for the IDPs in Somalia. By December, CCCM Cluster partners had established CCCM mechanisms in 1,009 IDP sites and

assisted nearly 1.3 million people with site improvement activities. In response to COVID-19, partners completed ongoing risk communication activities in 909 IDP sites out of 2,400 IDP sites nationally, covering 1.1 million people-in-need (43 per cent of the total caseload). However, the Cluster noted lack of information on service provision at the site level, adding that lack of land tenure and forced evictions was also inhibiting the ability of partners to improve living conditions in sites. The Cluster was also constrained by resources, having received only 25 per cent of required funding.

IN BRIEF

Shelter is a key need for vulnerable female IDPs - Madina's story

Madina Samow, a paralyzed 50-year-old single mother of two boys and three girls, lives in Bufow Bacaad IDP site in Marka district, Lower Shabelle region, Somalia. "Being a female head of a household with children in an IDP settlement means that I am vulnerable to everything," she said. "I used to feel insecure, but right now I am protected and feel more secure than ever."

Madina is among the 66 IDP families who have so far received emergency shelter under a [Somalia Humanitarian Fund](#) (SHF) project which is addressing the emergency shelter and NFI needs of 2,216 IDP families (13,296 persons) in Afgooye and Marka districts of Lower Shabelle region.

Before she fled fierce fighting between the Somali National Army and Al-Shabaab militia in Janale district in March 2020, Madina and her family lived in a small makeshift shelter made of small sticks covered with old clothes. She had no basic household items and used to borrow utensils from neighbours for cooking.



Madina and her children pictured in front of their new shelter in Bufow Bacaad IDP Site. Photo HINNA

"I could not believe that I now have a shelter," she said. "I was afraid of the rains and my children were sheltering in a makeshift shelter with little protection from weather conditions."

2021 HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN FINALISED

OCHA and humanitarian partners have finalised the 2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), identifying a spike in the number of people in need driven by climate shocks, conflict and increased vulnerability. An estimated 5.9 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, an increase from 5.2 million in 2020. The HRP aims to assist 4 million people with access to basic services and livelihoods support, while providing life-saving food assistance to 3.1 million IDPs and non-IDPs in crisis and emergency phases of food insecurity.

In 2020, humanitarian partners assisted 2.3 million of 3 million targeted people in Somalia with 82 per cent funding received (US\$823 million of \$1.01 billion requested), but funding per sector was disproportionate with most clusters receiving less than 40 per cent of their requirements. The 2021 HRP, which will be launched on 15 February, will request \$1.09 billion for partners to implement their programmes.

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