

EXECUTIVE BRIEF ON SOMALIA – FOOD SECURITY CRISIS

July, 2014

ICRC

CONTEXT AND SCOPE

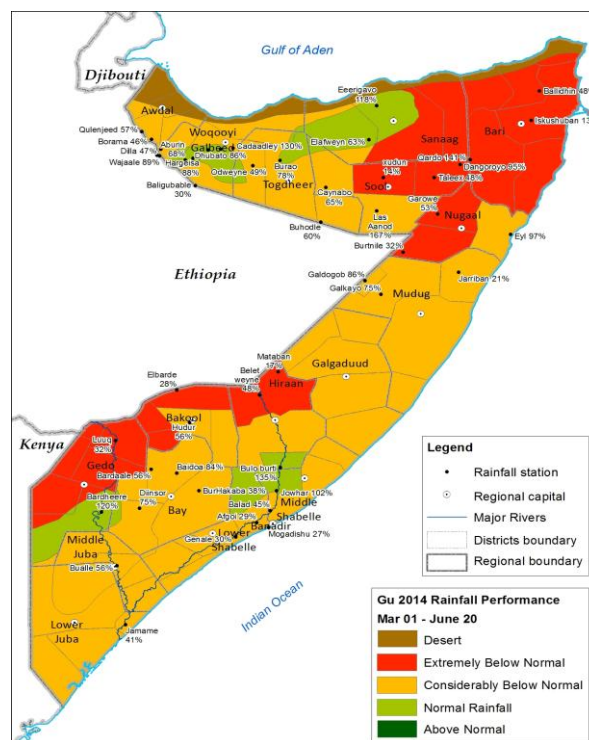
- ▶ The Somali Government, while declaring several Somali regions as drought affected, has urged the international community to support its efforts to avert a further severe food insecurity crisis.
- ▶ The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) has confirmed the sharp rises in food prices in several parts of Somalia. The steep escalation in prices is largely attributed to the inter-clan fighting and military clashes in towns. The warning by FEWS NET, in a situation where every seventh child is acutely malnourished, is highly alarming.
- ▶ A predicted El Niño phenomenon is expected to exacerbate the situation during September–December 2014.
- ▶ The ICRC, while continuing food assistance to around 80,000 internally displaced people in the worst-affected areas, has also scaled up cash-for-work and other livelihood support programmes aimed at strengthening the resilience of affected populations.

- ▶ This brief aims at describing the ICRC viewpoint on the food security situation in Somalia.
- ▶ The report is based on information gathered through secondary data analysis, ICRC monthly market assessments, direct observations by ICRC field staff and interviews with key informants, among them livestock traders, FSNAU (Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit) field staff, elders and local authorities.

THE AFFECTED POPULATIONS

Four groups are facing severe food insecurity:

- ▶ The affected populations of certain towns and particularly the civilians of Hudur, Wajid, Burdhubo, Garbaharey, Buloburte, Qoryoley and Elbuur are facing severe humanitarian hardships where food prices are 30%–150% higher than in normal times.
- ▶ The populations of flood- and cyclone-affected areas (in 2013) of Middle Shabelle and Puntland regions remain under stress, and the acute food security crisis is likely to persist in these areas.
- ▶ The pastoralists of drought-affected areas (see map) in south-central and north-eastern regions of Somalia are under stress owing to low and erratic Gu rains. The FAO Somalia Water and Land Information Management (SWALIM) unit have reported extremely below normal rains in both of these regions, leading to moderate drought conditions in the regions of Sanaag, Sool, Nugal, Hiran, Bakool, Gedo and parts of Shabelle.
- ▶ Internally displaced persons (IDPs) across the country face a dire food security situation. A FSNAU post-Gu 2014 assessment indicated acute malnutrition at a **very critical level** (GAM>20%) among Garrowe IDPs, while **critical levels** (GAM>15%) have been seen among IDPs in Mogadishu, Dhobley and Kismayo (south Somalia), and Dhusamareb and Galkayo (central Somalia). IDPs in Beletweyne are in a similar or worse situation according to an extensive ICRC food security and nutrition assessment.



Overall Gu 2014 rainfall performance. FAO SWALIM, 2014.

MAIN CAUSES OF THE FOOD INSECURITY

Beside the low rainfall in some regions, many factors have triggered the current crisis:

- ▶ Military clashes have resulted in population displacement, as well as blockades of a number of towns. This has restricted the availability of both imported and locally produced staples. The reduced supply and increased demand, which has led to increased prices of most essential food commodities, is adversely impacting the food security situation of urban populations in these regions.
- ▶ The violence in Sool and Sanaag regions and heightened tensions between Somaliland and Puntland are reported to have scared traders away from these areas. This has led to fluctuations in staple food prices and poor terms of trade for the pastoralists and waged labourers – though some gains have been made by pastoralists thanks to increased livestock market activities due to live animal exports to Saudi Arabia (for Ramadan and the Hajj). In general, the food security situation of urban populations remains at risk, while the livelihoods of pastoralists in these areas are being stretched to the limit and are also at risk.
- ▶ Communities who lost their livelihood assets as a result of the cyclones in Puntland and the floods in Middle Shabelle in 2013 have yet to recover from the after-effects of these natural disasters.
- ▶ The IDPs and the urban poor in Hiran have suffered from repeated shocks, including floods, conflicts and the fake Somali Shilling that has wreaked havoc in markets. Small traders and waged labourers have been hit the hardest. Alarming rates of malnutrition (as high as 25% Global Acute Malnutrition, 16% Moderate Acute Malnutrition and around 10% Severe Acute Malnutrition) are reported among IDPs across the country. Without assistance, the lives of malnourished children and pregnant and lactating women can be at immediate risk.

POTENTIAL EVOLUTION OF THE SITUATION IN THE COMING MONTHS

- ▶ July to September is normally a dry period across most of Somalia. However, due to the late start, below average and early cessation of the April–June rains, a prolonged dry season is expected before the start of the October–December rains. This may lead to severe water shortages in areas that received little or no rains over the past three months (FSNAU, July 2014). Pastoralists in such areas have already started to suffer immensely, with stress migrations reported in Galgadud, Mudug, Hiran, Nugal, Bari and Sool and Sanag.
- ▶ The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC) climate modelling processes have indicated at least an 80% chance of El Niño conditions from October to December 2014. This is likely to result in above average rainfall and very wet conditions in several parts of eastern Africa, with flooding possibly occurring not only in riverine areas. The modelling indicated that the 2014 El Niño event could be comparable to the 1997 event, the strongest on record.
- ▶ The pastoralists in the drought-affected north-eastern regions of Sool, Sanag, Bari and Nugal are likely to get limited relief owing to increased livestock exports for Ramadan and the Hajj. However, the food security situation of pastoralists in Hiran, Bakol and Galgadud is likely to deteriorate further. Distress sales of livestock are already reported in Hiran where livestock markets are over-supplied with animals in poor condition. The decline in livestock prices is further deteriorating the terms of trade for pastoralists. According to FSNAU field reports, a sharp increase in water prices has been reported in many parts of the country. Opportunistic livestock migrations in search of water and better pasture are being observed across the country.

THE NEEDS

The IDPs in most parts of Somalia and populations in affected towns need urgent interventions to improve their food security situations. Many also need improvements in their living conditions as their shelters are too poor to protect them from adverse climatic conditions. Long-term displaced people will need assistance to develop sustainable income-generation activities to help them through the current economic downturn.

Communities in the affected towns face a critical food insecurity situation. Many families not having fled yet from the conflict have been forced to abandon their homes due to lack of basic necessities for survival and have ended up in IDP camps (e.g. Bulobarde and Elbur). Many others are facing a real humanitarian emergency. Although some the direst humanitarian problems are reported in these towns, the ICRC is unlikely to be able to intervene for obvious security reasons.

Most pastoralists are so far coping, although the elasticity of their resilience is not endless. As a result of two good years, the sizes and body condition of their herds have generally improved, with the exception of those in rain-deficit areas. However, the pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities in Hiran and parts of Galgadud, Mudug and Bakool – where livestock markets are suppressed and prices are depressed – have started suffering and need assistance to protect their key livelihood assets and prevent negative coping strategies.

ICRC RESPONSE

- ▶ The ICRC distributes emergency food only when needs are acute and urgent, as it did during the Somalia food crises drought in the 90's and during the crisis of 2011-2012.
- ▶ More than 80'000 displaced people and vulnerable people have received food in Beletweyne, and Sool and Sanaag, areas affected by conflict or insecurity.
- ▶ The Somali Red Crescent Society runs 20 outpatient therapeutic feed programs and five mobile health teams with ICRC support, which aim specifically at assisting malnourished young children and mothers.
- ▶ Beyond these emergency activities, the ICRC also concentrates a large part of its efforts to support the recovery of economic self-sufficiency. The ICRC is for instance helping twenty agricultural cooperatives with agricultural inputs and tractors, five coastal communities with fishing material, and livestock authorities to resume the delivery of veterinary services. Some of these cooperatives helped around 50,000 people to boost their agricultural productivity using donated tractors and ploughs. Four cooperatives produced good-quality seed and increased their maize yield per hectare to five times higher than average production.
- ▶ Through cash-for-work initiatives, breadwinners of over 6,200 households repaired irrigation canals and water storage infrastructures serving some 80,000 people, and earned enough money to cover their families' needs for two months, thereby increasing the resilience of the population to future dry spells and stress. .
- ▶ In Puntland, around 22,000 people affected by the November 2013 cyclone received food rations, allowing them to keep their livestock instead of selling them to buy food. In Middle Shabelle, around 30,000 people rebuilt their shelters using donated materials.
- ▶ The ICRC has already placed more than 300,000 sandbags in Mogadishu and Kismayo for flood prevention projects. Distribute some of these bags to risk-prone communities in Middle and Lower Shabelle and Middle and Lower Juba before the onset of the expected 2014 El Niño.

For more information or feedback, please contact:
ICRC Somalia delegation, Denis Pritt Road, P.O. BOX 73226-00200, Nairobi – Kenya (somalia@icrc.org;
+254202713367/8/9)
Jean-Yves Clémento, Public Relations Officer, Eastern Africa, (jclemenzo@icrc.org; +41 22 730 22 71)