

# Press Release

## Humanitarian Emergency worsens in the Shabelle Regions of Somalia - as thousands of families flee Mogadishu in a new wave of displacement

Issued October 31, 2007

Released Jointly by the Food Security Analysis Unit for Somalia (FAO/FSAU) and FEWS NET

Renewed armed conflict and civil insecurity in Mogadishu has resulted in a new wave of thousands of people fleeing the capital to the surrounding Shabelle regions over the last five days. This new displacement signals a significant deterioration in an already serious **Humanitarian Emergency** ongoing since March 2007 in the Shabelle regions due to conflict, drought and displacement, affecting more than an estimated 600,000 people (*FSAU/FEWS NET Press Release, August 14, 2007*).

The ongoing humanitarian crisis in the Shabelle regions and Mogadishu continues to deteriorate due to the impact of several shocks in the last few months, including the lowest cereal production in thirteen years, trade disruptions, massive displacement, hyper-inflation and continued civil insecurity. The renewed conflict and civil tension is further disrupting economic activities, leading to hyper-inflation, reducing livelihood options, and increasing humanitarian needs.

Staple and non-staple food prices are continuing to increase sharply and are now beyond the reach of most of the IDPs and the poor urban and rural households. For example, in the three main market towns of Jowhar, Afgoi, and Merka in the Shabelle regions, current October prices compared to the five year average are between 235-255% for imported rice, 165-210% for local maize, and 200-210% for vegetable oil. Food availability and access are severely constrained for poor households due to the rapid devaluation of the Somali shilling, increased transportation costs and conflict-related disruptions in trade and import activities.

Poor water and sanitation conditions, limited health services, increased food sharing and reduced food access have led to high malnutrition rates that are above the WHO emergency threshold. The latest Nutrition surveys in the Shabelle region conducted by FSAU confirm global acute malnutrition rates of 17% and rates of severe acute malnutrition of 4.8%. This means that approximately 38,000 children under the age of 5 years in the rural population are estimated to be acutely malnourished, with 10,000 estimated to be severely malnourished and at risk of death if they do not receive the appropriate care.

The recent onset of the October to December *Deyr* seasonal rains will further stress the already highly vulnerable population, as IDPs without adequate shelter and facing poor sanitation conditions will be at greater risk of waterborne diseases, such as Acute Watery Diarrhea, leading to even higher levels of acute malnutrition in the coming weeks. Already cases of Cholera have been confirmed in the region, therefore urgent measures to provide safe water and sanitation facilities for displaced populations are essential to contain the spread of the disease.

Although it is too early to accurately estimate the number of people fleeing Mogadishu in this new wave of displacement, as the situation is rapidly evolving, indications are that the numbers are in the 'tens of thousands' and that the security situation is continuing to deteriorate. "This new wave of displacement not only creates a need for increased immediate life saving interventions for the newly displaced populations, including clean water, shelter, food, health services, sanitation, and protection", says Cindy Holleman UN FAO Chief Technical Advisor of the FSAU, "but places additional burdens on host communities who already face **Humanitarian Emergency** and **Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis** conditions and who have not received adequate assistance to date". Humanitarian assistance for **displaced populations, host communities, and rural populations** in crisis in the Shabelle region is urgently needed to avert a slide into a humanitarian crisis of increased magnitude. Increased advocacy at all levels is essential to secure sufficient humanitarian access and space to meet the increasing needs.

For more information see: [www.fsasomali.org](http://www.fsasomali.org), [www.fews.net](http://www.fews.net) or contact FSAU: [fsauinfo@fsau.or.ke](mailto:fsauinfo@fsau.or.ke).



Families fleeing from Mogadishu

Source: SAACID, October 2007



Cars loaded with family belongings leaving Mogadishu

Source: Centre for Education and Development, October 29, 2007 Afgoye Road NW Mogadishu

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