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More than 3.2 Million People in Humanitarian Crisis Somalia: A Humanitarian Emergency Spiraling Out of Control

The humanitarian disaster unfolding in Somalia is one of the worst in world. The scale, magnitude and speed at which the crisis is deteriorating are alarming and profound. Within the first six months of this year, the number of people requiring emergency livelihood and humanitarian support increased 77%, from 1.83 million to 3.25 million, affecting 43% of the entire population of the country (Map 1), according to the just released FSAU Post Gu '08 Assessment. The level of human suffering and deprivation is shocking. One in six children under the age of five is acutely malnourished, and the number is continuing to increase. Rates of acute malnutrition in most of south and central Somalia are above emergency thresholds of 15%, and in 8 out of 20 nutrition surveys conducted in the last five months rates were above 20%. The number of severely malnourished children is continuing to increase in many of the urban towns and among the protracted internally displaced populations (IDPs). In the north, where nutrition rates are normally low and stable compared to the rest of the country, now the nutrition situation is also deteriorating.

One of the main factors driving this crisis is civil insecurity – which is increasing and is currently the worst the country has experienced since the collapse of the government in the early 1990's. The armed conflict and insecurity is escalating and continuing to directly lead to human suffering in terms of human rights abuses, violence, killings, and displacement (more than 870,000 people have been internally displaced in the last year). However, the indirect effects of the conflict on the economy is creating an added economic crisis – which is now having a wider and more devastating impact on the broader population and the humanitarian situation.

The escalating conflict and instability is creating an economic crisis, not only by disrupting economic activities, trade and transportation networks, but due to the uncontrolled and excessive printing of the local currency, in large part to locally fund the growing conflict. Newly printed Somali shilling notes have flooded the markets, rapidly increasing the money supply, and sending the value of the Somali shilling into freefall, hitting record low levels of exchange - depreciating 165% since January '07.

The combined effect of the currency depreciation with high dependence on imported commodities, high international food and fuel prices, and low local cereal stocks and production, has led to hyperinflation in basic food and nonfood items. Prices have increased up to 370% within the last six months and 700% within the last year. In the south, for example, sorghum prices increased six fold in the twelve months, from 2,195 to 12,970 SoSh/kg. Rural and urban populations not directly affected by conflict are now struggling to meet basic food needs, especially the poor who are market dependent and have limited capacity to cope with the sudden and dramatic price increases. For pastoralists already struggling to cope with a continuing drought the added economic shocks of food and water price hikes are leading to a more rapid deterioration in asset losses, food access and nutritional status.

'More and more people from the rural and urban areas are falling into *Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis (AFLC)* and *Humanitarian Emergency (HE)*', says Cindy Holleman the Chief Technical Advisor of the Somalia Food Security Analysis Unit (FSAU/FAO), 'as they cannot cope with the compounding shocks of conflict, drought, and hyperinflation. Many of the poor and middle households are becoming severely indebted, and are adopting extreme coping strategies, including reducing food consumption, skipping meals, splitting families, selling productive assets, and out migrating, known locally as *'keynaan'*.

All information indicates that the key factors driving this humanitarian crisis will continue to worsen over the coming months. There is an urgent need to scale-up integrated emergency livelihood and humanitarian assistance. Currently, humanitarian access is insufficient to meet the growing humanitarian needs and humanitarian agencies are struggling to maintain a presence. Killings and abductions of aid workers, increased troop and militia activity, and threats to the humanitarian community make humanitarian response extremely difficult and has led to the reduction and even suspension of some humanitarian operations in south and central. Humanitarian access is decreasing when the needs are still unmet and are continuing to increase.

'The escalating conflict, civil insecurity, and instability in Somalia is now fueling an economic crisis that is beginning to have a wider and more devastating impact on the broader population', says Cindy Holleman 'threatening to plunge the country into an even greater humanitarian disaster'.

For more information see: www.fsasomali.org, or contact FSAU: fsauinfo@fsau.or.ke.

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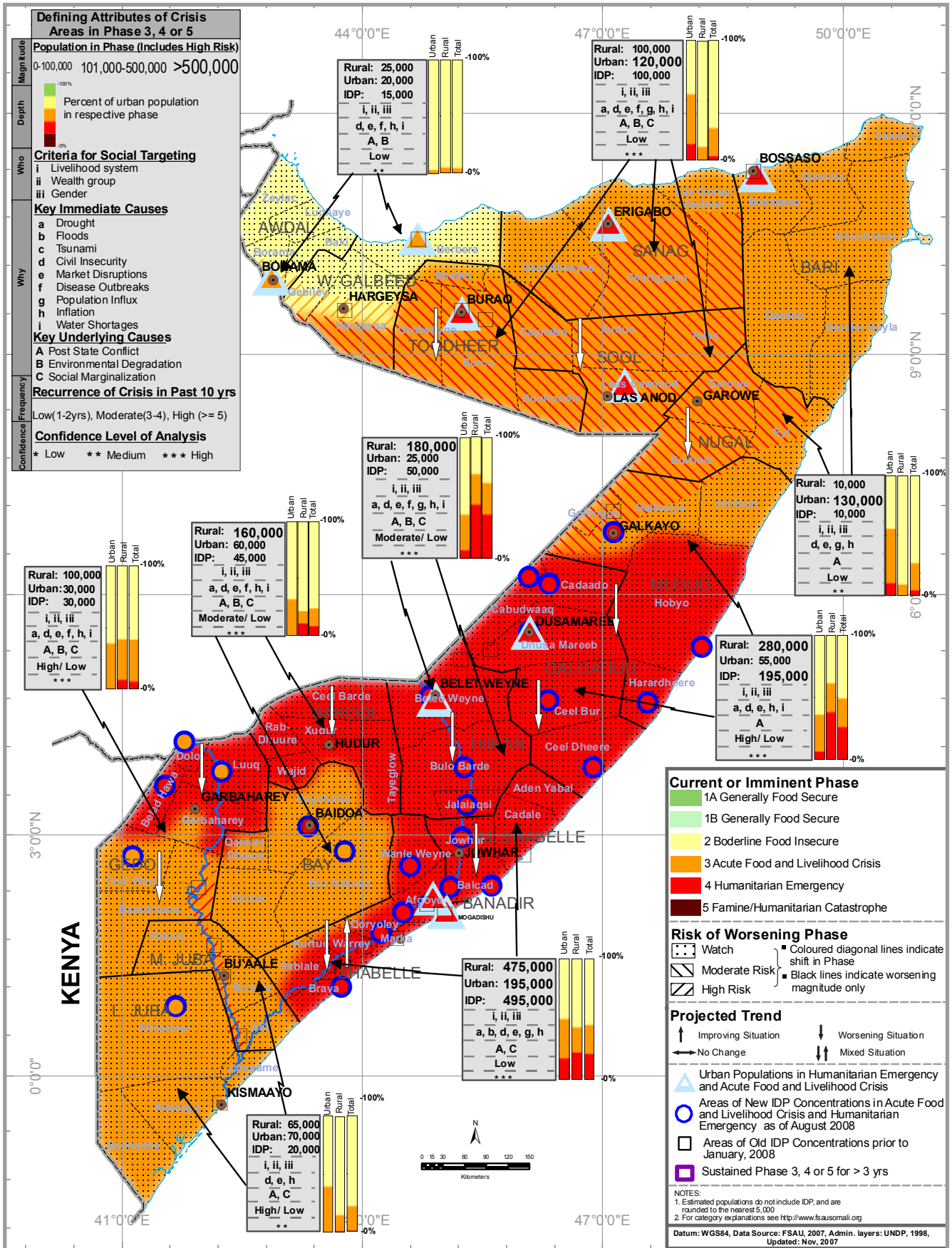


Funding Agencies



SOMALIA INTEGRATED FOOD SECURITY PHASE CLASSIFICATION

Rural, Urban and IDP Populations: Projections July - December 2008



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FSAU is managed by FAO.

The boundaries and names on these maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. The regional & District boundaries reflect those endorsed by the Government of the Republic of Somalia in 1986.

