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## Continuing Humanitarian Crisis in Pastoral Regions of Central Somalia

Although the seasonal rains between late Sept to early November were largely normal in the drought affected pastoral regions of Central Somalia, the **Humanitarian Crisis** is continuing as confirmed by recent FSAU and partner nutrition surveys results (November 13-21, '08), which indicate continuing high rates of global acute malnutrition (GAM) of 18.8% and 21%. Even more alarming are the levels of severe malnutrition (SAM) at 3.8% and 5.8%, which is elevated from 2.3% and 2.8% in the May 2008 nutrition surveys. 'These nutrition rates exceed emergency thresholds and confirm earlier analysis of a deepening humanitarian emergency in the central region' says Cindy Holleman the Chief Technical Advisor of the Somalia Food Security Analysis Unit (FSAU/FAO).

In early November, reports began to emerge of an unconfirmed Acute Watery Diarrhea (AWD) outbreak in Abudwaq district of Galgaduud in the Hawd pastoral areas. The November 2008 FSAU and partner nutrition survey also identified elevated morbidity with 28% of assessed children reported to have diarrhea in the two weeks prior to the survey. Although not representative, clustering of severe malnourished children was observed in villages reporting higher incidence of diarrhea. The surveys also reported crude and under five mortality rates of 0.98 deaths/10,000/day and 1.8/deaths /10,000/day, respectively.

Despite seasonal rains, which have led to improvements in pasture and browse and partially replenished water catchments, pastoralists are continuing to struggle. Livestock herds are severely diminished by the drought, as three successive seasonal rain failures (*Gu '07*, *Deyr '07/08*, and *Gu '08*) have led to high livestock abortion rates, as well as increased deaths of lactating animals, calves, and cattle. In addition, herds are severely depleted because pastoralists have sold large numbers of animals over the last 6 – 12 months to cover the high costs of food and water trucking and herds could take several normal rainy seasons to recover, depending on the livestock species.

Households are also severely indebted and social support mechanisms are overburdened. According to a recent FSAU urban analysis, the cost of the minimum basket in Dhusamareb increased 88% between March and October '08. Food prices, though stabilizing, still remain at record high levels. The combination of limited numbers of marketable animals and high food prices means pastoralists will continue to struggle, not only to meet their basic food and nonfood needs, but will continue to deplete their primary livelihood asset, livestock. Milk production is and will remain low to none, due to the lack of lactating animals, and no livestock calving and kidding is expected before *Gu '09*.

Furthermore, there are large numbers of 'drop out pastoralists' who have lost all their livestock during the drought and are concentrated in main district towns and villages throughout Galgaduud. These populations have no other form of income or food, and have become dependent on handouts and relief.

This dire situation is worsened by the limited humanitarian interventions in the region since August due to deteriorating civil insecurity and shrinking humanitarian access. Parts of the Hawd pastoral areas are also confronted with increased inter-clan hostility which is hindering population out migration and options for movement.

These results confirm the continuing humanitarian crisis in central Somalia, highlighting the severity of the situation and the need for urgent humanitarian interventions to save lives and livelihoods. An integrated humanitarian response of health, nutrition, water, sanitation and food are essential to save lives and prevent a further deterioration. In addition, parallel livelihood support is urgently needed to assist households to cope with continuing high food prices, deteriorated food access and continuing livelihood asset losses.

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

1 See FSAU Food Security and Nutrition Brief, September 12 and November 21, 2008, at [www.fsasomali.org](http://www.fsasomali.org).

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