

Famine spreads into Bay Region; 750,000 people face imminent starvation

NAIROBI/WASHINGTON SEPTEMBER 5, 2011 – August survey results indicate that the prevalence of acute malnutrition and the rate of crude mortality have surpassed Famine thresholds in Bay Region of southern Somalia. In addition, July/August Post-*Gu* seasonal assessment analysis suggests that poor households in this region face massive food deficits due to a combination of poor crop production and deteriorating purchasing power. As a result, the FAO managed Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit and FEWS NET have now classified this region as IPC Phase 5 – Famine. Bay Region joins the Bakool agropastoral livelihood zone and the Lower Shabelle region, where Famine was declared on July 20th, and the agropastoral areas of Balcad and Cadale districts of Middle Shabelle¹, the Afgoye corridor IDP settlement, and the Mogadishu IDP community, where Famine was declared on August 3rd. An additional 50,000 people in cropping areas of Gedo and Juba and pastoral areas of Bakool face Famine-level food deficits. In total, 4.0 million people are in crisis in Somalia, with 750,000 people at risk of death in the coming four months in the absence of adequate response. Tens of thousands of people have already died, over half of whom are children. Assuming current levels of response continue, Famine is expected to spread further over the coming four months.

The current crisis in southern Somalia is driven by a combination of factors. The total failure of the October-December 2010 *Deyr* rains (secondary season) and the poor performance of the April-June 2011 *Gu* 2011 rains (primary season) have resulted in the worst annual crop production in 17 years, reduced labor demand, below-average livestock prices, and excess animal mortality. The decline in maize and sorghum availability has subsequently pushed local cereal prices to record levels and, in combination with reduced livestock prices and wages, substantially reduced household purchasing power in all livelihood zones. Large-scale displacement and significant limitations on humanitarian access have further exacerbated the negative food access and health outcomes.

Based on the Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) scale, version 1.1, an area is classified as in Famine when at least 20 percent of the population faces extreme food deficits, global acute malnutrition (GAM) exceeds 30 percent, and the death rate exceeds 2/10,000/day for the entire population. In regard to the current situation:

- Local cereal prices across the south are far above average, more than triple 2010 prices in some areas. These high prices have eroded the value of wages and livestock and, combined with reduced crop production, resulted in substantial food deficits among poor and lower middle households, especially in marginal cropping areas.
- During July and August, FSNAU conducted 34 representative nutrition and mortality surveys across southern Somalia, including 30 among local populations and four among internally displaced populations. Results from 24 surveys are available. Based on the most recent data available for each region, the average GAM prevalence was 36.4 percent and the average severe acute malnutrition (SAM) prevalence was 15.8 percent. The highest recorded level of acute malnutrition is in Bay, where the GAM prevalence is 58.3 percent. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has verified these findings.
- Population-wide death rates are above the alert level (1/10,000/day) across all areas of the south, above the Famine threshold (2/10,000/day) in the Bay, Bakool and Middle Shabelle (Balcad and Cadale) agropastoral livelihood zones, and more than double the Famine threshold in Lower Shabelle and among IDPs in the Afgoye corridor and Mogadishu. Tens of thousands of people have died in the past three months. Under-5 death rates are higher than 4/10,000/day in all areas of the south except Juba pastoral. Under-5 death rates meet or exceed 13/10,000/day (equivalent to 10 percent of children under five dying every 11 weeks) in riverine and agropastoral areas of Lower Shabelle and among Afgoye and Mogadishu IDPs.
- Emergency levels of malnutrition and mortality persist in cross border refugee camps. Conditions are especially dire in the new camps in southern Ethiopia, where acute malnutrition exceeds 30 percent and mortality has likely surpassed 2/10,000/day, despite adequate stocks of food aid.



Assuming current levels of humanitarian response and average October to December rains, further deterioration in food security is expected given the very high levels of SAM and under-5 mortality, the expectation of increased malaria and measles outbreaks, continued limitations on humanitarian access, very low *Gu*-season crop production, a rise in international rice prices, and further increases in the cost of local cereals. Famine is considered likely by December 2011 in agropastoral and riverine areas of Gedo and Juba, and agropastoral areas of Middle Shabelle and Hiran.

A massive, multisectoral response is critical to prevent additional deaths and total livelihood/social collapse. Most immediately, interventions to improve food access and to address health/nutrition issues are needed, complemented by measures to support preservation of productive assets. In the medium term, interventions to support and rebuild livelihoods are critical. Extraordinary measures to provide these responses should be implemented. These assistance needs will persist into 2012.

FSNAU and FEWS NET will continue to monitor conditions and outcomes, update analysis, and report on current and projected levels of food insecurity and malnutrition. Joint food security and nutrition updates are released every ten days. Repeated nutrition and mortality surveys will continue across southern Somalia and additional food security assessments will occur in September/October. Updated joint analysis, including food security projections through March 2012 will be released in late October. All information will be made available through www.fews.net and www.fsnau.org.

ⁱ Results from a representative survey of all agropastoral livelihood zones of Middle Shabelle indicate that levels of acute malnutrition and mortality have crossed Famine thresholds. However, the cases of malnutrition and deaths identified by the survey are not evenly distributed across the region. Instead, there is significant clustering in Balcad and Cadale districts. This geographic distribution is supported by the proximity of these districts to Mogadishu, information from field staff, and the relatively better service availability in Jowhar District. Therefore, the current Famine declaration applies to only these two areas of Middle Shabelle.