SOMALIA: IPC Acute Food Insecurity and Malnutrition Snapshot | March - June 2023

Overview

Despite some improvements in the country’s humanitarian crisis, approximately 6.6 million people across Somalia are projected to experience high levels of acute food insecurity classified in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or above through June 2023. The three areas identified as at Risk of Famine in the last January 2023 IPC analysis (Mogadishu IDPs, Baidoa IDPs and Burhakaba Agropastoral) experienced a significant decrease in population in IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe) from 194,000 to around 12,000 with additional reductions in populations in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency) and are no longer at Risk of Famine.

The previously estimated total burden of acute malnutrition among children under the age of five in Somalia for January to December 2023 remains valid at approximately 1.8 million acutely malnourished children, including 477,700 who are projected to be severely malnourished.

Updated forecast for the April to June 2023 Gu season points to a relatively better seasonal rainfall across most parts of Somalia than previously anticipated. Observed rainfall since the beginning of March 2023 indicates a good start for the 2023 Gu season rainfall in many parts of Somalia. Rainfall has partially replenished pasture and water in many parts of the country, creating favourable conditions for Gu season land preparation and crop planting. However, riverine and flash floods have also been reported in some areas, causing damage and displacement. There will be an increased risk of flooding if heavy rains continue in Somalia and southeastern Ethiopia. Despite a favourable start to the 2023 Gu season rainfall, which will support some improvement in cropping and livestock conditions, recent forecasts indicate a likelihood of near-average to below-average rainfall, making a full recovery unlikely.

Sharp increases in food prices since mid-2021 have been one of the key drivers of acute food insecurity in most parts of Somalia. Food prices remain above the five-year average in most markets, making food too expensive for most poor households, however, they have been on a declining trend over the past six months. Access to agricultural and casual labour employment, declining food prices and sustained humanitarian assistance are mitigating extreme food security, nutrition and mortality among surveyed populations.

Following a deterioration of the food security and nutrition situation across Somalia since early 2022, humanitarian food and non-food assistance (including livelihood support, nutrition, WASH, and health-related interventions) have been scaled up since mid-2022, including the food and cash assistance that has been sustained, reaching an average of 4.4 million people per month between January and March 2023 with planned assistance expected to continue at comparable levels through June 2023. Scaled up and sustained humanitarian assistance has likely prevented the worsening of food security and nutrition outcomes in many areas. However, humanitarian food assistance delivery continued to fall short of requirements. Humanitarian assistance under the Nutrition Cluster has also been scaled up, with more than 2.3 million children vaccinated against measles and Vitamin A and deworming tablets administered to two million children in November 2022, and nearly one million children vaccinated against cholera in January 2023. However, given the extended impact of the multi-season drought, acute food insecurity and malnutrition levels remain very high across Somalia.

In March 2023, more than 5 million people are still experiencing Crisis or higher (IPC Phase 3 or above) outcomes, including over 1.3 million people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and nearly 5,000 people estimated to be in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5), meaning they are not receiving sufficient food assistance to prevent food consumption gaps or livelihood challenges. Additionally, with current funding levels falling short of requirements, acute food insecurity and malnutrition levels are expected to increase between April and June 2023, with 6.6 million people expected to face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or above outcomes. This includes approximately 1.9 million people that will likely be in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and nearly 40,000 people that will likely be in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5).

Contributing Factors for Acute Malnutrition

**Food insecurity**: Reduced milk production and consumption across counties, low food stocks, and unfavourable terms of trade were reported. This was due to the cumulative effects of three failed rainfall seasons.

**Poor childcare practices**: The quality of care provided to infants and young children is inadequate, leading to malnutrition in many countries, especially those affected by extreme poverty and dry spells.

**Poor water, sanitation & hygiene**: Poor access to clean water, basic toilets, and good hygiene practices deter a healthier start for children.

**Insufficient health services**: Stock-out of essential supplies for management of acute malnutrition and sub-optimal coverage of health and nutrition programs.

Conflict and insecurity

The conflict and insecurity in Somalia have led to the displacement of around 3.8 million people who are poor and have limited livelihood assets. This situation is further compounded by high food prices, limited income-earning opportunities, low access to communal support, and a heavy reliance on external humanitarian aid. Conflict in the areas surrounding Burhakaba and Baidoa continues to result in the displacement of tens of thousands of people.

High food prices

Sharp increases in food prices since mid-2021 has been one of the key drivers of acute food insecurity in most parts of Somalia. Although food prices have been on a declining trend over the past six months, improving purchasing power, food prices remain above the five-year average in most markets, making food too expensive for most poor households.

Impact of prolonged drought

Despite the recent positive performance of the season, the cumulative impact of protracted drought has led to loss of life and severe damage to livelihoods. Consecutive poor-to-failed harvests among farmers and declining livestock holdings among pastoralists have contributed to food insecurity and malnutrition.
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In January 2023, the IPC analyzed the acute food insecurity and malnutrition of various population groups. According to the analysis, Mogadishu IDPs, Badoa IDPs, and Burhakaba Agropastoral were identified as the three groups facing the risk of famine between April and June 2023.

The projection was based on the assumption that there would be a failure of rainfall and crop production during the April to June 2023 Gu season. In March 2023, follow-up surveys were conducted in three areas to assess the current situation. Based on the results of these surveys and subsequent IPC analysis, the provision of sustained multisectoral humanitarian assistance, declining food prices, and access to agricultural and casual labor employment are helping to mitigate extreme food insecurity, nutrition, and mortality outcomes among the surveyed populations.

About the Risk of Famine

For the IPC, Risk of Famine…

… refers to a reasonable probability of an area going into Famine in the projected period. While this is not perceived necessarily as the most-likely scenario, it is a scenario that, generally speaking, has a realistic chance of occurring.

… complements the Famine and Famine Likely projections of the most likely scenario by providing insights into potential Famine if prospects evolve in a worse manner than anticipated.

… differs from Famine and Famine Likely projections because it focuses on a worst-case scenario that has a reasonable and realistic chance of happening.

… is a statement about the potential deterioration of the situation from what is expected. It is not a new classification, and it is not to be accompanied by population estimates.

… is an additional assessment that focuses on assessing if the area could realistically go into Famine during the projected period. Not all areas need to undergo assessment for Risk of Famine.

The parties to the conflict in Somalia must allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians, especially those most in need, which is impartial and conducted without any adverse distinction, subject to their right of control.

Recommended Actions

- Lifesaving humanitarian response
  - Urgent and timely scaling up of multi-sectoral humanitarian assistance (in-kind food, cash/voucher transfers, nutrition, WASH, and health-related) is required through at least June 2023 to prevent Famine (IPC Phase 5) - defined by extreme levels of food insecurity, acute malnutrition, and excess mortality, including starvation.

- Livelihood support
  - Considering upcoming harsher-than-normal drought conditions and the significantly diminished resilience, the high vulnerability to shocks and the protected nature of food insecurity and malnutrition, close collaboration between humanitarian and development programmes is needed to tackle the underlying causes of food insecurity and malnutrition and enhance resilience.

- Scale up nutrition interventions
  - Implement blanket supplementary feeding in the most affected areas to protect children and women from acute malnutrition given the projected worsening of an already precarious situation. Deploy a multi-sectoral approach to address the nutrition situation by incorporating livelihood/resilience activities into multi-sectoral nutrition response. Further scale-up of mass screening, integrated outreach services, coordination and nutrition surveillance.

- Expand access to health services
  - Strengthen health services including routine immunization, vitamin A supplementation and control of childhood diseases. Strengthen existing community structures to improve behavioural change interventions. Scale-up sensitization on prompt health-seeking behaviour, environmental hygiene including water (WASH).

- Social Protection Programs
  - Scale-up social protection programs targeting the most vulnerable households through Social Protection Register, home gardening, and small animals rearing, to improve nutrition and livelihood conditions.

- Promote de-escalation of violence and facilitate response
  - The parties to the conflict in Somalia must allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians, especially those most in need, which is impartial and conducted without any adverse distinction, subject to their right of control.