

SOMALIA

Outlook on the drought and risk of famine

KEY FINDINGS

6.7 M

PROJECTED TO
FACE SEVERE FOOD
INSECURITY

300,000

IN IMMEDIATE RISK
OF FAMINE
(IPC PHASE 5)
FOOD INSECURITY
LEVELS

High risk

OF SEVERE
MALNUTRITION
AND DISEASE
OUTBREAKS

1.6 M

INTERNALLY
DISPLACED
PEOPLE

CRISIS IMPACT OVERVIEW

- Somalia has seen a threefold increase in extreme weather events over the last 40 years. As at October 2022, four consecutive failed rainy seasons had resulted in a drought already worse in duration and severity than previous droughts in 2010–2011 and 2016–2017 (IASC 03/11/2022).
- Rain levels remain too low to alleviate the current dire conditions, despite light to moderate rains over the first week of November in southern and central Somalia (FAO 08/11/2022).
- In the wake of a fourth failed rainy season, drought is affecting over 7.8 million people. This number is more than double the estimated 3.2 million people affected at the beginning of the year (OCHA 31/10/2022).
- The severe drought is also affecting the entire Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia). In Somalia, the drought is having a strong impact on the population's food security, health, access to water, and livelihoods. It is also causing a sharp increase in protection issues for communities across the country. The 1.6 million IDPs within Somalia are particularly vulnerable to these impacts (Protection Cluster 30/09/2022; UNHCR accessed 08/11/2022)

ANTICIPATED SCOPE AND SCALE

- Somalia has two yearly rainy seasons that normally last from October–January and from April–July. Significantly below-normal rainfall is expected until the end of 2022 and throughout 2023, with the potential of fifth and sixth consecutive failed rainy seasons (WMO 25/08/2022; IASC 03/11/2022; FEWS NET 31/08/2022). The level of humanitarian needs during the January–March 2023 dry *Jilaa* season is expected to worsen across Somalia because of the persistent drought (FAO et al. 07/11/2022).

- More than 6.7 million people – over 40% of the country's population – are projected to face severe food insecurity by the end of 2022. The drought, protracted conflict, a rise in market prices resulting from the global food crisis and inflation, national political instability, and poor infrastructure significantly affect the population's access to food (IPC 12/09/2022; WFP 02/11/2022; FAO et al. 07/11/2022).
- Over 300,000 people are projected to face Famine (IPC Phase 5) food insecurity levels by December 2022, particularly in Bay region and the central and southern areas of Somalia (FAO et al. 07/11/2022; OCHA 31/10/2022). IDPs, agropastoral populations, and the urban poor will be the most affected population groups (IPC 12/09/2022).
- 1.8 million children, representing more than half of the country's child population, are estimated to face acute malnutrition between August 2022 and July 2023. This number includes over 500,000 projected to face severe acute malnutrition (IPC 12/09/2022; FEWS NET 31/08/2022). It is unclear how the healthcare system, already under severe strain, and a constrained humanitarian response will be able to cope with such a rise in admissions (OCHA 01/11/2022).
- Rising death rates in many areas of the country, the size of the affected population, the type and scale of needs, the expected duration of dry weather conditions, and the compounding nature of aggravating factors (such as conflict and the socioeconomic crisis) could result in cumulative levels of excess mortality as high as in 2011's Famine if humanitarian aid is not urgently scaled up (FAO et al. 07/11/2022).
- Regardless of the rainfall performance in 2023, recovery from a drought of the current magnitude will take many months or years, with extremely high humanitarian needs set to persist or increase in 2023 (FAO et al. 07/11/2022).



LESSONS LEARNT

- About 50% of the more than 260,000 deaths in the 2010–2011 Somali famine occurred before famine was officially declared. Wide evidence supports the health and socioeconomic benefits of an early mobilisation of funds and anticipatory action for the response. The timely scaling up of funds and aid could significantly help reduce the impact of drought and prevent famine (WEF 01/11/2022).
- Aside from aid in the form of food and relief items, social protection and cash transfer programmes have previously been efficient in helping families deal with hardship and build resilience during droughts in the region. They are also cost-effective forms of response (USAID 01/2018; WEF 01/11/2022). Better resilience also prevents negative coping strategies, such as early marriage for dowry, reducing food consumption, and withdrawing children from school to make them work (WEF 01/11/2022).

HUMANITARIAN CONSTRAINTS

- Funding has been inadequate to address the rapidly increasing needs, and humanitarian action has been forced to scale down efforts (WEF 01/11/2022; OCHA 31/10/2022; IPC 12/09/2022).
- Conflict and insecurity in some areas also experiencing drought have hindered humanitarian access to the people in need (Protection Cluster 30/09/2022). For example, Al-Shabaab recently caused an explosion at the Buulobarde bridge in Hiran, in Hirshabelle state. The explosion reduced food supplies for the urban poor and IDP communities (VOA 19/10/2022; WFP 31/10/2022).
- Reported issues during aid distribution include violence and abuse, such as extortion, and exclusion in aid delivery along clan affiliation lines, particularly among IDPs (Protection Cluster 30/09/2022 and 31/05/2022).

CRISIS IMPACT

Displacement

The search for food, water, pasture, and basic services forces people to leave their communities. Most displaced people settle in major Somali cities as they seek humanitarian assistance. From January–October 2022, there were 1.6 million IDPs across Somalia, with the drought displacing over one million of this number. Banadir, Bay, and Galgaduud regions saw the most new arrivals of drought-displaced people, while Bay and Lower Shabelle regions saw the highest number of people departing from their communities (UNHCR accessed 08/11/2022).

Displaced populations face poor sanitation and hygiene conditions in congested settlements, and unclear tenure arrangements often place them at risk of eviction by landowners (IOM 07/11/2022). Pressure on limited resources contributes to rising tensions, conflicts, and land and water disputes, particularly in locations hosting large numbers of IDPs and returnees. Newly displaced people joining IDP settlements add pressure to already scarce critical services, and overcrowding raises health and protection concerns (IOM 07/11/2022; Protection Cluster 30/09/2022). As at October 2022, more than half of the drought-displaced population had yet to receive any shelter assistance (OCHA 31/10/2022).

Food security

4.3 million people experienced acute food insecurity between June–September 2022 in the country. The crisis has had a negative trajectory since then, and current figures are expected to be much higher. The district of Baidoa, in Bay region, has 466,000 affected people (72% of the district's population), and one out of every five people faces Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) food insecurity levels (OCHA 31/10/2022). After the past failed rainy season that should have lasted until July, the death rate of children under five in some IDP population groups in the region exceeded 2/10,000/day, crossing one of the technical famine thresholds of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (FSNAU 12/09/2022).

Health and nutrition

Food insecurity and poor health outcomes are tightly linked. Beyond the risk of starvation and permanent damage to their brains and bodies, children suffering from malnutrition also have a weakened immune system that makes them more susceptible to disease. Such a condition makes them nine times more likely to die from conditions like diarrhoea and



measles. Poor water and sanitation also severely increase these risks (WHO 03/11/2022 and 10/08/2022). Malnutrition is widespread because of severe obstructions to the availability of and people's access to nutritious foods. More than one million admissions for acute malnutrition were reported between January–September 2022, 30% of which were for severe acute malnutrition (WFP 02/11/2022; OCHA 31/10/2022).

The dire conditions in the country increase the risk of infectious disease outbreaks, such as anthrax, measles, cholera, yellow fever, chikungunya, and meningitis (WHO 03/11/2022). Mass displacement as a result of conflict and drought and the low vaccination coverage of children given the fragile healthcare system are leading to a rise in measles cases. The number of suspected measles cases had risen more than five times by September 2022 compared to the same period in 2021. The great majority of cases affect children under five. Limited access to safe water, especially at IDP sites, is also driving a rise in cholera cases.

There were more than 10,000 cases of cholera in 25 drought-affected districts through September 2022, compared to 3,400 cases in nearly twice as many districts during the same period in 2021. Both measles and cholera, which are easily treatable viral infections, are causing an increase in deaths among children (TNH 31/10/2022; OCHA 31/10/2022).

Under staffed and under-resourced healthcare facilities around the country and severe constraints on medical aid delivery are causing difficulties for facilities to cope with high admissions (OCHA 01/11/2022; IRC 07/07/2022; Garowe 01/05/2022). Less than 30% of Somalis have access to healthcare services, and only 11% of children are able to follow the basic vaccination schedule (Garowe 01/05/2022).

Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)

About 5.2 million people, including almost one million IDPs, face acute water shortages as a result of depleted groundwater levels and overstretched borehole capacities. At least 108 IDP sites in Baidoa, comprising 124,000 people and hosting regular new arrivals, are without access to water and sanitation. The escalating demand for water trucking and quickly depleting water sources have increased water prices in Southwest state by 250% (OCHA 31/10/2022). Such precarious access to safe water and sanitation threatens family livelihoods and heightens the risk of harmful health outcomes, such as the spread of infectious diseases.

Livelihoods

Most of the Somali population relies on agropastoralism. The effects of the drought and conflict have caused a growing number of people to lose their livelihoods and coping capacities, meaning they are depending heavily on assistance to meet basic needs (FAO et al. 07/11/2022). The 2022 mid-year July harvest in southern Somalia was 50% lower than the long-term average for 1995–2021, representing the fourth consecutive season with low cereal production. High inflation, shortages of essential items, and the threat of non-state armed groups, such as Al-Shabaab, also contribute to difficulties in crop cultivation and harvesting (FSNAU 12/09/2022; The Guardian 11/10/2022).

Pasture, browse, and water availability are largely below average across Somalia as a result of the consecutive failed rainy seasons and fast depletion of resources resulting from overgrazing. Overgrazing occurs as a result of massive livestock migration into areas with relatively better rainfall. It affects livestock production and reproduction, herd sizes, animals' body conditions, and milk availability, by extension affecting livelihoods in pastoralist communities and forcing displacement (FSNAU 12/09/2022).

Protection and gender-based violence

Cumulative crop failure and livestock deaths affect the ability of heads of households, typically men, to fulfil their traditional responsibility of primary provision for families. This difficulty increases the economic burden on women and girls, adding to their traditional caretaking responsibilities and placing them at heightened risk of sexual and intimate partner violence (Protection Cluster 30/09/2022).

80% of displaced people are children and women (OCHA 04/11/2022). In overcrowded IDP settlements, women and girls are exposed to increased gender-based violence, including rape, sexual harassment, domestic violence, and early or forced marriage, including among children. Drought and displacement worsen the situation as women and children live in makeshift dwellings and must walk long distances to access water. Reports of family separations, the exclusion of people with minority-clan affiliations, and hindered access to justice have also increased. Displaced children are particularly at risk of protection concerns, including forced marriage, violence, and economic exploitation (Protection Cluster 30/09/2022).



AGGRAVATING FACTORS

Political instability and violence

The security situation remains precarious, with non-state armed groups seizing opportunities to target government-affiliated forces and political figures. As at 4 November, there were almost 2,500 events of violence reported in 2022, with nearly 5,000 people killed across the country (ACLED accessed 08/11/2022). Bakool, Hiran, and Middle Shabelle regions reported a recent spike in displacement amid conflict involving government and non-state armed groups. There have also been reports of child recruitment at IDP communities and the forced taxation of families by non-state armed groups (OCHA 31/10/2022).

On 29 October, twin car bomb attacks struck the Ministry of Education, killing at least 121 people and injuring 300 others. The armed group Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the bombings. Since the Somali Government launched a new offensive against Al-Shabaab in September, the group has increased attacks around the country and on the neighbouring borders, threatening the population and impeding humanitarian access (HRW 01/11/2022; CNN 30/10/2022). On 2 November, suspected Al-Shabaab attackers abducted four people in an ambulance as part of a campaign to pressure Kenya into withdrawing its forces from Somalia (Reuters 02/11/2022).

Election-related disputes between government and opposition parties pose a significant risk of violence against civilians. In Somaliland, the postponement of the presidential elections, originally planned for November 2022, sparked a breakout of deadly protests, with government forces accused of using excessive force to quell the demonstrations (Protection Cluster 30/09/2022).

Interclan conflicts at local, district, and regional levels, stemming from social injustice, clan-based disputes, poverty, and resource scarcity, continue to drive violence and insecurity throughout the country (Protection Cluster 30/09/2022).

Socioeconomic crisis

Poverty is widespread, with seven out of ten Somalis living on less than USD 2.15 a day (WB accessed 08/11/2022). Multiple shocks, including extreme climate events, locust invasions, and the COVID-19 pandemic, have curtailed economic growth and boosted poverty (ADBG 25/05/2022). The Russian invasion of Ukraine and rises in global inflation have caused higher food and oil prices and extended the socioeconomic crisis. Increasing prices of imported food commodities in the markets reduce food access for households. Concomitantly, an observed trend of decreasing wage rates is particularly affecting the urban poor in Mogadishu, causing diminished purchasing power and enhancing economic vulnerability (WFP 31/10/2022).

VISUAL COMPARISON WITH THE 2010–2011 AND 2016–2017 DROUGHTS

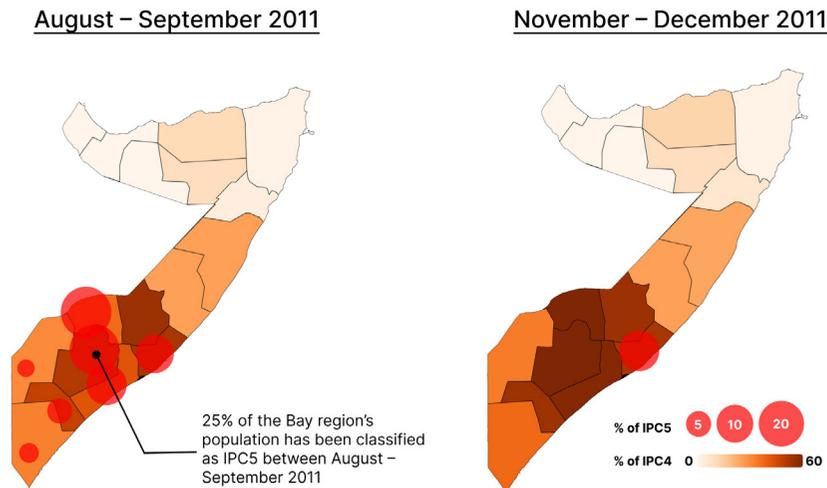
The 2010–2011 and 2016–2017 Somali droughts underscore a long-standing history of drought in the country. During the 2010–2011 drought, famine caused an estimated 260,000 deaths, half of whom were children under five. About 50% of deaths occurred before Famine was officially declared. In 2017, a famine was averted, but more than half of the Somali population needed food assistance, 500,000 risked starvation, and 45,000 people died (Al Jazeera 08/01/2022; Concern Worldwide 22/01/2020; WEF 01/11/2022).

Comparison between the three events reveals similarities in the nature of the droughts, as well as in the affected regions and population groups. The current escalating crisis underscores a high probability of the continued increasing severity of its impacts.

Considering the situation in November 2022, if humanitarian aid is not urgently scaled up and the drought and aggravating factors persist, excess mortality levels in 2023 are at risk of becoming as high as they were in 2011 during a period of Famine (IPC Phase 5) food insecurity in Somalia¹ (FAO et al. 07/11/2022).

The 2011 drought in Somalia

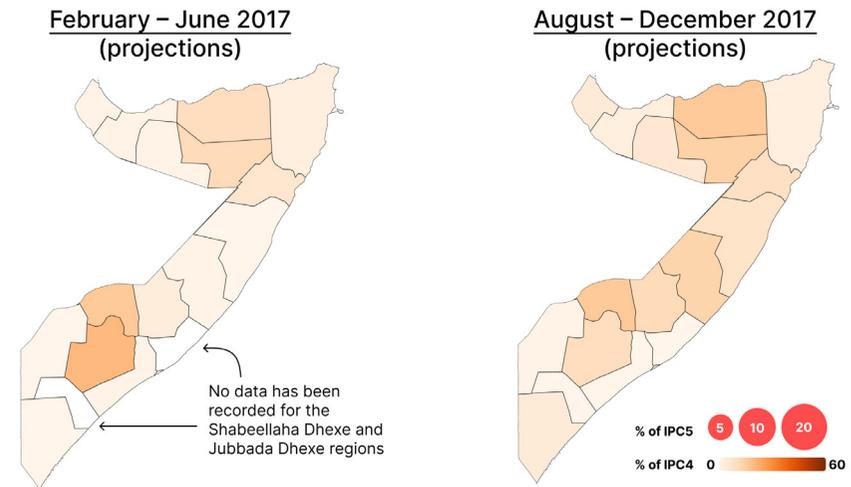
Acute food Insecurity, showing % of the population in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency) and IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe). A famine was declared by the UN on 20 July 2011 in two regions, and extended to other regions on 3 August and 5 September.



Source: Integrated Food Security Phase Classification for Somalia (IPC accessed in 08/11/2022)

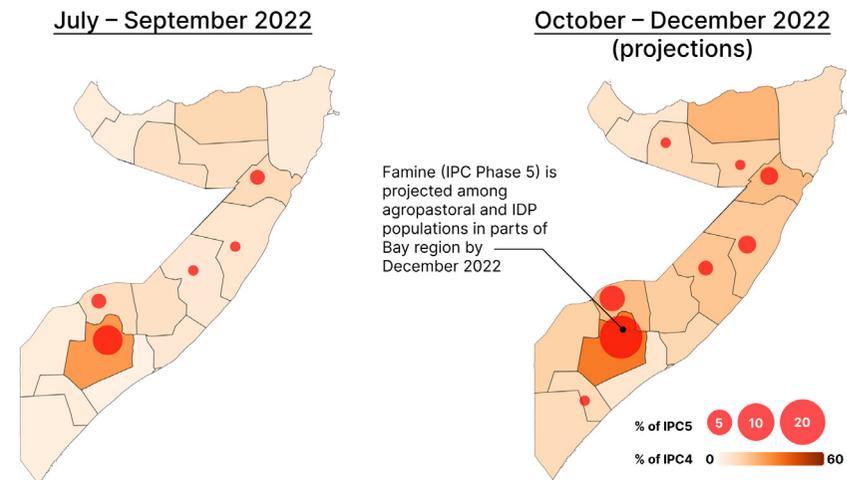
The 2017 drought in Somalia

Acute Food Insecurity, showing % of the population in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency) and IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe).



The 2022 drought in Somalia

Acute Food Insecurity, showing % of the population in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency) and IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe).



¹ A clarification on IPC Phase 5's Famine vs Catastrophe classifications: Famine is the IPC Phase 5 classification at the area level. In a given area, famine occurs when food security, nutrition, and mortality altogether portray famine conditions. The technical definition is when at least 20% of the population is affected, with about one of three children being acutely malnourished, and two people dying per day for every 10,000 inhabitants, all because of outright starvation or the interaction of malnutrition and disease. Households may be classified to be facing Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) food insecurity even if the area is not classified to experience Famine (IPC Phase 5) food insecurity levels. This distinction occurs when less than 20% of the population is experiencing famine conditions and/or when malnutrition, and/or mortality levels have not (or not yet) reached famine thresholds (IPC 11/12/2020)