

# **Grim milestone: Somalia drought and conflict forces one million people to flee**

Over 1 million people in Somalia have been forced to abandon their homes this year seeking food and water, mainly due to drought.

“We are alarmed at the massive scale of this crisis. On average, a staggering 3,500 people per day have fled their homes this year searching for food and water to stay alive,” said the Norwegian Refugee Council’s (NRC) Regional Director, Gabriella Waaijman. “We are witnessing a mass exodus from rural villages not seen since the deadly 2011 – 2012 famine that killed 260,000 people.”

Dry rural communities across Somalia have nearly turned into ghost towns, as crops failed, livestock died and families fled in droves after they ran out of all food reserves. Some 49,000 people fled their homes in September alone. Most migrated to overcrowded camps in urban areas, where Somalis share their stories of survival.

“I was a victim of drought that ravaged my village and the entire region of Lower Shabelle,” said Asha Ali Hussein. Eight months ago she fled Kontuwarey village, bringing her four children to Mogadishu. “I abandoned work on our one-hectare farm due to lack of water. Rivers dried; there was not a drop of water anywhere. We dug the soil to look for underground water but found nothing. All the water holes had vanished.”

The drought crisis has been spiralling downward in 2017. Half the population, over 6.2 million people, now need humanitarian assistance, of which 3.1 million people are in a crisis situation. With families on the move in search of food, 388,000 children under the age of five are acutely malnourished.

“Our 15 cows and 20 goats succumbed to the drought. We had a farm and livestock back in Kontuwarey village. Now we are living as displaced people, and we depend on cash assistance from aid agencies in Mogadishu,” says Asha.

NRC is responding to the crisis with direct cash relief for drought-affected

families, in addition to other programmes. Asha has received cash support from NRC for the past four months, including US\$81 this month to pay for food, water, healthcare and school fees for her children aged four to ten. This was funded by EU Humanitarian Aid under the EU Cash Alliance for Drought Affected Somalis programme, which has benefitted 400,000 people across the country.

“We have to continue this urgent response to prevent another famine from occurring in Somalia. Donors have made significant contributions towards this emergency, but more funding is needed. Predictions for the next rainy season are unfavourable. This would push more people over the edge, so continued support is needed,” warned Waijman.

While drought was the main cause of displacement in Somalia this year, other causes included conflict, insecurity and flooding.

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Source: <https://www.nrc.no/news/2017/october/grim-milestone-somalia-drought-and-conflict-forces-one-million-people-to-flee/>

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