

P R E S S E M E L D U N G**At least 20,000 children at risk of dying in drought-stricken Somalia**

New study shows severe malnutrition rates are soaring in nearly half the surveyed districts

Photos and b-roll available [here](#)

More than 20,000 children across nine districts in Somalia risk starving to death in a few months unless the international community continues to provide life-saving aid to the drought-stricken country, Save the Children is warning.

New survey results released by the aid organisation and conducted in partnership with Concern Worldwide and Action Against Hunger, show the number of severe acute malnutrition cases—the most dangerous form of hunger—have skyrocketed in nearly half of the nine districts assessed. In the district of Mataban alone, 9.5% of children under five are now severely malnourished.

A series of indicators tied to malnutrition, food supplies and mortality rates must be met for a famine to be declared. The survey results show the nutrition indicator is pointing to famine-like conditions in some areas of the country.

Hassan Noor Saadi, Save the Children's Country Director in Somalia, said: "The lack of food and rising numbers of severely malnourished children are distressing, to say the least.

"The most recent rains have been erratic and have not performed well enough to guarantee crop growth, and families continue to lose what little remains of their livelihoods and livestock, leaving them with few options to provide for their children, indicating a clear risk of famine."

An estimated \$1.5 billion is needed to help aid agencies working on the ground save lives, of which only \$550 million has been funded to date. Save the Children is urgently calling on the international community to follow the UK Government's example and continue funding the drought response in Somalia.

"The first half of the year saw significant levels of support from donors, which allowed us to help nearly one million vulnerable children. But these funds will soon run out, leaving millions at risk unless additional funding is made available.

"We welcome the UK government's recent announcement to provide an additional \$75 million to the response, and the US government's ongoing commitment. We urge other donors to follow suit and make more funds available. Otherwise, we risk repeating the horrors of 2011, when a famine caused over 250,000 people – half of them children – to needlessly lose their lives."

Drought-related diseases like cholera have also been persistently high across the country, causing thousands of deaths and leaving already weakened children even more vulnerable.

ENDS

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Notes to editors:

- The study used the SMART method for nutrition assessment, finding Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rates of between 30.7 and 16.6 percent in 8 out of the 9 districts.
- 9.5% of the children under five in Mataban are severely malnourished, followed by Elbarde with 8.3%, Baidoa with 7.5% and Wanlaweyn with 6.2%
- A famine can only be declared when certain measures of malnutrition and hunger, food shortages and mortality are met – 20 per cent of households in an area must be facing extreme food shortages, acute malnutrition rates must exceed 30 per cent, and the death rate must be higher than two people per day per 10,000 people.
- The Somalia appeal is currently 63% underfunded:
<https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/528/clusters>
- Save the Children has categorized the drought in Somalia at its highest level, Category One.
- During the first five months of 2017, Save the Children reached nearly 1.5M people in need of live-saving aid, including one million children.

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Über Save the Children

Save the Children ist als größte unabhängige Kinderrechtsorganisation der Welt in mehr als 120 Ländern tätig. Die Schwerpunkte liegen in den Bereichen Schule und Bildung, Schutz vor Ausbeutung und Gewalt sowie Überleben und Gesundheit – auch in Katastrophensituationen. Save the Children setzt sich ein für eine Welt, die die Rechte der Kinder achtet. Eine Welt, in der alle Kinder gesund und sicher leben und frei und selbstbestimmt aufwachsen können.