

P R E S S E M I T T E I L U N G

Final warning: Children's lives at risk across Somalia with country at the door of famine

MOGADISHU, 6. September 2022 – Up to 1.5 million children in Somalia – or one in five - could face deadly forms of malnutrition by October without immediate action, Save the Children said today as the international community issued a final warning about the country being on the brink of famine.

A new UN statement released on Monday said agricultural communities and displaced people in three areas of the Bay region of southwest Somalia, including Baidoa and Burhakaba districts, could face famine between October and December without significant humanitarian assistance reaching those most in need as Somalia faces its worst drought in 40 years. The UN projected up to 1.5 million children could be facing severe acute malnutrition by October.

Save the Children - along with other NGOs and UN agencies - has been alerting donors and governments to the worsening crisis in the Horn of Africa for more than a year, with Somalia crippled by four consecutive failed rainy seasons and forecasts poor for October-December rains. A failed fifth rainy season would be unprecedented.

The projection of famine in the Bay region - where thousands of lives were lost in the last famine in Somalia in 2011 that claimed 260,000 lives, half aged under 5 - is based largely on currently available information that minimal assistance will be distributed in those areas in November and December due to funding constraints.

For months, Save the Children has warned of hospitals being overwhelmed by a surge on severely malnourished children with beds full and wards at breaking point as drought in East Africa decimates people's ability to raise livestock or grow crops and the war in Ukraine drives up food prices, making staples unaffordable for many dependent on imported grain.

Early warning alerts were initially largely overlooked although a rapid scale-up of humanitarian assistance since the start of 2022 has undoubtedly saved many lives. But these activities have nowhere near reached the scale needed and [US\\$1.5 billion](#) is needed to give vulnerable children and their families the food, healthcare, education and water they need to survive.

Save the Children's Country Director for Somalia, Mohamud Mohamed Hassan, said:

"We are too late for those children and adults who have already died from hunger - tragic, avoidable, and excruciating deaths. Their deaths not only represent a catastrophe for their families, but demonstrate in most brutal form the growing global apathy for the victims of the climate crisis. We mourn them and we are angry for them.

"In recent months, international donors have stepped up with critical funding for this crisis. This is exactly what Save the Children and other agencies have been calling for and it is of course very welcome. But today's analysis shows that even this generosity may have come too late and we need not just immediate funding but rapid long-term planning and system change to stop this from continuing to happen to people who have done absolutely nothing to contribute to hunger or the climate crisis.

"As well as significant funding for immediate, lifesaving services, donors must continue to invest in early warning and anticipatory action to better manage the risk of hunger crises and mitigate against its

impacts before it is too late. Reactive humanitarian funding alone is too slow, unreliable, and costly and ultimately ineffective to tackle the complex crises of today.”

A famine declaration is based on technical decisions around three thresholds – that at least 20% of the population is affected, with about one out of three children being acutely malnourished and two people out of 10,000 are dying daily - as well as a political agreement.

The last official famine to be declared was in parts of South Sudan in 2017.

The latest analysis found that since early 2021, the drought has forced around 260,000 people in the Bay Region to abandon their farms and move to displacement sites in search of food and aid. By July, acute malnutrition levels among children under five had reached 24.9% among rural populations and 28.6% among newly displaced children.

This again highlighted that children in the worst affected parts of Somalia are dying now, from hunger, malnutrition, or diseases brought on through starvation and malnutrition. Being malnourished makes children, particularly infants, much more susceptible to disease and illnesses such as dysentery, diarrhoea, cholera, malaria and pneumonia.

Without enough nutritious food to eat or the ability to absorb the right nutrients due to illness, children under five are at high risk of acute malnutrition that can lead to death - or if a child survives, can cause [stunting](#), and impede mental and physical development longer term.

Save the Children has worked in Somalia since 1951 and is a national and international leader in humanitarian and development programming in health, nutrition, education, child protection and child rights governance.

This year, Save the Children has reached more than 24,000 people through cash programming and treated more than 50,000 children for malnutrition. We are currently providing water trucking to more than 25,000 households and unconditional cash provisions to nearly 11,000 households in the worst-affected areas.

Sources:

IPC [September 5, 2022 \(ipcinfo.org\)](#)

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Über Save the Children

Im Nachkriegsjahr 1919 gründete die britische Sozialreformerin und Kinderrechtlerin Eglantyne Jebb Save the Children, um Kinder in Deutschland und Österreich vor dem Hungertod zu retten. Heute ist die inzwischen größte unabhängige Kinderrechtsorganisation der Welt in rund 120 Ländern tätig. Save the Children setzt sich ein für Kinder in Kriegen, Konflikten und Katastrophen. Für eine Welt, die die Rechte der Kinder achtet, in der alle Kinder gesund und sicher leben sowie frei und selbstbestimmt aufwachsen und lernen können – seit über 100 Jahren.