

HIGHLIGHTS

- Renewed climatic shocks: Desert Locust infestation in new areas; at least 500 pastoral families displaced in Puntland due to water shortages in parts of Puntland and Somaliland.
- Since 16 March 2020, 4,690 laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 127 associated deaths, have been reported in Somalia.
- Humanitarian access further complicated by climatic events and the condition of infrastructure such as roads and bridges.
- As of 28 December 2020, donors generously provided 81.6 per cent of the US\$1.01 billion requested in the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), enabling partners to reach more than 2 million people with life-saving assistance.
- Upcoming general elections and implications on humanitarian operations.



NRC drilling a borehole in IDP site in Burao Togdheer. Photo: OCHA

KEY FIGURES

5.2M

People in need of humanitarian assistance

2.6M

People displaced by conflict and natural disasters

73K

People affected by Deyr floods

2.1M

People food insecure through December, including 849,000 acutely malnourished children

25

Children infected by polio in 2020

SITUATION OVERVIEW

Alarming water-crises in Somalia and movement of Pastoral Communities.

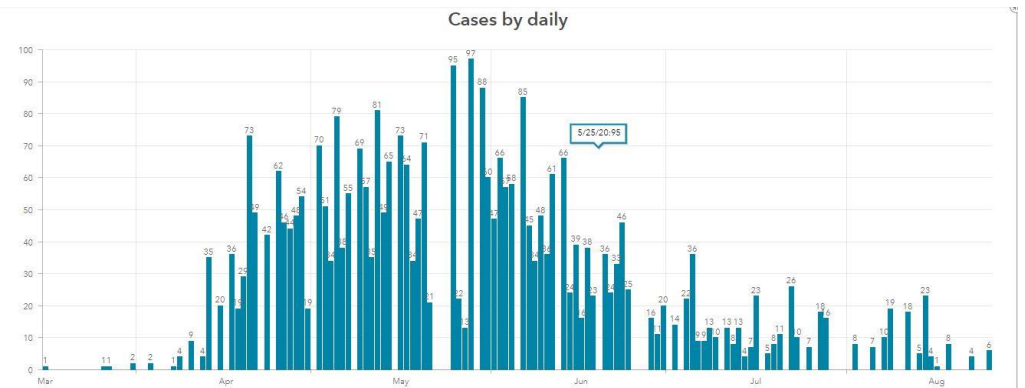
By the end of 2020, Somalia continued to face multiple threats, including the COVID-19 pandemic, Desert Locusts and poor rains from the *Deyr* season. In the north of the country, the situation was further aggravated by unprecedented rainfall and strong-winds from Cyclone Gati in November, which caused flash floods resulting in crop, livestock and property losses, particularly in Iskushuban district of Bari region. Approximately 120,000 people were affected, including the displacement of around 42,100 people.

In December, Food Security Cluster partners in Middle Shabelle region reported the invasion of new swarms of Desert Locusts. The new locust swarms crossed from Hiraan region causing damage to the pasture-rich areas. The presence of locusts in south Somalia had already devastated pasture resources and farms, including different types of crops. In parts of Bari region in Puntland, a renewed locust infestation was also reported, affecting both nomads and farmers.

There was an increase in reports of water shortages in parts of Puntland and Somaliland, especially the coastal parts of Bari, Nugaal and Sanaag. By the second week of December, close to 500 pastoral families had been displaced in Puntland. Women and children remain most affected. In Somaliland, the water crisis is critical, especially in Togdheer region due to the failure of the *Deyr* rainy season. The shortages have caused movement of pastoral households to Ethiopia in search of water and pasture. In Gedo region, Jubaland authorities reported the dire need for water for rural communities and their livestock given the poor *Deyr* rainfall. This situation is expected to worsen through March 2021.

Round-up of Covid-19 Situation in Somalia

According to the Federal Ministry of Health and the WHO country office, 12,698 suspected cases of COVID-19 were tested between 29 November and 19 December 2020, of which 165 were confirmed to be positive. The majority (69.6 per cent) of samples tested were from the Banadir region, followed by Somaliland (21 per cent). Six new deaths were recorded during this period: three from Somaliland, two from Banadir region and one from Puntland State.



Source: Federal Ministry of Health

Since 16 March 2020, 4,690 laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 127 associated deaths, have been reported in Somalia. The large majority (83 per cent) of confirmed cases have been aged between 20 and 60 years, with a median age of 33 (ranging from 1 to 110 years), and 74 per cent have been male. The cumulative positivity rate, since the start of the outbreak, has declined gradually and stands at 6.4 per cent, whilst the cumulative case fatality rate stands at 2.7 per cent.

According to the national Health Cluster, an increase in confirmed COVID-19 cases was reported in Somaliland and Puntland in November, while there was a decline in Banadir, Hirshabelle, Jubaland and Galmudug states. Testing has been increased following the setup of additional labs in Puntland and Somaliland. The exact reason for the increase in the two specific locations is unknown, but it is suspected that it may be related to behavioural factors. To understand this, WHO is supporting the Ministry of Health to continue to provide surveillance systems, including at the community level through community engagement teams jointly supported by the Ministry, WHO and UNICEF. After improvements in the reach of surveillance Rapid Response Teams, only 17 “silent” districts remain.

Over the period of the response, 19 isolation centres were established in Somalia. Due to low utilization, as only severe cases were presenting to the isolation centres, WHO has scaled down to 16 isolation centres with a capacity of 300 beds in 51 high-priority districts. Stand-by capacity remains if scale-up is needed. It remains concerning that generally good practices such as mask wearing and social (physical) distancing and health-care seeking behaviour remain low.

Consequences of Access Constraints on the Humanitarian Operation in Somalia

Humanitarian access is defined as the ability of humanitarian actors to reach affected people, as well as the affected population’s ability to access humanitarian assistance and services in a timely and unimpeded manner. Multiple constraints varying from armed hostilities or physical difficulties to excessive and time-consuming administrative requirements may hamper humanitarian access in different contexts.

In Somalia, challenges related to the physical environment constitute a substantial element that complicates humanitarian access. Obstacles related to terrain or climatic events, and the condition of infrastructure such as roads and bridges, substantially limit humanitarian access. For instance, in November 2020, obstacles related to the physical environment that limited or prevented road access amounted to roughly one third of all access challenges reported across Somalia. During this month, flooding affected several districts in Banadir, Lower and Middle Shabelle as well as Lower Juba, limiting or preventing access along the main routes that connect Jowhar to Mogadishu and Afgooye to Wanla Weyn towns.

These physical access constraints have a serious impact on the humanitarian situation in areas that become inaccessible for long periods of time. Not only are critical humanitarian deliveries such as nutrition supplies delayed but the availability of commercial goods is also curtailed, potentially increasing the vulnerability of the affected population. For example, in Jowhar town, which depends on main supplies of food and other essential commodities coming from Mogadishu, humanitarian partners reported shortages of food and other commodities including drugs, as well as a 5 per cent increase in food prices due to limited supplies that are transported via boats or donkey carts.

Climatic events are also an important factor that affect the physical environment, limiting humanitarian access. The most recent example is Cyclone Gati, that made landfall in Bari district on 22 November. Heavy rainfall and strong winds damaged the main road that connects the port town of Bossaso to Qardho town, situated on the crossroads that link major population centres. Road access to areas heavily affected by Cyclone Gati remain extremely challenging, impacting the emergency

humanitarian response. Humanitarian partners on the ground noted that some of the main roads were damaged during Cyclone Pawan in December 2019, and further degraded by the heavy rains and flooding of Cyclone Gati.

Compounding other limitations for road movements due to insecurity along the main routes, these physical constraints further complicate humanitarian access across Somalia and contribute to the vulnerability of affected communities. Advocacy for a safe operating environment continues. Following collective efforts and engagement by OCHA and the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, Bardaale District Council has announced the reopening of the Bardaale airport and efforts are underway to resume humanitarian flights.

FUNDING UPDATE

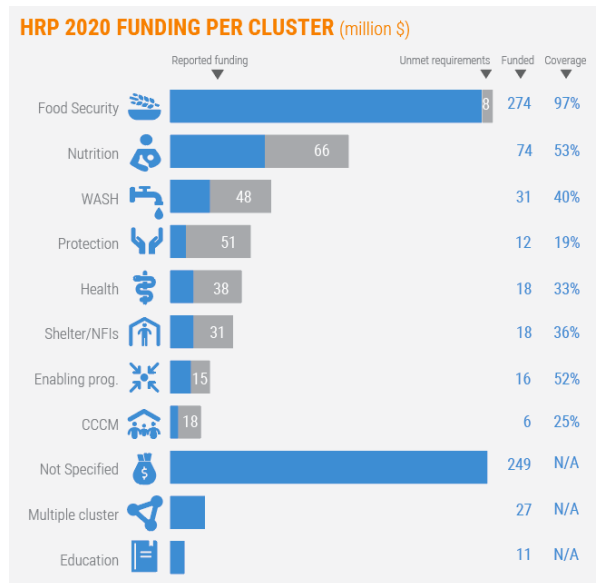
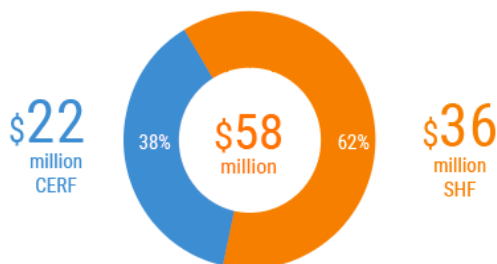
Early funding will boost timely response in 2021

By 28 December 2020, donors had generously provided 81.6 per cent of the \$1.01 billion requested in the 2020 HRP, enabling partners to reach more than 2 million people with life-saving assistance. However, funding per cluster ranged between 19 and 97 per cent. This disparity in funding across clusters has hindered adequate response. The least funded clusters are CCCM and Protection, with less than a third of their requirements met. Other key clusters such as Health, Shelter and WASH have received less than half of their requested funding. The gaps in funding may be a cause of concern in early 2021 before mainstream funding is received. Sustained financing and continued commitments from donors are required to fund ongoing activities and ensure continuity of priority humanitarian programming in early 2021.

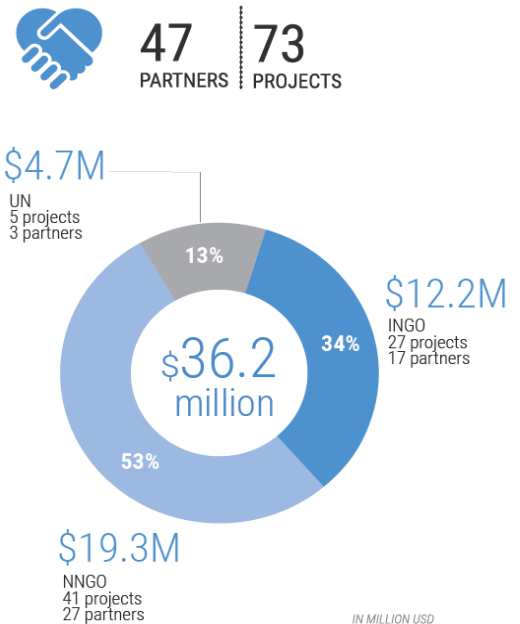
Pooled funds boost response

In 2020, the humanitarian pooled funds, including the Somalia Humanitarian Fund (SHF) and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), allocated \$58 million to humanitarian partners in Somalia to respond to the impact of the triple threat of Desert Locusts, floods and COVID-19. Of the \$22.1 million CERF allocation in 2020, \$15 million is supporting anticipatory action interventions. The SHF allocated \$36 million, enabling the fund to support 74 projects in underserved and hard-to-reach areas across Somalia. About 53 per cent of the funds allocated were channelled through local NGOs to advance the Grand Bargain commitment on localization of aid. Throughout the year, the SHF promoted the integration of humanitarian response where possible to maximize the impact of limited available resources.

Given the scale of humanitarian needs, donors are encouraged to replenish the Fund as early as possible for 2021. Early and enough funding will advance SHF's ability to provide predictable, adequate and timely support towards immediate life-saving response in Somalia.



Syria Humanitarian Fund 2020



IN BRIEF

Overcoming COVID-19 challenges in Education: Shukri's story

Shukri Habib Saed is a 16-year-old refugee student from an Ethiopian family who lives in Hargeisa. Her family consists of six members: father, mother and four young sisters (all in school). Her father works as a casual labourer at a construction site. Shukri is passionate about becoming a doctor and is currently studying medicine, with a goal to serve vulnerable people.

Shukri says, "From the beginning I had little to say about my education or future ambition, and I could not seriously think about going to school because I was very young and could not settle future goals. But my mother decided that life full of hardships and poverty was not suitable for us and she took me to a school supported by UNCHR/NRC. Thanks to both organizations, no school fees were required, and we were provided with a uniform, textbooks and notebooks. Mother regularly motivated me and my siblings to go far and study, so I absorbed that message and with my efforts, I aim to get higher grades in all my exams."

Schools were closed due to COVID-19 restrictions between March and July 2020. This meant limited to no formal classroom instruction for students across the country. In the absence of formal learning, Shukri studied at home and spent all her time reading and studying on her own. Shukri mentioned that 2020 was different from previous years in other ways, noting, "This year, I was completing my primary level to secondary school. It is a moment in my academic journey I had been dreaming of for a long time! I wanted to score higher marks than any other student. I spent sleepless nights reading my books and reviewing past exam papers. Also, my target was to join iconic schools like SOS or Amano School, that can provide excellent academics and an opportunity to have more challenging lessons that will boost my talents and academic prosperity. So, the eighth grade national exam was the last test to determine which school I would join. When the result was announced, I was the top leading student in Somaliland, and was selected for Amano Boarding School."

Shukri said, "The COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on my lessons and classes. Learning was transformed to online and I had no smart phone, computer or internet connection. So, I collaborated with school friends and shared their phones in order to access my classes. With the removal of COVID-19 restrictions in Somaliland, physical classes are slowly re-starting, and I recently started the first class of secondary school." With the generosity and help of UNCHR and NRC, Shukri's school tuition fee is covered to enable her studies at Amano secondary school.

Among the many impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the education sector has been hugely affected. Many children, including those living in IDP sites in particular, have been forced to discontinue learning due to the ongoing challenges, such as their parents losing livelihood sources.

Somalia's upcoming general elections and implications on humanitarian operations

Somalia is poised to conduct presidential and parliamentary elections in early 2021 as the current terms of the President and legislators come to an end.

On 17 September, Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed (Farmaajo), along with five regional state Presidents and the Governor of Banadir region, reached a revised election model, known as the Electoral Constituency Caucuses in Mogadishu. Leaders agreed that the number of delegates who will elect a federal MP will be 101. This means 27,775 delegates will elect the 275 seats for the House of the People. A political parties' system will not be applied and the election will take place in two locations in every state.

However, a new political standoff on the implementation of the agreed election model emerged in October after the Federal Government appointed the election implementation committees. Prominent opposition presidential candidates, including Farmaajo's predecessors and some of the federal



Shukri in the library studying. Photo: NRC



Former Presidents of Somalia, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud (left) and Sharif Sheikh Ahmed (right) stand alongside President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo at the inauguration ceremony in Mogadishu on February 22, 2017. Photo: UNSOM

member state leaders, asserted the committee of included members of the intelligence agency, civil servants and supporters of the incumbent President – an allegation denied by the Government.

According to Somalia's provisional constitution, the Houses of the Federal Parliament shall elect the President in a joint session, presided over by the Speaker of the House of the People of the Federal Parliament. The election of the President shall be conducted by secret ballot. More than a dozen candidates are to run for the country's top seat this term with the hope to lead the nation through 2025.

With an increasingly tense political environment, there are concerns of potential humanitarian implications, as seen in recent developments. In mid-December, protests in Mogadishu called by opposition groups over concerns about the Federal Government's management of the upcoming elections resulted in the death and injury of several civilians, as police used force to disperse the protests. These demonstrations and the reaction of the security forces hampered humanitarian personnel and supplies to freely move to and reach the people in need. There are also concerns of possible increases in the number of evictions, as seen in the last general elections in 2017, which saw the worst single mass eviction incident of more than 150,000 people evicted in Mogadishu alone.

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