

UNHCR has reached half a million vulnerable displaced individuals through its drought response in Somalia

Situation Overview

Somalia is in a midst of a climate emergency that is showing little signs of abating and is uprooting lives and livelihoods of millions. Five consecutive below par rainy seasons brought about by climate change has resulted in the longest drought the country has witnessed in more than 40 years. According to the UNHCR-led [Protection Returns Monitoring Network \(PRMN\)](#), the catastrophic drought has displaced more than 1.4 million people since 2021. Thousands of Somalis have also fled to neighbouring countries to seek assistance.

Many people have lost their livelihoods and their coping capacities have been stretched too thin to recover from the drought as a result of climate change. The situation is further compounded by persistent insecurity and armed conflict, soaring food prices, and extreme poverty. These multiple shocks have exacerbated protection risks and pre-existing inequities.

The drought has disproportionately affected women, children, persons with disabilities, and those from minority/marginalized groups/clans. Women and children make up for more than 80% of Somalia’s drought displaced population. Poorly lit and overcrowded shelters and IDP sites, limited access to shelter and basic necessities, and the need to travel long distances to access water, latrines, and animal feed have made women and girls more vulnerable to gender-based violence. According to UNFPA, child marriage has become a harmful coping mechanism for families struggling with poverty, exposing the girl child to the dangers of physical and sexual abuse, malnutrition, and an elevated risk of maternal and neonatal mortality. Furthermore, children are devoid of safe space, and more than a million children have either lost access to education or are at risk of dropping out.

Although the projected famine in Baidoa and Buur Hakaba districts between October and December 2022 has been averted, according to the Integrated Food Security Classification (IPC) [analysis](#) from 13 December, there is a strong possibility of famine between April and June 2023, if the next rainy season fails and if humanitarian assistance is not sustained. Over 8.3 million Somalis are expected to face crisis level (IPC Phase 3) of acute food insecurity by June 2023, including 727,000 facing catastrophic levels of extreme hunger (IPC Phase 5).



UNHCR’s partner explaining the content of a dignity kit during the distribution of sanitary materials to women and girls in Baidoa. ©DRC

UNHCR and Partners’ Response

BENEFICIARIES

	Protection Interventions	200,000
	Core Relief Items	230,000
	Cash Assistance	106,000
	Shelter	46,000
	Livelihoods	6,000

In response to the drought, UNHCR in Somalia has been delivering life-saving assistance and protection response to persons with specific needs in displaced

populations and host communities in tandem with the authorities and partners. As the lead or co-lead of Protection, Shelter/NFI, and Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) clusters as well as the Somalia Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Inter-Agency Network, UNHCR has taken an active role in enhancing coordination of the inter-agency drought response at national and sub-national levels and supported mainstreaming protection across the inter-agency response. For example, UNHCR finalized a framework for collaboration to mainstream protection across field locations with WFP and organized a training for WFP staff in Baidoa on the use of the protection mainstreaming tools in the context of the delivery of food and cash assistance. Cluster partners, including Food Security, WASH, and Housing Land Property (HLP) received PSEA training and were introduced to the reporting mechanisms in Somalia to support the scale up of protection activities. Likewise, with UNICEF

and UNPFA, UNHCR developed Letters of Understanding (LoUs) to collaborate on child protection, education issues, and gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response.

The UNHCR-led PRMN data continued to provide up-to-date information on internal displacement caused by drought, which informs the humanitarian response of the UN and partners. In November, UNHCR Somalia launched a [new PRMN online portal](#), which provides real-time displacement and protection updates, and supports evidence-based planning and response. In addition, UNHCR collaborated with UNOHCHR, Protection Cluster, and Minority Rights Organizations (MROs) to prepare recommendations for [an advocacy paper](#) developed with PRMN data to highlight the impact of drought and food insecurity on displacement and protection.

The scale up of UNHCR's protection response to the drought continued through a variety of interventions. UNHCR has established 23 mobile and static Protection Desks, which serve as entry points to specialized protection services, in Baidoa, Banadir, Beletweyne, Dhobley, Dollow, Galkayo, and Kismayo. The Protection Desks have elicited more than 4,300 complaints and feedbacks from the affected community and referred more than 1,400 cases to service providers. Separated and unaccompanied children were provided with psychosocial support and counseling, and referrals to nutrition facilities. Families at risk of being evicted from their homes due to loss of income received legal counseling. Furthermore, to strengthen GBV prevention and mitigation efforts,

partners were trained on code of conduct, PSEA, and protection/GBV mainstreaming; and awareness and information campaigns targeted the community members. UNHCR has reached more than 200,000 individuals through aforementioned protection services and awareness raising campaigns.

Lifesaving and basic needs assistance was provided through the distribution of multipurpose cash, shelter assistance, and core relief items (CRIs). Approximately 230,000 IDPs and host communities have received CRI kits which are comprised of household items such as kitchen sets, blankets, and jerry cans to fulfil one's basic needs. Likewise, to date, 46,000 IDPs benefited from shelter support. The overall number of drought affected people who received cash assistance from UNHCR doubled since September 2022. More than 106,000 vulnerable IDPs, refugees, asylum-seekers, and returnees received cash assistance, which helped them to prioritize and address their immediate and short term needs with dignity.

Other multi-sectoral drought response activities supported by UNHCR include sustainable livelihood and CCCM interventions. In Puntland, Somaliland, and across South Central Somalia, UNHCR worked with more than 6,000 IDPs, including pastoralists and fishing communities, to strengthen their resilience through skills trainings, small business grants, and in-kind support (donkey carts, fishing equipment, boats, etc.). CCCM partners continued to work with Nutrition actors to screen new arrival children at risk of malnutrition and making referrals to feeding programme.

Unmet needs

Somalia's longest drought in at least 40 years continues to drive high levels of humanitarian needs. According to the PRMN data and assessments conducted by UNHCR and partners targeting drought affected displaced population, food, livelihood support, shelter, water, basic needs items, and protection violations against women and children were identified as the top needs and protection concerns.

Drought affected IDPs belonging to minority/marginalized clans, elderly without support, people living with disability, and at-risk women and children among others are more vulnerable and face heightened protection risks.

UNHCR is working with partners and seeking additional funds to meet the current urgent needs.

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