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Somalia Teeters on the Edge of Famine as Malnutrition Soars

*World Concern Responds with Aid in Hardest Hit Areas (*Photos Available)*

Dec. 2, 2022 (SEATTLE, Wash.) – As much of Somalia continues to teeter on the edge of famine and child malnutrition cases soar, the humanitarian community is urging the world to not wait for a famine declaration to respond. A joint statement issued by 15 humanitarian agencies in November offers a dire reminder of the 2011 drought:

“During the 2011 drought, 260,000 people died in Somalia, with **the majority of deaths occurring before a Famine (IPC Phase 5) was declared.** The world should not allow a repeat of what occurred in 2011. Given rising death rates in many areas, the size of the affected population, and the likely duration of the crisis, the cumulative levels of excess mortality could become as high as in 2011. We cannot—and must not—wait for a Famine (IPC Phase 5) to be declared, or for additional rainy seasons to fail, to act,” the statement warns.

Five successive seasons of failed rains have resulted in widespread food insecurity and alarming rates of malnutrition. According to UNOCHA, 7.8 million people in Somalia are affected by the crisis, and 1.8 million children under the age of five are facing acute malnutrition.

“We are talking about 50% of the population being affected by the drought,” said Peter Mutua, World Concern’s Somalia director. “Displacement is on the increase. Close to one million people are displaced solely by the drought, not by violence or insecurity issues, but by the drought. Malnutrition cases among the children under five, are also on the increase ... as we speak, children are suffering acute malnutrition across Somalia.”



Photo by Peter Caton

World Concern is responding in the Lower Juba region of Somalia, one of the hardest hit areas, with cash transfers, water vouchers, and hygiene kits to meet the urgent needs of families that are facing hunger, sickness, and loss of livelihoods.

*****Humanitarian photographer Peter Caton was recently in Somaliland documenting the impact of the drought on families there. His photos are available for publication in the media upon request from World Concern.***

In Somaliland, World Concern is working hard to save the lives of malnourished children and pregnant and lactating mothers by distributing emergency nutrition packets to the most vulnerable.

Families like Hawa's who have left their homes and migrated in search of food and water have endured tremendous loss. While Hawa was focused on caring for her grandchildren during the move, she lost her son to hunger.

"He was 25 years old. He had a family with three children. He got sick during the drought and he was feeling weak ... due to lack of food, hunger, and there was no livestock to get milk ... We didn't have any money to go to the hospital so he died," said the grieving mother.

Hawa is not alone in her suffering. Many families have lost loved ones to hunger and have lost most or all of their livestock.

"I moved here with 50 goats. Before, I had 150 goats and sheep, but many died due to the drought. While I was here the 50 I had left started dying slowly due to lack of food and water. There were no grazing lands because they were very dry, I couldn't buy any food for them since I didn't have any money. I am only left with two goats now."



Photo by Peter Caton

World Concern has worked in Somalia for more than 30 years, beginning with leprosy projects and famine relief in the Lower Juba Valley. In recent years, World Concern's work has been focused in the Somaliland region and has included disaster risk reduction, nutrition, health, livelihoods, and agriculture.

For more information on World Concern, or to donate, please visit www.worldconcern.org.

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