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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Covid-19 preparedness and response scaled up
- Government has announced various COVID-19 control measures
- *Gu* rains have started with moderate to heavy showers
- Thousands of people displaced in Lower Shabelle region
- SHF to allocate US\$22 million but more resources needed.

## FIGURES

# of food insecure people (FSNAU: Feb. 2020)	4.1m
# of people in food insecure at emergency and crisis levels (IPC Phases 3 and 4, Feb. 2020)	1.3m
# of people in stress (IPC Phase 2, Feb. 2020)	2.8m
# of children projected to be malnourished	1.0m
# of internally displaced persons	2.6m

## FUNDING

**\$1.03 BILLION**

requested in the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP)

**\$100.2 MILLION**

Funding received for the 2020 HRP

Source <http://fts.unocha.org>, 27 March 2020



Emergency coordination meeting on covid-19 in Mogadishu. Photo: MoH

## Coronavirus (COVID-19) preparedness and response scaled up across Somalia

In conjunction with Somali authorities, UN agencies and partners in Somalia have consolidated the humanitarian components of the integrated Country Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP) to address the humanitarian consequences of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The two-pronged plan, which aligns with federal and state plans, focuses on scaling up specific COVID-19 related interventions, mainly by reinforcing healthcare services, while maintaining critical programmes and activities within the 2020 Somalia Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP).

Somalia has so far recorded five cases and has instituted measures to contain the possible spread of COVID-19 including closing schools, banning large gatherings and suspending international and domestic passenger flights. Preventing deaths and debilitating illness are the prime concerns, humanitarian partners are also concerned about the possible impact of the virus on the livelihoods of vulnerable populations in Somalia including internally displaced people, food insecure communities, and people living in locust infested or flood-prone areas. The reliance on remittance by relatives in the diaspora is also likely to diminish as bread winners outside the country see their economic opportunities reduced.

Given the current global context of the outbreak, including the exponential reporting of confirmed cases, the risk of COVID-19 spreading remains high because of crowded living



Map of Somalia showing airports and border crossing overlaid with IDP sites. Source: OCHA

Somalia Confirmed its first case of the novel coronavirus disease in Mogadishu on 16 March and the fifth on 31 March.

conditions in urban centres and poor hygiene practices. According to WHO, countries in fragile, conflict and vulnerable settings like Somalia are especially at risk for wide-spread community transmission should an imported case go undetected among the general population.

Somalia's capacities to prevent, detect and respond to any global health security threat scored 6 out of 100 as measured by the Health Emergency Preparedness Index in 2016. The number of health workers in different parts of the country is 2 per 100,000 people compared to the global standard of 25 per 100,000 people. Less than 20 per cent of health facilities have the required equipment and supplies to manage epidemics.

The most vulnerable population includes over 2.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in overcrowded sites with poor hygiene. Due to their low economic status, the IDPs have limited access to health care service, if at all. Many also lack safe drinking water, clean latrines and hygiene kits including soap. Apart from IDPs, the elderly - approximately 2.7 per cent of the population - and the urban poor, are also considered vulnerable groups who could be heavily impacted should COVID-19 spread.

The CPRP will complement the Government's [national preparedness plan](#) launched on 26 March, which seeks US\$57.8 million to scale up preparedness, readiness and response over the next nine months. It is informed by the Government's analysis of the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 and aligned to WHO's strategic preparedness and response guidelines.

### Various control measures have been announced

The five cases include one employee of a commercial contractor engaged by the UN who was in quarantine for eight days after arriving from abroad prior to diagnosis. Since confirming the first case on 16 March, Somalia set up a national COVID-19 task force and trained health workers on preparedness and response, among other control measures. Health workers have been deployed to all 23 officially designated points of entry, including the four international airports at Mogadishu, Garowe, Bossaso and Hargeisa.

**Tallaabooyinka ka-hortagga ee COVID-19**

1. Gacmahaaga si joogto ah ugu dhaq saabuun iyo biyo ugu yaraan 20 ilbiriqsi.
2. Iska ilaali in gacmahaaga oo an dhaqneyn aad ku tabatid indhahaaga, sankaaga, iyo afkaagaba.
3. Hadii aad qufaceysid ama hindhiseysid afkaaga iyo sankaagaba ku dabool xagasha gacantaada ama isticmaal tiish, siina tuur tiishka isla marka aad isticmaashid.

**Tallaabooyinka ka-hortagga ee COVID-19**

4. Nadiifi, kana dil jeermiska walxaha inta badan aad isticmaashid.
5. Ka fogow in aad xiriir dhow la yeelatid dadka Xanunsan.
6. Ilaa xad iska ilaali meelaha dadku ku badan yahin kana fogow in masafo ah inta ay sura gal tahay.
7. Haddaad xanuun dareento, ka dheerow meelaha aad dadka kale kula kulmi karto.

On 25 March, the Government received a donation of testing kits and other preventive products.

The borders with neighbouring Ethiopia and Kenya have also been closed, halting cross-border movements of people between Doolow in Gedo region in Somalia, Dollo Ado in Ethiopia and Mandera in Kenya. The restrictions will affect people who were recently displaced by violence in Gedo. It will also affect 300,000 beneficiaries of the cross-border Building Opportunity for Resilience in the Horn of Africa (BORESHA) project that is being implemented in Doolow Somalia, Dollo Ado of Ethiopia and Mandera, Kenya.

On 25 March, the Government received a donation of testing kits and other preventive products from the Chinese billionaire and Alibaba co-founder Jack Ma. The donation included 20,000 testing kits, 100,000 face masks and 1,000 protective suits and face shields, which the Government is distributing to various states.

To ensure that operations continue, humanitarian agencies have activated their business continuity plans and are reprioritising or reprogramming activities.

## Humanitarian operations continue amidst COVID-19 challenges

In light of COVID-19, humanitarian agencies have activated their business continuity plans. Where feasible, they are also reprioritising or reprogramming activities, but are concerned that the delivery of humanitarian operations could be affected if supply chains are significantly disrupted by lockdowns or limited availability of stocks on the global market. Cash programming might also be impacted if commercial markets lack key goods required by beneficiaries. Already, freight forwarders are reluctant to deliver to Somalia because of flight restrictions. UNHAS and UNSOS passenger flights have been suspended, limiting movement of humanitarian staff and contractors to and within the country. A large number of staff are working remotely.

In the current COVID-19 scenario, the priority is on limiting the spread of the virus in Somalia, infection prevention and control. Efforts are underway to enhance surveillance, rapid response and testing to enable quick identification, diagnosis and tracing of all suspected cases. To achieve this, humanitarian agencies, working closely with government officials, have trained health workers, established isolation centres, deployed health workers at key entry points and ramped up hygiene responses. Plans are under-way to distribute two-month food rations if the situation deteriorates. Additional supplies will need to be front loaded to ensure continuation of critical activities.

## Gu' rains (April-June) start with moderate to heavy showers in some areas

Some areas in Somaliland received unusually heavy rains of 102 mm on 26 March with Hargeisa recording 61 mm and Gebiley 40 mm

The 2020 *Gu'* (April-June) rains started in Somalia with moderate to heavy rains recorded in the northern regions, and light to moderate rains in the southern regions. As of 27 March, the rains were yet to start in the central regions of the country. According to the FAO - Somalia Water and Land Information Management (SWALIM) Project, some places in Somaliland received unusually heavy rains of 102 mm on 26 March with Hargeisa recording 61 mm and Gebiley 40 mm. The southern regions also received good rains of about 20-50 mm over two days. The rains are expected to reduce until the season begins in earnest in mid-April.



Rains are likely to trigger flooding in some areas. Photo: OCHA

Parts of Puntland also saw increased rainfall activities over three days with many stations recording rainfall between 20 mm and 50 mm. On 26 March, the Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management Agency (HADMA) in Puntland reported that storms damaged at least 10 houses in Shaxda village near Qardho; floods have also cut off the main Garowe- Bossaso highway near Qardho, temporarily disrupting traffic. Local authorities in Qandala said livestock were killed.

In Baidoa, South West State, humanitarian agencies are concerned that the *Gu'* rains will worsen the plight of IDPs in Baidoa. Shelter Cluster partners report that over 80 per cent of the IDPs lack proper shelter and that the emergency plastic sheeting distributed to most IDP households over two years ago is worn out due to weather conditions. There are 483 IDP settlements in Baidoa hosting about 55,000 displaced families.

## Rains will bring both challenges and benefits

The *Gu'* rains are expected to trigger a spike in acute watery diarrhea and cholera cases because of poor hygiene and sanitation, and lack of adequate health services across the country. Already, at least 1,505 cases have been reported in Somalia although the trend



has declined. Humanitarian partners scaled up response to contain the outbreaks and stepped up preparedness in other high-risk areas.

As the rains intensify, new swarms of desert locusts are expected to form, and hoppers will become immature adults. Currently, Somalia is experiencing a devastating desert locust infestation – the worst such outbreak in over 25 years. On 2 February, the government declared a national emergency over the locust upsurge. On 27 February, the Somali Federal Government and FAO released the ‘Somalia Action Plan for The Desert Locust Crisis’ which requires US\$32.2 million to implement activities through July.

Most of the annual rainfall in Somalia is recorded during the *Gu’* season. Despite possible flooding, the expected average to above average rains will boost crop production prospects and replenish pasture and water sources in most parts of Somalia. This comes after a largely favorable rainy season in October-December and will contribute to continued recovery among pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods that have previously been adversely affected by drought, though the impact of locust will reduce the benefit in some areas. Already, farmers in most parts of the country farmers started cultivating the land and planting crops.

## More assistance needed for recently displaced families in Lower Shabelle region

An estimated 8,000 people were recently displaced from their homes to Marka, Afgooye, Shalanbood and Mogadishu

Recent clashes in Janaale, Lower Shabelle region, have affected over 20,000 people, with an estimated 8,000 people displaced from their homes to Marka, Afgooye, Shalanbood and Mogadishu. According to local authorities, some of the internally displaced people (IDPs) have joined their relatives or are living in IDP settlements while some have returned to their homes. Many fled without belongings and now have no means of livelihood.

The clashes, which started in 16 March, have since ended with an uneasy calm reported around Janaale, a strategic agricultural town located 75 km southwest of Mogadishu. The town, which has an estimated population of 28,000 people, was under the control of Al-Shabaab, who were forced to withdraw by Somali National Army (SNA) forces with assistance by international security partners.

Humanitarian implementers report that the displaced families benefitted from the existing health, nutrition and WASH services in Marka, Afgooye and Mogadishu IDPs settlements. However, there is a need to scale up interventions to cover the immense needs. A rapid assessment by two local humanitarian partners recommended a rapid distribution of non-food items, unconditional cash transfer interventions and provision of kits to control diarrhea during the upcoming rainy season in April.

## SHF to allocate US\$22 million, more resources urgently needed to sustain life-saving response

The Somalia Humanitarian Fund (SHF) issued a call for project proposals to eligible partners under its First Standard Allocation window of US\$22 million towards sustaining the life-saving response in areas with high levels of malnutrition, food insecurity, protection risks and limited access to health facilities and basic services. The SHF funds will also

A third of the \$22 million will support integrated response, mostly in IDP settlements, while the remaining funds will support critical cluster-specific interventions.

target underserved and hard to reach areas, through cluster-specific and integrated projects. While the allocation was finalized prior to the declaration of a global Covid-19 pandemic, partners will be given flexibility to adjust programming to ensure interventions respond to the immediate threat at hand.

A third of the \$22 million will support integrated responses, mostly in IDP settlements, while the remaining funds will be used to support critical cluster-specific interventions across the country. The prioritised activities will help address food insecurity, improve health and nutrition outcomes and health, through provision of agricultural inputs, unconditional and conditional cash transfers to ensure continued access to food, provision of curative and preventative nutrition services and essential health care services.



The allocation will sustain life-saving responses. Photo: SOYDA

WASH services to most vulnerable communities living in underserved and hard to reach areas in Gedo, Bakool, Lower Jubba, Middle Shabelle, Nugal and Bay regions will also improve through rehabilitation and construction of water infrastructure and installation and rehabilitation of sanitation facilities on the sites. SHF funds that were intended to support access to education for IDP children in schools, will likely be adjusted in light of school closings due to Covid-19.

Additionally, protection risks will be alleviated through the provision of emergency shelter/NFI kits, dignity kits, community psychosocial support, and the establishment of referrals for gender-based violence survivors. Vulnerable individuals, particularly persons with special needs including those with disabilities, will also be supported.

While this early funding from the SHF is critical for continued programming in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, much more financial support is required to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance and livelihood support to millions of Somalis in 2020 especially with flooding and locust impact on the horizon. As of 27 March, the 2020 HRP is only 9.6 per cent (\$100.2 million) funded. Early funding can keep the situation from deteriorating further in the upcoming months prior to the *Gu'* rainy season (April-June).

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