

As deaths continue to accumulate despite assistance, Somalia is projected to face Famine in 2023

Famine (IPC Phase 5) is projected to emerge in three areas in southern Somalia in April-June 2023 if current high levels of multi-sectoral humanitarian assistance are not sustained. These areas include rural areas in Baidoa and Burhakaba districts in Bay Region and settlements of internally displaced people (IDPs) in Baidoa and Mogadishu. After warnings of the likelihood of Famine (IPC Phase 5) were issued in September 2022, governments and humanitarians responded with a significant scale-up in assistance that has thus far prevented the minimum thresholds for Famine (IPC Phase 5) from being met; however, food security outcomes remain very near the famine thresholds and high levels of acute malnutrition and hunger-related mortality, exacerbated by concurrent disease outbreaks, are still ongoing. The Famine (IPC Phase 5) thresholds are expected to be metⁱ during the April-June 2023 projection period based on currently available information that humanitarian food assistance will decline to minimal levels after March 2023 due to insufficient funds. Furthermore, several other areas are assessed to face a risk of Famineⁱⁱ in central and southern Somalia. Donor governments and humanitarians must act immediately to mitigate the acceleration of deaths and destitution in Bay Region and Mogadishu, at a minimum, and across Somalia more broadly.

What is a Famine declaration?

According to the IPC protocols, Famine (IPC Phase 5) is declared when at least 20 percent of the population in a given area **currently** has an extreme lack of food, resulting in extremely critical levels of acute malnutrition (≥30 percent of children under five) and significant levels of mortality attributed to starvation and/or the interaction of malnutrition and disease (≥2 people per 10,000 dying per day).

What is a Famine projection?

Available information and the likely evolution of events suggest that Famine (IPC Phase 5), as defined above, is likely to occur **in the future**.

The [latest IPC analysis update](#) – conducted by experts across multiple agencies, including FEWS NET and FSNAU – anticipates that up to 8.3 million people will need urgent humanitarian food assistance through at least mid-2023 in order to treat and prevent hunger and acute malnutrition and reduce the accumulation of ongoing, hunger-related deaths. The scale of [humanitarian interventions](#) in Somalia currently exceeds that of any year of the past decade, reaching 5.8 million people with food assistance and 1.1 million people with acute malnutrition treatment and prevention assistance since January. Nevertheless, the scale of the response is not keeping pace with the historic level of need amid the relentless 2.5-year

Figure 1. Projected food security outcomes, Somalia, April-June 2023

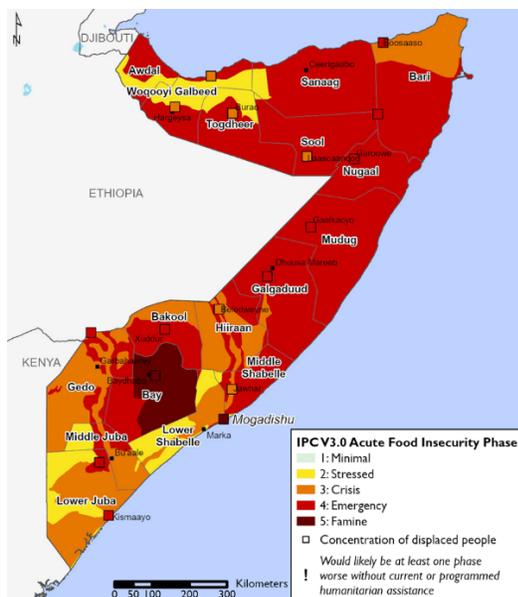
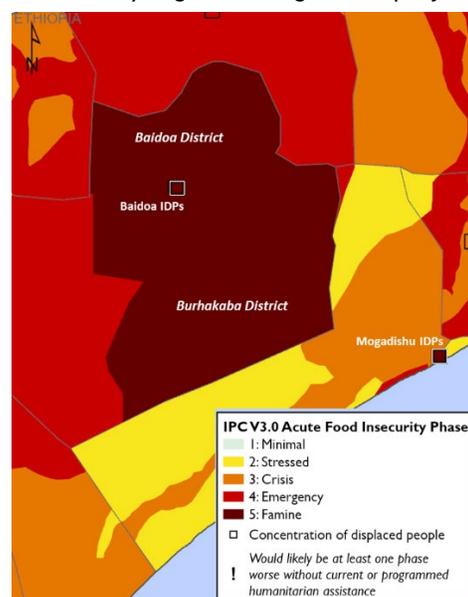


Figure 2. Projected food security outcomes, Burhakaba and Baidoa districts in Bay Region and Mogadishu, April-June 2023



Source: Somalia IPC multi-partner consensus analysis

drought, record-high staple food prices, persistent conflict and insecurity, and disease outbreaks. The October-December 2022 *deyr* rains have performed 40-70 percent below average across large swaths of Somalia, resulting in a fifth consecutive season of poor-to-failed crop production and livestock losses in the areas most affected by drought. The drought continues to result in rising levels of destitution and displacement, with [over 1.3 million people displaced by drought](#) since early 2021. Moreover, a sixth consecutive below-average rainfall season is [forecast in April-June 2023](#), which would break yet another historical record for the longest drought sequence and further prolong the humanitarian catastrophe into late 2023.

Amid concurrent water scarcity and [measles and cholera outbreaks](#), millions of households continue to face severe hunger and acute malnutrition and excess mortality levels remain elevated. Household survey data collected by FSNAU and partners in late October 2022 found that acute malnutrition among children under five is still affecting 19.8 to 24.5 percent of the rural and displaced populations in Baidoa, Burhakaba, and Mogadishu, while mortality levels have breached the Famine (IPC Phase 5) threshold among children under five among displaced populations in Baidoa and Mogadishu. The loss of livelihoods in rural areas continues to compel hundreds of thousands of people to seek assistance in displacement sites, where the dense concentration of displaced people exceeds the availability of water, sanitation, health, and nutrition services. Lengthy journeys to displacement sites, challenges in timely registration processes for assistance amid the large volume of need, very low vaccination coverage, and poor sanitation and hygiene conditions are converging with severe hunger to drive high disease incidence, with the worst outcomes observed among new IDP arrivals. These results, which are in the presence of food assistance reaching well over 50 percent of the rural and IDP population in Baidoa and Burhakaba and over 25 percent of the IDP population in Mogadishu, are indicative of Emergency! (IPC Phase 4!)ⁱⁱⁱ outcomes that are near Famine (IPC Phase 5).

Prospects for recovery in the worst drought-affected areas of southern Somalia will remain slim until at least late 2023. The 2022 *deyr* season cereal harvest in January is expected to be 40-60 percent below the 1995-2021 average, resulting from both poor rainfall and the abandonment of fields given the scale of current displacement. Millions of poor households are expected to harvest minimal to no food stocks and will face concurrent, steep declines in income from agricultural labor. Livestock are also generally in poor and unsalable condition with little to no milk productivity, and around 40 percent of rural household survey respondents in Bay Region reported they no longer owned any livestock in October 2022. Staple food prices remain exorbitantly high and out of reach for most poor households, approaching or exceeding double the five-year average in major southern markets such as Baidoa, Qoryoley, and Mogadishu, and prices are not expected to decline significantly in the near-to-medium term. With the next rainy season in April-June 2023 also forecast to be below average, household food and income from crop and livestock production will remain very low through the next *gu* harvest in July 2023. As a result, livelihoods are expected to erode further, and destitution levels will rise, until the next rainy season starts in late 2023.

If additional funding is not obtained to scale-up and sustain multi-sectoral assistance, then additional hunger-related deaths and destitution will occur in the coming months and accelerate to meet the Famine (IPC Phase 5) thresholds in April-June 2023, when many households will lack any other options for survival. While food assistance is expected to reach 5.8 million people per month on average in Somalia through March and will most likely sustain Emergency! (IPC Phase 4!) outcomes in Bay Region and Mogadishu during that time, information from the Somalia Food Security Cluster suggests the number of beneficiaries will drop by 60-80 percent by April due to funding shortfalls. Without this critical lifeline, Famine (IPC Phase 5) is expected to occur among rural and displaced households in the three areas of Bay Region and Mogadishu between April and June. Furthermore, while it is not currently considered to be the most likely scenario, there is a credible risk of Famine among pastoral populations in Hawd, Addun, and Coastal Deeh livelihood zones in central, Hiiraan, and northeastern regions; agropastoral populations in Middle Shabelle Region; and displaced populations in Garowe (Nugaal Region), Galkacyo (Mudug Region), and Dollow (Gedo Region) if rainfall performs worse than forecast in April-June and food assistance remains low.

Even if the technical thresholds for Famine (IPC Phase 5) are not reached during this period, a scale-up in the humanitarian response is still critically needed to lower the ongoing high levels of acute malnutrition and excess mortality that occur amid Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes. Without significantly higher levels of assistance, the accumulation of deaths will undoubtedly be substantial, and it remains within the realm of possibility that hunger-related deaths over the course of this (2020-2023) drought could exceed that of the 2011-12 Famine in Somalia without the thresholds for Famine ever officially being met, as [widespread hunger-related death can occur well before](#) (or in the absence of) an official Famine declaration.

Recommend Citation: FEWS NET and FSNAU. Somalia Food Security Alert: As deaths continue to accumulate despite assistance, Somalia is projected to face Famine in 2023, December 2022.

ⁱ The IPC Famine Review Committee (FRC) [reviewed the analysis](#) and ultimately determined it was not possible for them to endorse the projection of Famine given the high degree of uncertainty and volatility of the drivers; however, the FRC recommended that IPC partners release the projection with a clear outline of the assumptions behind that scenario.

ⁱⁱ "Risk of Famine" is defined as a scenario in which Famine (IPC Phase 5) would occur if a specific set of events evolve worse than assumed and projected in the most-likely scenario. In order for a scenario to describe a "Risk of Famine" it must have a reasonable likelihood of occurrence, even though it does not represent the most likely scenario.

ⁱⁱⁱ A classification of Emergency! (IPC Phase 4!) indicates Famine (IPC Phase 5) would be expected in the absence of humanitarian assistance distributions.