



A Briefing Note

Situation of Women and Girls - Drought in Somalia



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Introduction:

A recent FSNAU technical release notes that up to 2.7 million people across Somalia are expected to face food consumption gaps or depletion of livelihood assets indicative of Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse outcomes through mid-2021 in the absence of humanitarian assistance. Furthermore, the report notes that the drivers of acute food insecurity in Somalia include the compounding effects of poor and erratic rainfall distribution, flooding, Desert Locust infestation, socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19, and conflict. Women (especially female headed households and those living with disabilities) are majority poor in Somalia.

The situation of women and girls with the COVID-19 is worsened by the persistent droughts in Jubba land, South West State, Puntland, Galmudug and Somaliland. Increasing incidences of intimate partner violence, sexual violence and abuse is most likely to become worse as more women and girls suffer multiple displacements, loss of live livelihoods, food insecurity, sexual abuse and exploitation, poor access to markets and water insecurity. Puntland report on the Humanitarian situation estimates population affected 1,876,624 persons. Out of the total population it is estimated that 469,156 women and girls (25 percent of women and girls of reproductive age) are impacted by the drought events. In Gedo region of Jubba land a total estimate of 133, 310 women and girls have been reported to be impacted by the droughts in Garbaharay, Badera, Beltheawa, Elwak, Dolow and Luuq. A Somaliland Drought Risk Assessment Report indicate that a total population of 135,500 . 50 percent of the total displaced population of 17,700 displaced were women and children.

GBV risks and Exposure:

In the 2021 humanitarian response plan already had 1.7 million people in need of gender based violence programs and services across Somalia. The people in need could increase at least 25% due to the worsening drought conditions. Increases in the incidences of GBV is more likely as women and young girls are exposed to GBV risks as they travel long distance to collect water and fuel; use toilets and seek casual jobs for survival. Lack of adequate protection along lonely tracks in IDP camps and host communities predispose women and young girls to harassment and attacks of sexual nature. Inadequate physical shelter structures in IDP camps, overcrowding in family housing units, inadequate lighting in IDP camps, lack of/and inadequate locks for latrines are also secondary factors that predispose women and girls to sexual violence and abuse. Conflicts over scarce resources increase during droughts and resource scarcities create tensions in the home with increased risks of domestic violence. Reports of gang rapes and murders of rape victims have also increased in Somaliland. The risk of families undertaking early marriage for their female children is increasing with the event of drought. For instance, the February 2021 draft GBVIMS report for Gedo indicators an increase from 4 percent for FGM in 2019 to 6 percent. Families are anxious to secure economic security and reduce the burden of feeding by undertaking FGM to ensure marriageability of their female children. In addition, the recent displacement in Belethawa of Gedo region due to the border conflict has exacerbated the drought situation. Destitute households including women, girls and elderly have moved to remote villages as safe haven with limited GBV services. There are unconfirmed reports of rape incidents at the border by both combatants. In Puntland, women and girls in drought-affected communities with already have pre-existing emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic, locust, and the effect of Cyclone Gati suffer extreme vulnerability. Young girls are at high risk of early marriage due to loss of family livestock.

Parents are willingly to marry off their daughters to the hosting pastoralist in exchange for livestock as Daughtry. The Somaliland Drought Risk Assessment Report indicate increased vulnerability of women and children to sexual violence, harassment and abuse due to distance to water points and poor shelters. Mass cutting of girls were reported in the regions affected by drought while residents also feared the possibility of greater transmission of COVID19 infection among displaced communities.



Access to Services:

The drought-induced crisis is likely to impact the ability of women and girls at risk (and GBV survivors) to access services. COVID19 restriction caused a shrinking of services with closure of services sites, reduced mobility of women and girls to access GBV services, and reluctance of service providers (especially Shelter providers) to continue to provide services due to fear of COVID19 infection. The event of the droughts complicates the situation of service provision even further through deepening the poverty levels of women. Vulnerable pregnant mothers are at a greater disadvantage due to lack of proximity to health facilities and challenge of extra costs of transportation to access services in other sites. In a recent South West State assessment; majority of the respondents reported that everyone in the community wasn't able to access basic obstetric care, reproductive health services and safe home delivery. Only 2.4% percent reported having the access to Basic Obstetric care, only 9.5% to Reproductive health services and 17.4% have the access to safe home delivery. Despite the fact that most people reported that they feel safe in areas where are living (64.4 per cent in Diinsoor, 54.3 per cent in Qansax Dheere and 63.3 per cent in Waajid. However, majority of the respondents 93.1 per cent from Diinsoor, 86.4 per cent from Qansax Dheere and 49.4 per cent from Wajid reported that everyone in the community did not able to access the available services for GBV survivors.

Impact on Food Insecure Women and adolescent girls:

The persistent drought in addition to armed conflict and COVID19 restrictions ensure food crisis among families especially female head households. Women and children headed households are the hardest hit during food crises which is precipitated by the current drought situation in Somalia. As a result of disruption of incomes, restricted mobility, lack of access to labour, land and capital women lack the capacity to sustain basic survival for themselves and their families. Food scarcity and increasing food prices compel poor families to use up all their income for meeting basic food needs leaving little or no possibilities for meeting the basic social services and reproductive health including maternal and new-borns health needs of the affected populations. High food prices and food scarcity may lead women and young girls to sell or exchange sex for food and other basic household needs. There is a likelihood that consumption pattern will change in families if the food crises persist which may lead gendered discrimination in access to food, malnutrition and encourage women to practice altruism. This is particularly dangerous for pregnant women and lactating mothers.



Conclusion:

Women and girl's vulnerability to GBV continues to increase given the incidents of natural disasters, community clashes over scarce resources, armed conflict and COVID19 restrictions. It is important that humanitarian actors must prioritize and act on the following

- broaden service provision; ensure prepositions of supplies and equipment for GBV service provision, sustain capacity and mobilization of CMR and PSS actors to deliver services;
- integrate and expand cash and voucher assistance for vulnerable women and girls and ensure that women and girls have access to material items such as dignity kits, reusable sanitary pads, solar lanterns for the protection of dignity.
- GBV risk mitigation initiatives both at IDP camps and host communities.
- And sustain updating and implementation of integrated referral pathways to direct vulnerable women and girls including GBV survivors to timely, quality and confidential services.
- Undertake mobile team delivery of services to meet immediate GBV, protection and Reproductive health needs of vulnerable women and girls.

References

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4. Humanitarian Situation Report in Puntland - February 2021
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6. OCHA - Rapid Drought Assessment; Somaliland/Jubaland/Galmudug/Puntland January 2021