

Embargo 06:00 GMT 31 October 2019

Extreme flooding batters Somalia forcing at least 100,000 children from their homes

- Fears of disease outbreak as infrastructure damaged and floods worsen in Beledweyne, with more rain predicted**
- Tropical Cyclone Kyarr is expected to follow by the weekend bringing strong winds to Puntland and Somaliland**

At least 200,000 people - including at least 100,000 children^[i] - have been forced to flee their homes in the town of Beledweyne following heavy rains which continue to fall across Hiraan and Bakool regions of Central Somalia.

Save the Children teams on the ground are reporting whole neighborhoods are now underwater, with families escaping on tractors, via donkey cart, on boats and on foot. Tens of thousands of families are now living in makeshift camps on higher ground in the surrounding areas in dire need of food, water and other basic necessities.

Nearly 85% of the residents of Beledweyne, normally home to nearly 400,000 people, have been affected by the floods according to the Somali government. According to the government, the situation has spread to other areas including Bardale, where flash floods due to heavy rains have affected at least 30,000 people. More rains are predicted in the coming days, with warnings that floods will continue or worsen in Beledweyne and surrounding regions.

The main hospital in the Bardale is currently out of action due to the floods, prompting fears that communities may be unprepared for an outbreak of diseases such as malaria and cholera amongst children. Save the Children has deployed mobile health teams and established integrated health and nutrition centres in affected areas to screen children for illnesses and provide nutrition and medical support to displaced communities.

Tropical Storm Kyarr is also expected to make landfall in Puntland and Somaliland before the weekend, with strong winds, rains and possible flash flooding^[ii]. Save the Children is monitoring the storm's progress and preparing to scale up its response.

The Government of Somalia has appealed to humanitarian actors for support to address the current crisis in Beledweyne and surrounding areas by increasing resources and services to affected communities.

Mohamud Mohamed Hassan, Save the Children Somalia Country Director said:

“Somalia is on the frontline of the climate crisis and resources are being stretched to their limits. The worsening situation in Beledweyne and Bardale highlights just how vulnerable communities are. Save the Children was one of the first international NGOs on the ground, providing support to children and families as they try to

survive the harsh conditions. Most of our staff in the region are also displaced, with their homes also destroyed by the floods, but they are working tirelessly to save lives and keep families healthy, but we're worried that things will get worse, quickly.

“The current needs are huge and we're in danger of being overwhelmed if donors don't step up urgently. Right now, our main concern is the potential health crisis including cholera and malaria outbreak which are devastating diseases for children. With the main hospital out of action and sanitation systems severely compromised, this is a recipe for disaster.”

Save the Children and its partners have been supporting affected children and their families in Hiraan and Bakool regions by providing clean water, distributing food and hygiene kits, and installing over 200 temporary latrines.

ENDS

^[i] Demographics of Somalia https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/somalia_statistics.html

^[ii] http://faoswalim.org/resources/site_files/Tropical_Storm_Alert_29102019.pdf?utm_source=SWALIM+Mailin+List&utm_campaign=d85579a3cf-Somalia_Rainfall_Forecast_13_11_2017_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_24f1202523-d85579a3cf-293799569

Photo caption: Shabelle River floods, Beledweyne town in Somalia

Note to editors: Save the Children have people available for interview please contact: Ally Clelland, Communications Specialist, Save the Children NZ, phone 022 531 9514 or email ally.clelland@scnz.org.nz

About Save the Children

Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. In New Zealand and around the world, we work every day to give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. When crisis strikes, and children are most vulnerable, we are always among the first to respond and the last to leave. We ensure children's unique needs are met and their voices are heard. We deliver lasting results for millions of children, including those hardest to reach. We do whatever it takes for children – every day and in times of crisis – transforming their lives and the future we share.