Climate, Peace and Security Fact Sheet

Somalia*



Somalia experienced its worst drought on record from 2021 to 2023, with an unprecedented five consecutive failed rainy seasons that displaced hundreds of thousands of people, undermined livelihoods and raised the spectre of famine in some areas. From August 2022, clan militias and the Somali armed forces launched operations against al-Shabab in some of the most drought-affected regions. As climate change and conflict continue apace in Somalia, the need for robust analyses and responses to climate-related security risks has never been greater.

- The convergence of climate change and violent conflict is undermining livelihoods in Somalia, with impacts for the security of local economies, households and individuals.
- More than one million Somalis were displaced by the effects of climate change in 2022. Many vulnerable people are living in protracted displacement, in rural and increasingly in urban and periurban areas.
- An escalation in conflict operations against al-Shabab in central Somalia is coinciding with the effects of the multi-year drought, complicating a precarious humanitarian situation.
- Climate-related disasters have a disproportionate effect on minority groups, while elite rent-seeking behaviour continues to be a risk for local resilience.

The United Nations Security Council has stressed the need for strategies to assess and manage the risks of climate change, ecological change and natural disasters in Somalia, including in programming by the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), the Somali government and Somalia's federal member states. The combined impacts of climate change and conflict, especially the drought and ongoing military operations in central Somalia, require cross-sectoral collaboration in analysing and responding to climate-related security risks.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- Somalia's partners should support the capacities of the Somali government and federal member states to track and respond to the effects of extreme weather events on agricultural production, food security and livelihoods. Existing early warning and response systems (such as the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization) and government coordination mechanisms (such as the federal Somalia Disaster Management Agency and interstate Inter Emergency Sub-Sectoral Coordination Group) can support analysis and response capacities.
- Addressing new and protracted displacement is a humanitarian and peacebuilding priority in Somalia. To facilitate the adoption of durable solutions, the humanitarian-development-peace nexus should address short-term humanitarian priorities in host communities and use area-based approaches to build longer-term resilience.
- During the current handover of security responsibilities, the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia and the UN Support Office in Somalia should support the capacity of the Somali armed forces to analyse and prevent climaterelated security risks, particularly in ongoing military operations in central Somalia.
- The UN should institutionalize the position of Climate Security Advisor at the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia to support capacity building and coordination across the Somali government, federal member states and the broader UN system in Somalia; and boost community participation in addressing climate-related security risks.

3 13

Human Development Index (HDI)

0.36

* This is an updated version of the fact sheets released in February 2021 and September 2022.

6.5 million (2022)

Figure 1. Key statistics

Climate and environment

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Sources: Binder, L. et al., 'Climate risk profile Somalia', Weathering Risk, Feb. 2022; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Drought Monitoring Tool for Somalia, 'Combined Drought Index (CDI)', accessed 4 Aug. 2023; World Bank, Climate Change Knowledge Portal, 'Country: Somalia–Current climate: Trends and significant change against natural variability, accessed 4 Aug. 2023; World Bank, Climate Change Knowledge Portal, 'Country: Somalia–Climate projections: Mean projections', accessed 4 Aug. 2023; UN Somalia, Common Country Analysis: Somalia 2020 (UN: Sep. 2020); UN Population Fund, 'World Population Dashboard: Somalia', accessed 22 Aug. 2023; Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 'Country profile: Somalia', accessed 22 Aug. 2023; Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), 'Somalia: Acute food insecurity situation Mar. 2023 and projection for Apr.-June 2023', accessed 16 Aug. 2023; Institute for Economics and Peace, 'Global Peace Index 2022', accessed 5 Sep. 2023; Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN), 'ND-GAIN Index country rankings 2021', accessed 5 Sep. 2023; Global Data Lab, Subnational HDI Database, v. 7.0, accessed 22 Aug. 2023; and Smits, J. and Permanyer, I., 'The Subnational Human Development Database', Scientific Data, vol. 6, no. 190038 (Mar. 2019).

Climate exposure: Trends and projections

Somalia has an arid and semi-arid climate with significant seasonal variability influenced by monsoons, tropical cyclones and the Indian Ocean and Red Sea coastlines. Historically, it has two rainy seasons: Gu, March–June; and Deyr, October–December. From mid 2021 to early 2023, Somalia experienced its worst drought on record.¹ Current El Niño and positive Indian Ocean Dipole conditions mean that higher than average rainfall is forecast for the rest of 2023, increasing the risk of flooding. However, some parts of Somalia may need years to recover from the recent drought.²

Temperature: Annual mean temperature is close to 30°C in some parts of Somalia, while the whole country experiences warm periods between April and June.³ It has experienced an increase in mean temperature since 1991.⁴ By 2050, temperatures could increase by 1.5–2.3°C compared to pre-industrial levels.⁵

Precipitation: Rainfall in Somalia is characterized by inter-annual and seasonal variability. Conditions are hot and arid in the north (up to 50 mm rainfall) and wetter in the south (c. 400 mm) and south-west (c. 600 mm).⁶ While precipitation trends are less certain than temperature trends, there has been a notable reduction in Gu season rainfall.⁷ Precipitation projections are also uncertain, but inter-annual variability is likely to increase and extreme weather events (e.g. droughts and floods) are likely to occur more frequently.⁸

Socioecological vulnerabilities

The effects of climate change intersect with existing vulnerabilities in Somalia and impact large parts of the population, given the predominance of agropastoral livelihoods. Rising air temperatures exacerbate water shortages and decrease vegetation cover, which affect yields from farming and livestock rearing for the estimated 72 per cent of the population engaged in the sector.⁹ Higher ocean temperatures and a doubling in the number of marine heatwaves disrupt fish stocks and coastal communities.¹⁰

Climate change is exacerbating a complex humanitarian crisis, compounding forced displacement and food insecurity. Acute food insecurity rose by an estimated 91 per cent in 2022, driven by lower domestic production and higher food import costs.¹¹ Poor urban households and internally displaced persons (IDPs), who often spend 60–80 per cent of their income on food, were especially impacted.¹²

Conflict affects the capacity of individuals and households to cope with the adverse effects of climate change. Military operations against al-Shabab in central Somalia and political violence in Las Anod, Somaliland have exacerbated displacement, increased attacks on civilians and infrastructure, and restricted freedom of movement and humanitarian access.¹³

Climate change is also leading to more frequent and severe disasters in Somalia, which leaves communities with less time to recover from shocks and narrows the space for building resilience. Although rainfall levels have recovered since early 2023, the lingering effects of drought and reduced soil absorption capacities have exacerbated floods in some regions.¹⁴ As of July 2023, floods had affected some 500 000 people across the country, with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization warning that 1.5 million hectares of cropland along the Juba and Shabelle rivers could be inundated during the 2023 Deyr rainy season.¹⁵

Climate-related peace and security risks

Climate change is rarely the main driver of conflict, but it can undermine development gains, exacerbate the dynamics of ongoing violence and disrupt fragile peace processes. Violent conflict and political instability can also weaken community resilience to the effects of climate change. This fact sheet uses four interrelated pathways to navigate the relationship between climate change, peace and security: (*a*) livelihood deterioration, (*b*) migration and mobility, (*c*) military and armed actors, and (*d*) political and economic exploitation and mismanagement.¹⁶

Livelihood deterioration

Long-running conflict, weak governance, poverty and informal employment, and the predominance of agropastoralist livelihoods all increase vulnerabilities to climate change in Somalia. Unreliable seasonal rainfalls and extreme weather events can undermine access to water and pasture that are essential to agropastoralism.¹⁷ In some cases, drought has undermined critical rural livestock economies and agropastoral incomes and increased the risk of local natural resource conflict.¹⁸

Consecutive failed rainy seasons from 2021 to 2023 have impacted livelihood security in Somalia; agropastoral incomes have been decimated by exceptionally high water and fodder prices, combined with crop failure and livestock deaths.¹⁹ The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that one third of livestock in the most drought-affected regions have died since 2021, and floods in 2023 have also destroyed hectares of cropland.²⁰ Moreover, conflict has undermined people's resilience to shocks, restricting access to water, pasture and livestock markets. The conflict in Las Anod has led to bans on commercial traffic and reduced livestock flows from neighbouring Galmudug State.²¹

Livelihood shocks impact women and men differently in Somalia. Women remain under-represented in formal and informal governance and are disproportionately affected by poverty. They have limited rights to land ownership and are more at risk of displacement, exploitation and violence.²² This hampers efforts to address gender-specific needs and roles in climate change adaptation. For example, the environmentally damaging production of charcoal and its trade are banned in Somalia,

- ¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Somali Water and Land Information Management, Drought Monitoring Tool for Somalia, 'Combined Drought Index (CDI)', accessed 4 Aug. 2023.
- ² IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC), 'El Niño Southern Oscillation and Indian Ocean Dipole Watch for the Eastern Africa—short rains season (October– December 2023), 17 July 2023.
- ³ World Bank, Climate Change Knowledge Portal, 'Country: Somalia–Current climate: Climatology', accessed 4 Aug. 2023.
- ⁴ World Bank, Climate Change Knowledge Portal, 'Country: Somalia–Current climate: Trends and significant change against natural variability', accessed 4 Aug. 2023.
- ⁵ Binder, L. et al., 'Climate risk profile: Somalia', Weathering Risk, Feb. 2022.
- ⁶ World Bank (note 3).
- ⁷ World Bank (note 4).
- ⁸ World Bank, Somalia Climate Risk Review (World Bank Group: Washington, DC, 2023).
- ⁹ UN Somalia, *Common Country Analysis 2020* (UN: Sep. 2020).
- ¹⁰ Trisos, C. T. et al. 'Africa', eds H.-O. Pörtner et al., Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK/New York, USA, Feb. 2022); and Blasiak, R. et al., 'Climate change and marine fisheries: Least developed countries top global index of vulnerability', PLOS ONE, vol. 12, no. 6 (June 2017).
- ¹¹ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Humanitarian Needs Overview: Somalia*, Humanitarian programme cycle 2023 (OCHA: Feb. 2023).
 ¹² OCHA, *Humanitarian Response Plan: Somalia*, Humanitarian programme cycle 2023
- ¹² OCHA, Humanitarian Response Plan: Somalia, Humanitarian programme cycle 2023 (OCHA: Feb. 2023); and Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), 'Somalia faces risk of famine (IPC phase 5) as multi-season drought and soaring food prices lead to worsening acute food insecurity and malnutrition', 8 Apr. 2022.

- ¹³ OCHA (note 12); and OCHA, 'Somalia: Flash update no. 4 on the situation in Laas Caanood, Sool Region', 3 Apr. 2023.
- ¹⁴ Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), 'Normal light-to-moderate rainfall in early June continues to support drought recovery across much of Somalia', Somalia Seasonal Monitor, 15 June 2023.
- ¹⁵ OCHA, 'Somalia: 2023 flash and riverine floods', Situation Report no. 3, 17 July 2023; and FAO, 'FAO calls for anticipatory action to safeguard lives and livelihoods in Somalia ahead of El Niño', 7 July 2023.
- ¹⁶ Mobjörk, M., Krampe, F. and Tarif, K., Pathways of Climate Insecurity: Guidance for Policymakers (SIPRI: Stockholm, Nov. 2020).
 ¹⁷ Eklöw, K. and Krampe, F., Climate-related Security Risks and Peacebuilding in Somalia,
- ¹⁷ Eklöw, K. and Krampe, F., Climate-related Security Risks and Peacebuilding in Somalia, SIPRI Policy Paper no. 53 (SIPRI: Stockholm, Oct. 2019).
- ¹⁸ Somali Ministry of National Resources, National Adaptation Programme of Action on Climate Change (NAPA), Apr. 2013; and Maystadt, J. F. and Ecker, O., 'Extreme weather and civil war: Does drought fuel conflict in Somalia through livestock price shocks?, American Journal of Agricultural Economics, vol. 96, no. 4 (2014).
- shocks?', American Journal of Agricultural Economics, vol. 96, no. 4 (2014).
 ¹⁹ Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), 'Somalia: Acute Food Insecurity and Malnutrition Snapshot: June–December 2022', 12 Sep. 2023.
 ²⁰ OCHA (note 11); and OCHA (note 15).
- ²¹ World Food Programme (WFP) Somalia, 'Situation report on Laas Caanood response', 28 Apr. 2023; International Crisis Group, 'Time for Somaliland and the Dhulbahante to talk', 19 May 2023; and Radio Ergo, 'Hiran farmers' profits hit by conflict in Somaliland'. 17 Mar. 2023.
- ²² Hassan, A. 'Somalia's women and girls are victims of climate change', Inkstick, 11 May 2023; and Syn, J., *Housing, Land and Property Rights for Somalia's Urban Displaced Women* (Norwegian Refugee Council: 2016).

but existing (limited) research suggests that women play important roles in charcoal value chains in sub-Saharan Africa.²³ Thus, more research is needed to develop gender-sensitive livelihood alternatives as part of climate change adaptation in Somalia.

Recent government strategy, including new ministerial portfolios and coordination mechanisms, as well as government policies such as the National Environment Strategy and Action Plan, may facilitate progress in Somalia's climate change policies. The Somali government and its partners should also support capacities to track and analyse the effects of climate change on agricultural production, food security and livelihoods, including the gender-specific impacts. Key resources include the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit and the Somalia Water and Land Information Management project, as well as government coordination and response mechanisms such as the federal Somalia Disaster Management Agency and the interstate Inter Emergency Sub-Sectoral Coordination Group.

Woqooy Galbeed Acute food insecurity status Mar. 2023 Minimal (IPC phase 1) Stressed (IPC phase 2) Nugaal Crisis (IPC phase 3) Emergency (IPC phase 4) No. of violent events 35 10 MOGADISHU Lower Shabelle Middle Juba ie Cl IPC, 'Somalia: Acute Food Insecurity Situ ion & Event Data Project, 'Data export tool', accessed 1 Sep. 2023

Figure 2. Food insecurity and conflict in Somalia

Migration and mobility

Climate change can influence forced and voluntary migration. People may be forced to migrate when it poses a threat to their survival, for example, due to

extreme weather events. Voluntary migration can allow people to shift livelihood strategies and

adapt to the effects of climate change.

An estimated 1.3 million people were internally displaced by drought in Somalia in 2022 and more than 600 000 (the highest number in over a decade) by violent conflict.²⁴ Most climate-related migration takes place locally, but the drought increased cross-border migration too, for example, from Ethiopia's Somali region, and even long-distance migration to the Gulf states, via Yemen.²⁵ Climate-related migration in Somalia can accentuate local tensions, including conflicts over animals, in areas such as Galmudug State's Abudwaaq district, where nomadic pastoralists use seasonal migration to cope with adverse weather conditions.26

Nevertheless, most displacement in Somalia is from rural to urban and peri-urban areas, mainly Mogadishu and Baidoa, which has contributed to one of the highest urbanization rates on the continent.²⁷ Women and children make up an estimated 80 per cent of the displaced population, where separation from male relatives, long-distance travel and insecurity leave them vulnerable to exploitation and violence.²¹ Weak service provision and safety nets mean that IDPs are especially vulnerable to conflicts over property, forced evictions and clan conflicts.²⁹ Given the challenges, there is a higher risk that IDPs and returnees adopt negative coping strategies in the short term.³⁰

Despite progress in government policy on displacement in Somalia, including the National Durable Solutions Strategy 2020-2024, the humanitarian system continues to be strained by new displacement and overstretched services in the limited number of managed IDP sites.³¹ To alleviate displacement risks and facilitate the adoption of durable solutions, humanitarian assistance should be complemented by resilience building in vulnerable communities. In rural agropastoral communities in particular, climate change and conflict need to be addressed in tandem. Nature-based solutions to improving the access to and use of water and pastoral resources can strengthen ecosystem services and support local livelihoods and economies.³² Related programming should pay special attention to strengthening local capacity in gender-sensitive ways.

Military and armed actors

Research shows that armed groups can adapt their strategies and tactics to capitalize on the local effects of climate change.³³ This can be through the opportunistic use of disasters to advance control over communities. For example, during Somalia's latest drought, al-Shabab challenged government relief efforts, setting fire to food trucks and destroying water wells and part of the Shabelle riverbank.³⁴ It maintained the taxation of households, confiscated livestock in communities that refused to send young men to its ranks and carried out violent attacks in drought-affected communities.35

The combined forces of drought and conflict are driving down local resilience. In mid 2022, clan militias and the Somali armed forces launched a counteroffensive against al-Shabab in some of the most drought-affected regions of the country. According to one report, conflict operations have limited herders' access to traditional grazing grounds in Galmudug State, leading pastoralists to migrate less for

- ²³ Ihalainen, M. et al., 'Women-the recurring anomaly in the charcoal sector: Genderresponsive approaches for more inclusive, equitable and sustainable outcomes', Sustainable Woodfuel Brief no. 2, CIFOR-ICRAF, 2021.
- ²⁴ OCHA (note 11); and International Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 'Country profile: Somalia', accessed 28 Aug. 2023.
- Al Jazeera, 'Rise in migrants from Horn of Africa to Gulf states worrying: UN', 15 Feb. 2023; and Radio Ergo, 'IDP camps in Abudwak, Galgadud, swell with families from Ethiopia', 20 Feb. 2023.
- ²⁶ International Organization for Migration (IOM) Somalia, *Galmudug District Profiling*, Analysis Brief (IOM: Sep. 2023).
- ²⁷ Boru Halakhe, A. and Miller, S., 'No going back: The new urban face of internal displacement in Somalia', Refugees International, 25 May 2023.
- ²⁸ OCHA (note 11); and UN Population Fund (UNFPA), Somalia Country Office, 'Overview of gender-based violence in Somalia', Advocacy Brief, 2021.
- ²⁹ IOM Somalia (note 26).
- ³⁰ OCHA (note 12).

- ³¹ Somali Ministry of Planning, Somalia: The National Durable Solutions Strategy 2020–2024, 31 Mar. 2021; and Boru Halakhe and Miller (note 27).
- ³² Broek, E. and Hodder, C. M., *Towards an Integrated Approach to Climate Security and* Peacebuilding in Somalia (SIPRI: Stockholm, June 2022).
- ³³ Van Baalen, S. and Mobjörk, M., 'Climate change and violent conflict in East Africa: Integrating qualitative and quantitative research to probe the mechanisms', International Studies Review, vol. 20, no. 4 (Dec. 2018).
- ³⁴ Radio Ergo, 'Hiran families return to burnt village to try to restart their lives', 25 Nov. 2022; Radio Ergo, 'Weekly feedback report: 15-21 September 2022', 23 Sep. 2022; International Crisis Group, 'Sustaining gains in Somalia's offensive against Al-Shabaab', Africa Briefing no. 187, 21 Mar. 2023; and Dahir, A. L., 'Militants attack trucks carrying food relief in Somalia', New York Times, 3 Sep. 2022.
- ³⁵ International Crisis Group (note 34).
- ³⁶ Radio Ergo, 'Galgadud pastoralists caught between drought and conflict', 19 Feb. 2023.

security reasons, which increases their vulnerability to drought. $^{\scriptscriptstyle 36}$

In Hirshabelle State, numerous farming households have been forced to abandon their crops due to conflict.³⁷ OCHA estimates that 450 000 more civilians will be displaced by conflict in 2023.³⁸ In a rush to make territorial gains in Galmudug, Hirshabelle and al-Shabab strongholds in South West State, the Somali government and its allies may disrupt access to food and water, with devastating effects on local communities.³⁹

In view of the need for data and information on climate change impacts and vulnerabilities in central Somalia, particularly in newly recovered territories and communities, the government and its regional and international partners should facilitate inclusive, community-led assessments of climate-related security risks. As the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) draws down and hands over security responsibilities to the government, it should work with the UN Support Office in Somalia to develop the capacity of the Somali armed forces to analyse and prevent climate-related security risks. The UN should institutionalize the position of UNSOM Climate Security Advisor to continue supporting efforts to ensure that climate-related security risks are integrated across UN and partner programming.40

Political and economic exploitation and mismanagement

Climate change can create and exacerbate local vulnerabilities, as well as create opportunities for powerful groups to expand or consolidate control over natural resources, for example, land and water. Under the current clan-based power-sharing system in the government, an estimated 30 per cent of Somalis can be considered minorities and these groups are disproportionately affected by disasters.⁴¹ In the past, powerful clan militias have looted and attacked livestock and food stores in minority Somali communities during famines.⁴² In 2011 flooding in the Shabelle River Basin led to the displacement of minority clans and, when the floodwaters receded, the same lands were seized by more powerful clans.⁴³

The most recent drought has had a significant impact on the availability of freshwater sources and grassland, and may accentuate longer-term declines in vegetation cover.⁴⁴ Ecosystems may be less resilient to

³⁷ Radio Ergo, 'Conflict forces farming families to abandon their land in Beletweyne to languish in IDP camps', 18 Nov. 2022.

- ³⁹ International Crisis Group (note 34): and Radio Ergo, 'Weekly feedback report: 22–28 September 2022', 29 Sep. 2022.
- ⁴⁰ UN Security Council Resolution 2657, 31 Oct. 2022.
- ⁴¹ OCHA (note 11); and Majid, N. et al., 'Another humanitarian (and political crisis) in Somalia in 2022', Feinstein International Center, June 2022.
- ⁴² Majid, N. and McDowell, S., 'Hidden dimensions of the Somalia famine', *Global Food Security*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Dec. 2012).

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als Tracking Tool', accessed 1 Sep. 2023

drought in the southern regions of Somalia than in other parts of the country, where the effects of climate change can further reduce the availability of cultivable land and increase the risk of conflict around land rights, access and use in areas with existing high levels of violent conflict.⁴⁵

Local governance capacities within natural resource management will be crucial to building both peace and climate resilience in rural Somalia. The pressing problem of land and water conflicts cannot be addressed without trusted systems for managing these resources and resolving related disputes. In territories that have been newly recovered from al-Shabab, the government and its partners, including in the UN system, should support and enhance local capacities to resolve disputes and prevent their escalation to community violence or political spill-over effects. Existing indigenous mechanisms for land dispute adjudication, such as *xeer*, and other alternative dispute resolution mechanisms can empower local communities through access to justice.⁴⁶ These actions will be especially important in preparing for the voluntary return of IDPs and refugees to newly recovered territories and preventing new land conflicts.

⁴³ Eklöw and Krampe (note 17).

- ⁴⁴ FAO, Somali Water and Land Information Management, Drought Monitoring Tool for Somalia, 'NDVI maps', accessed 4 Aug. 2023; and Measho, S. et al., 'Assessment of vegetation dynamics and ecosystem resilience in the context of climate change and drought in the Horn of Africa', *Remote Sensing*, vol. 13, no. 9 (Apr. 2021).
- ⁴⁵ Measho (note 44); and Eklöw and Krampe (note 17).
- ⁴⁶ International Development Law Organization (IDLO), 'Strengthening climate justice in Somaliland: The role of ADR centres', Issue Brief, Mar. 2023.

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³⁸ OCHA (note 11).