

A mother and child after travelling 350 kilometres on foot arrive at Daynile IDP camp in search of food, water and health services. Credit: WHO/Somalia

WHO integrated health response services help save lives as severe drought triggers population displacements across Somalia

Mogadishu, 9 February 2023 – "After walking for over 350 kilometres with a caravan of about 25 people, including women, children and older people, we have arrived alive and with enough energy to live another day. But there are many we have buried in our villages because of this unending drought," remarked Ali Abdullahi (55 years) while settling down the handful of belongings that he was able to carry in this life-saving and heart-wrenching week-long journey from the remotest southern village of Galmudug to reach this camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Daynile district of Banadir region.

Every day, an estimated 15 to 20 families are arriving in the suburbs around Mogadishu, including Daynile district. Most of the people arrive on foot and the majority of them have identical stories like Ali Abdullahi to share with the locals and humanitarian teams receiving, registering and treating them at the camp. Daynile, one of the 17 districts within the limits of Banadir Regional Administration, has just over 117 000 households while the camp for IDPs houses over 500 000 people and is growing with every passing day. Owing to decades of conflict and instability, climatic shocks like floods, drought, cyclone and the COVID-19 pandemic, Somalia's overall and Daynile district's fragile health system struggles to provide essential health and nutrition services. Now, with IDPs arriving in significant numbers, health facilities in host communities cannot adapt to the increasing needs. Owing to extreme food hunger among the population living in this camp and catastrophic living conditions with no access to safe water and sanitation and hygiene coupled with lack of basic health care for these people who were denied any access to health care for decades before they were displaced to this camp, famine (Integrated food security phase classification 5) has been projected in this district of Mogadishu between April and June 2023.

"We are finding the camp being extended almost daily to accommodate new drought-survivors arriving from various parts of Somalia to find the very basics of life like drinkable water, some food and medical help. These people are coming with almost nothing but with a big burden of diseases and stories of their dead relatives and livestock," said the WHO-supported health worker, Binte Subah, deputed at the Daynile camp set up for IDPs to provide basic health services to these survivors.

Binte Subah is one of the 70 health workers assigned to provide integrated health services in the camp. To manage the initial influx of displaced persons in the camp, WHO deployed health workers for 4 days a week for a month. But with the continued pouring in of new drought survivors, WHO has extended the mission for another month and will assess the demand of

services at the end of next month.

The integrated outreach teams have identified several key health issues affecting people in the IDP settlement and the Daynile community more broadly, including malnutrition, epidemic-prone diseases like acute water diarrhoea and measles, pneumonia, anaemia in pregnant woman, and skin infections due to lack of water intake. These teams have carried out screening to identify and refer children with malnutrition to outpatient therapeutic programmes and at stabilization centres.

"I am thankful to WHO health teams for saving the life of my wife and newborn child by giving them timely medications after we arrived at the camp in Daynile. Soon after giving birth to our child, we had to leave our village because our water wells have dried, our livestock have perished and there are no signs of rain thus we were left with no other option but to migrate in search of food and health services leaving everything behind. In this fragile state, she was walking with us for almost 120 kilometres to reach this camp and both were in a really bad health when we put our foot in the camp," remarked Abdirahmat with tears in his eyes while receiving the free medicines and supplements for his wife and newborn at the WHO medical centre – set up on the roadside under the shadow of a tree inside the camp.

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Please see the links below for additional information on WHO's drought response across Somalia:

- <u>https://www.emro.who.int/somalia/news/somalia-launches-campaign-to-vaccinate-one-mil</u> <u>lion-people-against-cholera.html</u>

- <u>https://www.emro.who.int/somalia/news/who-supports-nationwide-integrated-immunizatio</u> <u>n-campaign-in-the-midst-of-drought-261-million-children-vaccinated-against-measles-and-polio</u> <u>.html</u>

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