

## **Breaking the cycle of crisis in Somalia**

**By: Oxfam**

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It is one year since the UN declared Somalia as being in “famine”. But despite the cameras moving elsewhere the emergency is far from over – right now over a quarter of the country’s population are still in food crisis – relying on humanitarian aid to survive. Added to this recent poor rains mean that over a million more could fall back into crisis if early warnings are not acted upon immediately.

According to Oxfam’s partners in Somalia, there has been improvement since last year’s famine, with the number of people in need of humanitarian help reduced from 3.7 million a year ago to 2.51 million today. However, the poor rains of the past few months have affected people at a crucial time as they try to recover from last year’s drought, crop failure, death of livestock and destruction of livelihoods.

Our partners say that in parts of the country people are at risk again. The farmers who live away from the rivers are the hardest hit, since their fields are far from irrigation. If we don’t act now, they say we are likely to go back into a deepening emergency in the next 60 days. Oxfam is currently working to get a picture of what the real situation is and are supporting partners to scale up their programs to respond.

To break this recurring cycle of drought and people falling into repeated crisis we need to invest heavily in long term development programs alongside emergency aid. Long term programs could include for example tree planting and agricultural improvement; rehabilitation of canals provides short term jobs and long term irrigation for crops; training young people in skills that help them earn a decent living; and sustainable provision of clean water and health projects. This sort of project gives communities the means to cope with droughts that occur regularly in the region.

As well as delivering needed humanitarian aid and longer term development for Somalis the international community also needs to demonstrate it is serious about supporting bottom up peace processes for Somalia and allow Somali people to shape their own future.

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