

UK steps up support as famine looms in Somalia

- Minister for Africa Vicky Ford has announced a £25 million aid package for Somalia, supporting almost a million people.
- Somalia facing prospect of widespread famine, with 350,000 children's lives at risk if no action is taken.
- Ford did a virtual visit to Baidoa in Somalia yesterday [Monday] and announced new funding at UN event in Geneva today.

Minister for Africa Vicky Ford has announced a new £25 million aid package to provide vital services to almost a million people across the country, including food and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) support, as the country teeters on the brink of widespread famine.

Speaking at a roundtable event organised by UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Ford announced the package of lifesaving food, water, nutrition and emergency health support and called on other international donors to step up.

After three failed rainy seasons, approximately half the population require life-saving aid due to the ongoing drought. Forecasts suggest a fourth failed rain is likely. The UN estimate that there are pockets of famine in the country now, with more than one million people on the edge.

The Minister also announced a groundbreaking partnership with Qatar, which will see the Qatari government invest \$1.5 million with the UK towards the emergency response and resilience-building in Somalia.

Minister for Africa Vicky Ford said:

We should be in no doubt of what will happen if we fail to support the people of Somalia – 350,000 children will die and many more will have their lives ruined.

The UK is stepping up our support with an additional £25 million, taking our support to almost £40 million in 2022 alone. It will mean life-saving food, water and healthcare support for more than a million people.

After a quarter of a million people needlessly died from hunger in Somalia in 2011, we said never again. Now is the time for the international community to fulfill that commitment and stand with the people of Somalia.

Yesterday [25 April], the Minister conducted a virtual visit to Baidoa in Somalia where the UK is supporting almost 120,000 people with food and water support. She met with representatives from the Norwegian Refugee Council, a

UK partner on the ground, and heard from communities affected.

Norwegian Refugee Council's Somalia Country Director, Mohamed Abdi said:

The scale of the crisis in Somalia, and the level of human suffering, is truly staggering. More than three-quarters of a million people have been forced to flee their homes, millions more face life-threatening food and water shortages, and people are on the brink of famine.

To avert a tragedy and save lives the world must act now – Somalia requires a massive injection of support.

A perfect storm of events is behind the current situation in Somalia. Extreme weather events associated with climate change are ruining harvests. Poor governance and conflict across the country continue to displace vulnerable communities, destroy livelihoods and limit access to humanitarian assistance.

Driven in part by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Somali people have also faced sharp rises in the price of rice by almost 15%, the price of oil by 40% and the price of wheat by 45%.

The food insecurity crisis extends across the Horn of Africa. Some 14 million people across Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia are at risk of severe hunger and water shortages.

The Minister witnessed the impact of the crisis in the region first-hand on a visit to Kenya and Ethiopia earlier this year. The UK Government committed an initial £14.5 million of support for Somalia earlier this year, which is expected to support almost 500,000 people to access clean water and afford food supplies.