Drought Emergency in Somalia

What is the issue?

A joint statement by the U.N. FAO, OCHA, UNICEF and WFP stated that roughly 40% of Somalia's population is now facing extreme levels of food insecurity with pockets of famine conditions in certain areas.

What about the geography of Somalia?

> *The Republic of Somalia was formed in 1960 by the federation of a former Italian colony and a British protectorate.*

- Somalia is located in the Horn of Africa, the eastern most part of Africa.
- Somalia is bounded by the Gulf of Aden to the north, Indian Ocean to the east, Kenya and Ethiopia to the west, and Djibouti to the northwest.
- The capital is Mogadishu, located just north of the Equator.
- Somalia is a country of geographic extremes where the climate is mainly dry and hot, with landscapes of thornbush savanna and semidesert.
- Somalia has some of the highest mean annual temperatures in the world.
- Somalia experiences two bouts of rainfall
    - *Deyr* season- September/October to December
    - *Gu* season- April to June
- The Somali people are clan-based Muslims, and about three-fifths follow a mobile way of life, pursuing nomadic pastoralism or agropastoralism.

What concerns were echoed in a joint statement?

- United Nations Resident & Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia stated that 1.4 million children under five years of age are severely malnourished in Somalia, and in the absence of intervention, it is projected that 3.5 lakh will perish by the summer of this year.
- Similar concerns were echoed in a joint statement of the U.N. FAO, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the UNICEF and World Food Programme (WFP).
- They sought an immediate injection of funds to scale up lifesaving assistance in Somalia, adding that the recent events had exposed nearly 40% of the Somalian population to the risk of a famine.
- The impact of the drought was compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic political turbulence, and large-scale displacement of people to better-off areas within the country.

What is the cause of this crisis?

- **Seasonal changes**- Somalia has been struggling with multi-season drought since late 2020.
- The 2021 *Deyr* season started late, ended early, and had an erratic distribution.
- The cumulative rainfall was 40-60% below average resulting in massive crop failures and below-average crop production.
- The harvest season led to increased migration in search of food, water and pasture, spurring pressure and depletion of resources in less drought-affected areas.
- The aftereffect of the failed Dyer season was compounded by the dry and harsh *Jillal* season between January and March.
- IPC stated that households faced water shortages, limited milk availability, and a lack of saleable animals as they were dying of starvation.
- **Factors exacerbating the crisis**
    - Persistent insecurity
    - Conflict
    - Unresolved political tensions
    - Global supply and price shock
- **Emergency**- The Federal Government of Somalia had declared a state of emergency in 2021 and made urgent calls for international assistance.
- This was followed by the country's Vice-Presidential office on January 13 declaring the drought a national emergency in Somaliland.

What is the near-term outlook of the situation?

- **Food security-** If the upcoming March-April-May rain fails, this would lead to a historic four-season drought that would suppress critical food and income sources in 2022.
- Also, the average rainfalls would not lead to any immediate recovery.
- **Pastoralists-** Poor pastoralists in Somalia are unable to cope with rising costs of water and food.
- Fewer livestock births are expected in the current calendar year with reduced income from their sales.
- **Urban poor-** The IPC's report states that the urban poor presently spend 60-80% of their income on food.
- Declining labour wages and rising food prices have led to sharp declines in the terms of trade between wage labour and cereals.
- As a result, the urban poor face moderate to large food consumption gaps through mid-2022.
- **Population displacement-** Worsening drought conditions and persistent food insecurity could lead to increased displacement from rural to urban areas through mid-2022.
- This would result in displaced people experiencing moderate to large consumption gaps.
- **Health issues-** The health authorities have observed a measles outbreak in Somalia.
- Overcrowded settlements of the displaced populations, poor water and sanitary conditions could result in further outbreaks of acute watery diarrhoea affecting mostly children under five years of age.
- The levels of acute malnutrition could rapidly increase to 30% or more Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) which is one of the thresholds for Famine (IPC Phase 5) classification.

References

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n-somalia/article65318478.ece?homepage=true
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