

## NGOs call for all-inclusive dialogue to save lives in Somalia

As NGOs who have worked in Somalia for decades, we are accustomed to the daily struggle to survive that is the reality for most Somalis. However, never before have we faced such acute suffering with so many lives at stake. Somalia is at a turning point. The next three months are critical; hundreds of thousands of lives hang in the balance. Efforts to increase assistance and prevent more deaths will not be enough unless accompanied by a dramatic change in approach. The humanitarian imperative of saving lives must override any political considerations at this crucial time.

It is hard to imagine that the suffering in Somalia could get any worse. Yet we know that the arrival of the *Deyr* rains predicted for October 2011 will result in increased suffering and lead to the deaths of many more weak and vulnerable Somalis in communities already decimated by famine. The spread of cholera, measles and malaria will have a devastating effect on malnourished men, women and children. Current restrictions on the delivery of humanitarian assistance are preventing the rapid scale up of aid that is so desperately needed in Somalia.

This scale up should not and cannot be achieved through military means. Somalia's recent history has demonstrated that military action has often led to increased death and suffering, and further reduced humanitarian access.

Lives will be saved through active dialogue rather than military action. We welcome recent statements by some donor governments that an all-inclusive dialogue is possible and necessary and urge further efforts in this respect from all sides.

With this in mind we call on:

Parties to the conflict to:

- Immediately commit to a full cessation of hostilities throughout Somalia
- Allow free passage of assistance and for those seeking assistance; and
- Remove restrictions on the delivery of impartial aid and allow organisations to scale up their assistance, both in terms of experienced staff and essential materials such as food, water and medicine

International governments and other actors to:

- Enhance diplomatic efforts and engage with all parties to the conflict to ensure the unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid throughout Somalia. We encourage members of the League of Arab states, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the Somalia diaspora to continue to use their influence to achieve the rapid scale up of humanitarian assistance and save lives.
- Remove any legal impediments to providing assistance in areas dominated by armed groups - aid must be provided impartially, based on need, and independently of any political or military agendas
- Ensure that funding is available to support the levels of assistance that are needed ; and
- Set aside funds for long term solutions.

Despite our best efforts we know that many lives will be lost. Yet we are faced with a window of opportunity, a critical period where a change in approach - putting people before politics - could save thousands of lives.

ACF INTERNATIONAL

Action Africa Help – International (AHH-I)

ADRA Somalia

Caritas Switzerland

Danish Refugee Council (DRC)

Family Empowerment and Relief Organization (FERO)

Finn Church Aid (FCA)

GRT Group for Transcultural Relations (GRT)

HIRJA Somalia (HIJRA)

Integrated Development Focus (IDF)

International Rescue Committee, Somalia (IRC)

KAALO Relief and Development (KAALO)

Mines Advisory Group (MAG)

Médecins du Monde France (MDM)

Mubarak for Relief and Development Organisation (MURDO)

OXFAM

SAREDO

Vétérinaires Sans Frontières - Germany (VSF G)

WASDA

World Vision (WVI)