**UK announces urgent support to Somali people facing famine**

UK Minister for Development visits Somalia and commits vital UK aid in response to the growing risk of famine.

Minister Mitchell speaking with Somalian people affected by the drought.

* life-saving healthcare, water, food and climate-change protection to help half a million people, was announced during a visit to Somalia by the UK Minister for Development
* Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell MP, in his first visit in his new role, pledged the emergency support in response to the country’s devastating drought
* this funding package also includes international partnerships with Germany and Saudi Arabia’s King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSRelief)

The UK is providing vital aid to Somalia in response to its growing risk of famine – as climate change threatens to make such crises more frequent.

Andrew Mitchell, the UK Minister for Development, announced the new support on a visit to Somalia – his first overseas visit since his appointment.

The funding will tackle drought, food insecurity, gender-based violence and boost climate resilience, reaching over 480,000 of the country’s most vulnerable people. New funding will also help Somali troops in their fight against al-Shabaab.

The humanitarian crisis in Somalia continues to worsen, with 300,000 people projected to be in famine by the end of the year and 1.8 million children at risk of malnutrition.

The UK is working with the UN and NGO partners to address this humanitarian crisis, providing life-saving health and nutrition support, cash transfers to buy food, safe drinking water, and ensuring those displaced by drought will receive emergency assistance shelter.

The funding will also protect children from violence and exploitation and provide women subject to gender-based violence with mental health support.

The Minister for Development, Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell MP said:

Somalia faces one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world, with millions of people in desperate need of aid, including over half a million children under 5 years old who are at risk of death.

I visited Somalia in 2011 at the height of famine and I was appalled by the loss of life.

The UK is committed to providing urgent support to the most vulnerable who are in the most desperate need. But we cannot act alone. The international community needs to do all it can to stop famine, and also to help the country be better prepared for such disasters in the future.

During the 2-day visit to Somalia, Minister Mitchell met Somalia’s President and other government figures, as well as partners, to discuss how to meet immediate humanitarian needs, and better prepare for future crises such as extreme weather.

He also witnessed first-hand the impact of the drought on vulnerable populations.

Working with international partners and NGOs, the UK is stepping up humanitarian efforts to meet the most immediate needs while better equipping Somalia for future crises.

The UK has deepened its relationship with Saudi Arabia to meet urgent humanitarian need. This new partnership with Saudi Arabia has seen £1.7 million of the UK’s humanitarian funding package matched by Saudi Arabia’s KSRelief. This will provide a boost to the World Food Programme and will go towards food security and famine prevention programming.

The UK is also expanding this work with partners including Germany and the World Bank to put in place innovative disaster risk finance and insurance arrangements, particularly towards agriculture investments and drought response. This is part of the World Bank’s Horn of Africa DRIVE project and will deliver long-term financial protection for Somali communities and help them be better prepared to deal with the impact of climate change.

**Background**

During his 2-day visit, Minister Andrew Mitchell confirmed:

* £6.7million in humanitarian aid funding which includes health, nutrition, water services, food security assistance and support for victims of gender based violence
* £1.7 million aid match funding with Saudi Arabia’s KS Relief fund that will go towards the World Food Programme
* £3.8 million (matched by Germany) as part of the Global Shield initiative for a programme combining support to improve the livelihoods of pastoralists with access to financial services and insurance against drought
* £3 million in funding which was previously announced at the UN General Assembly to support the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). This funding will increase the provision of support services to victims of emergency gender-based violence, and will provide sexual reproductive health support to women in new internally displaced person (IDP) sites. This funding plans to reach over 34,800 women
* £1.5 million to the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) trust fund to support Somali troops in the fight against al-Shabaab

This package of support takes the UK’s total humanitarian, health and nutrition funding for Somalia this financial year to nearly £61.2 million. The UK has committed to spending a total of £156 million in humanitarian support for crises in East Africa this financial year.

Roughly 50% of Somalia’s population require humanitarian aid with 300,000 people projected to be experiencing conditions akin to famine by the end of the year. When famine last occurred in Somalia more than 250,000 people died – the majority young children.

Conflict and climate extremes including flooding and drought are the key drivers of suffering in Somalia and the East Africa region.  There have been 5 successive failed rainy seasons and there are concerns for the upcoming March to May season. More than 68 million people in need of life-saving aid across the wider East Africa region.