Somalia Flood Updates

27th April 2018

Somali Natural Resources Research Center (SONRREC) is a non-profit and non-governmental research center that was established in 2016.

SONRREC was founded to promote the concept of research development in Somalia. It was established to fill the gap in research on natural resources in the field of Agriculture, Livestock, Fishery and Marine Resources, Water Resources, Environment and Resilience sectors in Somalia followed by the International standards and best practices.

SONRREC is a unique multi-disciplinary center of excellence by delivering high quality research, advice, teaching and training in support of Somalia food security, sustainable development and poverty reduction and dedicates to promote natural resources and environmental protection and conservation in order to empower and improve livelihood condition of the poor agro-pastoral community in Somali through research and innovations.

Somalia experiences two types of flooding: river floods and flash floods. River floods occur along the Juba and Shabelle rivers in Southern Somalia, whereas flash floods are common along the intermittent streams in the northern part of the country. In the recent past, the country has experienced an increasing severity and frequency of floods. The historically most recent severe floods were those of the Deyr in 1961, 1977, 1997, and 2006, and the floods of the GU in 1981 and 2005. These floods resulted in human casualties and major economic damage.

Whereas flash floods in Somalia result from localized rains, river flooding along the Juba and Shabelle rivers are primarily due to drainage from catchment areas located in the Ethiopian highlands, which normally experience heavier and more frequent rainfall than what occurs in Somalia. The flooding is worsened by illegal openings on the river embankments (made to create outlets for irrigation water during the dry season). Water coming out of the river through these openings during High River flows cause havoc to the adjacent land.

Current Situation overview

The GU rains started the first week of March across the country, with consistent, heavy rains continuing in flood prone areas of southern and central regions throughout April. By mid-April, the Juba and Shabelle basins in Somalia and in the Ethiopian highlands continued to receive moderate to heavy rains, according to FAO-managed Somalia Water and Land Information Management unit.

Following heavy rains, which caused a spike of several meters in river levels in the course of a few days in mid-April, flash and river floods have been reported in many locations within the two basins leading to displacement and destruction of property and, inundation of croplands and displacement settlements.

Middle and Lower Juba regions received the highest amounts of rainfall of more than 100mm in mid-April alone and more rains are expected in the coming weeks. Following the considerable rains, water levels along the Juba and Shabelle rivers continued to rise reaching the high flood risk levels in the upper and mid sections of the two rivers.

SWALIM projects that given the rainfall forecast and the high river levels, there is a high risk of flooding in the middle and lower reaches of the Juba and Shabelle rivers with some sections already having experienced overbank river flow due to weak river embankments and open river breakages. Flash floods in built up and low lying areas within the basins are already being reported.

Meanwhile, the unusual early March rains that covered most parts of the country have encouraged many farmers to start early planting of crops. The continued rise of the Shabelle and Juba rivers in March and April will enhance opportunities for crop cultivation in the river basins where crop land has not been inundated, especially in riverine area of Hiraan, Middle Shabelle and parts of Lower Shabelle including Afgooye and Marka. Opportunistic livestock migration to areas where pasture is better was observed in the areas that received early rains in March.

Humanitarian impact and needs

Overall, more than 427,000 people have been affected as of 26 April and of these nearly 175,000 have been displaced as a result of the flash and river flooding in Hirshabelle, South West and Jubaland states

as well as Banadir region, according to data collected by humanitarian partners. Assessments are ongoing to determine the impact of flooding in affected areas.

In Hiraan region of Hirshabelle State, an estimated 122,580 people have been displaced in Belet Weyne town and surrounding riverine villages after the Shabelle River burst its banks and inundated houses and crops. Some of the affected were already internally displaced. Immediate needs include water, shelter, food, latrines, health services and emergency education. Shabelle River levels have reached the bank full-level as heavy rains continued to pour in the river basin of Ethiopian and Somalia.

Latest Updates

Within the last few days, heavy downpour has been experienced in many parts of the Juba and Shabelle River basins both in Somalia and in the Ethiopian Highlands.
Flash floods have been reported in some areas within the basins including Gedo, Bakool and Bay regions. Following the heavy rains, the river levels have increased drastically in the enθre reaches of the two rivers and are a few centimeters to reach the bank full levels at Luuq and Belet Weyne. The rainfall forecast for the next seven days (23 to 29 April, 2018) is pointing towards moderate to heavy rains within the Ethiopian highlands and inside Somalia.
Observed river levels along the Juba and Shabelle Rivers are expected to continue rising further in
The coming week following the foreseen heavy rains.
There is therefore an immediate **high risk of flooding** along the two rivers given the current situation. Areas to watch include;

- Belet Weyne and Jowhar towns (Shabelle) and their environs; where the riv
- er levels are currently at full crest,
- Dollow , Bardheere and Bualle town (Juba) and their environs,
- Other riverine towns in the Middle and Lower Shabelle regions such as Ballads and Kurtunwaarey as well as those in Lower Juba.
- Flash floods in Bay and Bakool regions also cannot be ruled out given the rainfall forecast.

Finally SONNREC recommends the following point on ways to handle such floods;

- Stay calm, exercise good judgment and, as far as possible, act independently. Do not expose yourself to unnecessary danger; leave the endangered area immediately.
- When danger of flooding exists, do not enter basements or underground car parks, and do not drive a vehicle or ride a bicycle on flooded roads.
- Keep away from rivers and lakes that carry flood water. Surging water can not only catch you by surprise, but also erode banks and cause their collapse.
- Consider possible escape routes (from endangered rooms, the building and the area).
- Store water-polluting and flammable substances (chemicals, fertilisers, fuels and lubricants, paints, thinners etc.) outside the critical zone
- Develop national and regional programs to provide information to and increase the awareness of the various groups involved - government authorities, professionals, social leaders, and the society at large - in order to make the decision-making process better and more efficient. And Etc.

References:

- OCHA Flash Update –humanitarian impact of heavy rains-2018
- SWALIM-SOMALIA FLOOD WATCH BULLETIN -2018