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PRESS RELEASE

Forced suspension of World Vision leaves thousands of lives in jeopardy in Somalia

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Last week's suspension of World Vision programs in south central Somalia will mean almost certain starvation for thousands of children, the aid agency said today.

More than 3,400 children were receiving vital nutritional feeding from the organization before it was forced to suspend its operations last week by militant group Al-Shabaab.

World Vision says that last week alone, they had 51 severely malnourished children admitted to their stabilization centres and they are now concerned about the fate of these children.

Quarter of a million women and newborn children are also facing an uncertain future with the closure of nine mother and child healthcare centres and 162 health posts across the affected regions, leaving them with no access to vital, primary healthcare.

Hundreds of patients (227) were being treated for TB in another program and World Vision says interrupting their treatment at this critical time in their recovery puts them at high risk of the disease gathering strength, in a drug-resistant form.

Suspension of livelihood programs will further exacerbate the vulnerability of more than one million people who were dependent on ongoing World Vision projects for their economic survival.

Ongoing conflict in Somalia has heavily restricted humanitarian space for aid agencies over the past few years, and this latest closure is a further blow to those already suffering the most.

World Vision says that there is no unilateral solution to the problems in Somalia and lasting development and peace building will only be viable if leadership for them come from indigenous and acceptable Somali process.

Facts:

- World Vision has been working in Somalia since 1992.
- World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organization dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome extreme poverty and injustice, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity or gender.

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"In a country where one out of every seven children dies before their fifth birthday, and one mother in every hundred dies during pregnancy or childbirth, the situation is a big blow to the vulnerable. Given the humanitarian cost of our programs being suspended, we want to get back in and to work as soon as possible"

- Chris Smoot,
Program Director,
World Vision Somalia

"All those involved in this conflict must observe international humanitarian law, and ensure protection and care for the vulnerable. The children of Somalia deserve nothing less than a peaceful environment"

- Chris Smoot,
Program Director,
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