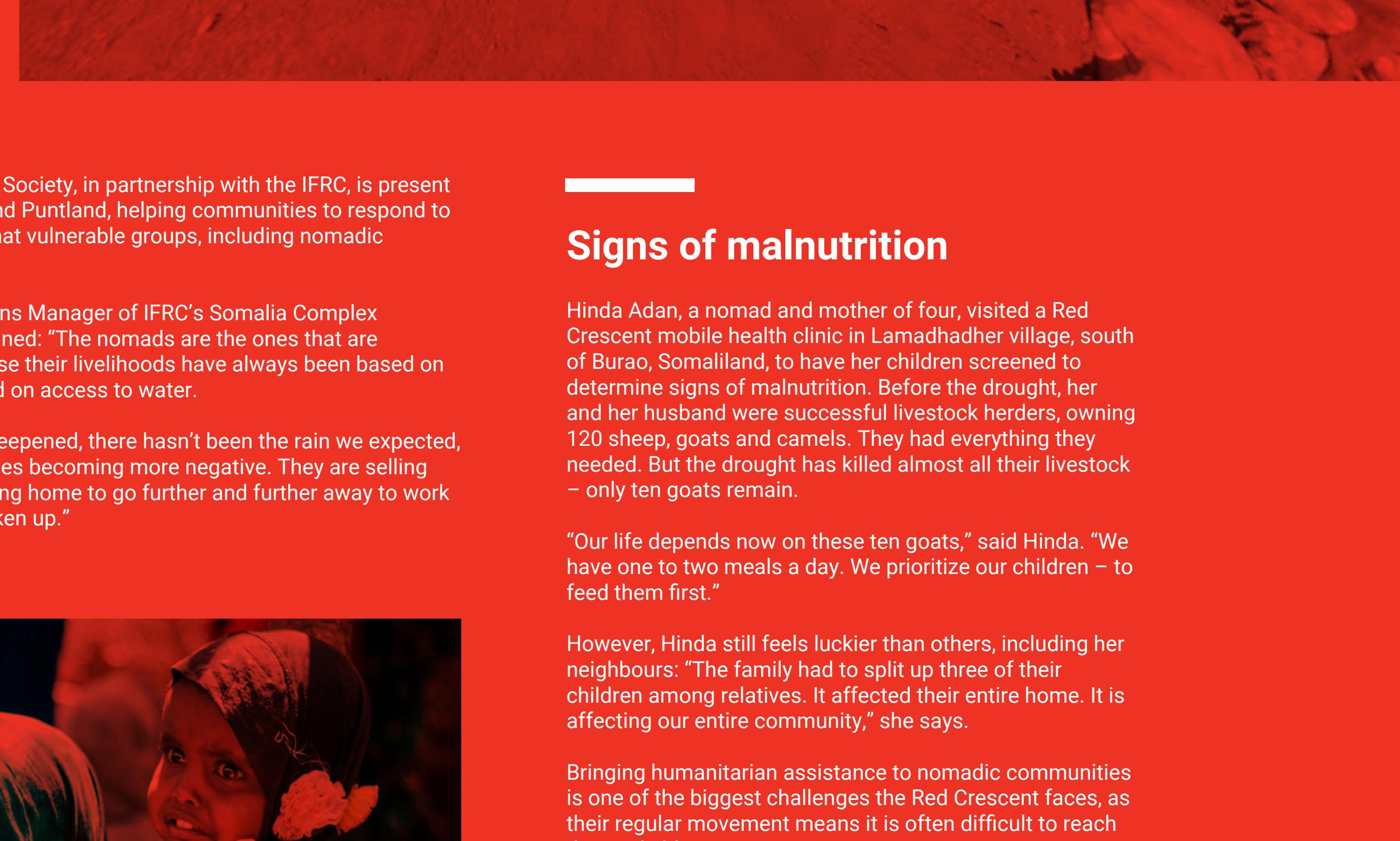


# Nomadic communities suffer most as drought stalks Somaliland

Driving through the rural landscapes of Somaliland, the views are breathtaking – towering blue mountains cutting the glaring sky over dry, thorn-bushed desert. Small dome-like temporary houses, known as 'aqals', dot the arid terrain.

These belong to nomads who have survived in these harsh conditions for generations, but for the first time, they are facing an uncertain future.

Years of consecutive drought have spiralled Somaliland's nomadic communities into a devastating food crisis. Their ability to pack up and move livestock to better grazing pastures would normally give them a major advantage over other farmers. But the unprecedented drought has caused most – if not all – of their camels, sheep and goats to die and, with them, their livelihoods.



The Somali Red Crescent Society, in partnership with the IFRC, is present throughout Somaliland and Puntland, helping communities to respond to the growing challenges that vulnerable groups, including nomadic communities, face.

Dorothy Francis, Operations Manager of IFRC's Somalia Complex Emergency Appeal, explained: "The nomads are the ones that are suffering the most because their livelihoods have always been based on livestock and that's based on access to water."

"Because the crisis has deepened, there hasn't been the rain we expected, so we see coping strategies becoming more negative. They are selling everything. They are leaving home to go further and further away to work so families are being broken up."



Above: Hinda Adan, with her three children waiting at a Red Crescent mobile clinic in Lamadhadher in Togdheer region.

## Signs of malnutrition

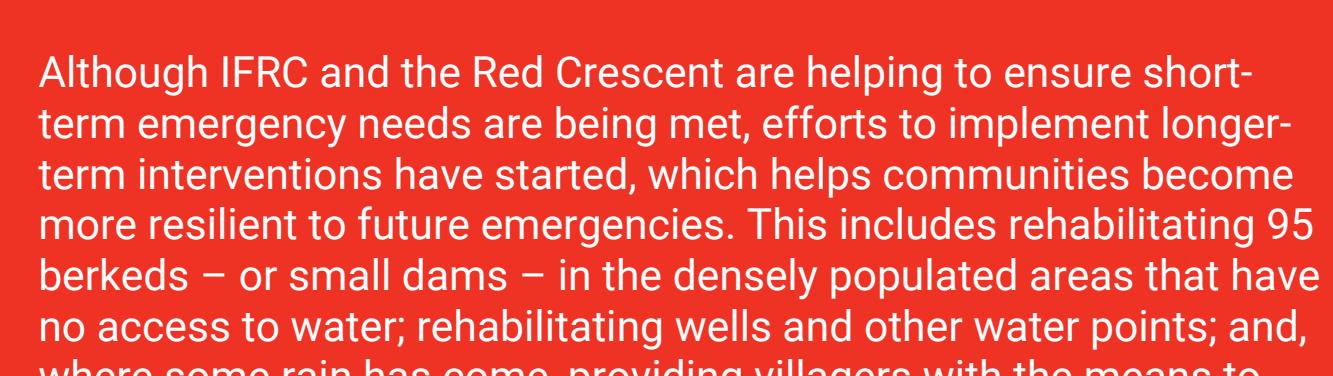
Hinda Adan, a nomad and mother of four, visited a Red Crescent mobile health clinic in Lamadhadher village, south of Burao, Somaliland, to have her children screened to determine signs of malnutrition. Before the drought, her and her husband were successful livestock herders, owning 120 sheep, goats and camels. They had everything they needed. But the drought has killed almost all their livestock – only ten goats remain.

"Our life depends now on these ten goats," said Hinda. "We have one to two meals a day. We prioritize our children – to feed them first."

However, Hinda still feels luckier than others, including her neighbours: "The family had to split up three of their children among relatives. It affected their entire home. It is affecting our entire community," she says.

Bringing humanitarian assistance to nomadic communities is one of the biggest challenges the Red Crescent faces, as their regular movement means it is often difficult to reach them reliably.

"Often, we arrive in a community to find that [the nomads] have gone to the next area," explained Hussein Mohamed Osman, Berbera branch secretary for the Red Crescent in the Sahil region. "It also proves to be very costly to travel long distances to reach them."



## Understanding local needs

IFRC is supporting the Somali Red Crescent in supplementing their urgent needs over the next three months, including emergency cash for food and other items. All humanitarian assistance is carefully considered to meet the teams' needs and allow them to remain mobile: jerry cans and aqua tabs to ensure water is clear, and shelter products to keep them warm in the cool desert evenings, including blankets, sleeping mats and tarpaulins.

Although IFRC and the Red Crescent are helping to ensure short-term emergency needs are being met, efforts to implement longer-term interventions have started, which helps communities become more resilient to future emergencies. This includes rehabilitating 95 berkeds – or small dams – in the densely populated areas that have no access to water; rehabilitating wells and other water points; and, where some rain has come, providing villagers with the means to plough their farmland.

"What we are trying to do is cover an entire community with everything so we'll have a cleaner, safer, healthier community – providing them with food, providing them with water, providing them with shelter," explained Dorothy.

Above: Two women from Lamadhadher village collect water at a nearby well. Like many in rural Somaliland, the well has not been treated or constructed properly, which puts the village at risk of water-borne diseases.

"It is a huge task but IFRC is working with a very strong Red Crescent society. We are managing to reach the most vulnerable people. We are doing the best we can."

Fatima Mohamed Yusuf, a nomad in Togdheer region, is one of the community members who received much-needed health care in a Somali Red Crescent mobile clinic close to her temporary settlement. The drought came at a devastating cost to her and her family, who lost 270 sheep and goats.

"If there is no rain, I worry for my remaining livestock and I worry for myself and family. Allah only knows when the rains will come," said Fatima.

