

Nearly 260,000 die in Somalia famine

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Nearly 260,000 people, more than half under the age of five, died in Somalia's famine between 2010 and 2012, a United Nations study says.

The report, by the United Nations and the Famine Early Warning Systems Network, said the famine was caused by a severe drought and worsened by conflict between rival military groups. The report said the number of deaths was higher than the estimated 220,000 people who died in Somalia's 1992 famine.

The U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organization said earlier the "true enormity of this human tragedy" emerged for the first time from the study.

Rudi Van Aaken, deputy head of the FAO operation in Somalia, says the humanitarian response has been too slow, the BBC reported Thursday.

"The main lesson learned is that the humanitarian community should be ready to take early action, respond early on," Van Aaken was quoted as saying.