

SOUTH / CENTRAL SOMALIA



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS SOMALIA

Overview of Humanitarian Environment in South/Central Somalia

The Transitional Federal Government (TFG) for Somalia was established in Kenya in late 2004 yet its split relocation (Jowhar and Mogadishu) into southern Somalia in June 2005 has limited its capacity – and affected its ability to expand its authority on Somali territory to bring peace, stability and good governance to the country. However, more than 210 parliamentarians out of a total of 275 attended the first in-country parliamentary session in Baidoa on 26 February 2006. Some prominent faction leaders from Mogadishu did not attend the meeting although they reportedly claimed they would join in at a later stage. The parliament agreed to go into recess for a week yet the session marked a significant milestone for the TFG, which is hoped, will bring about a positive impact on access throughout southern Somalia.

Most parts of South/Central continue to experience little authoritative government, sporadic armed conflict, widespread human rights abuses, endemic humanitarian needs, minimal access to social services, flooding, drought, displacement and lack of economic recovery. Lower/Middle Juba, Bay/Bakool, Gedo, Hiran, Mudug and Galgadud regions are beset by localized recurrent conflicts characterized by inter and intra clan rivalry, militia roadblocks/checkpoints, and random banditry with major flashpoints over power and resources, particularly land and water. Against this unpredictability, UN agencies, INGOs and local partners focus to the greatest extent possible on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable and food insecure, displaced, returnees and minority groups through a diverse mix of programmatic approaches. **South/Central Somalia remains in a complex emergency, with lack of sustained humanitarian access and reduced operational capacity a major factor affecting human survival.**

Somali civil society has increasingly and significantly contributed to providing a range of essential services that have helped replace many of the functions of the state. Yet, lack of sustainable peace, security and the disruptive activities of militias and freelance gunmen have constrained what civil society can achieve. The demobilization of armed and freelance militia, for example, is an urgent prerequisite for sustainable social and economic recovery alongside the resumption of governance, law and order.

However, in 2006, it is possible that a new wave of 'optimism' among Somalis – many of whom are tired of conflict, will lead to increased humanitarian access to south/central zones where to date only limited aid has been reaching the most vulnerable. While the situation will continue to be volatile, where new opportunities for access will develop, expanding humanitarian presence with greater vigour will be crucial.

The failed 2005 *Deyr* (short) rainy season in southern Somalia exacerbated the ongoing humanitarian crisis by aggravating existing vulnerabilities and debilitating livelihoods. As a result, the number of people targeted for humanitarian assistance in 2006 has more than doubled. Approximately 2.1 million people (including 370,000-400,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) experiencing severe livelihood distress) or over 25% of the population are in need of urgent aid until at least the end of June. The climate outlook is of great concern predicting a below normal Gu rainy season (due to begin sometime in April), as the severity of the current crisis looks set to worsen in coming months, with increased numbers of population falling into the Humanitarian Emergency phase from the Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis phase.

While communities in the north and centre continue to face an Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis, the majority of those affected are in southern Somalia, where the drought has resulted in depletion of water sources and grazing land, widespread crop failure, significant loss of livestock, increased and erratic population movements, resource-based conflicts and banditry. In Bay and Bakool, more than 85% of schools closed due increased drop-out rates. Gedo, the most drought affected region, has been identified at moderate risk of a famine. Malnutrition rates in some areas are over 15%. Lack of adequate food and water and poor sanitation conditions have created an environment that is conducive to the spread of communicable diseases. Field reports indicated that measles and malnutrition could account for over 50% of deaths should conditions further deteriorate and the situation is further complicated by intermittent humanitarian access to those most in need.

Major constraints affecting the presence and delivery of humanitarian assistance include volatile insecurity compounded by political instability; imbalanced sectoral funding; limited capacity of local implementing partners; interference by some local authorities in aid delivery, flooding, piracy and poor road infrastructure. Tragically in October 2005, a Somali National working for United Nations Department of Safety and Security was deliberately shot dead in Kismayo. It remains unclear what the motive was but the incident only underlines the precarious and unpredictable operating environment in much of the country (there is also growing concern over an increase in terrorist infiltration and extremism). In light of these challenges, agencies will continue to assess the needs and the response in south/central in efforts to overcome the constraints by, for example, the increased use of local actors to enhance the implementation and monitoring of humanitarian activities.

Key Humanitarian Issues

IDPs

Displacement due to conflict has continued unabated ever since the collapse of the government in 1991. An estimated 250,000 displaced presently reside in Mogadishu with others concentrated along the Shabelle river, Gedo and Lower Juba (an estimated 90,000). These displaced are unlikely to return home to their place of origin due to volatile insecurity and poor socio/economic prospects. Others fled to northern areas in Somalia where they thought relative safety prevailed but found themselves without protection of their own clans and subject to human rights violations. Many of the displaced in Mogadishu and Kismayo fled from rural areas of conflict in south/central Somalia in search of economic opportunities and basic services. Instead, they became hostage to freelance militias and subjected to serious human rights violations. Others fled to Puntland or left Somalia completely (ceasing to be IDPs).

Until 2006 the humanitarian response to the displaced in South/Central had been limited due to insecurity and without national governance structures, the protective environment remained weak. However, in 2006 given significant drought induced displacement, aid partners have established a rapid monitoring network to track drought related population movements, monitor access to aid and highlight other protection related issues that may result from conflict and/or the drought. The current drought (March 2006) and depletion of resources (water and pasture) in many areas has led many pastoralists and agro pastoralists to move either with their livestock to areas where water and food is available or to abandon their locations altogether. Livelihoods have become disrupted and stressed. Some local authorities are reporting an increase of primarily women and children on a daily

basis at IDP/returnee settlements. But tracking of movement remains very difficult, particularly in areas where aid partners are not present due to insecurity

Gender

In the south/central fragmented environment, girls and women continue to be one of the most vulnerable groups with their rights to survival, protection, development and participation consistently violated. Beyond deprivation, this has manifested itself in a range of abuses, violations and both petty and large-scale tyranny, practiced for the most part with impunity. The spread of HIV/AIDS and the deepening disenfranchisement of young people are among the high societal prices to be paid.

Access and Security

South/Central remains one of the most dangerous humanitarian operating environments in Somalia. The recent increased threat posed by extremist groups has resulted in the need to improve security standards. The threat has also limited the 'humanitarian operating space'. Attempts to gain access to extremely vulnerable groups in South/Central are currently mostly ad hoc and event driven, and responses are often delayed as the humanitarian community struggles to negotiate access. Access is further complicated by piracy, flooding, mines, poor road infrastructure and a lack of adherence to humanitarian principles and agreements (by local authorities) causing interruptions to aid activities and limited sustainability.

A Humanitarian Success Story From South/Central Zone 2005 : Four months after the inauguration of the Duduble (China) canal in Jowhar, there has been a dramatic change, not only in scenery but also in the livelihoods of the people in the area. 14,000 hectares of simsim have been planted fed by the waters of the recently rehabilitated 15 kilometre canal, some of which is now being harvested. Trucks are transporting the harvested grain to Mogadishu for sale and further for export to the Gulf. In Jowhar, the grain is being processed locally into sesame oil. The planting, harvesting and processing are all labour intensive and have created thousands of jobs in the area. The rehabilitation of the canal is a joint venture between the local community and administration, UNDP and WFP.

During December 2005 and January 2006, the onset of the drought dominated the humanitarian domain with focus directed at the worst hit regions of southern Somalia. Humanitarian needs have soared in the most unpredictable and insecure areas of Somalia yet access and security are unshakable challenges to contend with. Despite all the complications, in January 2006 the Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Prime Minister in which the TFG committed itself to cooperating with the UN to enhance unhindered access and to assist in the dissemination of the MOU's principles at the local level. UN agencies have also produced a statement for local authorities and communities to adhere to basic humanitarian principles. The TFG has also created a Drought Technical Committee, which among other things will look into access issues. On 1 March, during a UNICEF/OCHA visit to Lower Juba to consult with partners on the ground and identify quick impact priority drought interventions, the mission was ambushed in Afmadow by armed militia and a UNICEF international staff detained. Direct negotiations with the TFG and local authorities were immediately commenced to seek the staff member's quick and safe release - which after intense consultations occurred 30 hours later. This again underlines the fragile operating environment in southern Somalia.

Livelihoods and Food Security

According to FAO's Food Security Analysis Unit Post Deyr Survey (Feb 2006), around 710,000 people are in a state of Livelihood Crisis while 915,000 are experiencing a Humanitarian Emergency throughout Somalia. **Most of these communities are in southern Somalia where the worst hit regions are Gedo, Middle and Lower Juba and areas of Bay and Bakool, with northern Gedo and riverine areas in Juba regions identified at moderate risk of a famine. The Climate Outlook predicts that the Gu rains, due in April, will be near to below normal which will increase the severity of the current crisis.** The livelihood and food security situation of people continues to be fragile and environmental degradation remains a problem. Stemming from deforestation for charcoal production and compounded by drought and flooding, the environment is slowly being depleted, holding long-term consequences for recovery.

REGION	Region Population 2004	Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis	Humanitarian Emergency	Total in Need as % of Total Population
Central				
Galgadud	319,735	40,000	0	13
Mudug	199,895	20,000	0	10
TOTAL	519,630	60,000	0	12
South				
Bakol	225,450	45,000	105,000	67
Bay	655,686	135,000	395,000	81
Gedo	375,280	80,000	180,000	69
Hiran	280,880	55,000	0	20
Lower Juba	329,240	60,000	115,000	53
Middle Juba	244,275	50,000	120,000	70
TOTAL	2,110,811	425,000	915,000	63

The Bantu Juba riverine community continues to face a complex set of issues related to food access, dietary diversity, access to social services, discrimination and insecurity. The flooding along the Juba Valley in May 2005 (due to heavy rainfall in the Ethiopian highlands) caused the temporary displacement of thousands of households. As the waters have recessed, many have now returned to their homes but remain in need of urgent assistance. Currently the organizations working in the area are MSF Holland, World Vision, ICRC, Agrosphere, OCHA and WFP some of which work through a local NGO - AFREC.

Source: FAO/Food Security Analysis Unit (2006)

Humanitarian Partners in South/Central and Coordination Mechanisms

UN Agencies working in South/Central include HABITAT, UNICEF, UNDP, WHO, WFP, UNESCO, UNDSS, OCHA, UNFPA and FAO. International NGOs include CARE, WVI, ACF, GTZ, CEFA, INTERSOS, Agrosphere, World Concern, ADRA, SC-UK, IMC, PACE, Muslim Aid-UK, DRC, Trocaire, VSF Suisse, NCA, DAI, GHC, and MSF. The ICRC also works in these zones. Local NGOs include ASEP, SADO, AFREC, SDA, Kissima, Suen Dereurex, Juba Shine and ACA. Sectoral coordination meetings are held in Jowhar and Mogadishu on security, health, education and food security. The OCHA sub-office in Jowhar organizes a monthly inter-agency humanitarian coordination meeting for South/Central as well as ad-hoc joint inter-agency assessments taking place in south/central. OCHA sub-offices in Mogadishu, Jammame, Wajid, Belet Hawa and Belet Weyne host similar coordination meetings for their area.

UN OCHA SOMALIA

7th Floor, Kalson Towers, Crescent Street, off Parklands Road, P.O. Box 28832, 00200 Nairobi, Kenya

Tel No: (254-20) 3754150-5; Fax No: (254-20) 3754156

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