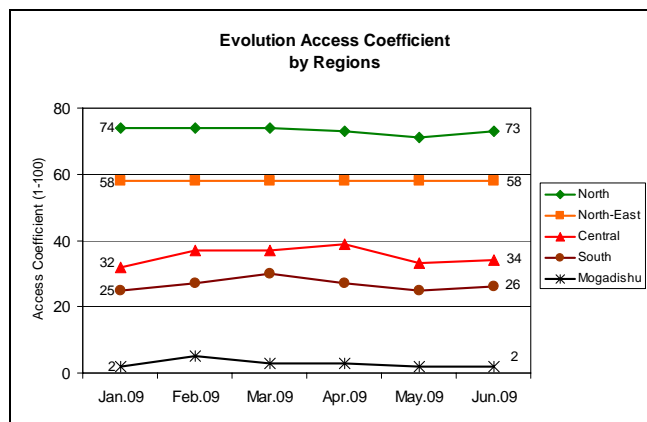


INTRODUCTION

This paper aims at analysing the humanitarian situation in Somalia during the first half of 2009, and the effect that access constraints have had on the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the protection of beneficiaries.

In the first six months of 2009 access constraints remained significant. These constraints resulted in instances of humanitarian organisations withdrawing, temporary suspensions of programmes in certain areas, or delays in the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Access in Somalia is organic, meaning that access can change rapidly, and that there are significant differences in access depending on the region in question. Broadly stated, access in the North and North/East (Somaliland and Puntland respectively) generally is better than any region in South/Central Somalia. While there are a number of factors that can explain this difference, a dominant factor is that the North and North/East are governed and controlled by a single political entity, with no serious challenger to that authority. South/Central has significant and on-going power struggles, which directly or indirectly impact humanitarian workers and activities.



In isolation, indicators such as staff presence and road blocks could suggest that access has improved; however, reviewed as a whole, the indicators show a more nuanced picture of access. Overall in areas where access previously existed such as in the North and North/East, positive strides to improve access have occurred. In areas where access was very limited, such as in Mogadishu or in the South, inroads were either made, or stifled, because of general insecurity and direct targeting.

¹ The "Access Coefficient" is based on eight indicators: International staff presence (UN & INGOs), UN staff movements, Security assessments, Humanitarian flights, check-points, security incidents (last six months), and stability of the area. For each district each of these indicators is evaluated and receives a notation from 1 (extremely negative) to 5 (positive), based on standardized assessments.

The review of relevant indicators² shows that while the humanitarian community was able to maintain its programmes primarily through the work of national staff or Somali NGO partners, there is still limited capacity to ensure programmatic follow-up and to monitor activities.

KEY CONSTRAINTS TO ACCESS

1. Violence involving humanitarian personnel and assets

Violence involving humanitarian personnel and assets reduced in the first half of 2009, with approximately 50 security incidents directed towards humanitarian workers or assets occurring since January 2009, as compared to 89 for the first half of 2008. The bulk of the incidents occurred primarily in South/Central Somalia. The 56% reduction in violence is not easily explained; however, two possible theories exist: one, the parties to the conflict are not targeting as frequently as in the past humanitarian workers and assets; and two, the humanitarian community reduced exposure and restricted staff movement outside UN and NGO compounds more so than in the previous year.

Humanitarian worker continued to be killed, abducted or otherwise subjected to violence in Somalia. Since January 2009, 7 aid workers were killed and 7 were abducted, as compared to the first half of 2008 when 19 humanitarian workers were killed and 17 were abducted. The reasons for this dramatic reduction in deaths and abductions are not easily understood; however, a possible explanation is that the blatant targeting in early 2008 was unprecedented and unexpected, and resulted in the humanitarian community being forced to change its *modus operandi* to limit staff exposure in Somalia. Nineteen aid workers are still in captivity since 2008, three of whom were abducted in Mandera, Kenya, and taken to Somalia.

International staff presence increased from January to June 2009 from 44 to 75 for the UN and from 67 to 163 for NGO staff throughout Somalia. For the same period last year, 128 UN staff members and 78 NGO staff were in Somalia. The drastic reduction in UN staff can be attributed to the fall-out from the October 2008 suicide bombings at the UN compounds in Somaliland and Puntland. While staff presence has increased in the first half of 2009, the bulk of staff are located in Somaliland or Puntland (64% for the UN and 71% for NGOs), which reflects the similar trend for the same period last year where 76% of UN and 61% of NGO staff were based in Somaliland or Puntland.

Of interest is that prior to April 2009, Central Somalia (Galgaduud, Mudug, and Hiraaan) had no international staff presence whereas since then an average of 7 UN and 4 NGO international staff were present. This suggests that Central is viewed as being more secure than in the past years, and that access albeit limited is possible.

The overall impact on limited international staff presence continues to highlight issues regarding risk and responsibility transfer, as well as, accountability and quality of monitoring on the implementation and impact of assistance and service delivery.

Direct attacks on humanitarian workers and assets, and a volatile security situation resulted in humanitarian organisations withdrawing, and to a lesser degree temporarily suspending programmes in certain areas. Some examples are illustrated below.

In January, following the killing of two WFP staff within three days, WFP announced that it would continue to distribute food only in those areas where written security commitments and assurances of the safety of their workers were received from community leaders. WFP further stated that operations would be suspended in areas where security commitments were absent. Currently WFP is able to distribute food to the majority of areas previously covered, with the exception of some districts in Lower Shabelle and Lower Juba regions.

² It should be noted that the figures quoted are collected from various sources and represent OCHA's most reliable estimates. However under-reporting and validation of events are chronic problems, therefore these figures should be considered indicative.

In May, the UNICEF compound in Jowhar town, Middle Shabelle region was raided and occupied by Al Shabaab forces. As a result of the incident and subsequent looting of highly valuable nutritional supplies and the destruction of cold chain equipment, over 50,000 severely malnourished children in life-threatening conditions and over 85,000 moderately malnourished children remain affected by the break in receiving nutritional and medical supplies. To date, the UNICEF compound remains occupied by Al Shabaab forces, and inaccessible to UNICEF staff.

In June, MSF closed its programs in Bakool region. The decision was motivated by insecurity, including an abduction that occurred in April 2009. MSF activities in Bakool included the provision of medical care in the health centre in Xudur, the largest in-patient facility in South/Central Somalia and in four outlying health posts in Laban Jerow, El Garas, El Berde and Rabdure. The health centre and health posts provided annually roughly 39,000 outpatient consultations, and roughly 1,600 admissions to the health centre.

These three incidences serve as examples of how humanitarian delivery of aid can be negatively impacted. The suspension or closure of programmes results in a large number of beneficiaries remaining without assistance often for an indeterminate period of time.

2. Impediments and restrictions to agencies

Bureaucratic impediments and restrictions to agencies operating constantly changed, particularly in South/Central Somalia. The relationship between humanitarian actors and newly established administrations evolved slowly, meaning that in many locations, local administrations become more official and organised. Within a short span of establishing themselves, local administrations appoint humanitarian affairs focal points, who are in charge of liaising and monitoring humanitarian actors. Often, these focal points enforce new regulatory procedures for operating in their zones of control. As a result, an increasing accumulation of *ad hoc* and evolving demands are issued by local authorities, which inevitably impact on the most basic aspects of humanitarian activities. Some examples are illustrated below.

The Al Shabaab administration, based in Marka, Lower Shabelle, has continued to deny access to international humanitarian organizations since the beginning of 2009. With the exception of Afgooye district, access has been denied in all other districts. In May 2009, due to continuous demand from the Al Shabaab that UN national staff pay taxes, the UN pulled out from Marka district. As a consequence, the overall level of assistance in these districts remained at a minimum.

In May, the Al Shabaab administration in Bu'aale, Middle Juba region issued a letter, which required that within a 5-day period (25 to 30 May) all humanitarian agencies register with the newly established *Administrative Office for Humanitarian Affairs*. The letter further stated that failure to register in the required time would result in serious consequences, which could lead to the suspension of activities, and expulsion from the region. To date, some agencies have registered while others have not. No consequences have been reported by organizations that did not register.

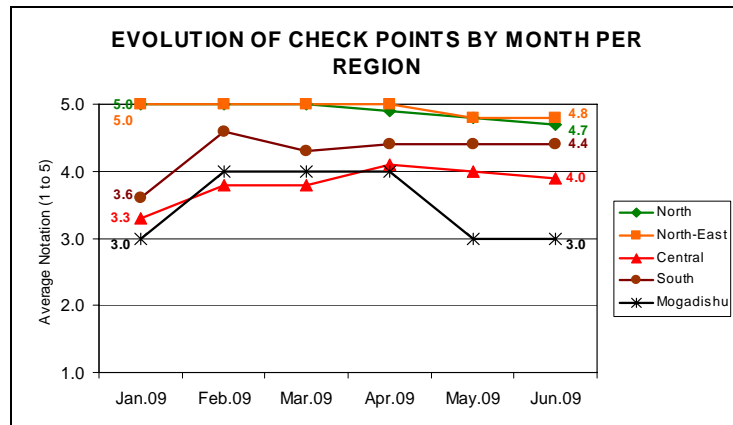
In June, the Al Shabaab administration requested humanitarian organizations in Baardheere town, Gedo region to register effective 14 June 2009. On several occasions, Al Shabaab administrations have instructed humanitarian organizations to register and pay fees (ranging from \$200 to \$1,000 according to an agency's operational capacity) in each district of Gedo region. As of the date of reporting, there has been no consequence on humanitarian activities of organizations that have not registered.

These bureaucratic procedures and imposed constraints often were unevenly and inconsistently applied. They tend to be onerous and time consuming, and coupled with the uncertainty and seemingly arbitrary nature of the requests to register, often cause delays in the provision of aid.

3. Restrictions or delays in movement of goods

Check-points and roadblocks only occasionally obstructed the movement of humanitarian personnel and goods, throughout Somalia in the first half of 2009, and their impact in terms of delays in the provision of aid notably reduced. The graph below aims to capture the impediments to freedom of movement as

experienced by humanitarian workers in different regions³.



Since January 2009 the number of check-points and roadblocks dramatically decreased in most regions of South/Central Somalia. Previously, South/Central was the most problematic region. Currently check-points in most regions are limited to administrative control points at the entrance/exit of the main towns. The progressive strengthening of Islamist movements, who generally were opposed to such restrictions and the setting-up of more solid administrations at regional and district level, explains the removal of most roadblocks in Southern regions. This issue is now primarily confined to Mogadishu, or reappears at intervals in the form of sporadic banditry activity. The same trend is observed in Central regions where the Al-Shabaab and Al Sunna Wal Jamaa systematically have worked on freeing up road travel. Unlike last year, by April 2009 vehicles could travel from Galkayo, Mudug region, to Mogadishu, Banadir region, without encountering any road-blocks.

Piracy continued throughout the first six months with 27 ships hijacked, as compared to 8 in the first half of 2008. While there has been an alarming increase in the absolute number of pirate attacks, and an unprecedented expansion of piracy activity in the Indian Ocean in 2009, the hijacking success rate is currently at 23% as compared to 40% in 2008. This shift is likely due to the increase in naval patrols and heightened security practices of the merchant vessels in the Gulf of Aden.

A few acts of piracy directly affected the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Examples of instances where piracy had a direct impact include: two vessels carrying 4,097 and 27,000 metric tones respectively of food and other aid items, were attacked in April 2009 off the Somalia coast. The ships were able to safely arrive with cargo intact at their destination following the US navy's intervention.

In terms of addressing threats to the safety of relief consignments, the provision of naval escorts played an important role in facilitating safe passage for humanitarian supplies in the face of continuing piracy off the Somali coast.

³ For the purpose of OCHA's access analysis and reporting the regions are grouped as follows: 1. North: Awdal, Togdheer, Sanaag, Sool, Wogooyi Galbeed; 2. North East: Bari, Nugaal; 3. Central: Mudug, Galgaduud, Hiraan; and 4. South: Bakool, Gedo, Bay, Lower Shabelle, Lower Juba, Middle Shabelle, and Middle Juba.

⁴ The Chart depicts the following notations (1-5): 1=Check-points frequently prevent movement of humanitarian personnel and supplies; deadly incidents reported at check-points in the last three months; and/or contractors may refuse to move to the area because of high taxation or harassment at check-points; 2=Check-points occasionally prevent movement of humanitarian personnel and supplies; 3=Presence of check-points or administrative control-points in the district; and/or harassment and taxation usually reported but does not hinder movement of humanitarian personnel and supplies; 4=Presence of check-points or administrative control-points in the district; harassment and taxation rarely reported; and/or no hindrance of movement; 5=No check-points in the district or only administrative control-point with no harassment reported.

4. Ongoing hostilities and military operations impeding humanitarian interventions

The security situation throughout South/Central Somalia improved slightly between January and March, and then deteriorated again from April 2009 onward. In areas in and around Mogadishu, security significantly deteriorated from May onwards due to heavy fighting, resulting in significant displacement and civilians deaths. Approximately 220,000 people were displaced in the months of May and June 2009, throughout Somalia, out of which roughly 190,000 people were displaced due to the insecurity in Mogadishu. This is the largest displacement in Mogadishu since the Ethiopian intervention in 2007.

In the specific context of Mogadishu, the continuous and intense fighting frequently precluded access to affected populations and prevented or interrupted ongoing assistance activities. For example, the 16 wet feeding sites where hot cooked meals are provided to the most vulnerable were closed since 20 June due to the fighting in the actual districts where the wet feeding sites or the warehouses are located. This resulted in roughly 80,000 beneficiaries not having access to a daily meal. It is the first time since the inception of the project that all 16 sites were shutdown completely, and for such an extended period of time. In different locations in South/Central Somalia otherwise periodic confrontations and hostilities prevented long-term programming, and planning of activities that required continuous follow-up in the field. The situation reduced the actual response to primarily emergency interventions.

Finally, overall out of the total number of 25 Humanitarian Response Fund (HRF) funded projects in 2009, three requested extensions of time to implement their projects mainly due to security constraints. This means that about 107,000 beneficiaries did not receive programmatic assistance in the timeframe originally envisioned. However, a reduction in implementation delays was noted as compared to 2008, when out of 30 HRF funded projects, 15 requested extensions in the first half of the year, affecting about 1,300,000 people.

5. Attitude toward the humanitarian community

Perceptions towards the humanitarian community vary and are dependent on the region the UN and NGOs work in. For example, neither the Somaliland nor the Puntland authorities have made public statements that impacted negatively on the humanitarian community. While the perception of the Somaliland and Puntland authorities and the general public is that the humanitarian community, particularly the UN, should do more to assist the people in need, this perception has not translated into impediments to operate. In South/Central, on the other hand, the Al Shabaab, in particular, publicly has issued several statements that impact negatively on the attitude towards humanitarian operations.

Statements with a negative consequence for the humanitarian community continued during the reporting period and contributed to a generally threatening atmosphere again, principally in South/Central. Two examples are illustrated below.

In June, the Al Shabaab administration in Kismayo, Lower Juba region, accused humanitarian organizations operating in various regions of Somalia of being part of the ongoing conflict for the last 20 years. The Al Shabaab media secretary explained that Al Shabaab officials do not recognize aid agencies operating in the Juba regions, as they have 'ulterior motives' behind their operations.

In May, the TFG Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Resettlement stated at a press conference in Mogadishu that there is no reason for aid organizations to stockpile humanitarian supplies, and urged any agency unable to directly deliver supplies to needy families to distribute through other groups. He warned international and local aid agencies not to stockpile aid supplies, otherwise they would face punishment.

Statements continued to be made on a regular basis against the humanitarian community and contributed to a generally threatening atmosphere.

CONCLUSION

In the first half of 2009, humanitarian access has remained relatively stable in the North and North East regions, but has evolved very unevenly in South/Central Somalia. The overall access situation in the South remained extremely restrictive in most of the districts; while in the Central regions, access improved slightly during the first three months of the year, particularly in Galgaduud and Hiran regions, which stabilised for a while, but recently has again deteriorated.

Of the ten types of access constraints OCHA reports on⁵, the five mentioned constraints stood out as being the most significant in terms of the ability of humanitarian actors to maintain effective operations, and to reach the most vulnerable populations in need of humanitarian assistance and services.

Overall and despite all efforts made by the humanitarian actors in terms of access negotiations and communication, violence towards humanitarian personnel and assets occasionally forced humanitarian organisations to withdraw or temporarily suspend activities in certain areas. Impediments and restrictions to agencies, and restrictions or delays in movement of personnel and goods resulted in some instances in delays of humanitarian delivery and short-term localised suspensions. Ongoing hostilities and military operations, generally prevented long-term programming, and in the specific case of Mogadishu caused suspensions of assistance and service delivery.

OCHA's analysis indicates that, while the humanitarian community is still able to maintain programmes primarily through national staff and Somali NGO partners, it increasingly finds itself having to provide assistance where it can, rather than where needs are highest. Despite the slight increase of humanitarian international staff in Somalia during the first half of 2009, the ability to move in an unrestricted manner outside established compounds remained a challenge. As a result, there is very limited capacity for humanitarian agencies to manage and monitor the provision of aid; or to determine the actual impact assistance and service delivery has on the beneficiaries.

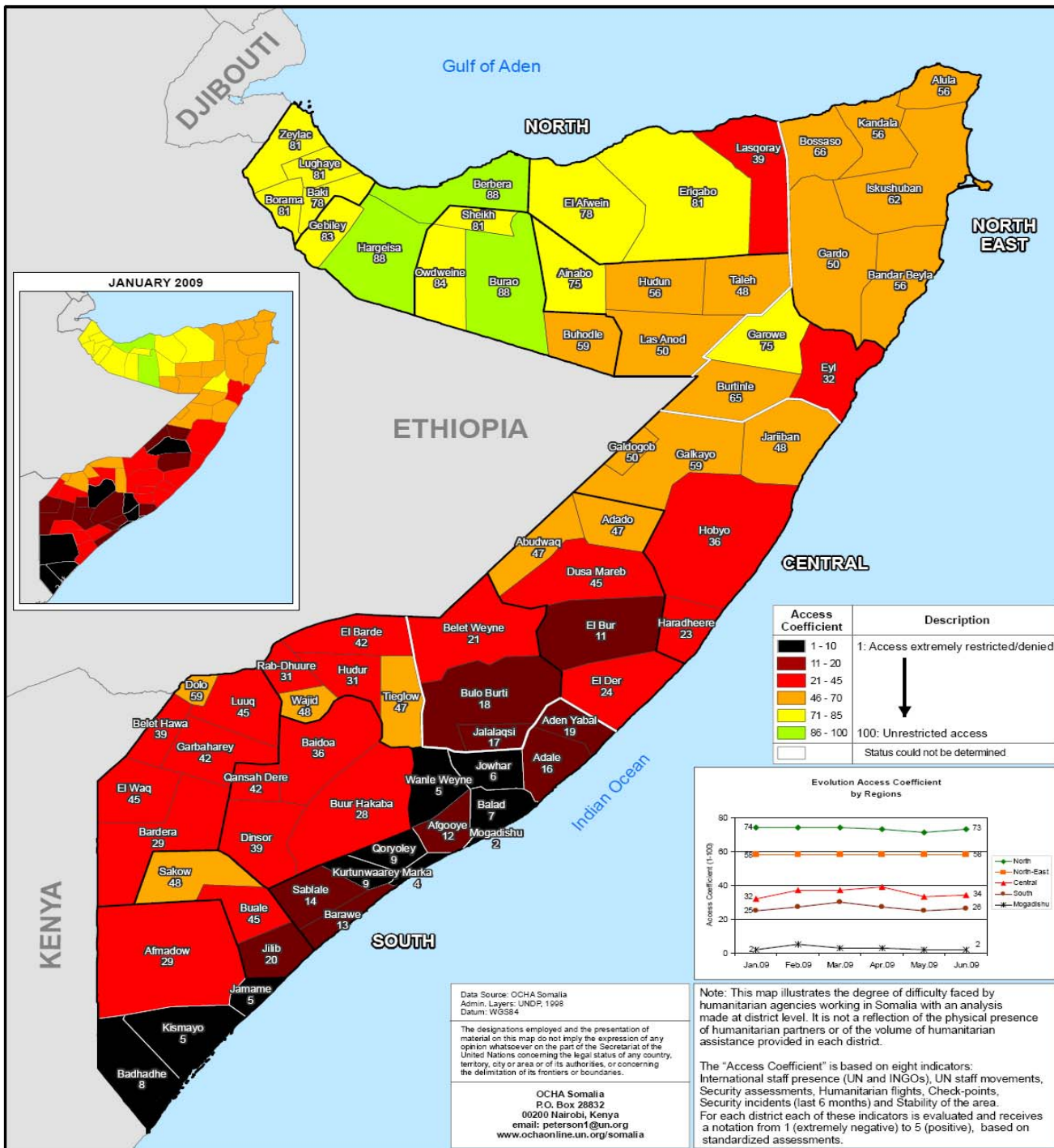
⁵ The following are the ten access constraints OCHA reports on for the purpose of the Secretary General report on Protection of Civilians: 1. Denial of the existence of humanitarian need or of entitlements to assistance as a policy and standard practice; 2. Impediments on the entry of agencies, personnel, goods into the country of operation; 3. Restrictions on or interference with the passage of agencies, personnel goods within the country; 4. Military operations and ongoing hostilities impeding humanitarian operations; 5. Threats and violations against humanitarian personnel and facilities; 6. Interference in the implementation of humanitarian activities; 7. Presence of Mines and UXOs; 8. Physical environment; 9. Organisational security and restrictions; 10. Restrictions on, or obstructions of, conflict-affected populations' access to services and assistance.



United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

SOMALIA HUMANITARIAN ACCESS MAP

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