

# SOUTH / CENTRAL SOMALIA



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS SOMALIA

## Overview of Environment in South/Central Somalia

The Transitional Federal Government (TFG) for Somalia was established in Kenya in late 2004 and relocated to Somalia in June 2005. During the summer of 2006, with the TFG based in Baidoa and warlords controlling most of southern Somalia, the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) took control of much of South/Central. However, the balance of power changed again in December 2006, when tension between the TFG and the ICU erupted into conflict in critical locations. By January 2007, ICU militia had been defeated and TFG forces, backed by Ethiopian troops and air strikes, controlled much of South/Central, including Mogadishu. Since then, anti-government factions and TFG/Ethiopian troops have battled in Mogadishu in what is considered the worst fighting since 1991; hundreds of civilians have been killed in gun battles and indiscriminate mortar attacks. At the beginning of March 2007, the first wave of AMISOM troops arrived in Mogadishu.

The violence and insecurity that have characterized the early months of 2007 have provoked a humanitarian tragedy. Humanitarian access and delivery of assistance have meanwhile been limited. Between 1 February and end of April 2007, over 365,000 people were displaced from Mogadishu. Free-lance militia and checkpoints – both of which diminished during the period of ICU control – have increased, while Ethiopian troops have reportedly harassed and arbitrarily detained aid workers.

According to the FAO/FSAU-led post *Deyr* 2006/07 assessment (February 2007), around 1 million Somalis are in need of assistance and protection (including 400,000 protracted IDPs), as compared to the 1.8 million identified in August 2006. Despite an overall improvement, the food security situation deteriorated in riverine areas of the Juba and the Shabelle rivers and all of South/Central remains Chronically Food Insecure; IDPs are particularly vulnerable to malnutrition. Meanwhile, the forecast for the current *Gu* season (April-June) suggests that localized flooding may occur in parts of South/Central. Flooding would likely exacerbate the recent cholera/Acute Watery Diarrhea (AWD) outbreak (between 1 January and mid-April, over 17,000 cases of AWD/cholera were confirmed in South/Central, with 600 related deaths). The potential combination of renewed flooding, continued conflict and restricted humanitarian access would result in a serious deterioration in the humanitarian situation. In an effort to avoid such a scenario, humanitarian partners are continuously advocating for improved access as well as attempting to develop and utilise alternative access routes.

## Key Humanitarian issues

### Access and Security

According to a recent study by ODI, Somalia is one of the most insecure environments for humanitarian organizations to operate in. This is particularly the case in South/Central. In the first quarter of 2007, Mogadishu experienced a serious escalation of violence, as fighting intensified between TFG/Ethiopian forces and anti-TFG factions. Key installations were attacked and targeted assassinations of people seen to support the TFG, as well as Human Rights defenders, have been carried out. Hundreds of civilians are estimated to have been killed since the start of 2007, and at least 1,000 war wounded were admitted to Mogadishu's two main hospitals during the first three months of the year. AMISOM troops and those supporting them have also been targeted; in March, an AU-contracted cargo plane was shot down during take-off, killing all 11 Belarusians on board.

The deterioration of the security situation in Mogadishu has seriously complicated the delivery of humanitarian assistance not only to Mogadishu but also to neighbouring areas. Partners have faced particular difficulties in mounting an adequate response in Middle and Lower Shabelle, where the majority of the most vulnerable newly IDPs are. Food and non-food items warehoused in Mogadishu have been difficult to access and ongoing military activity along main roads to Merka and Afgoye causes insecurity and delays. Aid workers have also been harassed, arbitrarily detained at key checkpoints and prevented from conducting relief distributions.

Airports such as K50 and Merka – access hubs for Middle and Lower Shabelle – remained closed for several weeks in early 2007, further obstructing delivery of assistance. In early April, efforts to scale up response were further obstructed by last minute administrative procedures requested by the authorities. (On 7 April, a planned food distribution by WFP was prevented in Afgoye following a request that all aid supplies be inspected before distribution.) On 23 April, following a meeting between the newly established TFG inter-ministerial Humanitarian Committee and UN representatives to overcome access problems, the TFG declared all civilian airports open. Given the possibility of renewed flooding during the current *Gu* season, heavy rains may further impede humanitarian access by rendering many roads impassable. In such case, air access to populations in need would be all the more essential. On 28 April, the Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia issued an 'Open Letter' to Somali Leaders, Military Commanders, Elders and Community Representatives calling for unimpeded access for the delivery of assistance and provision of protection to Somalis.

Throughout 2006/2007, OCHA Somalia has received funding from:  
Australia, ECHO, Ireland, Italy, Republic of Korea, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and United Kingdom  
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## **IDPs and protection**

Displacement due to conflict has continued unabated since the collapse of the government in 1991. Countrywide, up to 400,000 protracted IDPs have lived in public buildings or settlements, including in Mogadishu, Gedo and Lower Juba and along the Shabelle river. Others who flee to northern areas in Somalia (some seeking the onward sea journey to Yemen) in search of safety find themselves without clan protection and subject to human rights abuses. In addition to conflict, natural disasters such as drought and flooding have, over the years, pushed people to move from their areas of origin, causing thousands of households to lose their livelihoods.

In 2006 and early 2007, five new waves of displacement occurred as a result of drought, flooding and conflict. The *Deyr* flooding in late 2006 resulted in the displacement of around 255,000 people. The fighting in December 2006 between TFG/Ethiopian forces and the ICU displaced between 65,000-70,000 people, some of whom had already been displaced by the flooding. Most of this displacement was localized and short-term. However, as insecurity and violence escalated in Mogadishu in the early months of 2007, more civilians fled the fighting. Over 365,000 people – around a third of the city's estimated population - fled Mogadishu between 1 February and end of April. The majority headed to Lower and Middle Shabelle, while large numbers also moved to Galgadud, Mudug, Gedo, Lower Juba, Hiran, Bay, Bakool and Somaliland. Some of these include the above-mentioned protracted displaced although numbers are impossible to confirm. Most of the displaced are women; children and elderly who find themselves camped along main roads with no proper shelter, food, clean water, sanitation, health facilities and protection. Meanwhile – and of even more concern – those who lack the means to leave Mogadishu have remained trapped in the city, moving from one neighbourhood to the next in an attempt to avoid the fighting.

Civilians have borne most of the consequences of the fighting. Indiscriminate artillery fire in and around residential areas has caused an unconfirmed number of casualties and deaths, and hospitals too have been targeted. As well as the violence, human rights organisations are receiving reports of violation of human rights and international humanitarian law, particularly abductions, rape, and unlawful killings of civilians. Recent reports have highlighted concern over the arbitrary detention, deportation, and apparent disappearance of dozens of individuals arrested by Ethiopian forces/TFG.

## **Livelihoods and Food Security**

The FAO/FSAU-led post *Deyr* 2006/07 assessment showed overall improvement in food security in Somalia. The *Deyr* rains, while causing flooding, resulted in good or exceptional crop production in some areas of southern Somalia. Around 1 million people (including 400,000 IDPs) are now identified as being in need of assistance until at least June 2007. Around 360,000 of these people are in Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis (AFLC), while approximately 230,000 people are in Humanitarian Emergency (HE). Agro-pastoral and pastoral areas of Hiran, Bay and Bakool (except for some pockets) are now out of AFLC, but riverine areas of Middle and Lower Juba, Gedo and Hiran are in a state of HE. Important to note is that the entire country remains Chronically Food Insecure.

The nutrition situation in Somalia, particularly in southern regions, remains grave. Despite improvements in the food security situation, critical levels of malnutrition persist in all of Lower Juba and Gedo, most of Middle Juba, and parts of Bay, Bakool and Hiran regions, and could worsen as a result of the recent outbreak of cholera/AWD. The large movements of people – and the strain they are placing on already inadequate water sources in various regions – is contributing to the spread of AWD/cholera, especially in Mogadishu/Benadir and Lower Shabelle regions. IDPs are also moving to areas where malnutrition rates are already high and could thus further strain conditions.

FAO/FSAU, IMC and UNICEF conducted six nutrition assessments in March and early April 2007 (four in Hiran and two in Bay). Of these, five reported rates of 15-20% global acute malnutrition (above the emergency threshold) thus highlighting a persistent critical nutrition situation, with no significant change recorded from assessments conducted in the same place this time last year despite the improvement in the food security. This is as a result of continuing poor access to health care, limited access to humanitarian support and chronic poverty from the ongoing conflict.

Table: Estimated Rural Population by Region in Humanitarian Emergency (HE) and Acute food and Livelihood Crisis (AFLC).

| <b>REGION</b>            | <b>Region Population 2006</b> | <b>Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis</b> | <b>Humanitarian Emergency</b> | <b>Total in Need as % of Total Population</b> |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|---|
| <i>North</i>             | 2,341,718                     | 0                                       | 0                             | 0   |
| <i>Central</i>           | 680,156                       | 0                                       | 0                             | 0   |
| <i>Banadir</i>           | 901,183                       | .                                       | .                             | .   |
| <i>South</i>             |                               |   |                               |   |
| <i>Bakool</i>            | 310,627                       | 80,000                                  | 0                             | 26  |
| <i>Bay</i>               | 620,562                       | 10,000                                  | 0                             | 2   |
| <i>Gedo</i>              | 328,378                       | 90,000                                  | 110,000                       | 61  |
| <i>Hiran</i>             | 329,811                       | 10,000                                  | 10,000                        | 6   |
| <i>Lower Juba</i>        | 385,790                       | 90,000                                  | 40,000                        | 34  |
| <i>Middle Juba</i>       | 238,877                       | 80,000                                  | 70,000                        | 63  |
| <i>Lower Shabelle</i>    | 850,651                       | 0                                       | 0                             | 0   |
| <i>Middle Shabelle</i>   | 514,901                       | 0                                       | 0                             | 0   |
| <b>Sub-Total (south)</b> | <b>3,579,597</b>              | <b>360,000</b>                          | <b>230,000</b>                | <b>13</b>                                     |
| <b>Grand Total</b>       | <b>7,502,654</b>              | <b>360,000</b>                          | <b>230,000</b>                | <b>8</b>                                      |

Source: FAO/Food Security Analysis Unit (January 2007)

## **Humanitarian Partners in South/Central**

International NGOs working in South/Central include: CARE, WVI, ACF, CONCERN, CEFA, INTERSOS, Agroshere, ADRA, SC-UK, IMC, Muslim Aid-UK, DRC, NRC, GHC, VSF Suisse, COSV, NCA, MSF (Holland, Swiss, Belgium, Spain, France) Solidarites, MDM, SAWA, World Concern, COOPI, Terranuova, SOS KI, DBG, COSPE, ISAN, Swiss Kalmo, IAS, Heinrich Boll Foundation and VETAID. UN Agencies include: UNPOS, UNICEF, UNDP, WHO, WFP, UNESCO, UNDSS, UNDP, OCHA, UNFPA, UNAIDS, UNHCR, and FAO. ILO and the ICRC also operate in the area as do a multitude of local NGOs.

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