

# SOMALILAND



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS SOMALIA

## OVERVIEW OF HUMANITARIAN ENVIRONMENT IN SOMALILAND

Over the past ten years, the degree of peace and stability obtained in Somaliland and the presence of viable government counterparts has allowed a large number of UN agencies, international NGOs and local partners to work in a coordinated manner on both humanitarian and recovery development programmes, as the area moves closer to political, economic and social recovery and reconstruction.

Somaliland has an estimated population of 2-3 million and broke away from Somalia in 1991 declaring 'independence'. It has not been recognized to date by the international community. Somaliland did not participate in the 2003/4 Somali peace process initiated in Kenya and has continued to reiterate its sovereignty. Meanwhile, a democratic system has been put in place as ongoing political development and economic recovery materialize. Legislative elections were held in September 2005 (following council elections in 2002 and presidential elections in 2003), which according to international observers, were carried out in a peaceful, free and fair manner. Of the 1.2 million refugees that fled Somalia's conflict in 1991, 700,000 have returned back to Somaliland, attracted by the dynamic urban areas and relative stability of the region.

Generally, access throughout Somaliland is unimpeded, although following incidents involving aid workers, the UN in collaboration with the local authorities established a Special Protection Unit (SPU) in October 2003 to provide protection for humanitarian workers. In the east, there still exists an unresolved boundary dispute with Puntland over areas of Sool and Sanag, which, while generally calm, results in sporadic clashes.

Livestock export forms the backbone of the Somaliland economy. This sector, however, has been exposed to several shocks in recent years, including the livestock ban of 2000 (by Gulf States due to outbreak of Rift Valley Fever) and the lack of national capacity to establish necessary regulations and infrastructure to facilitate certification of animals for export. Also, some areas have experienced several years of drought which severely impacted on the Somaliland pastoral livelihood (60-65% of the population rely on livestock for their livelihood). The drought caused enormous hardship as livestock losses amounted to 60-80% of herds; destitution (creating rural – urban migration); and severe environmental degradation.

Presently, the most pressing humanitarian concerns in Somaliland focus on the continued fragile livelihoods following several years of drought; issues relating to IDPs, returnees and urban destitute; inadequate protection particularly for IDPs and other vulnerable groups and continued low human development indicators (especially in education and health).

## KEY HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

### ***Disruption to Livelihoods Following Several Years of Drought***

Pastoral areas of Somaliland have experienced gradual but significant recovery following consecutive years of drought between 2002 and 2004. According to FAO's Food Security and Analysis Unit, subsequent to the 2006/2007 *Deyr* rains, Somaliland experienced a further improvement in livelihoods and food security; pastoral areas that were previously experiencing an Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis (*Deyr* '40/05 to Gu'06) are now identified as recovered, albeit still classified as Chronically Food Insecure.

Charcoal production - which many households revert to when livestock productivity declines - is reported to have reduced during and after the *Deyr* season. This is attributed to continuing improvements in livestock productivity and therefore better income opportunities. In Sool region, however, although the pastoralist community, with the help of some local NGOs and district authorities, has imposed strict rules on this activity, charcoal production continues.

A large number of the population relies on remittances (money sent from extended family working overseas) in the Somali Diaspora. Remittances make up an estimated 25% of household income. After livestock, agriculture is the most viable livelihood but it is vulnerable to low production due to erratic rainfall, mono-cropping, poor soil fertility, endemic pests and diseases, lack of pesticides/sprayers and labour shortages. Somaliland has a coastline of about 850 kilometers but currently the fishing industry is only small scale. The population relies heavily on imported food but regular price increases (due to devaluation of currency) affect the ability of an average household to rely solely on market purchase. In many households it is common for limited resources to be spent on consumption of the leaf narcotic (*Khat*), leaving little household money for essential household needs such as education and health.

Periodic heavy rains sometimes lead to mass death of livestock (particularly after droughts) belonging to rural communities, and flooding of urban areas with highest impact on urban poor and IDPs/destitute groups (e.g. recent floods in Burao and other areas). Coordinated crosscutting responses such as provision of emergency assistance (food and non-food) to affected households, and repair of damaged infrastructure (e.g. hospitals, MHCs, schools etc) are needed to address the impact of such shocks. Support to disaster preparedness institutions of the local authorities is key for timely and adequate response to the emergencies in the medium and long term.

## IDPs

The number of IDPs in Somaliland is currently estimated at 40,000. Between January/March 2007, new IDP arrivals were reported during the fighting in Mogadishu thus exact numbers are unknown. **IDPs and returnees live in very poor conditions – often in urban areas with inadequate water and sanitation and lacking income opportunities and access to basic social services.** Many also lack protection (usually provided by their clan). A national policy on IDPs is still being drafted by the Somaliland authorities in consultation with aid agencies. The resources for IDP programmes continue to be limited and affect a comprehensive response. The current standing of the MRRR and the Hargeisa Municipality is to relocate two temporary settlements in Hargeisa. Consultations are on-going to reach a consensus between the government and the humanitarian community on how best to help the IDPs. A joint Taskforce has been working to develop a joint programme to respond in a multi-sectoral manner to the problem of IDPs in Hargeisa including the resettlement of the two temporary IDP sites (Statehouse and Stadium) during a pilot phase.

## Security/Access

The establishment of relative stability in Somaliland has facilitated access by the humanitarian community to the most vulnerable populations in most parts of the zone except for the contested areas of Eastern Sanag and Sool. **The last heavy round of fighting broke out around Las Anood in October 2004. According to the Somaliland authorities the fighting displaced a total of 1,500 households.** The UN negotiated and secured a written agreement with both authorities (Somaliland and Puntland) in late 2003 to facilitate unimpeded humanitarian access for the needy population. However on several occasions the authorities verbally revoked those commitments. As long as the issue of Eastern Sanag and Sool is unresolved, the security situation in these areas will remain fragile. Poor road infrastructure in remote areas also affects the delivery of humanitarian relief for example in Awdal and Sanag mountainous terrains. In April 2007, the UN down-phased the security level in most regions from phase 4 to phase 3.

## HIV/AIDS

In September 2005, the Somaliland authorities launched an AIDS Commission – Somaliland National AIDS Commission (SOLNAC). The overall average prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Somaliland is estimated at 1.4%. In June 2005, the first anti-retroviral therapy (ART) project (implemented by the Ministry of Health) was started. At least 500 people are receiving voluntary counseling and testing, 102 patients have received HIV/AIDS care and 56 are on antiretroviral treatment.

## HUMANITARIAN PARTNERS WORKING IN SOMALILAND AND COORDINATION MECHANISMS

Operational UN agencies: UNDP, OCHA, HABITAT, UNDSS, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNOPS/IFAD, FAO (FSAU and EXCELEX), ILO, ICAO, UNAIDS, UNIFEM. There are around 35 INGOs operating including DRC, NRC, CARE, OXFAM, SF Alliance, PENHA, HANDICAP, ICD, NPA and VETAID. Interagency emergency coordination groups are formed as per need. National NGOs are more than 90; amongst the most active are NAGAAD, HAVOYOCO, COSONGO and CANDLELIGHT. NAGAAD and COSONGO are two national umbrella organizations that convene periodic coordination forums for their respective member organizations.

Existing Coordination Mechanisms include Sectoral Coordination Meetings held by the respective line ministries; functional groups include health, education, agriculture/food security and water. In addition the Ministry of Pastoral Development and Environment convenes a periodic Pastoral Forum. The Natural Environment Research and Disaster Management Agency (NERAD) has established a Disaster Management Committee, which is building up its capacity to assess and coordinate responses during emergencies.

A Humanitarian Coordination Forum - chaired by the Ministry of National Planning and Coordination with assistance from OCHA – leads the coordination of cross-sectoral responses to emergencies; for example during the recent flooding that occurred in Burao.

The Forum consists of clusters such as water/sanitation, health, shelter/infrastructure, food, nutrition, and livelihoods. IDP WG co-chaired by OCHA and MRRR coordinate cross-sectoral assistance to IDPs in Somaliland.

## Internally Displaced People from South Central regions receive Emergency and Community Support in Somaliland.

In late 2006, IDPs from South Central regions started arriving in Somaliland. The main cause of the displacement was the fighting in South/Central between forces of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) and the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) with Ethiopian support.

Based on an assessment conducted by UNHCR, the MRRR and local NGOs in February 2007, 160 newly displaced households were identified and were assisted by with food and NFIs, 58% of which were children and 50% women. Originating from Mogadishu, Hiran, Merka, Baidoa, and other parts of South/Central, most of them set base near existing IDP settlements around Hargeisa. More IDPs were also reported in other major towns of Burao and Berbera; these too cited conflict as well as clan clashes and flooding as reasons for fleeing their places of origin.

The newly displaced join other IDP communities in Somaliland who live in congested settlements with minimal access to income and lack of support and protection from the host communities. To make a living, many revert to begging and children are forced to work.

The assessment recommended emergency aid for these people and after several consultations between humanitarian agencies and the Somaliland authorities, the 160 households received assistance in the last week of March 2007. Accompanying the assistance, the authorities also carried out awareness campaigns amongst local communities around where the IDPs were, to prevent feelings of hostility or frustration – a campaign that was very successful. The IDPs received food rations, family relief kits, and emergency plastic shelter contributed by WFP, UNICEF and UNHCR with support from the MRRR, Somaliland police and local NGOs.