

SOUTH / CENTRAL SOMALIA



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS SOMALIA

Overview of Environment in South/Central Somalia

South/Central Somalia has been the epicenter of the humanitarian crisis, fraught with ongoing and worsening conflict, massive displacement, and natural disasters such as floods, drought and crop failure.

Somalia's transitional authority, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), 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 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 was considered the worst fighting since 1991. South/Central Somalia has continued to be the epicenter of humanitarian crisis since the beginning of 2007. Between February and April at the peak of fierce fighting, over 365,000 people fled Mogadishu to relatively calm parts of the country. In March 2007, the first group of AMISOM Ugandan troops arrived in Mogadishu. Other African countries have since hesitated to send their troops.

The situation, while still worrying seemed to stabilize for a few months, until end of October 2007, when renewed clashes between Ethiopian/Transitional Federal Forces (TFG) and anti-government elements triggering massive displacement of about 200,000 civilians. There are close to 600,000 people displaced from Mogadishu since February 2007 at a time when access and delivery of assistance has been severely limited by the insecurity. This November, the Security Council recommended preparations for a possible UN Peace Keeping force.

Assistance to vulnerable households throughout large parts of southern Somalia has been sporadic and insufficient. The displaced people who have fled to various parts of South/Central regions and particularly Middle and Lower Shabelle are living in deplorable conditions in need of basic services such as water, healthcare and food. Civilians are constantly caught in the crossfire of the conflict and it is estimated that about 5,000 war-wounded have been admitted to the two main hospitals in Mogadishu since the beginning of 2007. Hundreds of civilians have also been killed in gun battles and indiscriminate mortar attacks.

According to the FAO/FSAU-led Post-*Gu* (April – June) 2007 assessment in August 2007, around 1.5 million Somalis are in need of assistance and protection, a 50% increase compared to 1 million people in need in January 07. Most, or 80 per cent of those identified in Humanitarian Emergency are in the Shabelle regions. Various factors like ongoing conflict in Mogadishu, failed *Gu* rains, increase in prices of essential food commodities among others, have provoked the dramatic decline in the Shabelles. The regions have also suffered deteriorating health conditions

Key Humanitarian issues

Access and Security

According to a recent study by Overseas Development Institute (ODI)¹, Somalia is one of the most insecure environments for humanitarian organizations to operate in. This is particularly the case in South/Central. Throughout 2007, starting in the first quarter, Mogadishu experienced a serious escalation of violence, as fighting intensified between Ethiopian /TFG 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, including journalists, have been carried out. Hundreds of civilians are estimated to have been killed since the start of 2007 and at least 5,000 war wounded were admitted to Mogadishu's two main hospitals since the beginning of the year.

During the months of July and August, insecurity in the South/Central regions impeded access and restricted freedom of movement to reach people in need of humanitarian assistance. In mid-year, a high number of roadblocks (238) were reported all over South/Central regions with most of them imposing taxation on humanitarian commodities creating huge impediments on aid delivery. Charges per truck at some checkpoints reportedly increased from \$125 to \$520. Limited access of vessels to seaports due to high tidal waves was experienced during the monsoon season (June – September). Piracy has also been on the increase leading to a call by the Security Council for the escort of humanitarian ships by council members following which in November, two WFP ships were escorted by French Navy vessels. Aid workers have also experienced harassment, arbitrary detention at key checkpoints and been prevented from conducting relief distributions.

Numerous advocacy efforts to improve access have been undertaken, including an unprecedented statement by 40 international and national NGOs working in Somalia in October highlighting the dramatic deterioration of the humanitarian situation in South/Central Somalia. They called upon those with the responsibility to protect civilians to act in order to save lives. The statement said constrained access and deteriorating security left international and national NGOs with little humanitarian space in which to operate. Also an open letter from the Humanitarian Coordinator on 1 November called for improved access and cessation of hostilities to improve access to vulnerable people.

¹ ODI is a Britain based independent think tank on international development and humanitarian issues. source: www.odi.org.uk

Throughout 2006/2007, OCHA Somalia has received funding from:
Australia, ECHO, Ireland, Italy, Republic of Korea, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and United Kingdom, SIDA, USA, DFID

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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 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.

Since the beginning of 2007, anti-government elements continue to fight Ethiopian/TFG forces based in Mogadishu triggering massive movements of people in and out of the city. According to UNHCR's Population Movement Tracking, an estimated 600,000 people have been displaced from the capital to relatively calm areas of the city and with the vast going to other parts of the country such as Lower Shabelle, Galgadud, Mudug, and Middle Shabelle regions. Most of those displaced are women; children and the 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 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, hospitals too have been targeted. As many as 5,000 war wounded have been admitted to hospitals. 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/TFG forces.

Livelihoods and Food Security

According to the post-Gu 2007 analysis by FSAU, FEWSNET and partners, the Shabelle regions in the south of Somalia are in a state of Humanitarian Emergency. Out of the 1.5 million people in need of assistance, about 300,000 (50%) are in Middle and Lower Shabelle regions. This also includes around 490,000 people experiencing Acute Livelihood Crisis, an estimated 325,000 new IDPs (between April and August) and some 400,000 protracted IDPs since the war in the 1990s. Traditionally, the Shabelles are the most agriculturally productive regions, but of late the disruption in trade and economic activities, high and increasing concentration of displaced people fleeing Mogadishu, deteriorating health conditions following cholera outbreak and continuing civil insecurity have contributed to food insecurity in these regions.

The ongoing humanitarian crisis in the Shabelle regions continues to remain critical due to the impact of several shocks in the last few months, including lowest cereal harvest in 13 years, trade disruptions, massive displacement, hyper inflation and continued civil insecurity. Food access and availability also remain of great concern with prices of imported food commodities like rice, sugar and vegetable oil, now at peak levels in all markets in the Shabelles and central regions.

The chronic acute nutrition crisis in most South/Central Somalia persists. Results from 20 surveys conducted so far in 2007 continue to highlight a chronic critical nutrition situation particularly in Bay, Hiran, Gedo parts of Bakool regions.

Preliminary results from three Nutrition surveys conducted in Shabelle regions from 30 October to 9 November by FSAU and partners indicate that the nutrition situation remains at, or close to, emergency threshold levels (more than 15%) without any statistically significant change from the levels reported in May.

Acute malnutrition in the Shabelles have not deteriorated further due to the harvest in July which increased access to food, as well as intensified humanitarian interventions by agencies since May 2007.

A further stress on the already highly vulnerable population in the Shabelles is the latest wave of population displacement. Current estimates of up to 200,000 newly displaced populations from Mogadishu, many remaining in the Shabelle regions, have been reported by UNHCR in October due to renewed conflict.

Table: Estimated Rural Population by Region in Humanitarian Emergency (HE) and Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis (AFLC) July – December 2007

REGION	Region Population 2006	Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis	Humanitarian Emergency	Total in Need as % of Total Population
North	2,341,718	0	0	0
Central	680,156	0	0	0
Banadir	901,183	.	.	.
South				
Bakool	310,627	80,000	0	26
Bay	620,562	5,000	0	1
Gedo	328,378	80,000	30,000	33
Hiran	329,811	30,000	15,000	14
Lower Juba	385,790	80,000	0	21
Middle Juba	238,877	65,000	0	27
Lower Shabelle	850,651	90,000	165,000	30
Middle Shabelle	514,901	60,000	85,000	28
Sub-Total (south)	3,579,597	490,000	295,000	22
Grand Total	7,502,654	490,000	295,000	10

Source: FAO/Food Security Analysis Unit (August 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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