



UNITED NATIONS

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Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) – SOMALIA
Situation Report #42 – 15 June, 2007

Main Developments

According to FAO/FSAU, the 2007 *Gu* performance has so far been poor and may result in significantly reduced crop production, with corresponding implications for food security. Although the *Gu* season started well in mid-April, rains in May were erratic and poorly distributed. The forecast for June predicts below-normal to no rains for most of Somalia. Of particular concern are Hiran and the southern regions. Poor *Gu* rains, combined with the impact of displacement from Mogadishu, may negatively affect agropastoral and agricultural communities in these areas. A best case scenario anticipates below-normal rainfed production, while a worst case scenario would see rainfed crop failure, especially in Hiran and the Shabelles. In late June, FAO/FSAU will conduct its usual post-*Gu* food and livelihood security assessment. This year, given the scale of the recent displacement crisis, the survey will include an analysis of the impact of the displaced on local food security conditions.

Fighting between Ethiopian forces and anti-government factions took place 13 June involving grenades, machine guns and mortars. A District Official was assassinated the next morning. The violence followed the previous day's announcement by the Chairman of the National Reconciliation Committee that the Reconciliation Conference had been postponed. The Conference, scheduled to begin today, is now set to take place in mid-July. This week's unrest came on the heels of several days of rising tension in the city due to last week's security crackdown, which involved house-to-house searches for weapons and the arrest of hundreds of Mogadishu residents. Movement within Mogadishu has since then been severely restricted due to the imposition of numerous checkpoints. There have been reports of limited displacement from Mogadishu as a result of the violence. (see below)

A UN inter-agency mission headed by the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) travelled to Mogadishu on 14 June. The mission's aim was to discuss ways to increase delivery of humanitarian assistance through improved coordination and communication between all constituencies working in Mogadishu; meetings were held with the TFG Minister of Planning, the Mayor of Mogadishu and NGOs. During meetings, all stakeholders voiced a desire and need for improved cooperation to scale up humanitarian response and supported a proposed workshop to define roles and responsibilities of each constituency. The mission once again clarified that the focus of the response is now on the provision of basic services to target IDPs and the wider community. On the issue of the government's repossession of some public buildings in which IDPs have been living, the HC stressed that any such activity should be in line with international standards and in conjunction with alternative solutions being provided for affected IDPs. More broadly, any long-term resettlement of IDPs must be based on outcomes of the National Reconciliation Conference. Freedom of the press and the regularization of registration for NGOs were also addressed during meetings. It was agreed that discussions on the above issues would continue throughout the coming weeks.

The three media houses (HornAfrik, Shabelle and IQK) that were shut down on 6 June by the TFG as part of the government security crackdown were re-opened on 10 June following discussions between government officials and media executives. The TFG had accused the media outlets of supporting anti-government factions.

Elsewhere in South/Central, there was growing tension and insecurity. Ongoing clan fighting in the Kismayo (Lower Juba) area over the last several days resulted in an unconfirmed number of dead. The fighting reportedly began as revenge killings and grew into a land dispute. There have been allegations of militia looting in the villages around Kismayo. Following reports of increased TFG troop movements in Lower and Middle Juba – possibly in relation to events in Kismayo – a UN mission to Buale (Middle Juba) planned for this week was

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cancelled. UNHCR is reporting that up to 10,000 people may have moved to Kismayo town as a result of the clan conflict.

Meanwhile, tension in Lower Shabelle is high following fighting between the former and the newly appointed regional administrations. Forces loyal to the new Lower Shabelle Regional Administration entered Bulo Marer (40km southwest of Merka) on 7 June. The following day, ten people were reported to have been killed when militia from the two sides clashed, resulting in the new administration withdrawing to Mogadishu. Further confrontations in the area are possible unless negotiations are undertaken. Almost 800 people are estimated to have been displaced to Merka because of the clashes.

Returns and Displacement

Reports indicate that approximately 112,000 people have returned to their homes in Mogadishu since 1 May (99,000 during May), though the numbers may be higher. Most of the returnees are attempting to restore their livelihoods, as many lost property during the conflict. Obstacles facing those who wish to return include uncertainty over the government's future use of public buildings and the fact that many buildings in which IDPs had lived were destroyed during the conflict. Transport to Mogadishu from areas of displacement has also slowed returns, with reports indicating that IDPs trying to return have had to wait up to three days for transport.

The majority of returns have been from Lower Shabelle (65,000, mostly from Afgoye and Merka) and Middle Shabelle (34,000, mostly from Balad and Jowhar). About 5,000 are reported to have returned from Gedo and 2,000 from Bay. Other regions that have recorded returns include Hiran (800), Mudug (1,000) and Middle Juba (300). Additionally, about 1,700 people who were displaced within Mogadishu have returned home. Unlike the movement out of Mogadishu, which was sudden and in large numbers, returns have been gradual and more difficult to quantify. Meanwhile, UNHCR is estimating that during the month of June, almost 1,500 people have fled insecurity and sporadic violence in Mogadishu, with almost 600 of these having gone to Galkayo.

Access and Response

Various procedural issues regarding the importation of humanitarian cargo into Somalia remain unresolved. In a recent incident, WFP-contracted trucks were delayed for a day at Mogadishu port while awaiting permission from the authorities to continue to Mogadishu warehouses for off-loading. Regarding the border, negotiations are ongoing concerning authorization to move humanitarian cargo overland from Kenya to Somalia. Meanwhile, road passage fees at roadblocks and checkpoints inside Somalia continue to impede delivery of assistance, causing delays and raising transport costs. In recent weeks, charges per truck at Baidoa are reported to have increased from \$125 to \$520, while passage fees in all other major towns are said to have doubled or tripled. WFP has raised the issue of roadblocks and checkpoints with the TFG on numerous occasions and, more recently, in written communication with the Minister of Health, the focal point for humanitarian activities.

A joint mission involving OCHA and World Vision travelled to Idaale (Bay) on 9 June to assess the humanitarian situation and discuss response. Idaale village suffered severe damage to its infrastructure during the conflict of late 2006/early 2007 between ICU and TFG/Ethiopian forces. The mission reported serious need among the population for water and sanitation and hygiene interventions; support for new returnees with shelter materials and NFIs; health care; income generation programs and livestock support; and support for education. Of particular concern was the presence of unexploded mines, artillery shells, hand grenades and anti-aircraft missiles remaining from the conflict.

The bodies of two Kenyan police officers who were abducted on 9 June by heavily armed men were found on 14 June about 10km south of Mandera, near the Somali border. The two officers had been stationed in Mandera town and went missing while on patrol. Problems concerning the border issue have been ongoing in recent months (the Government of Kenya closed its border with Somalia in early 2007), sometimes impeding transport of humanitarian cargo and staff into Somalia.

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