

UNHCR Somalia Operational Highlights 17-24th March 2013

1) Political and Security

South-central:

Following the Ethiopian Defence Force's (EDF) withdrawal from Xudur town, Bakool district, Al-Shabaab (AS) militants seized control of the town. A large number of EDF as well as families/relations of Somali National Armed Forces (SNAF) residing in Xudur also followed suit. As of 21st March 2013, approximately 2,500 people (mostly adolescent and adult males) have been displaced to Ceel Barde. The people who fled first primarily consisted of members of the local administration, government sympathizers, local NGOs, health workers, and their families who fear AS persecution. Further displacement of civilians may occur.

The Representative and UNHCR Mogadishu team had a series of meetings with the Technical Assessment Mission (TAM) Team as well as high level delegations/donor missions (a Norwegian delegation, and a donor mission (ECHO, USAID, DfID and AusAID). Discussions with the donors centered on IDP relocation and IDP returns and the relevant durable solutions for the returning populations. The prospect of a tripartite agreement between the governments of Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia (regional strategy) on refugee returns and ongoing discussions around durable solutions planning and IDP policy in Somalia were also discussed.

The security situation in the Jubas remains stable with no major incidents reported. The negotiations of the community stakeholders on the establishment of a federal state of "Jubaland" are ongoing and the conference is expected to resume this week in Kismayo.

Somaliland:

No major political and security developments were reported during the reporting period.

Puntland:

The security situation in Galkayo (Mudug region) remained fairly calm with no major incidents. On 19 March, a local armed militia man opened fire while NRC staff were selecting beneficiary for CGI shelter in Bulo Bacley settlement. Reportedly, the militia man wanted to be included in the list of beneficiary. No casualties reported. The Galmudug self-proclaimed president Mr Elmi is reported to be planning to launch a radio station in south Galkayo. Reportedly, preparations are ongoing to install the new FM radio station. In Bossasso, two men were arrested at the southern checkpoint of Garowe, after they were found trafficking seven (7) young girls aged between 5-7 years from Southern Somalia to Laas'anood in Sool Region. The children were handed over to Ministry of Women and Family Affairs as their relatives are traced and reunited with them.

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2) Population Movement

IDP Returns:

Between the 15th and 22nd of March, at least 4,553 people were displaced from different areas in Puntland and South Central, mainly due to insecurity (Xudur town in Bakool), IDP evictions in Mogadishu, lack of livelihood opportunities, drought and IDP returns. Major areas of return/movement include Bari, Bakool, Banaadir, Juba Hoose and Shabeele Hoose, as well as Bari, Nugaal (Puntland), Togdheer and Waqooyi (Somaliland). Priority needs reported include food, shelter, livelihood support and civilian protection.

Refugee Returns:

From Kenya to Somalia: 459 refugees returned from Ifo 2 (210) Ifo 1 (195) and Nairobi (54) to Somalia through Dhobley, Dif, Kismayo and Mogadishu. These people are heading to their place of habitual residence in Juba Hoose, Banaadir, Juba Dhexe and Hiraan regions. Their main reasons for moving include the general harsh living conditions at the camps, improving security situation in Somalia and also to access and rebuild their properties and farms in Somalia. The returnees reported food, shelter, livelihood support, protection from conflict and health as urgent needs. 71% are female.

From Saudi Arabia to Somalia: A family of four have been deported from Saudi Arabia to Mogadishu. . They reported livelihood support as their urgent need.

3) Protection and assistance activities:

South-central:

Mogadishu office is currently monitoring arrival of Somali refugees from Dadaab to Mogadishu. Employed routes are through Kismayo and Barawa taking nine days), or Dhobley and Afgooye, taking five days. New arrivals speak of a long, difficult and expensive journey (105 USD per family) especially with young children. They also complain of robbery and harassment particularly at Al Shabab controlled check points. Their immediate needs, now in Mogadishu, are access to livelihood and shelter. Discussions with UNHCR Kenya office will be held to better address these issues.

On 21 March, UNHCR Mogadishu held a meeting with the President of the Parliamentary Committee on Humanitarian Affairs and Human Rights. UNHCR and MP Khadija Mohamed Dirye agreed to organize a one-day retreat on IDP and refugee matters with all 17 MPs/ members of the said committee, in the last week of April.

Following the last IDP Relocation Task Force meeting, further agreement has been reached with the government in relation to site planning and service provision modalities. The Site Planning Technical Working Group conducted an initial mapping mission to demarcate government-owned land. The IDP Profiling Technical Working Group has agreed on the core data needs for the exercise and will begin to mobilize funds. Save the Children will help in this process, particularly in Sigale and Darawish settlements.

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The Communication Technical Working Group is also developing a communications strategy mainly encompassing protection concerns in regards to the process.

The Protection Unit (GBV Working Group and Protection Cluster) continues to hold various trainings with relevant partners on psychosocial support for child survivors and trauma healing as well as Protection Mainstreaming (integrating protection in all stages of project cycles).

On 23 March, UNHCR and WFP jointly distributed used WFP sacks to a group of female IDPs from Mogadishu's Bantu IDP community, which would help them in rope-making, as an income generating activity. The community composed of approximately 130 households (approximately 780 individuals), mainly women and children, lives in Karaan district. The ropes will be mainly sold to other communities and laundry companies.

Somaliland:

On 21 March, thirty IDPs representatives returned to Somaliland after the go and see visit to Bay, Banadir, Middle and Lower Shabelle. With the support of the return consortium the following week it will be organized community sensitization sessions to debrief IDPs population in Hargeisa, Burao and Lasanod.

Between 17 and 21 March external audit has been conducted for six implementing partners and a debriefing session has been undertaken accordingly, highlighting the main findings of the exercise.

Puntland:

The IDP delegates who departed Galkayo for the go-and-see visits to Bay and Lower Shabelle areas have returned and are currently planning to hold feedback sessions with the rest of the returning population. Immediately thereafter, final IDP registration and relevant pre-departure processes will take place in all settlements.

Vulnerability assessments of refugees and asylum seeker have planned from the last week of March. This will better guide protection activities in the operation.

A monitoring mission has been sent to Abudwaq (Central region) to monitor beneficiary selection for livelihood activities. The mission will enhance planning for the targeted beneficiary population, especially with respect to livelihood activities.

In preparation for a Humanitarian Gap Analysis (HGA) exercise planend to take place in Garowe in April, UNHCR conducted shelter and protection cluster meetings whereby tools for the exercise have been developed. UNHCR in collaboration with OCHA, NRC and WVI will lead the exercise for Shelter and Protection sectors.

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4) RO Somalia

Office Relocation:

The Blast Expert, Gunter Heil, accompanied by a Technical Adviser from HESCO was on mission to conduct blast assessments on all UNHCR premises in Mogadishu, in preparation for the planned office migration. The team provided advice on perimeter security for all premises including the erection of a number of HESCO walls. In addition, he reviewed and provided advice on better use and repair of the small UNHCR armored vehicle fleet. Final report will be received later this week.

Returns Consortium:

A (toll free) feedback and complaints mechanism via SMS (Short Messaging Service) and Voice Calls, is being launched, to cater for returning populations' needs. Consortium members as Danish Refugee Council, Mercy Corps, Norwegian Refugee Council, Agrosphere and Qatar Charity have been trained on the mechanism and how to effectively address relevant return issues, especially prior departure.

Banners, stickers, posters and phone pouches with the information to access the service were produced and will be distributed to the beneficiaries by the sending organization during the next few days.

IDP registration for returning populations is currently ongoing after successful completion of all go-and-see visits in the potential areas of returns.

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