

UNHCR Somalia Operational Highlights

1st-7th April 2013

1) Political and Security

South-central:

The revival of Al Shabaab activity in Mogadishu and nearby regions is likely to continue. The British Foreign Office issued an advisory against travel to Somalia and in particular Mogadishu against a background of renewed reports of possible Al Shabaab threats in the capital. Risk management measures are already in place to address the existing terrorist threats and corresponding risk levels. A general advisory regarding kidnapping countrywide was also issued by NGOs. Necessary precautions are being taken.

The Kismayo conference has passed a new constitution for the Jubaland administration. A flag for the upcoming administration was then designed and agreed upon on 4 April. 45 members of parliament from the federal government arrived in Kismayo in order to negotiate between the Kismayo interim administration and government. Even though the government has officially rejected the conference and announced the outcome as unconstitutional, the delegates and the organizers of the meeting are continuing to establish a regional administration for Gedo, Middle and Lower Juba regions.

Somaliland:

The Mayor of Hargeisa, who has been in Dubai for some time seeking treatment, recently passed away. Elections by the Hargeisa Local Council will be held to appoint a replacement. The Somaliland government is set to commence talks with the federal government of Somalia. Somaliland's approach to the talks is based on achieving diplomatic recognition for its independence. A truck carrying 20 Ethiopian immigrants overturned in Koosar neighborhood in Burao town. Two people were seriously injured and were admitted at Burao hospital. The driver and passengers were arrested.

Puntland:

Puntland Ministry of Planning, International Cooperation and Federal Affairs (MOPIC) requested the establishment of Sectoral Working Groups for all operating UN Agencies in Puntland and to conduct quarterly sectorial coordination meetings. Bilaterals with the UN agencies and MOPIC are underway (first meeting scheduled for 17 April), to map out roles and expectations for this coordination.

Three radio stations have been closed down by the Puntland government (Radio Daljir, Voice of Peace and One Nation) over allegations of reproducing programs broadcasted by external media, not licensed by government. Media associations and other human rights activists have indicated that the decision contradicts the constitutional rights of the free press. Some political observers assume there could have been connection between the upcoming elections and the silencing of the most prominent radio stations in the region. Subsequently, the Ministry of Interior lifted the ban under the condition that these radio stations will stop reproducing and broadcasting programs of already banned Radios (Hirad, Ergo and Bar-kulan).

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2) Population Movement

IDP Returns:

264 people were displaced within Somalia mainly due to lack of livelihood, IDP return and insecurity in Kham-Kham, Kismayo. They moved/returned to Bakool, Banadir, Juba Hoose, Shabeele Hoose, Mudug, and Hiraaan regions with priority needs reported to be food, shelter, protection from conflict and livelihood support. 65% were female.

Refugee Returns:

From Kenya to Somalia: 245 refugees returned from Ifo 1 (77) and Ifo 2 (168) to Somalia through Dhobley (116), Dif (109) and Kismayo (20). These people are heading to their places of habitual residence in Bay, Hiraaan, Juba Dhexe and Juba Hoose regions. Their main reasons for moving include the improving security situation in Somalia. Some are stranded at Dhobley and could not proceed to their final destinations due to the rainy season (bad roads) and high transportation charges. Food, transport and shelter are the main urgent needs. 71% were female.

From Ethiopia to Somalia: Three (3) refugees returned from Ethiopia to Mogadishu and reported livelihood support as their urgent need.

3) Protection and assistance activities:

South-central:

The Finnish Ambassador Mrs. Sofie From-Emmesberger together with the Finnish Ministers of Foreign Affairs and International Development, met with the Somali federal government in Mogadishu, thereafter having a working lunch with UNHCR and its partners. Discussions revolved around durable solutions for vulnerable IDP populations in Mogadishu and within South Central Somalia.

Somaliland:

Protection activities such as subsistence allowance distribution and advocacy with partnering government ministries are ongoing. Heavy rains remain a threat across Somaliland, hampering access especially in areas within Berbera and Burao. The government with the support of NFI/Shelter cluster identified more than 1,900 households Mohamed Moge and Nasahablood IDPs that are in need of urgent NFI / Shelter assistance.

Puntland:

In Bosasso, UNHCR participated in a joint fact finding mission to three locations where IDPs have either been relocated, or are intended to be relocated by local authorities. The aim of the mission was to find out realities on the ground in terms of viability of the land as well as the actual needs of those who have been already relocated. The mission was followed by a brainstorming session whereby participants shared their inputs for compilation and further dissemination by OCHA. The findings of the mission would also be presented in the general coordination meeting to be held in April.

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Quarterly narrative reports have been prepared by qualified local implementing partners, and shared with UNHCR for feedback/inputs. Meanwhile, verification of implementing partners' financial reports is underway in the light of their narrative reports as well as performance monitoring conducted by UNHCR between January and March 2013.

In Galkayo, registration for IDPs return to Bay and Lower Shabelle regions of South Central Somalia from Mudug, has been completed by INTERSOS and DRC. A total of 480 HHs were registered; 180 HHs for Bay, while 300 HHs will return to Lower Shabelle. Three centres were set up for medical screening, one each in Bulo Kontrol, Ali Amin and Mustagbaq IDP settlements. All 146 families screened were cleared and issued travel certificates by the Galkayo Medical Foundation (GMC). The first convoys of 60 families; 30 for Bay and 30 for Lower Shabelle departed Galkayo on 8 April. Prior to departure, the IDPs, through their representatives, are expected to sign a memorandum of understanding with implementing partners; INTERSOS and DRC to ensure compliance of provision of assistance and travel. Both INTERSOS and DRC conducted three days of mobilization to create awareness of assistance to be provided to returnees.

Refugee and Asylum seeker vulnerability assessments were conducted, identifying five groups of people facing potential risks; elderly, women and girls, children and adolescents. The assessment also looked at possible protection related assistance including self-reliance and access to basic services.

Implementing partner, Galkayo Education Centre for Peace and Development (GECPD) in respect to GBV issues, supported a group of IDP women in Halabokhad settlement, to establish a support group with the aim of promoting women protection against GBV. The group will be trained by GECPD to develop capacity that will ensure sustainable ownership through the establishment of GBV social networks. The group will serve as GBV advocates and community educators on women rights and work towards discouraging regressive cultural practices and other forms of gender based violence.

Following a declaration of concern by the Somali Federal Government, expressing the President's commitment to address human rights abuses, in particular violence against women, GECPD organized a one-day advocacy forum to sensitize women rights activists, youth leaders, elders and the authorities to join efforts with government and all stakeholders to fight human rights abuses. Participants at the forum demonstrated willingness to unite and support the fight against gender based violence.

A joint mission comprising UNICEF, OCHA, WFP, UNHCR and DRC visited Abudwaq on 3 April to assess damage caused by heavy rain for five consecutive hours the night of 25 March. The rains triggered-floods destroyed properties in the town and IDP settlements. According to preliminary report, the most affected were IDPs who were living in ramshackle huts made of old sack, old clothes, cartons and stick.

Out of seven IDP settlements in the town, four settlements, namely Bali garas Hurfada, Jaqaf waa bir and Baligiish, were badly affected because of their location on low-lying ground near a natural water catchment. According to briefing from the mission team, about 30% of IDPs living in the four affected settlements are displaced, one person along with eighteen goats and dozens of chickens were killed by the flood.

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4) RO Somalia

Returns Consortium:

Nine households supported by DRC have completed their return to Lower and Middle Shabelle and assistance is currently being provided. Another 700 returnee families from Mogadishu to Lower Shabelle and Middle Shabelle are scheduled to return between 10 and 12 April.

In Hargeisa, Burao and Lasanod, a significant decrease is reported between the figures of IDPs interested in Voluntary return intercepted during the Intention Survey and the actual registration exercise after the go-and-see visit. Among the causes, it has been reported by NRC and DRC that:

- a) Gatekeepers in all locations are disseminating contradictory information about the process with the aim to discourage IDPs to return;
- b) security developments related to the withdrawal of Ethiopian forces and related security concerns in the areas of return;
- c) lack of confidence in the content and actual capacity to deliver the return package once at the Village of origin.

Only around 90 households, out of the over 400 families recorded during the Intention Survey are completing the pre-departure preparations in the three locations.

Awareness on Return Consortium Feedback and complaint mechanism was provided to all groups of IDP returnees in each location. Functionality of the system in South Somalia has been affected by technical problem related to links with HORMUD Telecom. RC is working on a backup with Nationlink, full coverage of Central, Puntland and Somaliland is ensured with Telesom and Golis.

END

