



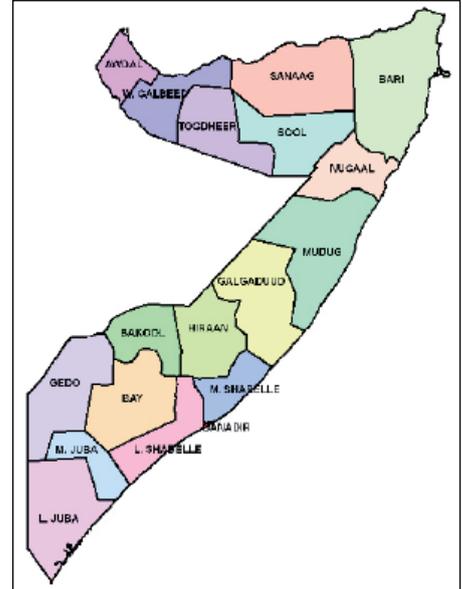
UNITED NATIONS
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Somalia Humanitarian Overview

Vol. 1 Issue 7 - July 2008

Main Developments

- ❑ It is estimated that more than 70,000 people were displaced from Belet Weyne town in July following clashes between Ethiopian troops and insurgents. The humanitarian situation in and around Belet Weyne town is causing grave concern. People are in desperate need of food, water, shelter and medical care but very little assistance is reaching the area.
- ❑ The Food Security Analysis Unit (FSAU) issued a warning on the deepening humanitarian crisis in Somalia. FSAU estimates that the total number of people in need humanitarian assistance will increase from 2.6 million people to 3.5 million by the end of the year, in the worst case scenario.
- ❑ The security situation in Somalia continues to deteriorate. So far one humanitarian agency has confirmed it is pulling out of Somalia while others are scaling-down their operations or withdrawing from certain regions or districts due to shrinking humanitarian space.
- ❑ The plight of children in Somalia is a major concern. So far this year more than 150 children have been killed or injured through indiscriminate shelling, bombing and crossfire.



The Somalia Humanitarian Overview, a monthly analysis of the humanitarian situation and trends produced by OCHA Somalia.

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Belet Weyne

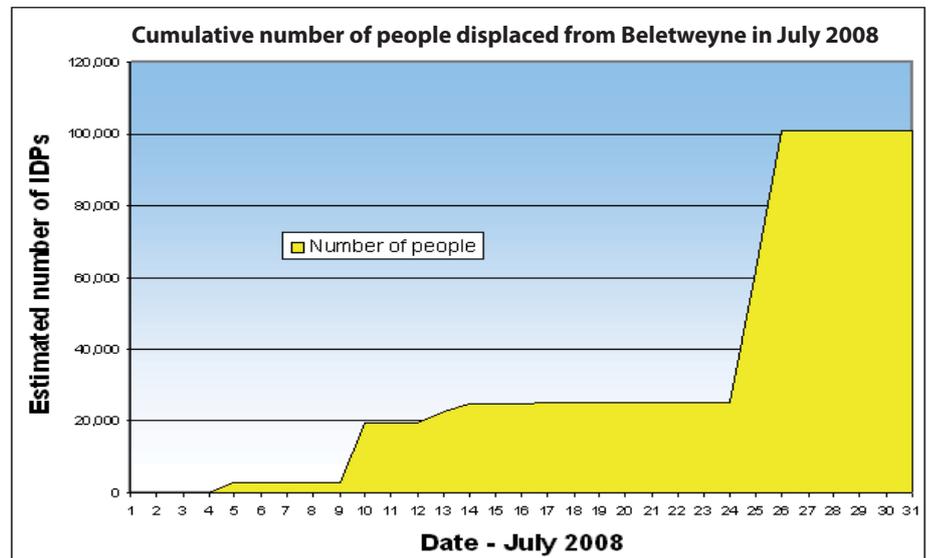
Residents of Belet Weyne town, the regional capital of Hiraan, lived under constant terror throughout July owing to continuous clashes between Ethiopian troops and the ICU. The situation for residents was particularly devastating from 24 to 26 July when Ethiopian forces shelled the western district of the town. According to field reports compiled by the Protection Cluster, all sides to the conflict employed methods of warfare that disregard international humanitarian law, such as indiscriminate road side bombs, bombardment of civilians areas, arbitrary arrests, detentions and extrajudicial killings.

During July, Belet Weyne residents suffered massive displacement, civilian casualties, destruction of property, arrests, detentions and extrajudicial killings. There were three major waves of displacement. An estimated 2,600 people fled their homes from 1-9 July in fear of a possible clash between Ethiopian troops and ICU. From 10 July, displacement increased markedly, reaching an estimated 35,000 by 17 July. Between 24 and 25 July, coinciding with the launch of the Ethiopian troop military operation, it was reported that more than 50,000 people were displaced. Based on 37 reports received by the Protection Cluster Population Movements Tracking system for July, an estimated 70,000 people remain displaced from Belet Weyne as of end July.

Humanitarian assistance reaching Belet Weyne is insufficient to meet the enormous needs. The World Food Programme (WFP) reported that the fighting delayed trucks carrying at least 1,500mt of food aid meant for distribution in July by CARE. The Somali Red Crescent Society is operating three health posts outside the town, while the International Medical Corps is running four Out-Patient Departments. Increased cases of diarrhoea and conjunctivitis have been reported among children under five. On 30 July there were unconfirmed reports that at least 10 children, displaced in the bush areas and villages of Furka Balay and Baar Qolay,

25km south of Belet Weyne, died of hunger/lack of water.

Traditional elders have made several efforts to address the conflict, without success. On 12-13 July, clan elders held separate meetings with ICU representatives and Ethiopian troops to negotiate an end to fighting in civilian populated areas of the town and to provide safe humanitarian access for aid workers. Many elders now fear for their lives as a result of unknown groups having

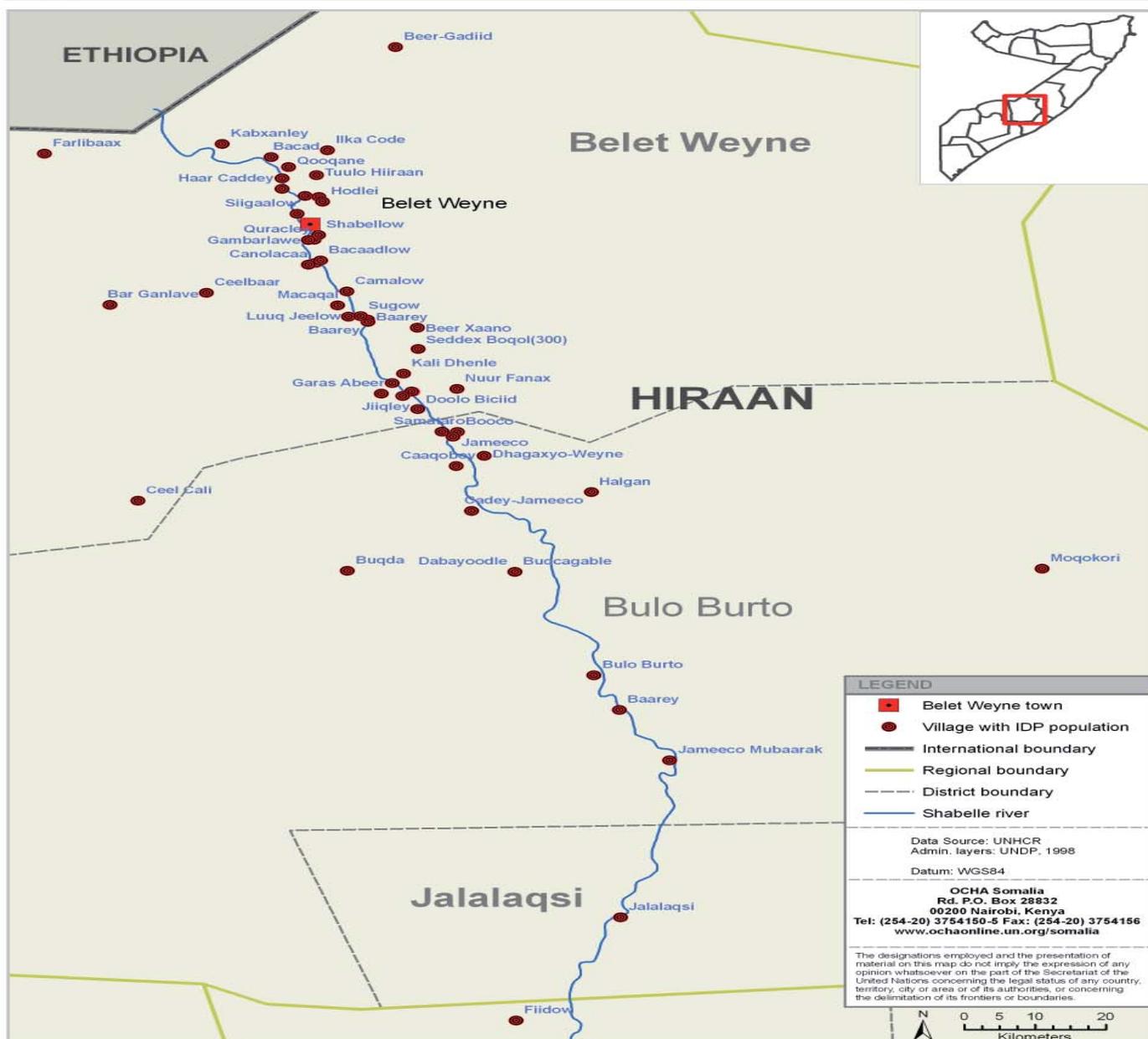


Source: UNHCR



UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

SOMALIA - BELET WEYNE - Population Displacements
August 2008



Source: UNHCR & OCHA

distributed leaflets warning that those in contact with Ethiopian troops will face severe punishment. The elders also held meetings with humanitarian agencies later in July, following the large-scale displacement, to appeal for urgent humanitarian assistance.

Warning from FSAU

FSAU issued a special brief on 23 July warning of the immediate deepening humanitarian crisis in Somalia. Preliminary findings from the ongoing post *Gu* assessments indicate that the total number of people in need of humanitarian assistance will increase from the current 2.6 million to an estimated 3.5 million by the end of the year, in the worst case scenario. The causes for this deterioration include poor *Gu* rains,

increasing food prices, continuing currency devaluation and increased conflict.

There is deepening drought in Galgaduud, Mudug, Hiraan and Bakool, due to the failure of the 2008 *Gu* rains - now the fourth consecutive season of failed rains in some regions. Severe water and pasture shortages have led to massive migration of people and livestock, now concentrating around permanent water sources, including boreholes. The drought is affecting up to 50% of pastoralist settlements. As the next rains are not expected before mid-October, the situation will deteriorate further without adequate humanitarian and livelihood support interventions. For further details on FSAU briefings and assessments go to www.fsausomali.org.

[fsausomali.org](http://www.fsausomali.org).

At a press conference on 22 July, United Nations agencies from the Horn of Africa region called on donor agencies to provide more funds to curb the worsening crisis in the Horn, including Somalia and Ethiopia. The agencies stressed that the humanitarian situation is likely to worsen in coming months, estimating that over 14 million people in Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Djibouti will require food and other forms of assistance. The Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Mark Bowden, called upon donors to provide more support to the current Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP), requesting USD\$637 million, up from USD\$406 million in January, of which only



Photo: Children in Afgooye IDP Settlement, July 2008 - Credit : OCHA

Situation of Somali Children

The Protection Cluster received reports of more than 150 children killed or injured through indiscriminate shelling, bombings and crossfire since the beginning of 2008. In a press statement issued on 31 July, Christian Balslev-Olesen, UNICEF Somalia Representative, said, "the current environment of conflict, displacement and insecurity in Southern and Central Somalia has a serious negative impact on children's and young people's long-term psychosocial welfare and health development". During the third week of July, seven children died in the ongoing battles in Mogadishu – five as they were leaving school and two while they were playing football. UNICEF called on the parties involved in the conflict to respect International Humanitarian Law, safeguard the rights of children, prioritize their welfare and safety, and seek solutions to increase humanitarian access.

Somalia is considered the worst place in the world for children to live, with 1 in 6 Somali children acute malnourished, the world's highest infant and maternal mortality rates, and the lowest primary school enrolment of 13% for boys and 7% for girls.

37% had been funded (as of mid-July). "We fear that we are moving into a very acute crisis in Somalia and need far more support externally to be able to do what is probably one of the most difficult relief jobs in the world at the moment," he said.

Nutrition Concerns

According to UNICEF and FSAU, an estimated 180,000 children in South Central and from protracted IDP populations in the North are believed to be acutely malnourished, of which 26,000 are severely malnourished. This is an increase of 11% in the last six months. The median rate of acute malnutrition for South Central now stands at 18.4%, up from 15.6% for the same period, or 1 in 6

children under the age of five. Severe acute malnutrition rates stand at 2.5%, meaning 1 in 40 are severely malnourished.

Limited numbers of these children are receiving nutritional rehabilitation. Out of the 180,000 children, 30% are reached through 220 selective feeding programmes in Somalia. A majority of the children not yet reached are in the Shabelles, Bay, Galgaduud and Mudug. Insecurity, funding constraints and a limited number of trained Somali health staff, are some of the major impediments to improved nutrition response coverage. Currently, the nutrition cluster projects planned for 2008 are only 23% funded against the 24.7 million 2008 Consolidated

Appeal (CAP) requirements.

UNICEF has scaled up its nutrition operation to reach more than 50,000 children under the age of five. The agency completed a second round of its blanket feeding program, which involves the distribution of UNIMIX-food supplement, rich with vitamins and minerals, to 54,000 under-five children in IDP camps along the Afgooye corridor and in Mogadishu.

Humanitarian Response

Assistance by aid organizations continues in various locations in Somalia despite the challenging security conditions. During the month of July, ICRC distributed 13,454mt of food aid commodities through its general food distribution to vulnerable resident populations and IDPs in central regions, Puntland and Somaliland reaching a total of 373,728 beneficiaries. CARE distributed a total of 145mt food aid to 15,328 beneficiaries in Balanbale District of Galgaduud region. WFP's total food requirement in July was 32,236mt. However, due to commodity shortfalls it delivered a total of 20,599mt for distribution through its various programmes across Somalia reaching a total of 1,253,274 beneficiaries. Approximately 98% of food aid delivered went to South Central Somalia. WFP needs to double the amount of food brought to Somalia to 32,000 metric tons per month to assist 2.4 million of the estimated 3.5 million in need by the end of the year. In the last three months, WFP prioritized the distribution of oil and pulses for the cooked meals programme in Mogadishu (80,000 meals per day) and supplementary feeding centres across Somalia due to pipeline breaks. For the third month in a row, IDPs are getting only 75% of the full food basket of 2,100 kcal. WFP has urgently appealed to governments to provide naval escorts for ships carrying WFP food into Somalia, to protect them from piracy. As the July Humanitarian Overview went to press, the Government of Canada agreed to provide naval escort.

Of 114 piracy attacks reported to the International Maritime Bureau's Piracy Reporting Centre in the first half of 2008, 24 were off the Somali coast. Somalia remained the global blackspot with a spate of violent hijackings in the Gulf of Aden. Of 24 actual and attempted attacks, 19 were in the Gulf of Aden.

The WFP Somalia Country Director, Peter Goossens, said that despite piracy and attacks on aid workers, it is still delivering large amounts of food assistance every month to people in need, and can continue its operations and scale up as long as donors support its life-saving work.

In July, the Central Emergency Response

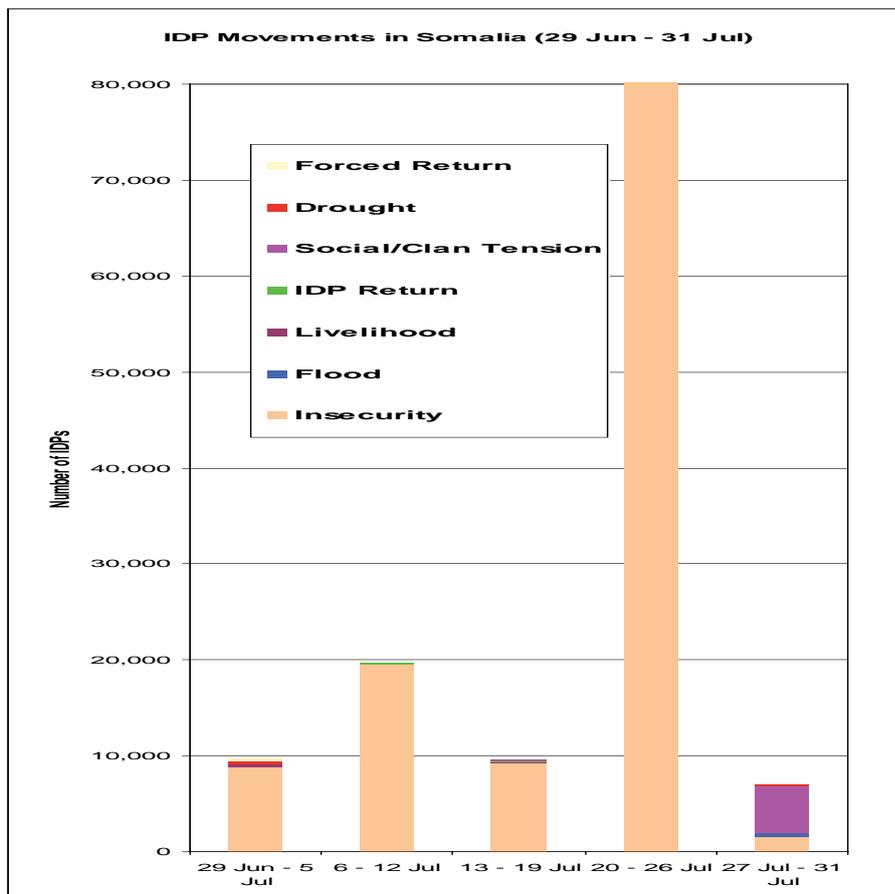
Fund (CERF) approved USD\$2.71 million for UNHAS to continue the provision of critical and safe passenger air services, at a subsidized cost. With the CERF-funded subsidy, the maximum cost per flight to all destinations in Somalia will be reduced to USD\$500 from the current USD\$600.

Humanitarian agencies recognize that they need a different approach to reach Somalis in need to increase humanitarian response in Somalia. At a donor meeting on 23 July, humanitarian agencies requested support for a flexible response from the donor community due to the constantly changing situation in Somalia. By flexibility, humanitarian agencies suggest they should be able to allocate resources to new areas of need, to have new types of aid programming that allow them to look at different mechanisms of distribution such as cash-for-work or public work schemes. This approach could make a significant difference, but would require donor support for increased costs and for changes to existing programs.

Security and Humanitarian Space

The security situation has become increasingly dangerous for humanitarian aid workers operating in Somalia. Aid workers are targeted as they strive to reach the increasing number of Somalis in need of humanitarian assistance. The main incidents in July include:

- On 6 July, the head of UNDP in Somalia, Osman Ali Ahmed, was killed by unidentified gunmen in the Somali capital, Mogadishu.
- On 7 July, a WFP-contracted truck driver was killed at a check-point in Lower Shabelle while carrying food aid, representing the fourth WFP-contracted truck driver killed this year.
- On 11 July, a senior NGO national staff member was shot and killed by unknown armed men at his residence in Mogadishu. Again, on the same day, another NGO staff member was shot in the face while conducting a food distribution in the Kilometer 13 area of Mogadishu. The victim is in hospital and remains in a critical condition.
- On 13 July, unidentified gunmen killed an agent for a WFP-contracted transport company in Bu'aale in Middle Juba region.
- On 17 July, at one of the 16 food kitchens in Mogadishu's Heliwa district, a group of 13 armed militia looted food and other cooking items. Workers at the site were beaten and some badly wounded. Despite this challenge, the NGO which is implementing the programme, SAACID, is determined to keep the site open, as there are many IDPs and urban poor who are not in a position to relocate to other safer areas in search of food. SAACID says Heliwa is the only area in Mogadishu where, to date, verified deaths from starvation have been recorded.



Source: Protection Cluster

- On 18 July, gunmen killed three Somali elders who were helping aid workers distribute food in an IDP camp on the outskirts of Mogadishu. The shooting by unknown men appeared to be the latest deliberate attack on humanitarian efforts in the country.
- On 26 July, a WHO District Polio Officer was shot several times as he tried to escape from an apparent abduction attempt in Diinsoor district, Bay region. He was later evacuated to Nairobi for further treatment.

The motives for these incidents have not yet been established but may be related to recent threats against national aid workers issued by insurgents in Mogadishu. A total of 20 aid workers have been killed in Somalia this year, while 18 have been abducted and 13 were still in captivity by the end of July. Two were subsequently released on 5 August.

The UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Mark Bowden, expressed grave concern over the rapidly deteriorating security situation for UN and NGOs humanitarian workers in Somalia. "It is intolerable and incomprehensible that humanitarian workers, striving to save lives and alleviate human suffering, in one of the most difficult environments in the world, are being targeted and killed," said Mark Bowden, adding that he is particularly concerned about the levels of civilian casualties. He further urged Somalis, whom he said have

been supportive of humanitarian work in the past, to redouble their efforts to provide an environment in which aid and services can be delivered.

Despite increasing security threats, most humanitarian agencies are not pulling out of Somalia. Some have scaled-down their operations in certain areas of the country, while so far only one agency is reported to have pulled out completely. On 23 July, NGO Horn Relief announced it is closing its office in Kismaayo following the brutal assassination of its Head of Office, Mr. Ahmed Bario, on 17 May 2008. The NGO will, however, continue supporting schools and enterprises, providing skills training in Kismaayo.

Displacement

According to UNHCR reports, during the past two months (June and July), nearly 20,000 people have been displaced in Mogadishu due to insecurity. During April and May, there was less displacement from the city but since then it has increased. Insecurity in Mogadishu varies from district to district and in some cases is neighbourhood specific. For example, on 21 July, 184 people fled from Abdi Qassim neighbourhood in Hodan district, while on 22 July nearly 470 people fled to Garas-Baaley neighbourhood in the same district. Both movements were caused by fighting between TFG/Ethiopian troops and insurgents.