

Situation overview

An armed conflict between SNA forces and Al-Shabaab (AS) erupted in the eastern villages of Balcad district, Middle Shabelle region, in which reportedly nine civilians were killed and even more injured. Huge displacement occurred following the arson committed by AS against civilian dwellings. OCHA received reports indicating that, on 25 January, the Government forces launched an attack against AS in Dhagaxow, Hawadley, Jameeco, Shanlow, and Yaqle villages in the eastern part of Balcad district, which were their biggest bases in the district, particularly Hawadley village. During the conflict, no civilian casualties were reported in these areas. The IDPs from Xawaadleey, Yaqle, Jameeco, Shanlow, Dhagaxow and Farbaraki villages, since Tuesday 25 January, have now settled in Gargaar 1 and 2 IDP camps in Balcad and were estimated about 2,300HHs (13,800 people) by the local authority. The new arrivals also put pressure on the IDPs already in the camp causing hygiene and sanitation issues since there are few latrines.

As retaliation, on 28 and 29 January, AS attacked Mukadhare and Mareerey villages in the east of Balcad, following direct conflict with the government soldiers, who retreated. AS started burning houses claiming that the owners work with the government by supporting government forces and resisting AS's attack. Almost all houses were burnt in Mukidhere, Xanlay and Bananey, as well as the private clinics, schools, mosques etc. This conflict caused the deaths of nine civilians and displaced residents to Balcad town. According to reports that OCHA is receiving from partners and the local authority in Balcad, most of the recent conflict-displaced communities reaching Balcad town in the last few days have settled in one of the old government buildings called Ex-Imamu-Nawawi school and its compound in Balcad town, while some of the new IDPs from four villages attacked on 28 and 29 January have integrated with their relatives in the town. A humanitarian partner reported that 1,557 households (approximately 9,342 individuals) newly arrived. The local community and local traders are contributing with support by providing food, as the local administration called on locals to assist with food and clothes. The local administration has also organized a youth group who are ready to cook and distribute food twice-a-day. Reports indicate that these families access water from the district hospital shallow well and the nearby school building. There are reportedly poor hygiene conditions as these families are sharing very few latrines and children are openly defecating. There are no hygiene materials available, which increases the risk of disease outbreak due to poor hygiene conditions and overcrowding. There are also reports of some IDPs moving to Mogadishu where their relatives are.

Humanitarian needs, gaps and response

Where access to basic human services is limited, (shelter, latrines, and food, water, and NFI kits), there is an urgent need for food distribution, water, NFI, hygiene kits, and shelter. No assistance was received so far except from the local traders and communities in Balcad and there is an urgent need of shelter/NFIs, latrines, hygiene kits, food, and water. There are no active Nutrition, Health, Shelter, Protection and WASH active partners in Balcad, and there are only two food security partners in the area. STS and IVDO are the only Food Security Cluster partners in Balcad with the following activities:

- IVDO, in partnership with WFP, are planning to support 5,741 households (4,420 HHs with CBT and 1,321 with in-kind food assistance), which was planned to start from January to March 2022 but they are still in the registration phase.
- STS, in partnership with FAO, supports some collaborative groups with agricultural inputs like seeds, tools, and irrigation cost.

QRS, Aid Vision, ZAMZAM and Islamic Relief are Health Cluster partners in Balcad town and now have funding gaps, while SOS is the only active health partner in Balcad town and is providing maternal and childcare and operates in the district hospital. There are gaps in nutrition and health services in Balcad town where there are no UNICEF and WFP nutrition partners except for ARC, which is operating in Garas Bintow 13 Km away from Balcad town.

There is an urgent need of food, health, nutrition, WASH protection and shelter/NFIs interventions to respond to the above-mentioned conditions in the area. OCHA is monitoring the situation and will update on any development. OCHA also organizing cluster focal points and relevant partners to conduct a rapid inter-agency joint needs assessment on the conflict-displaced people in Balcad.