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Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) – SOMALIA
Situation Report #46 –20 July, 2007

Main Developments

Mogadishu

Last week the restrictions on daily activities for most of the Mogadishu population had a severe impact on the livelihoods of the vulnerable population including an impact on their already strained coping mechanisms. With the closure of the Bakara market (serves as a wholesale market), people experienced difficulties in securing their remittances (being a main source of income) and experienced limitations in their economic activities. Furthermore, with the start of the National Reconciliation Conference (NRC) the security situation deteriorated, with daily casualties and injured among civilians reported. Indiscriminate firing by TFG and Ethiopian troops as well as by anti-government elements was the main cause of civilian casualties.

The economic activities in Bakara market are not only decreasing as a result of increased insecurity, but also due to the closure of all entry roads to the market and due to an increasing inflation. For instance, only in the course of the last week the price of sugar doubled. A local NGO on the ground reported that the whole population in Mogadishu seems to be affected. This resulted for vulnerable individuals in a decrease in the number of meals per day.

The precise number of casualties around the venue of the NRC and Bakara market is still unknown. However, it was reported by monitoring partners that during the last two weeks an estimated number of 25 people were killed and others injured.

On 15 July, two armed Ethiopian soldiers entered the UN Common Compound in Mogadishu in what is regarded as a serious breach of the UN Privileges and immunities. The UN Humanitarian Coordinator has followed up on the issue with a letter to the Prime Minister and the Ethiopian command in Mogadishu. The letter has been shared with the Permanent Mission of Ethiopia and Somalia to UN Headquarters.

During the opening of the National Reconciliation Conference (NRC) 3 mortars were launched at the venue; unconfirmed casualties reported among civilians are 3 and several people were injured. 268 persons living in the proximity of the NRC venue left for Balcad (Middle Shabelle) for security reasons. However, after the conference was concluded for the day, rockets rocked the city for most of the remainder of the day. Seven mortars were recorded which missed their target and landed at Shibish in a residential area. An estimated six children were killed and several people were injured.

South /Central

In Afgoye an evening curfew was imposed (15 July) after the Deputy District Commissioner was killed by a grenade at Afgoye municipal office after attending a meeting and others were injured. Furthermore, illegal kiosks near the administrative centre were demolished (17 July) and unconfirmed reports mentioned lootings as well.

Puntland

In preparation of the resumption of the human smuggling in September, organizations are developing a joint contingency plan to address the assistance and protection needs of this population. Discussions with the authorities are ongoing for the development of a longer term strategy. Due to recent security incidences against humanitarian aid workers, the Humanitarian Coordinator, NGOs representatives met with authorities in Puntland and agreed to develop an agreement of cooperation.

Returns and Displacements

The UNHCR Population Movement Tracking (PMT) reports indicated that in the reporting week over 10,000 people fled Mogadishu due to the ongoing insecurity and sporadic violence (20 July). Since the beginning of June, when the government troops started securing Mogadishu, a total of 21,000 people left the city and

OCHA SOMALIA

7th Floor, Kalson Towers, Crescent Street, off Parklands Road, P.O. Box 28832, 00200 Nairobi, Kenya

Tel No: (254-20) 3754150-5; Fax No: (254-20) 3754156

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about 20,000 returned to Mogadishu. This is the first time since the beginning of June that more people left Mogadishu than returned back to the city. In addition, UNHCR and partners monitoring indicate that 2,900 residents and IDPs have been evicted from their homes in public buildings. Most of them end up on the streets, stating that IDP settlements are too full and that they don't have other places to go to.

Access

Following six weeks of negotiations with Kenyan authorities to reopen the Kenya/Somalia border for humanitarian relief items, the first consignment of some 3,150mt of food commodities on 67 WFP- and UNICEF-contracted trucks received permission to cross into Somalia in the first week of July. A further 5,000mt of WFP and CARE food are currently being prepared for crossing expected to continue later.

The progressive deterioration of the transport infrastructure inside Somalia is causing increasing delays. Some damaged bridges - for example the one in Kamsuma located about ten kilometers south of Jilib towards Merka - are increasingly becoming obstacles for the movement of commodities on heavy trucks as those locations require off and on-loading of the cargo.

Due to the high number of road blocks, travel time between Kismayo and Buale now takes up to six days, while the same distance used to be covered within a day and a half. The estimated passage fee per truck to be paid through checkpoints and roadblocks for the entire trip is now close to \$400.

Access to South/Central Somalia by air has improved significantly with the resumption of UN air services to Afmadou and Wajid this week. Following the completion of Phase I of the rehabilitation of Wajid airstrip, regular direct air services from Nairobi to Wajid resumed. Almost all regions in South/Central Somalia are accessible by air with the exception of some airstrips due to landing authorizations, UN security clearance as well as the airstrip condition.

Access by sea remains hampered by piracy. Reportedly another commercial cargo vessel was reported missing on 15 July in the Somali waters, totaling the number of missing / pirated vessels to five. On 16 July, the executive director of WFP and the Secretary General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) appealed for more-effective action to enforce order off Somalia's coast after the World Food Program lost half its capacity to ship aid to the country because of pirate attacks. They called on the TFG to allow foreign warships into its waters to combat the threat. The pirates appear to have changed tactics and are now operating mainly in Somalia waters to remain out of reach of the international forces.

Response

WFP distributed food aid in Garbahare and Burdubo areas (Gedo region) from 7-14 July. In Burdubo WFP distributed half rations while in Garbahare it distributed full rations. In total 9,504 households received food assistance in the form of maize, pulses, vegetable oil and CSBs.

On 17 July WFP issued a press statement that a forecasted crop failure and insufficient funds could leave thousands of people in South/Central Somalia without food in the next six months. WFP appealed for immediate contributions to meet the needs of the weakest Somalis, mainly women and children. And, by the end of the year 26,500 metric tons of food (worth US\$19,5 million) are needed to feed one million people.

In Somaliland relief items such as plastic sheets, sleeping mats and mosquito nets were distributed on 18 July to 2969 of the most vulnerable households in different IDP settlements in Hargeisa. The households represent 15-20% of all IDP households in Hargeisa and were selected by the settlement committees.

On 18 July an international NGO contributed mother and child equipments to Kismayo hospital addressing the dire needs of the women in the region. Among the equipments were an incubator, ultra-sound machine, delivery tables and a suction machine.

For further information, contact:

Rita Maingi at +254 722 334 671 - maingir@un.org or

Petra Costerman Boodt +254 734 210 102 - boodt@un.org

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7th Floor, Kalson Towers, Crescent Street, off Parklands Road, P.O. Box 28832, 00200 Nairobi, Kenya

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