

10 December 2009

Somalia:

Political and security crises, access limits and donor cuts increasing IDP vulnerability

Political stalemate, security crisis and the continuing conflict in Somalia between the UN-backed coalition government and armed opposition groups continue to expose internally displaced people (IDPs) to violations of their rights under international humanitarian and human rights law. An estimated one and a half million people were internally displaced in south and central Somalia as of November 2009. In the relatively peaceful Somaliland, land tension between sub-clans in the Gebille area also led to displacement in 2009.

The security situation has deteriorated since May 2009 due to intensified clashes between government forces and insurgents, causing civilian casualties, injuries and population displacement. Humanitarian and human rights organisations continue to report displacements, child recruitment, attacks, sexual violence, and efforts to protect IDPs and provide humanitarian assistance have been ineffective.

Humanitarian agency staff and property continue to be directly targeted. In July 2009, Al-Shabaab demanded that three UN agencies stop operating in areas under its control; in November the group ordered the World Food Programme to stop importing food and start buying from Somali farmers, even though such a system would lead to even greater food insecurity. Meanwhile, some donors have significantly reduced humanitarian funding in 2009 for fear that it is being diverted to extremist groups, affecting the capacity of most UN agencies.

The government signed the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of IDPs in Africa, and has committed to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child; an important development in a country with a massive IDP population and where children face daily risk to their security and general wellbeing. However, the situation in the country will make their implementation impossible in the short term.

Background

In 2007 and 2008, large-scale displacement was caused in Somalia by fighting between Ethiopian forces supporting the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) led by Abdullahi Yusuf and a host of insurgency groups that sprang up to challenge them. This led to the killing of an estimated 18,000 people and the displacement of some 800,000 people between January 2007 and December 2008. Most of the fighting was concentrated in south and central Somalia, especially in and around the capital Mogadishu (HRW, 8 December 2008; UN News, 28 November 2008). Other areas of conflict during this period included Beletweyne on the border with Ethiopia (UNICEF, 22 August 2008) and the southern port town of Kismayo (IRIN, 25 August 2008)

In January 2009 a UN-backed peace process for Somalia led to a peace agreement in neighbouring Djibouti, the election of a president and the formation of a coalition government made up of members of the TFG and the Djibouti wing of the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS), a grouping of leaders of opposition groups including the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) (IDMC, 20 May 2009). Under the terms of the agreement, the Ethiopian forces withdrew (BBC, January 2009), and the subsequent lull in fighting and ensuing optimism led to the return of some 74,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) to Mogadishu between January and early May (OCHA, 8 May 2009).

However, despite these positive developments, continuing fighting between the forces of the new government and armed opposition groups prevented the return of

many IDPs and led to the new displacement of hundreds of thousands of people (IRIN, 12 May 2009; VOA, 12 May 2009; BBC 13 May 2009). Armed opposition groups vowed to fight on after the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops, and started targeting troops of the small African Union peacekeeping force known as AMISOM. In September 2009, 17 AMISOM soldiers were killed by a suicide bomber (VOA, 8 May 2009; Al-jazeera, 24 May 2009; IRIN, 15 July 2009; LA Times, 18 September 2009; UNSC, October 2009).

Fighting between Islamic insurgents over control of territories in Mogadishu and Kismayo led to further loss of life and displacement of civilians. In Kismayo, the violence between armed opposition groups followed the breakdown of their agreement to rotate the administration of the town (IRIN, 29 September 2009).

IDP numbers and new displacement

The estimated number of IDPs in Somalia increased from 1.3 million at the end of 2008 to 1.55 million at the beginning of September 2009, most of them fleeing conflict in Mogadishu and other areas of southern and central Somalia, but also human rights violations and forced recruitment by militias, and drought in the case of pastoralists in some rural areas (IRIN, 7 September 2009; UN News Centre, 21 October 2009). According to UNHCR, the number of civilians displaced by fighting in Mogadishu between May and first week of July stood at some 200,000 people. A further 95,000 people fled the city between July and September (UNHCR, 7 July 2009; IRIN, 7 September 2009).

Many of the displaced from Mogadishu moved to the already overcrowded settlements that line the 30 kilometre road between Mogadishu and the town of Afgooye (Oxfam, 2 September 2009; IRIN, 7 September 2009; UNICEF, 11 November 2009).

Conflict in different parts of the country has since continued to lead to further displacement of the civilian population. During September, fighting between government forces and armed opposition groups for the control of Beletweyne displaced an unknown number of people. In October, the fighting between armed opposition groups in Kismayo displaced hundreds of people. On 23 November, hundreds of people fled in fear of violence when armed opposition groups took control of the town of Afmadow in southern Somalia (UNHCR, 1 October 2009; IRIN, 1 October 2009 and 24 November 2009).

In Somaliland, an estimated 700 families were displaced in July 2009 following conflict between members of the Hared and Mahamoud Nour clans. In the first seven months of 2009 alone, there were four successive clashes between the two clans over the ownership of farm land, with efforts to resolve the dispute unsuccessful (IRIN, 16 July 2009).

UNHCR has estimated numbers of IDPs in different areas based on reported population movements: in November 2009 there were an estimated 610,000 around Afgooye, 370,000 around Mogadishu, 150,000 in Galgadud, 70,000 in Galkayo in the autonomous northern region of Puntland, 66,000 in Baydhaba, and 51,000 in Hiran. However, these figures

have not been validated and are thus imprecise estimates. They are largely derived from population movement tracking data, a system designed to measure movements rather than cumulative IDP population data. Given the current context of Somalia, it is extremely difficult to verify these figures. The figures for some regions are based upon field assessments, and additional population movement reported to those areas since the assessment was conducted. However, given the limitations of the population movement tracking system, it is hard to ascertain who is still in an area and who has moved to another area, with return movements often under-reported (email communication with UNHCR Somalia office in Nairobi, 23 November 2009).

Protection risks facing IDPs

Physical security and integrity

During a visit to Somalia in October 2009, the Representative of the UN Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons (the RSG on IDPs) observed that serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law were being committed by all parties to the Somalia conflict. He highlighted cases of indiscriminate attacks and shelling of areas populated or frequented by civilians – acts which could be tantamount to war crimes – and also death threats, targeted killings and forced recruitment by militias. The RSG on IDPs was told that violations, including rapes, were especially rampant in areas controlled by those acting under the umbrella of anti-government groups (UN News Centre, 21 October 2009; IRIN, 11 November 2009). Civilians have borne the brunt of the fighting, with 145 killed

and 285 injured in September alone (UN News Centre, 2 October 2009). IDPs are among the most exposed and have sometimes been directly targeted in the upsurge in fighting (UN News Centre, 10 July 2009).

One report focusing on camps in Galkayo suggested that many displaced families in camps are headed by women, and that sexual and gender-based violence is widespread. Some men have reportedly abandoned their families, others have sought livelihoods elsewhere. According to the report, rapes are reported every week in Mustaqbal IDP camp, with the police unable to act against perpetrators (Telegraph, 23 October 2009). Fear of sexual violence is one of the major concerns for women living in the camps, according to women's organisations and camp residents. Women are most vulnerable when working outside camps in the day; most cases are not reported due to the lack of a reporting mechanism and the fear of further victimisation (Relief-web/IRIN, 23 September 2009).

According to UNICEF, there are between 700,000 and 800,000 displaced children, and violations of their rights have been widespread. An increasing number of Somali children have been recruited by the army and militia groups (Relief-web/IRIN, 11 November 2009).

Access to basic necessities

Half of the population is believed to be in need of humanitarian assistance, but the delivery of essential supplies has been prevented by the continuing insecurity. The essential needs of IDPs have not been met in many areas (IRIN, 30 September 2009).

In May, militiamen attacked a UNICEF warehouse. In July, camps in Jowhar hosting 49,000 IDPs were cut off from assistance, as the local partner of the World Food Programme (WFP) was unable to distribute food due to insecurity. In southern Somalia in August, increased insecurity forced UNICEF to suspend the dispatch of hundreds of tons of supplies for the prevention and treatment of acute malnutrition (UNICEF, 20 May 2009 and 13 August 2009; IRIN, 27 August 2009).

In September, Oxfam reported that poor sanitation and the lack of access to basic services were creating a public health emergency in camps. Oxfam said that the Afgooye settlements were the world's densest concentration of displaced people and described the situation as a human tragedy of "unthinkable proportions" (Oxfam, 3 September 2009).

In October, flash floods hit IDP camps in Kismayo and Mogadishu, and destroyed the makeshift shelters of thousands of people. In Kismayo, rains left an estimated 36,000 people homeless and exposed them to mosquitoes and other hygiene-related problems. In Mogadishu, floods washed away shelters and carried with them utensils and other household items (IRIN, 19 October 2009).

A comprehensive country-wide inter-agency assessment, led by the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, underlined in August 2009 the spread and the severity of Somalia's humanitarian crisis, with half of the population or an estimated 3.76 million people in need of assistance. 75 per cent of them were in south and central Somalia, where the fighting was

most intense and where there was least access for humanitarian operations. Given the context of an escalating civil war, FSNAU also issued an early warning of a further deterioration in the situation, depending on the extent of the fighting in the coming weeks and months (FSNAU, 24 August 2009).

The FSNAU estimate of people in humanitarian crisis included 1.4 million people in rural areas affected by severe drought, 655,000 poor city-dwellers who continued to struggle with very high food and non-food prices, as well as more than 1.42 million IDPs fleeing the conflict. Nutrition surveys confirmed that IDP populations were highly vulnerable, as IDPs consistently recorded higher rates of global acute malnutrition rates, at 20 per cent compared to the non-IDP rates of 18 per cent (FSNAU, 24 August 2009).

Emergency nutrition levels in several parts of the country had deteriorated since January and one in five children was acutely malnourished (compared with one in six children earlier in the year), while one in twenty was severely malnourished. The national rates of acute malnutrition were among the highest in the world. The assessment estimated that 285,000 children under five years of age were acutely malnourished, of whom 70,000 were severely malnourished and at increased risk of death if they did not receive the appropriate specialist care. More than two-thirds of these children were located in south and central Somalia.

According to UNICEF, about half the 3.6 million people affected by hunger and severe food insecurity are children. Only 38 per cent of UNICEF's live-saving activities for children had been funded by

November (FSNAU, 24 August 2009; UNICEF, 19 November 2009).

National and international responses

Government response

The national response to internal displacement in Somalia has been extremely weak given the lack of institutions that can provide law and order and the poor resource base of the government.

Somalia is one of the 17 African states that has signed the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Kampala on 23 October. The Convention is designed to help prevent and finally eliminate forced displacement in Africa (UNHCR, 23 October 2009). However, in the case of Somalia, this remains a distant and unenforceable ideal given that the large swathes of the country are under the control of the insurgents (VOA, 2 November 2009).

In November, the government committed to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This is a significant development given that Somalia and the US were the only two countries that had not signed the Convention.. However, this intention is not likely to have any short-term impact due to the prevailing insecurity and lack of implementing institutions (BBC, 20 November 2009).

International response and humanitarian access

In response to the displacement crisis, and as part of a larger coordinated effort among aid agencies to address the hu-

manitarian situation, the inter-agency cluster system has been working to mitigate the situation.

Targeting of humanitarian workers has also affected aid delivery to needy populations. From 2008 to November 2009, some 42 aid workers were killed, 33 abducted, and ten remain in captivity (OCHA, 30 November 2009). Four WFP staff members were killed between August 2008 and January 2009 (VOA, 10 November 2009). In November 2009, 12 international staff working for WFP and World Vision International were evacuated from southern Somalia for security reasons (Reuters, 23 November 2009).

In July, Al-Shabaab announced a ban on a number of UN agencies in areas of south and central Somalia under its control, including United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS) and the Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) (BBC News, 20 July 2009). Towards the end of November, Al-Shabab demanded that WFP stop importing food into Somalia from January 2010, and instead buy locally despite the fact that the country cannot meet the food needs of its population (BBC, 25 November 2009).

Despite these threats, provision of food, water and sanitation and health care has continued. WFP has provided food through local and international partners where security permits. In the first half of 2009, WFP provided food aid to some 2.87 million Somalis. UNICEF and other agencies continue providing health care activities and water, sanitation and health (WASH) programmes in IDP settlements. However, the security situation and fund-

ing cuts have had serious impact on their programmes (Reuters, 23 November 2009; UNICEF, 19 November 2009).

Given the security situation, most coordination and field management is done in Nairobi, where the international staffs of most humanitarian agencies is based. The RSG on IDPs and also local organisations have urged the humanitarian community to find ways to improve access, by moving operations closer to the populations in need and engaging local organisations more (IRIN, 21 October 2009 and 30 September 2009). However, agencies countered that since the emergence of armed groups in most of south-central Somalia, traditional structures have not been able to ensure access (email communications with INGOs, November and December 2009).

As of November 2009, total available humanitarian funding for Somalia stood at \$571 million (including some \$250 million carried over from last year) compared with \$615 million in 2008 (IRIN, 6 November 2009). According to OCHA, some of the biggest donors in 2008 have either given much less or nothing in 2009.

UN Agencies have highlighted that the USA has withheld millions of dollars of funds. The New York Times has attributed this to the fear that American donations may be reaching Al-Shabaab, which is thought to have growing ties with Al-Qaeda, through the UN's operational partners (New York Times, 1 October 2009; IRIN, 6 November 2009). A British official also told Voice of America that future British government donations would be contingent on the findings of an investigation on the alleged misuse of aid to the country (VOA, 10 November

2009). In November 2009, WFP reported that its food supply to Somalia had been effectively broken as a result of the American policy; the US had been the largest donor to WFP.

The RSG on IDPs has warned the international community not to cut funding in spite of aid diversion. The RSG reported in October that reducing levels of funding would not only punish the most vulnerable among the Somali population, but also play into the hands of radical elements (UN News Centre, 21 October 2009).

The head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for Somalia also warned that if the funding did not improve soon, the dire situation might lead to mass exodus

from the country, which would have major regional implications. At a December news conference in New York, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia expressed concern at the lack of pledges for funding through the 2010 Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP), especially in critical sectors including food, water, sanitation and health; a situation that is likely to increase suffering and lead to further displacement (IRIN, 6 November 2009; Reuters AlertNet, 10 November 2009; UN News, 8 December 2009).

Note: This is a summary of IDMC's new internal displacement profile on Somalia. The full profile is available online [here](#).

Sources:

Aljazeera, 24 May 2009, Deadly bombing hits Mogadishu base

BBC News, 13 January 2009, Ethiopia troops 'leave Mogadishu'

BBC News, 13 May 2009, Mogadishu hit by further mayhem

BBC News, 20 November 2009, Somalia 'to ratify UN child pact'

BBC News, 20 July 2009, Somali Islamists ban UN agencies

BBC News, 25 November 2009, Somali rebels order UN to stop food imports

Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU), 24 August 2009, Somalia: Half the Population in Humanitarian Crisis Amid An Escalating Civil War

Human Rights Watch (HRW), 8 December 2008, "So Much to Fear" - War Crimes and the Devastation of Somalia

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), 25 August 2008, SOMALIA: Thousands displaced as insurgents take control of Kismayo

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), 12 May 2009, SOMALIA: Thousands flee Mogadishu shelling

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), 15 July 2009, SOMALIA: Mogadishu battle "marks turning point"

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), 29 September 2009, SOMALIA: Islamist groups on a "war footing" in Kismayo

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), 7 September 2009, SOMALIA: Record number of displaced at 1.5 million

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), October 2009, SOMALIA: Civilians flee fighting in Kismayo

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), 24 November 2009, SOMALIA: Mass exodus as militia takes control of southern town

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), 16 July 2009, SOMALIA: Clashes displace hundreds of families in Somaliland

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), 23 September 2009, SOMALIA: Instead of a safe haven, fear and rape in Galkayo

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), 30 September 2009, SOMALIA: Insecurity "no excuse" to neglect IDPs

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), 19 October 2009, SOMALIA: Rains wash away IDP shelters in Mogadishu

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), 21 October 2009, SOMALIA: Shift aid base to "safe" areas in-country, urges UN official

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), 6 November 2009, SOMALIA: Donor caution alarms aid workers

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 20 May 2009, Security and protection crisis continues despite peace deal

LA Times, 18 September 2009, Somalia militants hit African Union base; 9 dead

New York Times, October 2009, U.S. Delays Somalia Aid, Fearing It Is Feeding Terrorists

Oxfam International, 3 September 2009, Somalia conflict: camps are 'barely fit for humans'; international response inadequate

ReliefWeb, 11 November 2009, Somalia: More and more children joining army or militias, say activists

Reuters, 23 November 2009, Aid workers in southern Somali town moved to Kenya

Reuters AlertNet, 10 November 2009, U.N. warns of mass displacement without Somalia aid

Telegraph.co.uk, 23 October 2009, Rapists, hunger and hyenas attack Somalia's displaced women

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 22 August 2008, Children most affected by the conflict in Belet Weyne

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 13 August 2009, Somali children at high risk as escalating hostilities against aid work cause postponement of life-saving supply delivery

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 20 May 2009, UNICEF condemns looting of life-saving humanitarian supplies in Jowhar, Somalia

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 19 November 2009, UNICEF Deputy Executive Director urges stepped-up response to crisis in Somalia

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 7 July 2009, Number of Mogadishu civilians displaced by fighting since early May tops 200,000

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), October 2009, New fighting erupts in Somalia, number of casualties increases

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 23 October 2009, African Union adopts major convention to protect and assist the internally displaced

United Nations Security Council (UN SC), October 2009, Somalia: Security Council Report, October 2009

UN News Centre, 8 December 2009, Somalia faces humanitarian crisis in 2010 with aid coffers empty, UN warns

UN News Centre, 28 November 2008, Upsurge of fighting in Somalia among heaviest in recent months, UN reports

UN News Centre, 21 October 2009, International community failing uprooted Somalis, says UN rights expert

UN News Centre, 2 October 2009, Somali civilians bearing brunt of latest upsurge in fighting – UN agency

UN News Centre, 10 July 2009, Reports from Somalia suggest possible war crimes, says UN human rights chief

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), 8 May 2009, IASC Protection Cluster Update

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), 30 November 2009, Consolidated Appeal for Somalia 2010

Voice of America (VOA), 12 May 2009, Somali Capital Assesses Damage After Days of Clashes

Voice of America (VOA), 8 May 2009, Hard Line Insurgent Group Vows to Increase Attacks on Somali Government

Voice of America (VOA), 2 November 2009, Al-Shabab Tightens Grip in Somalia

Voice of America (VOA), 10 November 2009, Aid Groups Alarmed Over Delay in Somali Famine Relief

About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, established in 1998 by the Norwegian Refugee Council, is the leading international body monitoring conflict-induced internal displacement worldwide.

Through its work, the Centre contributes to improving national and international capacities to protect and assist the millions of people around the globe who have been displaced within their own country as a result of conflicts or human rights violations.

At the request of the United Nations, the Geneva-based Centre runs an online database providing comprehensive information and analysis on internal displacement in some 50 countries.

Based on its monitoring and data collection activities, the Centre advocates for durable solutions to the plight of the internally displaced in line with international standards.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre also carries out training activities to enhance the capacity of local actors to respond to the needs of internally displaced people. In its work, the Centre cooperates with and provides support to local and national civil society initiatives.

For more information, visit the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website and the database at www.internal-displacement.org.

Contact:

Nina Birkeland

Head of Monitoring and Advocacy

Tel.: +41 (0)22 795 07 34

Email: nina.birkeland@nrc.ch

Nuur Mohamud Sheekh

Country Analyst

Tel: +41 22 799 07 10

Email: nuur.sheekh@nrc.ch

IDMC

Norwegian Refugee Council

Chemin de Balexert 7-9

1219 Geneva, Switzerland

www.internal-displacement.org

Tel: +41 22 799 0700

Fax: +41 22 799 0701