

UNICEF Somalia Monthly Review

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Political and security developments

Transitional Federal Government (TFG) forces with support from Ethiopian troops took over Mogadishu, Somalia's capital, the main southern port-town of Kismayo other locations in Central/Southern Somalia.

The two towns had previously been under the control of militia allied to the Council of Somali Islamic Courts (COSIC). The conflict has since resulted in attacks being launched by US forces on suspected terrorists in Somalia. Following the takeover of Mogadishu, there was a brief lull and the security situation in Mogadishu became fluid with some attacks against the TFG and Ethiopian forces and protests against the takeover.

TFG President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed and his Prime Minister Ali Gedi later visited Mogadishu and some of the faction leaders who were kicked out of the city six months ago by the Council of Somali Islamic Courts returned.

In Northeast Somalia ('Puntland'), the situation was calm save for armed conflict on 23 December when Puntland, Ethiopian and TFG forces clashed with those of the COSIC at Bandiradley, 60km south of Galkayo. The fighting left behind casualties on both sides and the wounded persons from both sides were treated side by side in Galkayo General Hospital, administered by the Puntland Ministry of Health. A number of COSIC prisoners of war were thereafter released from Galkayo main prison

following an amnesty announced by Puntland President Mohamud Muse Hirsi.

Floods

Effects of the floods that started in September 2006 continued to be felt in Central/Southern Somalia. Villages remain cut off and transport and movement continues to be hampered. Access to food has become a major problem while outbreaks of malaria, acute respiratory infections and bilharzia have compounded the situation.



A scene from Yaqlow village, Central/Southern Somalia after floods struck in December 2006. Credit: UNICEF Somalia/CSZ office.

UNICEF continued to distribute supplies including plastic sheeting, blankets, jerricans and mosquito nets. It also continued to initiate measures to ensure communities had access to clean drinking water through water trucking and chlorination of sources and reservoirs. Efforts were also made to provide sanitation facilities. Water trucking in El-Jalle, Hiran region helped provide clean water to about 5,000 families. Communities were provided

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with support to help them carry out education activities. UNICEF supplies included tents to Hiran which enabled 28 schools along the Shabelle River to open. In some areas learning had to take place under trees after classrooms were flooded. The floods severely affected many schools in Jilib and Jamame. In Lower Shabelle region UNICEF supported those affected in Kurtunwarey, Sablale, Qoryoley and Merka by assisting partner organizations to get children back to school. In Merka district, education supplies were distributed to 18 villages while school tents were constructed and classrooms rehabilitated in eight villages. High-protein food supplements were distributed in Tulo Hiran and Sigalow villages in Belet Weyne district to benefit breastfeeding and pregnant women as well as children. Given the movement of populations due to displacement, measures were initiated to raise awareness for HIV prevention and control in flood-affected areas. In Jilib four supplementary feeding centres were set up to respond to the increasing number of malnourished children. Twenty workers were trained in the management of feeding centres. Feeding centres in Belet Weyne, Hiran, Jowhar and Middle Shabelle remained operational.

High river levels and flooding were reported in Lower Shabelle and the breach of the Chinese Canal near Mahaday in Middle Shabelle, affected about 80 villages between Mahaday and Wanlaweyn.

Supplies distributed in Lower Shabelle included about 30,000 insecticide treated nets. UNICEF and organizations including the World Food Programme and the International Committee of the Red Cross also distributed food and non-food items to affected people.

Health and Nutrition

Immunization: Polio immunization campaigns were carried out in Somaliland and Puntland reaching about 340,700 and 146,340 children aged under five respectively. Support from local administrations and communities including religious leaders helped make the campaigns successful.

Malaria: With onset of rains, malaria cases were reported on the increase. To alleviate the situation and help treat the sick, UNICEF provided test kits and drugs for treatment in Puntland and other locations. About 2,500 insecticide treated nets for malaria prevention were donated to internally displaced persons in Galkayo.

HIV: UNICEF donated a CD-4 count machine, antiretroviral drugs and laboratory supplies required for HIV testing to Merlin NGO for use at Bossaso Hospital.

Safe Motherhood: UNICEF supported the first meeting of the Reproductive Health and Newborn Health Work Group in Somaliland, as part of joint UNICEF/UN Family Planning Association (UNFPA) efforts at capacity building of the Ministries of Health. The meeting, chaired by the Ministry of Health, was attended by 10 participants including UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO and NGOs.

Training: 20 doctors who are members of the Bari Medical Association (BARMA) and 50 traditional birth attendants were trained in improved feeding practices for infants and children. The skills will enable them provide advice to pregnant women and guardians in Bossaso and Las Qorey districts.

Water and Environmental Sanitation

Training: Staff of international organizations active in the water supply sector were trained in maintenance of pumps and generators.

Sanitation: Construction and rehabilitation was carried out of sanitation facilities for 15 primary schools serving a total of 3000 pupils.

Project: Construction work continued on the Dhahar, Taleh and Bur Salah mini-water systems.

Equipment and other supplies for water supply and sanitation systems were delivered to various locations.

Education

Nomadic education: UNICEF sponsored a study tour to Iran for member of staff from the Somaliland administration to expand their knowledge and understanding of nomadic education and mobile schools.

Training: UNICEF in collaboration with the Somaliland administration trained 16 people in information management for the education sector. Also receiving training were 120 teachers from the non-formal education sector in Awdal and Sahil regions and 260 teachers in Puntland. Another 15 Puntland trainees learnt how to set examinations for the non-formal education sector. About 400 teachers are set to benefit from upgrading of their skills and knowledge as part of the training in Somaliland. Non-formal education helps provide basic education to out of school youth. In Mogadishu, 360 teachers serving IDP communities were trained in basic teaching skills and methodology.

Books: Supplementary reading materials for primary school children in Somaliland were printed with funds provided by UNICEF in partnership with the African Education Trust.

School improvement: Rehabilitation of Baidoa Girls' school was completed. The girls' only school consists of nine classrooms, office, three latrines, veranda and perimeter wall. 400 girls enrolled following the rehabilitation. Meanwhile, construction of foundation works for school tents was completed in Rabdurre, Berdale Luuq and Bardere. Construction of other foundation works continued in Gedo region.

Youth Participation and Development

Capacity-building: UNICEF donated a computer and related equipment to the Youth and Sports Department of the Ministry of Labour, Youth and Sports in Puntland. Equipment was also donated to youth in Puntland to manage the youth website: hellosomaliyouth.org. Rehabilitation of two play grounds in Sool and Sanaag regions of northern Somalia commenced.

HIV/AIDS

Awareness: As part of the 'Woman-to-Woman' initiative on HIV and AIDS, 44 awareness forums were held in Somaliland, each for 600 women. Similar forums were held for leaders and youth in Puntland during the HIV/AIDS Youth Week marked around World AIDS Day.

The Greater Involvement of People Living with AIDS (GIPA) initiative was launched in Somaliland with UNICEF support. Local organizations including

the Network of People infected and Affected by HIV, Youth Advocacy and Social Development (NEYAD) participated in the launch. NEYAD's mandate is to provide care and support for people living with HIV. It undertakes advocacy initiatives to support their welfare and has launched a bulletin called 'The Positive Voice'.

World AIDS Day: World Aids Day was celebrated in various locations with public rallies/processions, sports tournaments, debates and information material dissemination. Media outlets organized discussion forums on issues related to HIV. Participants in these activities included students, health professionals and academics,

Capacity building: UNICEF provided advice to HIV/AIDS regional working groups in Central/Southern Somalia to enable them to organize awareness raising forums for political and religious leaders and vulnerable members of society.

Testing: While Voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) centres continued to provide services, Kismayo VCT centre was unable to do so due to insecurity which hindered access to the facility. Merka Hospital VCT was functional and received a marked increase in patients: among them, some who came from Mogadishu in the hope of getting anti-retroviral treatment which is not yet available.

Child Protection

Bill passed: The Somaliland Parliament passed the Juvenile Justice Bill which UNICEF and other UN agencies had lobbied for. Once it comes into law after the president gives his assent, it will accord international level safeguards to juveniles who come into conflict with the law.

Elder's talks: UNICEF participated in a meeting at which 200 elders and leaders discussed traditions which impact on children's lives. The participants recommended that the government enact laws to prohibit child labour and called for stiffer penalties for convicted rapists. They suggested punishments of five years to 15 years.

Training: 108 community members from four IDP camps in Bossaso, among them 24 teachers, were trained in providing psychological care and support. 40 people were given advice on how to provide psychological care and support to children and women in two IDP camps in Bossaso, Puntland. The 40 were drawn from a cross-section of people that included community members, traditional and religious leaders, primary school and Koranic school teachers; youth and women's group members.

Communication for Development

Orientation: Members of the Somaliland administration, members of Borama and Berbera local councils, UN partners and

individual leaders were briefed in the concept of community-driven development.

Training: Eleven youth from Puntland were trained to tutor members of school clubs that promote child-to-child learning. Under the initiative children access learning materials and training through the clubs enabling them to train others. Leadership and governance training was provided to staff of UNICEF and Africa Action Hilfe, an international NGO that works in Puntland. 24 youth received basic journalism training through the Somali Development Trust. They received instruction in video production, print journalism and radio production. This is a follow-up to training provided to young people under UNICEF's Youth Broadcasting Initiative started in 2003. Since its inception, the initiative has provided youth in Somalia with skills in audio and video production and editing.

Polio-affected help fight disease

People with physical disabilities as a result of polio are partnering with UNICEF in Somaliland in an innovative advocacy campaign to fight the disease. Under a pilot project, victims of polio are taking the lead in urging people to get their children vaccinated. The new advocates are members of the NGO, HAN Association. Following intensive training they are now actively involved in raising awareness about the causes, transmission and effects of the disease. And their efforts are helping to change people's attitudes to polio immunization.



Residents of Jameco Village, Central/Southern Somalia get relief supplies from UNICEF following flooding there in December 2006.

Credit: UNICEF Somalia/CSZ office.

Their task begins when a household is identified as having refused to take children (or a child) for vaccination. The polio-affected advocate visits the household to talk to the family, allay fears and convince them of the importance of vaccination. Their physical disabilities not only reinforce their message but also help to demystify misconceptions about polio.

Once the family is convinced, the advocates proceed to administer the polio vaccine to children in the household. Their success rate (about 80%) has led to the replication of the project in Borama, Burao and Garowe.

If you have questions about the UNICEF Somalia Monthly Review please contact:

Denise Shepherd-Johnson, Communication Officer.
E-mail: dshepherdjohnson@unicef.org

OR Robert Kihara, Assistant Communication Officer.
E-mail: rkihara@unicef.org
Tel: 254-2-7623958/ 7623950/7623862/ 7623959/
350410. Fax: 254-2-520640/ 7623965

Credit for majority of content in this report goes to UNICEF staff in Somalia.