

UNICEF Somalia Monthly Review

March 2006



Security developments...

Four days of heavy fighting from 22 to 26 March in Mogadishu between the Union of Islamic Courts and the new Alliance for Peace and the Fight Against International Terrorism claimed the lives of at least 80 people and left about 200 wounded. Thousands of families were displaced and those killed included children and women. Elders, Imams, intellectuals and clan chiefs negotiated a cease fire. Violence, skirmishes and looting were reported elsewhere in Central/Southern Somalia.

In Northwest Somalia ('Somaliland') one person was killed in a shooting incident in Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland on March 15. Seeking revenge, two armed men stormed Hargeisa Group Hospital and killed two men who were visiting a patient. It later emerged that the two people killed in the hospital may not have been linked to the earlier killing.

In Puntland a confrontation pitting police against militia occurred in Majiyahan, a location 40Km south west of Bossaso, Puntland's commercial capital. Five people died and eight were injured. The arrival of a foreign company in Majiyahan escorted by police triggered the confrontation. The company has signed an agreement with the administration on exploring mineral deposits in Puntland.

Political developments...

The European Commission signed a pact giving political recognition to Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and pledged more

support, according to reports from *Reuters*. The signing of a "memorandum of understanding" with Somali leaders is an attempt by the European Union executive to encourage EU states and others to recognize the government after last month's opening of an interim parliament on home soil. "I gave assurances of moral, political and material support," European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso said after the signing of the memorandum with Somali President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed and Prime Minister Mohamed Ali Gedi.

Barroso said the Commission would urge EU states to release a further 70 million euros (\$84 million) in assistance to Somalia on top of the 200 million euros it has already granted, mainly through United Nations agencies. "This is a historic event which marked Somalia's aspirations to the community of nations after 15 years of civil strife," Gedi told a joint news conference with Barroso. EU Development Commissioner Louis Michel said the pact would make it easier for the EU to channel aid to Somalia, adding he would visit the country to study potential aid projects.

Somalia's new parliament opened in February 2006 in the southern city of Baidoa, the 14th attempt to restore government since warlords ousted Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991.

On 12 March 2006, a delegation of TFG and elders from South Mudug led by Mr. Osman Hassan Ali (Atto) met the President of the semi-autonomous Puntland State of Somalia Mohamud

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Muse Hirsi in Garowe, Puntland's administrative capital. The delegation expressed willingness to promote peace and reconciliation.

On 15 March 2006, the King of the Darod clan, Boqor Mohamud Boqor Muse died in Gardo town after several months of illness. The funeral took place on 16 March in Gardo district with the participation of prominent elders representing their clans, high level government officials including the President and personalities from the TFG and Somaliland.

Drought...

A revised Humanitarian Appeal for Somalia for \$326m was launched in Nairobi on 21 March 2006 by the Acting Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Mr Christian Balslev-Olesen, to seek additional funding to respond to the critical humanitarian needs of the drought. UNICEF staff continued to support drought intervention and relief efforts in collaboration with other UN agencies, Somali communities, local and international NGOs. In Central Somalia, contacts were initiated with local communities and leaders to emphasize the importance of ensuring free access to ensure humanitarian aid got to drought-affected people.

The drought-induced food security crisis in parts of southern Somalia has

deteriorated leading to increased migration of people and livestock. Some 2.1 million people are affected by the drought including 710,000 people facing an acute food and livelihood crisis, 915,000 experiencing a humanitarian emergency and up to 400,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs). Areas worst affected are Gedo, Middle and Lower Juba, and parts of Bay and Bakool. Villagers have had to migrate to riverine areas in search of water, income opportunities and social support.

The situation is likely to deteriorate if the next seasonal rains, from April until June, are below normal. "If the rains are below normal, parts of southern Somalia would be at a high risk of famine/humanitarian catastrophe from July to December 2006," warned the Food and Agriculture Organization's Food Security Analysis Unit (FSAU). Even if the rains were normal or above normal, there would still be a need for continued humanitarian assistance to support livelihood recovery due to extremely high asset losses, weakened human health conditions and debt accumulation as a result of the drought, it said.

In Puntland water trucking is still needed in some areas. Danish Refugee Council (DRC) is ready to start water trucking to select locations for human and livestock populations.

UNICEF Operational Areas...

Northwest Zone – Hargeisa Office

Awdal
West Galbeed
Togdheer
Sahil
Sool
Sanaag

Northeast Zone – Bossaso Office

Bari
Nugal
Mudug

Central and Southern Zone – Baidoa, Jowhar and Mogadishu

Galgaduud
Hiran
Middle Shabelle
Lower Shabelle
Benadir
Lower Juba
Middle Juba
Gedo
Bay
Bakool

UNICEF meanwhile is pre-positioning supplies and equipment for water supply facilities in drought affected areas of Puntland.

IDPs: The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) organized a training workshop in Merka town of Lower Shabelle region. Participants included staff of UNICEF, UNHCR and international and local NGOs. It discussed issues such as education protection and status of IDPs in Somalia.

Following lobbying by UNICEF, the Bossaso Mayor, Khadar Abdi Haji, and his council passed by-laws allowing every school age IDP child to be issued with a free birth certificate. Every child who was born in Bossaso or grows up in Bossaso is entitled to the certificate. The local administration in Bossaso will cover the cost of providing 2,200 school age children from IDP communities with the certificates.

Special events...

Special events: International Women's Day was commemorated on 8 March by women's groups with support from UNICEF. World Water Day was marked on 22 March in Somaliland and Puntland. In Somaliland it was marked by a ceremony that saw the opening of the new water agency building. In Puntland, leaders appealed for support from the international community to alleviate the water shortage in drought-hit areas. World Tuberculosis Day was marked on 25 March at a function held

at Hargeisa Tuberculosis Hospital. Information disseminated on the day focused on the transmission, prevention and cure of TB.



Women perform a dance during International Women's Day celebrations in Somaliland. **Credit: UNICEF Somalia.**

Health update...

Measles: A large-scale measles campaign kicked off on 7 March aiming to vaccinate 2.5 million children in Central and Southern Somalia. The campaign supported by UNICEF and the World Health Organization will end in April 2006. UNICEF and WHO put together a strong coalition of partners that includes local and international NGOs as well as community-based organizations. The Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and local authorities are guaranteeing access and security during the campaign which will target children aged between nine months and 15 years. Similar campaigns were conducted between the end of 2005 and February 2006 in Puntland and Somaliland as well as Bakool region of Central Somalia.

Malaria: 182 health workers in Somaliland and 41 others in Puntland were trained in malaria treatment through a joint UNICEF-WHO/local administrations' initiative. New and effective malaria treatment - Artemisinin-based

Combination Therapy (ACT) - is being launched across Somalia to replace drugs to which there is high resistance. Maternal and Child Health (MCH) centres' and hospital staff are being trained on new treatment guidelines.

To-date staff of at least 50 MCH centres and seven hospitals in the Central-South; 55 MCH centres and three hospitals in Somaliland and more than 20 MCH centres in Puntland have received training. As severely malnourished are particularly vulnerable to malaria, ACT is also being provided through the therapeutic feeding centres. Alongside the new drugs, Rapid Diagnostic Tests (RDTs) are being introduced. These simple-to-use tests can confirm malaria diagnosis and are useful where reliable microscopy is not available.

Africa Malaria Day (April 25) will mark the launch of ACTs and RDTs. Long-lasting insecticide treated nets for prevention of malaria are being distributed targeting the most vulnerable, pregnant women and children under the age of five. A recent shipment of 60,000 nets will be

distributed to vulnerable groups affected by the drought and in highly endemic areas.

Review: UNICEF and partner UN, international and local organizations discussed various issues related to Health and Nutrition sector reform, services and responses to major disease threats during a meeting held in Borama, Somaliland in mid-March.

Supplies: Medical supplies and equipment were dispatched to health centres in various locations in Somalia. The equipment included eight refrigerators for vaccine storage from the World Health Organization (that were installed in Jowhar and Merka towns of Central/Southern Somalia. Other fridges were repaired through UNICEF support.

Survey: An assessment was carried out on the nutrition status of children and women south of Hargeisa district and parts of Sahil district.

Training: Training of traditional birth attendants was carried out in collaboration with Africa Action Hilfe. It focused on enhancing their skills to serve their communities and mothers in issues related to post-pregnancy care. About 90 attendants will benefit. Eventually about 630 TBAs will be trained to serve 315 villages in Puntland.

POLIO

A nation-wide polio vaccination campaign was launched on Sunday, 26 March. It aims to vaccinate 1.4 million children. After recording its last case of polio in 2002, polio re-emerged in July 2005 with an importation of poliovirus that has affected a total of 199 children to date.

Maternal and Neonatal Tetanus Campaign: Preparations for the Puntland Maternal and Neonatal Tetanus campaign to be carried out in June 2006 continued. Using the innovative UNIJECT syringes, the campaign aims to reach about 120,000 women of child-bearing age in rural and urban areas of Puntland.

Nutrition update...

Treatment: UNICEF in collaboration with the Somaliland administration conducted nutrition screening and treatment of common ailments among children and women in 25 villages in Hawd area in Hargeisa.

Supplies: UNICEF provided various nutrition supplies and financial assistance to partner organizations in Central/Southern Somalia.

Training: The Somaliland administration and UNICEF trained 12 workers in the treatment of malnourished children as part of the preparations for setting up a therapeutic feeding programme in Hargeisa Group Hospital. The programme will provide nutritional care to severely malnourished children. Similar training was conducted for another 12 staff of health facilities by UNICEF in collaboration with the Somaliland Red Crescent Society and the Somaliland administration. The workers will undertake activities to reduce malnutrition in internally displaced persons' settlements in Burao town.

In Puntland, - 25 staff of CBOs and NGOs were trained in breastfeeding promotion and counseling by We Are Women Activists (WAWA), a local organization.

Education update...

Back to School: Since the launch of the Back to School campaign in 2005, the Sanaag community has established about 20 schools. The campaign that UNICEF is running in Somalia involves raising community awareness about the importance of education and getting school-age children back to school. A major challenge is that most schools have students who learn under trees and lack basic infrastructure. In Erigavo town schools are stretched with some having 80 students per class. To reduce the congestion, UNICEF is to provide 10 school tents to accommodate children in the most needy locations. WFP will establish a school feeding programme with the pilot phase being in three schools in Erigavo. Eight school tents were distributed to five schools in rural areas and vulnerable communities in Sheikh, and Ainaba districts. Construction of three schools to serve Quljeed, Bus and Illinta dhexe villages in Somaliland has started. The schools will be constructed through a joint project between UNICEF and the UN Office of Project Services (UNOPS). Other considerations include a proposal to construct a girls only school in Erigavo and a classroom for Mayd Primary School in Mayd village. In Central/Southern Somalia, UNICEF

Water and environmental sanitation

UNICEF conducted training in community mobilization for hygiene and environmental sanitation and prevention of diarrhoea in Bulo Shek section of Jowhar town and other locations in Middle Shabelle, Bakool, Bay and Middle Jubba regions.

Rehabilitation of 40 wells and water trucking continues in drought-hit Bakool region.

staff met partner organizations involved in running and rehabilitating schools.

Supplies: Education materials for 3000 children were delivered to Gadudey area. Following discussions with members of the Afmadow Education Board UNICEF is to provide schools with education supplies as well as support to drought-affected children.

School tents: School tents have been put up to serve drought-affected children from Rabdure and Elbarde districts that have moved to Wajid in search of humanitarian assistance. The number of children joining these schools is increasing and learning space is insufficient. UNICEF is to provide additional tents and education supplies to meet education demands of the children. A total of 1,000 children are benefiting from school tents established in Wajid internally displaced persons' camps.

Alternative education: Twelve villages in Qoryoley riverine area have established primary alternative education programmes which benefit children of school-age who are unable to access formal education. 1,563 school age children/youth of whom 834 (53%) are girls are benefiting. Primary alternative education covers the same competencies as the formal system but in a shorter time frame. In some locations it is carried out in the evenings at learning centres which normally serve as schools during the daytime. UNICEF

staff met members of community education committees from Merka, Afgoe, Qoryoley, and Barave towns of Lower Shabelle region to promote learning activities and to involve communities in management and maintenance of education centres for primary alternative education. Education committees support payment of teachers and improvement of learning facilities.

IDPs: Education initiatives for IDPs in Mogadishu and other areas in Somalia continued to receive support. In Puntland, a course was carried out for 60 teachers who serve children of IDP communities. UNICEF in collaboration with the local administration is supporting the initiative that will involving setting up of at least 40 classroom school tents. 2,200 children have registered for enrolment. UNICEF is providing teaching and learning supplies for pupils and teachers. Apart from the teachers' training, UNICEF is providing teaching/learning supplies for the pupils and teachers.

Diaspora support: Members of the Diaspora with their roots in Barawe town of Lower Shabelle rehabilitated and furnished eight classrooms of the formerly public school in the town. As a result, 300 children are getting access to learning facilities.

HIV/AIDS

Advocacy: An advocacy video for prevention and control efforts is to be produced in Somaliland. Copies of the HIV Knowledge Attitudes, Behaviour and Practices survey were distributed to community groups and NGOs involved in HIV control, prevention and awareness efforts. Discussions were held with the Mogadishu-based HornAfrik media group on the possibility of their promoting HIV awareness.

UNICEF supported the Puntland AIDS Commission in holding a two-day advocacy workshop for 30 MPs. The MPs signed a declaration pledging support for prevention, control and awareness measures.

Voluntary counseling and testing services: Four VCT centres supported by UNICEF continued to provide services in Mogadishu, Jowhar, Merka and Kismayo in Central/Southern Somalia.

Training: Community counselors and members of HIV support and women's groups were trained in counseling.

Child protection update...

Discussions: Members of the Child Protection Working Group comprising representatives of UNICEF, UN agencies and NGOs held discussions in Hargeisa on the protection of children in vulnerable communities including those in internally displaced persons' camps. UNICEF held discussions with the Somaliland Parliamentary Social Committee on the finalization of the Juvenile Justice Bill. A workshop on the Bill was held on 26 March. It was organized by the Somaliland Lawyers Association and drew participants that included UNICEF and UNDP, the local administration, legislative leaders and women's organizations.

Training: Child protection advocates, staff of local administrations and NGOs were trained in prevention of gender-based violence in Somaliland. Sensitization continued among the more vulnerable communities in Bossaso to enable them develop action plans for child protection.

Communication for development update...

Youth broadcasting: UNICEF-supported youth groups produced six TV and two radio programmes. The content covered issues related to HIV/AIDS, girls education, sports, radio and the need to eradicate chewing of *khat* (an amphetamine leaf akin to the coca leaf of South America).

Training: Members of community organizations were trained to enhance their skills in emergency response with special focus on responding to the drought in Central/Southern Somalia.



Community members hold discussions on development of community action plans in Somaliland. UNICEF encourages community participation in development initiatives. **Credit: UNICEF Somalia.**

Advocacy: Local radio stations in Baidoa collaborated with UNICEF to air messages on measles prevention to support the ongoing immunization campaign.

Media competition: Entries for a media competition on development and human rights reporting continue to be received. Entries are for print, radio and web-publishing. The TFG Ministry of Information is receiving submissions. UNICEF is supporting the competition. Among the prizes are a computer, digital camera and tape recorder.

Youth development

Youth from different locations in Somalia participated in website development training aimed at giving them skills in managing their own website. UNICEF is supporting the youth in developing a website that will provide information on various youth groups and their activities in Somalia.

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Credit for majority of content in this report goes to UNICEF staff in Somalia. Credit too to IRIN for input on drought and political developments.