

UNICEF Somalia Monthly Review

May 2005



UNICEF suspends operations in Northeast Somalia ('Puntland')

Effective Thursday, 26 May, UNICEF suspended its operations through its office in Bossaso, Northeast Somalia ('Puntland'). The decision was prompted by death threats that had been made against some UNICEF Bossaso-based international staff requiring their relocation to Nairobi. The most recent threats were issued earlier in May against one international staff member.

Following written and verbal guarantees from Puntland President, Mohamud Muse Hirsi "Adde," that the staff member's security would be assured, plans were made for his return to Bossaso. However, on Friday 20 May, President Mohamud Muse Hirsi "Adde" not only reneged on these assurances but indicated that the officer was no longer welcome in Puntland. UNICEF Somalia Representative Jesper Morch said "such actions had left UNICEF staff vulnerable, at risk and without further recourse to protection and arbitration. UNICEF had no recourse but to withdraw from Puntland State and suspend its programme activities indefinitely."

Puntland, a semi-autonomous state within Somalia, has its own president, but unlike Northwest Somalia ('Somaliland') which has declared sovereignty, Puntland has always vowed to remain an integral part of Somalia. As elsewhere in Somalia, where it has a presence, UNICEF's work in Puntland has focused on health,

nutrition, water and environmental sanitation, education, youth development, HIV/AIDS, child protection and communication for development.



Former Zambian President Dr Kenneth Kaunda (in maroon shirt, centre), with members of the Somaliland HIV/AIDS coordination committee during his visit to Hargeisa, Somaliland. Credit: UNICEF Somalia/0505/ NWZ Office.

"Though UNICEF is suspending activities, it looks forward to the day when collaboration can resume, but must insist that an environment of safety, respect and transparency is re-established before that can take place," said Mr. Morch.

Political developments

Kaunda visits Somaliland: Former Zambian President Dr. Kenneth Kaunda visited Somaliland and held discussions with President Dahir Rayale Kahin. Dr. Kaunda also met the local coordination committee for HIV/AIDS and promised that he would open a branch of the Kaunda Foundation in Somaliland.

AU/UN/World Bank missions: A delegation from the African Union visited Somaliland on a political fact-

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finding mission. A UN/World Bank mission also visited and held a meeting with UN agencies, the local administration and members of the private sector. The focus of the mission was to initiate an assessment on the economic recovery of Somalia and Somaliland. The out-going UNICEF Somalia Representative Jesper Morch and his successor, Mr. Christian Balslev-Olesen visited Somaliland. Mr Morch and Mr Balslev-Olesen held discussions with members of the Somaliland administration and NGOs.

Celebrations: Somaliland celebrated 14 years since it declared sovereignty on May 18 1991.

Economic ties boosted: An Ethiopian delegation lead by the Revenue Minister Mr. Letachew Belay visited Hargeisa, Somaliland's capital on 28 May and signed an agreement with the administration on the use of Berbera port as a transit port for Ethiopian goods. A Somaliland delegation from the Ministry of Commerce visited China to discuss strengthening of trade ties. High on the agenda was the improvement of Berbera port, mineral exploration and twinning of Berbera and Weifang city in China.

Mogadishu and Lower Shabelle regions experienced heightened political tension as a result of differences between members of the Transitional Federal Government. In Mogadishu, there has been a marked improvement in the situation as some faction leaders redeployed their militia.

Security developments

Central/Southern Somalia continued to experience internal displacement, intermittent fighting and killings. Tension between members of the Transitional Federal Government resulted in fighting in the South Western Somali town of Baidoa on Monday 30 May. The fighting killed at least 12 people and wounded more than 20. The fighting was between factions of the Rahanweyn Resistance Army (RRA), which controls much of Bay and Bakool regions in southwestern Somalia. Forces loyal to former RRA chairman Hasan Muhammad Nur Shatigudud and former RRA first-deputy chairman Shaykh Adan Madobe, who are currently ministers in the transitional Somali government, attacked the town, which is controlled by forces loyal to Muhammad Ibrahim Habsade, an MP.

Emergency

United Nations agencies provided relief after torrential rains caused severe flooding in Somalia which left more than 40 people dead, swept away entire villages and destroyed farmlands. In Somaliland, UNICEF provided relief following extensive damage by floods along a previously dry river bed in Hargeisa and other towns and villages in Somaliland. The floods ripped through the centre of Hargeisa, damaging bridges and knocking out power, water and telephone lines. Some 270 families displaced by the floods were forced to

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, Mogadishu and Kismayo Offices

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

stay in the police compound in Hargeisa. Yusuf Abdi, a resident whose home is near the burst river bank said it was the worst flood he had seen since 1953. The office of Handicap International, a French charity in the city, had to be evacuated after it was flooded. The raging waters uprooted large trees, swept cars and buried properties under mud.

Other floods in Middle Shabelle and Hiran regions of Central/Southern Somalia affected 2000 families. The floods damaged farmland and worsened the living conditions of vulnerable populations. Six children between the ages of 10 and 13 died in Belet Weyne town of Hiran while swimming in flooded areas. Middle Shabelle region is prone to flooding during the rainy season in Somalia and in the Ethiopian highlands where the Shabelle River originates. The situation was aggravated by the collapse of canals that were used to control floods due to lack of maintenance. The main area where water breached embankments was Oloficio area near Bayhaaw village, about 6km south east Jowhar district. The flood waters engulfed six villages on the south east of Jowhar town, the main urban centre in Middle Shabelle region.

UNICEF, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and local communities and NGO partners coordinated relief interventions that included treatment of the sick and distribution of supplies such as mosquito nets to affected villages. Hygiene and sanitation training was conducted in six villages of Jowhar. As

part of the response, UNICEF provided more than 12,000 sand bags to Mahaday, Jalalaqsi and Jowhar local authorities. In Hiran region, the most affected areas were the northeastern part of Belet Weyne. Shelter materials, mosquito nets, access to basic health care and environmental sanitation tools were distributed to the population. UNICEF provided 2,000 sand bags to the Somali Red Crescent Society for flood control in Belet Weyne.

Nutrition

In Somaliland, UNICEF in collaboration with the Somaliland Red Crescent Society (SRCS) organized nutrition promotion and growth monitoring activities in seven villages in Sheikh district and Jamo Laye IDP settlement in Berbera town.

Pregnant women and children aged less than five years were screened for anaemia. Iron and folic acid supplements for prevention of anaemia and vitamin A were distributed to pregnant and lactating mothers and children.

UNICEF's partners in Lower Shabelle and Middle Shabelle regions of Central/Southern Somalia continued to disseminate information and knowledge to promote proper nutrition and feeding practices for infants and young children. Internally displaced persons' (IDP) camps in Mogadishu were also targeted in this awareness promotion. One of the major challenges to better health and nutrition for families in the IDP camps is the lack of proper waste,

Health

UNICEF carried out immunization in collaboration with local partners and the Somaliland administration in various locations. The immunization targeted six killer childhood diseases: tuberculosis, diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio and measles.

Supplies: Vaccines and other supplies were distributed to World Vision for immunization in Wajid, Burhakaba, and Buale districts in Bay, Bakool and Middle Jubba regions of Central/Southern Somalia respectively. Other supplies were dispatched to Gedo region. Chlorine for treatment of drinking water was distributed to the Somali Red Crescent Society (SRCS) in Bardhera as part of diarrhoea prevention and control measures.

excreta and refuse disposal. UNICEF's water and environmental sanitation sector addresses these problems. UNICEF has developed a handbook for promotion of improved infant and young child feeding. It will be used by women's groups and community based organizations implementing the activity throughout the Centra/Southern Somalia.

Education update...

Survey: UNICEF staff held a planning meeting in Hargeisa, Northwest Somalia ('Somaliland') for the 2004-2005 annual UNICEF Primary School Survey. Since 1997, UNICEF has been carrying out annual surveys to gather information on the primary education sector for better planning of education programmes. The planning session was also used to provide refresher training for 68 enumerators and 13 regional coordinators involved in data collection. Enumerators for the survey were trained at the Education Development Centre in Hargeisa. This year, the survey encountered obstacles that slowed down data collection. One of the major ones was the heavy rainfall that made access to locations difficult.

Celebrations: In Jowhar, Central Somalia, UNICEF and UNESCO marked the Education For All week through quizzes and sports competitions. The celebrations were attended by members of the local administration, women's groups' members, parents, teachers, and students. UNICEF and UNESCO continue to advocate for increased

enrolment in school in Somalia. The Middle Shabelle administration has supported efforts to increase access to education. The administration's support has included the payment of teachers.

UNICEF and UNESCO have been instrumental in developing a curriculum for primary education. Textbooks will soon be available for grades one to eight in all schools in Somalia.

In further efforts to boost education enrolment in Central/Southern Somalia, UNICEF held discussions with InterSoS, an Italian NGO. Areas in most acute need of schools were identified. InterSoS previously supported seven schools in Middle Shabelle region and is now seeking to revive the support and extend it to Bay and Bakool regions. In Jowhar district, seven schools had their pupils sit the final school examination for the 2004/5 academic year. A total of 6,449 students sat for the exam in Middle Shabelle region, a major increase compared to last year's 3,677 students.

HIV/AIDS

A workshop on development of clinical management guidelines for HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections was held in Hargeisa.

It was organized by UNICEF, UNDP and the local HIV/AIDS coordination committee of Somaliland. Participants were health professionals from public and private hospitals and partner agencies in Somaliland.

Water and Environmental Sanitation

Projects: Solar-powered pumping units for the Gebiley Water System are now operational. The third phase of securing an alternative water source for Hargeisa town started in May with test drilling of two borewells in Agabar. The Biyodhacay and Illinta Bari communities refused to allow test drilling in their area.

Training: Hygiene education and household chlorination training was held for 12 participants from flood-affected riverine villages in Central/Southern Somalia.

Advocacy: UNICEF staff met members of the Somaliland Ministry of Religion and national technical committee on HIV/AIDS to discuss how to strengthen the role of religious leaders and communities in responding to HIV/AIDS. One proposal was to train more representatives from the religious and community sectors to carry out social mobilization. UNICEF staff met journalists including staff of Somaliland TV and Radio Hargeisa, to enlist their support in advocacy for HIV/AIDS prevention and control. In Central/Southern Somalia, UNICEF distributed information materials to partners, maternal and child health (MCH) centres and schools. UNICEF staff met the Transitional Federal Government's Vice Minister of Health to discuss the formation of a HIV/AIDS Commission to oversee control and prevention initiatives in Central/Southern Somalia.

Testing: Several health facilities were identified to be pilot voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) service centres in Somaliland. The sites include Hargeisa Group Hospital, Edna Aden Maternity Hospital, Borama Hospital, Annalena TB centre in Borama, Berbera Hospital and Burao Hospital.

Child Protection

Visit to Somaliland: A UNICEF delegation visited Hargeisa and held discussions on the drafting of a proposed Juvenile Justice Bill and how to strengthen issues relating to justice for children. The delegation met Somaliland administration ministers and officials and visited the youth wing of Hargeisa, Central Prison. UNICEF Somalia staff made a presentation on the Child Protection Study to staff of the United Nations High Commission on Refugees.

Training: Trans-cultural Psychosocial Organization of Uganda (TPO), a Ugandan trained 28 NGO and government representatives over three weeks in psychosocial care in Hargeisa, Somaliland. The objective of the training was to equip the trainees with knowledge and skills to provide community based psychosocial care and support to vulnerable children and their families. At the end of the training, the participants - who came from all around the country - prepared a work-plan of the activities they will undertake in the next weeks and months. UNICEF is supporting this capacity building initiative, which will continue throughout 2005.

Child soldiers: UNICEF staff and staff from three organizations involved in the project on child soldiers rehabilitation and reintegration (Elman Peace Centre in Mogadishu, IIDA in Merka and Kanava Youth Centre in Kismayo) met in Merka to review the achievements of the programme that has reached 540 former child soldiers in Mogadishu, Merka, and Kismayo. The review took place in Merka, southern Somalia on

Youth development

Training: To facilitate the goal by UNICEF of training 3200 youth in leadership and organizational development, UNICEF assisted a local NGO, Green Gates, to recruit 22 youth who will be trained as leadership, organizational development & youth peer education (LOD/YPE) trainers. UNICEF is now in the process of finalizing a partnership cooperation agreement with Green Gates that will see them coordinate LOD/YPE and youth group mentoring activities.

Supply plans: UNICEF will distribute sports materials and equipment to youth groups in Bay, Bakool, Gedo, Lower Jubba and Middle Jubba regions. Sporting activities are one of the activities that UNICEF supports to promote peace and community interaction. At least 1200 youth will benefit from the sports materials.

28 May 2005. An independent evaluation of the initiative will be undertaken in the coming months. The results will feed into the broader efforts of UNICEF and partners in integrating child rights and child protection into broader demobilization, disarmament and rehabilitation efforts in Somalia.

Communication for Development

UNICEF held discussions with members of Youth Broadcasting Initiative partner groups in Hargeisa, Merka and Bosasso. UNICEF has supported youth groups in Somalia through training in production of audio and video programmes. It has also provided filming and editing equipment. UNICEF staff help them craft correct messages whenever they produce programmes that cover areas such as health, nutrition, water supply, environmental sanitation, HIV/AIDS, child protection and youth development in which UNICEF has experts.

Community Dialogue workshop: UNICEF supported a three-week workshop on participatory integrated community development. The purpose was to impart skills to UNICEF Somalia staff, district level authorities and staff from local partners that will enable them to facilitate the communities to analyze their needs, develop a vision for their community, prioritize their needs and develop a community development plan in a participatory manner. Partner organizations from Central/Southern Somalia participated and included Women Care from Jowhar, Community

Care Centre from Wajid/Baidoa and Ayub Orphanage in Merka.

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