

UNICEF Somalia Monthly Review

February 2006



Political developments...

The first full Somalia-based session of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) started in the town of Baidoa in Central/Southern Somalia on 26 February. Prior to the Parliamentary session, TFG President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed had held a three-day closed-door meeting with Prime Minister Ali Mohammed Gedi and Speaker of Parliament Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden in Galkayo town of Puntland. Yusuf, along with Gedi and their allies are based in Jowhar, 90 km north of Mogadishu, while the Speaker and some MPs are based in the capital, Mogadishu. During the opening session, the President, called upon parliamentarians to work for the cessation of hostilities and to promote reconciliation and development, a call echoed by the Prime Minister and Speaker.

Those present during the opening included Francois Fall, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative to Somalia and UNICEF Somalia Representative, Christian Balslev-Olesen, (currently acting UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia). "This is a very positive development we are witnessing today," said Mr Balslev-Olesen. "It is a significant window of hope for peace and reconciliation that has not been seen by Somalis during the past 15 years, and we are privileged to be present and to support the process."

Norwegian mission: The Norwegian Ambassador to Kenya, Ms. Elisabeth Jacobsen visited Somaliland on 6

February and toured projects funded by her government. She also inaugurated a new medical ward at Hargeisa Public Hospital for the treatment of women traumatized by female genital cutting.



UNICEF staff and members of a Norwegian government delegation during a tour of drought-affected Kurta area, Wajid, Central Somalia in February 2006. **Credit: UNICEF Somalia/CSZ Office.**

Drought...

A UN mission visited Haud district south of Hargeisa in Northwest Somalia ('Somaliland'), where people and their livestock are affected by a serious shortage of water. In Central/Southern Somalia, the chairman of the Middle Shabelle Administration, Mohammed Dhere, appealed to the international community and residents of Jowhar (where his administration is headquartered) and to help drought-victims in Adale town. His administration pledged to contribute US\$64,285.00 to help the victims. Jowhar is the location of the main UNICEF office in Central/Southern Somalia.

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Somalia is currently facing a severe humanitarian situation. An estimated 1.7 million people are affected.

Security developments

Staffer released: UNICEF Somalia Emergency Officer, Bob McCarthy who was abducted on 1 March 2006 in Afmadow, southern Somalia was released without harm the next day following negotiations involving the TFG, UN, local community and elders. **(Editors note:** The incident occurred as this *Review* was going to press)

Fighting: Mogadishu witnessed intense fighting between militia of the newly-established Alliance for Peace and Fight Against Terrorism on one side and the Islamic Courts on the other. About 25 people were reported killed and more than 150 wounded including women and children. The newly created alliance consists of Mogadishu-based faction leaders who are members of the TFG, cabinet ministers and businessmen.

In Hargeisa, five people were killed and 11 others hospitalized following unrest on 4 February 2006. Many others were treated for minor injuries at Hargeisa Group Hospital. The unrest was sparked off by a land dispute. In Bossaso, Northeast Somalia ('Puntland'), a 14-year-old boy was killed and three others injured on 7 February 2006 as police quelled violence that broke out among people protesting the publication of cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammad. In another incident on 27 February, three

people were killed in an exchange of gunfire between rival militia near the Puntland parliament in Garowe, Puntland's administrative capital.

Health update...

Measles: A vaccination campaign took place in Galbeed region of Somaliland between 11 and 20 February. About 157,000 children (about 66 per cent of the target population) aged between nine months and 15 years were vaccinated.

Supplies: UNICEF distributed five tonnes of medical supplies to health facilities in Somaliland. Other supplies were distributed to locations in Puntland and Central/Southern Somalia. Information and communication equipment and furniture valued at \$10,000 were donated to the Somaliland National Aids Commission. A similar donation of equipment and furniture worth \$40,000 was also donated to the Somaliland Ministry of Planning. The Somaliland Ministry of Health received furniture worth \$10,000.

Training: UNICEF in collaboration with Africa Action Hilfe, an international NGO, trained 21 community health workers from Puntland in health service delivery and malaria management. Training in malaria management was conducted for 85 health workers from Central/Southern Somalia.

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

Water and environmental sanitation update...

Repairs and supplies: The Dubar Springs - Berbera pipeline was repaired in an exercise that included replacement and clearing of blocked pipes. Pipes and pumps were distributed to the Hargeisa Water Agency and the El-Afwein water project.

Drought alleviation: Ensuring access to drinking water is one of the major challenges that UNICEF and other organizations are facing in dealing with the drought in various locations. While water trucking is crucial for meeting short-term needs, UNICEF supports the rehabilitation and establishment of infrastructure such as borewells and water supply systems that can meet regular needs. Spare parts for generators and borewells are being distributed to ensure that systems that have broken down resume operation. In Somaliland, UNICEF in collaboration with the local administration installed a pump at Dameero Boob borewell to help in supplying water to areas south of Hargeisa. Borewell rehabilitation and water trucking was implemented in 11 villages of drought-affected regions of Bakool, Bay and Gedo regions in Central/Southern Somalia where about 50,000 people are getting water through

trucking. Three borewells in Kurta, Doyanuney and Alio Marayle villages in Bay and Bakool regions were rehabilitated and generators and pumps installed. Rehabilitation of six borewells is under way. About 15,000 people in the three villages and a huge number of livestock are benefiting together with people in 20 villages in outlying areas. UNICEF supplied pumps to Concern Worldwide NGO and to villages of Awdheghe district in Lower Shabelle region. A water supply system that will serve Jowhar airstrip and a community of about 2,000 in its environs is in the planning stages. In Baidoa, UNICEF supported extension of the water supply system to the premises where the TFG Parliament started meeting on 26 February. In Wajid, digging of two new wells for the supply of water to IDPs started.

Sanitation and Hygiene: three hundred people from villages in Bay, Bakool and Gedo regions were trained in hygiene promotion and water chlorination. Twenty-one drums of chlorine were distributed for treatment of water supply sources. The trainees and supplies will eventually benefit about 850,000 people in the three regions.

Nutrition

Vitamins given: About 70,000 children aged between six months and five years were given vitamin A supplements during measles vaccination in Somaliland. The supplements are effective in preventing blindness and enhancing resistance against common infections such as diarrhoea and acute respiratory tract infections.

Drought response: UNICEF provided food supplements to partner organizations involved in drought alleviation activities in Bay, Bakool, Gedo, Hiran and Middle Juba regions in Central/Southern Somalia.

Education update...

IDPs: Month-long training commenced for 60 teachers of schools for children of IDPs in Bossaso, Puntland. Upon completion of the course in March, the trainees will begin teaching in schools housed in tents within IDP settlements. A total of 36 tent classrooms were established in January in the most populated IDP camps in Bossaso, Gardo and Dangoray in Puntland. The Bossaso administration is implementing the IDP education project in partnership with UNICEF.

Back to School: The Somaliland Minister of Education laid the foundation stone for the first of three schools that the UN Office of Project Services (UNOPS) will construct as part of the Back to School Campaign. The function took place at Quljeed village, Awdal region. The campaign seeks to boost enrolment of primary school age children throughout Somalia. Social mobilization was carried out in support of the Back to School Campaign in Middle Shabelle, Lower Shabelle, Hiran, and Galgadud regions. Other social mobilization activities focused on raising awareness about primary alternative education which benefits children of school-age who are unable to access formal education. It covers the same competencies as the formal system but in a shorter time frame and will be carried out in the evenings at learning centres which normally serve as schools during the daytime.

Supplies: UNICEF distributed 540 sets of benches/desks to nine newly-constructed schools and six school tents serving internally displaced persons in Somaliland. About 5,210 school children, (45% of them girls) are expected to benefit.

Diaspora input: Support from the Somali Diaspora is helping children access schooling. In Mirji'eley village, in Galgadud region, the Diaspora has constructed four classrooms and other structures that are catering for 100 children, 40% of them girls.

Rehabilitation: UNICEF oversaw completion of rehabilitation works of Balanballe primary school in Galgadud, Waberi and Gurban primary schools in Bay region and Sarinley primary school in Bardera town of Gedo region. A total of 931 children are benefitting. Similar work is being undertaken in other schools with UNICEF support. A model tent-school is being put up at Kongo village, 5km south of Jowhar town. A 451m perimeter wall for Kulmis Primary School in Jowhar was completed.

Drought response: Massive closure of schools has occurred due to drought, UNICEF is the lead agency working in the education sector with WFP, UNESCO and NGOs in the drought affected regions. UNICEF school tents and educational supplies have been distributed to 80 schools in Bay, Bakool, Lower Juba and Middle Juba. Temporary schools have been set up in the Wajid area. At Wajid IDP camp 616 children are benefitting.

HIV/AIDS update...

Advocacy: A leadership and advocacy workshop for HIV/AIDS was held in Hargeisa for 25 Somaliland MPs. Participants made a declaration of commitment to support the HIV/AIDS response including fighting stigma and discrimination. SAHAN - the Somaliland HIV/AIDS Network - and UNICEF launched a HIV/AIDS mass media awareness project in Hargeisa. The Puntland AIDS Commission organized a HIV/AIDS coordination meeting which was attended by staff of UNAIDS, UNICEF and the local administration. In Baidoa, Central Somalia, HIV/AIDS sensitization was carried out for 52 participants from Bay region. Information materials including the Knowledge, Attitudes, Behaviour and Practices (KABP) survey were distributed to HIV/AIDS working groups in Baidoa, Bakool and Lower Shabelle regions and 30 people involved in communication for development initiatives in Central/Southern Somalia. Elenjedo, a community-based organization in Wajid, conducted HIV/AIDS sensitization for 180 participants from community groups. World Vision also sensitized religious leaders in HIV/AIDS issues.

Testing: InterSoS NGO opened a voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) centre in Jowhar Hospital. TFG ministers, members of the local administration, UN and NGO staff attended the opening ceremony.

Youth development update...

Training: A total of 121 youth groups were trained in Puntland on leadership and organizational development.

Advocacy: A three-day meeting was organized in Mogadishu for 52 youth from Central/Southern Somalia. Participants shared information on community development and peace building. The launch of the distribution of *KOOR*, a youth magazine took place. It is produced in Somaliland with UNICEF support. *KOOR* discusses issues of relevance to youth such as HIV/AIDS. A similar meeting for youth from Lower Shabelle region was held in Merka town.



Swiss actress Hanna Scheuring observes girls discussing the challenges they face in Somaliland at a leadership training session in Hargeisa, **Credit: UNICEF Somalia/ShepherdJohnson.**

Communication for development

Training: Eight groups whose members were trained in 2005 under the Youth Broadcasting Initiative (YB1) have started producing radio and TV programmes on subjects that include youth and drugs; sports; girl education, HIV/AIDS; street children and sanitation. The UNICEF-supported initiative works with different youth groups in Somalia who have benefited through audio and video production training as well as the provision of recording and editing equipment. The youth are free to make programmes of their choice some of which are aired in partnership with local TV/radio stations and others disseminated through video parlours/centres. The initiative has been running since 2003.

Child protection update...

FGM eradication: The International Day for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) was marked on February 6 in Somaliland and Puntland. In Somaliland, two local NGOs - Somaliland Culture and Sports Association (SOCSA) and Horn of Africa Voluntary Youth Organization Committee (HAVOYOCO) – with support from Care International took a leading role. In Puntland, member organizations of the Child Protection Networks played a major role in activities. Radio and TV talk shows and discussion and advocacy forums involving religious leaders, health professionals, FGM practitioners, community members and local authority representatives were some of the Day's highlights.

National Committee visit: Executive Director of the Swiss Committee for UNICEF, Elsbeth Müller and Swiss actress Hanna Scheuring, visited Hargeisa from 18 to 21 February to discuss issues related to female genital mutilation/cutting. They met with the Minister of Family Affairs, members of the local administration, local NGOs, religious leaders, traditional birth attendants as well as young women. Discussions were also held with TOSTAN - an NGO which has had success in West Africa facilitating community empowerment which led to public declarations against the practice of FGM/C. Among others, the Swiss team met members of the Somaliland

Culture and Sports Association, the Somaliland National Youth Organization (SONYO) and 'Naagad' women's organization.

Advocacy: UNICEF distributed the findings of a child protection study conducted in 2003 to 25 journalists from Belet Weyne, Merka, Baidoa and Kismayo towns. The journalists were members of a group that had earlier been trained in media ethics and reporting skills by the Mogadishu-based Horn-Afrik radio station. UNICEF also distributed information materials on child protection to participants from 40 organizations in Baidoa. Peaceline, a UNICEF partner organization facilitated discussion of child protection issues through radio in Mogadishu. In Jowhar, staff of the TFG and those of NGOs discussed issues related to orphans and vulnerable children in a process facilitated by the UN. Views from the discussions will be considered in the development of a countrywide action plan.

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