

Somali Region Update Humanitarian Response

10 December 2007

Highlights¹

- Operations have begun in the two newly established joint UN support offices in Kebridehar and Degehabur towns as of early November. Humanitarian interventions are being further supported by UN presence in Jijiga and Gode towns.
- To date, 19 NGOs have been officially accredited to operate in the five zones of military operations. Advocacy for inclusion of more NGOs in the list is ongoing.
- The seasonal assessment in the region has been completed and results are being finalized. A separate Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Agency (DPPA) led inter-agency rapid nutrition assessment started in early December in Fik and Korahe zones.

Humanitarian Overview/Context

The humanitarian situation within the military operational area continues to be of concern. Early warning reports indicate that the *deyr* rains (main rainy season) have failed in large areas of the seven receiving zones of Degehabur, Korahe, Warder, Gode, Afder, Liben and Fik. Crop production has significantly declined and early livestock migration is reported in some zones. This coupled with continued low levels of commercial and livestock trade is likely to have a negative impact on the already fragile livelihoods of the population. The *karan* rains, however, performed relatively better in Shinile and Jijiga zones. The multi-agency seasonal team led by DPPA is currently in the region to assess needs and identify beneficiaries in need of emergency assistance.

In response to a recommendation from the September UN inter-agency mission for increased humanitarian assistance to the Somali region, two UN field offices were established in Kebridehar and Degehabur on 7 and 8 November, respectively. While there has been some progress in the provision of food and medical supplies to certain areas outside of major towns, access limitations to monitor dispatches and distributions continues to hinder humanitarian response in some areas.

In Kebridehar and Jijiga towns, the security situation appears quiet. Limited coverage of the entire military operational area makes a first-hand accounting of the general security situation in the region impossible.

The UNCT is discussing with the Government the implementation of actions agreed between the highest authorities at federal level, in particular the Prime minister, and the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) during his recent visit. In particular, discussions are ongoing on ways to increase access for NGOs to operate in the five zones of military operation.

Access

The Federal Government has officially cleared 19 NGOs to operate in the five zones affected by military operations, and has requested NGOs to provide a list of staff that will be deployed to the area in support of the recommendations made by the UN during the September mission. The Somali Regional State authorities have requested similar documentation. The regional government has made a number of welcomed initiatives to speed up the process, including provision of letters to facilitate travel. While some of these NGOs are already operational, others are now in the region, finalizing preparations to commence operations.

¹ The information in this document is consolidated from reports and field information from a variety of sources including UN agencies, NGOs and government partners as well as the different coordination forums.

Whilst in Korah area access is not a major issue for most humanitarian partners, more efforts and negotiations are ongoing to increase accessibility and coverage of operations, including monitoring of food and drugs dispatches. Access to Fik and Warder for food aid monitoring of dispatches and arrivals has thus far been limited. Agreement has also not yet been reached for mobile health teams to operate in the five zones.

On 15 November, WFP set-up an air passenger operation, United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS), to the Somali region to facilitate access for UN and NGO staff, as well as Government partners and donors. UNHAS flights serve Gode, Jijiga and Kebridehar twice a week. Since the 15 November, there have been 7 UNHAS flights to the Somali region, which have carried 47 passengers and 1.5 MT of cargo. On 10 December, UNHAS flights were suspended by the carrier until further notice due to technical problems. Ethiopian Airlines has also resumed regular flights to Kebridehar town twice a week.

Markets and Market Activity

An increase in the number of military-escorted commercial truck convoys along the Jijiga-Degehabur-Kebridehar corridor has been noted. During November, two to three convoys accompanied by military escort were observed compared with one convoy per month reportedly passing through the area during the previous four to five months. This commercial trade appears only to benefit larger villages near the main roads. Efforts are put in place to gather full understanding of the complete extent of commercial trade in the region. The UN is monitoring prices of basic commodities and livestock in local markets and prices of commercial food, however, are reported by the UN to have increased during the past month, particularly for imported food.

Sectoral Response

- **Food aid**

As of 10 December, almost 13,500 MT of emergency food was under transportation to the five zones under military operations. Until last week, DPPA dispatched food to 28 district capitals. WFP has however reached an agreement with the government to dispatch food to 186 Final Distribution Points (FDPs) in the five zones under military operation, and dispatches have now begun to these areas. For food transported to district capitals, secondary transport is necessary to redistribute food to final distribution points. WFP is working with DPPA toward a solution.

Limited escort availability continues to delay food deliveries in the five zones under military operation. There have been several occasions where trucks carrying relief food have been stranded for days, in some cases for weeks, while awaiting military escorts in Kebridehar town. WFP is working with the government to address these problems. DPPA has approved the establishment of a joint Logistics Information Centre within the operations unit of DPPA in Dire Dawa. The Centre will provide daily reports on food deliveries and will liaise closely with DPPA and the Transport Coordination Committee in order to facilitate the transportation of relief items. WFP has also begun mapping the logistics infrastructure of the Somali region. Moreover, WFP is assisting local authorities in establishing food distribution committees at distribution points in the five zones, and beneficiary registration is under way in many locations. In Kebridehar a "Food Aid Distribution & Monitoring Committee" has been established, which brings together local authorities, NGOs and WFP to make plans and resolve food-related issues on a weekly basis.

WFP staff from the Kebridehar Field Office has developed a monitoring plan, and have so far been allowed access to monitor only 4 of the 6 FDPs in Kebridehar woreda. In Shekosh, food aid monitors have visited 2 of the 6 FDPs, while 2 others are inaccessible due to road conditions. On 12 December, WFP has a mission to Shilabo to assist local authorities in targeting and establishing food distribution committees.

Food aid monitors from WFP's Sub-Office in Jijiga have been able to monitor food arrivals in Gashamo and Aware, but not in Warder zone, where request have been declined by the local military commander. As a result, WFP will now monitor FDPs in Warder from the Kebridehar Field Office. From the Degehabur Field Office, WFP has monitored food arrivals in Ararso, Obole and Degehabur town. WFP requests from Degehabur to monitor food dispatches to Fik zone, have been repeatedly denied.

- **Health and nutrition**

While the Government health officials report that there are no reports of major human disease outbreaks and that AWD cases have decreased considerably compared to the same period last year, lack of health personnel in much of the region has limited reporting capacity and it may be premature to assume the situation is improving dramatically. Information related to watery and bloody diarrhoea continues to be reported from Degehamedo. Shortages of drugs and medical supplies as well as limited supervision are among the major gaps identified in the region. Poor communication at all administrative levels is also impeding effective response.

Meanwhile, UNICEF reported that discussions with the Regional Health Bureau (RHB) to operationalize the remaining ten mobile health and nutrition teams are ongoing. RHB has agreed to start the training of another five teams in Jijiga starting 15 December. The teams will be deployed in Korahe, Degehabur and Fik. Five teams have already been trained and deployed along the Southern periphery of the conflict area since mid-November (2 teams in Afder Zone (Chereti and West Imi) and 3 teams in Gode Zone (Kelafo, Gode and Mustahil). The teams will congregate to review their work in Gode on 25 December. UNICEF/RHB medical supplies, nutritional supplies and water chemical materials are being redistributed to a further 41 satellite health facilities of the ten restocked hospitals and health centers. Major constraints related to access to health posts and human resource capacities are delaying the restocking operations. It is estimated that only 10 of the 41 facilities have been restocked so far. Discussions are ongoing with RHB to increase measles coverage in accessible areas in the coming weeks.

The first Health and Nutrition taskforce meeting took place on Friday 7 December in Jijiga. Meanwhile, a health and nutrition meeting was held on 28 November in Kebridehar. In the meeting MDM, RHB, UNICEF divided areas of operations amongst themselves. MDM will be working in Kebridehar and Shilabo woredas and UNICEF and RHB in Shekosh and Debeweyin woredas.

- **Water and sanitation**

According to WFP early warning reports indicate that the *deyr* rains (main rainy season) have failed in most of the seven receiving zones of Degehabur, Korahe, Warder, Gode, Afder, Liben and Fik. Serious water shortages are reported in Gorobaqsa, West Imi, Bare, and Dolobay woredas in Afder zone; Filtu and western Dolo Odo woredas in Liben zone; Shilabo and Shekosh woredas in Korahe zone; Geladin and Boh woredas in Warder zone and Ayisha woreda in Shinile zone. There are reports of many non-functioning water schemes for different reasons, including fuel shortages. The regional water bureau intends to carry out a comprehensive assessment on the condition of water schemes across the region and coordinate immediate responses through the WASH coordination task force in Jijiga which needs to be revitalized.

- **Livestock and Agriculture**

The poor *deyr* rains in most parts of the region have triggered early internal migrations of herds. Livestock conditions have started to improve in some woredas where good *deyr* rains were received. Fresh harvests of maize and sorghum are reported in the agro-pastoral areas of Jijiga and Shinile zones. The good showers in Gashamo, the only woreda in Degehabur zone with reports of normal *deyr* rains, have reportedly attracted a large influx of livestock from neighbouring areas.

Coordination

The Humanitarian Coordination Forum in Jijiga town, led by PCDO with support from DPPB and OCHA, and the participation of all humanitarian stakeholders is ongoing. The forum discusses the current humanitarian situation as well as ongoing interventions. A similar meeting was established in Kebridehar on 29 November. In Degehabur, preparations are being finalized to start coordination meetings and at the Federal level, DPPA is taking the lead on coordination and has convened ad hoc meetings. DPPA has approved the establishment of a joint Logistics Information Centre within the operations unit of DPPA in Dire Dawa. The Centre will provide daily reports on food deliveries and will liaise closely with DPPA and the Transport Coordination Committee in order to facilitate the transportation of relief items. In addition, regional sectoral taskforces in the WASH, Livestock and Agriculture, Health and Nutrition are either already established or will be established soon.

Funding Update

The Somali Region Emergency Action Plan seeks approximately US\$ 6.4 million to address emergency needs in the five zones under military operation for an initial three month period. To date, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) has granted US\$ 872,000 for setting up common services to support field operations and 100,000 for reproductive health response. An additional US\$ 603,000 for logistics and US\$ 790,000 for health interventions are under consideration for CERF funding.

The Action Plan is based on joint sectoral emergency requirements identified by the UN September mission . In addition to logistics support and establishment of necessary joint UN support offices in Degehabur and Kebridahar, the action plan focuses on life-saving interventions in four key sectors: food, health and nutrition, water and environmental sanitation and livelihoods, including livestock and agriculture.

Funding requirement

SECTORS	USD
Food Aid	24,000,000* [53,000 MT]
Health	2,640,000
Water and Sanitation	1,730,000
Agriculture and Livestock	177,000 **
Coordination	50,000
Logistics	800,000
Common services	1,000,000
TOTAL	6,397,000***

* Amount already provided by USAID through WFP

** This is for assessment and initial assistance. Additional requirements will be determined following further assessments.

*** This represents the current funding gap to be covered by bi-lateral, CERF and HRF. This does not include all requirements for NGOs to support humanitarian actions, for which further requirements will be estimated.