

PUNTLAND



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS SOMALIA

OVERVIEW OF HUMANITARIAN ENVIRONMENT IN PUNTLAND

Puntland is situated in the north east of Somalia, centered around the administrative capital of Garowe - other major towns include Bossaso, Galkayo, Garowe and Gardho. In 1998, political leaders declared it an autonomous region which in future they hope will be part of a federal united Somalia.

In the past, conflict, drought and out migration of people (especially prior to the civil war in the early 1990s) have paralyzed most of the region's infrastructures and economic resources. The last major conflict took place in 2002 when two rival factions fought for authority and power in the region. While the current prevailing peace (2005) provides respite from warfare and hope for a better future, the situation in Puntland remains critical – financial resources are limited, food security is tenuous and the vulnerable population is growing.

There remains an unresolved dispute with Somaliland over the western regions of Sool and Sanaag that resulted in clashes, displacements and restricted humanitarian access during 2004/5. Apart from this dispute, access and security in Puntland is currently unhindered, although increased security incidents against INGOs working in the area were reported at the end of 2005.

In the last three years and attracted by Puntland's relative stability, the number of people spontaneously moving into the region has risen - fleeing the south for security and economic reasons. IDPs and returnees occupy the major towns particularly Bossaso, Galkayo, Garowe and Gardho. However, reports suggest this has detrimentally impacted on the standard of living of the host population who are obliged to assist (with whatever support they can) through the extensive Somali family network and putting great additional strain on the area's limited resources.

The rule of law remains weak; vulnerable groups particularly IDPs, the urban destitute and poor, suffer regular infringements of their human rights. However, progress is being made and in November 2005 the Puntland authorities embarked on their first ever Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programme (DDR) with UNDP Somalia to strengthen the rule of law and security in the region.

Smuggling and people trafficking from Puntland to Yemen and the Gulf States continues to be a major concern. According to UNHCR in Yemen, the death toll of people smuggled from Bossaso to Yemen is rising. Two boats capsized off the Yemeni coast on 21 and 22 January 2006. The first carried 128 people of which only five survived, while the second carried 128, with only 46 survivors. Passengers are mainly Somalis and Ethiopians. In the last two weeks of January, 32 boats were registered by the Yemen authorities. During the same period some 1,300 Somalis and 70 Ethiopians were registered as newcomers by UNHCR. The influx came after a break over the Christmas period due to bad weather conditions and is said to have increased because of the drought affecting the Horn, which smugglers are taking full advantage of. Efforts are being made to find durable solutions to the problem in cooperation with the local authorities in Puntland.

Following several years of drought in the north, the FAO's, Food Security Analysis Unit (FSAU) reported (February 2005) on the need for the humanitarian community to continue to support the recovery of pastoral livelihoods in the region in the form of debt relief, restocking and the creation of alternative livelihoods for people that burn wood to make charcoal. ***This industry has a detrimental impact on the environment, involving the cutting down of trees - and further degradation will impact the sustainability of the pastoralist livelihood in future.*** Development projects also need to address the high levels of overall poverty in the region and in particular the lack of schools and health facilities, poor communications and road infrastructure. The use of limited household income on the leaf narcotic 'khat' is continuing to have a devastating impact on the economy and society in general.

KEY HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

Tsunami

The Indian Ocean tsunami hit the coast of Somalia in the last week of December 2004. North-eastern Somalia and specifically Puntland was worst affected, particularly a stretch of about 650 kilometres between Hafun and Garacad. The tsunami further exacerbated the humanitarian situation in the region which had already been hit by a series of 'shocks' including three years of drought, floods, freezing rains, the continuing livestock ban (imposed by Gulf states due to livestock disease) and civil tensions. The tsunami affected an estimated 44,000 people (including IDPs and returnees), resulting in a shift in wealth groups, loss of life, destruction of infrastructure, damage to water sources and loss of livelihood assets. Humanitarian organisations worked with local communities to provide relief, focusing on shelter construction, water and sanitation, rehabilitation of schools and health facilities. The UN Country Team (UNCT) declared an end to the tsunami emergency in April 2005, following an assessment that certified that the emergency humanitarian needs arising from the disaster had been met and agencies had adequate stocks to continue responding to food, water, health and shelter needs. At the end of 2005, the UNCT was finalizing a Recovery and Development proposal for the affected tsunami coastline. This multi-sectoral proposal has identified a strategic plan - involving investment in the infrastructure of the area and governance reform - and working in close consultation with the Puntland authorities.

Livelihoods : Impact of Recurrent Drought

The issue of pastoralists made destitute by several seasons of drought – continues to be highlighted in Puntland during 2006. While the O5 Deyr rains were generally normal enabling combined improvement in rangeland and livestock conditions, localized pockets received very little rain and **the FSAU estimates that in Bari, 45,000 people are facing an Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis and in Nugal 20,000 face an Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis.** Mechanisms need to be developed to deal with the humanitarian implications surrounding the frequent droughts, which historically have proved to be a natural occurrence – and response planning extended into all areas of Puntland. To encourage economic diversification and to allow Somalis to benefit from their coastal waters, fishing sector assessments are now complete for Puntland (Somaliland and South/Central). The Somali coastline the longest in Africa has so far been exploited by artisan fishermen with little large-scale commercial activity taking place to benefit local communities. In fact, it is largely foreigners that profit from the Somali coastline – it is estimated that Somalia loses approximately US\$100 million to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities, resources that could go a long way towards improving the livelihoods of Somalis. The assessments will be synthesised and analysed by the World Bank and the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and will help to inform a coherent and sustainable strategy to develop a commercially viable fisheries sector.

IDPs

It is estimated that up to 60,000 IDPs are languishing in IDP settlements in the major towns of Puntland with contaminated water and no sanitation facilities, lack of access to basic social services, rampant disease and regular outbreaks of fire/arson. However, there is a very active inter-agency IDP working group consisting of UN agencies, INGOs and local partners who are providing assistance to the Puntland authorities on the provision of humanitarian assistance to IDPs in Bosasso and Garowe, as well as looking at the implementation of longer term responses which focus on IDP reintegration.

Gender

The voices of women are frequently not heard as they are not usually in decision-making positions within society. On the coast and following the tsunami, women specifically requested the humanitarian community to provide them with fishing boats as they wanted to set up fishing businesses. Women are not always allowed to do what might benefit the immediate community.

Education and Health

Access to health and education is limited. According to UNICEF an estimated 200,000 children (6-14 years) in Puntland are out of school. Mass illiteracy and lack of access means children lack access to opportunity and if children don't go to school it is more likely they will end up in militias or working as child labour.

HIV/AIDS

In October 2005, the authorities launched the Puntland AIDS Commission (PAC) which is tasked with coordinating HIV/AIDS activities in the region. The event was led by acting President of Puntland and attended by members of the UN Country Team, authorities, religious leaders, civil society organizations including women's and youth groups and development partners.

Access and Poor Infrastructure

Lack of access as a result of poor infrastructure, particularly roads, is inhibiting social/economic/political development in the region. There is an urgent need to build roads and communication facilities so rural areas do not remain cut off from the rest of Somalia and the outside world. The remote north eastern coastal areas of the region had never received any form of humanitarian assistance before the tsunami struck in late 2004.

Urbanization and the Urban Poor

Puntland is facing rapid urbanization, which is creating another vulnerable group – the urban poor. This group includes destitute pastoralists, economic migrants and people who are unable to make ends meet through lack of livelihood opportunities. Private sector business remains relatively limited so there are few employment opportunities.

A Humanitarian Success Story from Puntland 2005 : *The Puntland authorities have embarked on their first Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Programme with UNDP Somalia. 500 young men (eventually 1000 by 2006) are signed up into the project that will reduce the security personnel (previously employed by the Puntland authorities) dramatically - and which should improve peace, security and development in the region. The DDR policy will guide the selection of those eligible to participate in different elements of the programme. After handing over their weapons to their commanders, the participants will be provided with placement and on the job training, formal education, rural resettlement or support to start their own micro-enterprises. The Puntland authorities requested the programme. The Acting President of Puntland Hassan Dahir stressed that 'DDR is essential to alleviate the financial pressures now facing the government. It will also make the forces more efficient and effective'. Once completed, this exercise is expected to free up an annual one million US dollars (previously spent on security) from the state budget that will support the provision of essential services such as education and health.*

Humanitarian Partners Working in Puntland and Coordination Mechanisms

The Puntland authorities established HADMA (Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management Agency) in 2005 to lead the coordination of humanitarian interventions in Puntland. HADMA with the support of OCHA currently coordinate and organize on a monthly basis sectoral meetings on : Health, Education, Water and Sanitation, Environment, Infrastructure and Shelter, Food Security and Fisheries. The Puntland Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation also does some coordination in terms of development programmes. UN agencies operating in Puntland include UNICEF (Health, Education, Water and Sanitation, Environment) WFP (Food Distributions) ILO (Road Infrastructure Interventions) UN Habitat (Shelter and Infrastructure) UNHCR (Refugees, Returnees and Repatriation resettlement) WHO (Health) UNDP (IDPs) FAO (Agriculture and Livelihoods) UNESCO (Education) OCHA (Coordination, Protection and Advocacy). Some of the INGOs working in Puntland include SC-UK, CARE, Diakonia, VSF, UNA, AFRICA-70, ADRA, NCA, NRC, DRC, Horn Relief, MSF and CEFA. There are a number of local NGOs that serve as implementing partners for international NGOs and UN agencies.

UN OCHA SOMALIA

7th Floor, Kalson Towers, Crescent Street, off Parklands Road, P.O. Box 28832, 00200 Nairobi, Kenya

Tel No: (254-20) 3754150-5; Fax No: (254-20) 3754156

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