OVERVIEW OF HUMANITARIAN ENVIRONMENT IN SOUTH/CENTRAL

The Transitional Federal Government (TFG) for Somalia was established in Kenya in late 2004 yet its split relocation (Jowhar and Mogadishu) into southern Somalia in June 2005 has limited its capacity – and affected its ability to expand its authority on Somali territory to bring peace, stability and good governance to the country.

**Most parts of South/Central continue to experience little authoritative government, sporadic armed conflict, widespread human rights abuses, endemic humanitarian needs, minimal access to social services, flooding, drought, displacement and lack of economic recovery.** Lower/Middle Juba, Bay/Bakool, Gedo, Hiran, Mudug and Galgadud regions are beset by localized recurrent conflicts characterized by inter and intra clan rivalry, militia roadblocks/checkpoints, and random banditry with major flashpoints over power and resources, particularly land and water. Against this unpredictability, UN agencies, INGOs and local partners focus to the greatest extent possible on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable and food insecure, displaced, returnees and minority groups through a diverse mix of programmatic approaches.

Somali civil society has increasingly and significantly contributed to providing a range of essential services that have helped replace many of the functions of the state. Yet, lack of sustainable peace, security and the disruptive activities of militias and freelance gunmen have constrained what civil society can achieve. The demobilization of armed and freelance militia, for example, is an urgent prerequisite for sustainable social and economic recovery alongside the resumption of governance, law and order.

**However, in 2006, it is possible that a new wave of ‘optimism’ among Somalis – many of whom are tired of conflict, will lead to increased humanitarian access to south/central zones where to date only limited aid has been reaching the most vulnerable. While the situation will continue to be volatile, where new opportunities for access will develop, expanding humanitarian presence with greater vigour will be crucial.**

Meanwhile, chronic food insecurity and unacceptably high malnutrition levels persist in the south. In 2005, around a quarter of the under five population experienced levels of acute malnutrition exceeding the internationally accepted rate (15%) in parts of Gedo and Juba regions, malnutrition is above 20%. The region also faces the challenge of recurrent flooding (seen in Juba Valley in May 2005 due to heavy rainfall in the Ethiopian highlands). The lack of sustained humanitarian operations in the area was reflected in a slow humanitarian response. There are fears that if the Deyr rainy season fails (Oct/Nov 2005) the impact on the humanitarian situation will worsen dramatically. **South/Central Somalia remains in a complex emergency, with lack of sustained humanitarian access and reduced operational capacity a major factor affecting human survival.**

Major constraints affecting the presence and delivery of humanitarian assistance include volatile insecurity compounded by political instability; imbalanced sectoral funding; limited capacity of local implementing partners; interference by some local authorities in aid delivery, flooding and poor road infrastructure. Tragically in October 2005, a Somali National working for United Nations Department of Safety and Security was deliberately shot dead in Kismayo. It remains unclear what the motive was but the incident only underlines the precarious and unpredictable operating environment in much of the country (there is also growing concern over an increase in terrorist infiltration and extremism). In light of these challenges, agencies will continue to assess the needs and the response in south/central to the greatest extent possible on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable and food insecure, displaced, returnees and minority groups through a diverse mix of programmatic approaches.

**KEY HUMANITARIAN ISSUES**

**IDPs**

Displacement due to conflict has continued unabated ever since the collapse of the government in 1991. Many of the displaced in Mogadishu and Kismayo fled from rural areas in South/Central in search of economic opportunities and basic services. Instead, they became hostage to freelance militias and subjected to serious human rights violations. Others fled to Puntland or left Somalia completely (ceasing to be IDPs).

Without national governance structures, the protective environment in South/Central zones is very weak and vulnerable groups continue to be subject to abuse and exploitation. Data collection of vulnerable groups (including the displaced) is particularly challenging due to little available information (owing to limited presence of aid agencies on the ground) and an absence of mechanisms to monitor human rights violations.

An estimated 250,000 displaced presently reside in Mogadishu with others concentrated along the Shabella river, Gedo and Lower Juba (an estimated 90,000). These displaced are unlikely to return home to their place of origin due to volatile insecurity and poor socio/economic prospects. Others fled to northern areas in Somalia where they thought relative safety prevailed but found themselves without protection of their own clans and subject to human rights violations.
To date, the humanitarian response to the displaced in South/Central has been limited due to instability. However, in 2006 a Protection Monitoring Group will be established to initiate protection activities and monitor the displaced more closely.

Gender
In the southcentral fragmented environment, girls and women continue to be one of the most vulnerable groups with their rights to survival, protection, development and participation consistently violated. Beyond deprivation, this has manifested itself in a range of abuses, violations and both petty and large-scale tyranny, practiced for the most part with impunity. The spread of HIV/AIDS and the deepening disenfranchisement of young people are among the high societal prices to be paid.

Access and Security
South/Central remains one of the most dangerous humanitarian operating environments in Somalia. The recent increased threat posed by extremist groups has resulted in the need to improve security standards. The threat has also limited the ‘humanitarian operating space’. Attempts to gain access to extremely vulnerable groups in South/Central are currently mostly ad hoc and event driven, and responses are often delayed as the humanitarian community struggles to negotiate access. Access is further complicated by flooding, mines, poor road infrastructure and a lack of adherence to humanitarian principles and agreements (by local authorities) causing frequent interruptions to aid activities and limited sustainability.

Maritime officials describe Somali waters as some of the most dangerous and insecure in the world. Since March 2005, the hijacking of more than 32 vessels carrying commercial but also relief commodities have forced World Food Programme (WFP) to look at alternative routes to access the country, including overland from Kenya and through Djibouti. However, such initiatives would also have serious cost implications – and security – even then would not be guaranteed.

Livelihoods and Food Security
According to FAO’s Food Security Analysis Unit Post Gu Survey (August 2005), around 345,000 people are in a state of Livelihood Crisis while 200,000 are experiencing a Humanitarian Emergency throughout Somalia. Most of these communities are in southern Somalia where about 169,000 people in Gedo, Bakool, Middle and Lower Juba, mostly from riverine communities, are in a state of Humanitarian Emergency (and 91,000 in Livelihood Crisis). The livelihood and food security situation of people remains fragile and environmental degradation remains a problem. Stemming from deforestation for charcoal production and compounded by drought and flooding, the environment is slowly being depleted, holding long-term consequences for recovery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGION</th>
<th>Region Population 2004</th>
<th>Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis</th>
<th>Humanitarian Emergency</th>
<th>Total in Need as % of Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>319,735</td>
<td>38,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Galgadud</td>
<td>199,895</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bakol</td>
<td>225,450</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gedo</td>
<td>375,280</td>
<td>59,000</td>
<td>53,000</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Juba</td>
<td>329,240</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>37,000</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Juba</td>
<td>244,275</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>79,000</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: FAO/Food Security Analysis Unit (2005)

A Humanitarian Success Story From South/Central Zone 2005: Four months after the inauguration of the Duduble (China) canal in Jowhar, there has been a dramatic change, not only in scenery but also in the livelihoods of the people in the area. 14,000 hectares of simsim have been planted fed by the waters of the recently rehabilitated 15 kilometre canal, some of which is now being harvested. Trucks are transporting the harvested grain to Mogadishu for sale and further for export to the Gulf. In Jowhar, the grain is being processed locally into sesame oil. The planting, harvesting and processing are all labour intensive and have created thousands of jobs in the area. The rehabilitation of the canal is a joint venture between the local community and administration, UNDP and WFP.

Humanitarian Partners in South/Central and Coordination Mechanisms
UN Agencies working in South/Central include HABITAT, UNICEF, UNDP, WHO, WFP, UNESCO, UNDSS, OCHA, UNFPA and FAO. International NGOs include CARE, WVI, ACF, GTZ, CEFA, INTERSOS, Agrosphere, World Concern, ADRA, SC-UK, IMC, PACE, Muslim Aid-UK, DRC, Trocaire, VSF Suisse, NCA, DAI, GHC, and MSF. The ICRC also works in these zones. Local NGOs include ASEF, SADO, Afrec, SDA, Kissima, Suen Dereurex, Juba Shine, and ACA. Sectoral coordination meetings are held in Jowhar and Mogadishu on security, health, education and food security. The OCHA sub-office in Jowhar organizes a monthly inter-agency humanitarian coordination meeting for South/Central as well as ad-hoc joint inter-agency assessments taking place in south-central. OCHA sub-offices in Mogadishu, Jammame, Wajid, Belet Hawa and Belet Weyne host similar coordination meetings for their area.