Snapshot 10 – 17 December

In Syria, government military aircraft targeted rebel-held districts in the northern city of Aleppo, killing at least 15 people according to opposition activists. In parallel, Damascus announced that it had retook control of the key Damascus – Homr supply highway after gaining ground in the battle for the strategic Qalamoun region. London and Washington decided to suspend all non-lethal assistance to the Syrian opposition fearing that military equipment may fall under the control of Islamic radical groups. The decision is a clear blow to the already weakened Syrian opposition ahead of the planned Geneva II peace talks that are still in limbo. Meanwhile, the number of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries now stands at over 2.3 million as the humanitarian crisis continues to worsen in a region hit by a severe winter storms.

In the Philippines, OCHA now estimates that about 14.1 million people were affected by Typhoon Haiyan, including 4.1 million people who remain displaced, the majority of whom are sheltering outside the designated evacuation centres. The latest report from the Philippines authorities indicates that, as a result of the disaster, over 16 million people were affected, 6,000 people were killed, 27,000 were injured and over 1,770 are still missing. Despite the ongoing response, UN organizations reported that acute humanitarian needs remained in affected areas, notably in remote areas outside the main urban centres. To date, humanitarian actors stress in particular the need for short and medium-term shelter solutions that need to be provided before the start of the...
In Central African Republic, the security situation remains extremely volatile, especially in the northwest region. In the capital Bangui, fighting has eased after several days of heavy clashes that resulted in over 530 people being killed and 189,000 people being displaced. An estimated 680,000 IDPs are scattered across the country, with this figure expected to rise in the coming days. In addition, 1.3 million people in CAR are classified as food insecure, a figure expected to rise in 2014 with the lean season predicted to start as early as January-February instead of May.

In Kenya, tribal fighting between the Borana community and a joint force of the Burji and Gabra tribes on the north-central border with Ethiopia caused an estimated 41,000 refugees to flee into Ethiopia. The violence erupted in the flashpoint border districts of Marsabit and Moyale.

Last Updated: 17/12/2013 Next Update: 07/01/2014
Political and Security context

Burkina Faso has been politically stable for over two decades but has been suffering from the political and military crisis in neighbouring Mali. Instability and unrest in neighbouring Niger and Cote d'Ivoire also have an impact on the country.

Presidential elections are set for 2015, raising fears of unrest if the current president fails to implement a smooth democratic succession after years of restrictions on political space. In this context, the country is threatened by social unrest, with an increase of local conflicts over land, traditional leadership and growing inequalities in 2012. Already in 2011, several violent protests erupted in various cities due to public distrust toward the power in place. The current administration has two years to prepare a smooth mandate transition and prevent a succession battle or a new social uprising.

Humanitarian Context and Needs

Burkina Faso has been affected by insecurity and the on-going military intervention in Mali.

Displacement: As of 20 November, UNHCR noted that the current number of Malian refugees in Burkina Faso (unchanged since April) stands at 49,975, including 27,146 children. Refugees are located in seven formally recognised camps and informal settlement sites: Mentao, Damba, Fereiro, Goundabou, Bobo Dioulasso, and Ouagadougou. Most camps are in the northern region of Sahel, in the provinces of Soum, Oudalan and Seno, where almost 90% of Malian refugees are settled.

Disaster: As reported by OCHA on 16 September, on the basis of rapid assessments, CONASUR (National Council for Emergency and Rehabilitation) counted a total of 13,057 people affected by floods and winds, in 10 regions of Burkina Faso. In addition, 21 wounded and 4 deaths were recorded as well as 1,554 homeless. To cope with this situation, the government delivered food and survival equipment to meet the urgent needs of the affected populations. ECHO reported on 13 September that the population was in urgent need of food assistance and shelter, while wells and water points needed to be rehabilitated. To date, severe flooding has affected over 400,000 people across nine countries of the Sahel region in Africa.

Food Security: As of 28 October 2013, 1.8 million people in Burkina Faso remain food insecure, according to WFP. While cereal production from the 2012/2013 agricultural season was more than 30% higher than the 2011/2012 production, Burkina Faso has undergone several shocks over the past five years, including the 2011/2012 drought, and the population has not yet recovered from the last food crisis.

According to FEWSNET as of late November, new crops from ongoing harvests are forecasted to enable most households to replenish their food stocks. Poor households are expected to have regular food access and pursue their normal livelihoods and should thus experience Minimal Food Insecurity (IPC Phase 1) between now and March 2014. Very poor and poor households in the North and East livelihood zones in the Sahelian region, where an estimated 90% of people depend on agriculture and livestock for their livelihoods, should be able to offset the expected shortfall in cereal production without resorting to atypical sales of livestock. These households are expected to experience Minimal acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 1) between now and March next year. Rising prices and increased production will boost household income, particularly income from sales of livestock and cash crops. This will help improve household terms of trade and strengthen livelihoods.

Civil strife in northern Mali has contributed to increased food supply issues in parts of the country. OCHA reported early July that the arrival of Malian refugees and their cattle had further increased pressure on scarce resources leading to tensions with local communities. A May WFP and UNHCR joint assessment showed that 15% of the Malian refugee households have poor or borderline food consumption, against 13% in the host population. A February FAO/WFP joint assessment indicated an elevated prevalence of food insecurity in Malian refugee camps and in Burkinabe host communities with an estimated 52% of refugees and 58% of host populations affected by food insecurity.

Health and Nutrition: One million children under 5 are affected by stunting due to chronic malnutrition.

The 2013 total target annual caseload of children under 5 with severe acute malnutrition (SAM), as reported by UNICEF in late October, is 96,000 children. The number of new admissions in 2013 from January until end of September is 52,921 or 55.1% of the annual target. To date, 49.7% of refugee children suffering from SAM received therapeutic treatment and 72% of the refugee children aged 6-59 months received vitamin A supplementation. According to OCHA, the number of children with a serious risk of SAM was reassessed on the basis of new admissions recorded between January and July 2013 and increased from 71 to 320 children.

The number of children affected by Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) is estimated at 400,000, marking a decrease from January levels, bringing the <5 Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rate to 10.9%. According to 2012 assessments, the highest GAM rates
were recorded in the regions of Centre North, East, North, Centre and Boucle de Mouhoun. In May, UNHCR and WFP reported that malnutrition is alarming among certain Malian refugee communities, especially in Goudebou, where rates are beyond critical thresholds (SAM: 5.3%, MAM: 19.1%).

According to UNICEF, 2,479 cases of meningitis and 294 deaths were reported in all 63 districts of Burkina Faso since the beginning of the year until the last epidemiologic report on 15 October 2013 (week 41). The fatality rate rose marginally from 11.8 to 11.9%. The total number of cases is the lowest in comparison to the past years as there has been no epidemic this year.

From January to October 2013, a total of 2,832 cases of measles (with 53 new cases from September to 13 October) and 12 deaths (equal to a mortality rate 0.42 per cent) due to measles-related complications such as pneumonia, croup or encephalitis (mortality rate 0.42 per cent), were reported in Burkina Faso. Of these, 976 or 34 per cent of cases (including 8 new cases reported since September) and no deaths were reported in the Sahel region.

Central African Republic: Conflict, Food Insecurity, Insecurity

Highlights

**15 December:** Michel Djotodia, the interim leader of CAR, dismissed three ministers, including Security Minister Josue Binoua, from his government, in line with the announcement of an upcoming cabinet reshuffle he made in November. According to local officials, Prime Minister Nicolas Tiangaye had not signed off on the dismissals as mandatory under the terms of the country’s transitional administration. While the move was allegedly made to quell the population’s frustration regarding rising insecurity and lawlessness across the country, it was also criticised by France as being contrary to the agreement on how the transitional government should work. In the aftermath, Paris indicated that the decision may trigger sanctions.

**Mid-December:** According to reports, Djotodia is also considering a possible amnesty for armed groups involved in heavy sectarian fighting over the past weeks in exchange for their disarmament. Government sources reported that the interim President is therefore assessing the possibility of starting peace talks with the various armed militias, notably largely Christian anti-Balaka groups, active in the country, a possibility that many observers have deemed unrealistic. According to HRW, there is a clear lack of structure and coordination between and even within the different armed groups to engage them in meaningful ceasefire discussions.

**Mid-December:** To date, following massive violence in Bangui, an estimated additional 189,000 people, including 40,000 people who are now stranded without food rations at a makeshift camp near the airport, have been displaced across over 40 sites, with the highest concentration in churches, religious sites and the Bangui international airport. The last wave of displacement brought the overall number of IDPs to over 680,000 people across the country. According to UNHCR, the last wave of violence in Bangui also resulted in the displacement of close to 1,800 refugees from Bangui to DRC.

**Mid-December:** As reported by WFP, the number of food insecure in CAR may be as high as 1.3 million people, and the figure is likely to further rise in the coming months. According to the FAO-supported Integrated Food Security Phase Classification in mid-December, about 1.29 million people, or more than 40% of CAR’s rural population, were in need of urgent assistance.

**12-15 December:** The security situation in Bangui continued to gradually improve, though it remained volatile as tensions between communities ran high and targeted killings continue, with the neighbourhoods of Combatant, Gobongo, Miskine and Benz-vie being the most affected. On 12 December, an anti-Balaka militia reportedly killed 27 Muslims in Bohong, a village close to the far western town of Bouar, while violence was also reported from Bouca, Bossangoa and Bozoum, according to the UN.

**10-11 December:** Starting from 10-11 December, US military aircraft started air lifting Burundian troops to reinforce the AU mission in CAR. To date, Washington is already providing logistical support and advisers to African troops operating against the infamous Lord Resistance Army (LRA) armed group in eastern and southeastern CAR. Meanwhile, Great Britain started air lifting equipment for French troops in Bangui on 11 December.

Political and Security Context

**French Intervention and International Context:** On 10 December, the French President Francois Hollande visited the Central African Republic (CAR). On 6 December, Paris started to deploy additional forces to CAR in a clear attempt to put an end to the spreading violence in the war-torn African country. France scaled up its military presence in the country from an estimated 450 military to 1,600 soldiers, following a UN Security Council resolution. The 450 French troops that were formerly stationed in the capital Bangui had a restricted mandate of securing the international airport and protecting French interests and citizens in the country. As of mid-December, an estimated 1,200 French military were stationed in Bangui while the rest of the troops were deployed to other parts of CAR, notably Bossangoa.

According to Hollande, no further troops increase is planned in CAR. Against this background, French troops, as well as African Union (AU) peacekeepers also stationed in the country, are nevertheless receiving logistical support from US and Great Britain. US assistance is expected to be similar to the support provided to the French troops in Mali. Starting from 10-11 December, US military aircraft started air lifting Burundian troops to reinforce the AU mission in CAR. To date, Washington is already providing logistical support and advisers to African troops operating against the infamous Lord Resistance Army (LRA) armed group in eastern and southeastern CAR. Meanwhile, Great Britain started air lifting equipment for French troops in Bangui on 11 December.

In late November, France had circulated a UN Security Council resolution to allow international troops to use force to end mounting chaos. The resolution aimed to strengthen the African stabilisation force in CAR as a first step toward turning it into a formal UN peacekeeping mission, amidst increasing calls by UN officials regarding a potential...
genocide risk in CAR. On 4 December, Paris officially got UN Security Council authorisation to use lethal force to help African peacekeepers in CAR.

On 10 October, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2121 aimed at providing a basis for the resolution of the ongoing crisis in CAR in a first indication of rising international concerns over the situation in the country. The resolution demanded the swift implementation of the transitional arrangements that should allow for transparent presidential and parliamentary elections following the rule of a transition government during 18 months. In parallel, the UN urged elements of the various armed groups operating in the country to participate in disarmament and demobilisation programmes.

African Union Presence: On 7 December, against the background of the French military scale-up in CAR, the African Union peacekeeping mission also announced that it will increase its force in Central African Republic to 6,000 men, with notably the arrival of Burundian troops, up from the current 3,500.

As reported by the UN on 18 November, the AU-led force may be transformed into a full-scale UN peacekeeping operation, numbering between 6,000 and 9,000 troops, with the support of local powers and if local conditions in terms of governance are met. However, UN Security Council officials informed that a decision on the deployment of UN peacekeepers would not be made until after the AU-led force has a chance to try and stabilise the situation in CAR.

On 10 October, the UN Security Council updated and reinforced the mandate of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA) in five areas: support for implementation of the transition process; support for conflict prevention and humanitarian assistance; support for stabilisation of the security situation; promotion and protection of human rights; and coordination of international actors.

On 1 August, the approximately 2,500-strong Multinational Force of Central African States (FOMAC), which had operated in CAR before the coup and was dispatched to help improve security, became the African-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (MISCA), with the main mandate of helping restore control by the authorities over the whole territory.

Regional Context: On 17 November, fighters from CAR raided a village in eastern Cameroon, forcing the local military to respond by killing five of the attackers. Two other people, including a Cameroonian soldier, died in the fighting. According to local authorities, the motive and the identity of the fighters are still unknown. This attack is the latest in a series of cross-border raids staged by rogue elements, possibly in search of food and money, since the unfolding of the crisis in CAR in March.

Political Context: On 15 December, Michel Djotodia, the interim leader of CAR, dismissed three ministers, including Security Minister Josue Binoua, from his government, in line with the announcement of an upcoming cabinet reshuffle he made in November. According to local officials, Prime Minister Nicolas Tiangaye had not signed off on the dismissals as mandatory under the terms of the country’s transitional administration. While the move was allegedly made to quell the population’s frustration regarding rising insecurity and lawlessness across the country, it was also criticised by France as being contrary to the agreement on how the transitional government should work. In the aftermath, Paris indicated that the decision may trigger sanctions.

According to reports in mid-December, Djotodia is also considering a possible amnesty for armed groups involved in heavy sectarian fighting over the past weeks in exchange for their disarmament. Government sources reported that the interim President is therefore assessing the possibility of starting peace talks with the various armed militias, notably largely Christian anti-Balaka groups, active in the country, a possibility that many observers have deemed unrealistic. According to HRW, there is a clear lack of structure and coordination between and even within the different armed groups to engage them in meaningful ceasefire discussions.

On 18 August, the former rebel leader Michel Djotodia, head of the Seleka coalition that took control of CAR following a coup in late March, was formally sworn in as the country’s new president. The inauguration of Djotodia officially marked the beginning of his interim administration’s 18-month rule to restore order and organise elections. Since the deployment of its troops to curtail the spreading violence in CAR in early December, France has indicated that it wanted presidential elections to be brought forward to next year, putting an end to the interim period originally scheduled to run into 2015. Michel Djotodia has reportedly agreed to discuss the possibility.

Since August, several UN reports have documented the extreme weakness of state institutions in CAR. As of November, the new authorities were still unable to restore order or even deploy official representatives outside of Bangui while, across the country, new warlords, some foreign, had established dominance over territories out of the authorities’ control.

In mid-September, President Djotodia officially announced the dissolution of the Seleka, the fragmented armed coalition that allowed him to seize power in March. Various sources indicate that the Seleka numbered an estimated 25,000 fighters, composed roughly of 5,000 core fighters from the largely Muslim northeast, 5,000 foreigners, mainly Sudanese and Chadian, and 15,000 people recruited while the Seleka advanced toward Bangui between December 2012 and March 2013 and in the immediate aftermath of the seizure of the capital. According to local sources, only part of the Seleka fighters will be officially integrated in the regular Central African Forces (FACA); most of the group is to be disarmed. At present, the disarmament operations are handled by French and MISCA troops after a period of voluntary disarmament ended without much result in mid-September. Since March, disarmament conducted by government troops triggered widespread violence and lootings, and was heavily criticised for its resulting in indiscriminate attacks against civilians, according to international observers.

Initially, violence erupted in CAR in December 2012, when the Seleka coalition, a group of five rebel movements, took up arms against the government, claiming that it had failed to honour 2001 and 2007 peace deals declaring amnesty for fighters who laid down their arms. Throughout March, the Seleka took control of various towns and continued its advance until it seized Bangui on 24 March and toppled President Bozizé who fled to Cameroon.

Security Context: The security situation in the country remains highly volatile with rising violence between armed militias, including ex-Seleka units, self-defence/ anti-Balaka (literally anti-machete or “anti-sword”) groups, and groups loyal to the deposed ex-
president Bozize. As of 11 December, according to French official sources, there were an estimated 3,000 to 8,000 armed fighters, mainly ex-Seleka members, self-defence mainly Christian anti-Balaka groups and members from security forces from the former regime who have joined anti-Balaka groups, and different militias in Bangui. French sources state that no reliable estimate regarding the number of combatants in the whole country is available.

Against this background, fighting has increasingly adopted the characteristics of a sectarian confrontation between Muslim and Christian armed groups. As reported by a UN official in November, inter-sectarian violence was clearly on the rise with former Seleka fighters targeting churches and the Christian population and the latter responding by creating self-defence militias and retaliating against Muslim groups. With violence escalating, the UN suggested that a genocide might develop in the country if the conflict dynamics remain the same.

As of 15 December, the security situation in Bangui continued to gradually improve, though it remained volatile as tensions between communities ran high and targeted killings continue, with the neighbourhoods of Combattant, Gobongo, Miskine and Benz-vie being the most affected. Although information remains scarce, sectarian strife is reportedly still rising in the northwestern cities of Bossangoa and Bozoum. On 12 December, an anti-Balaka militia has reportedly killed 27 Muslims in Bohong, a village close to the far western town of Bouar, while violence was also reported from Bouca, Bossangoa and Bozoum, according to the UN. In separate incidents, several people were also killed in renewed violence between Christians and people allegedly linked to the Seleka in Bangui.

On 9-10 December, French forces established checkpoints and patrols in the capital, and started disarmament operations. According to reports, French military were also patrolling the northwestern town of Bossangoa. Although large-scale violence had reportedly eased in Bangui, official reports stated that two French soldiers were killed in clashes with fighters in the capital during night patrols, while tensions over disarmament operations were also reported. In parallel, reports indicated that at least six people were lynched in the capital overnight in violence mainly targeting Muslims.

On 5-8 December, rival militias, including Christian “anti-Balaka” groups, ex-Seleka fighters and militias loyal to the ousted authorities, clashed in Bangui. Following the violence, and although figures remain difficult to ascertain, an estimated over 530 people were killed with hundreds more being injured in unprecedented sectarian violence that also triggered the displacement of 189,000 people in the Bangui area. According to local sources, the clashes happened alongside widespread lootings and attacks on civilians. In Bossangoa, several days of violence resulted in at least 39 people killed, although the death toll is likely to be much higher. According to reports, violence was also recorded in the northwestern towns of Bozoum and Bocaranga.

The previous week, armed men killed at least 12 civilians and wounded 30, including children, northwest of Bangui, in an early indication of tensions in the capital. In late November, Djotodia had already established a curfew in the capital and increased patrols in moves that did not prevent the spread of violence.

On 18-19 November, clashes flared up between former rebels and local militias south of the western town of Bouca in northern CAR. According to reports by INGOs, several people were left dead with the violence also triggering new displacement. On 13 November, fighting between ex-Seleka and a protesting crowd was reported in the central Fatima neighbourhood of Bangui. As the incident evolved into clashes between ex-Seleka fighters and security forces, at least three people were killed and several others wounded. Demonstrators also reportedly threw stones at the motorcade of the transitional President Djotodia. On 6 November, at least two people were killed in a shooting between rival groups of ex-Seleka fighters until forces from the MISCA restored order in the area.

In October, violence between self-defence groups and former Seleka elements resulting in heavy casualties was reported from the western town of Bouar, in Nana Mambere province, the southeastern city of Bangassou, in the southern province of Lobaye, and the northwestern Ombella-MPoko province. In September, widespread violence flared up in the volatile northwest of the country, igniting around Bossangoa and later spreading to the rest of Ouham province. While the strife was apparently between Seleka elements and insurgent forces supposedly loyal to toppled President Bozize, it also bore sectarian characteristics. According to UNHCR, the widespread violence triggered massive displacement with up to 170,000 people uprooted in September in the area.

Humanitarian Context and Needs

Since March, CAR is struggling to cope with a severe humanitarian crisis; several international humanitarian organisations have warned that the situation is worsening. With regular lootings of health facilities and schools, the population is largely deprived of access to basic services. As of early November, the UN reported that an estimated 2.3 million people – out of an estimated population of 4.6 million, including half of children – were in need of assistance. Earlier humanitarian reports indicated that the entire population of the country was affected by the ongoing conflict.

Displacement: Levels of internal displacement in CAR remain hard to ascertain. As of mid-December, following massive violence in Bangui, an estimated additional 189,000 people, including 40,000 people who are now stranded without food rations at a makeshift camp near the airport, have been displaced across over 40 sites, with the highest concentration in churches, religious sites and the Bangui international airport. The last wave of displacement brought the overall number of IDPs to over 680,000 people across the country. At least half of the displaced are reportedly children. According to UNHCR, living conditions remain appalling in many of the sites hosting the displaced, particularly at the airport and at the monastery of Boy-Rabe. To date, with information being limited, levels of displacement caused by violence in early December in others parts of the country cannot be estimated.

As of 31 October, OCHA reported an estimated 21,000 IDPs and refugees in the eastern and south eastern areas plagued by the activism of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), although numbers were difficult to ascertain because of insecurity.

In mid-December, according to UNHCR, the last wave of violence in Bangui also resulted in the displacement of close to 1,800 refugees from Bangui to DRC. As of 25 October, OCHA reported that almost 65,000 refugees had fled from CAR since the crisis erupted in December. The Democratic Republic of Congo alone has reportedly received an estimated 42,600 refugees while 13,000 people, including 4,000 who have arrived in the Moissala
area since mid-July, have crossed into Chad. An additional 4,800 people fled to the Republic of Congo and 4,286 to Cameroon respectively. Overall, there are over 220,000 CAR refugees in neighbouring countries.

There are an estimated 17,000 long-term refugees in CAR, mostly Congolese and Sudanese. In April and May, an estimated 5,000 people crossed into the country from Sudan’s Darfur region following tribal clashes. According to local media, 2,200 Sudanese refugees from camp Bambari demanded to be moved from the camp due to deteriorating security and the dire humanitarian and health situation in the camp.

**Access:** Rising widespread insecurity, non-existent official administration, and logistical constraints continue to severely hamper the provisions of humanitarian aid in CAR. In the countryside, the security of humanitarian workers remains dependent on the willingness of local strongmen in control of a given area. Since August, several attacks against humanitarian workers were reported, with two people killed in Ouham district in early September. Lootings of humanitarian 4x4 vehicles have reportedly further increased in the capital in late October. On 17 October, WFP reported that the delivery of aid is increasingly challenging due to transport companies being reluctant to travel without armed escort.

According to UNICEF, as of early November, health activities were disrupted across CAR with the supply chain completely halted outside of Bangui since the onset of the crisis a year ago. In addition, the UN reported massive fuel shortages after most petrol stations have been looted or damaged in the conflict. Fuel is essential to ensure that the cold chain functions properly. The shortages are forcing UNICEF to supply fuel by road.

On 25 October, OCHA reported that logistical constraints were blocking the road between Bangui and Paoua. The use of secondary roads remains challenging because of logistical constraints, and access is largely limited to towns and populations along main roads.

**Food Security:** The exact number of food insecure people in CAR remains difficult to establish. As reported by WFP on 16 December, the number of food insecure in CAR may be as high as 1.3 million people, and the figure is likely to further rise in the coming months. According to the FAO-supported Integrated Food Security Phase Classification in mid-December, about 1.29 million people, or more than 40% of CAR’s rural population, were in need of urgent assistance. In November, WFP assessments indicated that though localised food insecurity was registered across the country, people faced the greatest food shortages in the northwestern Ouham, Ouham-Pende and Nana Gribizi provinces and the northern Vakaga and Bamingui-Bangoran provinces.

Humanitarian organisations, including FAO, WFP and the Food Security Cluster, currently all expect the country to experience increased food insecurity in 2014, as this year’s harvest is likely to be considerably reduced. The ongoing crisis has disrupted the livelihoods of the majority of people in the country who rely on subsistence farming. A significant part of the population had to face loottings of cattle, seeds, tools and food reserves and was prevented from accessing farmland. In early November, WFP expressed concerns that the coming lean season, which usually starts in May after food from the previous harvest runs out, may begin as early as the start of 2014.

In December, FAO additionally reported that food prices in the country were high and volatile due to severe market disruption. In particular, maize prices in Bangui rose by 31% between January and November 2013, while millet prices increased by 70% between March and October in Ouham province, an important sorghum and millet producing area in the northwest. As reported by FAO in November, the average inflation rate, which surged from 1.3% in 2011 to 5% in 2012, is forecast to rise further to 8% in 2013.

**Health and Nutrition:** The situation in the health sector was dire even before the eruption of the current crisis, with MSF documenting mortality rates that were well above the emergency threshold in several regions. In June, the international aid organisation Merlin reported that 3.2 million people were living without access to basic health care in the country.

On 25 October, OCHA stated that 60% of health facilities in the country had been vandalised, looted or destroyed, and over 80% of the local medical doctors had moved to Bangui from the countryside. In mid-October, ICRC already reported that no health facilities beyond those provided by humanitarian organisations were operating outside Bangui while drugs were running short.

According to OCHA, outbreaks of measles have been reported almost everywhere in CAR, with at least 600 confirmed cases as of 25 October. The Health Cluster reported cholera outbreaks in 15 of 22 health districts.

According to MSF, the number of cases of malaria in northwest CAR has almost doubled, notably because of the impact of endemic insecurity. Between January and June, MSF recorded 36,910 cases of malaria in Bogoila, a region 50 km from the Chadian border, compared with 19,498 cases during the same period last year. Malaria is estimated to be the cause of 54% of the deaths of children < 5 in CAR.

As of mid-August, over 13,000 people living with HIV/AIDS had their anti-retroviral treatment interrupted as a result of instability since December 2012.

According to UNICEF, malnutrition rates remain high with an estimated 13,500 children <5 suffering from SAM, and 44,000 affected by MAM. A recent exploratory mission in southwest CAR, in Nola, Boda, Berberati, Gamboula and Gadzi, revealed increased levels of GAM, ranging from 6%-10.3%. In May, as reported by an IPC seasonal analysis, the prevalence of SAM in children <5 was above the WHO emergency threshold by 2% in nine of 16 prefectures.

**Protection:** In late October, Amnesty International published a report expressing deep concern over serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law during the armed conflict in CAR. Documented violations included attacks, executions and torture of civilians, indiscriminate shelling, sexual and gender based violence against women, and forceful recruitment of children. Since March, several international organisations have expressed similar accusations.

On 22 November, UNICEF reported that the number of forcefully recruited child soldiers having joined the ranks of various armed groups amount to between 3,500 and 6,000. This suggests that the number has more than doubled in recent months, a development UNICEF ascribes to the rise of self-defence militias created to counter waves of attacks by former rebels. Humanitarian partners, including UNICEF, have indicated that children,
Education: An estimated 2.3 million children have been affected by the ongoing violence.

According to UNICEF, seven out of ten children have not returned to primary school since the conflict started in December 2012. 65% of the 165 schools visited by UNICEF had been looted, occupied, or damaged by bullets or shells.

In September, OCHA reported that many schools, which had recently re-opened, had had to close again because of the ongoing insecurity with the provinces of Ouham, Ouham-Pendé, and Ouaka particularly affected.

Updated: 17/12/2013

CHAD FLOODS, FOOD INSECURITY

No new developments this week. Last update: 10/12/2013.

Humanitarian Context and Needs

Displacement: In 2013, Chad has been at the junction of four major crises - Sudan, Central African Republic (CAR), Nigeria and Libya -, which have intensified its exposure to population movements. More than 87,000 new arrivals (refugees and returnees) from Darfur, CAR, Nigeria and Libya were recorded in the first half of 2013. In total, Chad is currently hosting some 452,600 refugees.

As of late November around 150,000 Chadian returnees from Libya have arrived since the start of the Libya Crisis in 2011, according to OCHA. Sporadic arrivals continue in Faya-Largeau and areas of northern Tibesti region.

Following tribal clashes in Darfur, an influx of around 25,000 Sudanese refugees and 22,757 Chadian returnees have arrived at the border town of Tissi in the South East of the country. On 19 November, the total number of Sudanese refugees in Chad was exceeding 374,500 people. The displaced fled a conflict over gold mines in eastern Darfur between Maaliya and Rizeigat ethnic groups. Another wave later crossed into Chad fleeing inter-communal violence between Salamat and Misseriya ethnic groups in Um Dukhun, Central Darfur.

Political turmoil in CAR has sent a new wave of about 12,000 refugees in the Chadian region of Gore and Moissala since January 2013 and 8,900 have been integrated into existing camps in southern Chad, bringing the total figure of CAR refugees to 75,451. Additionally, more than 1,000 Chadian returnees fleeing the CAR crisis have also arrived in Tissi. New influx of refugees and Chadian returnees from Sudan contributed to the strain on scarce natural resources and increased the vulnerability of the host community in Tissi. Since the beginning of the SELEKA uprising in December 2012, Chad witnessed three major waves of CAR refugees.

Clashes between Nigerian Military and armed groups in northern Nigeria have caused an influx of about 3,500 returnees and 553 Nigerian refugees in Western Chad around Lake Chad. New influx of returnees to Tissi and the proximity of the border with transit and resettlement sites is a major concern of Protection (Child protection; Gender Base violence). Returnees from Nigeria hosted in Ngouboua are mostly unaccompanied children from fishing villages in Bagakawa. According to OCHA, returnees are dispersed across two other locations: Bol and Mao.

Some 90,000 IDPs and 91,000 internal returnees, reintegrated and relocated, are still in need for assistance.

Humanitarian needs among incoming refugees are primarily access to potable water; hygiene; shelter; and health and nutrition care for children and women. Against this background, UNICEF reported in late April that basic social services are non-existent in Tissi, having been destroyed or damaged during the 2004-2006 civil war and following ethnic tension in the Sila region.

Access: According to OCHA, humanitarian organisations in the area of Tissi (Southeast) and in the mine-affected region of Tibesti (North) are confronted with restrained access due to the proximity of two unstable borders, heavy rains, and insecurity.

Food Security: Two consecutive years of continued climatic shocks, including poor rainfall in 2011, caused significant food security concerns in Chad in 2012 that are continuing into 2013. In November, OCHA reported that 2.3 million people remain food insecure in Chad – half a million more than in January – including 1.2 million at risk of extreme food insecurity.

As of late November, FEWSNET reported that the average cereal production of 2013-2014 crops is forecasted at 12% above the five-year average. However, some regions (Kanem, Wadi Fira, Bahr El Ghazal and Hajer Lamis) will likely face a significant deficit (around 50%) due to the late start of the planting, poor rain distribution and early cessation of rains compared to normal.

Food security for households dependent on rain-fed cereal production is improving due to the ongoing harvests. Replenished cereal stocks coupled with increased levels of farming products will enable households to diversify their food sources between October and at least December 2013. During this period, the country will face Minimal food insecurity (IPC Phase 1). However, cereal stocks in Wadi Fira, parts of the northern areas of Ouara, Kanem, northern Batha, North Guera, Hadjer Lamis and Bahr El Gazel, will start to deplete from January 2014, one to two months earlier than usual.

According to FAO early December, crops and pastures in the Sahelian countries of West Africa (Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal) have been affected this year by late onset and early cessation of rains. The situation could lead to a new surge in food insecurity and malnutrition in the 2013/14 marketing year.

Moreover, atypical cereal price increases will further limit food access for very poor and poor households. During this period, they will have reduced food consumption and will...
remain at Stressed levels of food insecurity (IPC Phase 2). Later, during the peak of the
lean season (June-September 2014), food security is expected to decrease in Wadi Fira and Bar -El- Gazal due to significant food deficits. Households in these areas are expected to face Acute Food Insecurity (IPC Phase 3).

Despite a net cereal production surplus form the current harvest season, production deficits have been registered in some structurally food-deficient regions of the Sahel belt. The main reasons are: drought, crop diseases, and destruction by birds. In southern Chad, deficits are largely a result of floods.

Health and Nutrition: Malaria remains a major health problem in Chad, with a prevalence rate of nearly 30% across all age groups and about 36% among children younger than five years, according to UNICEF. According to IRIN, malaria deaths have nearly doubled in Chad in 2013, with more than 2,000 fatalities registered so far and around 780,000 cases diagnosed. Late November, OCHA reported that malaria cases increased in endemic area (Logones, Moyen Chari, Tandjile, Batha, Chari Baguirmi). Erratic rainfall with intermittent dry spells may have encouraged the breeding of mosquitoes and the development of larvae into adult insects.

MSF reported in mid-September that the main causes of morbidity in the Tissi area are malaria, acute watery diarrhoea, and respiratory infections. The malaria caseload for 2013 is a cause of concern, with some of the hardest hit regions seeing a tenfold rise from 2012, following an unpredictable rainy season and the shortage of bed nets across the country. MSF reported that the number of malaria cases increased alarmingly in Am Timan, Salamat region, with 14,021 cases reported in August alone.

Since July, local media have regularly reported the dire conditions in which Sudanese refugees live in camps located in eastern Chad. On 12 September, it was reported that the refugees of camp Djabal have complained about the high incidence of malaria and diarrhoea, especially affecting the youngest and older persons, while camp authorities reported 22 deaths during August.

The nutritional situation in Chad’s Sahel belt is at critical levels with a GAM rate surpassing the emergency threshold of 15% in nine of 22 regions, according to OCHA. The most affected areas are Batha (25% GAM), Wadi Fira (22% GAM), Salamat (22% GAM), Beg (21% GAM), and Kanem (21% GAM). UNICEF forecasts that an estimated 126,000 children will suffer from SAM in 2013.

Reviewed: 17/12/2013

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO CONFLICT, FOOD INSECURITY

Highlights

12 December: The Congolese Government and the March 23 rebels (M23) signed a peace agreement in Nairobi, Kenya. The deal reiterates the dissolution of M23 as an armed group, and states the intention of the DRC government to work for disarmament and the reintegration of former combatants into society. However, one government official indicated that the deal does not include amnesty for the fighters accused of war

11 December: The 20,000-strong UN peacekeeping force MONUSCO announced that its troops had launched a military operation against the rebel group, the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FLDR), which operates along the Congolese border in the Kivus. This is part of a broader plan to neutralize remaining rebel movements which did not respond to DRC’s call for voluntary surrender, following the M23 defeat and the opening of a disarmament process for armed groups in the east of the country.

10 December: Movements of the Ugandan rebel group Allied Democratic Forces/ National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF/NAFLU) from North-Kivu to Ituri (Province Orientale) resulted in the displacement of 30,000 people.

Political and Security Context

International and Regional Context: On 2 December, Congolese President Kabila met with Ugandan President Museveni in Kampala where the two leaders agreed on the urgency to conclude the protracted talks with the ethnic Tutsi-dominated March 23 rebels (M23) and to facilitate the peaceful completion of the demobilisation process of armed groups in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Both Uganda and Rwanda have been repeatedly accused of backing armed groups active in DRC. Tensions have heightened with Kinshasa over the last few weeks, following Uganda’s refusal to release any rebel fighters until DRC signs a deal with the M23. Kampala is allegedly sheltering two M23 political and military leaders, and the Ugandan military is currently holding nearly 2,000 former M23 rebels who crossed the border after being routed by DRC’s troops early November. Observers have underscored that this meeting between Kampala and Kinshasa marked the resumption of bilateral relations between the two countries, which could be the first step in the reactivation of the Joint Border Demarcation Committee for which activities have been suspended for almost two months.

Between 25-30 November, the UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes completed a week-long visit to Tanzania, Rwanda, Congo, Uganda and DRC to help shore up peace efforts in the region. While the mission focused on the dialogue in Kampala between the Government of DRC and M23 insurgency group, it also aimed at fostering progress in implementing the broader commitments of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework signed in February 2013, by mobilising support from the 11 signatories during the East African Community Summit of Heads of States on 30 November. The framework includes two main levels of responsibility, namely national and regional. It calls for political reforms in Kinshasa, and requests neighbouring countries to stop fostering instability in DRC. Earlier in November, leaders from the member countries of the Southern African Development Community and the Conference of the Inter-regional Great Lakes met in Pretoria to discuss the conflict in the Kivus and bring together governments backing Congolese President Kabila and those supporting his Rwandan counterpart.

Insurgent groups in the East: On 12 December, the Congolese Government and the M23 signed a peace agreement in Nairobi, Kenya. A month after negotiations stalled in Kampala, the deal reportedly reiterated the dissolution of M23 as an armed group, and the intention of DRC’s government to work for the disarmament, demobilisation and
reintegration into society of former combatants. A government official indicated that the deal does not include amnesty for the fighters accused of war crimes, which was at the centre of the talks disruption early November.

DRC has struggled for over two decades with the proliferation of armed groups, mostly in the eastern provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu, Katanga, and Orientale. In May 2013, violence escalated in North-Kivu, which harbours over 20 different armed groups. The M23 insurgency movement, which had been leading a rebellion since April 2012, engaged in heavy fighting against government troops, which caused the deaths of an estimated 900 people including 700 rebels, between May and early November. At the end of October, M23 rebels suffered a series of severe military defeats that precipitated the effective end of the insurgency. With the support of the UN Force Intervention Brigade, established within the MONUSCO, this victory marked the army’s first over a significant rebel group.

In late November, the DRC government presented its plan for the process of disarmament and reintegration of members of armed groups operating in the country. The end of the M23 uprising was followed by several waves of fighters surrendering in the east, including militants from other groups active in North Kivu, South Kivu, and Katanga, namely the Hutu-dominated militia Nyatura, the Hunde-dominated Alliance for a Free and Sovereign Congo, and the Nduma Defence of Congo. The opening of the reintegration process has led other rebel groups such as Raia Mukombozi and Raia Mutomboki to announce the end of their rebellion on the condition that their fighters could join government forces.

These latest developments could allow for the gradual stabilisation of the east, but observers warn that the political issue of M23 is not resolved, and further efforts are needed to rid the country of negative forces which represent threats of renewed violence. Indeed, several militias are reportedly reluctant to take part in the process which favours social integration but not systematic reintegration into the national army.

In late November, DRC’s government warned that the ultimatum for voluntary surrender would end soon and remaining rebel groups to depose arms before FARDC and MONUSCO launched new offensives on those rebel groups still active. In line with MONUSCO’s new objective, unarmed surveillance drones were deployed early December to monitor rebel activities along the Rwandan and Ugandan border, and on 11 December, the 20,000-strong peacekeeping force announced that its troops have launched a military operation against the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FLDR), a rebel group which operates along the Congolese border in the Kivus. Ongoing operations to neutralise armed groups in the east also plan to target the ethnic Ntiti Patriotic Resistance Force of Ituri (FPRI), and the Forces for the Liberation of Congo (FPLC).

Despite progress in neutralising armed groups in the Kivus, other armed groups remain active in the northeast, notably in Province Orientale, where several clashes between the army and non-state actors were recorded over the last few weeks. According to ECHO on 10 December, movements of the Ugandan rebel group Allied Democratic Forces/ National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF/NALU) from North-Kivu to Ituri caused population displacement. As of 20 November, OCHA reported that violence between FARDC and the FPRI has affected 300,000 people in Sud Irumu since August, including 200,000 displaced. Sporadic clashes have been reported in the area since 23 August, when four days of fighting in Walendu-Bindi, Bavi, and Olongba reportedly caused a first wave of displacement of 80,000 people.

On 19 November, OCHA reported that attacks from a rebel group caused internal and cross-border displacement in Arru territory, on the border with Uganda, while young civilians reportedly joined into self-defence militias to cope with the absence of the national army in the area. Further west, local sources reported that clashes between the army and an unknown armed group in Wamba caused significant population displacement.

Orientale province has also been affected by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), a Ugandan militant movement operating in DRC since 2005 and was responsible for 122 incidents from January to September 2013, noted OCHA. According to OCHA on 18 November, renewed LRA violence was recorded early November in two Uele districts, along the borders with CAR and South Sudan. Following two months of relative calm in the area, the militant group reportedly conducted 19 attacks along with abductions and lootings, mostly between 1-15 November. No displacement was recorded, but local authorities fear that increased LRA activism may slow down the return of IDPs and refugees in the north of the province.

Humanitarian Context and Needs

In the east of the country, conflict-affected areas recorded high levels of needs and repeated population displacements, both internally and cross-border. Displaced and host populations alike suffer from multiple shocks and are very vulnerable, as are people unable to flee the violence. Due to different economic and conflict dynamics, needs vary depending on the area and the presence of humanitarian organisations. In conflict-affected areas, insecurity poses multiple protection risks and a lack of access to basic services.

Displacement: As of 31 October, UNHCR reported that an estimated 439,000 Congolese refugees reside in neighbouring countries, including 152,900 in Uganda, 72,000 in Rwanda, 65,000 in Tanzania, and 43,000 in Burundi.

As of 31 October, UNHCR reported that DRC currently hosts over 202,000 refugees among whom 141,000 are from Rwanda and the rest from Central African Republic (CAR), Burundi, Sudan, Uganda, and the Republic of Congo. In mid-December, an estimated 2,000 new CAR refugees reportedly arrived in DRC following the upsurge of violence in Bangui since 5 December.

Deterioration of security in the east of the country caused repeated population displacements over the last months, with OCHA reporting an estimated 2.7 million IDPs as of November 2013, more than half of whom are located in the Kivus, with the rest residing mostly in Province Orientale and Katanga. The army’s victory over M23, and subsequent surrender of militants, has allowed for a relative lull in violence in the east since early November. OCHA reported in late November that IDPs are starting to return to their homes, but a new offensive against armed groups in the east is expected to lead to additional displacement, and limit return movements. Meanwhile, ongoing activism of numerous armed group in North Kivu and Orientale continue to cause small-scale population displacements internally and across the border with Uganda.

North-Kivu Province: In August, early September, and late October, extensive fighting between armed non-state actors and FARDC, as well as infighting, has led to massive
displacement both internally towards South-Kivu and across the border to Rwanda and Uganda. In early November, the Rwandan authorities reported an estimated 3,000 new DRC refugees, and Uganda reported at least 10,000. On 19 November, OCHA reported that thousands of displaced, both IDPs and refugees, are starting to return home following the ousting of M23 rebels by FARDC in Nyiragongo and Rutshuru territories. Sporadic violence is still being reported in other areas in North Kivu which continues to record small-scale population displacements.

As of 25 October, OCHA reported that North Kivu hosts over a million IDPs, some displaced since January 2009. This represents an increase of almost 4% compared to the cumulative number of IDPs in September. In August, over half the displaced were in Masisi (30%) and Walikale (23.5%) territories. In the whole province, 63% of IDPs were living with host families, against 22% in public buildings, and 15% in camps. Population movements remain ongoing due to the presence of multiple armed groups and repeated clashes between insurgents and government forces.

**South Kivu Province:** According to OCHA as of 30 September, there are 591,000 IDPs in South Kivu, 76% of whom fled their places of origin because of insecurity caused by armed groups. This number marks a decrease compared to August, due to updated figures for returnees in the province.

On 25 October, local media reported that fighting between armed groups displaced over 10,000 people in October in Shabunda territory. In late September, small-scale new displacement occurred following fighting between Raia Mutomboki and government military in the area.

**Maniema Province:** On 30 September, OCHA reported that Maniema province was hosting an estimated 257,000 IDPs, 75% of whom come from South-Kivu. The displaced are mainly located along the administrative boundaries with the Kivus, between Punia and Pangi.

**Oriente Province:** According to ECHO on 10 December, movements of the Ugandan rebel group Allied Democratic Forces/ National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF/NALU) from North-Kivu to Ituri caused the displacement of 30,000 people.

According to OCHA on 19 November, attacks from a rebel group in Arru territory displaced 6,400 people, internally and over the border with Uganda. Further west, local sources reported that clashes between the army and an unknown armed group in Wamba also caused the displacement of an estimated 20,000 people.

On 20 November, OCHA reported that violence between FARDC and FRPI has displaced 200,000 people in Sud Irumu since August, when a first wave of clashes had caused the displacement of 80,000 people.

On 17 November, local sources reported that clashes between FARDC and an unidentified armed group in the east of the province forced over 20,000 people to flee in the bush over the previous week.

As of 30 September, OCHA reported that 506,000 people are displaced in Orientale province.

**Katanga Province:** OCHA reported end of November that the number of returnees in Katanga increased by more than 85%, up from 24,000 in June 2012 to 167,000 in September 2013 due to the surrender of several armed groups usually active in the province and the subsequent decrease in violence.

OCHA reported on 9 October that the number of IDPs in the province had decreased from 389,700 to 358,400 from August to September. Over the same period, the number of returns has increased significantly due to a lull in violence in Kasenga, Manono, and Mitwaba. However, the situation remains volatile in Maimba Nkulu, and Pweto where repeated clashes between government forces and local militias continue to cause displacement. Pweto is considered to be the territory most affected by these events and records up to 40% of the IDPs in the province.

According to OCHA, new attacks by armed groups on 17 and 18 October caused people to flee their villages in the area of Mitwaba. In late September, OCHA reported that activities of the militia Bakata Katanga has led to new population displacements from Nganie to Mwanza, straining Mwanza resources, mostly with heightened food insecurity. Since early June, attacks by Bakata Katanga resulted in the displacement of 23,000 people, according to authorities.

**Access:** Access is limited across large parts of DRC, mainly in the east. Physical and infrastructural impediments to delivering aid are significant due to mountainous and volcanic terrain, and a lack of asphalted roads in some areas, especially in Maniema province.

Tensions between aid workers and the local population, with incidents of hostilities against aid workers and interference in delivering aid, have been reported. OCHA recorded 177 security incidents against aid workers across DRC from January to September 2013.

Since the defeat of M23 in North Kivu early November, access is reportedly improving in eastern DRC, as FARDC are now securing the areas formerly controlled by the rebels. Mine clearance operations and the clearing of unexploded ordinances is ongoing.

**Food Security:** A June report by FSNWG estimated that 6.4 million people are at Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or Emergency (IPC Phase 4) levels of food insecurity. The figure represents an increase of about 75,000 people compared to October 2012. Two-thirds of food insecure people, an estimated 4.2 million, are considered severely food insecure and concentrated in the east of North Kivu province and the south of Katanga province, which were severely affected by conflict and displacement between March and October.

Extreme poverty and limited livelihood options are the main reasons for food insecurity across the territory. However, in the conflict-affected eastern areas, food security and livelihoods are negatively impacted by insecurity and displacement, which in turn disrupt agricultural and income generating activities. The west of DRC, although relatively stable compared to the east, faces chronic food insecurity due to isolation, lack of social infrastructure, and the effect of aggravating economic shocks.

In the northern provinces of Equateur and Orientale, the planting of the main season maize crops harvested in October has been completed under average rainfall conditions. Satellite analysis indicate that good rains benefited crops in northern and southern regions, while
poor rains may have affected crops in central provinces of Bandundu, Kasai Occidental and Kasai Oriental.

Health and Nutrition: The Congolese health system remains weak, as a result of structural problems and violence affecting mostly the east of the country. Epidemics are rife throughout the country, and the burden of infectious and non-infectious disease is one of the highest in the region. Due to extreme poverty, limited basic services, and lack of access to healthcare, maternal and child morbidity and mortality rates remain high.

Across DRC, 19,000 cholera cases have been registered for 2013 as of 30 October, OCHA reports. 337 deaths have been reported for a fatality rate of 2%. Over 60% of cases (more than 11,600) are registered in Katanga province. During 2012, DRC had 30,753 registered cholera cases with 709 deaths, compared to 21,700 cases in 2011. The surge in cholera cases is largely the result of limited access to safe drinking water, poor hygiene conditions, and poor sanitation.

In October, OCHA reported 63,400 cases of measles between January and August 2013. Over four million cases of malaria have been reported since the beginning of 2013, 8,500 deaths were registered as of 17 June (21,000 deaths in the whole 2012). As of late November, OCHA reported a threefold increase in the number of malaria cases recorded in the former M23 rebel stronghold of Rutshura (North Kivu) compared to past years. While the cumulative number never exceeded 25,000 per year between 2009 and 2012, over 76,000 cases have been recorded in the area so far in 2013.

The national rate for GAM stands at 11%, with UNICEF reporting an estimated 2.5 million children <5 who are acutely malnourished, 975,000 of whom suffer from SAM. Local capacity to respond to malnutrition is limited, and health stakeholders struggle to monitor epidemics and displacements, key contributors to the high rates of acute malnutrition.

Protection: Insecurity is a key concern across all conflict-affected areas of the country, with both armed groups and armed forces accused of repeated abuses against civilians, including arbitrary arrests, extortion, looting, violence, and executions. Sexual violence and conscription of children are considered the two main protection issues. At end July, UNHCR reported that violence in North-Kivu, involving FARDC, the M23, and the ADF/NALU, is increasingly exposing women and girls to violence, particularly rape. From January to July 2013, 619 cases of rape were reported, compared to 108 cases during the same period in 2012. On 26 August, UNICEF indicated that a growing number of children are killed or injured in renewed fighting and up to 2,000 are being conscripted as child soldiers in the current conflict.

Updated: 17/12/2013

Humanitarian Context and Needs

Displacement: The continued influx of refugees from Somalia is leading to an increase in humanitarian needs in both rural and urban areas. UNHCR reported that as of 10 September, there were 18,725 Somali refugees in Djibouti, including 630 who had arrived since January 2013.

Food Security: Several consecutive years of drought have led to a critical food security situation in Djibouti where an estimated 70,000 people are classified as food insecure. Most households affected by severe and moderate food insecurity are concentrated in the rural areas of Ali Sabieh, Dikhil and Obock.

As of November, FEWSNET reported that food security has been improving for most pastoral households, which currently experience Stressed levels (IPC Phase 2). The July to September rains were near average to above average and well distributed, which should allow food security to remain at steady levels from November through March. Staple food prices remained generally stable from September to October, and availability of resources and income from the current season is supporting minimal consumption requirements.

Continued Stressed acute food insecurity is expected for most poor households in Djibouti City’s urban areas of Balbala, Radiska, and Baulaos and is anticipated to heighten through December. High unemployment rates (up to 48%) and high staple prices are causing urban to peri-urban migration to areas such as Balbala. The food voucher programme for vulnerable households (from July through September covering Ramadan and Eid), in addition to humanitarian and food assistance programmes, has reportedly improved access to food.

Health and Nutrition: According to FEWSNET and WFP, as of August, GAM rates for children <5 stood at 17.9%, while chronic malnutrition was 35.2%. Roughly 33% of children <5 are underweight, and 15% of women of reproductive age are acutely malnourished.

Reviewed: 17/12/2013

GUINEA FOOD INSECURITY, UNREST

Highlights

No new developments this week. Last update: 03/12/2013.

Political and Security Context

Political Context: On 25 November, at least one person was killed and several wounded during a protest over the results of the parliamentary elections which took place on 28 September. Guinea’s opposition parties called their supporters to the streets to protest a Supreme Court decision released on 15 November that rejected opposition challenges to the ruling party’s victory in the elections. A week before, another person was killed and nine others injured during clashes in Conakry after a journalist critical of President Alpha Conde said he had been targeted for assassination.
In October, OCHA reported continued tensions in Guinea in response to the official results of the 28 September parliamentary elections. Results were initially due to be published by 2 October but were eventually delayed to 17 October and gave the lead to the Rally of the Guinean People (RPG) party headed by Alpha Conde. Opposition insisted that electoral fraud occurred and, as a result, called for the annulment of the elections. On 9 October, the international community - including SRSG Said Djinnit and representatives from the EU and ECOWAS – echoed the opposition’s claims, noting electoral irregularities in eight out of the thirty-eight constituencies; the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) has admitted errors but labelled them as minor.

Guinea’s opposition parties withdrew from UN-mediated election talks with the government after violence broke out on 20 June and left three anti-government activists shot and nine others wounded. The negotiations aimed to secure opposition participation in the long-delayed parliamentary polls, which were meant to seal the mineral-rich nation’s transition to civilian rule following a coup in 2008.

Inter-Communal Violence: The Guinean Government reported on 25 July that a sudden outbreak of ethnic violence killed at least 100 people between 15-17 July, a significant increase compared to the previously announced death toll of 58. UNHCR reported on 19 July that 242 were wounded after Guerze tribesmen, who form the majority population in the forest region, allegedly attacked three ethnic Konianke in the town of Koule. Fighting spread to the provincial capital N’Zerekore, 570 km southeast of Conakry, and clashes reached the town of Beyla on 17 July. According to the UN, security and defense forces were deployed to restore order, with the support of additional troops from Macenta and Gueckedou, and calm seems to have been restored as of 22 July.

Humanitarian Context and Needs

Displacement: As of 30 October 2013, OCHA reported that over 6,500 Ivorian refugees are currently residing in Guinea.

Several international organisations reported on 23 July that 30,000 people were displaced following the outbreak of ethnic violence from 15-17 July. On 19 July, UNHCR reported that several hundred IDPs sought refuge in military camps in N’Zerekore and Beyla.

Food Security: According to FAO late November, harvesting of maize, millet and sorghum has just been completed, while harvesting operations of rice, the most important crop produced in the country, are currently underway. Most cropping areas benefited from good distribution of rainfall during the cropping period (April-September). As a result, a recent crop assessment put the aggregate 2013 cereal production at 3.4 million tonnes, about 6% up on 2012.

However, despite the improved food security situation, a joint WFP/Government survey indicated that 200,000 people, out of a total population of 6.7 million, located mostly in the west (Boké, Kindia, Conakry) and in the South (N’Zérékoré), still suffer from severe food insecurity, while an additional 1.8 million people estimated to be moderately food insecure.

Health: As reported by OCHA, Guinea experienced severe cholera outbreaks in 2012 and continued to report cases throughout 2013 in different parts of the country. Nevertheless, the country have witnessed a steady decline in the number of cases this year with 294 cases of cholera reported nationwide since the beginning of the year compared to 5,523 cases (and 105 deaths) in September 2012. However, Guinea is the country reporting the highest Case Fatality Rate, with an estimated 30 deaths so far (9.4%).

Reviewed: 17/12/2013

MALI CONFLICT, FLOODS, FOOD INSECURITY

Highlights

15 December: The second round of legislative elections took place as scheduled on 15 December. The European Union declared that the elections had met international standards. Preliminary results showed President Keita’s party, the Rally for Mali, had won most of the votes. Full provisional results are due by 20 December. Counter-terrorism and security measures were scaled-up ahead of the polls, especially following an earlier announcement on 29 November by the rebel Movement for the Liberation of the Azawad (MNLA) that the group was ending the ceasefire and taking up arms.

14 December: A suspected Islamist attack killed two peacekeepers and injured at least seven in the north eastern city of Kidal, a day before the second round of parliamentary elections.

Early December: A major French military operation targeting jihadists was conducted north of Timbuktu, and early reports indicated that 19 members of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) were killed.

November: FEWSNET reported that cereal availability is improving in southern Mali, indicating households will face Minimal (IPC Phase 1) acute food insecurity through March 2014. Improvement in household income in the north was also reported, with communities also expected to remain at Minimal levels until March 2014.

As of late November, a SMART Survey conducted in the six southern regions indicated that the rate of Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) stands at 8.6%. In the north, the survey was only conducted in the region of Gao, where GAM rate reportedly stood at 13.5%.

Political and Security Context

Political Context: The second round of legislative elections took place as scheduled on 15 December. The European Union declared that the elections met international standards. The second round of voting was seen as important due to the low number of determined seats in the first round. Preliminary results showed President Keita’s party, the Rally for Mali, won most of the votes. Full provisional results are due to be published by 20 December and it is widely hoped that democracy can be restored to the country following an Islamist takeover of the north last year.

Counter-terrorism and security measures were scaled-up ahead of the polls, especially following an earlier announcement on 29 November by the rebel Movement for the Liberation of the Azawad (MNLA) that the group was ending the ceasefire and taking up arms. While no major incidents were reported, the elections followed a recent upsurge in
rebel attacks against African troops in the north, resulting in low voter turnout, some as low as 15%, in most polling stations.

**Tuareg Insurgency:** On 14 December, a suspected Islamist attack killed two peacekeepers and injured at least seven in the northeastern city of Kidal, a day before Malian people were expected to vote in the second parliamentary elections. Despite the absence of recent clashes between Tuareg groups and the Malian Armed Forces (MAF), insecurity linked to terrorism continues to dominate the northern provinces of the country.

On 29 November, the MNLA announced they ended the ceasefire and were taking up arms, following a Tuareg demonstrations seeking to block a visit by Mali's Prime Minister to Kidal, which escalated into clashes between Malian soldiers and stone-throwing protestors. This declaration by militants marked a rupture in the ongoing process to honour the June peace deal, which had led the creation of an alliance of three Tuareg and Arab rebel movements to form a united front in the peace talks with the government. Before the MNLA, the Arab Movement of Azawad (MAA), and the High Council for the Unity of Azawad (HCUA) announced their merger and committed to the national dialogue, President Keita created a Ministry for National Reconciliation and the Development of the Northern Region to seek solutions to the Tuareg issue, an lifted arrest warrants against four leaders of the Tuareg rebellion.

**Military operations:** Early December, a major French military operation targeting jihadists was conducted in the towns of Bouje-Baya and Aourane, north of Timbuktu, and early reports indicated that 19 members of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) were killed between 7-8 December.

French forces still present in Mali have formally handed over security duties to MINUSMA. A separate and reduced contingent of at least 1,000 French soldiers will remain in Mali to conduct counter-terrorism operations. France’s involvement in the conflict came after Islamist fighters moved to within 20 km of Mopti, a strategically important town on the border between rebel and Government held territories, taking control of the strategic town Konna on 10 December 2012.

**Humanitarian Context and Needs**

**Displacement:** OCHA reported in late November that an estimated 424,000 people remain displaced as consequences of the 2012 crisis in the north. As of 30 November, the Commission on population movements indicated that 256,000 people are still internally displaced, which represents a decrease of almost 30,000 compared to early November, a drop attributed to people returning home due to improved security conditions. The capital Bamako hosts the largest number of IDPs (62,500), followed by the northern regions of Gao (47,000), Timbuktu (45,000) and Kidal (34,000). Between January and September, more than 78,000 IDPs have reportedly travelled from the south to the north, and surveys indicate that improvement of security conditions is the main reason for these population movements. However, sporadic violence in the north and the difficult economic situation are still causing displacement toward the south, with 39,000 people reported to be displaced between January and September 2013.

As of 30 November, UNHCR reported that 168,000 refugees reside outside Mali, mostly in Mauritania (66,000), Niger (50,000), and Burkina Faso (50,000).

**Access:** Humanitarian access continues to improve in central regions and parts of the north, and aid is increasing in the accessible parts, according to OCHA. Aid activities in other parts of the north are limited due to continued insecurity and bandity. On 4 November, a landmine exploded at the passing of a public transport vehicle, killing four people and wounding a dozen. According to the UN, unexploded ammunitions and landmines in the north remain a significant threat.

Access to basic water, education, and health services remains limited in the north largely due to the low return of civil servants, the destruction of infrastructure, and a lack of materials to support basic services.

**Food Security:** According to FEWSNET as of late November, the average ongoing harvest is improving cereal availability and should ensure adequate food consumption for households in southern Mali, which are expected to face Minimal (IPC Phase 1) acute food insecurity through March 2014. In the north, conditions are not yet back to normal, but households income show a steady improvement, and humanitarian assistance should allow vulnerable people to meet their food needs and to remain also at Minimal levels of food insecurity between now and March 2014.

In late September, WFP reported that the regions of Timbuktu, Kidal and Gao are the worst affected in terms of food insecurity with prevalence rates between 32% and 36% for severe food insecurity, and up to 90% of the population affected by severe to moderate food insecurity and relying heavily on food assistance. As IDPs and refugees begin to return to the north, limited resources will be further strained, and the number of people requiring assistance is likely to increase in the coming months. According to previous assessments finalised in May, people affected by food insecurity are estimated at about 3.5 million, including 1.4 million in need of immediate assistance.

FEWSNET notes that as of late September, the availability of green-harvested maize, tubers, and rice marks the end of the lean season in southern and northern growing areas, where poor households are seeing improved access to food products thanks to continued humanitarian aid, the availability of milk and gathered foods, and especially favourable terms of trade.

**Health and Nutrition:** On 5 August, OCHA reported that in the areas that were occupied by armed groups, 65% of health structures are reported partially, or non-functional compared to 17% nationally.

As of late November, a SMART Survey conducted in the six southern regions indicated that the rate of Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) stands at 8.6%. Due to insecurity in the north, the survey was only conducted in the region of Gao, where GAM rate reportedly stood at 13.5%. According to UNICEF in July, an estimated 660,000 children <5 suffered from acute malnutrition in 2013, including 210,000 from severe acute malnutrition.

**Updated:** 17/12/2013

**MAURITANIA FOOD INSECURITY**
Highlights

No new developments this week. Last update: 10/12/2013.

Political and Security Context

On 3 December, Mauritania’s National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) announced the official results of the first round of legislative and local elections elections that occurred on 23 November. The results yielded a landslide victory for the ruling party Union for the Republic (UPR) which won 56 seats out of 147, while another 34 seats were shared between 14 small parties aligned to the UPR. Tawassoul, the Islamic party banned by the government until 2007, took the lead of the parliamentary opposition with 12 seats. A second round of voting – originally scheduled on 7 December – will be held on 21 December to allow parties time to appeal against the first round results.

Tawassoul, the only member of the 11-party Coordination of the Democratic Opposition (COD) to resist an election boycott, has claimed the poll was marred by fraud while several presidential parties, including the UPR, also addressed claims to the CENI. The COD called for the cancellation of the elections, which come after months of protests against the staging of the polls.

On 29 November, incidents of unrest were reported in several cities of Mauritania, including Nouadhibou, Kaedi, Boutilimit and Zouerat, according to ECHO. Those happening in Zouerat seemed the most serious, and derived from a protest of People's Progressive Alliance (APP), a moderate opposition party, against discrepancies between their figures and the provisional ones provided by the CENI. Incidents started with the throwing of stones during a demonstration, and police answered with tear gas. At least 7 people have been injured, mostly due to the effects of gas.

No major incidents were reported on the day of the election and the CENI announced a record turnout of 75% of the 1.2 million registered voters in the country.

The COD had announced early October that 10 of its 11 member parties had decided to boycott the vote but Islamist party Tawassoul said they would participate, prompting uncertainty over the future of the coalition. The current president Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz seized power in a 2008 coup and was elected a year later, but the COD has never accepted his presidency as legitimate.

Humanitarian Context and Needs

Displacement: Mauritania is the largest recipient of refugees fleeing the conflict in Mali. UNHCR has stated that the number of Malian refugees in Mauritania has levelled off since March 2013 standing at 66,200 people as of 28 November. Almost all refugees live in the Mbéra camp, a remote desert location on the border with Mali with significant security challenges. According to UNICEF, 60% are women and children and many have been in the camp for almost two years, resulting in overlapping emergency and medium term needs. This remote area of Mauritania, which is hosting the refugees, is very poor, suffers high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition and has limited government services.

Disaster: As of early October, the several weeks of consecutive rainfall since mid-August, had caused flooding in much of the capital, Nouakchott, and the six surrounding regions of Brakna, Tagant, Hodh Ech Chargui, Assaba, Inchiri, and Adrar. According to the Department of Civil Protection, the damages caused by the flooding are unprecedented in the region. As reported by IFRC, more than 5,600 people were affected by the flooding. 2,305 people were displaced and at least eight people died according to OCHA.

Food Security: According to FAO early December, crops and pastures in the Sahelian countries of West Africa (Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal) have been affected this year by late onset and early cessation of rains. The situation could lead to a new surge in food insecurity and malnutrition in the 2013/14 marketing year. A large Malian population displacement due to civil unrest is also contributing to regional food insecurity.

An estimated 800,000 people are food insecure in Mauritania, marking an increase from the estimated 560,000 food insecure people reported in January 2013. 190,000 people are classified as severely food insecure and 610,000 moderately food insecure. WFP reported on 3 September that as of July, 23.7% of Mauritanian households are considered food insecure, representing a decrease compared to the same period last year (32.3%), but the rate is not as low as expected (estimation for July 2013 was 22%). Higher rates were recorded in the south of the country, in the Guidimaka (40%), Assaba (37%), Tangant (34%), and Gorgol (31%) regions. Food insecurity is higher in rural areas (28.5%) than in urban areas (17.4%), even though rural exodus and rising food prices are driving the urban food insecurity rates higher.

As reported by FEWSNET late November, Mauritania is expected to face Minimal Food Insecurity (IPC Phase 1) in most parts of the country due to pastoral conditions and harvests generally comparable to those of an average year, regular and adequate supply markets, ability to access food reinforced by functional assistance programmes and favourable terms of trade.

In the northwest of rain-fed crops areas (central and northern Guidimaka, eastern and northern Gorgol and northern Brakna), a sharp decline in rain-fed cereal production, only resource for most of poor households, is expected. Poor livestock conditions in Guidimaka (North) and Brakna (South-West) will also lead to early transhumance in February/March 2014, compared to April/May in a normal year. Grain prices are relatively stable compared to October but remain above the average of the last five years (20-40%) due to high prices in Mali’s source markets. All this will result in Stressed levels of food insecurity (IPC Phase 2) for this group of households between January and March of next year.

According to FAO and WFP, as of late November, a locust outbreak is underway in northwestern Mauritania, where locust numbers are increasing due to high levels of precipitation and summer breeding this year. As a result, hoppers continue to form groups and bands in Inchiri, Dakhlet Nouadhibou, southwest Adrar and northern Trarza. A second generation of breeding could occur in December and cause locust numbers to increase further. Despite continued efforts to combat the plague, locust pressure could pose a serious threat to flood-recession cropping. Mauritania suffered a large locust attack in 2004 covering about 16,000 square kilometres that ravaged a vast quantity of crops and threatened nearly a million people with starvation.

Health and Nutrition: According to ECHO’s Humanitarian Implementation Plan for Sahel
2014, more than 114,000 Mauritanian children affected by Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) were in need of therapeutic treatment in 2013. According to the SMART survey conducted in July, six regions of the country have reached or exceeded the emergency threshold of 15% for Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM). The national Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) rate remains below (12.8%). The estimated caseload for 2014 is 125,263 children with GAM, including 30,741 children with Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM). This is an increase of more than 25% from 2013.

Reviewed: 17/12/2013

SOMALIA CONFLICT, FOOD INSECURITY

Highlights

12 December: Following the dismissal of Prime Minister Shirdon on 2 December, Somalia’s President Mahamud appointed Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed as a new PM, ending a governmental crisis which raised significant concerns over the security situation.

10 December: Suspected Al Shabaab militants attacked the Ministry/Minister (?) of Social Affairs in the southern city of Kismayo in the Jubaland region, killing a security guard. The Jubaland region, which borders Kenya and Ethiopia, has been repeatedly affected by violence due to rivalries between multiple forces including clan militias, Al Shabaab, and Kenyan and Ethiopian soldiers

6 December: A Member of Parliament was killed by a car bomb in the capital Mogadishu, three days after an attack on the Intelligence and National Security Agency in which the two attackers were killed.

Political and Security Context

International and Regional Context: On 16 September, a Somalia New Deal Conference was hosted by the European Union and the Federal Government of Somalia in Brussels. Somali representatives, the international community and aid agencies endorsed the Somali Compact, which defines the country’s priorities for 2014-2016, focusing on strengthening the institutions, restoring stability and security, and developing the population’s access to basic services.

Political Context: Following the dismissal of Prime Minister Shirdon on 2 December, Somalia’s President Mahamud appointed Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed as a new PM on 12 December, ending a governmental crisis which raised significant concerns over the security situation. Infighting between presidents and prime ministers has been a recurrent issue for previous Somali governments, and while the swift replacement of Shirdon is seen as a positive development, the political situation remains tense and unstable. The choice of new PM Ahmed, an economist, is in line with the government’s effort to fight corruption, following reports accusing Somali officials of economic and political collaboration with Al Shabaab militants.

Security Context: Instability has characterised Somalia for over two decades, with conflict intensifying significantly from 2006 onward. In a context of multiple competing powers across the country, violence is widespread across the territory with South-Central Somalia especially affected by the activism of armed non-state actors, including the militant Islamist group Al Shabaab, and the northern territories of Puntland and Somaliland plagued by inter-communal violence.

On 10 December, suspected Al Shabaab militants attacked the Ministry of Social Affairs in the southern city of Kismayo in the Jubaland region, killing a security guard. The Jubaland region, which borders Kenya and Ethiopia, has been repeatedly affected by violence due to rivalries between multiple forces including clan militias, Al Shabaab, and Kenyan and Ethiopian soldiers. In June, fighting between rival Somali warlords claimed an estimated 100 lives and injured more than 350, in the heaviest clashes the city had seen in over four years. In the aftermath of the June clashes, the central government called for the withdrawal of Kenya Defence Force troops from Kismayo believing that they sided with one of the militias.

On 6 December, a Member of Parliament was killed by a car bomb in the capital Mogadishu, three days after an attack on the Intelligence and National Security Agency in which the two attackers were killed. Elsewhere in the South Central region of the country, Al Shabaab fighters launched an attack on African Union troops near the Beledweyne airport, Hiraan region, in an attempt to seize control of the area at the end of November.

In early November, a suspected Al Shabaab car bomb attack killed at least four people in Mogadishu, including a government official, and injured 15 others. On 3 September, Al Shabaab ambushed President Mahamud’s military-escorted motorcade, firing rocket-propelled grenades at the convoy. The President reportedly escaped unhurt. In mid-June, Al Shabaab militants launched a high-profile assault targeting the UN compound in Mogadishu. The attack killed 15 and caused all UN missions outside Mogadishu International Airport to be suspended for 24 hours.

Until late-2010, Al Shabaab still controlled a significant part of Mogadishu and surrounds, but the past three years marked considerable strategic gains by the joint Somali and AU-led campaign, especially since 2011 with the involvement of Ethiopian and Kenyan troops. The expansion of the federal government has pushed Al Shabaab to expand both southwards and to the northeast, and even though the number of attacks and fatalities has decreased between 2010 and 2013, Al Shabaab retains strongholds in parts of rural southern and central Somalia and in the mountains of the northern semi-autonomous Puntland region. Although security in the capital Mogadishu has improved since its lowest point in August 2011, attacks by Al Shabaab in urban centres and along transport axes are common. Besides Al Shabaab’s activism, the capital is also witnessing sporadic violence perpetrated by other unidentified armed groups targeting mostly soldiers and security forces.

Northeastern and northwestern territories of Puntland and Somaliland experience far lower levels of violence than the rest of the country, but show a higher proportion of communal violence, especially during the June–November rainy season, when improved resource access and competition for cattle contribute to increased raiding activity among the various groups.

Conflict Patterns in Puntland: Tensions persist between the central authorities and the semi-autonomous Puntland region, which is in the midst of an electoral process that should
lead to a new parliament this year, and presidential elections in January 2014. In late August, the president of Somalia’s Puntland region said the central government was undermining plans to create a federal system, and that he would develop potential oil resources in his area even without a revenue-sharing deal with Mogadishu. On 5 August, Puntland cut all ties with the central government in a clear sign of distrust toward Mogadishu, on the grounds that central authorities refuse to share power and foreign aid with the region.

Puntland is also struggling to uproot Al Shabaab from the region and has scaled up operations in the Barri area, from where insurgents launch their attacks. On 5 December, a suspected Al Shabaab car bomb targeting a military vehicle reportedly killed 10 people and wounded 30 in Bossaso town. A month earlier, 40 insurgents staged a failed attempt to free militants convicted in the same locality. On 29 September, the defence forces of Puntland raided Al Shabaab positions in the Galgala Mountains, reportedly inflicting casualties.

In July, clashes were recorded between residents and security forces in Qardho (Karkaar region). Following the clashes, Puntland President Farole announced the suspension of the 2013 Local Council elections planned for 15 July due to instability. However, elections are planned for early 2014. Community leaders and clan elders will soon begin the process of nominating 66 new MPs to the Puntland Parliament. Once in session, the MPs will elect a president of Puntland for a new term to start in January 2014.

Military Operations and International Presence: In the beginning of October, US Special Forces raided Barawe, Lower Shabelle, to capture Abdikadhar Mohamed Abdidkar, the alleged link between the Al Shabaab Islamist group in Somalia with Al-Qaeda and Kenya militants. Al Shabaab has controlled the town since 2008. According to residents in Barawe, Al Shabaab sent 200 masked fighters with heavy machine guns as reinforcement in response to the US operation. On the same day as the raid in Somalia, US forces seized alleged Al-Qaeda leader Anas Al Liby from the Libyan capital Tripoli. On 28 October, an air strike in southern Somalia close to Barawe killed two senior commanders of Al Shabaab.

On 19 September, African Union (AU) troops backed by Somali government forces reportedly captured Mahaday district (Middle Shabelle region) from Al Shabaab, marking it the third town in the region to be taken after Jowhar and Balca. According to local sources, heavy clashes between Al Shabaab and government forces aided by AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) troops continued in Mahaday on 2 October.

According to the AU on 9 May, an estimated 3,000 AU peacekeepers had been killed in Somalia since 2007. Despite recent success by Somali forces and AU peacekeepers against Al Shabaab fighters, tensions exist between the different military forces involved and local authorities to the extent that, on 22 April, Ethiopia officially announced its wish to remove troops from Somalia. However, it has no plans for a complete withdrawal from the fight against Al-Qaeda linked insurgents. During March-April, the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops from Hudur, a town in the southern Bakool region, led to its immediate occupation by Al Shabaab.

In early March, the UN Security Council agreed to maintain deployment of the AU Mission until February 2014 and partially lift its 20-year weapons ban for a year to boost the government’s capacity to fight off Al Shabaab insurgency. In a similar move, the US declared that Somalia was again eligible to receive defence articles and services, which may be seen as a tangible illustration of improving relations between Washington and Mogadishu.

As threats from Al Shabaab persist and attacks continue both in Somalia and the Horn of Africa, the AU’s Peace and Security Council endorsed the recommendation to boost AMISOM by 35% in the renewed effort to fight Al Shabaab with an additional 6,235 soldiers, taking its total strength to around 24,000. The UN Secretary General urged member nations to provide AMISOM with financial and military support. Following the Westgate attacks in Kenya, the UN envoy for Somalia called for additional AU troops to counter the 5,000 Al Shabaab fighters, which the UN said posed an international threat.

Humanitarian Context and Needs

Protracted conflict, consecutive years of drought and natural hazards, and disruption of basic infrastructure have led to large-scale displacement in Somalia and across the region, leaving almost half of the population (around 3.2 million) vulnerable to external shocks, and lacking access to basic services and goods.

Displacement: According to UNHCR, an estimated 1.1 million Somalis are IDPs and reside mainly in the South-Central region, with high concentrations in Mogadishu where 369,000 people live in makeshift camps to shelter from cyclical drought, famine, and armed conflict. In January 2013, the authorities announced their plan to relocate IDPs from the capital to camps outside the city, as a consequence of urban development. As a result, the UN estimates that several thousands of displaced persons were evicted during August and September 2013. Although the official relocation plans have been put on hold by the government, trends show that eviction of IDPs by private land-owners has recently increased. The proposed solution is to move the displaced to the Deynille district, west of the city centre. This area is considered particularly insecure due to Al Shabaab’s activism, and ownership issues raise the question whether the land is public property and thus available for relocation purposes.

As of October, UNHCR reported that more than one million Somalis are registered refugees in neighbouring countries, mostly in Kenya (around 582,000), Ethiopia (246,000), and Yemen (240,000). On 10 November, a tripartite agreement was signed by UNHCR and the governments of Kenya and Somalia to establish the legal framework for the voluntary repatriation of Somali refugees. Since the attack on the Westgate Mall in September, the Kenyan government has pushed to expedite the return of these refugees, citing national security concerns. The international community has warned that a premature return could result in these refugees becoming IDPs in Somalia, where they would face the same protection challenges as IDPs currently living in and around Mogadishu. On 23 November, the Kenyan government ordered the shut-down of the Dadaab refugee camps, and requested that all UN agencies supporting refugee operations in Kenya move their programmes to Somalia, on the grounds that the repatriation process had begun. On 25 November, UNHCR declared it will not close the camps, as these measures were not part of the agreement signed earlier in November.

Disaster: According to an assessment released on 4 December, seasonal rains in the Ethiopian highlands and across Somalia caused flooding in Middle Shabelle region,
affecting over 60,000 people (11,000 households), mainly in Jowhar district. FAO reported that an estimated 8,000 hectares of land were inundated, and the Food Security Cluster included an additional 30,000 people in its November programming. According to AMISOM, the situation is further compounded by the early seasonal outbreak of clan fighting, which has already affected up to 18,000 people as of 4 December, as reported by OCHA. Due to insecurity in the area, a breach in the Shabelle river embankment could not be fixed, resulting in flood water continuing to pour into the plain. Water has contaminated wells, disrupted markets, destroyed crops and delayed planting crucial to the next crop season. Additionally, a major frontline between AU troops (AMISOM) and the armed group Al Shabaab is limiting access and the provision of assistance. As of 3 December, FAO reported a significant reduction of rainfall activities, downgrading the flood risk level to moderate for the Shabelle river and minimal for the Juba river basin.

On 10-11 November, Tropical Cyclone Three made landfall on the impoverished region of Puntland, with high speed winds and rains triggering flashfloods, which caused at least 100 deaths in coastal areas and inland in Nugaal and southern Bari. As of early December, FAO reported that an estimated 35,000 people (5,000 households) were affected, along with 270,000 livestock. As of 22 November, ECHO also reported that heavy rains affected IDP settlements on the northern coast of the Bari region, but also inland in the regions of Karkaar, Nugaal and Mudug. The cyclone caused substantial damage to houses and infrastructure, and the lack of access to safe drinking water is raising fears of an outbreak of waterborne diseases in affected areas. On 9 December, OCHA reported that the storm also hit parts of Somaliland, where it caused the deaths of at least 10 people and over 500 livestock, mostly Awdal, Sanaag and Woqooyi Galbeed regions.

Access: As of late September, Al Shabaab continued to interfere with relief operations in rural areas across southern Somalia, particularly in Middle Juba region and parts of Bakool, Bay, and Gedo regions. In southern and central Somalia, humanitarian access remains challenging. The withdrawal of Al Shabaab from key towns in southern Somalia has enabled an increased international presence in some areas. Insecurity in these areas, however, continues to affect trade and market activities and the delivery of humanitarian assistance. FSNAU notes that conflict has disrupted the movement of food and other basic commodities in most parts of these regions, particularly in Bakool. Attacks on aid workers pose a serious constraint for humanitarian operations.

Food Security: According to FEWSNET on 27 November, food security is likely to deteriorate in some areas of Somalia due to recent climatic shocks. Floods in Middle Shabelle in late October caused the inundation of about 18% of irrigated crops fields. In the northeast of the country, the tropical cyclone which hit the coast in Puntland caused extensive losses of livestock, raising fears of a rapid deterioration of the food security status in areas that have only emerged from a food crisis a year ago. Additionally, deyr rains from October to December in southern Somalia are likely to produce below average cereal harvest for sorghum and maize.

According to a mid-November FSNAU report, the food security situation remains unchanged since August with an estimated 870,000 people at Crisis and Emergency levels (IPC Phases 3 and 4), 72% of whom are believed to be IDPs. These latest figures represent an improvement since the start of 2013, when an estimated 1.05 million people were in Phase 3 and 4, and an even more significant progress since the country was plagued by famine which cost 258,000 lives between October 2010 and April 2012. Additionally, 2.3 million people are considered to be at Stressed levels (IPC Phase 2) of food insecurity, which represents one-third of Somalia’s population.

As of November, cereal prices increased moderately on a year-to-year basis in all regions of Somalia, except for the southern Juba regions which benefited from a good Gu harvest. In the south, maize prices have declined since July following an average Gu harvest, but sorghum prices have increased moderately (10-20%) as a result of below normal Gu sorghum harvest.

Health and Nutrition: Malaria is a major health problem and represents the leading cause of death in <5 children, while tuberculosis incidence in Somalia is one of the highest in the world with 25,000 expected cases every year, trending upward. Cholera outbreaks are recorded mainly in the Central and Southern zones, and coincide with the dry season.

The first confirmed case of the wild poliovirus since 2007 was reported in Mogadishu on 9 May. The total number of confirmed cases in Somalia stands at 183 cases as of 14 November. The polio epidemic has spread to neighbouring countries with 14 in Kenya, six in Ethiopia, and three cases reported in South Sudan. The first vaccination campaign began on 14 May. However, fighting in Kismayo halt the polio vaccination campaign planned for July, targeting 24,000 people. Large insecure areas of south-central Somalia have not conducted immunisation campaigns since 2009, leaving 600,000 children vulnerable, according to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. The risk to populations across other areas of Somalia is high, due to substantial population immunity gaps.

Nutrition indicators in Somalia have improved since the 2011 famine. However, the prevalence of malnutrition remains above WHO’s emergency threshold of 15%, especially among IDPs. More than 260,000 children <5 are acutely malnourished, a slight decrease since January 2013, when FSNAU estimated 215,000 children <5 to be acutely malnourished of whom at least 45,000 were severely malnourished. Two-thirds of these children are in Southern Somalia, where high rates of malnutrition persist and are attributed to an inadequate health infrastructure and poor feeding practices.

At the start of August, FSNAU reported critical levels of GAM (≥15% and <30%) in North East, Central and South Somalia. In Kismayo, 19% GAM rates were reported in a recent flashpoint area for tribal fighting that also hampered the polio vaccination campaign. The nutrition situation in Kismayo suggests a decline in acute malnutrition and improved nutrition when compared with results from the December 2012 assessment, which reported a GAM rate of 28%.

As reported by FSNAU, the nutrition status of IDPs in the central and northern regions of Somalia has deteriorated. Sustained malnutrition levels were seen among IDPs in Bosaso, Gaalkacyo, Garowe, Dhusamaareb, Kismayo, Dhooley, and Mogadishu.
SOUTH SUDAN CONFLICT, FLOODS, FOOD INSECURITY, DISPLACEMENT

Highlights

15 December: Ongoing gunfire was reported in Juba, a day after the government said it had quashed an attempted coup. President Salva Kiir blamed soldiers loyal to his dismissed former deputy Riek Machar for the violence, but said the government was in control. Clashes between rival factions, following the attempted coup, killed 12 people, injured at least 130, and caused hundreds of civilians to flee.

Machar has allegedly been leading a dissident group within the ruling party Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM), and is aiming for the party’s leadership and the national presidency in 2015. He was sacked from the government in July.

8 December: UNHCR reported that South Sudan hosts an estimated 228,000 refugees, mostly from neighbouring Sudan.

30 November: OCHA reported that 293 violent incidents have been recorded across the country since January 2013.

Political and Security Context

South Sudan – Sudan: On 26 November, Khartoum hosted the fifth meeting of the Joint Security Committee, where Sudanese and South Sudanese members discussed their respective complaints and claims related to the presence of –and support to- rebel groups in both countries. Despite reports about the decrease of support to rebels, both Khartoum and Juba have been trading accusations of harbouring insurgent groups since the independence in 2011, and now seek to foster progress in the implementation of the September 2012 Cooperation Agreement which established a buffer zone, created a joint force to monitor and ensure security of the common border, and laid grounds for the re-launch of crude oil exports from South Sudan.

While a gradual improvement of relations was witnessed following the signature in March 2013 of a technical agreement for the coordinated implementation of all elements from the 2012 deal, tensions arose again in June, with a quarrel over alleged support by Juba to rebels in Sudan, and accusations that Khartoum backed rebels fighting in Jonglei state, South Sudan. This destabilisation of bilateral relations threatened to disrupt again vital oil and transit fees that make up both countries’ main source of foreign income. In September, the two sides issued a joint statement in which they agreed to expel rebel groups from the demilitarised zone on the border between the two countries and open crossing points for oil export. The next meeting of the Joint Security Committee is set to be held in Juba in mid-January 2014.

In the contested area of Abyei, no major incidents were reported in November. On 25 November, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution extending the mandate of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) until May 2014, and welcomed the redeployment of the Sudanese and South Sudanese military in the Abyei area. The Council urged the communities to refrain from any act or statement which may lead to violence, and called on Khartoum and Juba to make effective use of the joint mechanisms to ensure the security and transparency of the Safe Demilitarised Border Zone. It underscored that UNISFA’s mandate includes the protection of civilians, but also the documentation and reporting on the presence and movement of weapons in Abyei.

The future of the oil-producing zone remains one of the most sensitive issues since South Sudan became independent in 2011 and is home to the Dinka Ngok tribe, closely connected to South Sudan, and the semi-nomadic Arab Misseriya tribe, who traditionally move back and forth from Sudan. End of October, residents of Abyei voted in an unofficial referendum to determine if the border area should remain with Sudan’s South Kordofan region or join the Bahr el-Ghazal region in South Sudan, a move observers feared could trigger renewed violence and affect the continuing normalisation of relations between the two countries. Although organisers insisted the polls were open to all Abyei residents, only the Dinka Ngok voted, which resulted in ballots overwhelmingly expressing the tribe’s demand to secede from Sudan and join South Sudan. Both Khartoum and Juba criticised the vote, and the African Union warned against the far-reaching consequences this event could have on the region. Initially, Abyei was supposed to vote in January 2011 when Juba voted to split from the north, but the referendum was repeatedly stalled despite international pressure from the UN Security Council and the African Union High Implementation Panel for Sudan (AUHIP). On 27 November, the UN reported that tensions remain following the referendum, and the security situation is unpredictable due to the large influx of people from South Sudan in the last month, and the early commencement of the Misseriya migration southward.

National Context: As of 17 December, sporadic fighting was still ongoing in the capital Juba, a day after President Kiir announced he had defeated a coup attempt blamed on troops loyal to Riek Machar, South Sudan’s former vice president who was sacked from the government in July. According to local sources, violence which erupted in the capital on 15 December, left 12 people dead-most of them soldiers, and injured at least 130. Two days of clashes between rival troops reportedly caused hundreds of civilians to flee and seek refuge in a nearby UN compound. Machar, who is seen as Kiir’s main challenger in the ruling party, has allegedly been leading a dissident group within the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM), aiming for the party’s leadership and the national presidency in 2015. Earlier in December, Machar and several senior leaders of the SPLM accused President Kiir of mismanaging the government, following his unilateral decision to dissolve the ruling party’s structures in mid-November.

After 20 years of conflict and the 2011 referendum formalising the country’s independence from the north, South Sudan’s stability is still challenged by the polarisation of divergent ethnic and political communities and the activism of armed groups and militias. With a view to ending political and communal unrest across the country, the Government of South Sudan announced late November that it succeeded in integrating a dozen former rebel groups in its regular army, but also in other security organs and civil services. Following several months of behind-the-scene negotiations, presidential orders pardoning militant groups have seen a significant reduction in insurgency concentrated mostly in the Greater Upper Nile region. As of late November, 13 armed groups responded to a general amnesty, with five and eight movements joining the reintegration process in 2012 and 2013.
respectively. Juba underscored that efforts must continue to bring on board the rebels still at large, notably militants who are part of -or associated with- the South Sudan Democratic Army (SSDA), a Jonglei-based 6,000-strong armed rebellion led by David Yau Yau, and reportedly supported by Khartoum. Additionally to the ongoing disarmament and reintegration process, the government also called on tribal leaders of the Murle, Nuer and Dinka to address the protracted violence affecting their communities, in order to bring sustainable stability to the eastern state of Jonglei.

Inter-Cultural Violence: Ethnic clashes and violence continue across South Sudan with an increasing number of human rights abuses reported, notably by government forces, according to a July Human Rights Watch report. Violence is concentrated in Jonglei state and the central tri-state area of Lakes, Unity, and Warrap, with incidents also reported in Northern Bahr-el-Ghazal and Western Equatoria.

The eastern state of Jonglei has a long history of sporadic violence, and is considered most affected by the lack of basic infrastructure, chronic insecurity rooted in cattle raids, conflict over natural resources, and armed hostilities between the national army and non-state actors. The state is home to six ethnic groups, with the Dinka and the Nuer numerically and politically dominant. Tension and violence traditionally focus around the Nuer, based in northern Jonglei, and the Murle, a minority group based in the south of the state. Inter-clan animosity stems from competition over water resources and grazing land, and is considered to have become more violent since the second Sudanese civil war, with widespread militarisation of the population and availability of small arms. As a result, deaths resulting from inter-communal fighting have increased, along with attacks and abductions of civilians and significant population displacement. In October, a rebel attack on two cattle camps in Twic East county, killed 78 people and wounded 88 others. Local authorities reported that 20 children were abducted and thousands of cattle were stolen in the raid. Subsequent attacks were reported in several other locations. At the beginning of August, nine people were killed in two cattle-raiding incidents recorded in Twic East and Bor counties, which authorities blamed on the Murle and Yau Yau groups.

According to observers, patterns of violence are perpetuated by the fact that local and national forces allegedly fund the conflict and return Nuer weapons seized during disarmament operations in the region, while crimes and abuses against Murle are not investigated nor punished. The lack of state-provided authority, security and justice mechanisms are believed to be pushing many Murle to join David Yau Yau's South Sudan Democratic Army. In 2013, the rise of ethnic violence in Jonglei has forced 120,000 people to flee to the bush, where they are cut off from aid and face severe food insecurity. Increasing numbers of attacks on women, children, and older people has led to a build-up of grievances that could escalate the violence, especially with a lack of functional dispute resolution mechanisms.

In the southwestern state of Western Equatoria, OCHA reported that five villages were attacked on 5-7 November by armed groups suspected to belong to the Ugandan rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Militants reportedly killed three people, looted food stocks and burnt houses, triggering small-scale displacements towards neighbouring towns. These attacks are the first suspected LRA events in South Sudan in over two years, and are believed to be the result of the offensive launched against the militants in southeastern Central African Republic.

In Lakes state’s capital Rumbek, a forceful disarmament campaign by local authorities was conducted in September, leaving two dead and four seriously injured, according to local reports. Rumbek has struggled to curb recent inter-communal violence and proliferation of arms in the region. Five people were shot as clashes erupted between cattle herding groups on 7 September in Rumbek North county, according to local officials. On 1 September, seven people were killed in separate inter-communal clashes between Rup and Kuie communities in Rumbek Central county in Lakes state. The following day, six were killed in a retaliatory attack.

Humanitarian Context and Needs

Displacement: As of 30 November, OCHA reported that at least 188,500 people have been internally displaced by violence since January 2013. This figure reflects only those who have been accessed and assisted. Because of access constraints, it is a marked underestimation of the number of people displaced by violence in South Sudan.

Following increased inter-communal violence in Jonglei, international organisations have reported new IDPs. In September, OCHA reported 112,600 displaced who were mostly located in Pibor county or had fled to Juba or neighbouring countries, following fighting. An inter-agency assessment conducted in Pibor county on 7-8 September indicated that most IDPs and returnees reported heavy losses of livestock and assets. The majority said they have been displaced at least four times because of violence since the start of 2012. The six main population centres in Pibor county (Boma, Gumuruk, Likuangole, Manyabol, Maruwa Hills, and Pibor) are either partially or completely abandoned and many civilians remain in the bush, cut off from assistance. In Gumuruk, IOM registered 23,000 IDPs as of 9 September, and people move in and out to receive assistance. Vulnerable populations in Pibor county live outside protected communities with inconsistent access to food, safe drinking water, shelter, and health care. Most IDPs have resorted to extreme coping strategies, with some eating wild fruits and leaves. Following cattle-raids, reportedly in the tens of thousands of cattle, the population is slaughtering female cattle for meat, even if this means that they cannot replenish stocks.

As of 8 December, UNHCR reported that an estimated 228,000 refugees, mostly from neighbouring South Sudan, are in South Sudan. According to OCHA as of 30 November, there are over 122,000 Sudanese refugees in Upper Nile state and 76,300 in Unity state who need humanitarian assistance. An estimated 71,000 South Sudanese have returned from Sudan since January 2013, totalling 1.9 million returnees from Sudan since 2007; up to 350,000 South Sudanese remain in Sudan.

Local authorities in Fashoda county, Upper Nile state, reported that 2,500 refugees crossed into the area from South Kordofan early October. UNHCR reported that 2,100 refugees from South Kordofan have arrived in Upper Nile since mid-July. Local authorities stated that 70% of the refugees are women and children and fled their homes because of aerial bombardments, ground clashes, or food shortages. Many refugees showed signs of malnutrition. In mid-June, according to OCHA, an estimated 3,000 new IDPs arrived in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal state, fleeing increased insecurity and armed attacks in areas around River Kiir, South Darfur, and South Kordofan. 26,000 people were reportedly displaced as of 21 July. According to MSF, the remote area is practically inaccessible and IDPs have little access to aid. Their food situation is already dire and may further worsen
as the rainy season gets underway.

Disaster: As of 4 December, OCHA reported that seasonal flooding in South Sudan has affected up to 345,000 people, mostly in Jonglei (127,000), Northern Bahr el Ghazal (45,700), Warrap (41,000), Unity (30,800), Lakes (30,400), and Central Equatoria (29,000). With the rainy season coming to an end, access is improving gradually, but remains challenging in parts of Unity, northern Jonglei and eastern Upper Nile. As reported by OCHA, affected populations need household items, clean water, emergency drugs, and short-term food assistance.

Access: Insecurity, poor infrastructure, and lack of logistics capacity continue to hamper humanitarian access nationwide. The recent floods have exacerbated the challenges of humanitarian access in certain areas of South Sudan, with Unity state particularly difficult to access due to infrastructure constraints.

OCHA reported as of 30 November that 293 violent incidents had been recorded since January 2013. As of 12 September, Upper Nile and Jonglei states are the worst affected in terms of access incidents, with repeated violence against humanitarian personnel and assets, active hostilities, and interference in implementation of relief programmes. Insecurity led humanitarian actors to halt distributions of food assistance twice during August. Following widespread violence in July that affected over 140,000 people, aid workers had reached close to 21,000 people with food distributions as of 18 August, but had to stop programming to review operational constraints, including guarantees of safety for civilians receiving assistance and for aid workers supporting them.

On 14 July, and for the first time in 2013, OCHA stated that aid agencies reached parts of Pibor county, where thousands of civilians have been hiding in the bush. Permanent insecurity in Pibor county makes it complicated for humanitarian actors operating in the area. In July and August, aid agencies reached IDPs in Dorein, Labrub, and Pibor town.

Food Security: FEWSNET reported in late October that food security has improved across the country due to the latest harvest and currently stands at Minimal levels (IPC Phase 1). However, according to the multi-agency food security group, an estimated 1.2 million people still faced Stressed and Crisis (IPC Phase 2 and 3) levels of food insecurity as of late October. Crisis levels are recorded in Pibor county (Jonglei) as a result of conflict and extensive displacement, and are expected to persist through December. In Abyei, food security is maintained at Stressed levels (IPC Phase 2) due to provision of humanitarian assistance. Households affected by floods in Jonglei, Unity, Lakes and Warrap states are expected to go from Minimal (IPC Phase 1) to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) from January through March, due to displacement and the loss of crops.

Health and Nutrition: On 25 October, health officials announced that the country has been polio free since June 2009, after three suspected cases tested negative. South Sudan had been on alert following the polio outbreaks in Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya.

A measles outbreak was officially announced in Upper Nile state in early October. Since August, 44 cases have been registered in Malakal county, according to South Sudanese authorities and WHO. South Sudan declared an outbreak of meningitis in Malakal county in late May.

OCHA reported that the hepatitis E outbreak that began in mid-2012 and peaked in February 2013 in refugee camps in Unity and Upper Nile states is now under control. Though the number of cases per week is decreasing in most locations, it is still increasing in others, with Maban and Doro refugee camps (Upper Nile state) of particular concern. In Maban, as of mid-July, 11,279 cases and 205 deaths were recorded since the beginning of the outbreak.

According to OCHA, as of mid-June, the <5 GAM rate was 18.1%. In August, using MUAC measurements, WFP estimated average national malnutrition rates at around 11% with Jonglei, Unity, Warrap, and Lakes states showing serious to critical levels ranging from 14% to 21%.

Updated: 17/12/2013

SUDAN

CONFLICT, FOOD INSECURITY, EPIDEMIC, DISPLACEMENT

Highlights

Mid-December: The UN estimated that 165,000 Sudanese children living in rebel-held parts of South Kordofan and Blue Nile, do not have access to basic health services, including vaccinations against measles and polio.

11 December: The Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and Sudan Liberation Army, led by Minni Minawi (SLM-MM) reiterated their demand for a negotiated peaceful settlement to the conflicts in the country. Their demand came on the closing day of the three-day All Inclusive Peace and Security in Darfur Technical Workshop in Addis Ababa, which brought together government representatives and two rebel groups.

Early December: In South Darfur, an estimated 10,000 people from the Salamat tribe from have arrived in Bulbul Timbisco from Ed El Fursan locality, west of Nyala, following tribal clashes with Misseriya tribe in November. The IDPs are reportedly in need of food, non-food items, and water, sanitation and hygiene services.

Early December: As reported in the last OCHA bulletin, an estimated 2,800 people, including 1,850 children and 600 women, have fled fighting and food insecurity in the Jugo, Seen, Com Reg and Bobuk areas in Bau locality in Blue Nile state, and taken shelter in the El Gerri area, north of El Roseires locality.

Early December: Local media reported that renewed tribal fighting in the Um Deibut area in West Kordofan triggered the displacement of over 6,000 people to El Taboun and Babanusa in West Kordofan, and Adila in East Darfur.

Early December: Armed clashes in West Kordofan between members of the Hamar and Ma’aliba tribes were reported on 5 December in the Um Deibut area, near the border with East Darfur State. According to local reports, at least 38 members of the two tribes were killed in the violence. The fighting reportedly stopped following the deployment of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF).
Sudan – South Sudan: On 26 November, Khartoum hosted the fifth meeting of the Joint Security Committee, where Sudanese and South Sudanese members discussed their respective complaints and claims related to the presence of -and support to- rebel groups in both countries. Despite reports about the decrease of support to rebels, both Khartoum and Juba have been trading accusations of harbouring insurgent groups since the independence in 2011, and now seek to foster progress in the implementation of the September 2012 Cooperation Agreement, which established a buffer zone, created a joint force to monitor and ensure security of the common border, and laid grounds for the relaunch of crude oil exports from South Sudan.

While a gradual improvement of relations was witnessed following the signature in March 2013 of a technical agreement for the coordinated implementation of all elements from the 2012 deal, tensions rose again in June, with a quarrel over alleged support by Juba to rebels in Sudan, and accusations that Khartoum backed rebels fighting in Jonglei state, South Sudan. This destabilisation of bilateral relations threatened to disrupt again vital oil and transit fees that make up both countries’ main source of foreign income. In September, the two sides issued a joint statement in which they agreed to expel rebel groups from the demilitarised zone on the border between the two countries and open crossing points for oil export. The next meeting of the Joint Security Committee is set to be held in Juba in mid-January 2014.

In the contested area of Abyei, no major incidents were reported in November. On 25 November, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution extending the mandate of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) until May 2014, and welcomed the redeployment of the Sudanese and South Sudanese military in the Abyei area. The Council urged the communities to restrain from any act or statement which may lead to violence, and called on Khartoum and Juba to make effective use of the joint mechanisms to ensure the security and transparency of the Safe Demilitarised Border Zone. It underscored that UNISFA’s mandate includes the protection of civilians, but also the documentation and reporting on the presence and movement of weapons in Abyei.

The future of the oil-producing zone remains one of the most sensitive issues since South Sudan became independent in 2011 and is home to the Dinka Ngok tribe, closely connected to South Sudan, and the semi-nomadic Arab Misseriya tribe, who traditionally moves back and forth from Sudan. End of October, residents of Abyei voted in an unofficial referendum to determine if the border area should remain with Sudan’s South Kordofan region or join the Bahr el-Ghazal region in South Sudan, a move observers feared could trigger renewed violence and affect the continuing normalisation of relations between the two countries. Although organisers insisted the polls were open to all Abyei residents, only the Dinka Ngok voted, which resulted in ballots overwhelmingly expressing the tribe’s demand to secede from Sudan and join South Sudan. Both Khartoum and Juba criticised the vote, and the African Union warned against the far-reaching consequences this event could have on the region. Initially, Abyei was supposed to vote in January 2011 when Juba voted to split from the north, but the referendum was repeatedly stalled despite international pressure from the UN Security Council and the African Union High Implementation Panel for Sudan (AUHIP). On 27 November, the UN reported that the security situation remains unpredictable, while tensions remain following the referendum, the large influx of people from South Sudan in the last month, and the early commencement of the Misseriya migration southward.

Insurgent Groups: While sporadic border clashes and oil export disruption threaten to revive tensions between Sudan and South Sudan, Khartoum continues to curb insurgencies waged by non-state armed groups in the southern states of South Kordofan, Blue Nile, and Darfur.

In late 2011, an alliance of opposition groups was formed under the name Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF), with the stated aim of organising new elections to end the current regime, although internal disagreements prevail. It comprises the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) mainly active in Blue Nile and South Kordofan states, as well as Darfur’s three largest rebel groups, namely Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), the Sudan Liberation Army led by Abdel Wahid Al-Nur (SLM-AW), and the Sudan Liberation Army led by Minni Arkou Minnawi (SLM-MM). While violence in Blue Nile and South Kordofan grew significantly after adjacent South Sudan won independence in 2011, insurgents in Darfur have been reportedly active since 2003, when they took up arms accusing the government of neglecting the region, which led to a counter-insurgency campaign which continues today.

On 7 November, SRF representatives began a tour of Europe, to meet notably with French, German and UK representatives and discuss the humanitarian situation in rebel-held areas of Sudan. The leaders of the rebel groups called on the European Union (EU) to support their call for a comprehensive peace process to end armed conflicts in Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan, but representatives of the EU reportedly dismissed meeting the insurgents, on the grounds that it could not accept any new forum for negotiations outside the framework of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD). The African Union Peace and Security Council recently called on Darfuri rebels to join the DDPD negotiating table, and warned that they would take measures against the insurgents, while demanding that the UN Security Council take similar sanctions if they did reject its appeal.

Because the SRF demands a holistic process while the government is only willing to discuss the conflict in Darfur, peace talks have remained deadlocked. In mid-November, the Sudanese defence ministry announced the beginning of extensive military operations, which aim to end rebellion in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile by the end of next summer.

Instability in the East: While the east of the country stands in contrast to the violence recorded in Sudan’s marginalised southern states, it remains one of the poorest regions, despite being home to the largest gold mine and Port Sudan, where all the country’s oil exports transit. With no deadly conflict since the signing of the 2006 Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement (ESPA), it is currently challenged by increasing divisions between the various armed groups which form the Eastern Front (EF), an alliance which signed the agreement seven years ago. Indeed, due to Khartoum’s alleged failure to implement the core elements announced in the ESPA and the spreading conflict in South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Darfur, various factions of the EF have been calling for a regime change, and claim they wish to join the southern and Darfuri-based SRF. Already in 2012, activists demanded separation from Khartoum and the creation of the Democratic Republic of Eastern Sudan, on the ground that the government was exploiting the region’s resources for its own gains and neglecting the development of eastern states. In an attempt to maintain its dominance over
the region, the government is reportedly buying off tribal leaders by allowing local militias to arm and boosting support to Arab tribes, raising fears of renewed inter-communal violence.

Civil Unrest: In a move allegedly aimed at appeasing protesters following the recent cut in fuel subsidies, Sudan's government announced on 6 November that it will undertake a major cabinet reshuffle. No further details have been given as to the nature and scope of the reshuffle except that it will include legislative and executive bodies at federal and state levels.

The violent protests broke out on 23 September with clashes between protesters, police, and military in Khartoum and central Sudan, following the cancellation of fuel and cooking gas subsidies, which effectively doubled fuel prices overnight. Driven by a severe financial crunch since the secession of oil-producing South Sudan in 2011, these subsidies cuts reportedly caused the worst unrest in central Sudan in decades. While the death toll remains contested, Sudanese and international human rights organisations reported over 200 deaths and hundreds of protesters wounded and arrested. Security forces were accused of using excessive force including live ammunition, but also censoring and shutting down newspapers, and arresting hundreds of activists, political opponents and journalists.

Humanitarian context and needs

Displacement: An estimated 2.9 million Sudanese are currently internally displaced due to food insecurity and conflict. As of late November, there are roughly 231,000 Sudanese refugees in South Sudan and Ethiopia, and another 346,000 in Chad, according to UNHCR.

According to UNHCR early December, Sudan currently hosts 156,000 refugees, mostly from Eritrea, with smaller numbers of people from South Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Chad.

By mid-September, an estimated 71,000 South Sudanese have returned from Sudan since January 2013. According to IOM, over two million people of South Sudanese origin have returned to South Sudan from Sudan since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005.

Humanitarian organisations estimated that between early September and late November 2013, 2,500 people have arrived in Abyei from South Sudan. These population movements are allegedly linked to the referendum on the final status of the area that was planned for 2011. Previous information indicates that 60% of the 100,000 people displaced from Abyei in May 2011 have returned. According to the Warrap state government, following a visit to Abyei to assess living conditions in the area, the situation is critical for many returnees with shortages of shelter, health, and water.

Disaster: As of late November, OCHA reported that heavy rains and floods which started in August affected 570,000 people in 16 states across Sudan and Abyei. Flooding cost 17 lives, and affected mainly Khartoum, Gezira, White Nile, Blue Nile, River Nile and northern states, where several families are still homeless and in dire need of shelter, health care, water and sanitation. This year’s floods are reportedly the worst to plague the country since 1988.

Access: On 4 October, the Rapporteur of the joint Sudan and South Sudan Security Committee announced that Sudan and South Sudan agreed to re-open five border crossings between the two countries. The Committee recommended that both countries agree on facilitation of delivery of humanitarian aid and the transport of citizens stranded at the borders, the relocation of refugees from the demilitarised zone, and the repatriation of prisoners of war.

On 21 August, the Sudanese Interior Minister announced that the government would introduce new rules governing the work of foreign relief organisations. Authorities will now only allow national organisations to work for human rights, excluding foreign humanitarian groups and UN agencies. The imposition of additional restrictions on foreign actors underlines Khartoum’s lasting discomfort with international organisations that it has repeatedly accused of exaggerating the magnitude of conflicts in the country, disseminating false information, and spying.

Access for humanitarian actors to affected populations, and access of affected populations to aid, is severely hampered by the presence of mines and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW). According to UNMAS, 250 locations, an estimated 32 km², are covered by mines and ERW, with the greatest concentration in Kassala, Gedaref, Red Sea, Blue Nile, South Kordofan, and Darfur states.

Food Security: As of October 2013, FEWSNET reports that an estimated 3.3 million people in Sudan face Stressed (IPC Phase 2) and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) levels of food insecurity. The figure marks a seasonal decline by 20% from the peak lean season figures of September, amounting to more than 4.2 million people food insecure. The current crisis is mainly driven by the impacts of conflict on access to food, and IDPs are considered most affected, representing an estimated 80% of the total food insecure population.

As of late November, FEWSNET reported that harvest prospects for the 2013/14 main agricultural season have been revised downwards. The harvest is now expected to be 20-30% below average at the national level. In the central and eastern areas of Sudan, the deficit is the largest, with production expected to be as low as 60-70% below average.

This year’s low production is mainly due to late and insufficient rains during critical times in the season. In eastern and central Sudan, rainfall totals over the course of the season were 20-50% below average, according to FEWSNET. The late start of the rains resulted in delayed planting, from July to August/September, something which increases the risks of wilting. In total, the areas planted across Sudan are 20-30% below the five-year average according to a September assessment by FEWSNET, FAO, USAID/FPF and the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MoA&I). Production deficits are also linked to ongoing insecurity and open conflict during the harvest, which is expected to lower harvest prospects, as well as cause continued destruction of assets and displacement.

The October green harvest was expected to improve food insecurity levels, despite the overall production deficit. However, a gradual and seasonal deterioration is likely to begin when poor households exhaust stocks and increase dependence on market purchases starting in January 2014. Moreover, projections indicate that the lean season is likely to begin earlier than usual in 2014, in March/April, compared to May/June in a typical year.
Health and Nutrition: On 24 November, Sudan’s Federal Ministry of Health (FMoH) launched a nationwide measles catch-up campaign targeting some 15 million children aged between nine months and 15 years old, OCHA reports. Sudan has experienced a resurgence of measles outbreaks since 2010, mainly due to population growth. Measles has spread across the country, and caused major outbreaks in Kassala state in 2012.

Child mortality due to malnutrition reached 40% in Sudan as of late September, according to WHO. Nationally, GAM levels for children <5 stand at 16.4%, above the emergency threshold of 15%. In mid-June, the Sudanese Ministry of Health issued a report noting that 33% of Sudanese children are chronically malnourished and 5.3% suffer from SAM. An estimated 500,000 children <5 suffer from SAM and up to two million children are stunted, according to a recent report on malnutrition produced by the Ministry of Health, UNICEF, and partners. Malnutrition rates in east Sudan (Red Sea, Kassala and Gedaref states) are the highest in Sudan, with 28% of children suffering from moderate or severe acute malnutrition in Red Sea state.

Darfur

Political and Security Context

For over a decade, the southwestern Darfuri states have been affected by various conflict dynamics, including fighting between government forces and rebels, groups, and inter-tribal fighting. The region also faces rampant banditry and criminality.

Insurgent groups – The Darfur Peace Process: On 9 December, the three-day All Inclusive Peace and Security in Darfur Technical Workshop began in Addis Ababa. Aimed to draw the Darfur rebel movements that did not sign the 2011 Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) to the negotiating table and revive the peace process, the workshop reportedly gathered government representatives and two SRF-affiliated groups, namely the SLM-MM and the JEM. Mediators indicated that the SLM-AW refused to participate. Initial reports stated that parties first discussed the humanitarian situation in Darfur as well as the lack of access to affected populations, and the JEM reiterated its demand for a comprehensive solution for the whole of Sudan, and not a partial dialogue for Darfur only. On 11 December, JEM and SLM-MM restated their demand for a comprehensive, inclusive, just and sustainable negotiated peaceful settlement of the Sudanese conflicts at the closing of the workshop.

On 13-16 November, the AU-UN Joint Chief Mediator for Darfur visited Juba, South Sudan, where he met with the Vice President of South Sudan and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and National Security to discuss the ongoing efforts to bring peace in Sudan’s troubled western region. The visit was part of a larger tour that included a number of Sudan’s neighbours and was an attempt to build consensus around the importance of regional cooperation to implement measures announced in the DDPD. Like the 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), the DDPD has only a minority of the rebel movements as signatories – the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM), and JEM-Mohamed Bashir, a splinter group from the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM).

On 20 November, the Sudanese government and the non SRF-affiliated LJM signed an agreement aiming to integrate 3,000 former rebels in the army and police forces, thereby concluding long discussion brokered by the UNAMID (the AU-UN Hybrid Operation in the western Sudanese region) over the implementation of a security agreement signed in July 2011 as part of the DDPD.

While such progress has been made, the Darfur peace process is challenged by the fact that it does not include the parties aligned in the SRF, namely the Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi (SLA-MM), the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid (SLA-AW), and the JEM. These Darfur movements have continuously rejected the Doha process, and are responsible for ongoing clashes with government forces across the state since April. On 3 November, dozens of government troops were reportedly killed in clashes initiated by an ambush undertaken by the faction SLA-MM in the area of Ninma, East Jebel Marra. The rebels reported that they lost 11 men and claimed to have killed 187 army soldiers and militiamen. Although the exact numbers remain uncertain, multiple local sources suggest that the violence caused an unusually high toll for the troubled region.

Military Operations: Since the beginning of August, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) has carried out regular air raids targeting East Jebel Marra in South Darfur, and Kadja and Dady areas of North Darfur. According to UNAMID, ten were killed in aerial bombardments near Shangil Tobaya and Sharafa in East Jebel Marra on 29 November, but government troops denied they carried out the attack. On 5-6 November, SAF reportedly launched intensive air raids causing widespread destruction on the valley of Jebel Dengo, north of Dady. An unknown number of people were killed in the raids and hundreds were reportedly displaced. According to local media reports, intensive air raids on 23 October killed one and injured at least 12 people, destroyed 30 houses and a school in East Jebel Marra, affecting the villages of Tangarara, Hiliit el Dum, and Arashu. In early September, at least seven people were reportedly killed in similar air strikes against Darfur’s East Jebel Marra in the vicinities of Kined, Silo, and Shangil Tobas. A European international organisation, the Society for Threatened People (STP), has condemned what it described as indiscriminate air raids on civilians in the Jebel Marra Mountains that forced thousands of people to flee the area in late August.

Tribal Violence: On 9 September in Khartoum, Darfuri leaders took part in a conference to discuss the root causes of the recent tribal conflicts and seek solutions for peaceful coexistence amongst tribes. Participants recommended both disarmament and the establishment of laws regulating relations between farmers and pastoralists, as well as the settlement of disputes over land resources. This was the first event organised by UNAMID, after the UN Security Council renewed its mandate late July 2013 until 31 August 2014, to address the causes of the escalating violence across Darfur.

Central Darfur: Localised fighting between Misseriya and Salamat tribes in Central Darfur state has flared up over the past months. The fighting is primarily linked to a long-standing conflict over access to resources, including land. In the latest expression of inter-tribal conflict, unverified reports suggested that more than 50 people were left dead and many others wounded following violent clashes mid-November in the Abuwar camp for IDPs, in the area of Um Dukhun town, while significant damage was caused to shelter and activity centres. The violence in the IDP camp followed only a week after more than 100 people were left dead and many injured over three days of clashes between the same tribes on 6-8 November. Heavy fighting between the Salamat on one side and the Misseriya and their Taaysha allies on the other caused markets and roads to close, and there were reports of
Humanitarian Context and Needs

OCHA reported in mid-August that 3.2 million people, over a third of Darfur’s population, are in need of humanitarian assistance as a result of the decade-long conflict and insecurity.

**Displacement:** According to the UNHCR as of 22 November, around 36,200 Sudanese refugees from Darfur have arrived in Chad since January 2013, which brings the estimated number of Sudanese refugees in Chad to 346,000. In addition, 3,400 new Sudanese refugees arrived in Central African Republic from Central Darfur since January 2013.

In South Darfur, an estimated 176,000 people have been displaced since April 2013 as a result of fighting between SAF and the SLM-MM and inter-tribal fighting between Rezeigat and Maaliya tribes. Of these, 140,000 people have been displaced as a result of the tribal clashes that began in August 2013. While government restrictions have prevented humanitarian organisations from assessing the needs of these people or verifying their number, ECHO reported on 12 September that the most urgent needs of these IDPs appear to be food, non-food relief supplies, emergency shelter, WASH, and health assistance.

In Central Darfur, according to humanitarian organisations, more than 25,000 people have been internally displaced since April, when fighting between Misseriya and Salamat tribes over resources started. There is little information available about civilian displacement caused by the recent fighting in early November, although local media reported population movements from Central to South Darfur. Between April and June this year, fighting between the two tribes forced over 55,000 people to flee their homes, including an estimated 22,000 IDPs and 30,000 displaced to Chad and 3,300 people to Central African Republic (CAR), according to UNHCR.

In South Darfur, an estimated 10,000 people from the Salamat tribe from have arrived in Bulbul Timbisco from Ed El Fursan locality, west of Nyala, following tribal clashes with Misseriya tribe in November. The IDPs are reportedly in need of food, non-food items, and water, sanitation and hygiene services.

**Disaster:** OCHA reports that heavy rains since mid-August have impacted 29,135 people and destroyed 2,562 houses in North Darfur. In South Darfur, 18,440 people are affected, and in West Darfur, 960 people are affected. Local sources reported heavy rains in El Salam IDP camp in South Darfur destroying over 1,000 homes. In early September, heavy rains were reported in central Darfur, with at least 95 houses destroyed north and south of Niertiti, and in North Darfur with over 100 homes destroyed at camp Dankaj in Saraf Omra. In West Darfur, rains and floods caused a number of injuries among IDPs in the Abu Suruj
Access to the Darfur regions remains constrained by on-going hostilities and insecurity, including direct targeting of aid workers and peacekeepers. On 29 November, the UN reported that two Sudanese health ministry workers helping to vaccinate children in the Darfur region had been killed. On 24 November, a UNAMID convoy came under attack by unknown armed men on the road from Kabkabiya to Saraf Omra in North Darfur. One Rwandan soldier was shot and killed. On 23 October, the head of a national NGO was killed by unidentified gunmen in South Darfur, according to OCHA. On 13 October, three Senegalese peacekeepers were killed and one injured after being ambushed by members of an unidentified armed group in West Darfur. According to UNAMID, the police unit came under attack while escorting a water convoy in West Darfur. On 11 October, a UNAMID military observer from Zambia died in the North Darfur capital El Fasher following an attack by armed men who stabbed him and hijacked his vehicle. These incidents came barely four months after seven Tanzanian peacekeepers were killed and 17 injured in what was described as the worst-ever single attack in the troubled region since 2007.

Inaccessibility due to insecurity is a major concern in North Darfur, particularly in conflict-affected areas of Jebel Amir, namely Elseraif town, Kebkabya and Saraf Omra. In South and East Darfur, particularly in Jebel Marra, access has been a concern for operational organisations. In Central Darfur, insecurity is hindering movement of humanitarian supplies by road especially to the southern corridor localities of Um Dukhun and Bindisi.

Food Security: As of October, according to an Integrated Food Security Phase Classification jointly undertaken by several humanitarian actors, 2,743,362 people in the Darfur states face Crisis and Emergency (IPC Phase 3 and 4) levels food insecurity, of whom 527,827 are in South Darfur, 1,023,611 in North Darfur, 468,891 in West Darfur, 492,933 in Central Darfur, and 230,100 in East Darfur.

Crisis (IPC Phase 3) levels of food insecurity will persist among new IDPs in East, Central and South Darfur states due to displacement, loss of assets and livelihood strategies. In addition, some 20% of existing IDPs in Darfur will remain Stressed (IPC Phase 2) throughout March 2014, according to FEWSNET.

Health and Nutrition: At least 25 people, among them eight children, diagnosed with visceral leishmaniasis (VL) and scabies have died in Kerenik (West Darfur) and Um Dukhun (Central Darfur) in October, according to local media. Local reports indicate that VL, scabies, and ringworm have increased since 2012, resulting in a surge of patients in hospitals and health centres in the region.

Blue Nile, West and South Kordofan states

Political and Security Context

Insurgent Groups: The southeastern states are mainly affected by the activism of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), which is the northern wing of the politico-military group which initially led the southern rebellion during the 1983-2005 civil war and which is now in power in the newly independent state of South Sudan. In April, talks about a possible ceasefire between the rebel SPLM-N and the Sudanese government stalled over the issue of humanitarian access corridors. According to the insurgents, the adjournment of the negotiations is linked to Khartoum’s insistence on linking the humanitarian issue to the political one, a condition the rebel group strongly rejects. On 19 November, Sudan’s government announced its readiness to resume talks with the rebels under the auspices of the AUHIP; the two sides are expected to meet in December in Addis Ababa.

Security Context: Armed clashes between SAF and rebel forces of various groups under the rebel alliance Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) in South Kordofan, West Kordofan and Blue Nile continue to result in the death and displacement of civilians. While aerial bombardment by the SAF has reportedly escalated over the last months, tensions have also intensified seasonally as roads become passable after the rainy season, starting from mid-November.

Armed clashes in West Kordofan between members of the Hamar and Ma’aliya tribes were reported on 5 December in the Um Deibut area, near the border with East Darfur State. According to local reports, at least 38 members of the two tribes were killed in the violence. The fighting reportedly stopped following the deployment of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF).

In South Kordofan, the HAC reported early December that SAF airstrikes and renewed fighting between the army and SRF caused new population displacements. Local sources reported that these events also cost seven lives including 6 children. Between 21-25 November, aerial bombing and ground fighting was reported by local sources in several parts of SPLM-N controlled areas, including Kaling, Habila, Al Buram, Talodi as well as Karka and Kondikar areas in Dilling. The attacks caused the displacement of a large number of people, while the number of deaths and material damage remain uncertain to date. On 19 November, local media reported that an air raid killed at least six people in Kujurya village, Dilling locality. According to unconfirmed reports on 22 October, SAF planes attacked Um Dorain county, causing civilian casualties and destroying homes and farmland. An August report by Sudan Consortium (a coalition of 50 Africa-based and Africa-focused NGOs) reported at least 23 civilians killed and another 81 injured in the state due to aerial bombardments since January 2013.

Meanwhile, SPLM-N reportedly shelled South Kordofan’s regional capital Kadugli on 19 November, and announced that it will continue to do so as a response to SAF aerial bombardments in the region. Two days before, rebels reportedly struck a town near the border of South Kordofan state.

In Blue Nile, the South Kordofan and Blue Nile Coordination Unit (SKBN-CU) reported as of October that the Sudanese Air Force aerial bombardments in September resulted in civilian casualties and displacement in multiple localities.

Humanitarian Context and Needs

Displacement: As of 30 June, OCHA stated that 231,000 people in South Kordofan and 95,000 people in Blue Nile were displaced or severely affected by conflict in government-controlled areas. In SPLM-N areas, 700,000 people in South Kordofan and 90,000 in Blue Nile are displaced or severely affected by conflict according to local estimates. The UN
reports that it has no presence in SPLM-N controlled areas and is unable to independently verify these figures.

As reported in the last OCHA bulletin, an estimated 2,800 people, including 1,850 children and 600 women, have fled fighting and food insecurity in the Jugo, Seen, Com Reg and Bobuk areas in Bau locality in Blue Nile state, and taken shelter in the El Gerri area, north of El Roseires locality.

As reported in local media in early December, renewed tribal fighting in the Um Deibat area in West Kordofan triggered the displacement of over 6,000 people to El Taboun and Babanusa in West Kordofan, and Adila in East Darfur.

According to HAC on 1 December, heavy fighting in South Kordofan between government troops and rebels caused the displacement of an estimated 12,500 people within one week. OCHA reported that humanitarian organisations have so far been unable to conduct assessments due to ongoing military operations, and no assistance has yet been delivered to the newly IDPs. According to unconfirmed statements by the SPLM-N, the aerial bombardments and ground attacks by government forces and militias between 21 and 25 November in rebel-controlled areas have displaced 24,920 people. SKBN-CU reported that over the past few weeks, over 3,800 people from Blue Nile and South Kordofan crossed into South Sudan and Ethiopia. During September, more refugees arrived in Upper Nile state, South Sudan from Talodi and Abu Jubaiha areas of South Kordofan due to aerial bombardments and acute food insecurity, according to SKBN-CU. Following ground fighting in Blue Nile, an influx of 3,000 refugees reportedly crossed into Ethiopia in late September. As of early October, 32,000 refugees from Blue Nile had arrived in Ethiopia since 2011.

Access: As of mid-October, there was no humanitarian access from Sudan to rebel-held areas in South Kordofan.

On 25 June, the Sudanese ruling National Congress Party (NCP) warned foreign aid groups expelled from the country against entering Blue Nile and South Kordofan states without Khartoum’s permission. The NCP secretary stated that some organisations previously working in Sudan who had been expelled due to violating government policies were trying to sneak back in. He claimed that these groups sought entrance through political bodies and people with connections to rebels to collect information on the humanitarian situation in Sudan and fabricate reports with the help of organisations such as Amnesty International and Transparency International. The authorities currently ban access of foreign groups to rebel-held areas in South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

Food Security: As of October, according to an Integrated Food Security Phase Classification jointly undertaken by several humanitarian actors, 104,240 people in South Kordofan, and 100,107 people in Blue Nile face Crisis and Emergency (IPC Phase 3 and 4) levels food insecurity.

According to FEWSNET, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) levels of food insecurity are likely to persist among IDPs and poor residents in SPLM-N controlled areas of South Kordofan and Blue Nile. At least 30% of IDPs in SPLM-N controlled areas of South Kordofan are estimated to remain at Crisis (IPC Phase 3) levels of food insecurity due to displacement, loss of assets and livelihood strategies, and lack of access to humanitarian assistance. Another 20% of poor residents in SPLM-N controlled areas of South Kordofan and Blue Nile, and IDPs in GoS-controlled areas of South Kordofan and Blue Nile states will remain at Stressed (IPC Phase 2) levels.

As of late November, the Ministry of Agriculture reported that a localised outbreak of birds and grasshoppers has caused severe damage to South and West Kordofan states. FEWSNET reports that the damages have reduced crop prospects, which were already low due to the impacts of conflict and poor rainfall.

Health and Nutrition: As reported by the UN in mid-December, an estimated 165,000 Sudanese children living in rebel-held parts of South Kordofan and Blue Nile do not have access to basic health services, including vaccinations against measles and polio because of the ongoing conflict.

Sudan’s Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) has announced that the polio vaccination campaign in areas controlled by the SPLM-N in South Kordofan and Blue Nile would start in December. On 27 October, the Government of Sudan announced a 12-day cessation of hostilities in non-government controlled areas in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states, beginning on 5 November 2013, in order to facilitate a polio vaccination and vitamin A supplementation campaign for children <5. However, the efforts to initiate the vaccination campaign failed due to outstanding disagreements over the logistics of the operation. The UNICEF and WHO-led campaign, originally planned for October, was due to target 147,000 children <5 in areas controlled by the SPLM-N in South Kordofan and 7,000 children in Blue Nile who have not been vaccinated since the ongoing armed conflict began in 2011. If the vaccination campaign is to be implemented, it will be the first cross-line access into SPLM-N areas from within Sudan since 2011.

In mid-November, Sudan’s Federal Ministry of Health (FMoH) notified WHO of a yellow fever outbreak in West and South Kordofan. WHO reported that between 3 October and 24 November 2013, a total of 44 suspected cases of viral haemorrhagic fever (VHF) were reported, including 14 deaths, presenting a case fatality rate of 31.8%. 12 localities in West and South Kordofan are affected as of late November, WHO reports.

Updated: 17/12/2013

**ANGOLA FOOD INSECURITY**

**Highlights**

**Early December:** An outbreak of cholera in the south of the country, triggered by protracted drought and then the onset of the rainy season, led to 48 deaths and 1000 infections over a two week period in November, reported Angola’s Ministry of Health. The cholera outbreak is mainly confined to southern Cunene province, which borders Namibia.

**Political and Security Context**

**Regional Security Context:** A unit of Angolan troops crossed into neighbouring Congo Republic on 13 October, taking position in several locations in Kimongo district and
detaining 40 Congolese soldiers, according to local sources. Angola’s ambassador in Brazzaville reported that he was unaware of Angolan troop movements inside the Congo Republic and denied that his country’s army was detaining Congolese soldiers. Congo deployed soldiers to the area after learning of the incursion, but they were quickly subdued by the Angolan forces. The soldiers were released on 17 October.

The incident highlights tensions around Angola’s oil-rich Cabinda enclave, which is separated from the rest of Angola and surrounded by Congo Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo. Cabinda is home to the FLEC rebellion, which has been fighting a low-intensity guerrilla war against Angola’s Government for decades.

Angola, which possesses one of the region’s most capable militaries, has in the past pursued FLEC separatists beyond its borders, notably inside Democratic Republic of Congo. FLEC signed a cease-fire in 2006; which was rejected by the Paris-based president of the group’s armed wing.

National Security Context: Domestically, Angola witnessed increased unrest over the past week. On 23 November, Angolan security forces shot and killed an opposition activist, according to local sources. The incident took place hours ahead of protests across the country where police detained 292 people. Tensions rose in the past week as the ruling MPLA party accused the main opposition party UNITA of promoting chaos through its protests against the kidnapping and possible murder of two activists in May 2012.

Humanitarian Context and Needs

Food Security: Since November 2012, Angola has been affected by a prolonged drought leaving 1.8 million people affected, out whom 700,000 are reported to be at risk of food insecurity by OCHA in late September. In August, 1.5 million were reported to be food insecure. Crop and livestock productions have been adversely impacted on account of the prolonged dry conditions and the resultant poor pastures. The five southern provinces of Namibe, Cunene, Kuando Kubango, Huila, and Benguela are particularly affected, with Cunene and Namibe being the most severely hit.

According to FEWSNET as of October, as a result of lower food stocks from own production and the longer migration, more than 20% of households of Namibe and Cunene are Stressed (IPC Phase 2) or are minimally able to meet their food needs, but are unable to purchase non-food items. Given current conditions and expectations for average rainfall, poor households in Namibe and Cunene are expected to be Stressed (Phase 2) until harvests arrive in March 2014, according to FEWSNET. Meanwhile, better access to water and livestock conditions suggests that in Cuando Cubango, Minimal (IPC Phase 1) is projected over the same period.

In Cunene, the GAM rate has reached 24%. Crop losses in Cunene are expected to reach up to 80%, adversely impacting farmers including semi-nomadic communities and children <5. This represents 50% of Cunene’s population of whom 130,000 are children <5.

In Namibe province, a June joint assessment found that 250,000 people were affected by the drought and 70% of crops destroyed. After food insecurity, the greatest reported problem is lack of access to water. Half of all water points are no longer working or have dried up, according to UNICEF. People are reportedly migrating in search of water and pasture for their cattle.

As a result of the drought, and despite an anticipated improvement of food security nationally compared to 2012, southern provinces are expecting a poor cereal harvest for the second consecutive year, negatively impacting food security. The government has established an emergency plan to provide assistance in the southern province of Cunene, where roughly 640,000 people are affected by the drought.

Health and Nutrition: As a result of the use of untreated stagnant water, levels of water-borne diseases are increasing. A protracted drought followed by the onset of the rainy season in southern Angola has triggered a sharp increase in cholera cases, mainly concentrated in Cunene province, where over 1,000 infections and 48 deaths were recorded during a two-week period in November, according to figures from the Ministry of Health. So far, the current outbreak has remained almost entirely confined to Cunene, although neighbouring Huila province has also recorded some cases. Since January 2013, just over 5,600 cholera cases and 190 deaths have been reported, about 70% of them in Cunene. The Ministry of Health has reported an epidemic of dengue fever (over 900 cases and ten deaths) and an outbreak of measles in 60% of the municipalities, particularly affecting malnourished children. Malaria is affecting large numbers of Angolans, with 75 deaths in eastern Lunda Sul province in the first quarter of 2013 and 15,000 cases registered overall. An estimated 533,000 children suffer from varying levels of malnutrition in a country that is still recovering from decades of a civil war that lasted until 2002.

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CAMEROON FOOD INSECURITY

Highlights

Early December: A malaria outbreak in the Far North region was declared. Prior to this, 182,400 cases of malaria were reported between January and September 2013, representing a 10% increase in cases recorded during the same period in 2012. Estimates suggest a third of the malaria cases recorded in 2013 proved fatal.

Humanitarian Context and Needs

Displacement: As of 15 November, UNHCR reported that an estimated 90,400 refugees from Central African Republic (CAR) are living in Cameroon. Around 5,280 refugees have arrived in the past year.

In addition, refugees from Nigeria, fleeing the on-going military offensive against the Islamist insurgent group Boko Haram, have arrived in Cameroon. The militants operate mainly throughout Nigeria and the North East of Cameroon and their attacks have led to a significant deterioration of the security situation in the region.

Since June 2013, Nigerian refugees have been crossing the border to Cameroon’s Far North region, mainly in the departments of Mayo Sava, Logone Chari and Mayo Sanaga. As of 17 July, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) estimated that there...
are about 10,000 Nigerian refugees in Cameroon, while local government and civil society sources say the number is closer to 20,000. UNHCR figures show that more than 8,000 located in the Far North region, mainly women and children. The needs among the arrived refugees are largely in WASH, health and nutrition.

**Food Security:** The impact of the 2011-2012 drought it still being felt across the country, with around 615,000 people still at risk from food insecurity and malnutrition. According to FAO as of early October, recurrent climatic shocks in recent years have negatively impacted agricultural activities in the two Sahelian regions North and Far North.

UNICEF reports that the nutrition situation for 2013 is similar to that in 2012 due to a structural vulnerability of populations in the northern Cameroon, which has increased with each consecutive crisis. As of 30 June, an estimated 83,300 children <5 years old suffered from SAM and 134,700 suffer from MAM.

In mid-October, FAO reported that harvesting of the 2013 main season and the planting of the second season maize crops are underway concurrently in several bi-modal rainfall areas of the Centre and South. Abundant precipitation during March to July, the main season planting and growing period, benefited crops. On the other hand, below average rainfall in August and September may have negatively impacted planting activities of second season crops, for harvest in December/January, and rainfall amounts and distribution in the coming months will be crucial for crop development and performance.

**Health:** A malaria outbreak in the Far North region was declared in early December. Prior to this, 182,400 cases of malaria were reported between January and September 2013, representing a 10% increase in cases recorded during the same period in 2012. Authorities blamed the recent upsurge on low bed nets use, heavy rains, weak medical services and widespread poverty.

On 21 November, WHO reported that the wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) has been confirmed in Cameroon. The case is the first wild poliovirus in the country since 2009. Wild poliovirus was isolated from two acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) cases from West Region. According to WHO, this event confirms the risk of ongoing international spread of a pathogen wild poliovirus slated for eradication. Given the history of international spread of polio from northern Nigeria across West and Central Africa and subnational surveillance gaps, WHO assesses the risk of further international spread across the region as high.

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**ETHIOPIA  FLOODS, FOOD INSECURITY**

**Highlights**

**13 December:** Ethiopia is facing the mass return of over 134,000 migrants who have been deported from Saudi Arabia over the past month. An additional 35,000 returning Ethiopian migrants are expected within the next weeks following the end of an amnesty period for illegal migrant workers in the Kingdom. OCHA has indicated that the surge in arrivals is causing congestion in transit centres and, due to poor sanitation in some of them, the risk of a disease outbreak has increased. The most urgent needs for the migrants include food, sanitation and health services.

**3-8 December:** In neighbouring Kenya, communal violence broke out for a second time between the Borana community and a joint force of Burji and Gabra tribes in the border districts of Marsabit and Moyale, sending an estimated 41,000 more people across the border into Ethiopia.

As of 8 December, 30 people had reportedly been killed in the tribal clashes which first erupted in early November. Refugees continue to arrive daily, and reports suggest that they do not plan to return to Kenya in the near future as violence is still reported in the area, despite the presence of government troops.

**Political and Security Context**

On 13 October, a bomb blast killed two people in the capital Addis Ababa. There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but the government has thwarted plots of attacks blamed on rebel groups based in the south and southeast of the country, and on the Somali Islamist movement Al Shabaab which Ethiopia has been fighting alongside African Union forces since 2011.

Ethiopia is considered comparatively stable in the Horn of Africa, but two decades of deadly conflict in the south eastern region of Ogaden have had a severe impact on the Ethiopian-Somali population, especially after five years of a relatively successful government counter-insurgency campaign. While there are signs that the peace process may restart in the coming months, deep clan tensions and intra-communal violence remain against the backdrop of wider regional rivalries involving neighbouring states of Somalia and Kenya.

According to observers, the country is likely to remain stable in the coming decade, due to a steady suppression of political opposition, the perspective of a new peace process between the government and separatist groups, and Addis Ababa's determination to accelerate economic growth in a context of sustainable peace. However, the recent shift in national leadership (following the death of the longstanding Prime Minister in August 2012) is raising fears of unrest if new constituencies start voicing grievances against the lack of political freedom and an economic situation characterised by high inflation rates and food insecurity.

Al Shabaab has been repeatedly threatening Ethiopia since 2011, and Addis Ababa recently pledged that Ethiopian troops will remain in Somalia until durable peace and security is maintained. So far, no attacks have materialised. The government has to date been able to suppress protests and contain armed insurgencies in the Ogaden and Oromo regions, but has yet to address the root causes of the violence.

**Humanitarian Context and Needs**

**Displacement:** As of 13 December, OCHA reported that Ethiopia is facing a mass return of migrants who have been deported from Saudi Arabia. With an average of 7,000 migrants returning every day, over 134,700 have returned since the operation began on 13 November, following the expiry of an amnesty period during which the workers were
allowed to legalize their status in KSA. As of mid-December, the government expects an additional 35,000 people to arrive. Earlier in December, OCHA indicated that the surge in arrivals is causing congestion in transit centres, and poor sanitation facilities in some of them increase the risk of a diseases outbreak. The most urgent needs include food, sanitation and health services.

In Kenya along the border, fighting broke out for a second time on 3-8 December between the Borana community and a joint force of Burji and Gabra tribes in the districts of Marsabit and Moyale. As of 8 December, 30 people have reportedly been killed in the tribal clashes which first erupted early November. According to ECHO as of 13 December, this latest wave of communal violence in neighbouring Kenya sent an estimated 41,000 people across the border to Moyale in Ethiopia. To date, refugees continue to arrive daily, and first reports suggest that they do not plan to go back home in the near future, as violence is still recorded in the area despite the deployment of troops by the government. Early September, ECHO reported that similar clashes in the same area displaced over 25,000 people in July-August, mostly across the border of neighbouring Ethiopia.

As of 23 September, OCHA reported that inter-communal conflict between the Oromo and Somali communities affected 90,000 people, part of whom are displaced within the East Hararge zone (eastern Oromia) where ECHO reported mid-September that 50,433 IDPs are in need of humanitarian assistance.

In addition to the newly arrived Kenyan refugees, UNHCR reported in December that Ethiopia is hosting 427,000 refugees, including 242,900 Somalis, 78,000 Eritreans, 68,000 South Sudanese, and 32,500 Sudanese.

Disaster: As of early November, OCHA reported that 33,500 people were affected by floods in South Omo zone, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples’ Region (SNNPR). Due to damaged water supply, people are using unprotected water sources, creating a high risk for water-related diseases. In Oromia region, a joint assessment by IOM and local authorities indicated that 19,000 people were displaced by flooding in September and October.

Food Security: As of early November, FAO reports that 2.7 million people are estimated to need food assistance due to consecutively below average belg and sugum rains, low crop production, deterioration of livestock, and asset depletion. This represents a 12% increase compared to the first half of 2013. The most affected regions are Oromia (897,000 people in need), Somali (690,970), Amhara (548,000), Tigray (321,400), and Afar (152,600).

Other estimates suggest that the total number of people affected by food insecurity might be as high as 3.5 million. Recent reports indicated that East and West Hararghe zones in eastern Ethiopia have deteriorated into food insecurity Crisis (IPC Phase 3) following two consecutive, poorly-distributed rainy seasons and a below average meher harvest in October-November 2012. Crops in most agro-pastoral areas in Afar, northern Somali, and the lowlands of Bale, Guji, and Borena zones in Oromia region are performing well.

According to FAO early November, food security conditions are gradually improving with the beginning of the meher harvest in October. In western areas, harvest labour opportunities increase the purchasing power of poor households and improve the access to food. However, food access is likely to deteriorate in areas which received below average rains, including SNNPR, north eastern Amhara, eastern and southern Tigray, and central and eastern Oromia regions.

According to FAO, prices of the main cereals continue to follow the upward seasonal trend that started at the beginning of 2013, with prices of maize increasing by 6-20% from June to August. FAO reported on 10 September that in Addis Ababa, prices of maize and red sorghum were 24% and 35% higher, respectively, than a year earlier. Prices of wheat, white sorghum and teff were at around the same levels.

Health and Nutrition: According to ECHO as of 6 December, some 9,258 cases of dengue fever have been reported in Dire Dawa city since the beginning of the outbreak in mid-October.

Separately, an upsurge in malaria cases was reported, with 86,762 cases across the country, including five deaths. Most affected regions are reportedly Amhara and SNNP.

According to OCHA as of 11 November, a suspected measles outbreak was reported in Somali region, with 372 cases confirmed in October. Since early September, a separate outbreak was declared in SNNPR, with 536 cases of measles and eight deaths reported as of 21 October. Nationally, OCHA reported as of 16 December that 2,860 cases were confirmed between January and October, with children under five constituting 37% of the affected.

On 23 August, a polio outbreak in the Horn of Africa was reported to have spread into Ethiopia. According to WHO as of 14 November, no new cases were reported since late September, and the national polio caseload stands at six. All cases were reported in woredas which share borders with Somalia where the polio outbreak in the region started in May.

OCHA reported on 28 August that in East Hararge zone (Oromia region), admission of children suffering from SAM to therapeutic feeding programs decreased by 24% between July and August, and 13% between August and September, bringing the monthly number of admissions to 2,403, consistent with the downward trend seen in the zone since February. September’s rate is still 7% higher than the SAM caseload in September 2012.

Disaster: The country is still facing a number of humanitarian issues.

WASH: According to the UN, critical water shortages continue in Afar region. Water availability has deteriorated over the past month in Tigray region. Water shortages were reported in Adadle and Kebridehar woredas. Though seasonal rains have fully replenished water sources in Somali and SNNP regions and in nearly all woredas of Oromia and Amhara regions, over 566,000 people still need water trucking across Ethiopia, down from 720,500 people in March.

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KENYA FOOD INSECURITY, DISPLACEMENT, INSECURITY

Highlights

10-11 December: Heavy rainfall affected parts of southern Kenya, causing floods in...
Taveta, Coast Province. Local media reported on 15 December that the rising waters in Kajiado County had killed 10 people.

10 December: Gunmen killed eight Kenyans, including five policemen, in an ambush near the border town of Liboi. Kenya’s border with Somalia has been repeatedly affected by Al Shabaab insurgents, and such attacks against police and security forces are routinely blamed on the Al Qaeda-linked rebels.

3-8 December: On the north-central border with Ethiopia, fighting broke out for a second time between the Borana community and a joint force of Burji and Gabra tribes in the districts of Marsabit and Moyale. 30 people have reportedly been killed in the tribal clashes which first erupted in early November. This latest wave of communal violence sent an estimated 41,000 people across the border to Moyale in Ethiopia.

Early December: In the northeast of the country, inter-clan violence erupted on the West Pokot-Turkana border, where pastoral communities clashed over resources, causing more than 20 deaths and displacing hundreds of families.

Political and Security Context

National Context: Kenya is considered relatively stable in the Horn of Africa and held rather peaceful presidential elections in March 2013. However, the country remains deeply divided, ethnically polarised, and has been continuously affected by two decades of conflict in neighbouring Somalia. The country’s political stability is facing major challenges including the implementation of the devolution process, land reform, and national reconciliation. Institutions are perceived as weak, and minority groups are using politically motivated violence to influence the devolution process, which creates risk of polarising the country further at a time when the 47 newly established counties are seeking to tackle socio-economic inequalities. The political scene is also likely to be dominated by the planned trial of the president and vice-president at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the coming year.

Al Shabaab Insurgency: While regional and socio-economic inequality threatens Kenya’s national stability, the Northeast province is concentrating most of the conflict drivers. The region dominated by ethnic Somalis has suffered for more than 30 years from unequal development, and a history of insurgency, repression, chronic poverty and poor infrastructure. It also experiences 63% of violent attacks attributed to the Somali Islamist movement Al Shabaab, which has built a cross-border presence and clandestine support network among the Muslim population in the northeast, Nairobi, and the coast.

On 10 December, gunmen killed eight Kenyans, including five policemen, in an ambush near the border town of Liboi. While the identity of the perpetrators remains unclear, Kenya’s border with Somalia has been repeatedly affected by Al Shabaab insurgents, and such attacks against police and security forces are routinely blamed on the Al Qaeda-linked rebels. The group has been active in the country prior to Kenya’s intervention in Somalia, but the frequency and scale of attacks has increased dramatically since 2011, and the nature of the violence has changed, with 40% of events targeting civilians. In September, an unprecedented attack was conducted by Al Shabaab fighters on a shopping mall in Nairobi, raising fears of increased communal tensions and discrimination against Somalis in particular, and Muslims in general. While the government is focusing on counter-terrorism policies, observers suggest that the main challenge remains the increasing radicalisation of the ethnic Somali Muslim population, which is allegedly fuelled by systematic ethnic profiling and discrimination from part of the government forces and the Kenyan population.

On 25 October, Kenyan authorities called for Somali refugees to be repatriated, claiming that refugee camps were being used as a safe haven for Islamist militants and are a threat to national security. Over the past year, five Muslim clerics were killed in the coastal city of Mombasa (Kenya’s second largest) on allegation that they were terror suspects recruiting in mosques for the militant group Al Shabaab. In early October, Mombasa erupted in riots after the killing of a Muslim preacher. Rising sectarian tensions also affect the city’s Christian community, as shown by the two separate attacks conducted on 19 October, which claimed the lives of two Christian clerics.

Inter-Communal Violence: In the northeast of the country, inter-clan violence erupted early December on the West Pokot-Turkana border, where pastoral communities clashed over resources, causing more than 20 deaths and displacing hundreds of families.

On the north-central border with Ethiopia, fighting broke out for a second time on 3-8 December between the Borana community and a joint force of Burji and Gabra tribes in the districts of Marsabit and Moyale. As of 8 December, 30 people have reportedly been killed in the tribal clashes which first erupted in early November.

According to ECHO as of 13 December, this latest wave of communal violence sent an estimated 41,000 people across the border to Moyale in Ethiopia. Armed clashes previously flared up in July and August between the two rival communities, which have a history of competing over land, water and land-grazing rights. In 2012, over 40,000 Kenyan sought refuge in Ethiopia due to similar events.

This fresh outbreak of communal violence led the government to take the almost unprecedented measure of deploying its troops to Marsabit, Samburu, Pokot and Turkana counties to restore order.

The northeast of the country is affected by fighting between the Garre and Degodia ethnic Somali clans, which have been feuding in Mandera county since March 2012. Tension and conflict between the two communities has historically revolved around competition for natural resources. Since March 2013, emerging tensions are attributed to political disagreements over governance issues under the new devolution structures. Inter-clan violence has spread to neighbouring Wajir county. Leaders from the warring Garre and Degodia clans signed a peace agreement on 23 June to stop the clashes, but violence resumed on 24 June. The Kenyan Red Cross reported that conflict between Garre and Degodia clans in Mandera County had left over 85 people dead as of 25 June.

In unrelated violence in western Kenya, tension is high along the West Pokot and Turkana county borders after two people were killed early October by raiders suspected to be Turkanas. At the end of June, a raid killed three herdsmen, and repeated incidents in August and September caused an unknown number of families to flee the area of Bargoi in Samburu county. Motives behind the attacks are unclear, but are suspected to be in retaliation for the killing of a Turkana boy by Samburu raiders. The western province saw
a surge in indiscriminate attacks by various armed groups and gangs in early May, affecting the cities of Bungoma and Busia. However, the two communities recently held talks where they agreed to resolve peacefully feuds between them.

**Humanitarian Context and Needs**

**Displacement:** According to ECHO as of 13 December, tribal violence in the northern districts of Marsabit and Moyale between early November and 8 December caused an estimated 41,000 people to cross into Ethiopia. To date, refugees continue to arrive daily, and first reports suggest that they do not plan to go back home in the near future, as violence is still reported in the area despite the deployment of troops by the government. Early September, ECHO reported that similar clashes in the same area displaced over 25,000 people in July-August, mostly across the border of neighbouring Ethiopia.

According to OCHA as of July, inter-communal conflict between the Degodia and the Garre clans in the north eastern counties of Mandera and Wajir has caused the internal displacement of 52,000 people in 2013.

As of August, UNHCR notes that Kenya hosts more than 582,000 refugees, including at least 475,000 Somali which reside mostly in the north eastern Dadaab refugee camp complex (388,000), the northwest camp of Kakuma (54,000) and in the capital Nairobi (32,000). On 10 November, a tripartite agreement was signed by UNHCR and the governments of Kenya and Somalia to establish the legal framework for the voluntary repatriation of Somali refugees. The Kenyan Government estimated the number of Somali refugees in Kenya at 600,000 as of late June 2013 and has been pushing to expedite the return of these refugees since the attack on the Westgate Mall in September, citing national security concerns and calling for the closure of the Dadaab camp complex.

According to UNHCR as of October, fighting in neighbouring South Sudan has caused 8,500 new South Sudanese refugees to cross into Kenya since January 2013.

**Disaster:** According to ECHO as of 12 December, three days of heavy rainfall affected part of southern Kenya, causing floods in Taveta, Coast Province. Local media reported on 15 December that rising waters in Kajiado County cost the lives of 10 people.

**Access:** From June 2012 to May 2013, Dadaab camp has seen kidnappings of humanitarian workers, explosions, grenade attacks, random shootings, and increased banditry.

**Food Security:** According to OCHA in mid-November, the food insecure population declined from 1.1 million in February to 850,000 in August, which represents a significant improvement compared to August 2012, when the number stood at 2.1 million. This is mainly attributed to the implementation of food security resilience programmes, but also to near average short rains crop production and improved grazing conditions compared to the 2012 August to September lean season. As of early November, the government highlighted the drought affecting 20 counties and warned that 1.6 million people could need urgent food assistance in the coming months.

According to FEWSNET as of November, the situation remains stable across the country, with Stressed levels of food insecurity (IPC Phase 2) predicted to remain the same through December, except for pockets of Kitui, Makueni, Taita, Taveta, and Kwale counties where the situation could deteriorate and reach Crisis levels (IPC Phase 3) due to households depleting their stocks and lacking coping capacities.

In the northwest of the country, an October food security assessment in the semi-arid Turkana region indicated that more than 346,000 people are in dire need of food assistance, and 500,000 heads of cattle are at risk as water and pasture have run out.

**Health and Nutrition:** According to WHO as of 14 November, the outbreak of wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) has reached a case count of 14 for Kenya, most of them reported in the eastern area of Dadaab, and more than half the caseload originating from the refugee community. This is the first WPV outbreak in Kenya since 2011. To date, four rounds of outbreak response activities have been undertaken, targeting 4.9 million people in 24 counties. Priority is given to the northeast of the country, where nearly 50% of children are reportedly under-immunised, compared to less than 5% nationally.

According to FEWSNET as of July, malnutrition levels remain below the five-year average, except for the south eastern county of Lamu, where malnutrition has increased and is now above the five-year average due to increased prices and limited milk availability. Malnutrition is also expected to deteriorate for areas affected by conflict and floods, such as Tana River county and Mandera county where UNICEF defines the nutrition status as critical.

**Updated:** 17/12/2013

**LESOTHO FOOD INSECURITY**

**Highlights**

No new updates. Last updated: 03/12/2013.

**Humanitarian Context and Needs**

**Food Security:** As of early October 2013, FAO estimated that 223,000 people require assistance due to constrained food access in Lesotho. The Food and Nutrition Security Working Group (Southern Africa) (FNSWG) reports that this number includes some 15% of the rural population.

The number of food insecure marks a decrease of 70% compared to the previous year, mainly due to strong production gains made in 2013 compared to the drought-affected harvest of last year. Production output has doubled compared to 2012.

FEWSNET reported in November 2013 that stable income opportunities associated with agriculture activities, ongoing poverty reduction and humanitarian programs, and the start of the green harvest are all expected to contribute to continued sufficient food access, resulting in Minimal (IPC Phase 1) acute food insecurity outcomes in most parts of the country until March 2014.

**Health and Nutrition:** WFP reported in June that the country records a HIV prevalence of
23.5% - the world’s third highest rate, and 39% of children under 5 are stunted.

Rains in Lesotho begin in or around November and are strongest between January-March. The 2013/14 rains are forecast to be near average for Lesotho. As of late November, FEWSNET reports that seasonal rains have been slow to start in the central and western part of the country and this could potentially delay the start of planting, which may impact yields for the Southern lowlands, and parts of the Foothills and Senqu River Valley livelihood zones.

Reviewed: 17/12/2013

MADAGASCAR FOOD INSECURITY

Highlights

As of 16 December, despite ongoing political tensions between supporters and opponents of the presidential candidates, no major violent incidents had been reported. The second round of the presidential election is scheduled to take place on 20 December.

5 December: Local authorities and WHO confirmed that a plague outbreak had affected 4 out of 112 districts in the country. 86 cases have been recorded since September, including 42 confirmed deaths. Heavy rains and poor waste management are raising concerns that the disease could spread to other areas.

Political and Security Context

Political Context: On 21 November, Madagascar’s military-backed government sacked the regional administrators from eight of the country’s 22 provinces and replaced them with five colonels and three generals. The government cited the candidacy of some regional leaders to legislative elections, recent insecurity and the national political context as being the main reasons for the move. Several local observers accused the current President of the High Transitional Authority Andry Rajoelina of trying to establish a military junta. It is the second round of such sackings. In August the authorities dismissed seven regional leaders, replacing them with civilian appointees.

On 25 October, the people in Madagascar voted in the country’s first presidential election since the 2009 coup. The elections were hailed by international observers as free, transparent and peaceful, despite isolated incidents of violence as well as some organisational flaws that prevented some from casting their ballots. Results released on 8 November showed that the presidential election will go to a run-off vote on 20 December between the top two candidates since no candidate won an outright majority in the first round. In total, 33 candidates participated in the presidential race.

According to Madagascar’s national electoral commission, Jean Louis Robinson, a candidate associated with ousted leader Marc Ravalomanana, and Hery Rajaonarimampianina, a former finance minister under Rajoelina will face each other in the run-off. In August, the current President of the High Transitional Authority Andry Rajoelina was barred from running in the 2013 election by a special electoral court.

Following the army-backed coup by Andry Rajoelina, who ousted President Marc Ravalomanana in 2009, Madagascar has been mired in turmoil. The current elections are designed to end the deep political crisis. The new dates were reached following three earlier postponements this year, amid a lack of funding and controversy over the candidacies of three top contenders. After the presidential polls, a parliamentary vote will follow on 20 December, along with the second run-off.

Security Context: According to OCHA, as of 16 December, no major incidents have been registered, but tension reportedly remains high between supporters of the presidential candidates. Violence and pre-election tensions have escalated in recent months, with a series of explosions and attacks in September and October. Moreover, large rural areas remain insecure due to proliferating armed bandit groups who have become increasingly organized in the wake of the diminishing legitimacy and capacity of the state.

Humanitarian Context and Needs

Food Security: According to the crop and food security assessment undertaken by FAO and WFP, as many as 4 million people, or 27.5% of the households in rural areas, of Madagascar are food insecure following this year’s reduced harvest. A further 9.6 million people are at risk of food insecurity. The south of the island - already a chronically food-insecure area - has been particularly affected, with severe food insecurity being significant in the regions of Androy, Atsimo Atsinanana and Atsimo Andrefana. Additionally, the regions of the southern plateau, including Hirombe, and in the food basket region of Alaotra Mangoro reportedly experience high rates of food insecurity. As of late October, FEWSNET reported that poor households in these areas are having difficulties meeting non-food needs and are currently at Stressed (IPC Phase 2) levels of food insecurity. As the lean season progresses, these households will face some slight food deficits and acute food security outcomes are expected to deteriorate to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) levels.

The sharp decrease in harvest output is attributed to several factors including flooding caused by Cyclone Haruna earlier this year followed by a period of poor rains, uneven rainfall distribution and a persistent locust plague.

Uneven rainfall distribution (both temporally and spatially), and a delayed start of the 2012/13 rainy season by one to two months, were observed in the rice producing regions in the north and center of the country. As a result significant reductions in the rice output were estimated in north-eastern regions, of up to 60%, relative to 2012’s harvest.

In addition, since April 2012, Madagascar has been facing a plague of the Malagasy Migratory Locust, which threatens the livelihood of 13 million people in the country according to FAO. The locusts have expanded beyond their endemic areas in the southwestern quadrant of Madagascar to affect over two-thirds of the country. Recent estimates indicate that resulting rice crop losses range from 10-40% in 17 of Madagascar’s 22 regions. This has both damaged crops and discouraged farmers from planting. The impact of the locust plague has been most severe in the southwest, which contributes on average about 7% to the national rice output. The impact of the locust plague has been comparatively limited on the national rice production, but has a significant impact on the livelihoods of the households in affected areas. In addition, the locust plague, which has already reached some of the main rice producing regions in the north, is
expected to have a serious impact on next season’s crop, if not controlled.

In total, according to the FAO/WFP Report, Madagascar’s 2013 rice output is estimated at 3.6 million tonnes, which is about 21% below the above-average level of 2012. Maize and cassava production are also estimated to have declined compared to the previous season, by 15% and 14% respectively. The country is estimated to have a rice deficit of about 240,000 tonnes for the 2013/14 marketing year (April/March), while approximately 46,000 tonnes of imported maize would be required to satisfy the national deficit.

Health: On 5 December, local authorities and WHO confirmed that a plague outbreak had affected 4 out of 112 districts in the country. 86 cases have recorded since September, including 42 confirmed deaths. Heavy rains and poor waste management are raising concerns that the disease could spread to other areas.

Updated: 17/12/2013

MALAWI FOOD INSECURITY

Highlights

Early December: Large parts of northern Malawi have not received rain since February and are now experiencing acute water shortages. The situation is expected to worsen as the current rainy season also appears to be getting off to a late start, as reported by OCHA.

Political and Security Context

On 11 October Joyce Banda, the president of Malawi, dismissed her entire cabinet of 25 ministers amid a corruption scandal. Up to 10 government officials have been arrested. They have been charged with money laundering, misuse of public office and corruption. Nine senior police officers were each jailed for 14 years last month for their roles in a $164,000 fraud.

On 15 October Paul Mphwiyo was appointed new finance minister. The government official, who was seen as an anti-corruption crusader, was shot and seriously injured last month in an apparent effort to silence him.

Humanitarian Context and Needs

Food Security: According to OCHA, as of early December, large parts of northern Malawi have not received rain since February and are now experiencing severe water shortages. The situation is expected to worsen as the current rainy season also appears to be getting off to a late start. So far, only a few days of heavy rain fell in early October.

As of November, according to the Vulnerability Assessment Committee’s (MVAC) updated food security assessment, the total population requiring food assistance has been revised from approximately 1.5 million to 1.8 million people. The MVAC further recommended that assistance is extended to March 2014.

The estimated affected population is located in 21 of the 28 districts in Malawi, suggesting that areas of need are more widely spread than last year and include the traditional surplus areas of central and northern Malawi. While the overall figure represents a drop from the 1.97 million people food insecure recorded in 2012, it is above the five-year average. The largest numbers of food insecure persons are located in Kasungu (Central Region) and Mzimba (Northern Region) districts, reflecting production declines in 2013.

FEWSNET projects that between November and December, the majority of poor rural households across the country will likely access adequate food through a combination of purchases from markets and some own household stocks, and will be facing Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes. However, emergency (IPC phase 4) situation exists in four districts in the south while a crisis (IPC phase 3) exists in central and northern areas, due to food production declines.

In southern Malawi, October normally marks the start of the lean period, when households exhaust their food stocks and depend more on markets for food purchases. However, in central and northern Malawi, the lean period normally begins in December, but has already started in October this year as well. This development is mainly due to poor households having experienced a reduction in their own production last season, leading them to turn to market purchase. The most critical months in terms of food insecurity are expected to be January and February, when most vulnerable households will have run out of stock from own production. The number of people in need of assistance is likely to increase further up to 1.9 million people during this period.

The main driver of food insecurity this year has been the rising price of maize. Higher transportation and production costs, following the devaluation of the currency (kwacha) in 2012, and production decreases relative to the previous year have sustained high prices across the country.

The continuing high price of both food and non-food commodities has contributed to stressing food security conditions, with many households experiencing a severe contraction in their purchasing power, as reported by FAO. In September 2013, the national average maize price was 114.47 Malawian Kwacha (MK) per kg compared to 56.18 MK per kg same time last year, showing an increase of 104%.

As of late November, FAO reports that the primary staple maize crop is estimated at approximately 3.6 million tonnes, similar to the previous year but about 5% above the average for the previous five years. Production in southern districts recovered from the drought affected harvests of 2012, whereas in the more productive northern and central districts, maize outputs declined slightly from the good levels of 2012. Production of sorghum and millet increased by 30 and 15% respectively over the previous season, while the wheat and rice crop remain relatively unchanged. Overall, cereal production in 2013 is estimated at approximately 3.9 million tonnes.

Updated: 17/12/2013

NIGERIA INTERNAL UNREST, FOOD INSECURITY, EPIDEMIC

Highlights
Mid-December: Food insecurity in the country has significantly increased, with Crisis levels (IPC Phase 3) reported in the north eastern states of Yobe, Borno and Adamawa.

Mid-December: OCHA reported that most international actors had withdrawn from the northeast region due to insecurity. In early December, an estimated 1,200 civilians, insurgents and military personnel were reported killed in 50 attacks since May 2013. Limited communication and continued armed attacks are believed to be hampering humanitarian activities on the ground.

Late November: FEWSNET reported that conflict-affected areas are likely to remain at Crisis levels between January and March 2014. Additionally, an estimated 2.3 million people affected by the 2012 floods are still reportedly food insecure, particularly along the floodplains of major rivers in the country, where Stressed (IPC Phase 2) levels are recorded.

Late November: 2,880 cholera cases have been reported across 16 states since the beginning of the year, representing an eight-fold increase compared to the same period in 2012.

Political and Security Context

Political Context: On 16 November, the southern state of Anambra went to the polls to choose its next governor, with the result likely to be seen as an indicator of public opinion regarding the country’s president before his expected campaign for re-election in 2015. The event was also considered to be a test regarding the ability to organise elections without fraud or violence, in the view of the general elections in two years. While no major incidents were reported, the National Electoral Commission (INEC) publicly acknowledged several irregularities, and recommended a supplementary election to be conducted on 30 November, for areas where the results were cancelled. The coalition of opposition parties already announced that it would boycott the second stage of the elections.

Years of conflict have led to public distrust toward the current administration, due to political manipulation of religion and ethnicity, failure of the state to ensure public order or implement peace building measures, economic decline, and growing inequalities. President Jonathan is also facing an open rebellion against his leadership within his own ruling party, which is divided over whether he should run for a second full term in 2015. Despite the deployment of forces to the north east of the country, recent attacks attributed to the Islamist insurgent group Boko Haram (BH) have created concern that violence will only escalate as 2015 elections draw closer.

Boko Haram Insurgency: On 6 November, Nigeria’s President extended the state of emergency (SOE) for six months in the border states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa. Initially declared mid-May 2013, it aimed to contain the BH Islamist insurgency, but observers report that the army offensive has only succeeded in pushing attacks away from large towns toward vulnerable rural areas.

BH is an Islamic militant group founded in Maiduguri, capital of Borno state, over a decade ago, which has been leading an insurgency to create an Islamic state in Nigeria’s mostly Muslim north. In May, the group took control of part of Borno state, prompting authorities to deploy large numbers of troops. So far, the Islamist group has dismissed the possibility of participating in a peace resolution committee set up in April to frame potential peace talks with authorities.

Fighting between government troops and the BH has intensified in the last months, particularly in remote areas. September saw the worst spate of attacks with up to 500 people killed in that month alone. According to OCHA in mid-December, an estimated 1,200 civilians, insurgents and military personnel had been killed in some 50 attacks since May 2013. The insurgency has cost over 4,000 lives since 2009.

On 2 December, hundreds of heavily armed Boko Haram militants launched a raid on an air force and army base in Maiduguri, Borno State, following an announcement by the military that it had successfully pushed out the rebels out of urban centres into more remote areas in the northeast of the country. Authorities reported dozens of casualties, both soldiers and civilians. The attack constituted one of the biggest strike against the military in many months, and raises serious concerns about a possible escalation of the conflict, which the International Criminal Court qualified as a civil war in late November.

On 27-28 November, suspected Islamist militants carried out two separate attacks in Borno state, respectively in Baga, where they ambushed and killed seven people, and in the Sabon Gari area, where the rebels killed 17 people and torched scores of shops and vehicles. On 21 November, a similar raid was carried out in the village of Sandiya, Borno state, killing 12 people and burning dozens of houses. These attacks were reportedly conducted in retaliation for the villagers’ support to security forces in their campaign against the insurgents. In the recent months, BH carried out several waves of raids in remote areas, mostly in Borno state, but also in Adamawa and Yobe.

On 24 November, government troops conducted air strikes on suspected Boko Haram camps in the rebel strong-hold of Sambisa Forest, Borno state. According to military sources, dozens of militants were killed in the attack. In mid-November, Nigerian troops launched an attack on suspected BH fighters in the north eastern state of Borno, close to the rebel stronghold of Bita. According to military sources, 20 insurgents were killed. On 9 November, Nigerian security forces raided suspected BH militants in the northern rebel stronghold of Kanon, following intelligence indicating that the rebels were plotting suicide attacks in the north and the capital Abuja. Fighting caused the death of seven people, including five suspected insurgents.

From 21-25 October, Nigeria’s military launched ground and air assaults on BH camps in Borno state and reportedly killed 70 suspected insurgents. In a separate outbreak of violence, Islamists militants conducted coordinated raids in Damaturu (Yobe state). Local authorities reported that 25 rebels died in these attacks.

Since April, attempts by military forces to engage with the militants resulted in excessive use of force and massive destruction in civilian areas. The counter-terrorist operations led by the military allowed for hundreds of arrests of suspected BH members, but also increased the levels of violence against civilians, notably during security and disarmament campaigns. Civilians have since begun to form bands of vigilante groups, which is encouraged by the Nigerian government but has led to repeated attacks by BH fighters on villages where these self-defence militias have formed. BH’s targets have also diversified. The group initially engaged with military and security forces, but lately has been...
increasingly targeting Christians, Muslims, students, politicians, and other groups opposed to its ambition to impose Sharia.

In mid-August, authorities claimed that Abubakar Shekau, the leader of the BH, may have been killed in a clash with government troops. In mid-August, the cross-border Multi-National Joint Task force, a group fighting BH in Nigeria, Chad, and Niger, reported that Nigerian soldiers killed two top insurgent commanders during a battle in Adamawa state. According to observers, BH may be taking advantage of the porosity of borders with Chad and Niger that allow criminal groups, including weapon dealers, to freely migrate between the countries. Nigeria’s authorities are also trying to curb the activity of the less operational Islamist group Ansaru that is linked to Al-Qaeda.

**Inter-communal violence:** On 26 November, gunmen launched a raid on four villages in the central Plateau state, killing 37 people. Two days before, some 300 gunmen stormed the mostly Christian village of Kuka, killing five people and burning an estimated 200 houses. While it is unclear who carried out these latest attacks, the mostly Muslim Fulani-Hausa ethnic group has been repeatedly blamed for attacks on the Christian Berom community, which is considered the state’s indigenous population and benefits from better access to land, education and public offices. Fulani leaders have requested for several years that state leaders, almost all Berom, implement major political reforms to curb the sectarian violence. Berom leaders have in turn accused the military of supporting the Fulani, and persisting mistrust between the security forces and the state’s politicians has been hampering the ongoing peace process. The state roughly falls on the dividing line between the Christian-dominated south and mainly-Muslim north of the country, and has been plagued by a decade-long sectarian conflict which has left thousands dead.

In unrelated violence in central Nigeria, inter-communal conflict in Nasarawa state between 13 and 15 September left 70 people dead, wounded at least 500, and triggered population displacement. The clashes opposed the Alago and the Eggon ethnic groups and caused the destruction of approximately 1,000 houses.

**Humanitarian Context and Needs**

The ongoing conflict in north eastern Nigeria has displaced a significant number of people, restricted population movements, disrupted food inflow, and limited agricultural activities. An interagency assessment was conducted in September in seven north eastern states affected by the violence between BH and the Nigerian army. The assessed areas included the three states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa where an SOE was declared by the government in May, as well as surrounding states affected by the spill over of the conflict and population displacement. This assessment estimated that just under 6 million people are impacted by the crisis in the SOE states, with over four million in Borno. Women and children represent half of the population of concern, and most urgent needs include food, WASH, and protection.

**Displacement:** The ongoing violence continues to trigger internal and international displacement, particularly in Borno and Yobo states. According to UNHCR, the most updated IDP figures date back to August and stand at 5,400. In October, the UNHCR reported that some 10,000 Nigerians had fled the conflict-affected northeast to neighbouring countries including Niger, Chad and Cameroon. This influx of refugees and the violence spill-over is reportedly creating cross-border tensions. In response, the Cameroonian authorities implemented a policy of refoulement in October, (expulsion of persons who have the right to be recognised as refugees) in October. In a further development, Niger and Nigeria established a Joint Border Patrol Command to address the security challenges related to displacement and rebel activity in the area.

**Disaster:** As of mid-December, OCHA reported that severe flooding, which occurred between 14 April and 17 August, had affected an estimated 81,500 people in the country. According to the National Emergency Management Agency, the worst affected states are Abia, Bauchi, Benue, Jigawa, Kebbi, Kano, Kogi, and Zamfara. The impact this year’s flooding is markedly lower than the damage caused by the 2012 floods, allegedly the worst experienced by Nigeria in 40 years, when over 7.7 million Nigerians were affected.

**Access:** OCHA reported that most international actors had withdrawn from the northeast region due to insecurity. Limited communication and continued armed attacks are believed to be hampering humanitarian activities on the ground.

**Food Security:** According to OCHA as of mid-December, food insecurity has significantly increased, with Crisis levels (IPC Phase 3) reported in the northeast states of Yobe, Borno and Adamawa, where insecurity is driving food prices upwards. In late November, FEWSNET reported that conflict-affected areas are likely to remain at Crisis levels between January and March 2014, due to violence impacting on market and farming activities. In the rest of the country, a favourable growing season should allow for households to stay at Minimal (IPC Phase 1) levels of food insecurity until March.

Additionally, an estimated 2.3 million people affected by the 2012 floods are still reportedly food insecure. Recovery among poor households has been slow, particularly along the floodplains of major rivers in the country, where Stressed (IPC Phase 2) levels are recorded.

**Health and Nutrition:** According to OCHA as of mid-December, 2,880 cholera cases have been reported in 2013 across 16 states, which represents an eight-fold increase compared to the same period in 2012. The outbreak has cost 145 lives so far, and the north western state of Zamfara is considered the most affected. According to reports from UNICEF, nearly half the Nigerian population does not have access to safe water, and a third does not have access to sanitation services. The 2010 and 2011 rainy season epidemics killed nearly 2,000 people over two years.

According to UNICEF in October, Nigeria has reported 49 cases of polio so far in 2013, representing a decrease compared to the 102 cases reported over the same period in 2012. 72% of the cases are recorded in Borno, Yobe, and Kano states, where insecurity is slowing the polio immunisation campaign.

In mid-August, ECHO reported that 492,000 children in northern Nigeria are severely malnourished. According to UNICEF, GAM rates are the highest in Sokoto state, at 16.2% (international emergency threshold: 15%), while Kano state, at 9.2%, has the lowest.

**Updated:** 17/12/2013

**BOTSWANA DROUGHT, FOOD INSECURITY**
Humanitarian Needs and Context

Food Insecurity: As of late November, FAO reported an estimated 372,000 people remain at risk of food insecurity. Government estimates have also indicated that 372,479 people or 49% of the rural population (18% of the total population) are classified as food insecure. Additionally 28% of Botswana’s population suffers from chronic food insecurity.

Botswana’s food insecurity is linked to an ongoing drought which is affecting all areas of the country and adversely impacting on crop growth in the main agricultural areas of the east and south. The government officially declared the 2013/14 agricultural season a drought year following an assessment which confirmed that rainfall was poorly distributed and much below normal in most parts of the country. The areas most affected by the drought are Ngamiland, Ghanzi, Kgalagadi, Southern and Central districts.

The 2012/13 cropping season was largely characterised by a prolonged period of below average rains, punctuated by intense rainfall in January which caused localised flooding and minor damage to the agriculture sector. The aggregate cereal production is estimated at 45,000 tons, 17% below the five-year average.

Although domestic production covers only 10% of Botswana’s total consumption requirements, poor production in the subsistence sector and deterioration in livestock conditions have aggravated the food security situation, according to FAO.

FAO reported that land preparation and the bulk of the planting for the 2014 cereal crops, which began in November, are expected to be finalised before the end of the year. Continued dry conditions were observed in October and the first half of November. However, FAO reports that rainfall forecasts point to an increased likelihood of average to above average precipitation between January and March 2014, the main growing period. The eastern areas are expected to receive average to above average rains in December.

Reviewed: 17/12/2013

BURUNDI DISPLACEMENT

Displacement: From 6 to 8 November, the Tripartite Commission on the voluntary repatriation of 13,000 Burundian refugees living in Uganda held its second meeting in Bujumbura. Representatives of the Governments of Burundi, Uganda and UNHCR adopted a text on practical modalities for the voluntary repatriation and several recommendations have been made including continuing information campaign to promote voluntary return and negotiating with the Government of Rwanda on the terms and modalities for the transit of goods and people across Rwanda. First convoys are due to take place early 2014.

On 31 October, IOM reported that at least 33,300 Burundian refugees living in Tanzania have been forcibly repatriated, with 59% of them registered in Giharo in Rutana province. However, it is difficult to quantify the exact number of people expelled since the end of July. Due to the lack of reception facilities at the various entry points, many of them choose to return to their province of origin without being registered.

The recent repartition wave follows the presidential directive by the Government of Tanzania on 25 July, requiring all undocumented migrants to leave the country. The civil war, which followed the coup in 1993, displaced up to a million Burundians who fled to the more stable Tanzania. Most of these refugees returned after the conflict ended in 2006. Tanzanian authorities seem to be increasing their expulsions of refugees from Burundi, DRC and Rwanda.

As of 30 September, UNHCR reported that nearly 26,925 people remained in transit centres in Mabanda (Makamba), Kinazi (Muyinga) and in Bukemba (Rutana). IOM reports that conditions for many Burundians currently stranded in border transit centres are deteriorating due to heavy rains. Many migrants, including vulnerable women, children and sick people have little or no shelter. Children are at particularly high risk of contracting diseases associated with the wet season, including respiratory infections and diarrhoea. Humanitarian workers reported that there is an acute need for emergency life-saving services including primary health care, ante-natal and post-natal care and vaccination for children.

As of late October, Burundi was hosting over 47,200 refugees and 8,300 asylum seekers. Refugees are mainly located in the border regions of Ngozi (north, along Rwanda), Ruyigi, Muyinga and Cankuzo (east, along Tanzania) and Bubanza (west, along DRC). Most (more than 46,000) are fleeing violence and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). In October, UNHCR reported a significant increase in the number of arrivals from DRC, with nearly 910 asylum seekers mostly from the province of South Kivu. Over 6,000 new refugees arrived between January and August 2013, compared to 3,500 over the same period in 2012. Most of the newly displaced are hosted in two transit centres in the west (Cishemere in Cibitoke and Kajaga in Bujumbura) before their transfer to other refugee camps in the east of the country. As of 20 August, an average of 150 new arrivals per day was recorded at the western border; the number of refugees hosted by the local population was still under assessment.

According to UNHCR as of late November, Burundi’s three refugee camps (Bwaviriza, Musasa and Gasorwe) have reached their maximum capacity with a total population of 26,000 refugees. In May 2013, UNHCR inaugurated a new refugee camp in Kavumu, Cankuzo Province to cater for refugees fleeing fighting in eastern DRC. The new camp is expected to accommodate 5,000 refugees by the end of 2013.

Meanwhile, a resettlement operation targeting current refugees in Burundi, which is
significantly growing, is also underway. The number of cases referred to the Regional Support Hub in Nairobi, Kenya for onward submission to resettlement countries has increased sharply in September and October 2013. In total, 564 persons have been referred since 1 January 2013, including 325 for the last two months. Moreover, the number of departures totalled 188 between January and October 2013.

As of late October, UNHCR also reported that a list of 20 sites hosting IDPs in Burundi was handed over to UNHCR by the Ministry of National Solidarity, Human Rights and Gender to initiate the voluntary return process and sustainable solutions. IDMC reported that although there has been no new displacement recorded since 2008, there are still up to 79,000 IDPs in the country, mostly ethnic Tutsis displaced by internal armed conflict between Government armed forces and non-state armed groups and inter-communal violence following the coup in 1993. They are mainly located in and around 120 sites across northern and central Burundi. There are concerns that the number of IDPs may increase in light of the increased number of returnees from neighbouring countries.

**Food Security:** According to the 2013 Global Hunger Index (GHI) report released in October, Burundi is the worst-affected country in the world among 19 nations with “extremely alarming” levels of hunger that can be attributed to prolonged conflict and political instability.

According to WFP as of late November, the results of the latest Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS) corroborate the projections of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) and clearly indicate a situation of acute food insecurity. Burundi’s population at risk from poor food consumption has doubled since April (from 5 to 10%). In terms of regional disparity, FSMS results show a decrease in the proportion of households with adequate consumption compared to April 2013 in Central Provinces (Muramvya and Gitega) and Eastern Plateaux (Ruyigi). Four of the eight livelihoods zones across the country have a significant proportion (>45%) of households with limited to poor food consumption. Eastern Burundi has been particularly affected by the closure of Tanzania’s Mtaba refugee camp in December 2012 and the forced repatriation of Burundian refugees initiated by Tanzanian authorities in August 2013. Moreover, slowness in the process of reintegration in rural villages coupled with the hostility of Tanzanian border authorities regarding traditional spontaneous movements across the border have worsened food security conditions in the region.

According to FEWSNET as of late October, household food stocks are seasonally low, following the start of the lean season in September, and food prices are increasing in line with seasonal trends. Although most households experience Minimal food insecurity (IPC Phase 1), poor households in the Plateaux Humides and Congo Nile Crest zones will face Stressed levels of food insecurity (IPC Phase 2) until harvests start in December. These households have reduced food quantity and quality due to below-average production last season, reduced purchasing power, and decreased opportunities for labour migration to Tanzania, given the recent expulsion of Burundians from Tanzania. The new returnee population will also require continued humanitarian assistance to meet essential food and non-food needs. However, overall food security situation is expected to improve countrywide in December-January, with 2014 harvests. All zones will face Minimal food insecurity (IPC Phase 1) through March 2014.

Overall, the 2013 cereal production is provisionally forecast at about 260,000 tonnes, about 7% lower than the five year average due to unfavourable weather conditions that affected the previous cropping seasons earlier in the year. For 2014, the whole country is forecast to receive average to above average rainfall amounts along the season, with favourable effects on crop yields and pasture conditions.

**Health:** Burundi has been experiencing an outbreak of cholera, along the border with DR Congo and Tanzania. According to WHO, as of 4 November 2013, a total of 1 576 cases including 16 deaths have been reported from 12 districts.

**Highlights**

**No new updates. Last updated: 05/11/2013.**

**Humanitarian Context and Needs**

**Food Security:** Namibia is in the grip of serious food security crisis due to the ongoing impact of recurrent drought. As of late October, the FAO said estimated 78,000 people are now food insecure, of whom about 331,000 persons are in need of assistance. The northern regions have been worst affected by the drought, with the largest number of food insecure assessed to be in northern region of Kavango.

On 17 May, the President of Namibia declared a national drought emergency and called for assistance from the international community. Results of an Inter-Agency Emergency Food Security Assessment also indicated that agricultural production will be very poor due to the lowest seasonal rainfall for decades.

The Government forecast suggests that the prolonged dry period during the 2012-13 cropping season (November-June) will result in a decrease in the main cereal production for 2013 by an estimated 42% compared to 2012 production levels. Grazing pastures have also been severely affected in six regions where many households rely on livestock production.

Many households have employed several coping strategies to mitigate the impact of the drought, including reducing the number of meals and increasing their consumption of wild foods. Water levels are decreasing, and 40-50% of water points no longer function. Many farmers are forced to sell cattle, due to lack of pasture, while cow-herds from Angola, which also suffer from the drought, are reportedly crossing the border in search of food, fuelling tribal tensions as competition for scarce pastures intensifies. The National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) was activated in mid-September 2013. Its main role is the monitoring of the overall drought response. It is still unclear when the Emergency Response Plan, which is to be led by Government with support from humanitarian partners, will be adopted. The biggest challenge remains the issue of water stress for livestock and human consumption.

As reported by IFRC, the initial response of the government’s food aid only targeted rural
As reported by IFRC, the initial response of the government’s food aid only targeted rural communities. However, it has been reported that people in urban areas, especially those in informal settlements in Kunene, are equally affected by the drought. Local authorities in Kunene have appealed to the government to include people in urban areas on the beneficiary list of its food aid.

Health and Nutrition: As of mid-December, WHO reported that acute malnutrition rates are high in Omsutai region, due to food shortage and inadequate child care. Back in July, the Namibia Red Cross Society reported that there are about 109,000 rural children <5 at risk of malnutrition because of lack of food and poor sanitation.

WASH: An assessment in the four regions of Kunene, Oshikoto, Ohangwena and Kavango found that due to high food insecurity and malnutrition levels, and as only a few people practice household water treatment, the risk of water and sanitation related diseases from possible water contamination at household level is high. Of particular concern are regions with the lowest access to water and sanitation, and prone to diseases like cholera, including Kunene, Ohangwena and Kavango regions.

Reviewed: 17/12/2013

NIGER FLOODS, FOOD INSECURITY, EPIDEMIC, DISPLACEMENT

Highlights

Late November: FEWSNET reported that the average crop production in Niger is allowing households to meet their food needs. Most of the population is, and will remain, at Minimal (IPC Phase 1) levels of food insecurity through the end of December. Certain areas in the south and southwest of the country are expected to experience Stressed food insecurity (IPC Phase 2) between January and March 2014 as a result of a depletion in cereal stocks, high cereal prices and decline of livestock market value.

Humanitarian Context and Needs

Displacement: Since mid-May 2013, south eastern Niger has witnessed an influx of displaced people from northern Nigeria, fleeing the ongoing military offensive against Islamist militants of the Boko Haram group. As of 7 November, UNHCR reported that roughly 37,000 displaced people have left the three northern states of Nigeria which are under emergency rule (Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa) and entered Niger territory (Diffa region). Of these, just over 29,000 are Nigerien returnees, approximately 8,000 are refugees from Nigeria, and 150 are third country nationals. The majority of these displaced people live with host families in Bosso, Abadam, Main Soroa, Diffa, Kablewa, Tchoukoudjani, Garin Amadou and Baroua.

According to UNHCR as of end of October, an estimated 49,601 Malian refugees are registered in Niger as a result of the military intervention in Mali. UNHCR also reported that 5,124 Nigeriens returned to Niger, bringing the total number of those displaced from the Malian conflict into Niger to over 54,000. Most of these people (77%) live in three refugee camps (Abala, Tabareybarey, and Mangaize), and in the Intikane hosting area. Malian refugees continue to place significant stress on the country with most settling in regions hardest hit by the nutrition and food security crisis.

In late October, the bodies of 92 migrants were found in Niger’s northern desert after they had died of thirst just a few kms from Algeria, their planned destination. Following this incident, international media reported on 3 November that at least 127 migrants were arrested as they attempted to cross into Algeria through the Sahara desert. Government officials have announced their plan to close illegal camps in the north of Niger, as they blame the migrant deaths on illegal trafficking.

Disaster: A month after the August-September floods which affected 230,000 people across the country, new small-scale river flooding was reported in the southern region of Diffa, due to the early rise of the Komadougou water levels in late October. As of 29 November, OCHA reported some 15,086 people, or 2,123 households are affected in some 20 villages, and up to 300 hectares of crops were inundated.

Food Security: As of late November, FEWSNET reported that the average crop production is allowing households to meet their food needs and that most of the population is and will remain at Minimal (IPC Phase 1) levels of food insecurity through the end of December. In the south and southwest of the country, certain parts of Tillaberi, Tahoua, Zinder and Diffa are expected to experience Stressed food insecurity (IPC Phase 2) between January and March 2014, as a result of depletion of cereal stocks, high cereal prices and decline of livestock market value.

According to a statement made by Niger’s Prime Minister Brigi Rafini on 10 November, after an initial evaluation, about one million people in Niger face severe food shortages due to poor harvests after drought and flooding. Figures about the actual needs are expected to be published shortly. According to OCHA on 19 July, 2.9 million people are food insecure in Niger.

FAO reported on 26 August that since Niger depends on food imports from Nigeria during the lean season, the current insecurity in the northeast that has disrupted trade with surrounding countries is affecting food availability.

Health and Nutrition: According to OCHA as of late November, the region of Tillaberi is recording 33% of the measles cases, over 70% of the cholera cases, 96% of the confirmed cases of diphtheria, and 17% of the malaria cases recorded since January 2013. The region is particularly affected by population movements, especially refugees from Mali, and suffers from limited access to water.

With 41 registered cases, of whom 16 have died, diphtheria has returned to Niger seven years after the last epidemic in 2006. The recent epidemic has been confirmed by local health officials in Tillaberi, 120 km northwest of the capital. The most affected age group is 5-14 years, with 26 registered cases.

According to WHO at the end of October, the cumulative number of GAM cases reported nationally since the beginning of the year is 625,486 and 254,364 for SAM. This is an increase compared to the 567,659 GAM cases and 213,509 SAM cases reported for the same period in 2012. UNICEF reported in mid-October that more than 2,500 children <5 died of malnutrition between January and August 2013.
ERITREA FOOD INSECURITY

Highlights

No new development this week. Last update was on: 12/11/2013.

No confirmed data on the food security situation or food price levels is available. Therefore, Eritrea is not included within the Global Overview prioritization.

Political and Security Context

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), Eritrea is still plagued by human rights’ abuses, including torture, arbitrary detention, and severe restrictions on freedom of expression, association, and religious freedom. Military conscription is compulsory and can last for an indefinite period of time.

Between 5,000 and 10,000 political prisoners are being held in this country of over six million people. The UN Human Rights chief has accused the Eritrean government of torture and summary executions.

Humanitarian Context and Needs

Displacement: According to UNHCR, Eritrean refugees crossing to neighboring Ethiopia are on the rise while the number entering Sudan has dropped compared to 2012. Since January, UNHCR and the Ethiopia government’s refugee agency, the Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA), have registered over 4,000 new Eritrean refugees. As of June, Ethiopia hosts nearly 72,000 Eritrean refugees, a record high, in four camps in the northern Tigray region and two others in the Afar region in north-eastern Ethiopia.

According to UNHCR, eastern Sudan receives an average 500 Eritrean refugees per month in 2013, down from 2,000 a month in 2012. Sudan reportedly shelters at least 114,500 Eritrean refugees.

Djibouti also receives an estimated 110 Eritreans each month.

According to UNHCR, as of 10 September, Eritrea is currently hosting 3,468 Somali refugees.

Access: There is a lack of updated and reliable data on the humanitarian situation due to limited humanitarian access and a ban on humanitarian organisations assessing needs.

Food Security: An estimated six million people in Eritrea are food insecure (98% of the population). Local food and fuel prices are likely to remain high, putting severe pressure on vulnerable groups’ coping mechanisms. The government of Eritrea officially denies any food shortages within its borders and refuses food aid.

On 31 October, the Government of Eritrea communicated that rain shortage in 2013, and poor follow-up would negatively affect farming and reforestation activities. Unwise land usage, deforestation and over usage of grazing were cited as additional causes for decreasing agricultural produce. FEWSNET similarly reports that the June to September rains were well below average in western Eritrea, with the season starting very late and rainfall totals never recovering.

Reviewed: 17/12/2013

ASIA

AFGHANISTAN CONFLICT, FOOD INSECURITY, DISPLACEMENT

Highlights

14 December: On an official visit to India, President Karzai once again discussed the issue of New Delhi supplying Afghanistan with military equipment, notably heavy weaponry. Karzai’s visit to India is seen as a sign of Kabul’s ongoing diplomatic push across the region in the run-up to NATO’s withdrawal from the country in 2014.

14 December: President Karzai reiterated that he had no intention of backing down from the conditions he outlined for the security deal with the US, despite increasing pressure from Washington on the Afghan leadership to do so.

11 December: A Taliban suicide bomber attacked a convoy of German troops in the vicinity of the Kabul international airport. No casualties were reported. The heavily-guarded airport was considered to be an extremely ambitious target for the militant group.

Political and Security Context

International and Regional Political Context: On 30 November, Pakistani Prime Minister Sharif met with Afghan President Karzai in Kabul as part of efforts to launch a peace process in Afghanistan before NATO troops withdraw next year. Sharif, who visited Afghanistan for the first time since he took office in May, promised that he would help arrange further meetings between Afghan officials and Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, a former Taliban second-in-command and reported friend of Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar. Baradar, who was captured in Pakistan in 2010, is seen by Kabul as key to reach to moderate Taliban commanders and involve them into peace talks.
In late October, a breakthrough in negotiations between President Karzai and Prime Minister Sharif was reportedly achieved at a meeting in London. In the aftermath, on 20 November, a delegation of senior officials from Afghanistan's High Peace Council travelled to Karachi to start peace talks with the Afghan Taliban, and meet notably with Baradar, who had been released by Islamabad in September but reportedly remained under close Pakistani supervision. During its visit, the Afghan delegation reportedly met with the former Taliban commander, but no discussion was effectively conducted. Earlier, Islamabad released a first group of detained Afghan Taliban, including senior commander Mansoor Dadullah, who were similarly not directly handed over to Afghan authorities. The release of influential Taliban commanders detained in Pakistan is seen by the Afghan authorities as instrumental in bringing the Taliban to the negotiation table.

In mid-August, as reported by a senior Afghan peace negotiator and former Taliban diplomat now working with the Karzai government, resumption of peace talks in Qatar with the Taliban is unlikely. Fresh talks in Turkey or Saudi Arabia appear to be a more realistic option for Kabul. No western source has commented, though it is unlikely that negotiations with the Taliban would be conducted without the US. To date, Kabul refuses to participate in peace talks that are not Afghan-led while the absence of an Afghan-US security pact continues to escalate bilateral tensions.

In mid-December, while visiting India, President Karzai has again requested extensive supply of military, including heavy, equipment from New Delhi, openly suggesting that a stable Afghanistan is key to the stability of the whole region. The Afghan President’s visit to India, a country that has been competing with other regional powers for influence in Afghanistan over the last decade, may be seen as another expression of Kabul’s multi-vector diplomacy of boosting regional ties in the run-up to NATO’s withdrawal from the country. To a large extent, the visit may also be seen as an attempt to put pressure on Pakistan, a country expected to play a pivotal role if actual negotiations between Kabul and the Afghan Taliban were to materialize.

International Military Presence: On 14 December, President Karzai restated that he had no intention of backing down from the conditions he outlined for the security deal with the US, despite increasing pressure from Washington on the Afghan leadership to do so.

On 24 November, the assembly of local elders, the Loya Jirga, issued a much awaited endorsement for the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA), a security pact with the US that is to lay ground for an American military presence in Afghanistan after 2014. In the aftermath, Karzai however refused to unreservedly support the deal before the April 2014 presidential elections, unambiguously ousting new conditions to be met by Washington, including an immediate end to US military raids of Afghan homes and the need for a clear US commitment to peace talks with the Taliban. The hand-over of the remaining Afghan detainees from Guantanamo Bay has also been reportedly demanded by Kabul. In late November, the Afghan leader had additionally requested a commitment from Washington to refrain from backing any candidate in the coming elections, a stark reminder of the earlier blame he placed on the US for meddling in the 2009 presidential elections.

While Karzai’s reluctance to sign the BSA is seen as a high-risk gamble by the international community, his local supporters argue that his move is aimed at appeasing the Taliban, at a time when Kabul is trying to engage in peace talks with the insurgents. Local opponents of the Afghan leader continue nevertheless to accuse him of trying to use the security pact to secure influence in the coming elections and to attempt to dissociate from the US before leaving power.

Responding to Karzai, US officials have repeatedly indicated that, without the prompt signature of a security pact, Washington would implement the so-called “zero option”, a complete withdrawal from Afghanistan similar to the pull-out of US troops from Iraq in 2011. Additionally, the failure to sign the bilateral pact could lead to the end of the US’s financial support to the country, along with the disruption of broader western aid. To date, Washington has reportedly not made any decision on the matter, nor has it indicated a steady deadline regarding when it intends to abandon ongoing talks with Kabul and commit to an entire withdrawal, although official sources suggested the US are likely to give Afghanistan a year-end deadline. Against the background of the rising insurgency in Afghanistan that most observers expect to become even more potent next year, the presence of American military personnel is seen as vital for the stability of post-2014 Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, in early December, following protests in Pakistan over drone strikes, Washington was reportedly forced to halt ground shipments from Afghanistan via its main Pakistan supply route. The affected route, which connects Torkham Gate at the Afghanistan-Pakistan border to the port city of Karachi, is crucial to ensure the ongoing withdrawal of the US combat mission from Afghanistan while the alternative Northern Distribution Network – a grid of supply lines running through Central Asia and Russia – is far more costly and politically challenging to use. According to US official sources, Washington is hoping that it will be able to resume cargo shipments through Pakistan in the near future.

Most of the over 84,000 international troops, including an estimated 60,000 Americans, stationed in Afghanistan as of 1 December are scheduled to withdraw by end 2014. Over 75% of the country was expected to be under national security control by end-July 2013, following the formal handover of national security from the US-led NATO coalition to Afghan forces in June. Within the US-led NATO coalition, there is widespread concern regarding the capacity of the 352,000-strong Afghan security forces to cope with the insurgency. As reported by an Afghan official in early September, police deaths have nearly doubled since the NATO forces have started withdrawing and handing over security to local troops. An estimated 1,792 Afghan policemen have died, and over 2,700 have been wounded in the last six months.

National Political Context: In early December, after refusing to sign the BSA with the US until after the coming polls, President Karzai went on to suggest the delaying of the April presidential elections. Constitutionally barred from running for a third term, Karzai has been Afghanistan’s only leader since US intervention in 2001, and these latest developments are reportedly raising both international and local criticism that he may be trying to drag out his second and final term.

Afghanistan’s election authorities have announced the final line-up of candidates for next year’s elections. Amid criticisms that it was not acting independently, nor being transparent, the election commission has cut the initial 26 candidates list for the 5 April 2014 vote down to ten. As reported by Human Rights Watch, presidential candidates
nevertheless include former militia commanders implicated in serious rights abuses, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. With the near-absence of a party system, the elections are likely to be a matter of identity politics.

According to international observers, there are currently no favourite to succeed President Karzai, as the country is growing increasingly turbulent. The Taliban movement officially announced that it will boycott the 2014 presidential elections and continue fighting until all foreign troops leave the country.

Security Context: Since they vowed to start a new campaign of attacks in April, using insider attacks as a key tactic against foreign and Afghan military force targets, the Taliban have intensified offensives in Afghanistan, amidst the ongoing withdrawal of ISAF troops. Since May, insurgents have largely targeted foreign military and humanitarian personnel and deliberately targeted civilians who are seen to cooperate with the government. A spokesperson for the Taliban indicated in June that the insurgents have no intention of changing their tactics in conflict-plagued Afghanistan despite possible peace talks and the scheduled presidential elections.

Over the past weeks, the number of attacks by militants have decreased in Afghanistan. On 11 December, a Taliban suicide bomber attacked a convoy of German troops in the vicinity of the Kabul international airport. No casualties were reported. The heavily-guarded airport was an extremely ambitious target for the militant group. On 2 December, local authorities reported that a suicide car blast killed four police officers in the eastern province of Wardak.

On 29 November, a suicide bomber wounded an anti-Taliban Afghan legislator in an attack in Kabul. On 27 November, six local staff members of the INGO ACTED were killed in an ambush in Farahy Province, northwest Afghanistan. On 26 November, three Afghans working for a local development project in southern Uruzgan province were killed in the explosion of a remote-controlled device. On 16 November, a suicide car blast occurred near Kabul at a compound where Afghanistan’s tribal and political elites later gathered to discuss the security deal with the US. At least six people were killed, including civilians, and an additional 22 wounded in the attack. On 8 November, a roadside bomb killed eight, including two children, near Qalat, the capital of southern Zabul province. On 6 November, seven Afghan civilians believed to have been kidnapped by the Taliban were found dead in the same province. According to local authorities, the executions are likely to have been punishment for working for Afghan security forces. On 1 November, at least nine people were injured, including children, after a bomb blast in Baghlan-e-Markazi of northern Baghlan province.

In October, attacks and assaults were reported in eastern Ghazni province, the Kabul area, Logar province, and Paktia province. In particular, two “insider attacks” were recorded during the month, bringing the total of such attacks to at least eleven since the start of 2013 for a death toll of foreign personnel killed of 15 to date. In September, attacks by militants had been recorded in Helmand, Ghazni, Wardak, Kunduz, Herat, and Nangarhar provinces. In August, militant attacks were recorded in Nangarhar, Kunduz, Ghazni, Helmand, Farah, Herat, and Paktia provinces. Since July, attacks conducted by armed groups increasingly targeted foreign troops and bases with a high-profile attack against a military base operated by Polish and Afghan forces in Ghazni province and one striking the Indian consulate in Jalalabad, Nangarhar province in August.

According to a July UN report, the number of civilians killed and injured in Afghanistan rose by 23% since early 2012, with homemade landmines the principal threat to Afghan civilians. From January to June 2013, 1,319 civilians were killed and a further 2,533 injured. The UN reported that 74% of casualties were caused by insurgents, 9% by pro-government forces, and 12% by ground fighting between the two sides. These numbers are a significant increase compared to the first half of 2012 and close to the record casualties recorded during the same period in 2011.

Military Operations: Against this background, military operations are ongoing. According to a US report, Afghan troop casualties climbed by 79% during key fighting months this year, as the Taliban intensified attacks amid NATO’s ongoing withdrawal from Afghanistan. In parallel, NATO casualties fell by 59% during the April—September period. While US officials acknowledged that Afghan troops’ combat capabilities have improved, the report still suggests that the Afghan National Security Forces would be at risk without international support after 2014. In August, Afghan military sources reported that insurgent numbers were up around 15% on last year’s summer fighting months.

On 11 October, US forces reportedly captured senior Pakistani Taliban commander Latif Mehsud in a military operation in eastern Logar province. Other reports suggested that Mehsud was seized from an Afghan government convoy in the province as Afghan officials were trying to recruit him to launch peace talks several weeks earlier, contributing to the current tensions between Washington and Kabul. The arrest of Mehsud could represent a blow to Tehreek-e-Taliban in Pakistan; the movement is reportedly facing dissention over Islamabad’s attempts to launch peace talks. On 6 October, four NATO soldiers were killed in southern Afghanistan, where the Taliban have been recovering ground, as forward operating bases were shut as part of the NATO disengagement plan.

Meanwhile, casualties of Afghan civilians and military caused by air strikes conducted by NATO-led forces continue to be a major source of friction between Kabul and its international allies. On 28 November, the NATO-led force launched an airstrike on an insurgent target in the southern Helmand province, which was followed by local officials reporting the death of a child during the attack. Earlier in October, a NATO airstrike in Nangarhar province resulted in the deaths of five civilians, according to authorities. In September, a NATO air strike allegedly killed nine civilians in the Watapur district of Kunar province. All incidents are currently under investigation.

Humanitarian Context and Needs

Afghanistan’s south and southeastern provinces are particularly vulnerable, ranking high in numbers of security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict displacement, and low in health and nutrition indicators. An estimated 7.7 million people in Afghanistan are in need of protection. The security situation across the country is becoming increasingly volatile.

Displacement: In 2013, conflict-induced displacement has been the main cause of acute humanitarian need, with a marked increase in previously stable provinces in the north, particularly in Farah and Badakhshan, noted OCHA. As of 30 November, there were 612,000 conflict-induced IDPs in Afghanistan. In 2013, an estimated 60,000 people had
been displaced in northwestern Faryab province because of conflict according to OCHA as of 30 November.

According to UNHCR and IOM, as of 30 November, there were an estimated 2.4 million Afghan refugees in Iran, including 1.4 to 1.6 million undocumented Afghans. Over 2.9 million Afghan refugees, including one million undocumented refugees, reside in Pakistan. An estimated 200,000 Afghan refugees are registered in other countries, placing an increased humanitarian burden on neighbouring countries, and triggering tensions as Iran and Pakistan push for their repatriation.

As reported by Human Rights Watch (HRW) in late November, Afghan refugees in Iran are facing increasing persecution, including arbitrary arrests, detentions, beatings and harassment, by the authorities. In parallel, Pakistan agreed this summer not to expel Afghan refugees who had permission to stay in the country until June. At an UN-backed meeting, Kabul and Islamabad also reached an agreement to continue efforts to solve the protracted refugee situation while Afghan refugees, 60% of whom are hosted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, are also triggering tensions in restive Pakistan.

In early December, additional displacement was recorded in Ghor, Daykundi and Bamyan provinces in the central highlands following drought like conditions and crop failures. As of 30 November, an estimated over 4,700 people were displaced around Herat and Ghor areas and had registered for assistance since early October.

**Disaster:** On 5 November, OCHA reported that heavy rains caused flash flooding in the districts of Sangin and Kajaki in southern Helmand province. Across the two districts, at least 220 houses have been damaged or destroyed while some infrastructure has also been affected. No estimates regarding the number of people affected are yet available.

**Access:** Active hostilities and threats of violence continue to impede humanitarian access, with contested areas remaining the most problematic. Movement restrictions are increasingly applied to aid workers, and relief organisations are reviewing security protocols. The humanitarian space in Afghanistan continues to shrink as security is increasingly precarious.

As of 30 November, OCHA has recorded 266 incidences against humanitarian personnel, facilities and assets in Afghanistan so far this year, including 37 deaths, 28 arrests and detentions, 47 injuries and the abduction of 80 personnel. Earlier OCHA reports indicated that, as of October, over 55% of the incidents are attributed to insurgent elements, but there is reportedly a significant rise in incidents attributed to pro-government forces, especially in contested areas of the South, East and Central provinces. With notably high-profile attacks against ICRC and IOM compounds occurring in May, security incidents involving aid workers have been on the rise in 2013 compared to 2012 when only 175 incidents, including 11 deaths, were recorded over the whole year.

According to OCHA in October, 24 violent incidents against humanitarian personnel and assets were registered across 15 Afghan provinces, with two staff deaths and ten abductions. This represents a decrease compared to September when 34 incidents against humanitarian personnel, including one death, were recorded in 16 provinces. The October number is at levels comparable to August when 25 violent incidents against aid workers were recorded.

In September, the majority of incidents were recorded in the eastern region where increased hostility towards aid agencies continued to interfere with aid workers in rural Nuristan, Nangarhar, and Laghman. Conflict related hostilities in Badakhshan, Wardak, Kabul, Logar, Nangarhar, Kunar, Kandahar, and Helmand provinces continued to impede access. September saw the highest number of incidents against health facilities and personnel this year, with 11 incidents reported from Wardak, Helmand, Nuristan, and Kunar provinces.

In 2012, according to the Aid Worker Security Report released in October, Afghanistan was one of the most dangerous countries for aid workers, topping the ranking in the absolute number of attacks and number of kidnappings.

**Food Security:** OCHA reported in mid-June that 4.5 million people in Afghanistan are food insecure, with 2.25 million people severely food insecure and targeted with humanitarian aid. Households in the extreme northeast, especially in Badakhshan province, central highlands, low-income and disaster-affected households across the country, and IDPs are especially vulnerable to food insecurity.

As reported by OCHA in late September, vulnerable families are facing a tough winter after dryness in the growing season caused crop failures in Ghor, Daykundi, and Bamyan provinces in the central highlands of Afghanistan. A WFP/ FEWSNET mission reported that 80% of rain-fed areas and 24% of irrigated areas were affected. In October, an estimated 2,700 people needed food assistance in eastern Ghor and Herat areas and had moved to urban centres in search of income to buy food.

According to a mid-August WFP report, a preliminary forecast put the 2013 wheat production at 4.9 million tonnes, slightly below the 2012 harvest, which was the second highest on record for 35 years. However, large differences exist between provinces. Smaller wheat harvests were gathered in Faryab, Ghor Jawzjan, and Khost due to dry spells and early rains combined with wheat rust in some areas.

As reported by WFP in November, the average wheat grain retail price in main Afghan urban centres has been increasing from August 2012 to March 2013, before decreasing from April to June and again slightly increasing between July and October. In particular, the October average price of wheat in main Afghan urban centres was slightly higher by 4.3% in comparison to the same time last year, and remained relatively stable – recording only a 2.2% increase – compared to the last 5-year average price of the same months. In parallel, the October wheat flour average price was slightly lower by 0.3% compared to the same month last year, while remaining fairly stable – only a 6.4% increase – compared to the last 5-year average price of the same months. The October average retail price of rice, the second main staple food in Afghanistan, was slightly higher by 7.1% compared to the same month last year and considerably higher by 23.4% compared to the last 5-year average price of the same months. By comparison, the October average price of high quality rice was considerably higher by 17.2% compared to the same month last year, and by 34.9% compared to the last 5-year average price of the same months.

**Health and Nutrition:** Conflict-related hospital admissions increased by 42% from January to April 2013 compared to the same period in 2012. In Helmand province, there has been an almost 80% increase in hospitalised injuries caused by conflict this year. The
Health Cluster reported a 40% increase in security incidents from January to April 2013 compared to 2012.

As reported by OCHA in mid-June, 125,692 children <5 suffer from GAM, including 28,650 suffering from SAM.

Updated: 17/12/2013

SYRIA CIVIL WAR

**Highlights**

**16 December:** UN agencies and NGOs appealed to donors for US$6.5 billion in funds for the Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP) and for the Regional Response Plan 6 (RRP6). The SHARP will assist those affected inside Syria whereas the RRP6 will help Syrian refugees and communities in neighbouring countries.

**15 December:** Syrian Government forces dropped ‘barrel bombs’ on ten opposition-held areas in Aleppo city, killing dozens, as reported by local sources. Attacks on opposition supporting areas reportedly occur daily, but the scale of this assault is unprecedented. Opposition groups stated that there will be reprisal attacks and have warned civilians in Government-held areas to move away from Government installations in Aleppo.

The UN airlifted the first stock of humanitarian supplies from Iraq to Al Hasakeh in north eastern Syria, some parts of which have not received assistance since May. The deliveries had been delayed by the severe storm.

**13 December:** In Aleppo province, Al-Qaeda-affiliated Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) reportedly kidnapped 120 Syrian Kurds. The group, which has been in combat with Kurdish groups in other parts of the country, often uses kidnapping to gain leverage in negotiations. It is thought to already be holding dozens of Kurds as well as over 20 foreign journalists.

**12 December:** A severe winter storm swept across the Middle East, bringing snow, rain and very low temperatures, falling below zero degrees in some areas. Many displaced persons in Syria and refugees in neighbouring countries are living in tents or unfinished buildings and have no protective clothing to shield them from the harsh conditions. The weather has also hampered and even prevented the delivery of aid to some areas.

**11 December:** The US and UK governments have decided to suspend all non-lethal assistance to the Syrian opposition. The announcement came after members of the newly formed Islamic Front reportedly took over headquarters and a warehouse storing weapons belonging to the Free Syrian Army’s Supreme Military Council. The FSA denies that the Islamic Front has control of these areas and states that the Front was instead protecting FSA property against ISIL attacks.

**10 December:** The Government of Syria announced it had re-taken the key Damascus - Homs highway after gaining ground in the battle for the strategically important Qalamoun region. Fighting resulted in the closure of the highway, which is vital for the movement of goods, for almost three weeks.

**Political and Security Context**

The US and UK governments have decided to suspend all non-lethal assistance to the Syrian opposition following the loss of important Free Syrian Army premises and weapons stockpiles to an extremist armed group. The suspension comes as a blow to the opposition forces amid claims that should the moderate opposition attend the planned Geneva II peace talks, they do not have the strength or leverage to uphold any deals they might reach with the Government of Syria.

Meanwhile, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has said that the removal of chemical weapons from Syria may be delayed slightly due to the difficulties of operating during a civil war. Delays are expected to be small and the Organisation still holds that the mid-2014 deadline to destroy these weapons is feasible.

**Armed Conflict:** The Government of Syria (GoS) stated that it had re-taken the town of An Nabk in the Qalamoun region after heavy fighting. With this, GoS forces reclaimed the key Damascus - Homs highway. Fighting for the strategic region had seen the highway, which is vital for the movement of goods, troops and arms, closed for almost three weeks. The GoS has announced that it is ready to commence the battle for Yabroud, the last main town in the region held by the opposition. In Aleppo, GoS forces have intensified their bombing campaign an opposition-held areas.

Conflict has raged in Adra, Rural Damascus this week after Islamist opposition forces launched an offensive aimed at capturing one of the main entrances to the capital. GoS forces have responded forcefully. Reports have circulated stating that opposition forces executed civilians in the town. Commentators have noted that the offensive, led by Islamist forces, is proof of the Free Syrian Army’s diminishing role in the conflict.

**Regional Security Context:** Lebanon continues to be hit by violent security incidents, with suspected extremists launching a bomb attack on an army checkpoint in South Lebanon on 15 December. On 19 November, 29 people were killed in a twin suicide bombings targeting the Iranian embassy in Beirut, Lebanon. The attacks illustrate the heightened security risks in Lebanon. The conflict in Syria is also fuelling tensions in Iraq and the Turkish border region has seen several security incidents.

**International Political Context:** Iran and Saudi Arabia have been invited to attend the Geneva II peace talks. The two major regional powers back opposing sides in the Syria conflict. Previously, Iran stated that it was ready to participate in the conference, as long as no preconditions to the talks were made. Iran has been reluctant to endorse a part of the “Geneva I” framework, which indicates that a future Syrian government must be formed by “mutual consent” of the authorities and the opposition.

After losing headquarters and warehouses containing weapons stockpiles to an extremist group, the Free Syrian Army are being viewed as weakened and the American and British Governments have announced that they are suspending the non-lethal aid they have been providing.

Under a September UN Security Council resolution, Syria agreed to destroy its stockpile of toxic nerve agents and munitions by mid-2014. This week the OPCW announced that all
Category 3 (unfilled) munitions declared by the Government of Syria have been destroyed and sites have been rendered incapable of further production of weapons. Destruction activities were conducted at sites in Homs that had previously been inaccessible for security reason.

**Humanitarian Context and Needs**

Revised estimates indicate that the total number of people in need in Syria has increased to 9.3 million, up from the April estimates of 6.8 million. A recent Syrian Centre for Policy Research study on the socio-economic impact of the crisis estimates that over half the population now lives in poverty, of whom around 4.5 million live in extreme poverty (i.e. are unable to fully meet their basic needs). On 16 December, the UN launched an USD 6.5 billion appeal to cover the needs in Syria and refugee hosting countries from January to December 2014.

**Displacement:** An estimated 6.5 million Syrians are internally displaced within the country with the highest concentration of IDPs in the governorates of Aleppo, Rural Damascus, Homs, Idlib, Tartous, Hama and Deir-ez-Zor. As of 16 December, the total number of Syrians registered and waiting to register as refugees outside of Syria stands at 2,304,128. Over 842,500 Syrians are registered or awaiting registration in Lebanon (government estimates 1.3 million Syrians in total, including a large number of Syrian migrants). Thousands more are expected to attempt enter when the battle for Yabroud takes place. There are around 567,000 in Jordan (government estimates 600,000 Syrians in total), nearly 540,000 in Turkey, 207,000 in Iraq, and over 130,000 in Egypt (government estimates up to 300,000).

Restrictions to entry remain in place, particularly in Egypt, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey. Several Syrians have reportedly been denied entry to Greece and Bulgaria, forcing them to return to Turkey.

**Access:** The intense fighting along the Damascus – Homs in recent weeks affected all aid to the centre of Syria, with food dispatches to Hama and Homs governorates affected. The situation is expected to be relieved soon as access has been successfully negotiated through alternative routes. Access is still particularly challenging to the north-eastern governorates of Al-Hasakeh, Deir-ez-Zor and Ar-Raqqa, as well as rural Aleppo. UNHCR has started airlifting assistance to Al-Hasakeh, parts of which have not been reached with assistance dispatches since May.

As of 25 November, an estimated 2.5 million people were living in hard-to-reach areas in Syria, having received little or no humanitarian assistance from international relief actors in more than 10 months, according to the UN. Access is particularly difficult to the roughly 250,000 people who remain in besieged neighborhoods and villages, including an estimated 200,000 people in GoS-controlled areas and 50,000 in opposition-held territories. In besieged and hard to reach areas, shortages of food and medicine are creating life-threatening situations. Access has remained severely limited throughout the country, with active fighting, bureaucratic impediments, road blockages, and a proliferation of non-state actors controlling transit routes continuing to slow or stall the delivery of humanitarian assistance. ISIL, who controls parts of northern Syria, has put tight restrictions on relief work including a ban on women carrying out work.

**Health and Nutrition:** The World Health Organisation has stated that of Syria’s 91 public hospitals, 36 are not functioning and another 22 have been damaged. Almost half of the 658 ambulances have been stolen, damaged or destroyed.

The health system has been severely affected by over 2 and a half years of conflict and IFRC reports that populations living in contested areas of Aleppo, Damascus suburbs, Deir-ez-Zor and Homs are most affected due to the lack of available health services and health professionals.

Malnutrition cases have been reported in Hama, Homs, Aleppo, Rural Damascus, Quneitra, Deir-ez-Zor, Idlib and Dar’a. As the health system has limited experience with malnutrition, it is likely that the issue is underreported.

**Shelter:** A violent storm swept across the Middle East, bring snow, rain and in places sub-zero temperatures. Two children are reported to have died due to the weather conditions, in Homs and Aleppo governorates. In both Syria and the neighbouring countries hosting refugees, many displaced persons are living in makeshift shelters or informal settlements that will not offer sufficient protection from the harsh winter conditions. In addition, at the start of October, the GoS withdrew a percentage of the subsidy on fuel, increasing the price by 25% (SYP 20 per litre), making it even more difficult for households to access fuel needed for heating, transport and cooking.

**Food Security:** An IRC study among 500 communities showed that 80% of Syrians assessed are worried about food running out. The GoS released a study showing that the prices of vegetable and animal produce had risen to sometimes 4 or 5 times their pre-2010 figures. Simultaneously, WFP price monitoring systems registered a recent reduction in the prices of commodities, due to the improved value in the Syrian currency and reopened trade routes.

However, the FAO has stated that due to the worsening conflict, an estimated 6 million people are facing severe food insecurity. Even before the subsidy cuts, a large number of the population were unable to generate enough income to pay for basic needs. An assessment in the northern governorate of Idlib found that only 20% of households assessed had a regular source of income. Average monthly income was assessed at USD 29, while the costs of food alone stand at USD 37. The absence of GoS price controls puts further pressure on household income. The wheat planting season started in October, but productivity is severely hampered by the lack of inputs and displacement.

**Updated:** 17/12/2013

**YEMEN CONFLICT, FOOD INSECURITY**

**Highlights**

12 December: Another drone strike targeting senior al-Qaeda militants killed an estimated 17 people in the town of Radaa in al-Bayda province. According to reports, although the strike reportedly killed several al-Qaeda fighters, most of the victims were civilians, a development that is likely to add traction to the growing criticisms over the US drone war.
Political and Security Context

Political Context: Yemen is undergoing a political transition process, which is aimed at opening the way for fully democratic elections in February 2014. The National Dialogue Conference (NDC), aimed at finding a common political agreement and making recommendations for a new constitution and voting system was due to complete its work on 19 September, but was postponed on several occasions because of disagreements and violent incidents. However, all 565 NDC participants have agreed to install Yemen as a federal state.

In early December, the UN Security Council welcomed the progress made to date in Yemen’s ongoing political transition process, including the NDC. However, the Council raised concerns about the significant delays in concluding the NDC, calling on all parties to engage constructively to address the remaining critical issues necessary to conclude the dialogue.

The most critical issue of the NDC remains the southern issue; southern secessionists wish to divide Yemen into two regions and have significant control over their own affairs while northern parties favour a multi-region federation. Their participation remains fragile as threats to withdraw support to NDC being regularly voiced, despite government assurances that the future of the south will be thoroughly discussed.

On 27 November, in the last development to date, it was reported that the Yemeni southern separatist movement Al-Hirak had announced its withdrawal from the NDC after voicing concerns that the Sana’a regime was failing to find urgent solutions to the southern issue and emptying the southern issue of its content. However, a day later, state media denied the walkout of Al-Hirak members, affirming that the southern movement remained committed to the national dialogue.

On 9 October, the southern separatist al-Hirak and northern Shia al-Houthi movements staged a sit-in protest over a lack of consensus on the future of their respective regions and demanded approval of a post-NDC roadmap before agreeing to any resolution. This was in spite of Yemeni authorities apologising in late August to southern separatists and northern rebels for wars against them in an effort to encourage their continued participation in the NDC.

Security Context: Yemen remains highly strategic for the US as it tries to provide stability to a country that flanks top oil producer Saudi Arabia and major shipping lines. Against this background, the US, supported by Yemeni authorities, has intensified its drone strike campaign against militants over the past months. To date, Yemen continues to face three concurrent security challenges: the presence of al-Houthi militants in the north, southern secessionists, and the increasing presence of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) militants throughout large portions of the country. In addition, urban centres of the west and central governorates have seen spates of civil unrest.

AQAP is extremely active in Yemen, relying on its strongholds in the south and east, despite counterinsurgency operations conducted by local military backed by US drone strikes. Pursuing a campaign started in 2012, AQAP is targeting senior officers from the army and various security services. According to local sources, an estimated 80 officers have been killed since 2012. Against this background, the group has also regularly targeted oil pipelines, interrupting exports earlier this year. Militants have also abducted several foreigners, particularly in large cities, including Sana’a. There have been at least 10 abductions/attempts of expatriates in Sana’a since February 2013, with a Dutch couple being released on 10 December.

On 9 December, in separate attacks, two Yemeni officers were killed in attacks targeting members of the security forces, one in the country’s second-largest city Taez, and the other in the southern Bayda province. On 5 December, a splinter group affiliated to AQAP, Ansar al-Sharia, staged an attack on the defence ministry’s headquarters in the capital Sana’a, killing 56 people, including seven expatriate medical staff, and injuring another 215. The attack was the worst militant assault to hit the country. On 1 December, a senior security officer was killed by alleged militants in the province of Hadramout while three Yemeni soldiers were killed in the same province after an attack on an army checkpoint outside Sayoun, Hadramout’s second-largest city.

On 24 November, three policemen were killed and two others injured in an attack by militants on a checkpoint at the entrance to the southern town of Seyoun, according to official sources. On 18 November, eight policemen were reportedly killed in an ambush by alleged AQAP-affiliated militants near an army checkpoint close to the Belhaf gas export terminal, in southern Yemen.

Military Operations: The US is continuing to regularly use drone strikes in Yemen, amidst local criticism over sometimes indiscriminate attacks. Since late July, drone attacks have killed over 70 people in Yemen.

On 12 December, another drone strike targeting senior al-Qaeda militants killed an estimated 17 people in the town of Radaa in al-Bayda province. According to reports, although the strike reportedly killed several al-Qaeda fighters, most of the victims were civilians, a development that is likely to add traction to the growing criticisms over the drone war. Although the attack was not officially attributed to Washington, such attacks are usually carried by US military. According to government sources, the authorities have promised to local tribal groups to investigate the attack. On 9 December, another US drone strike hit killed at least three people in the east of the country. In November, at least four other drone strikes were carried, hitting notably Ghayl Bawazir area near Mukallah, the southern province of Abyan and areas in southern and eastern Yemen.

During the 2012 military offensive carried out by the US-backed Yemeni army, Islamist militants were largely driven out of former strongholds. The Islamists have since allegedly regrouped and continue fighting to set up an Islamist state in eastern Yemen. Since early August, local security forces have been on high alert amid fears of an imminent attack by al-Qaeda in Sana’a, and have bolstered security around main government and possible foreign targets.

Tribal Conflict: The conflict between Shia Houthi rebels and their Sunni Salafi rivals that started on 30 October in the northern town of Dammaj in Sa’ada governorate is ongoing. As of mid-December, reports indicate that the fighting between the tribes has attracted Salafi-affiliated tribesmen and spread to Al Jawf and Hajjah governorates. OCHA also reported that both sides might be reinforcing their front lines in preparation for a protracted conflict, with significant numbers of fighters coming in. While the total death toll remains
uncertain, at least 120 people have been reportedly killed in the fighting to date. The reported toll does not include Houthis, who have not revealed their casualty figures.

Fighting initially broke out as Houthi fighters, who control most of the area, accused Salafi groups of recruiting foreign fighters to prepare an attack against them. The Salafis maintained that the foreigners are students who travel from abroad to study Islamic theology. Although information remains scarce because of access constraints on humanitarian actors, the UN reported that the conflict is currently affecting up to 29,000 people around Dammaj, as well as thousands of other people in Kitaf.

Tribal clashes over scarce resources frequently result in casualties. The recent escalation comes despite a year-long ceasefire agreement reached between tribesmen loyal to the Al-Houthis and tribesmen loyal to the Salafi Al-Ahmar family on 14 September.

On 29 November, in a separate development, tribesmen reportedly blew up Yemen's main oil export pipeline in the latest attack on one of the country's main sources of foreign currency. The attackers struck east of the capital Sanaa. Tribal sources claimed the responsibility and said they carried out the attack to force the government to pay them compensation, without going into further details. Tribesmen often carry out such attacks to pressure the government to free relatives from prison or in land disputes.

Humanitarian Context and Needs

An estimated 14.7 million people (58% of the population) in Yemen will need some form of assistance in 2014, according to the 2014 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO). The largest numbers of people in humanitarian need are located in densely populated governorates like Hajjah, Al Hudaydah, Dhamar, Ibb and Taizz. The new number would be an increase compared to the 13.1 million considered in need of humanitarian assistance in December, according to OCHA.

Displacement: As a result of widespread conflict, according to the UN in early November, almost 307,000 IDPs remain in Yemen's north, including San'a. Improved security has allowed 162,000 IDPs to return to their areas of origin in the southern Abyan governorate and neighbouring areas. Further returns are ongoing, according to UNHCR, despite authorities' challenges in meeting the needs of these returnees.

As of early December, almost 63,000 asylum seekers, refugees and migrants have arrived in Yemen from the Horn of Africa this year, according to UNHCR. Although this number marks a decrease compared to figures for the same period last year, 88,533, the Gulf of Aiden remains one of the world's most travelled sea routes for mixed migration, UNHCR reports. Moreover, the overall number of asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants in Yemen has been rising for the past six years. The large majority are from Ethiopia (51,687) and Somalia (10,447). The latter group is automatically recognised as refugees by the Yemeni authorities.

UNHCR states that Yemen hosts almost 243,000 refugees as of early December. According to IOM, 22% are women and girls who have been victims of repeated gender-based violence.

As of early December, according to IOM, an estimated 400,000 Yemeni migrant workers have returned from Saudi Arabia since April as part of a crackdown on undocumented migrants. The Yemeni government says it expects at least another 400,000 jobless returnees in coming months. The majority are undocumented migrant workers with daily arrivals numbering 600-700 people in September, with most traveling through the Al Tuwal border crossing in Hajjah governorate. The returns place a burden on Yemen's fragile political transition, conjuring up memories of the 1990 expulsion of more than 800,000 Yemenis from Saudi Arabia, which contributed to the unravelling of a 1990 unification pact between the former North and South Yemeni states and led to the 1994 civil war.

Disaster: Heavy rains and flooding starting in mid-August affected 26 districts in nine governorates of Yemen. The number of affected has reached 50,000 people in southern and central regions. Since mid-August, 37 people have been killed. Affected governorates include Taizz, Hajjah, Al Hudaydah and Ibb, and the Arqa area between Al-Shabwah and Abyan governorates. Though information remains limited, there are reports of displacements and loss of livestock, livelihoods, and infrastructure in several regions of Yemen. In some areas, scarcity of drinking water has been reported. The flash floods had a severe impact on three IDP camps near Haradh in Hajjah governorate, affecting about 12,000 people and destroying half the tents.

Access: Humanitarian access remains highly impeded in large parts of Yemen. OCHA reports that in various governorates, armed conflict, terrorism, crime, civil unrest, natural hazards and impediments put in place by non-state actors have prevented humanitarian workers from reaching those in need.

With regard to the tribal conflict in Sa'ada governorate, the ICRC reported being able to secure sporadic access, which enabled the evacuation of 126 wounded people, while many more reportedly need urgent immediate assistance. In addition, OCHA reported that fuel was in short supply in Sa'ada because roads were blocked, hindering access to civilians in Dammaj and Kitaf who were running out of food, water and medical supplies.

Since the start of the NDC, civil disobedience campaigns have disrupted humanitarian work and educational institutions in southern Yemen, where access has also been hampered by armed conflict over the last two years, notably in Abyan and in parts of Shabwah governorates. Other governorates with severe access constraints include Al Jawf in the north, Al Dhale'e in the south, Al Mahwit and Raymah in the west, and Al Maharah in the east.

Food Security: Although there is an improvement in acute food security compared to the crisis year of 2011, when conflict significantly disrupted food access, high levels of chronic food insecurity persist in Yemen. As early December, the total number of food insecure people in Yemen is estimated at 10.5 million, amounting to nearly 45% of the population, according to WFP and OCHA. WFP reported a decrease in the number of severely food insecure people, from five million people identified by the 2012 Comprehensive Food Security Survey to 4.5 million people in September 2013. Despite the national trend of decreasing food insecurity, some parts of the south, particularly Abyan and neighbouring Al-Shabwa, were reportedly worse in June 2013 than in 2011. Food security conditions are also of major concern in adjacent governorates of Aden and Lahij, where 90% of households are food insecure and 30% severely food insecure.
The primary underlying causes of food insecurity are extreme poverty, high unemployment, volatile food and commodity prices, compounded by conflict and insecurity. Populations of greatest concern include the displaced or recently returned.

According to FAO, recent surges in prices that reached their highest level since 2011 in April were likely due to conflict in several southern areas.

Despite the below-average March-May rains in the main cropping areas of the west, the preliminary crop production estimates suggest that the 2013 cereal harvest is forecast to be 13% higher than the five-year average.

Recent reports indicate that the desert locust situation has further deteriorated in Yemen and is potentially dangerous to the crops, especially given limited survey control operations, which are heavily constrained by insecurity. Most infestations are along the foothills near Marib and Bayhan, but important populations are present in remote and isolated areas north of Wadi Hadramout and on the edge of the Empty Quarter between Al Abr, Hazar and Thamud. If sufficient control measures are not taken, the locust could damage second-season crops that are ready for harvest, mainly sorghum and millet in western coastal plain, but also livestock. Since Yemen imports up to 90% of its staple foods, the locusts are not expected to have a large impact on domestic food prices and availability.

Health and Nutrition: A collapse of public services following the civil unrest in 2011 severely disrupted access to health services, clean water, and basic sanitation. As of November, the UN reported that an estimated six million people did not have access to health care across the country. In 2012, 170 children died from measles.

As of 15 October, UNICEF reported that 1,060,000 children <5 are estimated to be suffering from acute malnutrition, of whom 279,146 suffer from severe malnutrition. Previously, UNHCR reported that 988,000 children <5 are acutely malnourished, with the 15% emergency threshold exceeded in six governorates.

Updated: 17/12/2013

**IRAQ DISPLACEMENT, INSECURITY**

**Highlights**

**13 December:** At least 22 Iraqi detainees, all facing terrorism charges, have escaped from a Baghdad prison after killing at least one prison guard. The jail break was the latest in a series of prison escapes in the country since the beginning of the year with at least 500 inmates, including several al-Qaeda leaders, having escaped since July.

**10-16 December:** Daily violent attacks, mainly targeting Shi’ite civilians and Iraqi security forces, were reported in various locations across the country. Over 125 people were killed and hundreds injured in militant attacks ahead of next week’s Shi’ite ritual of Arbaeen which commemorates the death of Imam Hussein, grandson of Prophet Mohammad. Most of the attacks, which hit Baghdad, Baquba, Tikrit, Madaen, and Yusifiya, were attributed to Sunni Islamist militants affiliated to the al-Qaeda affiliated Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

**International and Regional Context:** On 20 November, six mortar shells hit near the border between Iraq and Saudi Arabia while the attack was claimed by an Iranian-backed Iraqi Shia armed group, al-Mukhtar Army group. According to a spokesman for the group, the aim of the assault was to prevent Riyadh from interfering in Iraq. While Baghdad denied any involvement, Iranian authorities have not commented on the attack.

In early November, while visiting Washington for the first time in two years, Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki openly blamed the resurgence of al-Qaeda affiliated armed groups in Iraq on regional unrest rather than acknowledging issues within Iraq. Most observers believe, however, that the unrest in Iraq is largely related to the divisive policies implemented by the authorities in Baghdad. During his trip to the US, al-Maliki was scheduled to discuss possible increased military assistance to Iraq amidst growing displeasure in Washington over his handling of the country.

The civil war in Syria is an important contributing factor of tensions between Sunni, Shi’ite, and Kurdish communities in Iraq. In July, the UN warned that escalating violence in Iraq can no longer be separated from the Syrian war due to an increased presence of Iraqi armed groups in Syria.

On 30 August, in another indication of the regional aspect of sectarian Islamist militancy, an Iraqi Shi’ite militia group al-Nujaba’a, an umbrella movement including Iraqi Shi’ite militants who have crossed into Syria to fight alongside troops loyal to Syrian President al-Assad, officially stated that it would attack US interests in Iraq and the region, if Washington carries out a military strike on Syria.

**Political Context:** Escalating violence in Iraq is largely linked to the country’s long-running political dispute between the authorities and armed militias opposing the allegedly sectarian policies of the Shia-led government. Since the start of 2013, the widespread discontent of the Sunni Muslim minority has fuelled unrest, with tensions at their highest since US troops left the country two years ago.

As reported by Human Rights Watch (HRW) on 15 November, Iraqi security forces closed off majority Sunni neighbourhoods, essentially shutting inhabitants inside, raiding homes, and instigating mass arrests prior to the Muslim holy month of Muharram. While largely aimed at limiting attacks on Shia groups on Ashura, the day which marks the climax of the Mourning of Muharram, these repressive measures further illustrated the authorities’ difficulty in preventing the country from sliding toward further sectarian violence.

On 4 November, the authorities passed a new election law, opening the way for the parliamentary polls to be held in April 2014 and alleviating concerns that the parliamentary elections would be delayed because of the rising insecurity. The voting on the election bill had been long delayed because of ongoing dispute between the central authorities and ethnic Kurds, who run their own region in the north. The upcoming general elections are seen as a crucial test of the country’s political stability amid growing sectarian strife.

In April, the provincial or governorate elections, the first ones held since the departure of US troops, served as a proxy indicator of the country’s stability ahead of the 2014 national
Although it failed to win a majority in any district, the current Prime Minister's State of Law coalition came top in the elections.

**Security Context:** In 2013, violence has surged in Iraq, bringing the country closer to general destabilisation due to increasing sectarian tensions between Iraqi Shi’ite and Sunni Muslims and Kurds. The ongoing violence is increasingly putting pressure on Iraqi authorities who are blamed for their inability to diffuse the sectarian strife while the Syrian conflict is reinforcing the militants. Most observers expect violence to increase ahead of next year’s elections.

Amid reinvigorated Sunni militancy in the country, deadly violence is affecting large parts of the country with most attacks claimed by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), an Iraqi Sunni al-Qaeda affiliated militant group which reportedly relies on strongholds in Anbar, Nineveh, Kirkuk, most of Salaheddin, and parts of Babil, Diyala, and Baghdad areas. Relying on strong support in western Iraq near the Syrian border, the group allegedly seeks to create an "Islamic state" across the Iraq-Syria border.

Over the past weeks, attacks by Sunni militants have largely targeted government security facilities and checkpoints, but also public places such as cafes and markets. While both Shi’ite and Sunni areas neighbourhood areas have been heavily hit over past weeks, the group seemed to have increased attacks on Shi’ite targets in November-December.

According to the UN, as of early December, over 8,000 people had been killed in violence in Iraq so far this year with the country witnessing levels of violence unseen since 2008, amid the rising activism of Islamist armed groups. According to local authorities, nearly 950 people were killed in November across the country, including 852 civilians. This represents a marginal decrease compared to October’s, but November remains among the bloodiest months since 2008. According to the UN, an estimated 1,000 people were killed and over 2,000 wounded in September with Baghdad, northern, northern-central, and western areas the most affected. The Baghdad area alone accounted for 89% of civilian deaths. In 2013, July was the deadliest month to date with 1,057 killed and 2,326 wounded the highest casualty numbers recorded in Iraq since April 2008.

Daily violent attacks, mainly targeting Shi’ite civilians and Iraqi security forces, were reported in various locations across the country. Over 125 people were killed and hundreds injured in militant attacks ahead of next week’s Shi’ite ritual of Arbaeen which commemorates the death of Imam Hussein, grandson of Prophet Mohammad.

Sunni Islamist militants – mostly affiliated to ISIL- are suspected to be behind a string of attacks which have killed scores across the country in recent weeks. There has been a marked escalation in assaults against the Iraqi security forces and all perceived supporters of the Shi’ite-led government. On 16 December, an initial double coordinated suicide attack hit Baiji, north of Baghdad, killing five policemen, and was followed by another suicide bombing which struck the local council building in Tikrit, north of Baghdad, killing three people. Later the same day, two car bombs exploded in the town of Yusifiya, south of the capital, killing at least 24 Shi’ite pilgrims next to a funeral tent. A roadside bomb was also detonated in southern Baghdad's mainly Shi’ite Abu Dsheer district killing another five pilgrims.

In separate incidents also on 16 December, militants executed 12 Shi’ite pilgrims in Mosul, and another five pilgrims.

On 14 December, at least 17 people were killed in attacks that targeted mainly Shi’ite civilians and struck in Baghdad's mainly Shi’ite district of Bayaa, another Shi’ite area at the outskirts of Baghdad, and the district of Hussainiya in the capital. In separate incidents, three soldiers were killed in an ambush in western Tikrit while two more were executed in at a checkpoint in eastern Baghdad. On 13 December, unidentified gunmen executed 18 people, most of them Iranians, working on a gas pipeline outside the northeastern Iraqi town of Muqdadiya. Although no group claimed the attack, the authorities reported that Sunni ISIL militants have been active in the area. In separate incidents, at least five people were killed and 14 injured in a car bombing in southern Baghdad's outskirts of Nahrawan, and another six died in a car bombing in the town of Madaen, south of Baghdad. On 10 December, 11 people were killed in a suicide bombing that also wounded 20 at a Shi’ite Muslim funeral in Baquba, northeast of Baghdad.

Meanwhile, at least 22 Iraqi detainees, all facing terrorism charges, have escaped from a Baghdad prison after killing at least one prison guard. The jail break was the latest in a series of prison escapes in the country since the beginning of the year with at least 500 inmates, including several al-Qaeda leaders, having escaped since July.

Over the first week of December, at least 95 people were killed and over 250 injured in militants’ assaults. On 9 December, a car bombing killed at least 11 people and injured another 22 in the majority Sunni town of Buhruz, south of Baquba in central Iraq, while another 11 people were killed and over a dozen injured in attacks in and around Baghdad, as well as in Mosul. The last attacks came after at least 39 people were killed and another 123 wounded in car bombs across Iraq on 8 December; the deadliest attack that killed seven struck the predominantly Shi’ite Muslim district of Bayaa in Baghdad and others hitting the Sunni district of Taji north of the capital, the Sunni Radwhaniyah area in the capital and Baghdad’s Shi’ite areas of Amel, Ghadir, Sadr City, Ameen and Hussainiya, as well as the northeastern city of Baquba. On 7 December, unidentified gunmen stormed liquor stores in the capital, killing at least 12 people while one person was killed in a bomb explosion in the southern Sunni district of Doura in Baghdad. Similar attacks earlier this year had been conducted by Shi’ite militias. On 4 December, at least 11 people were killed and 70 injured after gunmen attacked police intelligence headquarters and a nearby shopping mall in a coordinated assault in the northern city of Kirkuk, areas around which are believed to be strongholds of Al-Qaeda linked Sunni militants. On 3 December, similarly, at least 13 people were killed and at least 36 injured in two separate attacks on a government complex and a police building with the first attack striking in the northern Iraqi town of Tarmiya and the second one hitting the northern city of Tikrit.

In parallel, in early December, a string of execution-style killings, with at least 41 people found dead in one week, has been registered in Baghdad and northern Iraq in another indication of the country sliding towards levels of sectarian strife unseen since 2008. According to the authorities, such attacks have been happening on a smaller scale for the past two months with probably both Sunni al-Qaeda affiliated groups, as well as Shi’ite militias, being involved in the killings. Execution-style killings with bodies dumped in public places were widely used when the sectarian strife peaked in Iraq in 2006-2007.
Over the last week of November, an estimated 200 people died in attacks mainly in Baghdad and surroundings, but also in the northern provinces of Nineveh, Diyala, Kirkuk and Salaheddin, the southern provinces of Wasit and Babil, and the western province of Anbar. On 2 December, an attack north of Baghdad killed a family of six, while a series of attacks in the mostly Sunni town of Mosul and the ethnically-mixed Tuz Khurmatu left nine others dead. On 1 December, 11 people were killed in violence in Baghdad and its outskirts, but also in Mosul, Nineveh province, and Hawijah, Kirkuk province. On the same day, 33 people were killed in a series of bombing in Diyala province, including 28 people attending the funeral of an anti-Qaeda fighter of the Sawha, the Sunni tribal militia.

On 30 November, a car bomb and two roadside bombs killed seven people near Baghdad and in Nineveh province. On 29 November, a wave of violence killed 52 people, including 18 who were abducted and shot dead in Tarmiyah a northern suburb of the capital, and a series of other attacks in Mosul, Baquba and Kirkuk. On 28 November, a series of 11 car bombs struck nationwide and killed 31 people, targeting civilians in markets, bus stations and a funeral, as well as security forces and the convoy of a top police official. In Babil province, south of Baghdad, a half-dozen car bombs struck in Hilla and surroundings and killed six people. In Salaheddin province, north of the capital, an attack killed three civilians and three policemen. In Baghdad, a roadside bomb targeting a patrol of anti-Qaeda Sawha militiamen killed two, while two other bombs elsewhere in the city killed four more. On the same day, shooting in Mosul, northwest, killed four people including two members of the Yazidi religious sect. On 27 November, Iraqi authorities found the bodies of 19 people shot dead in Baghdad, while another 16 were killed in suicide bombings and other attacks. Most of the violence struck the capital, but Mosul and the western province of Anbar, both of which are mostly Sunni Arab, were also targeted. On 26 November, a state of suicide bombing against security killed 16 people as Iraq announced the execution of 11 convicted “terrorists” amid a protracted pre-election surge in violence in the country. The attacks targeted the northern outskirts of Baghdad, but also the northern towns of Mosul and Kirkuk.

The previous week, the country was again hit by numerous militants’ attacks that have mainly targeted Sunni places after several attacks on Shi’ite targets. On 25 November, attacks across the country killed at least 46 people with two bombs exploding outside a café in Baghdad, killing at least 23 people and injuring dozens. Two attacks occurred earlier on the same day around Baghdad: a suicide bombing killed three and wounded seven security officers at a checkpoint, northeast of the capital, and a roadside bomb killed two and wounded more in the mainly Sunni district of Doura in the south of the capital. Separate attacks hit the northern city of Mosul where nine were killed, the city of Baqubah north of Baghdad while a former Sunni MP was gunned down in the city of Nasiriyah, south of the capital. On 23 November, a suicide bombing killed at least nine people and wounded 54 in the town of Tuz Khurmato, in the north of the country. On 22 November, 23 people were killed and at least 33 wounded in bombings and shootings across the country, with the deadliest attack that killed six occurring in the Doura neighbourhood in southern Baghdad. Other attacks on that day hit the Sunni neighbourhood of Tarmiya in north Baghdad and Sunni mosques in the southern and western outskirts of Baghdad. On 21 November, a car bomb exploded in Sadiya, northeastern Iraq, killing 25 people and injuring over 30 while three bombs killed seven people and wounded 18 in Baghdad’s western Amiriya district. On the same day, four security forces personnel were killed and eight wounded in a suicide bomber attack at a checkpoint north of the capital while two more people were killed in an explosion in Mosul. On 20 November, seven bombs exploded across Baghdad in predominantly Shi’ite neighbourhoods, including the deadliest in central Sadiya area, killing 28 people and injuring at least 65 people.

In mid-November, Iraq was marred by attacks against Shia groups while the latter were celebrating the Mourning of Muharram. On 17 November, at least 21 people were killed and an additional 45 injured in a series of at least five blasts striking Sunni and Shia neighbourhoods in an area spanning from Sadir City in northeastern Baghdad to the western suburb of Radwaniyah of the capital. Across the country, according to local sources, at least 54 people were killed and 114 wounded in assaults on that day. The string of attacks included a suicide bombing that hit a religious procession in a Shia-majority area in the city of al-Sadiya of the religiously mixed Diyala province, north of Baghdad, coordinated blasts in the town of Hafriyah, south of the capital, and bombings in the northern city of Kirkuk. On 13 November, at least 19 people were killed in attacks targeting security forces and Shi’ite pilgrims in the country, including in a blast against a police checkpoint in the town of al-Alam near northwestern Tikrit and roadside bombs in northeastern Baquba, the capital of Diyala governorate.

Iraqi Kurdistan Political Context: While tensions persist between central authorities in Baghdad and in Kurdistan, both sides have made attempts to move closer as exemplified by the passing of the new election law in early November. Better relations with the Kurds should help ease pressure on Iraq’s Shi’ite leadership, which is facing increased sectarian strife that it blames on Sunni Islamist insurgents.

In September, Kurdistan’s main opposition party came in second in the semi-autonomous region's parliamentary election, beating the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) while the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) of regional President Barzani came largely ahead. Since 2005, KDP and PUK have ruled through a coalition government as part of a wider deal which has seen them divide up posts in Irbil and Baghdad. As of late October, it was unclear how or if the results would affect the long-standing power-sharing agreement.

The regional government delayed local presidential elections to 2015, extending the term of Kurdish leader Barzani, a move that the opposition has denounced as illegal.

Kurdish Regional Security Context: On 16 November, President Barzani called on Turkish Kurds to back the fading peace process with Ankara in his first visit to the Turkish southeast in two decades, ostensibly showing his support to Prime Minister Erdogan. Amid shared concerns over the activism of Kurdish militias in Syria that announced in mid-November their wish to establish a regional interim administration on the model of the Iraqi Kurdistan, Barzani and Erdogan are interested in settling the issue of the stalled peace process in Turkey. Iraqi Kurds are also concerned over retaining the regional leadership of the Kurds from the Syrian Democratic Union Party (PYD) that has links to the Turkish Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK). While Barzani was calling for more Kurdish support to Ankara, a counter rally by the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) was denouncing Ankara’s regional policies in Diyarbakir, the main city of Turkish Kurds.

To date, the withdrawal of PKK militants from Turkey to Iraqi Kurdistan has stopped, with fighters citing failures by the government to take steps agreed under the now stalled peace process that has not moved forward since the March ceasefire declaration. Despite the start of the withdrawal on 14 May, the Turkish authorities stated in August that only 20% of
PKK fighters had left Turkey, and they were mostly women and children. On 15 November, the eve of Barzani’s visit to Turkey, the Turkish authorities reported that Kurdish militants attacked a military convoy near the Syrian border in one of the most serious breaches of the ceasefire to date.

The Kurdish problem continues to be a regional one with the Syrian conflict largely impacting the situation of Kurds in Turkey and Iraq. While the arrival of former PKK insurgents is likely to strain already tense relations between the regional Kurdish authorities and Baghdad, it remains unclear how the withdrawal of PKK groups from Turkey will impact on the Syrian civil war where armed Kurdish groups have been increasingly active, pursuing their own political agendas. Although a senior Iraqi Kurdish official indicated in August that Iraq’s northern Kurdistan region had no plans to send troops to Syria to defend fellow Kurds as fighting between Kurds and Islamist anti-government forces in northern Syria continues, the region seems to be becoming increasingly dragged into the Syrian conflict while various regional Kurdish groups try to assert transnational leadership of the Kurds.

On 27 October, Syrian Kurdish armed groups captured the Yaaroubiyeh post in northeastern Syria after four days of clashes with jihadist groups, including Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIL. An Iraqi intelligence official confirmed that Kurdish rebels now hold the crossing point, one of two main crossings with Iraq, adding that Baghdad has brought reinforcements to the area. According to local reports, Iraqi forces were involved in the fighting near Yaaroubiyeh, using troops and artillery to secure victory for Syrian Kurdish militias associated with the PYD.

In late September, militants launched a coordinated attack on the headquarters of the security services in the capital of Kurdistan, killing 11 people in the first major assault in the relatively calm area since 2007. The blasts occurred one day after results of the region’s parliamentary elections were announced. ISIL claimed responsibility for the attack stating that it was carried out in revenge for the region’s support for Kurds fighting Islamists in Syria. ISIL has claimed responsibility for attacks on both sides of the border and has fought Kurds affiliated with the PYD.

Humanitarian Context and Needs

Displacement: UNHCR has warned that the significant increase of sectarian violence across Iraq threatens to spark a new internal displacement of Iraqis fleeing insecurity. Since the start of 2013, bombings and rising sectarian tensions have displaced 5,000 Iraqis, with people mostly fleeing from Baghdad into Anbar and Salaheddin governorates, and caused displacement in Diyala and Nineveh governorates.

As of September 2013, an estimated 1.13 million Iraqis were displaced in Iraq, according to local sources, though figures remain difficult to ascertain. Over 467,000 IDPs, returnees, and squatters reportedly live in over 382 settlements on public land or in public buildings with limited access to basic services.

Over 68,000 Iraqis have returned from Syria since mid-July 2012, with Baghdad receiving the largest number. Syrian refugees continue to cross into Iraqi Kurdistan through the Peshkabour crossing in Duhok governorate, following the re-opening of the border on 15 August after a closure in mid-May. As of 4 December, over 207,000 people had crossed into Iraq from Syria with a surge in arrivals since mid-August. Between mid-August and early October, an estimated 60,000 people, mainly women and children, had entered into Iraq from Syria. As of mid-September, the flow of Syrian refugees to Iraqi Kurdistan remained steady at 800-1,000 people per day, according to UNHCR. The rate is consistent with earlier flows in April and May 2013, prior to the closure of the Peshkabour border crossing.

According to local reports, the Iraqi authorities have been attempting to limit the influx to 3,000 refugees allowed to cross per day. To date, Kurdistan hosts over 90% of these refugees.

The situation at Domiz camp, in northwest Iraq’s Dohuk governorate, is especially worrying. The camp houses over 70,000 Syrian refugees in critically overcrowded conditions. Another 90,000 refugees are scattered in and around urban centres in Iraqi Kurdistan while several camps and centres are currently under construction in the Kurdistan region, many of which are on former military bases with a danger of unexploded ordnances, mines, and other explosive weapons.

Disaster: According to the authorities, recent flooding after three days of heavy rains in central and southern Iraq – notably in main urban centres Baghdad, Nasiriyah, Diwaniyah and Hilla – killed at least 11 people on 18-20 November. To date, there is no available information on numbers of affected while the flooding also triggered some small-scale protests regarding the authorities’ response.

Access: Although humanitarian access is less restricted, security threats for international staff remain high, particularly in Baghdad, the north, the central governorates, and the Disputed Territories. According to reports, access to Al Qa’im refugee camp remains difficult, though missions can be carried out by helicopter.

Health: Overcrowding in Domiz camp is impacting health and sanitation, which is already below humanitarian standards, with inadequate water and sanitation facilities increasing the risk of water borne diseases. Measles has been reported in new camp arrivals.

Updated: 17/12/2013

MYANMAR INTERNAL UNREST, FLOODS

Highlights

11 December: Authorities freed an additional 44 political detainees in the fifth presidential amnesty since the beginning of the year. The release is another attempt by the government to show goodwill in the context of the ongoing peace talks with several armed insurgent movements. President Thein Sein reiterated his promise, made in July, to free all prisoners of conscience by end 2013.

Political and Security Context

Political Context: On 11 December, a further 44 political detainees were released from jail in the fifth presidential amnesty since the beginning of the year. Their release, as with
the release of prominent Karen women human rights activist Naw Ohn Hla on November 15, represents another attempt by the authorities to show goodwill in the context of the ongoing peace talks with several armed insurgent movements.

This latest amnesty saw the release of members of ethnic minority armed groups with whom the government is seeking peace deals. Against this background, President Thein Sein reiterated his promise made in July to free all prisoners of conscience by end 2013. But while recent efforts by the Myanmar authorities to improve the country’s human rights record has been welcomed, local activists continue to report that the prosecution of dissidents is still continuing.

As reported by Karen officials on 9 December, the next meeting of Myanmar’s ethnic groups will take place at Lay Wah, the headquarters of the Karen National Union (KNU) in Karen state, around the third week of December. The meeting is to be held ahead of the next round of peace negotiations between the ethnic representatives and a government delegation. The next round of talks with the authorities is therefore likely to be postponed until January, indicating that a nationwide ceasefire before the end of the year, as promised by President Thein Sein, is unlikely to be reached. To date, no reaction from the authorities is available.

The Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT), an umbrella group representing several ethnic groups, most recently met 26-28 November for a three-day summit in Chiang Mai to reach an agreement between the armed groups regarding a framework for the nationwide ceasefire, as well as an itinerary for future procedures and political dialogue with the government. A draft proposed by the government was discussed and had several amendments added according to the policies of individual armed groups. The meeting was reportedly joined by more than 20 participants representing 14 different ethnic armed groups. The recent meeting follows a similar event in early November when, according to local reports, seventeen ethnic armed groups attended a conference in northern Kachin state and were reportedly close to signing a comprehensive agreement that may be a first step toward a nationwide ceasefire.

Since August, central authorities have made progress toward the pacification of Myanmar, signing several ceasefire agreements with various insurgent groups representing ethnic minorities. Against this background, and although violence flared up in parts of Myanmar in September and October, the government still plans to hold a ceremony at which an alleged nationwide ceasefire, promised by President Thein Sein in July, would be signed with the country’s many armed militant groups. It is unclear how the authorities are going to react to the announced postponement of the new round of talks with the ethnic groups in December.

On 10 October, authorities signed a fresh peace deal with Kachin rebels. The deal, which followed three days of negotiations, was aimed to open the way for political dialogue and end the conflict in Kachin. Initially, a seven-point peace agreement was achieved between the Government and the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) in May. The KIO, seeking greater autonomy for the one million Kachin people, is essentially chairing the alliance of 11 ethnic armed groups, the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC). Fighting between the government and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the armed wing of the KIO, reigned in June 2011 after a 17-year old ceasefire crumbled.

In early August, the All Burma Students’ Democratic Front, a once outlawed student movement, signed a state-level ceasefire agreement with Karen state government representatives. The deal was seen as a step toward broader national reconciliation. In mid-June, an agreement to push ahead with a national ceasefire between authorities and the Union Peace-Making Committee and Karenni National Progressive Party, representing the Red Karen in Kayah state, was reached.

Security Context: On 17 October, several small bombs exploded in northeastern Myanmar in Namkhm, a town in Shan state bordering China, where ethnic groups have been fighting government forces. These incidents are the latest in a string of low scale attacks that have been hitting the country since the start of October. The explosions killed one person and injured another two. On 14 October, a rudimentary time-bomb exploded in a hotel in Yangon, wounding one foreign tourist. Although authorities have suggested that these explosions are part of a coordinated series of bomb attacks across Myanmar by a group targeting tourist haunts, a Buddhist temple, and other public places, no clear connection between the attacks has yet been established. Moreover, it is unclear if the attacks are related to ongoing inter-communal strife or the protracted insurgencies affecting parts of the country. Since 11 October, multiple blasts have been recorded across the country, leaving at least four dead and several injured.

In June and October 2012, sectarian confrontations between ethnic Rakhine Buddhists and the Muslim minority shook western Rakhine state, displacing tens of thousands of people. According to reports, clashes between Buddhists and Muslims since June 2012 have killed at least 237 people, including 192 in Rakhine state. In recent weeks, human rights infringements were reported, and tensions remained high with authorities imposing restriction measures on the displaced Muslim minority in an increasingly tense local context.

Multiple violent incidents have been reported with fresh inter-communal violence between Buddhists and Muslims surging near Yangon in early October and in Thandwe, a coastal township in western Rakhine state, in late September where it led to casualties.

In August, outbreaks of communal violence were reported from remote Htan Kone in Myanmar’s northern Sagaing region while several communitarian incidents were reported from Rakhine’s Thandwe, Pauktaw, and Mrauk-U townships in July and June. On 20 July, authorities eventually lifted the state of emergency imposed around Meikhtila where heavy clashes and attacks, which resulted in 44 people killed and over 70 injured, occurred in March and April. Several thousands of people are still displaced in the area as of October.

Military Operations: On 18 November, Kachin campaign groups called for an immediate end to clashes between government troops and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), violence that has reportedly affected and effectively trapped an estimated 2,300 people, including children and IDPs, with limited food and shelter in the remote Bhamo-Mansi area of Kachin state, near the northern border with China. According to sources within Kachin armed groups, clashes have been ongoing in the area since October, but the violence would not derail the tentative peace process.

Between 22 and 28 October, violent clashes had already been reported from Kachin state’s Mansi township between government troops and KIA. Renewed fighting happened less than two weeks after authorities and Kachin insurgents signed a fresh ceasefire in mid-October.
No report on casualties is available to date.

Heavy fighting in northern Kachin state and in the northern part of neighbouring Shan state was reported in September as the authorities reinforced their troops in these areas. Local and international organisations reported various human rights abuses being committed in Kachin state.

**Humanitarian Context and Needs**

**Displacement:** As reported by OCHA in November, over 649,000 people are currently internally displaced in Myanmar because of violence.

In western Rakhine state, an estimated 143,000 people, mainly Rohingya Muslims, are displaced because of inter-communal violence between Rakhine Buddhists and the Muslim minority that occurred in June and October 2012. According to reports from human rights groups, Rohingya Muslims face ongoing tension, abuses and movement restrictions and a large part is considered crisis-affected and needing humanitarian assistance. According to the UN, the Muslim minority in Myanmar is subject to many forms of persecution, discrimination and exploitation.

On 21 November, Myanmar authorities rejected a UN resolution urging them to grant citizenship to the Rohingya Muslims, accusing the UN of encroaching on its sovereignty. The government continues to officially state that the estimated 1.1 million Rohingya Muslims are migrants from neighbouring Bangladesh, who are excluded from citizenship under the 1982 Citizenship Law.

Rohingya Muslims, many of whom have been in Myanmar for generations, are also rejected by neighbouring Bangladesh and are therefore stateless. To date, the majority of Rohingya are also denied refugee status by the Bangladeshi authorities. While an estimated 30,000 Rohingya Muslims live in official camps where they are assisted by aid agencies, another 200,000 refugees reside in unofficial camps or Bangladeshi villages where they get little to no humanitarian assistance and almost no protection from abuses. According to investigation reports published by international human rights organizations in early December, Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar are also subject human trafficking in neighbouring Thailand.

In early November, UNHCR reported that an increasing number of people, at least 1,500 over the last week of October, from Rakhine state, mainly Muslims, are setting out to sea on smugglers' boats from the Bay of Bengal. Although numbers remain difficult to ascertain, such forced departures often result in disasters as boats capsize.

In central Mandalay region, near Meikhtila, an estimated 5,500 people are displaced following violence in March and April.

An estimated 100,000 people have been displaced by conflict across Kachin and northern Shan states, including over 53,000 in areas beyond government control. Many have been displaced for up to two years, triggering renewed and additional needs for provision of basic services, livelihoods, and protection. The most urgent needs in displaced communities include education, health care, renovation of shelter, replacement of NFIs, and WASH facilities. In late October, an additional up to 1,500 people have been displaced by violence near the Mann Si township.

Up to 400,000 people across 36 townships continue to be displaced in the southeast following years of conflict, according to OCHA.

In June, UNHCR reported that 28,000 Rakhine Muslims were registered as refugees in Malaysia. However, according to groups representing them, the real number of Myanmar Muslim immigrants is much higher and has surged this year because of the violence.

**Disaster:** In late October, local media reported that over 2,000 acres of rice paddies had been destroyed by storms and heavy rains which submerged farmlands in western Magwe division’s Pwintbyu township. To date, no other information is available.

According to the UN, heavy monsoon rains and flash floods have displaced almost 50,000 people across the country this year, though most people have since returned home as of late September. During the monsoon season, heavy rains and flash floods were reported in different parts of Myanmar, notably in Yangon in late August and in the northern parts of the country in the first half of September. In September, WFP reported that affected rural people would require food assistance until the harvest season in November-December as floods have destroyed food stocks and paddy fields. An estimated 70,000 acres of farmland have been flooded or destroyed this year.

**Access:** Access has reportedly improved as major highways in Kachin state, closed since the outbreak of hostilities between the government and the KIA in 2011, were reopened on 17 March following the renewal of talks between the two sides.

In early September, OCHA reported that an 11-truck humanitarian convoy led by the UN and other humanitarian partners delivered food, medicines, and other items to displaced communities living in the Woi Chyai Camp in Laiza town in Kachin state. This is the first time that cross-line missions have been permitted to deliver humanitarian assistance to Laiza since December 2011. These missions supplement aid delivered on a regular basis by local NGOs. In June, for the first time in nearly a year, an UN-led aid convoy was allowed into other non-government controlled parts of Kachin state.

Access to affected populations in Rakhine state remains difficult, complicated by media campaigns based on claims of favouritism by international aid agencies towards the non-Rakhine Muslim minorities. According to OCHA, as of mid-April, access to IDPs is still seriously hampered by ongoing intimidation of national and international aid workers. In early July, OCHA encouraged humanitarian providers to adopt a "conflict-sensitive" approach to aid distribution with clear communication with the communities to explain the basis of aid distribution to mitigate the perception among the Rakhine population that assistance had been disproportionately provided to Muslim minorities.

**Food Security:** As reported by FAO in mid-June, the food security situation has improved across most of Myanmar. However, a poor harvest due to below average seasonal rains in lower Sagaing, western and central parts of Mandalay and most of Magway, is expected to lead to a deterioration of food security conditions in these areas. In Rakhine, southwest, Kachin, and Northern Shan states, where thousands of people have been displaced, food security remains a concern.
Health and Nutrition: Even though the numbers of dengue cases and related deaths were lower than expected for this year’s rainy season, health authorities still recorded 16,000 cases and 75 deaths for 2013, as of 12 September. In June, the cumulative number of dengue cases had surpassed the total for all of 2012, and officials feared that the monsoon season would worsen the epidemic.

As noted by OCHA in mid-July, a vulnerability mapping exercise showed that 36,000 people in 113 isolated villages in Rakhine state have no or limited access to basic services, including markets, education, and health care. Access to services is impeded by ongoing tension and restrictions on freedom of movement. This is in addition to the estimated 140,000 people displaced by 2012 inter-communal violence.

Updated: 17/12/2013

OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

Highlights

29 December: Israel is scheduled to release a third group of long-serving Palestinian and Israeli Arab prisoners, as part of the ongoing peace process. The situation on the grounds remain fragile, and continued settlement activity is seen as endangering the talks.

15 December: Over 5,000 people have been evacuated from flood-damaged homes in northern Gaza. One person was killed by the rising water. Over the past week, the wider region has experienced a severe winter storm which has caused flooding and widespread power outages in the Gaza strip.

Early December: Following the closure or destruction of smuggling tunnels from Egypt (?), the Gaza Strip is at risk from one of the most serious energy shortages in recent years. The vast majority of Gaza’s 1.7 million residents live without regular power supplies. Electricity blackouts across the Gaza Strip have reportedly increased to up to 16 hours per day.

Political and Security Context

International and Regional Political Context: On 19 July, an initial agreement between Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) on direct final status negotiations was announced. On 28 July, the Israeli government approved the release of 104 Palestinian prisoners as a sign of its readiness to revive the Middle East peace process. The peace talks opened formally in West Jerusalem on 14 August, and Israel freed 26 of the promised 104 long-serving Palestinian and Israeli Arab prisoners on the same day. The Israeli government approved the release of another 26 Palestinian prisoners on 28 October. The remaining prisoners will be released in three groups over the next seven months depending on progress in the newly-resumed peace talks with the Palestinian authorities.

Two rockets fired at a southern Israeli coastal city on 28 October from the Gaza strip may have been meant to spoil the peace negotiations. During the previous prisoner release in August, Gaza militants fired rockets across the border and Israel responded with air strikes. With the approach of the third release of prisoners, scheduled for 29 December, the situation on the grounds remain fragile, and continued settlement activity is seen as endangering the negotiation process.

On 29 November 2012, the General Assembly voted to grant Palestine non-member UN observer State status, while expressing the urgent need for the resumption of negotiations between Israel and Palestine to move toward a permanent two-State solution.

Local Political Context: While the negotiation process is expected to be lengthy, an ease of access and movement for the population in the OPT and for goods is pressing as recent action to counter illegal activities and insecurity in the Sinai has included imposing severe restrictions on movements of people through the Rafah Crossing into the Gaza Strip and closing down smuggling tunnels on the Egyptian-Gaza border.

On average, 150 people per day have been allowed to cross the Rafah Border Crossing in both directions since July 2013. These numbers remain well below the daily average of approximately 1,860 who crossed in both directions in June, before strict measures on the Rafah Crossing were imposed by Egyptian authorities due to security concerns. As of early December, the crossing has been closed since 6 and 7 November when it was last open for the movement of humanitarian cases. The Rafah Crossing remains the primary exit and entry point to the Gaza Strip for Palestinians. Movement across the other crossing points Erez and Kerem Shalom in northern Gaza Strip has been severely restricted since September 2000. Kerem Shalom, the only functioning official crossing for goods to and from Gaza, was closed for 52 days during the first four months of 2013.

Egypt announced its intention to destroy the network of smuggling tunnels used to deliver goods to the Gaza Strip, on the grounds that Palestinians have been using the underground passages to help Sinai militants. The Sinai Peninsula has seen frequent battles between the Egyptian military and Islamist gunmen. Due to the closure or destruction of these tunnels, the Gaza Strip suffers from a severe lack of basic goods such as fuel for cooking and heating, affecting businesses, agricultural production, and health services, according to the UN. It is estimated that in November, less than 20,000 litres of fuel per week entered Gaza via the tunnels, compared to nearly 1 million litres per day until June 2013.

As a result of the blockade, the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) was forced to shut down completely on 1 November after it had used all its fuel reserves. UN reports that Gaza is affected by one the most serious energy crises in recent years, with potentially serious humanitarian ramifications. OCHA reports that for the last month, all of Gaza’s 1.7 million residents have been living without power for most of the time, with electricity blackouts across the Gaza Strip having increased to up to 16 hours per day. The total amount of electricity currently available covers only 30% of the demand. The Gaza Electricity Distribution Corporation (GEDCO) has warned that electricity distribution will likely be more complicated with the coming cold winter season, as demand on electricity is expected to increase.

In addition to already existing restrictions, Israel’s freeze on the shipment of building materials into Gaza since mid-October continues for an tenth consecutive week. The measure was implemented after discovering what Israel says is a sophisticated “terror
tunnel” into its own territory from Palestinian land. Israeli authorities did not say how long the ban would remain in force. The Israeli army said the tunnel was buried 18m underground, made of concrete and ran for 1.7km with 450m extending into Israeli. Hamas Islamists in the Gaza Strip claimed responsibility for the tunnel beneath the heavily fortified Israel-Gaza frontier. The suspension of transfer of construction materials for those consecutive weeks has affected humanitarian operations: UNRWA has reported the suspension of 19 out of its 20 building projects in the Gaza Strip due to the lack of building materials. Furthermore, the suspension has directly affected more than 4,000 construction workers employed in different humanitarian projects, including rehabilitation or construction of housing, schools and health clinics.

Gaza’s economic situation is deteriorating with several thousand jobs in the construction industry affected, livelihoods eroded, and prices increasing. The Hamas government has paid only 77% of its $25 million August payroll for Gaza’s 50,000 civil servants.

**Safety and Security:** The peace negotiations face several severe challenges, one of which is the issue of Israeli settlements.

According to the NGO Peace Now, Israeli authorities have given the go-ahead for the construction of 829 new settler homes in the occupied West Bank on 25 November. The latest move comes two weeks after Israel announced its largest plan for settler homes ever, saying some 20,000 would be built in the West Bank. The order was shortly cancelled by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu following pressure from the US.

On 30 October, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered officials to press ahead with plans to build 3,500 more homes for Jewish settlers. The order came only hours after Israel had freed 26 Palestinian prisoners, and the decision was seen by some as a way to satisfy hardliners who had criticised the release of prisoners. 1,500 units would be built in Ramat Shlomo, a settlement in an area of the occupied West Bank that Israel considers part of Jerusalem. The other 2,000 settler housing units would be built in other parts of the West Bank, according to unconfirmed government sources.

Construction of new homes in illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank has increased by 70% in the first half of 2013, as reported by the Israeli NGO Peace Now. On 17 October, the group said that 1,708 new homes were started between January and June, compared with 995 in the same period in 2012. Israeli media reported in May that Prime Minister Netanyahu ordered a freeze on new tenders for settler homes. Most of the new construction is taking place in areas where tenders are not required, circumventing the freeze.

Related to the above development, settler-related violence continues to undermine the physical security and livelihoods of Palestinians. At present, OCHA estimates that there are 110 Palestinian communities, with a combined population of over 315,000 people, who are vulnerable to settler violence; of these, almost 60 communities (over 130,000 people) are at high risk.

Excessive use of lethal force continues to impact civilians in the OPT. On 14 December, a Palestinian from the Gaza Strip was reportedly wounded by Israeli gunfire after approaching a border fence. A week before, the Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR), reports that a Palestinian child was shot by Israeli soldiers north of Ramallah. Soldiers allegedly opened fire with live bullets at the group of children, as they set fire to rubber tires and threw stones at the Israeli soldiers.

In two separate incidents on 7 November, Israeli forces staffing military checkpoints shot and killed two civilian men. The Israeli authorities claimed the violence was self-defence. OCHA reports that checkpoints have remained a point of friction between the civilian population and Israeli forces. Currently, there are 61 permanently staffed military checkpoints across the West Bank, including 36 located along the Barrier, 11 in Hebron City and 14 on key routes elsewhere. On 1 November, an Israeli air strike reportedly killed three militants in the Gaza Strip, according to the Islamist group Hamas. Hours later, an overnight clash allegedly killed a fourth Palestinian gunman and wounded five Israeli soldiers. The Israeli military said its aircraft targeted a tunnel inside the southern Gaza Strip, used by militants for attacking Israelis. International media reported that the events marked the worst violence between Israelis and Palestinians in the coastal enclave since a ceasefire ended an eight-day conflagration in November last year.

**Humanitarian Context and Needs**

According to OCHA, 2.1 million people need humanitarian assistance in the Palestinian territories, with protection of the civilian population, improvement of food insecurity, provision of access to basic services, and prevention of forced displacement being the highest priorities. Longstanding protection threats affecting the Palestinian population, including movement and access restrictions, continue to generate high levels of humanitarian need.

**Disaster:** According to ECHO on 15 December, over 5,000 people have been evacuated from flood-damaged homes in northern Gaza, while one person was killed by rising water. Over the past week, the region suffered from a severe winter storm which caused flooding and widespread power outages in the Gaza strip. As a result of the weather conditions, scores of buildings were damaged, and 70 tunnels collapsed.

**Access:** Combined with the heavy Egyptian military deployment along the border and severe access restrictions on people and vehicles into the border area, a dramatic decline in the transfer of goods and fuel through the tunnels between Egypt and Gaza has been reported.

On 20 September, Israeli forces seized a vehicle carrying tents from an international humanitarian organisation destined for Khirbet al-Makhul, West Bank, where 48 Palestinians, including 16 children, urgently needed emergency shelter following repeated demolitions by Israeli authorities. The forces confronted members of the humanitarian and diplomatic communities who were present on site. The UN and the European Union have condemned the halt of humanitarian aid to the population in need.

**Food Security:** Over 770,000 people are estimated to be food insecure in the West Bank alone, according to the UN. Prior to the tunnel closure, the WFP Socio–Economic and Food Security Survey revealed an increase in the food insecurity in Palestine, showing that 1.6 million people (34% of households in Palestine) were food insecure, a rise from 27% in 2012. The deterioration was most pronounced in Gaza, where food insecurity levels surged from 44 to 57%. Economic pressure on Gaza could impact the number of persons in need
of humanitarian assistance in 2014. The unemployment rate, which is normally around 30%, is expected to rise as construction and tunnel-trade employment stagnates.

**Gaza fuel crisis:** The shortages of electricity and fuel, as well as of building materials, have further undermined people’s livelihoods, particularly those employed in construction, agriculture and fishing. Additionally, the halt in the smuggling of food products via the tunnel has triggered an increase in food prices – 11% for bread, 33% for rice, and 7% for vegetable oil. These factors combined are expected to be reflected in an increased number of families affected by food insecurity. Figures for 2012 indicate that 57% of the population is affected by food insecurity, up from 44% in 2011. About 1.1 million people (about 65% of the population) are already receiving food aid.

As land preparation for the upcoming growing season is starting, shortages and high prices of fuel in Gaza Strip lead to higher production costs and a greater risk for farmers who plan on growing crops will need (supplementary) irrigation.

**Health and Nutrition:** Shortages of affordable fuel used to operate backup generators have severely disrupted the normal functioning of critical hospital functions, such as emergency rooms, operating theatres, and neo-natal care, OCHA reports. All health facilities, including 30 hospitals and over 135 health clinics are affected.

Access to health care is further affected by the chronic shortage of drugs. Lack of sufficient funding and coordination between the Gaza and Ramallah authorities are main underlying reasons for this development. The restrictions imposed by the Egyptian authorities on the Rafah Crossing, which has served as the main entry point for most medical donations has further exacerbated the situation. As of late November, 30% of the essential drugs and 52% of medical disposables are at zero stock (141 types of medication and 469 types of medical disposables), according to OCHA.

**WASH:** As reported by OCHA, an estimated 600,000 people in the Gaza Strip may not have access to adequate and safe water and sanitation services as a result of increased power outages and lack of fuel.

There is an acute shortage of fuel to power standby generators at 291 WASH facilities across Gaza, including water wells, ground tank pumps, booster stations, desalination plants, sewage pump stations and wastewater treatment plants. OCHA states that this has resulted in reduced water supply to households, with only 15% of the population supplied every day, 25% once every four days, 40% once every three days, and 20% every two days, with supply cycles lasting 5-6 hours.

In November, OCHA said that fuel shortages, combined with unreliable electricity supply, continue to disrupt the provision of basic services, including water supply, sanitation, health and transportation. For example, the operation of 291 water and sewage facilities has been severely affected, and access to running water has already declined across the Gaza Strip.

When water is supplied, delivery lasts for only six to eight hours. Consequently, many families are forced to purchase unsafe water from unregulated water vendors and distributors. Initial reports indicate that people, mostly children, are filling jerry cans from these desalination units during night hours (when the electricity is on), raising protection concerns.

*Updated: 17/12/2013*

**PAKISTAN CONFLICT, FLOODS, DISPLACEMENT, EARTHQUAKE**

**Highlights**

15 December: The prominent local Shi'ite Muslim cleric Allama Nasir Abbas, leader of the banned Tehreek Nifaz Fiqah-e-Jafaria organisation, was shot dead in an attack in the eastern city of Lahore in Punjab province. The attack was declared to be a reprisal attack for the violence against Sunnis in the city of Rawalpindi in early November by Taliban militants.

Mid-December: According to health officials, 72 cases of polio were reported this year, an increase from 58 cases in 2012. To date, most of the cases have been recorded in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), followed by northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, eastern Punjab and southern Sindh provinces. Pakistan is one of the only countries in the world where polio is still endemic.

13 December: Unidentified gunmen shot dead a policeman and wounded another near the northwestern town of Topi in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The police officers had reportedly been deployed to guard the ongoing polio campaign in the area. It was the last such attack to date.

**Political and Security Context**

**US-Pakistan Context:** On 9 December, tensions between Washington and Islamabad over the continuation of drone strikes against militants in Pakistan territory have further mounted as the Pentagon chief, Chuck Hagel, visited Pakistan to conduct talks with the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. In the first visit of the Pentagon chief to Pakistan in almost four years, the objective for the US is to alleviate the local outrage over what Pakistani leaders see as a breach of the country’s sovereignty. While NATO is winding down combat operations in Afghanistan, Pakistan’s support remains essential for Washington.

In early December, following protests in Pakistan over drone strikes, Washington was forced to halt ground shipments from Afghanistan via its main Pakistan supply route. The affected route, which connects Torkham Gate at the Afghanistan-Pakistan border to the port city of Karachi, is crucial to ensure the ongoing withdrawal of the US combat mission from Afghanistan while the alternative Northern Distribution Network – a grid of supply lines running through Central Asia and Russia – is far more costly and politically challenging to use. According to US official sources, Washington is hoping that it will be able to resume cargo shipments through Pakistan in the near future. To a large extent, Hagel’s visit to Islamabad is due to solve this issue while a long-term suspension of the supply lines running through Pakistan have significant potential to derail the whole US regional strategy.

In November, the death of the Pakistani Taliban’s leader Mehsud, as well as the general continuation of drone strikes, have already had significant repercussions for US-Pakistan
relations in the short-term. It may put into question recent improvements that were
demonstrated by the restart of US security assistance to Pakistan that had been largely
suspended after relations became strained in 2011. In Pakistan, several politicians had
called for a suspension of US military supply lines into Afghanistan as had been done
between November 2011 and July 2012.

On 21 November, the day after Pakistan's foreign policy chief indicated that the US had
committed to refrain from drone strikes while the government tries again to engage the
insurgents in peace talks, another drone attack was carried out against an Islamic
seminary in the Hangu district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, killing a senior member of the
Taliban-linked Haqqani Network (HN), Maulvi Ahmad Jan, and four other people. HN is an
organisation that seems to have been particularly under pressure lately while its chief
financier was shot dead in Islamabad on 11 November by unidentified men. Although no
official comment by the authorities is available, Washington has long called for Pakistan
authorities to crack down on the group blamed for high-profile attacks in Afghanistan and
listed as a terrorist organisation by the US since September 2012.

The drone attack on 21 November was the first one to be conducted in Pakistan since the
1 November, when Hakimullah Mehsud, the leader of the Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP), the
Pakistani Taliban, was killed in a US drone strike in the Federally Administered Tribal
Areas (FATA), probably in North Waziristan, along with three other militants. The strike
occurred as Pakistani authorities started negotiations with the TTP. In the aftermath,
Islamabad openly denounced the attack as a US bid to sabotage the peace talks and the
hardliner Mullah Fazlullah that assumed command of the TTP immediately rejected
negotiating with authorities. On 4 November, US Secretary of State Kerry officially
endorsed the attack that killed Mehsud.

Prime Minister Sharif has repeatedly called for an end to US drone strikes against
militants, although such attacks have led to the deaths of several senior TTP leaders.
Nevertheless, an increasing number of drone attacks in FATA have been reported, with at
least nine occurring since Sharif was sworn in on 5 June. As reported by Pakistani
authorities in late August, 339 drone attacks have been recorded since 2004 resulting in
the deaths of an estimated 2,200 people, including 400 civilians and 200 victims deemed
probable non-combatants in FATA. No official US data on the number of people killed in
drone strikes is available, though numbers released by Islamabad have been put in doubt
by independent organisations. In late October, Amnesty International and Human Rights
Watch released separate reports voicing criticisms over the recourse to drone strikes and
detailing the deaths of dozens of civilians in such attacks.

India-Pakistan Context: On 8 October, and though talks to appease bilateral relations
between Islamabad and New Delhi were conducted, India's military continued to accuse
Pakistan of helping insurgents to push into Indian Kashmir as foreign forces withdraw from
neighbouring Afghanistan. According to the Indian military, eight militants were killed in
an operation as the military continue to fight a group that crossed into India in September.
Pakistan denies it is helping militants to cross into the Indian part of the contested region.

On 29 September, Pakistani Prime Minister Sharif met his Indian counterpart Manmohan
Singh on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, amid heightened tensions over their
shared Kashmir border. During the meeting, both leaders announced intentions to restore
calm as an initial step toward reconciliation. On the eve of these talks, on 26 September,
new fatal incidents were reported across the Line of Control, which marks the de facto
border in the disputed region, after heavily armed militants reportedly crossed from
Pakistan into India. Since 6 August, tensions have been running high in Kashmir, with
international observers fearing that the November 2003 ceasefire and stalled peace talks
between the two countries may be put into question. India and Pakistan have been trading
blame for the incidents that, as of early September, killed at least 44 members of the
security forces since the beginning of the year, up from 17 for all of 2012, according to the
South Asia Terrorism Portal, which monitors the violence.

In mid-August, several sources in the Pakistan-based Islamist terrorist organisation
Lashkar-e-Taiba commented that the group is preparing to reignite the fight over Kashmir
once Western troops leave Afghanistan next year. The bombing of the Indian consulate in the
Afghan city of Jalalabad on 3 August, for which the Taliban has denied responsibility,
might be an early indication of this change of strategy.

Afghanistan-Pakistan Context: On 30 November, Pakistani Prime Minister Sharif met
with Afghan President Karzai in Kabul as part of renewed efforts to revive Afghanistan's
peace process before NATO troops withdraw next year. PM Sharif, who visited
Afghanistan for the first time since he took office in May, promised that he would help
arrange further meetings between Afghan officials and Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, a
former Taliban second-in-command and reported friend of Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad
Omar. Baradar, who was captured in Pakistan in 2010, is seen by Kabul as key to reach to moderate Taliban commanders and involve them into peace talks.

In late October, a breakthrough in negotiations between President Karzai and Prime
Minister Sharif was reportedly achieved at a meeting in London. In the aftermath, on 20
November, a delegation of senior officials from Afghanistan's High Peace Council travelled
to Karachi to start peace talks with the Afghan Taliban, and meet notably with Baradar,
who had been released by Islamabad in September but reportedly remained under close
Pakistani supervision. During its visit, the Afghan delegation reportedly met with the former
Taliban commander, but no discussion was effectively conducted. Earlier, Islamabad
released a first group of detained Afghan Taliban, including senior commander Mansoor
Dadullah, who were similarly not directly handed over to Afghan authorities. The release of
influential Taliban commanders detained in Pakistan is seen by the Afghan authorities as
instrumental in bringing the Taliban to the negotiation table.

On 11 October, US forces reportedly captured senior Pakistani Taliban commander
Mehsud (unrelated to the former TTP leader Hakimullah Mehsud) in a military operation in
eastern Logar province. Other reports suggested that Mehsud was seized from an Afghan
government convoy in the province, as Afghan officials were trying to recruit him to launch
peace talks several weeks ago, contributing to current tensions between Washington and
Kabul. The arrest of Mehsud could represent a blow to TTP in Pakistan. The movement
reportedly faces dissention over Islamabad’s attempts to launch peace talks.

National Political Context: On 27 November, Lieutenant-General Raheel Sharif was
nominated as the country’s new army chief. Considered a moderate, Sharif is mostly
known for his role in the reshaping of the country’s strategic policy in 2007, when he turned
the focus away from the rivalry with India, and pushed for a more nuanced policy which
considered the internal threat from militants as equally pressing. To a large extent, the
nomination may be seen as another attempt of the civilian authorities to put pressure on
the influential military establishment.

Earlier, on 18 November, Pakistani authorities decided to put Pervez Musharraf on trial for
treason for suspending the constitution and declaring a state of emergency in 2007 while
he was in power. The decision is the latest development in a lasting imbroglio of
twisted legal cases against the former ruler since he returned to Pakistan from voluntary
exile to participate in May polls. The decision to put Musharraf on trial was a first
exceptional challenge of the country’s civilian administration to the military who used to
rule Pakistan and still retain significant power.

Pakistan’s Taliban Insurgency: On 30 October, while at a summit in London, Pakistani
Prime Minister Sharif announced that his administration had started talks with the
Pakistani Taliban in an attempt to end the insurgents’ attacks across the country.
However, on 1 November, the leader of the TTP, Hakimullah Mehsud, was killed in a US
drone strike and the TTP promoted Mullah Fazlullah, a brutal commander from the Swat
Valley, as its new leader at a “shura” meeting. Earlier reports had suggested the relatively
moderate Khan Said would assume command. On 7 November, the TTP officially rejected
the idea of any further peace talks with the authorities, a clear indication of the hardline
turn taken by the movement with the promotion of Mullah Radio, a nickname gained by
Fazlullah for his Islamist radio broadcasts in Swat valley. On 8 November, the TTP further
announced that it would orchestrate a wave of revenge attacks for the killing of Mehsud
and chiefly target “security forces, government installations, political leaders and police”.

On 2 December, the elusive Mullah Fazlullah has reportedly relocated from Afghan
Nuristan province, where he was based after a push of the Pakistani army into Swat valley
in 2009, back to Pakistani tribal areas to assume command of the Taliban insurgency,
according to intelligence and militant sources in early December. According to several
sources, his escort included three high-profile Taliban commanders, Azam Waziristan,
Mufti Abdul Rashid and Muftah Udin, in a clear attempt to give more credibility to
Fazlullah’s leading position within the TTP.

To a large extent, the TTP is a fragmented movement comprising several factions that
may pursue different agendas. The promotion of Fazlullah is an important change within
the movement whose centre of gravity may shift from the traditional North Waziristan area
to the Swat valley, although it is yet unclear from where Fazlullah is intending to lead the
insurgency. According to local sources, the promotion of Fazlullah is already triggering a
rift in the TTP with the loyalty of several commanders to their new leader vacillating
despite the reported endorsement of Fazlullah by Afghan Mullah Omar.

It is unclear how the authorities will react to the recent changes in TTP’s leadership as
negotiations with the TTP was a key element of Sharif’s strategy for Pakistan. Since
coming to power in May, Sharif has repeatedly suggested that his administration was
ready to negotiate with the Pakistani Taliban, although counterinsurgency operations were
to continue until negotiations started. In early October, Hakimullah Mehsud had responded
that he was open to peace talks with the Pakistani authorities, but complained that
Islamabad had not yet taken serious steps to begin dialogue. The TTP leader also
reiterated that the movement would continue to target the US and its allies and demanded
that any ceasefire in Pakistan include an end to US drone strikes. The issue of peace talks
with the TTP remains highly controversial in Pakistan. It is unclear if the influential
Pakistani military would welcome such talks, and tensions between military officials and
the authorities are reportedly on the rise over the matter.

Security Context: Tensions are running high in Pakistan with regular Taliban attacks
reported across the country. According to an independent count conducted by the Center
for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), 4,286 persons were killed and 4,066 injured
between January and 31 August in targeted killings, militant attacks, incidents of terrorism,
and security operations by the armed forces and intelligence agencies.

CRSS reported that the violence-related casualties in October came down by
approximately 50% compared to September. The death toll was 291 with another 277
people being injured with targeted killing being one of the major causes of deaths followed
by acts of terrorism, militants’ attacks and counter-terrorism operations by security
agencies. In October, Sindh was the province most affected by violence, counting more
deaths than Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Baluchistan combined. The last month thus
marked a significant decline compared to September – the deadliest month so far this year
with a 35% increase compared to August – when the death toll was 493 with another 555
people injured in attacks, the bulk of the victims being civilians. By contrast, the number of
death were highest in KPK, followed by Sindh, FATA, and Baluchistan in September.

In November and December, sectarian violence against Shi’ite Muslims, who comprise
a fifth of the country’s 180 million population, intensified. According to observers, attacks
against Shi’ite targets are largely due to Sunni militias such as the Taliban and the Punjabi
Lashkar-e-Jhangvi.

On 15 December, the prominent local Shi’ite Muslim cleric Allama Nasir Abbas, leader of
the banned Tehreek Nifaz Fiqah-e-Jafaria organisation, was shot dead in an attack in the
eastern city of Lahore in Punjab province. The attack was declared to be a reprisal attack
for the violence against Sunnis in the city of Rawalpindi in early November by Taliban
militants. On 6 December, gunmen killed the provincial leader of a Pakistani Sunni
sectarian group Ahle Sunnat Wal Jama (ASWJ) in eastern Lahore in Punjab province as
sectarian strife between Shi’ite and Sunni Muslims appears to be worsening.

On 13 December, in the last such attack to date, unidentified gunmen shot dead a
policeman and wounded another near the north western town of Topi in Khyber
Pakhtunkhwa province while the group was reportedly deployed to guard the ongoing polio
campaign in the area. On 5 December, one person was killed and 13 others injured in a
blast near a police checkpoint in the southwestern town of Chaman in Baluchistan
province. On 20 November, at least two members of Pakistani security forces were killed
and seven others injured after Taliban militants launched two separate attacks on security
checkpoints in North Waziristan, in the northwest of the country.

On 19 November, a Shia Muslim university professor and his driver were killed in a
seeming sectarian attack in Punjab province. The incident followed several days of inter-
communal violence in different parts of the country. On 15 November, at least nine people
were killed and over 44 wounded in Rawalpindi, a garrison city near the capital Islamabad,
after gunmen opened fire on a Shi’ite Muslim religious procession and clashes between
communities ensued. According to local sources, sectarian violence against Shi’ite groups
later spread to the southern towns of Multan and Chishtian, forcing the authorities to impose a curfew and block mobile phone services around Islamabad on 16-17 November before the military were deployed to the area. Although the curfew on Rawalpindi was lifted on 18 November, violence further spread to the northwestern towns of Hangu and especially of Kohat where a crowd, after a rally organised by the Sunni Muslim armed group Ahl-e-Sunnat Wal Jamaa, set shops on fire in a mainly Shi'ite district, killing at least three people, including two policemen. Although information remains scarce, exchange of fire between sectarian groups was also reported before the military were deployed to the area. The curfew in Kohat was lifted on 20 November.

On 21 October, at least five passengers were killed and 16 wounded after a bomb exploded on a train travelling toward Quetta in western Baluchistan. It was not immediately clear what group was responsible for the bombing. On 16 October, a suicide bombing west of Dera Ismail Khan in northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province killed the province’s law minister and seven others while wounding an additional 30 people in an attack claimed by an armed group allied to the Pakistani Taliban. On 10 October, bomb attacks hit four major cities – Quetta, Lahore, Peshawar, Karachi, as well as the semi-tribal area of Bannu in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The string of attacks killed nine people and wounded 60. On 7 October, a bomb exploded near a polio vaccination team in Peshawar, and killed two people in the latest Taliban insurgent attack to date. On 3 October, a Taliban attack against a pro-government rival armed group in northwestern Orakzai tribal district killed at least 17 people. On 2 October, a suicide bomber killed at least three people and wounded 12 others at a southwestern border crossing point between Afghanistan and Pakistan. On 2 October, a bomb killed two soldiers and wounded three others involved in relief operations related to the earthquake near Mashkey town in Baluchistan province. The attack was claimed by ethnic Baluch separatists who have been fighting in the area for years and have promised to further step up attacks against military personnel.

Throughout September, 152 people, mostly civilians, were killed and hundreds more wounded in attacks across the country. Attacks were reported in areas including Peshawar, the Afghan border, Quetta, and the troubled North Waziristan region.

Military Operations: As of early November, according to reports, a large number of Pakistani troops are still deployed to Swat Valley in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in a counterinsurgency operation, which started in 2009 and targets militants allegedly hiding in Afghanistan. The withdrawal that should have happened in September was reportedly put on hold on the 15th after a bomb blast killed the top Pakistani commander in the area. Although reports remain scarce, counterinsurgency operations are ongoing in the Pakistani tribal areas between government troops and Taliban insurgents.

Humanitarian Context and Needs

As reported by OCHA in November, an estimated 4.2 million people were in need in Pakistan, including 1 million IDPs in FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 1.61 million registered Afghan refugees, 185,000 affected by the Baluchistan earthquake and 1.5 million people affected by recent floods.

Displacement: As of mid-November, OCHA stated that more than 1 million people were internally displaced in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA due to protracted conflict. Earlier in

As reported by OCHA, 90% of IDPs live with relatives or in rented houses. Most IDPs are subsistence farmers, but displacement has forced them to leave their farms and relocate to the Peshawar area where employment and livelihood opportunities are limited. At present, many IDPs have switched to irreversible coping strategies, taking on debt and selling assets to pay for food.

Numbers of Afghan refugees in Pakistan remain difficult to assess exactly. As of November, UNHCR assisted an estimated 1.61 million Afghan refugees. An additional estimated 1 million undocumented Afghan refugees also resided in Pakistan. Most of the Afghan refugees, with the majority being located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, required humanitarian assistance.

This summer, the authorities agreed not to expel Afghan refugees who had permission to stay in the country until June, with Kabul and Islamabad also agreeing, at an UN-backed meeting, to continue efforts to solve the protracted refugee situation. Pakistani media reports that the presence of Afghan refugees is triggering tensions in host provinces.

Disaster: According to the Pakistan Red Cross and Red Crescent Society, an estimated 185,000 people have been severely affected by the 7.7 magnitude earthquake on 24 September and its main 7.2 magnitude aftershock on 28 September in the southwestern districts of Awaran (160,000 people affected) and Kech (25,000 affected), 350km south of Quetta in Baluchistan province. According to Baluch authorities, at least 200,000 people have been affected by the two quakes. As of mid-October, at least 376 people were killed and an estimated 824 injured by the tremors. The death toll is expected to rise as rescue teams reach remote villages. The districts of Awaran, Kech, Gwadarkhwan, Pagir, Chaghi and Khuzda were affected, and entire villages were reportedly flattened across these impoverished and sparsely populated areas of Baluchistan. According to local reports, the earthquake destroyed over 21,000 houses.

According to authorities, as of 6 September, monsoon rains have affected 1.5 million people across the country, 53% of those affected are in Punjab (222,260 people affected), Muzzafargarh (173,444), Jhang (127,230), and Rajanpur (95,171) being the hardest hit districts. Other parts of the country were severely affected, including Kashmore (105,515 people affected), Sukkur (79,005), Khairpur (74,830), and Jamshoro (65,559) as the hardest hit districts in Sindh. Floodplains from Sibi to Jaffarabad districts (148,889 people affected) were the most severely affected in Baluchistan. As of mid-October, significant humanitarian needs, notably with regard to food insecurity and livelihood support, remained in the affected areas, according to OCHA.

In addition, 75% of the affected 1.46 million acres of crops are in Punjab, triggering food security concerns for the affected population. To date, the number of people displaced in camps has dropped from over 12,000 people to 4,155 in 408 relief camps across the three provinces. The floods have reportedly killed at least 193 people and injured over 1,100
According to OCHA as of late April, around 1.5 million people still needed critical services in Baluchistan, Punjab, and Sindh provinces, following the flash floods triggered by heavy rains in September 2012. Many affected districts are still struggling to recover from the 2010 and 2011 flooding and have large inundated areas.

Access: In early December, OCHA reported that 91 attacks against aid workers had been recorded since the beginning of the year, including 29 people killed, 41 injured and 21 kidnapped as of 30 November. Following a surge in attacks in September-October, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remains the most affected province recording 37 attacks – including 20 people killed, followed by the FATA with 21 attacks and Sindh with 20 attacks. The total figure for last year was 42 attacks across Pakistan. Several deadly attacks on polio vaccination teams in FATA have been reported since the beginning of 2013, including on 30 November, when suspected militants attacked a team of polio workers in the suburbs of Peshawar, killing one policeman and wounding another.

As of mid-November, OCHA reported that INGOs continued to face delays in the renewal of their Memoranda of Understanding, four-month interim permissions to work in Pakistan, visas, and project implementation permits.

Aid response to the earthquakes that hit Baluchistan in September has been complicated by the remote region being home to separatist insurgents who fear that the army, which is overseeing aid operations, may take advantage of the crisis to move more forces into the area. Attacks on helicopters carrying aid workers were reported in September. On 10 October, new attacks by Baluch militants against security forces and government officials engaged in relief operations were reported.

Food Security: Food insecurity is at emergency levels with an estimated 58% of Pakistan’s population considered food insecure as of November 2013, as reported by OCHA quoting a National Nutrition Survey. Seven districts face IPC phases 3 (Crisis) and 4 (Emergency). Inflation, rising fuel prices, and stagnating domestic productivity are pushing up food prices. Prices of wheat and wheat flour have steadily increased since June 2012, underpinned by higher producer support prices.

Health and Nutrition: As reported by the authorities and WHO, over 8,500 cases of dengue were recorded in the northwestern Swat Valley, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, near the Afghan border, between 7 August and 20 October. On 19 September, local authorities declared a health emergency because of the recent surge in dengue cases. To date, 33 people have died from the disease that is currently affecting areas that do not fall in the traditional endemic belt for dengue, a significant difference to usual cyclical dengue outbreaks affecting Pakistan. It is believed that the disease spread from Lahore, where an outbreak killed 362 people and infected over 21,000 in September 2011. In Punjab province, at least seven people died from dengue as of early November.

On 28 August, health officials warned of a polio outbreak after the disease was detected in North Waziristan, a tribal district where militant groups have banned vaccination. According to WHO, the current polio outbreak in Syria is related to a strain of the virus from Pakistan.

As reported by the authorities in mid-November, the number of infections registered in 2013 has already passed the total for the whole 2012 year. According to health officials, as of 13 December, 72 cases were reported this year compared to 58 in 2012. To date, most of the cases have been recorded in the FATA, followed by northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, eastern Punjab and southern Sindh provinces. Children are especially at risk of polio contamination, with most children affected being <5. Pakistan is one of the only countries in the world where polio is still endemic.

According to authorities, over 240,000 children in North and South Waziristan are at risk with a Taliban ban on vaccination exacerbating the serious polio outbreak. In late November, the situation remained tense over polio vaccination while militants reportedly kidnapped and then released a group of teachers in the Khyber tribal agency after a polio vaccination team visited their school. The release was reportedly secured only on condition that the authorities agree to stop sending vaccination teams.

Since the start of 2013, 269 deaths from measles have been reported. According to local media, 141 children have died of measles since January in Punjab province alone. Sindh province, hardest hit by the measles outbreak, was also affected by flash flooding in September 2012. WHO described the situation in Pakistan as alarming due to a steady increase in fatal measles cases. According to OCHA, in Punjab and Sindh provinces, 54% of 8,844 children assessed between January last year and mid-May this year were not vaccinated against the disease.

Malnutrition rates in some flood-affected districts were beyond emergency thresholds before the recurrent floods in 2012 and are predicted to worsen. According to WFP as of June, 15% of Pakistani children are severely malnourished, and 40% suffer from stunted growth.

Shelter: As reported by the Shelter Cluster in mid-November, 1.2 million people required NFIs, such as blankets, quilts, shawls, kitchen sets, sleeping or plastic mats, jerry cans and solar lamps to cope with the harsh winter forecasted this year. To a large extent, the humanitarian caseload includes returnees, IDPs in the FATA and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, as well as people recovering from earthquakes and floods in Baluchistan, Punjab and Sindh.

Updated: 17/12/2013

BANGLADESH INTERNAL UNREST, CYCLONE

Highlights

**17 December:** Against the backdrop of violent protests in response to the ongoing election standoff, the authorities and the opposition Bangladesh National Party (BNP) failed to reach an agreement on how to bring an end to the demonstrations. According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), at least 100 people, including members of the security forces, have been killed and hundreds injured in the civil unrest that started on 25 October.

**13 December:** At least four people were killed in renewed violence after the execution of
the Islamist leader Abdul Quader Mollah. The execution triggered lootings, blockades of roads and clashes between supporters of the opposition, including Islamist groups, and supporters of the authorities.

Political and Security Context

Political Crisis: In 2011, the ruling Awami League (AL) scrapped a caretaker government, a system in which neutral leaders take over the leadership three months before elections and oversee polls. In mid-October, the AL refused to step down by 24 October, as should have happened ahead of the January elections. Several critics argued that AL is trying to stay in power up to the elections to influence their outcome. The move set the stage for an ongoing political crisis that may end up derailing the planned January 2014 elections. As of mid-December, despite ongoing talks, no agreement on how to bring an end to the protests was reached between the authorities and the Bangladesh National Party (BNP). The election standoff has sparked ongoing daily violence since late October.

Earlier, on 4 December, the AL had decided to keep the polls as planned with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina remaining in power. The violence set off on the night of the 25 November after the Election Commission announced that elections would be held on 5 January. The opposition continues to demand the prime minister’s resignation, the establishment of a non-party government prior to the elections and the suspension of the announced election date.

Civil Unrest: In early December, violence was ongoing in Bangladesh according to reports from local media and international rights organisations. On 7-9 December, further nationwide disruption occurred as the BNP, led by former PM Begum Khaleda Zia, enforced another 72-hour road, water and railway blockade. To date, consolidated information on new casualties is difficult to ascertain while the blockade was marked by renewed violence.

On 4 December, according to local reports, a member of the opposition Jtubo Dal party was killed in a clash with security forces with an estimated additional 50 people being seriously injured in the incident. In a separate incident on the same day, opposition protesters disrupted three trains in northern Gaibandha district, killing at least three passengers and trapping dozens of others while at least 40 people were reportedly injured.

With clashes ongoing across the country, reports from local sources indicated that security forces have been confirmed firing shots at protesters during clashes across the country while the death toll from such incidents remains difficult to ascertain. As of 17 December, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW), at least 100 people, including members of the security forces, have been killed and hundreds injured in the civil unrest that started on 25 October.

With information being fragmented, the actual death toll is however likely to be higher. As reported by Bangladeshi human rights organisation Odhikar quoted by HRW, over 4,000 people have been injured in the protests in November alone. As reported by HRW, protesters, who notably use artisanal bombs, are thought to be responsible for the majority of deaths and injuries.

Between 25 and 28 November, clashes between supporters of the BNP–led 18-party opposition alliance and the police erupted across the country, after the leader of the BNP called for a 48-hour programme of blockades to roads, rail routes and waterways. Within four days, at least 15 people were killed and more than a hundred injured in street battles. On 27 November, protesters tore up sections of railway tracks, causing a train to derail near the capital Dhaka. The previous day, authorities reported at least 60 attacks on the rail network, while opposition supporters exploded scores of homemade bombs, notably in the capitaL Dhaka, the northeastern Habiganj district and the northern district of Kustia.

On 10 November, the BNP started another 84-hour hartal called the previous day after police arrested at least five senior leaders of the party, triggering protests and violence across the country. Following new tensions, the Dhaka-Chittagong transport axis was reportedly blocked while shops and businesses remained closed across the country. On 6 November, the previous 60-hour-long nationwide hartal called on 2 November ended. According to the authorities, street battles were recorded across the country between thousands of supporters of the ruling party and the opposition, including Islamic elements from the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), the second biggest opposition party. In Dhaka, massive civil unrest led the police to fire several blank rounds and teargas canisters to bring the situation under control while over 100 small bombs were exploded in different areas of the capital.

During the protests, the international organisation Reporters without Borders documented several attacks on offices of media outlets and journalists in Dhaka and across the country, particularly by elements of JI. According to HRW, the protests resulted in pressure from the authorities on two prominent local rights’ activists.

In 2006, prolonged clashes between the two main parties resulted in dozens killed and an intervention of the military establishment that cancelled elections and set up a military-backed caretaker government.

On 5 November, a court sentenced to death over 150 people, from among the hundreds of insurgents accused of murder and other atrocities during a 2009 mutiny at the headquarters of Bangladesh’s border guards unit. Almost 850 people are accused of involvement in the bloody rampage that broke out in Dhaka and spread to a dozen other urban centres, killing 74. The decision has been widely criticised by HRW that reported serious violations of fair trial standards. It is unclear how the long-awaited decision will play out with the ongoing political crisis. According to the UN, the trials failed to meet international law standards and many of the defendants had been abused and tortured.

Security Context – Workers’ Protests: While the political deadlock, exemplified by hartals, between the ruling AL and the BNP is ongoing, Bangladesh has been hit by a wave of protests in mid-November by garment sector workers demanding a pay raise. According to reports, workers took to the streets, blocked major roads, and attacked factories in the Ashulia industrial belt, on the outskirts of Dhaka. Although information remains limited, over 50 people, including security forces, have been wounded. In spite of the fact that Bangladeshi garment factory owners agreed to an increase of the minimum wage following mediation by authorities on 14 November, protests continued for another day with workers demanding a bigger increase while an estimated 200 factories remained shut down in the country.
The Bangladeshi garment sector has already been seriously affected by the several hartals called by the BNP during the political crisis with AL over the past weeks. The mounting violence and strikes are a continuing threat to the country’s $22 billion garment export industry, on which the impoverished country heavily relies. It employs an estimated four million people, mostly women. Against this background, the garment industry has already been disrupted by several industrial accidents that have killed more than a thousand workers in the last year alone and have triggered widespread protests.

Security Context – 1971 War Trials Protests: Since the beginning of 2013, tension between Islamic groups and secular activists, and between the authorities and the opposition, have run high. Over the year, Bangladesh has seen recurrent hartals called by JI or the BNP to protest against the arrest and conviction of senior party officials for committing offences during the 1971 War. The hartals have caused significant disruption to business and losses to the economy.

On 13 December, at least four people were killed in renewed violence after the execution of the JI Islamist leader Abdul Quader Mollah. The execution – the first ever to be held following a conviction for war crimes – triggered looting, blockades of roads and clashes between supporters of the opposition, including Islamist groups, and supporters of the AL as the country is still in facing a political deadlock. The decisions to execute Mollah drew condemnation from various international human rights organizations.

On 3 November, a Bangladesh war crimes court sentenced to death in absentia two men accused of committing offenses during the country’s 1971 war of independence from Pakistan. As both men are currently not in Bangladesh, the sentence may further fuel the ongoing political crisis. Since the beginning of 2013, the tribunal has brought down eight convictions, with six defendants sentenced to death, including senior members of the BNP and the JI. In October, two senior members of the BNP were sentenced, one to death and one to life imprisonment, causing only limited protests across the country.

Displacement: Bangladesh is currently accommodating a large number of Rohingya Muslim refugees, an ethnic religious and linguistic minority subjected to exclusion and discrimination in Myanmar. The majority of Rohingyas are denied refugee status by the Bangladeshi authorities, and as of late November, observers expressed concerns over the government’s recent announcement of a “Rohingya strategy”, which allegedly plans for a survey to be conducted across the country in order to identify and register all Rohingyas living illegally in Bangladesh. While humanitarian organisations hope that the national strategy will aim to provide the displaced with a legal status, or at least a temporary one, very limited information is available and officials have so far declined to comment on the content of the document.

As of September, according to humanitarian partners, while an estimated 30,000 Rohingya Muslims lived in official camps where they were assisted by aid agencies, another 200,000 refugees resided in unofficial camps or Bangladeshi villages where they received little to no humanitarian assistance and almost no protection from abuses.

In early August, OCHA reported that following inter-communal violence at the border town of Tripura, northeast Bangladesh, around 1,500 people sought refuge and protection in India.

Humanitarian Context and Needs

Humanitarian Context and Needs

Disaster: As of mid-October, communities in southwestern Bangladesh are affected by water-logging, with stagnant water remaining in the fields, according to OCHA. According to local assessments, an estimated 120,000 people are affected in Satkhira and Jessore districts in the coastal southwestern part of the country.

As of 15 September, local authorities stated that flash floods starting on 10 September in Jamalpur, Rajshahi, Gaibandha, Kurigram, and Sirajganj districts affected over 178,000 people. The northern Dhaka division is among the most affected areas. In July, torrential rainfall and consequential onrush of water from upstream resulted in floods in several northern districts, notably Thakurgaon, Gaibandha, Dinajpur Panchagarh, Nilphamari, Lalmoihat, Kurigram, Jamalpur, and Sirajgonj. To date, an estimated 124,000 people were affected and nine killed.

Bangladesh was spared significant human impact from Cyclone Mahasen that was weaker than expected. Nonetheless, the cyclone caused damage, including 49,000 destroyed and 45,000 partially destroyed houses, mostly in Patuakhali, Bhola, and Barguna districts. Government sources report that 14 people were killed and 65 injured by the cyclone. As of 22 May, over 1.2 million people were affected by the cyclone with 1.1 million people having been evacuated.

Bangladesh is considered one of the world’s most hazard-prone countries.

Access: According to humanitarian partners, the current political crisis is already significantly affecting operations in Bangladesh with both international missions and local field trips being cancelled, while stakeholders struggle to oversee and implement programmes.

Food Security: 40% of the population is food insecure, especially in the western parts of the country. The lingering effects of frequent natural disasters, including floods at end
June, in mid-July, in late September in 2012, in mid-May in 2013, and violent
demonstrations and disturbance, and other localised problems have raised the level of food
insecurity of a high number of households.

As reported by local authorities, the country’s annual inflation rate rose in November –
standing at 7.15%, up from 7.03% in October, ending a declining trend since July. As
reported, higher prices have been registered for both food and non-food items in what may
be seen as the first indication of the tangible impact of the ongoing civil unrest on the
country’s economy. According to observers, economic growth is expected to slow in
Bangladesh to less than 6% in the year until June 2014 from 6% in 2013 following the
current unrest.

Updated: 17/12/2013

CAMBODIA FLOODS, TYPHOON

Highlights

15 December: Thousands of opposition supporters- led by the umbrella Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) – rallied across the country, demanding Prime Minister Hun Sen either calls for new elections or steps down from office. The CNRP has long protested about alleged vote-rigging in the July general election won by the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) of Hun Sen.

Political and Security Context

On 15 December, local media reported that thousands of opposition supporters- led by the umbrella Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) rallied across the country, demanding long-serving Prime Minister Hun Sen either calls for new elections or steps down from office. The opposition say they will continue their daily protests until their demands are met. The CNRP has long protested about alleged vote-rigging of the July general election won by the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) of Hun Sen.

On 12 November, Cambodian riot police, using sticks, tear gas and guns, broke up a 1,000-strong garment workers' strike in one of the most violent crackdowns on labour unrest to date that resulted in one person being killed and eight injured. According to local reports, several dozens of protesters, including some Buddhist monks who joined the workers, were arrested by the police. These clashes are the latest incident in an industry that has been long plagued by workers' protest over low pay and working conditions.

Humanitarian Context and Needs

Disaster: As of 30 October, as reported by Humanitarian Response Forum and the authorities, 188 people have reportedly been killed, while over 1,735,000 people, more than 10% of the country’s population, were affected by weeks of extensive floods that hit 20 out of 24 provinces in Cambodia. Over 144,000 people have been evacuated from affected zones to safer areas. Over 160,000 houses, 1,354 schools, 69 health centres and hospitals, and 498 pagodas along with roads, bridges and infrastructure were flooded and damaged.

The floodwaters also washed landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) from contaminated to cleared areas, increasing risks to the affected population. As of late October, waters were reportedly receding across the country but more slowly than expected in the worst affected provinces of Battambang and Banteay Meanchey in the northwest. Siem Reap and Otdar Meanchey provinces area also reportedly severely affected.

According to the first coordinated assessments, immediate needs of the affected populations centre on the provision of safe drinking water, sanitation facilities and awareness raising, medicine, shelter and some localised food assistance in areas that have not yet been reached by humanitarian assistance.

Since the third week of September, heavy rains were reported throughout the northwest and along the Mekong River in central and southern Cambodia. The 20 provinces of Otdar Meanchey, Banteay Meanchey, Preah Vihear, Battambang, Pailin, Siem Reap, Pursat, Stung Treng, Ratanakiri, Kratie, Kampong Cham, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Thom, Prey Veng, Phnom Penh, Svay Rieng, Preah Sihanuk, Mondolkiri, Takeo and Kandal were affected.

Updated: 17/12/2013

JORDAN DISPLACEMENT

Highlights

No new updates. Last updated: 10/12/2013.

Political and Security Context

After six days of relative calm along the Syria-Jordan border, coinciding with the Eid Al Adha holiday, a resurgence of heavy shelling was reported on 20 October in the southern Syrian villages of Daal, Nawa, Sheikh Al Maskin, Al Tufs, and Daraa. The Jordan Armed Forces said only around 400 Syrians crossed into Jordan on 26 October, marking a drop from the Eid Al Adha holiday, which saw 4,900 Syrians flee to Jordan over a five-day period, the largest refugee influx in nearly two months.

In October, the border region with Syria saw increased fighting, as the opposition has pushed to gain more ground. On 9 October, opposition fighters reportedly took control of the Hajanah border post, near the Syrian city of Dar’a, after besieging it for two months and fierce clashes erupting around it lasting a month. The border post is adjacent to an old customs post seized by opposition fighters on 28 September. With its capture, opposition forces now control a ribbon of territory along the border from outside Dar’a to the edge of the Golan Heights.

On 28 September, after four consecutive days of fighting, Syrian opposition forces, including members of an al-Qaeda linked group, captured the Ramtha military post on the outskirts of Dar’a city, at the border with Jordan. The military advance of opposition forces is also felt within Jordan where officials recently stated that al-Qaeda linked militants of
the al-Nusra Front have been recruiting Jordanians for the fight against Syrian President Assad.

While Jordan’s economy and its social fabric have been significantly impacted by the large influx of Syrian refugees, the country has remained politically stable and secure. However, this balance is fragile.

Internationally, Jordan is set to replace Saudi Arabia on the Security Council for a two-year term starting in January, after the unprecedented rejection of the seat by the Saudis, hours after having been elected. The UN General Assembly, which voted on October 17 to give Saudi Arabia the seat traditionally reserved for an Arab nation on the council, will have to formally approve Jordan as a replacement.

Humanitarian Context and Needs

Displacement: As of 10 December, 567,100 Syrian refugees, including those awaiting registration, have crossed into Jordan according to UNHCR. This influx has swelled Jordan’s population size by 11%, placing enormous pressure on national resources. Recent reports warn of rising tensions between Jordanians and Syrian refugees, especially in communities hosting large numbers of displaced Syrians.

Around 23% of Syrian refugees live in camps, the rest in local communities. Most refugees are in northern areas near the Syrian border, e.g. Irbid, Mafraq, Ramtha, and Zarqa. Recent statistics from the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization note that urban refugees comprise 75% of the total refugee population: 30% in Amman; 45% in the north; 15% in the middle; and 3% in the southern region.

Jordan’s biggest refugee camp Za’atari is the equivalent of an entirely new city, equivalent to the country’s fifth largest with over 130,000 residents. The lack of security in certain parts of Za’atari camp impedes refugees’ access to services. Limits of transportation impact accessibility to health services for the most disadvantaged, including persons with disabilities, older mobility-challenged refugees, and pregnant women. Security incidents in Za’atari camp are frequent.

On 2 November, heavy rainfall damaged dozens of tents in Za’atari camp forcing families to seek refuge with neighbours and relatives who have prefabricated caravans or so-called caravans. With the upcoming winter season, heavy rains and high winds will continue to impact the camp. Caravans are sold and re-sold in a black market trade inside the camp, at prices few refugees can afford. With winter approaching, refugees say prices have risen as high as 450 Jordanian dinars (US$635), leaving families who cannot afford them vulnerable to the elements.

On 9 October, protesters blocked the Irbid-Amman road, near the Azmi al-Mofti Palestinian refugee camp, and clashed with security forces attempting to secure the area. This is the latest in a series of recent incidents that underscore the persistent threat of unrest in Jordan’s outlying areas, including major cities like Irbid. Riots have re-erupted in Jerash, as a tribal altercation between residents of the Al-Hadada neighbourhood and those of the Gaza Palestinian refugee camp, evolved into clashes between Palestinians and the Jordanian police force. The riots are said to be led by pro-reform Jordanian youth who are angry about the contracting economy.

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**Highlights**

17 December: A car bomb exploded near a base of the Shiite movement Hezbollah in eastern Lebanon, causing an unknown number of casualties. In recent months, several attacks have targeted Hezbollah-controlled areas and convoys across the country, and are believed to be linked to the involvement of Shiite militants in Syria’s war.

15 December: A shooting took place between the Lebanese military and the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) in the vicinity of the Blue Line border demarcation separating the two countries. The UN called for continued restraint and invited both parties to cooperate with the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in its investigation of the incident.

14 December: UNHCR reported that the number of registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon stands at 842,480, including 57,000 awaiting registration.

3 December: The UN reported that an estimated 20,000 Syrians crossed the border into Lebanon, fleeing heavy fighting between the Syrian armed forces and armed opposition groups in the Qalamoun area, western Syria.

**Political and Security Context**

**International Context:** On 14 November, Hezbollah leader Nasrallah vowed to keep his forces in Syria, fighting alongside President al-Assad’s regime. Widespread involvement of the Shi’ite movement alongside Syrian Government troops in the offensive against the opposition-held stronghold Qusayr previously prompted the Free Syrian Army and Jabhat al-Nusra to independently warn that their fighters could start fighting Hezbollah inside Lebanon. On 10 July, the UN Security Council called on Hezbollah to end all involvement in the Syrian conflict. On 23 September, Nasrallah denied that his group had received chemical weapons from Syria after members of the Syrian National Coalition opposition group accused President Assad of transferring chemical weapons to the Lebanese Shi’ite group to avoid inspection after agreeing to put them under international control.

The first major clashes between Lebanese Hezbollah militiamen and Syrian opposition fighters inside Lebanese territory were reported in June. In the aftermath, shelling of Lebanese territory, including the eastern town of Hermel, a reported Hezbollah stronghold, from an area in Syria allegedly controlled by opposition forces, resulted in new deaths. Shelling from Syria in the border regions frequently results in casualties. On 14 October, at least 15 Syrian shells hit several towns in the northern district of Akkar.

**Lebanon – Israel:** On 15 December, a shooting took place between the Lebanese military and the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) in the vicinity of the Blue Line border demarcation separating the two countries at Naqoura, along the southern border. The UN called for continued restraint and invited both parties to cooperate with the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in its investigation of the incident.

**National Political Context:** On 9 July, the Lebanese Parliamentary Speaker announced that the March 8th coalition, a major bloc in the Lebanese political system, collapsed after a frail alliance between two of its major parties, the Amal Movement and the Free Patriotic Movement, ended. The expiration of the March 8th alliance is expected to give a major boost to efforts to form a new Cabinet which has been delayed several times.

On 31 May, the Lebanese Parliament unanimously voted to extend its mandate by 17 months after failing to adopt a new electoral law at a time of deep internal divisions over the war in Syria. Elections that were originally planned for June were postponed. On 1 June, President Sleiman lodged an appeal with the Constitutional Council to challenge the Parliament’s decision to extend its mandate and delay elections.

**Security Context:** Insecurity in Lebanon has grown with renewed fighting between different sectarian groups. The Syrian conflict is increasingly spilling into Lebanon, with almost daily shelling and sporadic clashes in the north and eastern border areas.

On 17 December, a car bomb exploded near a base of the Shiite movement Hezbollah in eastern Lebanon, causing an unknown number of casualties. In recent months, several attacks have targeted Hezbollah-controlled areas and convoys in the capital Beirut and in the Bekaa valley in the east of the country. On 19 November, a twin suicide attack targeted the Iranian embassy in southern Beirut, killing 23 people, and was believed to be linked to the involvement of Tehran-backed Shiite militants in Syria’s war.

In a similar incident in mid-August, a car bomb in Beirut’s Ruwais district killed 27 and wounded over 330 people. A previously unknown group, the Battalion of Aisha (Shiite?), claimed responsibility for the attack, accusing the movement (who exactly?) of sending fighters to help the Damascus regime.

In a separate development, repeated inter-sectarian strife were reported in Tripoli over the last months, raising fears that the Syrian conflict may become a regional one between Shi’ite and Sunni Muslims.

On 5 December in northern city of Tripoli, a Lebanese soldier was killed and six others wounded as pro- and anti-Syrian regime supporters clashed, breaking an army-imposed truce. Already in late November, two days of fighting between the rival factions from Jabal Mohsen and Bab Tabbaneh left ten people dead and 49 wounded. In early November, a similar wave of sectarian violence between Alawite and Sunni militants cost 14 lives and over 50 injured. Many residents of the two impoverished neighbourhoods, which have suffered frequent rounds of fighting since the outbreak of conflict in Syria in 2011, have fled their homes for other parts of the city. Some armed fighters in Bab El Tabbeneh declared their loyalty to the Al-Qaeda affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). There is risk of further unrest as fighting in the Qalamoun region in Syria, adjacent to the Lebanese Bekaa Valley, is expected to continue. In August, 47 people were killed and more than 500 wounded in blasts that exploded outside two mosques in a Sunni neighbourhood of Tripoli.

**Humanitarian Context and Needs**

Both host and refugee populations are impacted by increasing pressure on the health and education systems, housing, employment opportunities, and food prices. Tensions are rising between host communities and refugees over strained resources, particularly with...
regard to overwhelmed health facilities and employment. Many Lebanese families see their livelihoods eroding as wages decrease and rent prices soar, with hard-pressed Syrian refugees working for less money and sharing single-family homes with multiple families to save on rent. Real economic growth was 7% in 2010, fell to 1.8% in 2013 and is expected to be at 2.1% in 2014. In June 2013, general inflation reached almost 9% year-on-year (compared to 2% in June 2012). Food inflation eased from 5.7% in June 2012 to 3% in June 2013. Unemployment rates are expected to double to 29% in 2014.

**Displacement:** As of 14 December, UNHCR reported that the number of registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon stands at 842,480, including 57,000 awaiting registration. According to UNHCR, an additional 100,000 persons are unwilling to register.

As of 3 December, the UN reported that an estimated 20,000 Syrian crossed the border into Lebanon, fleeing heavy fighting between the Syrian armed forces and armed opposition groups in the Qalamoun area, western Syria. Clashes began on 15 November in Qarah and spread to neighbouring villages, triggering an upsurge in the number of new arrivals in the northeastern town of Arsal, which is home to 55,000 people, including 20,000 registered refugees who arrived prior to the latest influx. According to humanitarian partners, the lack of shelter options remains a critical challenge, and the need for winterized shelters is becoming more urgent with the onset of heavy rain and cold weather.

Refugees now represent over 25% of the country’s population and continue to cross into Lebanon daily. With no formal camps, refugees are spread across 1,500 locations of which 400 are informal settlements. Vulnerable Syrian families are settling in communal areas in Beirut (highway underpasses, green spaces between major roads, etc.); 69% of refugees stay in rented accommodation including unused shops, worksites and tents in makeshift settlements, half-finished buildings, and cramped apartment blocks, often in unhygienic conditions and with little access to food, water, and medical care.

An increasing number of evictions in some areas of Lebanon has been observed during in October, due to rising tension between Syrian refugees and host communities. This is particularly noted in informal settlements. It is extremely challenging and urgent for these refugees to find alternative accommodation considering the onset of winter, especially in elevated areas in the Bekaa and Akkar.

According to the Lebanese General Security Authority, there are currently two million Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Lebanon’s population has grown by 25% in under two years, while health, education, water and sanitation systems have all exceeded their capacities. According to media sources, the Lebanese government is implementing strict entry controls on Syrians attempting to enter the country at all border crossings. Only Syrians with valid identification cards or passports can enter. The measures reportedly aim at preventing extremist and anti-Lebanese groups from entering the country. While the majority of Syrian continues to be granted access to Lebanon according to UNHCR, there is a reported increase of arrest and detention of Syrians for illegal entry and stay.

**Access:** Security in Tripoli and in northern and eastern border villages remains volatile with rockets and shelling hitting a number of towns, impeding humanitarian access, and restricting activities, and the availability of services.

According to the UN, the highly fragile situation in Lebanon, with intensified hostility in the north, South and Bekaa, is affecting programme delivery and staff movement. Access to unregistered Syrians detained in Lebanon remains challenging.

**Food Security:** According to a World Bank assessment, the continuing refugee inflow will increase national vulnerability. Should refugee inflows continue, more than 170,000 additional Lebanese could fall into poverty by 2014, due to competition with refugees for unskilled labour. Currently, one million Lebanese live in poverty. The study estimates that the unemployment rate in Lebanon could double, exceeding 20% and affecting 320,000 people. An estimated US$1.6 billion will be needed to restore quality and access to health, education, and social safety nets to pre-crisis levels. According to the Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees conducted in May 2013, 70% of Syrian refugee households cannot meet basic food and non-food needs. The number of people requiring food assistance continues to increase, straining existing resources.

**Health and Nutrition:** UNHCR reported in July that access to health care is challenging for Syrian refugees in remote locations. Overstretched resources, short working hours, and non-availability of trained health personnel limit the adequate provision of care for the displaced who suffer from trauma, substandard living conditions, and depletion of savings and assets. Common needs include reproductive health care, family planning, child health care, treatment for acute illnesses, chronic disease, and mental health.

According to UNHCR, the current supply of medicines for acute and chronic diseases is insufficient to cover the rising demand. Prevention of disease control and outbreaks in view of already crowded living conditions, poor water and sanitation, presents a challenge.

Lebanon launched a massive public health initiative on 8 November to vaccinate all children <5 against polio, following a confirmed outbreak in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate in neighbouring Syria.

Updated: 17/12/2013

**PHILIPPINES** CONFLICT, FLOODS, TYPHOON

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**Highlights**

16 September: OCHA now estimates that about 14.1 million people were affected by Typhoon Haiyan, including 4.1 million people who remain displaced, the majority of whom are sheltering outside the designated evacuation centres. The latest report from the Philippines authorities indicates that, as a result of the disaster, over 16 million people were affected, 6,000 people were killed, 27,000 were injured and over 1,770 are still missing.

16 December: Latest OCHA reports highlighted acute humanitarian needs in the typhoon affected areas, especially outside of the main urban centres. In areas such as the smaller islands off Leyte, Samar and Panay, people remain in urgent need while larger response gaps are reported in Western Leyte.

Mid-December: According to the latest UN reports, over 65,000 people remained displaced in Zamboanga city following an eruption of armed conflict in September. An
increasing number of children, many suffering from malnutrition, are said to be amongst those sheltering in the evacuation centres. According to the last assessment report, SAM was detected in 9.4% of children, an increase of one percentage point from two weeks ago, while cases of MAM had risen to 11.5% from 11.1% among children under five across several surveyed camps in Zamboanga.

**Mid-December:** Before the start of rainy season in January, OCHA stressed the acute need for short and medium-term shelter solutions. Earlier reports indicated that the largest shelter gaps in Eastern Visayas were in Tacloban City and along the west coast of Leyte. In addition to shelter and livelihood support – seeds for farmers, displacement management, disease outbreak prevention and nutrition intervention were also immediate priorities.

**Mid-December:** The Department of Health reported a possible dengue outbreak in Tacloban and other parts of Leyte.

### Political and Security Context

**Situation in Mindanao:** On 8 December, Philippines President Benigno Aquino indicated that a peace deal with the Muslim rebels of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) – the biggest insurgent group – in Mindanao was within reach after a new part of the final deal – an annex dealing with power sharing – was signed in Kuala Lumpur. Four annexes have to be negotiated before the final agreement is signed; two other annexes on transitional arrangements and sharing of revenues were signed earlier this year. In the coming weeks, the next round of negotiations that should allow for the signing of the final annex on normalisation will also involve contentious talks regarding the disarmament of the MILF's 12,000 fighters.

The MILF officially signed an historic peace deal with authorities in October 2012 and has been conducting final negotiations with the government over the past year. It is expected to take over an expanded autonomous Muslim region in the south by 2016. Talks resumed in August amid deadly attacks by a splinter guerrilla group that left 15 dead in Mindanao. In July, a compromise on the sharing of local revenues with the creation of a Muslim self-rule area in the Mindanao region that is expected to be led by the MILF was reached. President Aquino said the ongoing talks aim to end decades of rebellion that had claimed 150,000 lives in the country’s Muslim southern regions.

Mindanao Island has been plagued by a long-term insurgency waged by Muslim groups. The original Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), from which the MILF later sprang, fought a 25-year guerrilla war for independence, until the signature of a peace treaty in 1996 granted it limited self-rule in the southern Muslim area.

In September – October, fighters belonging to a splinter faction of the original MNLF, assaulted the southern city of Zamboanga in western Mindanao Island, igniting three weeks of fighting. The attacks were largely seen as an attempt to sabotage the peace talks between the authorities and the MILF.

On 7 October, OCHA reported that fighting between the faction of the MNLF and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) around Zamboanga City in the southern Mindanao Island ended. It is unclear if rebels are still hiding in areas where clearing operations for unexploded ordinance continue. As of 22 October, UNHCR reported that an estimated 202 were killed, including over 160 militants, and an additional 324 injured in the violence. Although numbers are difficult to confirm, almost 140,000 people were displaced during the three weeks of fighting. Heavy fighting has left entire neighbourhoods razed to the ground. As reported by Human Rights Watch, Philippines security forces and Muslim rebels have committed serious abuses during fighting in Zamboanga.

On 23 September, Muslim rebels of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) clashed with the AFP and took hostages in a fresh outbreak of violence in the central part of Mindanao. At least eight people, militants and security forces, were killed in the fighting before the BIFF eventually retreated. According to the BIFF, the attack was not related to the fighting around Zamboanga.

### Humanitarian Context and Needs

**Typhoon Haiyan:** On 8 November, Category 5 Typhoon Haiyan, locally known as Yolanda, made landfall on the east coast of the Philippines. The Typhoon travelled over Eastern, Central and Western Visayas, Bicol and Southern Tagalog, causing flash floods and landslides before leaving the archipelago on 9 November. While humanitarian partners continue to conduct assessments across the affected areas, initial assessment findings indicate that eastern Leyte and Samar provinces are among the areas worst affected by the typhoon. Haiyan, reportedly one of the strongest storms in recorded history, is the third major disaster to hit the country in the past two months.

As of 16 December, OCHA reported acute humanitarian needs in the affected areas, especially outside of the main urban centres. In areas such as smaller islands off Leyte, Samar and Panay, people remain in urgent need while larger response gaps are reported from Western Leyte.

OCHA now estimates that about 14.1 million people were affected by Typhoon Haiyan, including 4.1 million people who remained displaced, the majority of whom are sheltering outside the designated evacuation centres. The latest report from the Philippines authorities indicates that, as a result of the disaster, over 16 million people were affected, 6,000 people were killed, 27,000 were injured and over 1,770 are still missing.

Before the start of rainy season in January, OCHA stressed the acute need for short and medium-term shelter solutions. Earlier reports indicated that the largest shelter gaps in Eastern Visayas were in Tacloban City and along the west coast of Leyte. In addition to shelter and livelihood support – seeds for farmers, displacement management, disease outbreak prevention and nutrition intervention were also immediate priorities.

In late November, OCHA reports indicated that there was also an important need regarding NFIs distributions, water and food.

According to assessments reported by OCHA on 16 December, an estimated 5.6 million people in 36 provinces have lost their livelihoods as a result of the typhoon. Of these, OCHA estimated that 2.2 million are engaged in risky forms of employment. Although the situation is improving, localised shortages of fuel and power are reported, notably in most affected areas.
As of 16 December, over 1.1 million houses had sustained damage, including almost 550,000 that were completely destroyed. Extensive damage to infrastructures and public buildings has also been reported, notably in Tacloban. According to first governmental estimates, the cost of rebuilding houses, schools, roads and bridges in typhoon-devastated central Philippines could reach $5.8 billion, potentially forcing the Manila to seek cheap loans from international development agencies.

One area affected by Typhoon Haiyan is the island of Bohol, which was also struck by an earthquake on 15 October that caused massive displacement. The situation of over 350,000 IDPs living in makeshift shelters on Bohol was badly exacerbated by the typhoon.

**Displacement:** On 16 September, Manila reported that almost 4 million people were still displaced outside evacuation centres. According to UNICEF, as of 4 December, an estimated 1.68 million children were among the displaced. In late November, it was reported that, while an increasing number of people were reportedly returning home, some people in worst affected areas are leaving in search of aid and shelter. The majority of the IDPs (97%) and evacuation centres are located in Eastern and Western Visayas regions.

**Access:** As reported by OCHA on 3 December, humanitarian access to people affected by the Typhoon Haiyan and logistics continue to improve. The UN Humanitarian Air Service is scheduled to offer air transport to relief agencies’ staff and cargo. However, humanitarian partners in regions VI and VIII indicated that food and other urgent support is not sufficiently reaching remote areas due to logistical challenges.

Debris clearance is ongoing, although some remote areas remain difficult to access. As reported by OCHA, the lack of power supply remains a severe obstacle in some affected areas, especially in Western and Eastern Visayas regions. Despite the recent improvements, though, access to areas affected by the typhoon remains challenging. Extensive damage to local infrastructure, notably roads, is hampering the delivery of aid.

The rise of insecurity in areas affected by the typhoon, with lootings and attacks on aid convoys reported near Tacloban on 12 November, is further challenging the humanitarian relief effort. According to UNHCR, looting, mobbing of relief trucks and jailbreaks are ongoing.

**Food Security:** As of 6 December, WFP reported that a multi-cluster initial rapid assessment was conducted and supported the initial estimate that 2.5 million people are in need of food assistance. As reported by OCHA on 3 December, an estimated 3 million people were in need of life-saving food assistance following the passage of Typhoon Haiyan. On 16 December, OCHA reported that overall 5.6 million people, including people not yet food insecure, were in need of support to prevent food insecurity and restore agricultural and fishing livelihoods.

As reported by the authorities in mid-November, the current shortage of certified rice seeds critical to rice-growing areas of Leyte and Samar regions may impair the coming wet planting season, leading to increased food insecurity. A deeply negative impact on the country’s coconut production and on the country’s fisheries was also recorded.

**Health and Nutrition:** As of 25 November, the Health cluster reported that the need for emergency trauma was decreasing while the need for primary healthcare was on the rise as operational health facilities are reportedly overstretched and there is still overall poor coverage of services.

At present, there is also a need for treatment for chronic conditions in areas affected by Haiyan. OCHA, WHO and UNICEF indicated that the risk of outbreaks of diarrhoeal diseases and measles remained of concern in affected areas given the lack of safe water and sanitation, displacement and overcrowding, and sub-optimal vaccination coverage. To date, communities are also reportedly in need of nutrition and clean water in order to prevent a further spread of acute respiratory infections in the coming months. In mid-December, the Department of Health reported a possible dengue outbreak in Tacloban and other parts of Leyte.

On 18 November, UNICEF reported that, a week after Typhoon Haiyan hit, children were facing an increased risk of malnutrition as families lose their ability to provide and prepare adequate nutritious foods. As of 10 December, the Nutrition Cluster indicated that up to 12,000 boys and girls aged 6-59 months suffered from severe acute malnutrition in seven severely affected provinces alone.

**WASH:** As of 9 December, water supply continues to improve in parts of the affected areas – notably Leyte and Busuanga, but rationing is still ongoing and concerns remain regarding sanitation. According to the Health cluster, as of 30 November, sanitation, access to potable water and waste management are currently a major concern in affected areas. Local health authorities reported that population displacement and overcrowding in settlements represent a significant threat to public health condition, and OCHA reported that a number of water systems have tested positive for faecal coliform, raising fears of potential waterborne disease outbreaks.

According to the WASH cluster on 18 November, access to drinking water is problematic in Eastern Samar, Cebu, Iloilo, and Capiz provinces following the typhoon. As documented by first assessments, a severe shortage of water around Tacloban is resulting in people relying on potentially contaminated water sources.

**Displacement:** As of mid-December, the UN reported that over 65,000 people remained displaced in Zamboanga city following the armed crisis that unfolded in September.

**Disaster:** On 12 November, tropical depression Zoraida affected areas previously hit by Haiyan, also hindering ongoing rescue efforts.

On 15 October, a 7.2 magnitude earthquake hit the southern Philippines, southeast of Manila near the town of Carmen in Bohol province. The initial quake struck at an estimated depth of 35 km around Bohol Island, to the north of Mindanao Island, and aftershocks were recorded.

As of 7 November, authorities have reported 223 people dead, eight missing, 975 injured, and over 3.2 million people affected across six provinces of Central and Western Visayas regions. An estimated 356,000 people remained displaced following the disaster; 80% of the IDPs are staying in makeshift tents outside evacuation centres. The earthquake destroyed or damaged over 73,000 houses, 41 bridges, and 18 roads, as well as caused power cuts across affected areas. On 31 October, IDMC reported that temporary shelters
were likely to be needed for at least six months.

Over the past two months, several tropical storms struck the Philippines. On 31 October, Typhoon Krosa hit northern Cagayan province, affecting more than 265,000 people, including 70,000 displaced, and damaging over 36,500 houses. To date, at least four people were killed by Krosa.

Access: As of late October, extensive damages to roads and bridges had also hampered humanitarian access to the areas affected by the Bohol earthquake.

Health and Nutrition: As of early November, OCHA reported that congestion in the evacuation centres hosting IDPs in Zamboanga remains a significant problem. The WASH cluster reported that 53% of water samples collected from storage tanks and jerry cans in evacuation centres tested positive for bacteria (coliiform).

An increasing number of children in evacuation centres following the crisis in Zamboanga are suffering from malnutrition in southern Philippines, according to the UN. According to the last assessment reported in December, SAM was detected in 9.4% of children, an increase of one percentage point from two weeks ago, while cases of MAM had risen to 11.5% from 11.1% among children under five across several surveyed camps. Although the SAM rate is still under the 10% threshold, humanitarian actors report it as a major concern.

According to the Department of Health, 1,528 dengue cases were reported in the first quarter of 2013 in Soccsksargen region, of whom 669 (41% of cases) are children <10. In Korodtal city, South Cotabato province, the municipal government declared a state of calamity on 27 June after a dengue outbreak was declared in the town. According to authorities, 239 dengue cases had been recorded as of 8 June, more than the 159 cases recorded in 2012. Dengue has also surged in central Philippines, particularly in the province of Iloilo, south of Manila, where the number of people affected is already 71% higher than the number recorded for the same period in 2012.

The reopening of Kaesong appears to be a step toward improving Pyongyang's relations with the West. After the soaring of the relations between Pyongyang and the West in early spring, relations with Seoul improved after an unexpected reversal on 6 June from Pyongyang, which proposed opening a dialogue. On 9 June, North and South Korean officials held their first talks in years in a positive end to months of military tension. On 27 June during a meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and his South Korean counterpart Park Geun-hye in Beijing, Chinese authorities agreed to push for new talks between the two Koreas and appeared to favour a denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

Updated: 17/12/2013

DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA FLOODS, FOOD INSECURITY

Highlights

No new development this week. Last update was on: 03/12/2013.

No current data on child mortality, food security, food price levels, and the general magnitude of humanitarian needs is available. Therefore, DPRK is not included in the Global Overview prioritisation.

Political and Security Context

On 17 September, UN human rights investigators released a report that documented human rights abuses of inmates in North Korea's prison camps suffering from starvation, torture, and other unspeakable atrocities. The inquiry, based on testimonies from North Korean exiles, came after pressure from Japan, South Korea, and Western powers to investigate and begin building a case for possible criminal prosecution. The report was rejected by Pyongyang and may strain relations between the North Korean regime and the international community that have only lately begun to improve.

On 5 September, North Korea agreed to restore a cross-border military hotline with South Korea, in a sign of easing tensions between the rival states. The line had been shut down in early spring.

On 14 August, North and South Korea agreed to reopen the joint industrial park in Kaesong after a series of talks concerning this rare bilateral economic cooperation. The two countries announced on 10 September that the facilities would be reopened. In April, Pyongyang pulled its 53,000 workers out of the park at the height of tensions with Seoul and Washington over its nuclear military programme. On 7 August, Pyongyang announced that it was ready to reopen the joint industrial zone. The statement came only an hour after Seoul, exasperated by the North’s lack of responsiveness, signalled its willingness to let the facility close definitively. Prior to closing, Kaesong was a rare source of hard currency for North Korea.

Disaster: In mid-July, heavy seasonal rain resulted in flooding in many parts of DPRK. Particularly affected are the provinces of North and South Pyongan. According to the Red Cross, Anju City, in South Pyongan province, was 80% flooded after the Chongchon River caused embankments to break on the morning of 21 July.

Noted by OCHA on 23 August, floods in DPRK have affected 800,000 people and left almost 49,000 homeless. Farmland has been inundated with at least 10,000 hectares affected, and 1,000 hectares of crops destroyed. Damage to agricultural land is extensive with up to 40% of the land in Pakchon county, including 80% of paddy, affected. An assessment conducted by the Health Cluster on 6 August documented damage to roads, bridges, houses, and public buildings, limiting the access of affected persons to basic health care and services. An increase in the number of diarrhoeal diseases was reported due to extensive damage to the water system. An estimated 678,000 people need basic health care, essential drugs, and hospital supplies for life-saving interventions.

On 9 August, authorities reported that the floods affected 73 counties and caused severe damage in 22 counties. Over 11,000 buildings were reportedly damaged. The number of
affected was given at 788,000 people, including 56,000 children <5 and 14,800 pregnant women. In early August, authorities estimated the death toll at 33 dead with 18 people still missing. An estimated 59,000 people were displaced. According to WFP, IDPs are suffering from a lack of access to safe drinking water. This comes after flooding and a subsequent typhoon in July and August 2012, which affected roughly 700,000 people, damaging health facilities and reducing access to primary and secondary health care.

Access: Humanitarian access to the country is limited. In early June, WFP approved a new two-year operation for DPRK starting on 1 July and targeting 2.4 million people, almost all children and pregnant and nursing women, with about 207,000 MT of food assistance.

Food Security: Information on the food security situation in DPRK remains limited. According to an August OCHA report, an estimated 16 million people, of a total population of 24.6 million, are chronically food insecure and an estimated 2.4 million people need food assistance. OCHA further reports that although the humanitarian situation has improved slightly over 2013, the structural causes of vulnerability persist and external assistance is needed, notably targeting the most affected northeastern provinces.

The results from a FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM) released in late November similarly indicate that, despite a slight increase in cereal production this year, the majority of households in DPRK have borderline or poor food consumption, with consumption being limited both in terms of quantity and quality. Specifically, WFP reports that 25% of households have acceptable food consumption while 45% and 30% have borderline and poor food consumption respectively.

The overall food production for 2013/2014 is estimated to increase by 5% compared to last year, according to WFP/FAO, allegedly resulting in the smallest cereal deficit since at least the early 2000s. Nonetheless, as reported by WFP/FAO, the food system in DPRK remains highly vulnerable to shocks and key gaps exist particularly in the production of protein-rich foods. According to OCHA, the lack of agricultural inputs (seeds, fertiliser and plastic sheets) remains the main challenge for food production.

Health and Nutrition: Rates of child under-nutrition in DPRK, measured through stunting, wasting and underweight, has declined over the past decade. However, the rate of chronic malnutrition (stunting) among children <5 remains, amounting to almost 28%, remains of alarming public health importance according to international standards, according to WFP/FAO as of late November. Stunting is also cited as a major underlying cause of maternal and child mortality. Meanwhile, the prevalence of wasting (4%) is now within the normal range according to international thresholds.

Reviewed: 17/12/2013

SECURITY CONTEXT

Security Context: As of mid-November, the UN Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) reported the resurgence of violence and killings perpetrated in Cité Soleil (Port au Prince) as well as violent incidents around schools in Cap Haiti. According to a local organisation, more than 170 people were reportedly killed by gunfire in Port-au-Prince between July and September. In October only, 65 killings were recorded in the city. This peak of urban violence points to the current deterioration of the political and socio-economic situation in some areas of the country.

Civil unrest: On 29 November, thousands of young Haitians demonstrated in several cities demanding the resignation of President Michel Martelly. In Port-au-Prince, demonstrators from multiple neighbourhoods converged on the US embassy to denounce what they claimed was US interference in the country. Riot police and UN peacekeepers blocked access leading to the embassy. No incidents were reported but tear gas was fired to prevent the demonstrators from reaching the diplomatic building. Demonstrations took place in other cities as well, such as Cap-Haitien in the north.

On 18 November, thousands of critics of President Martelly staged protest marches that turned violent, after people threw rocks and shots were fired in the air. Haiti has recently seen a series of protest marches amid growing public anger over the cost of living and claims of high levels of corruption. Riot police in Haiti broke up an anti-government demonstration attended by thousands of people to mark the anniversary of the 1991 ousting of the former President Aristide on 1 October. A small group of protesters responded by setting ablaze barricades that blocked a major thoroughfare through the heart of downtown Port-au-Prince. Haiti was to have held legislative and local elections in late November, according to OCHA as of 12 December, the prevalence of Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) among children <5 has increased from 5.1% in 2012 to 6.5% in 2013. 100,000 children <5 are affected by GAM, of whom 20,000 with Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM). Rural children are especially affected.

Late November: The Haitian government and humanitarian partners are currently targeting an estimated 35,900 IDPs (9,700 families) living in 73 camps to start a return programme. In late November, OCHA forecast that the number of IDPs living in camps would likely decrease from 172,000 to 145,000 early 2014.

Political and Security Context

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2011, but infighting among various government branches has delayed the vote. The election was supposed to have been held before year’s end, but it most likely will not be held until next year.

Humanitarian Context and Needs

Displacement: As of 12 December, nearly four years after the earthquake, an estimated 172,000 people remained displaced in Haiti (unchanged since September), according to IOM, 107,000 fewer than reported in early July. This is the highest decrease in the IDP population since April 2012. Between July and September, 46 IDP sites have closed. In June, the Shelter and Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster anticipated the number of IDPs to further reduce to 211,000 by December 2013; this has now been exceeded.

The Haitian government and humanitarian partners are currently targeting an estimated 35,900 IDPs (9,700 families) living in 73 camps to start a return programme. In late November, OCHA forecast that the number of IDPs living in camps would likely decrease to 145,000 early 2014.

Currently, 306 IDP sites and camp-like settlements host the remaining IDPs. Of the 306 sites, 72 (24%) are reportedly on public land, while 229 (75%) are on private property. The status of the remaining four sites could not be determined by IOM. The situation in the sites on private land is problematic with 75,000 IDPs possibly facing illegal forced eviction by land owners in the coming months. Camp-settlements are vulnerable to floods and landslides, putting the IDP population at risk in the upcoming hurricane season.

In addition, 300,000 people could be affected by the ruling of the Constitutional Court of the Dominican Republic that children of undocumented migrants, even if born in the Dominican Republic and registered as Dominicans, are not eligible for Dominican citizenship. If this sentence is applied, it means up to 300,000 people of Haitian origin could become effectively stateless. Without documents, they would be unable to access health and education services, get married, or own property.

On 25 November, a boat carrying Haitian migrants capsized near Staniel Cay in the Bahamas, the third maritime tragedy in the northern Caribbean since October. This incident cost the lives of up to 30 people. Also on the boat were at least 110 other individuals, including 19 women, who were rescued by the Bahamas military and police alongside the U.S. Coast Guard. UNHCR and IOM expressed concern over the recurrence of these maritime incidents.

Disaster: Haiti remains highly fragile and highly exposed to external shocks. The resilience of the population and its capacity to cope with new crises is extremely low.

Reports indicate that 119 of Haiti’s 140 municipalities have been severely affected by drought, the tropical storm Isaac and/or hurricane Sandy in 2012, displacing at least 58,000 people.

In early May, FEWSNET reported that seasonal rainfall was less than 50% below average in the Nippes, Sud, and Grand’Anse departments, which experienced the largest seasonal deficits. Seasonal rainfall in the Ouest and Sud-Est departments has also been below-average. An increase in rain during the first week of August helped relieve the dryness over parts of Haiti. However, moderate seasonal precipitation deficits remain in many areas in the northwest and the south. Continued below average rainfall could further increase moisture deficits and negatively impact crops.

Torrential rains caused by Hurricane Sandy in October 2012 led to massive flooding, affecting 1.5 million people. Ouest, Sud-Est, Nippes, Grand’Anse, and Sud were the most severely affected departments. As of early April 2013, 72,000 people affected by Hurricane Sandy still need humanitarian assistance, according to OCHA. Forecasts by the Directorate for Civil Protection anticipate that 600,000 people could be affected and 200,000 displaced by adverse weather conditions this year.

Food Security: According to a report by the National Coordination for Food Security as of 16 October, three million Haitians are food insecure. This figure is 44% lower than OCHA’s early October estimate. According to the report, the number of severely food insecure people has also declined in 2013, from 1.5 million to 600,000 people. In early October, OCHA reported that 1.5 million people across Haiti were still severely food insecure and risked a nutritional crisis; another 5.2 million people face moderate food insecurity. These 6.7 million people struggle to meet their own food needs on a regular basis according to WFP; 44 of 140 municipalities are affected, with over half the population facing high food insecurity. An estimated 800,000 people suffering from severe food insecurity had reportedly not received any emergency assistance and begun implementing negative coping mechanisms.

According to FEWSNET late October, food availability has improved significantly throughout the country since August 2013 due to the good performance of the spring agricultural production in the most productive areas. This situation is likely to continue until January 2014, during which time food stocks will begin to run out.

The 2013 harvest of the main cereal season was completed in September. Despite below average precipitation during the sowing period, the absence of tropical storms and flooding has resulted in good maize yields. Preliminary official estimates point to an increase of 30% in production from 2012’s sharply reduced levels. Planting of the secondary season has begun under favourable weather conditions. With the arrival of the new harvest into the markets, prices of local maize meal, an important staple, have declined. As current agricultural production was greater this year than in 2012, the prices of foods showed a significant decrease, thereby improving access to food. The price of maize, for example, fell in October by almost half compared to September 2012 in most markets. In remote areas, such as Jeremie and Hinche, prices were higher than in September 2012 due to access difficulties. Prices of imported rice, the main staple in the country, remained stable in most markets in September.

Despite poor and late rains during the two major agricultural seasons of 2013, they were well distributed in most production areas. However, according to FEWSNET, some regions such as the Southeast, the Northwest, Grand’Anse and the North have suffered from drought earlier in the season, which has resulted in low production. Poor households in these areas are facing stressed food security conditions (IPC phase 2). Bombardopolis, Baie de Henne, Anse Rouge, Bainet and Jacmel, among others, continue to be areas of concern regarding the impact of food and nutrition insecurity. Stocks made from this
production, especially in deficit areas, will be exhausted in January. This will result in an increase in prices of food commodities and reduced access to food for poor households in these areas. Some of them will be in Crisis food security conditions (IPC Phase 3) between January and March.

Health and Nutrition: Haiti continues to host the largest cholera epidemic in the western hemisphere. 56,174 suspected cases of cholera and 537 deaths were reported from January to November 2013 and a further 45,000 are expected for the year 2014, according to OCHA.

According to WHO/ Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO), since the beginning of the epidemic in October 2010 until 19 November 2013 (week 47), the total number of cholera cases reached 692,098, of whom 386,652 were hospitalised (55.9%) and 8,470 people died. Despite progress made, average fatality rates remain at 1.2%, with variations ranging from 4.4 %, in the department of Sud Est to 0.6 %, in Port-au-Prince. Since the onset of the 2013 rainy in April, Haiti has experienced a steady rise in new cholera infections and an increasing trend in cases has been noted in the past weeks. Between the last WHO epidemiological report released at the end of October and the end of November, 8,013 new cases and 99 deaths were reported countrywide. All ten departments of Haiti have registered new cases.

According to OCHA on 11 October, the number of reported cases since the beginning of 2013 was 41,701 and the number of deaths 360. Artibonite was the most affected and most vulnerable department, with just seven partners involved in the cholera response. Funding for the cholera response is covered by the least funded component in the Humanitarian Action Plan: only 23% of funding requirements for the health sector were met as of October. Contamination of rivers, unhygienic conditions, and inadequate sanitation are the principal causes for the spread of cholera. Some 42% of the population does not have access to clean water.

Human rights lawyers reported that they plan to seek compensation for Haitian victims of a cholera epidemic they blame on UN peacekeepers. The decision to file suit in New York comes after the UN said earlier this year that it would not pay hundreds of millions of dollars in compensation claimed by cholera victims in impoverished Haiti.

In Haiti, nearly a quarter of children <5 experience chronic malnutrition, according to UNICEF. According to OCHA as of 12 December, the prevalence of Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) among children <5 has increased from 5.1% in 2012 to 6.5% in 2013. 100,000 children <5 are affected by GAM, of whom 20,000 with Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM). Rural children are especially affected.

Updated: 17/12/2013
So far, the two sides have reached preliminary agreement on two of five topics: agrarian reform and the FARC’s return to political life once a comprehensive accord is reached. Negotiations are set to resume December 17.

The current round of peace talks resumed on 28 November as discussions moved onto the guerrillas’ involvement in drug trafficking. FARC negotiators said the drug discussions should involve the “nations of the world” because they are a global problem. Issues still to be discussed include disarmament and reparations for victims of the conflict. Political participation represents a major breakthrough in the ongoing peace. Among other things, it suggests that the FARC-EP are ready to give up the use of violence as a political tool in exchange for integration into the country’s political landscape. The tentative agreement also envisions the creation of temporary special congressional districts in areas hardest hit by the conflict, which generally overlap with the zones where the insurgent movement has the most influence over the population.

In May 2013, the two sides had already agreed on rural development and land reform in order to deal with the grossly uneven distribution of land, which is seen as one of the root causes of the conflict. Other items still on the agenda include reparation to the FARC-EP’s victims, tackling Colombia’s drug trade, and an actual end to violence.

The talks in Havana, which started in August 2012, are the fourth attempt to negotiate an end to the half-century old conflict, which has left 220,000 people dead. In late August, the guerrilla movement and the Government resumed negotiations following a new interruption in reaction to a proposal that any agreement be put to a national referendum. In early July, the FARC-EP announced that it would be working with the National Liberation Army (ELN), the second largest guerrilla group in Colombia, to find a political solution to the social and armed conflict. In late August, President Santos announced that the government was ready to begin peace talks with the ELN.

Security Context: On 7 December, at least eight people (including two civilians, a police official and five members of the military) were killed and 20 injured when a vehicle loaded with explosives blew up outside a police station in the small rural town of Inza (in southwestern Cauca province), where the FARC has a strong presence. Officials said the country’s largest rebel group, the FARC, was behind the attack.

Despite the resumption of peace talks in late November, fighting has been ongoing in several parts of the country. OCHA recorded 54 armed attacks in November, which is close to the monthly average for the rest of the year (65). The majority of attacks took place on the border areas with Venezuela in Arauca, and along the Pacific coast in Cauca, Valle del Cauca and Nariño. Overall, six attacks with Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) on police and military infrastructure were registered, and reportedly caused deaths and injuries among civilians, along with significant damage to infrastructure.

On 22 November, the representative in Colombia of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed concern over the high number of homicides in Buenaventura. So far this year, 145 homicides have been reported and the population is experiencing a difficult climate of violence. In October, OCHA had already reported a steady increase of the number of violent incidents between July and October with Cauca and Antioquia being the most affected departments. Some events were also recorded along the Venezuelan border and in central southern Colombia. In October, FARC-EP attacks accounted for most of the violence (over 30% of all events), followed by armed confrontations between the guerrilla group and the military (25%).

Meanwhile, the number of abuses against civilians has increased steadily since July. October recorded the most attacks in 2013, with OCHA reporting 114 events, a number significantly above the annual average. The released number also included death threats against civilians that accounted for 40% of the total. The northwest and the Caribbean coast, where the land-restitution process is under way, were reportedly the most-affected by violence.

Civil Unrest: As of late September, civil unrest continued with protests demonstrating across the country, including in Meta in central Colombia and in Cesar on the Caribbean coast. In north-western Córdoba, a new indigenous movement launched a protest against mining operations on their native territories. In Antioquia, protesters denounced the installation of new military bases in their towns. In all of these areas, with the exception of Boyacá, which was the scene of major protests by farmers during August, conflict has had a persistent humanitarian impact over the years. However, the latest protests have not reportedly led to blockades and confinements as in past months.

On 13 September, OCHA reported that major protests to demand better social conditions were held throughout August in 20 of the country’s 32 departments. Due to severe restrictions on mobility, several major cities were cut off, causing the rapid depletion of food stockpiles. Along with restricting humanitarian access in the southwest, central Colombia and the south, the protests also severely impacted on basic services.

Overall, an estimated 443,000 people were reportedly affected with 15 municipalities in Central Colombia being the hardest hit due to confinement. As of 30 August, negotiations with the protesters ended the strikes in the area, although civil unrest continued in other regions.

Humanitarian Context and Needs

Disaster: As of 30 November, OCHA reported that the second rainy season, which began in September and is expected to end around mid-December, affected more than 50,000, which is double the number of affected in October. The Pacific Region is reportedly most affected, with the departments of Choco and Valle del Cauca recording 30,000 and 22,500 people affected respectively. Landslides and storms caused widespread damage to houses, infrastructure and crops, and most urgent needs include shelter, food assistance and WASH. In March 2013, the first rainy season affected almost 60,000 people in six municipalities.

Displacement: In November, nearly 7,000 people were reportedly displaced due to violence involving mainly the FARC-EP, Post-Demobilization Armed Groups (PDAGs) and the ELN. This number is more than double compared with the monthly average of Internal Displaced People (IDPs) in 2013 (2,622 people) and the highest figure in 2013.

In Valle del Cauca, OCHA reported that nearly 6,000 were displaced from urban areas of Buenaventura in a single event in November due to PDAG confrontations in Colombia’s
main commercial port city. The most pressing humanitarian needs included protection, food and non-food assistance and shelter.

In 2013, about a quarter of the people displaced in mass events and over 10% of the total IDPs were expelled from Buenaventura, according to the National Victims Unit (UARIV). Many of these people have been displaced more than once. In 2013, 19% of IDPs were massively displaced within urban areas such as Buenaventura, Tumaco and Medellín. Buenaventura faced a similar emergency in October 2012, when approximately 5,000 people were displaced due to clashes between PDAGs. Currently, reports indicate significant activism of FARC-EP guerrillas in large rural areas around the port, while the PDAG groups Los Urabeños, Los Rastrojos and La Empresa compete for control of narcotrafficking, mining and other illicit activities. In urban areas such as Buenaventura, armed groups cause access constraints and mobility restrictions. In Colombia, intra-urban mass displacements have been an increasing concern.

In the south-western department of Cauca, FARC-EP was involved in seven mass displacement events. Unilateral actions and confrontations with Armed Forces displaced nearly 1,000 indigenous and rural inhabitants of the department Cauca. Intense hostilities were reported in northern Cauca, apparently related to the second anniversary of the death of former FARC commander Alfonso Cano. In November, FARC-EP attacked military infrastructure and displaced nearly 400 people in Miranda municipality.

In north-western Antioquia, running disputes between the PDAGs and FARC-EP over control of illicit mining in the area of Zaragoza resulted in the forced displacement of 300 people from rural communities to the urban centre. Along the Pacific coast in Chocó, in Alto Baudó, several families were displaced due to fighting between PDAG and ELN guerrillas.

In early August, the Victim's Registry reported that between 1985 and 2013, an estimated 5,800,000 people have been registered as internally displaced because of the ongoing conflict, with an estimated 127,000 IDPs being registered in 2012 only.

**Access:** Limited humanitarian access in Colombia is a major constraint for both humanitarian assistance provided to affected populations and access of population to aid and assistance.

According to estimates by OCHA, in November at least 24,800 people remained confined in 10 departments. Indigenous communities (57% of this total) and Afro-Colombians (21% of this total) are considered particularly vulnerable. More than 14,000 people were confined for about 10 days in north-western Colombia in El Bagre, Antioquia as result of a FARC-EP armed lockdown. The lock down (the third one this year) restricted movements along roads and rivers in the area and limited local people’s access to their livelihoods, as the main economic activity in the area consists of mining in rivers. The restrictions affected nearly half of the municipality and affected food security, education and health. In October, FARC-EP already placed an armed lockdown in Chocó, along the Pacific coast. All land and river transportation was halted in the department for three days.

In October, in Buenos Aires, Cauca, where several communities are displaced, others decided against displacement but face movement limitations due to repeated armed confrontations near their homes. These limitations affected the communities’ food security.

Along the Pacific coast in Bagadó, Chocó, Embera indigenous communities reported extensive APM-UXO contamination in their territories. As of late October, at least 41% of confinement events were reportedly connected to APM-UXO.

According to OCHA, attacks on medical missions are one of the most worrying humanitarian problems and one of the least reported, not mentioning the serious consequences for people who depend on medical services. In October, incidents affected the operations of humanitarian actors and medical missions in Chocó on the Pacific coast and on the Ecuadorian border in Putumayo. There were reports of direct attacks on humanitarian workers in both locations. Many humanitarian actors suspended operations during the indigenous “Minjí” march (Quechua word used by indigenous communities to describe popular mobilisations) as a preventive measure.

**Health and Nutrition:** Colombia remains in a permanent "state of alert" due to dengue fever. As of 15 November, WHO/PAHO reported approximately 110,000 cases since the beginning of the year, including 2,800 severe cases, and 125 deaths. In several municipalities of the country, local health authorities have officially declared an epidemic of dengue fever.

Santander (Northeast Colombia) is the department with the second largest number of dengue cases, after the department of Valle, with 13% of the national caseload. According to OCHA, some 46 cases of dengue are diagnosed each day and the incidence has reached 900 cases per 100,000 inhabitants. Authorities report a reduction in cases. So far in the year, 14,150 cases have been diagnosed, of which more than 200 are serious.

**Updated:** 17/12/2013

**PARAGUAY DROUGHT**

**Highlights**

**No new developments this week. Last update: 03/12/2013.**

**Humanitarian Context and Needs**

**Disaster:** On 1 December, heavy rains followed by a local severe storm hit parts of Central Paraguay, near the capital city of Asunción. The cities of Mariano Roque Alonso, Areguá and Capiatá were the most affected by the storm. According to the SEN, an estimated 5,000 people (1,000 families) were affected by heavy rainfalls in Bañado Sur (4000 people), Lambaré (500) and Luque, Villeta and Capiatá (100) and 250 houses were severely damaged in the violent storm.

As reported by the IFRC on 30 October, more than 50,000 people living in the Paraguayan Chaco, stretching over northern and western Paraguay, are currently facing one of the most severe droughts in years. The population's access to safe water is scarce, and the critical level the drought has reached is endangering the livelihoods of these communities, who are mostly dependent on subsistence agriculture as well as labour related to livestock and soy, sorghum and cotton farming.
The government of Paraguay declared a state of emergency on September 16 for 90 days. The National Secretariat of Emergency (SEN) reported that some 15,200 families (76,000 people) were affected in the departments of Presidente Hayes, Boquerón and Alto Paraguay. The worst affected districts in President Hayes were Lieutenant Irala Fernández, Puerto Pinasco and Villa Hayes. In Boqueron, the worst affected districts were Mariscal Estigarribia, Philadelphia and Loma Plata, and in the department of Alto Paraguay, almost all districts were severely affected. Food stocks have rapidly decreased and many labourers and workers have lost their livelihoods due to the drought. In addition, significant loss of pasture has resulted in mortality of cattle, which has been observed to be up to 25-30% in some communes.

As of late October, authorities have been distributing water and non-perishable food to the affected areas in response of the drought that affects rural and indigenous communities. The affected population faced floods in the same zone last year.

On 21-22 September, a local severe hailstorm hit parts of Paraguay. According to the SEN, several departments of the country were affected by the storm, among which the worst affected are Central, Cordillera, Caaguazú and San Pedro. In total, an estimated 70,000 across the country were affected as of late September. According to the SEN, 99 schools were damaged in the violent storm, leading to disruption of activities. The departments hardest hit by the storms were reported to suffer large crop losses according official reports.

Food Security: According to FAO as of mid-November, harvest of the 2013 wheat crop is about to be completed and production is estimated at 840,000 tonnes, a significant decline of some 30% from last year. The sharp reduction reflects severe frosts which caused important damage to the crop between July and August in the main production areas of Alto Parana, Itapua and Caaguazu, in southeastern Paraguay. Moreover, it is anticipated that the quality of this year’s wheat will also be negatively affected. Accordingly, cereal exports are expected to decrease of about 20%. Meanwhile, wheat flour prices in October remained at the record highs reached in the previous months due to the anticipated reduced 2013 wheat production and to increased import demand from Brazil.

Health and Nutrition: As of mid-November, WHO/PAHO reported that Paraguay is currently facing the worst dengue epidemic in its history. The dengue outbreak has killed 242 people so far in 2013, triple the number recorded last year, while confirmed cases of infection went from 30,800 last year to 150,000 in 2013. To date, more than 32,000 cases of haemorrhagic dengue, the most severe type of the disease, have been registered this year.

Figures are expected to increase even more in December with the start of the austral summer and the possible emergence of dengue virus serotype 4, which would combine forces with serotype 2, and increase the severity of the disease and the number of cases, according to experts. Authorities have allocated some US$4.5 million to eliminate mosquito breeding grounds.

On 26 October, the Paraguayan Ministry of Health reported 400 cases of dengue per week in the sole metropolitan area of the capital Asunción. The cities of San Lorenzo and Capiata are among the most infected with approximately 150 new cases per week.
Introduction to the Global Emergency Overview Update

The Global Emergency Overview is a weekly update that provides a snapshot of current humanitarian priorities and recent events. The Global Emergency Overview collates information from a wide range of sources, including Reliefweb and media sources, and displays this information in a manner that allows for quick comparison of different humanitarian crises. The primary objective of the Global Emergency Overview is to rapidly inform humanitarian decision makers by presenting a summary of major humanitarian crises, both recent and protracted. It is designed to provide answers to four questions:

1. Which humanitarian crises currently exist? (World map)
2. What has happened in the last seven days? (Highlights and Snapshot)
3. What is the situation in the country affected by a crisis? (Highlights Box and Narrative)
4. Which countries could be prioritised in terms of humanitarian response? (Prioritisation)

The Global Emergency Overview consists of three main sections:

First, the world map provides an overview of how the countries are prioritised, indicated by different shades of blue. The countries are subdivided by four priority levels: “on watch”, “situation of concern”, “humanitarian crisis”, and “severe humanitarian crisis”.

The priority levels are assigned on the basis of:

- the number of people affected by recent disasters
- the level of access to the affected population
- the <5 mortality rate
- the level of development of the country
- the number of protracted IDPs and refugees.

If a country experienced a disaster in the seven days prior to an update or witnessed an escalation of an ongoing crisis, a country is highlighted by a yellow dot on the map.

Second, the snapshot briefly describes what has happened in the last seven days from the date of publication, by outlining the crises that have occurred in the different highlighted countries.

Third, narratives for each country included in the Global Emergency Overview reflect major developments and underlying vulnerabilities of a country over the last months. Narratives are written based on secondary data. For each country, a specific highlights box is also added to put emphasis on the major developments that happened over the past 10 days.

The Global Emergency Overview is a mobile application.

To download the mobile application for Android phones click here.


To download the mobile application for iOS phones click here.


Update

The Global Emergency Overview will be updated once a week and the results will be available every Monday before midday (Central European Time/Central European Summer Time). In case of major new humanitarian events or an escalation of an ongoing crisis which triggers a change of prioritisation, the Global Overview will be updated on an ad-hoc basis.

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