

A.14 Somalia - 2008 - Conflict

Overview

Summary

Since 1991, Somalia has remained without a central government and has been in a state of intense factional fighting and civil war. Chronic insecurity and periods of drought have led to massive displacement of populations. By 2009 there were more than 1.3 million internally displaced people in Somalia, with nearly 100,000 people newly displaced in the months of May and June 2009.

Funding constraints combined with security issues have lead to a very limited presence by international supporting organisations. This is in strong contrast to the high level of need.



Background

Somalia has been highly insecure for nearly 20 years. As a result there has now an estimated 1.5 million internally displaced people in Somalia and a further 560,000 refugees, a large proportion of whom are living in Dadaab camp in Kenya.

Somalia is divided into three very different regions; Somaliland (the most secure), Puntland, and South Central Somalia (the least secure) which includes the capital Mogadishu. These regions have very different climates and levels of humanitarian access.

Somaliland

Many of the displaced people in Somaliland have settled in the capital Hargeisa. The main concentration of displaced people is in three unplanned settlements that were initially formed as temporary sites. Some people have moved to permanent relocation sites on the outskirts of the city. Many other people have settled on smaller patches of land across the city.

Puntland

In Puntland, humanitarian access is hindered by lawlessness. In the major port city of Bosaso, the climate is very hot and dry, with average annual rainfall under 100mm.

An exceptionally hot climate, strong winds, combined with overcrowding, poor sanitation and social

tensions means that large groups shelters are frequently destroyed by fire.

South Central Somalia and Mogadishu

In South Central Somalia, extreme security issues have severely limited humanitarian access. As a result many of the programmes by international organisations are managed remotely from Nairobi, and time spent working with affected populations is severely limited.

Shelter programmes

Across Somalia, very different shelter programmes have been implemented. They include:

- Emergency distributions of household shelter items, tents and plastic sheet to newly displaced families.
- Transitional shelter construction for the more vulnerable families living in congested sites.
- Distribution of tents for people living in planned sites.
- Distribution of shelter repair materials for some of the more vulnerable long-term displaced families.
- Addition of fire breaks, site clean-up and improvements to sanitation for some of the more congested urban sites.
- Construction of durable houses from masonry block in planned settlements on the outskirts of Hargeisa (Somaliland) that have

a long lifetime.

- Provision of sites with accompanying services that are allocated to families with accompanying entitlement to lands.

The scale of these programmes has ranged from large scale emergency distributions of plastic sheeting for hundreds of thousands of families to the construction of permanent housing that is much more limited in scale (hundreds of families).

In urban settlements in Bosaso and Hargeisa, the critical shelter issues have been outbreaks of fire and issues to do with overcrowding. Resulting shelter interventions have been more than simply the materials distribution or the construction of shelters. To meet the shelter needs it has been necessary to address issues with site layouts, create firebreaks, and improve sanitation.

Given the security context, and the nature of large scale displacements, tents have been required for some locations in Somalia. The quality of the tents has been variable, requiring organisations to develop precise specifications and relationships with suppliers.



Self-built shelters in Somalia, based on the traditional 'Buul'. In cities, they are built using recycled fabric, cardboard and tin cans. Photos: Joseph Ashmore