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ETHIOPIA

Displacement in Benishangul-Gumuz and Oromia regions



Briefing note – 15 October 2018

Over 100,000 people fleeing ethnic violence have been displaced in Benishangul-Gumuz (mainly in Kamashi Zone) and Oromia regions (mainly East Wollega and West Wollega zones). There are indications that displacement is rising, though the size of the displaced population is not clear. Urgent humanitarian needs are reported, including food, shelter, NFI and health (The reporter Ethiopia 06/10/2018, La Vanguardia 13/10/2018, Voa News 02/10/2018, OCHA 10/2018, The reporter Ethiopia 06/10/2018).

NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE



IMPACT



Anticipated scope and scale

With ongoing insecurity, access constraints will probably prevent humanitarian actors from reaching some of the affected population. The number of **displaced people is likely to continue increasing** in the short term; therefore, humanitarian needs will probably increase across the host locations.

Key priorities



+100,000
people displaced



IDPs in need
of immediate food assistance



Destruction of property
reported



Low capacity
of health facilities

Humanitarian constraints



Humanitarian assistance has been hampered as rival groups are blocking roads leading into and out of the regions, particularly the road linking Kamashi Zone and the town of Nejo in the Oromia regional state. Insecurity and violence are preventing response operations in the area.

Limitations

Information on the total number of IDPs as well as their specific needs remains relatively limited. There are indications that assessments are under way or completed, but the findings are not readily available. Access constraints are reported, but detailed information is lacking.

Crisis impact

More than 100,000 people have been displaced in Benishangul-Gumuz and Oromia regions following an attack on leaders of the Benishangul-Gumuz regional authority on 25 September. The officials were returning home along the Ghimbi-Kamashi route near the regional boundary, after an interregional security meeting of Oromia and Benishangul-Gumuz representatives in the Benishangul capital, Assosa (The reporter Ethiopia 06/10/2018, La Vanguardia 13/10/2018, Voa News 02/10/2018, OCHA 10/2018, The reporter Ethiopia 06/10/2018).

Sixty people have been killed in clashes since 25 September. Local sources suggest the number of deaths is likely to be much higher, because clashes also occurred in rural areas where casualty figures may not yet have been reported. (The reporter Ethiopia 06/10/2018, OCHA 10/2018).

Tensions and insecurity were already high in the region, and the attack triggered widespread insecurity and displacement around the border areas of both regions. Most displacement – up to 85,000 people – was from Kamashi zone (Benishangul-Gumuz) to East and West Wollega zones (Oromia), as Oromos in Benishangul-Gumuz faced attacks and fear of retribution. However, 20,000 people have also been displaced in Benishangul-Gumuz region, where access to them is particularly difficult due to a lockdown of key roads by rival groups (The reporter Ethiopia 06/10/2018, Ezega 02/10/2018, OCHA 10/2018, Channel New Asia 05/10/2018).

Information about the exact number of displaced people, their locations and needs remains limited, but reports since 25 September have consistently shown increasing estimates. Ongoing assessments will probably confirm a higher number of displaced people (The reporter Ethiopia 06/10/2018, Ezega 02/10/2018, OCHA 10/2018, Channel New Asia 05/10/2018).

Food: IDPs are reportedly in need of immediate food assistance in both Benishangul Gumuz and Oromia regions (OCHA 10/2018).

Shelter and NFIs: Destruction of properties by fire in Benishangul Gumuz region have been reported. At least 1,560 farm houses have been burned (Africa News 02/10/2018, Ezega 02/10/2018, Ezega 01/10/2018). It is likely that the shelter availability is limited because of the rapid and large-scale displacement.

Health: Injured people in Kamashi zone cannot be reached or referred to hospitals in towns due to insecurity, as rival groups are blocking roads linking those towns (Ezega 02/10/2018). High casualty rates could strain the capacity of health facilities.

Humanitarian and operational constraints

Rival groups are blocking vehicles on many roads linking Oromia and Benishangul-Gumuz, including the road linking Kamashi zone and the town of Nejo in the Oromia regional state (Ezega 04/10/2018). There are transport options via air, but these are limited and costly (Ezega 02/10/2018, MEO 02/10/2018, OCHA 10/2018).

Contextual information

Past conflict and displacement

A conflict started between the Oromo and Gumuz people in Kamashi and Eastern Wollega zones in 2008 (Norad 27/06/2018). A number of ethnic clashes have occurred in the Benishangul-Gumuz region since May 2018. The region saw a wave of violence from 25–28 June, with 10 people killed in the regional capital, Assosa. The cause of the violence was unclear, though some sources referred to an ethnic conflict. The Berta and Gumuz ethnic groups are considered indigenous to Benishangul-Gumuz; however, there is also a large presence of ethnic Amhara and Oromo (Africa News 28/10/2018, AA 01/10/2018).

Rival ethnic groups are normally armed with rocks and knives during attacks and violence (Voa News 02/10/2018, OCHA 10/2018, The reporter Ethiopia 06/10/2018).

Aggravating factors

Drought, underlying food insecurity and fall armyworm

Some 7.9 million people require emergency food assistance in Ethiopia (USAID 25/07/2018). The country was one of the worst affected in East African during the El Nino drought of 2016–2017, with many households still recovering from the shock. Although the Benishangul-Gumuz region remains in Minimal Acute Food Insecurity Phase (IPC 1), insecurity and localised conflict between ethnic groups in Benishangul-Gumuz and Oromia regions have been driving food and multi-sectoral assistance needs. In Benishangul-Gumuz, 13,812 people are targeted for food and 60,000 people for NFI (OCHA 2018). Livelihoods and access to typical sources of food and income have been disrupted, which has led to a deterioration in nutritional status for children under five and pregnant and lactating women (Fews Net 09/2018).

Fall armyworm has affected large parts of Ethiopia since February 2017, when it was first detected in Benishangul-Gumuz region (Addis Fortune 24/06/2017). The area affected spread significantly in mid-2017: 87,000 hectares of maize across the country were affected as

of May, including in Benishangul-Gumuz region (Xinhua 29/05/2018). By the end of August, reports estimated that 500,000 hectares of land in 411 districts had been affected, accounting for roughly 25% of the total area planted (FAO 08/2017). Food-security outcomes were negatively impacted and the effects continue to be felt. Some farmers are growing special plants to combat fall armyworm (Farm Radio 07/08/2018, CGTN Africa 29/05/2018).

Political and economic developments

Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn resigned on 15 February 2018 (The East African 02/06/2018). Parliament elected Abiy Ahmed as prime minister on 2 April (Africa News 3/4/2018, BBC 02/04/2018). He is the first prime minister from Oromia region (Aljazeera 02/04/2018).

The new government approved a draft law that would end the state of emergency on 2 June, two months earlier than originally scheduled (The East African 02/06/2018). Ahmed and the Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki signed a peace deal in July to restore diplomatic and trade relations (BBC 11/09/2018). In August, Ethiopia's government signed an agreement to end hostilities with the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). Another armed group, the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), declared a unilateral ceasefire to end hostilities. Despite the reforms, ethnic conflicts and protests continue in multiple places across the country (Reuters 12/08/2018, Al Jazeera 07/08/2018, ACLED 13/10/2018). Arbitrary detention, media control and development-induced displacement continue. Concerns about further government crackdowns remain high.

Displacement in Ethiopia

Many humanitarian organisations already support refugees and IDPs in Ethiopia. Therefore, humanitarian support for new IDPs due to conflict and clashes is limited.

Ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia are not new, but the levels of violence taking place across the country are rising, leading to increased displacement and humanitarian needs. Ethiopia has more than 80 ethnic groups and, despite recent political reforms, the country has a weak economy (The conversation 01/10/2018).

Ethiopia is already home to over 3.5 million people who face humanitarian needs. More than 905,000 refugees (the second-largest refugee population in Africa) and 2.6 million IDPs are in Ethiopia (UNHCR 20/09/2018, Capetalk 26/06/2018, UNHCR 01/2018). There has been a trend of increased conflict-related displacement since December 2016, mainly in 2018, due new waves of violence in many regions including the SNNPR-Oromia border, in Oromia and Somali regions, and in Afar region (ACLED 11/06/2018).

IDPs: recent increases in conflict



Map source: OCHA 31/08/2018

West Guji and Gedeo displacement

Intercommunal violence in Gedeo (SNNPR) and West Guji (Oromia) zones has displaced 960,000 people since 13 April (OCHA 31/08/2018). At least 75 people have died in seven localities (IOM 23/07/2018). By 9 October, around 456,000 IDPs had returned to their places of origin (OCHA 09/10/2018). The capacity of the hosting communities to absorb new arrivals is strained; as the area is relatively densely populated (CARE 31/07/2018; OCHA 17/08/2018). IDPs and returnees require humanitarian assistance (WFP 10/2018). The exact causes behind the recent conflict are unclear, but land disputes and conflict on border demarcations are key sources of tension (OCHA 06/06/2018).

Oromia-Somali displacement

Since September 2017, clashes between Oromo and Somali ethnicities have left up to one million people displaced in the two regions (OCHA 20/06/2018). This includes 141,410 people in Somali region since 4 August 2018 alone (OCHA 31/08/2018). After Somali authorities were accused of human rights violations, federal government forces tried to remove them. However, youth and Liyu police attacked civilians and destroyed property in the regional capital, Jijiga, on 4–5 August (Crisis Watch 03/09/2018). The conflict quickly spread to Deghabur, Warder, Kabridahar, Gode and Babile areas. IDPs are mostly

sheltering on the grounds of churches and army barracks. In Jijiga, price inflation is reported on food, water and other basic needs because there are few available shops and supplies. Fuel is also limited. On 15 August, some IDPs from Jijiga began to return home. Humanitarian needs are reported (OCHA 17/08/2018).

Addis Ababa displacement

Hostilities broke out near Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa on 15–16 September, after exiled OLF (Oromo Liberation Front) leaders returned. Between 23 and 58 people were killed during these clashes, which led to the displacement of at least 13,000 people. Massive protests against the violence were held in Addis Ababa and in Arba Minch in the SNNP region (ACLED 25/09/2018). At least 2,500 people were arrested in various locations of Addis Ababa (Daily Nation 24/09/2018).

Refugee influx from Eritrea

Following the Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship signed by the Eritrean and Ethiopian governments, Zalambesa and Bure border crossing points were opened on 11 September. The average daily arrival rate climbed from 50 people/day to 390 people/day between 20 September and 2 October. Since the border was opened, 6,779 refugees from Eritrea were registered at the Endabaguna Reception Centre, with 2,725 others at the border points awaiting relocation to Endabaguna as of 2 October (UNHCR 05/10/2018, UNHCR 01/10/2018). Over 15,000 Eritreans have crossed into Ethiopia between 11 - 26 September, many going to the camps or to present themselves to the Endabaguna Registration Centre. This brings the total number of Eritrean refugees in the Tigray region to over 46,000 people. There are more than 173,000 Eritreans in Ethiopia, including many unaccompanied minors (UNHCR 01/10/2018, ECHO 26/09/2018).

Other refugees

The largest refugee population in Ethiopia comes from South Sudan (422,240 refugees). The influx in Ethiopia from South Sudan in 2018 is mainly due to continued fighting and violence in Upper Nile, Jonglei and Unity states. Gambella state is hosting most South Sudanese refugees (UNHCR 09/2018). Ethiopia also hosts 257,283 refugees from Somalia, 173,879 from Eritrea and 44,620 from Sudan. About 59% of all refugees in Ethiopia are under 18 years old (UNHCR 09/2018, UNHCR 31/08/2018, UNHCR 08/2018, UNHCR 07/2018).

Key characteristics

- **Demographic profile:** Benishangul-Gumuz: 976,000 people. Oromia region: 36.2 million (UNICEF 2016, Population 2017).

- **Health statistics:** The infant mortality rate across the country is 49.6 deaths/1,000 live births (Index Mundi 2017). The maternal mortality rate is 353 deaths/100,000 live births (Index Mundi 2015). Under-5 mortality in Benishangul Gumuz is 98 deaths/1,000 live births (UNICEF 2018).
- **WASH statistics:** Only 38% of the population in Ethiopia have access to improved drinking water sources (Index Mundi 2008). Water supply coverage in Benishangul-Gumuz is 58.2% (UNICEF 2018).
- **Literacy levels.** Literacy rate on people between 15–24 years old is 44.6% (Index Mundi 2015).

Response capacity

- The Oromia regional government dispatched a team on 2 October to assess the situation (OCHA 10/2018).
- Humanitarian organisations are monitoring the situation and will continue to work with the government to assess needs and provide assistance (OCHA 10/2018).
- The National Disaster Risk Management Commission has been providing food and material assistance to the displaced people currently settled in 10 districts of East and West Wollega zone of Oromia regional state (Ezega 04/10/2018, The reporter Ethiopia 06/10/2018).
- The federal government was asked to send additional troops to increase their presence on the roads (Ezega 04/10/2018).
- Military helicopters are transporting food aid (Ezega 04/10/2018).

Information gaps and needs

- There is limited information on sectoral needs.
- There is no information detailing the extent of damage to crops or homes.
- There is no disaggregated data to break down the displaced population according to age, gender or persons with disabilities.

Lessons learned

- In Ethiopia, in the context of implementing the National Policy and Strategy on Disaster Risk Management, the government has established Disaster Risk Management and Food Security Committees not only in the capital, but also at the local level. These committees are directly involved in counting IDPs, conducting initial assessments, compiling figures with IOM support and providing assistance through government, the Ethiopian Red Cross Society, international NGOs and humanitarian actors, such as the ICRC (ICRC 10/02/2017).
- Local school authorities in Ethiopia allow internally displaced children without resident personal identity documents to attend school, thus avoiding or reducing interruptions to their education (ICRC 10/02/2017).
- Recommended recovery efforts include planning and reconstructing basic infrastructure and services, distributing seeds and agricultural inputs, replacing lost livestock and monitoring weather, the situation and recovery progress (Ethiopia National Disaster Risk Management Commission 27/04/2018).
- Commodity vouchers and other cash-based interventions have been piloted recently in some refugee camps to allow purchases on local markets. Ethanol fuel and solar power systems have been used in refugee response in some locations in Ethiopia (UNHCR 03/2018).
- The affected vulnerable population is more likely to use water from unprotected sources, including rivers and lakes, increasing the risk of waterborne diseases (WSUP 2017).

MAP



Source: Nations Online, 2018