



Mission Report

East Wollega Zone (Oromia) and Kamashi Zone (Benishangul-Gumuz)

16-19 July 2019

MULTIFUNCTIONAL TEAM MEMBERS

- The mission included members from IOM, UNHCR, WFP, RCO's office, Protection Cluster, GBV AoR and the HLP Working Group. The team is working on an operational response to durable solutions in the region together with government authorities.
- The report was prepared by the Protection Cluster Coordinator and GBV AoR Coordinator as a means to summarize key points and discussion outcomes to share with Protection Cluster members.

CONFLICT, DISPLACEMENT AND RETURNS

- On 26 September 2018, four senior officials from the Benishangul Gumuz region were killed in an ambush in Gimbi, West Wollega of the Oromo region, by unidentified armed groups. The officials were traveling back to Kamashi zone after attending a consultative meeting with Oromo regional security officials. There are armed elements in the region that are known to incite violence between the people in Oromo and Benishangul regions.
- This incident sparked inter-communal violence in the Kamashi zone of Benishangul-Gumuz region between the Gumuz community and the Oromo and Amhara populations residing in the area. The conflict resulted in death, injury, damage of public and private infrastructure, as well as deployment of security forces to Kamashi zone.
- Recently the overall security situation in the Wollegas and Kamashi zone has improved. However, in some parts of West Wollega border area with Kamashi zone, sporadic clashes between government security forces and unidentified armed groups have been reported.
- The GoE states that 90-95% of IDPs have returned to their areas of origin in the East Wollega, West Wollega and Kamashi zones. However, there are reports of returnees leaving Kamashi zone to return to their area of displacement in West and East Wollega due to ongoing insecurity and lack of basic services in Kamashi zone and the border area in West Wollega.

KEY FINDINGS

- Returnees are in need of basic services, including food, potable water, shelter, CRIs/dignity kits and access to subsidized medical services. There is a lack of basic and specialized protection services, including child protection and gender-based violence (GBV), due to an insufficient number of social workers, health professionals, or legal experts trained to respond to protection cases. Additionally, there was a lack of agriculture inputs during the planting season. The GoE provided limited amounts of maize seeds and fertilizer in East Wollega, however, the region is expected to be food insecure for another 12-18 months, due to lack of sufficient agriculture inputs.
- The need for psychosocial support services (PSS) for all conflict and IDP affected communities was highlighted by authorities as an ongoing need.
- While many IDPs have returned to their areas of origin, they are now living in temporary shelters, as houses have been destroyed, and are in need of support for durable shelter in addition to income generating activities.
- The overall humanitarian response in the region has been weak with limited funds/capacity to provide more than lifesaving and short-term interventions (i.e. distribution of NFI and shelter kits).
- Due to lack of funding available, a limited number of protection agencies are present in East and West Wollegas zones. However, in the last EHF round of funding, the Wollegas was prioritized by the

Protection Cluster, so additional protection activities (child protection, gender-based violence, protection monitoring) will soon be implemented in the Wollegas.

- Parts of Kamashi zone, such as Balodjeganfoa woreda visited by the mission team, are now accessible to the humanitarian community. Both ACF and Goal have set-up offices in Kamashi town.
- Protection and peacebuilding are essential components of durable solutions initiatives. There is a need for peace and reconciliation initiatives in areas of return in the East Wollega, West Wollega and Kamashi zones. Returnees expressed an interest in remaining in their areas of origin, but due to ongoing insecurity, the returnees requested support from the GoE to initiate peace building and reconciliation initiatives with the host communities.
- Health facilities and health posts have been looted and/or destroyed and are short of medicines and medical supplies. This is impacting service delivery and access to health care, including life-saving services for survivors of rape and sexual violence.
- The local health centres and health posts in IDP hosting woredas do not have funds to provide services, have run out of essential drugs and supplies and are in high need of emergency reproductive health kits to provide proper service for host and returnee communities.
- FGD with female returnees highlighted safety and security needs among returnees, as they are not able to collect firewood and water without risking being attacked
- Rape and sexual violence during the conflict highlighted by women, children and youth affairs offices, with inadequate capacity and funds to respond to such violence
- Authorities have estimated that approximately 50 houses of returnees have been occupied in the Kamashi zone, however, it is expected the number is higher. Thus far, through coordination with the Benishangul-Gumuz regional state, the authorities have managed to return 30 houses to their original owners. Those, who were denied access their houses, have returned to Oromia on a temporary basis. The Kamashi zonal administration council has established a committee to address complaints related to those denied access to their housing, land and property rights.
- Individuals that were renting land or engaging in sharecropping are now having difficulty in accessing land for farming and many have returned to Oromia region where they were hosted as IDP.
- Support is needed to local authorities to address complaints related to those denied access to their housing, land and property (HLP) rights.
- Capacity development initiatives are needed with local authorities to ensure strong coordination and adherence to humanitarian principles.

MISSION CONCLUSIONS BY PROTECTION CLUSTER MEMBERS

- The geographical areas identified by the mission team include: Balodjeganfoa¹ woreda in Kamashi zone of Benishangul-Gumuz and Sasiga² woreda in East Wollega zone of Oromia region. The mission did not visit West Wollega zone in Oromia region to identify an area, but it is recommended a border woreda is also identified, in West Wollega.
- Due to the economic, social and geographical interconnectedness of the three zones (East Wollega, West Wollega, Kamashi), a durable solutions intervention should serve all areas and ethnic groups to avoid exacerbating cross-border tensions. However, each zone is unique in terms of its stages of peace, security, accessibility and development, therefore the interventions should take into consideration the local dynamics and localized protection concerns.
- Protection and peacebuilding are essential components of the durable solutions initiative (DSI), as the situation remains fragile, and communities transition towards reconciliation.
- Priority components of a durable solutions intervention will include livelihoods, shelter and rebuilding of local infrastructure. Rehabilitation of damaged infrastructure and public structures (health clinics, schools) and public service provision will promote peace in the community and reduce conflict over limited resources.

¹ Estimated total population in woreda is 55,000 individuals.

² Highest number of returnees in the zone; estimated total population in woreda is 111,365 individuals.

- The presence of the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs (MOWCYA) at the zonal and woreda level is necessary to ensure appropriate services for children and women at-risk. Capacity development initiatives will be needed to ensure services provided at the community level are adequate and meet global standards of care to cover the population.
- Persons with specific needs should receive benefits from the Productive Safety Net Program³ (PSNP) as a means to transition persons with specific needs from humanitarian assistance to government social welfare systems such as the PSNP.
- Community-based structures should be supported to ensure participatory community-based planning. Women's participation in durable solutions decision making will help enhance not only their own safety and well-being but increase the likelihood that issues concerning the broader family will receive appropriate attention.
- Community-based MHPSS programs is an appropriate response to the high level of need for psychosocial-support for returnees.
- Given the passing of the planting season, the region is expected to be dependent on food-aid for another 12-18 months. An intervention that includes agricultural inputs (seeds, tools and fertilizer) during the planting season will reduce the duration of dependency on food aid.
- The humanitarian community should encourage donors to visit the Wollegas and Kamashi zones. Although the Wollegas are known to be a wealthier food-surplus region, donor resources are needed to support interventions.
- Support to be provided to ensure perpetrators of violence during the conflict are held to account. Authorities in Balodjeganfoa woreda, of the 17 individuals suspected on inciting violence, seven have been arrested and are currently in legal proceedings. The whereabouts of the remaining 10 suspects is currently unknown.
- A follow-up analysis is needed to understand the number of persons that were resettled⁴ from the Hararghes to the Oromia/Benishangul-Gumuz border area and how durable solutions interventions may be impacted based on their land access.
- UNHCR activated the Protection Cluster in East and West Wollega zones in April 2019, co-led by the Zonal Women, Children and Youth Affairs (ZoWCYA). Coordination of the protection sector needs to be strengthened in the East and West Wollega, as well as expanded to Kamashi zone.

³ PSNP provides a safety net for households that are both chronically food insecure and poor, and often affected by shocks. PSNP operates across widespread geographical areas and rural communities in Ethiopia to determine eligibility to receive payments based on specific criteria. Through this infrastructure, PSNP contributes to a local enabling environment for community development.

⁴ Initial findings indicate that groups resettled from the Hararghes to the Oromia/Benishangul-Gumuz border by the Derg government were provided with land, however, groups resettled by EPRDF government were not provided with land. A follow-up assessment is needed to verify the access of resettled communities to land in Oromia.