

Report

Somalia: Lower Shabelle



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Report **Somalia: Lower Shabelle**

SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of power relations, security and humanitarian challenges in the Somali region of Lower Shabelle after 2006, and of the region's geography, climate, population and society. The aim of the report is to make relevant information about Lower Shabelle more accessible. The amount of available information is limited, and there are certain periods of time and specific areas that we know very little about. The report gives an account of what we know and where information is lacking or unclear. The power shifts in the region since 2006 can be divided into four periods: 1) Indha-Adde and the ICU, 2) Ethiopian intervention, 2) Islamist rule, and 4) the offensive against al-Shabaab. Each period has entailed security challenges for the population. In addition to security concerns, the people of Lower Shabelle face major humanitarian challenges. The humanitarian situation in the region is complex and influenced by both man-made and naturally occurring conditions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report concerns the Somali region of Lower Shabelle. It provides an overview of the region's geography, climate, population and society, as well as of power relations, security and humanitarian challenges during the period since 2006. The report focuses on the situation for the local population. It does not discuss political conditions or the situation for internally displaced persons.

1.1 WHAT DO WE KNOW?

The purpose of this report is to make relevant information about Lower Shabelle more accessible. Although the available information has increased somewhat in recent years, the amount of information available about Southern and Central Somalia is still very limited. The reason for this is that the international community has had little or no access to information about or possibility of studying the living conditions of people in this part of the country since the breakdown of the Somali state in the 1990s. This applies in particular to the area outside Mogadishu. Major events are registered, but the available information is fragmentary. This means that we know little or nothing about certain periods and certain areas. The more remote the area and the further back in time, the less we know. This puts limitations on the report. The report gives an account of what information is available, what there is no information about, and indicates where the available information is unclear.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 GEOGRAPHY

We recommend using the following map of the Lower Shabelle region when reading this report:

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/121024_Administrative_Map_Lower_Shabelle_A4.pdf

Source: OCHA, 24 October 2012

The Lower Shabelle region covers an area of around 29,761 sq. km (GeoNames n.d.),¹ i.e. a little bigger than the county of Hedmark in Norway. Lower Shabelle borders on Banadir (Mogadishu and surrounding area), Middle Juba, Bay, Bakool, Hiraan and Middle Shabelle. The region borders on the Indian Ocean to the east.

Lower Shabelle is divided into seven districts:

- Wanla Weyn
- Afgooye
- Qoryooley
- Kurtunwaarey
- Marka
- Sablale
- Barawe

Each district has the same name as the biggest town in the district. The fact that districts and towns have identical names can give rise to confusion. In order to avoid misunderstandings, it is specified in the report whether we are referring to a town or district. If it is unclear from the sources whether a district or town is referred to, the term ‘area’ is used. Like the Somali state, the Lower Shabelle region and the different districts primarily denote geographical areas and not actual administrative entities.

Most of the region consists of lowlands and is dominated by the river that has given the region its name – the Shabelle. The Marka and Barawe districts have a long coastline. The Afgooye district has some coastline, while Wanla Weyn, Qoryooley, Kurtunwarey and Sablale are inland districts.

People who live along the river refer to it simply as *webiga* (the river) (Luling 2002, p. 11). The river runs more or less parallel to the coast from Middle Shabelle in the north-east to Middle Juba in the south-west. The distance between the river and the coast is approx. 30 km (Luling 2002, p. 12). The soil is fertile on both sides of the river, but the area is prone to flooding (see section 4.2.1). The inland areas largely consist of plains and scrubland (WFP 2012, pp. 54 -55). The coast is covered in sand and has little vegetation. Spread acacia trees grow throughout the region.

¹ There is uncertainty about the exact size of the region.

Detailed maps at the district level are available online from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) from 2012: ²

<http://www.unocha.org/somalia/maps-graphics/reference-maps/district>.

2.2 CLIMATE

Like the rest of Somalia, the climate in Lower Shabelle is hot and dry all year. The annual average temperature is between 26 and 28 degrees Celsius (Muchiri 2007, p. 28). The average temperature difference between the hottest months (from December to March) and the coolest months (July and August) is only a few degrees, but it is somewhat greater in the inland areas than along the coast. In August, the temperature can drop to 16 degrees Celsius (Luling 2002, p. 13). The average maximum temperature per month is 35 degrees Celsius. The climate is primarily characterised by rainy seasons (FAO-SWLIM 2010, p. 11):

- *Jiilaal*, the long dry season, lasts from December to March. This is normally the hottest season.
- *Gu*, the long rainy season, lasts from April to June.
- *Haggai*, the short dry season, lasts from July to September. This is normally the coolest season.
- *Dayr*, the short rainy season, lasts from October to November.

Even during the rainy season, there can be several weeks without any rain, and it can rain during the dry season at times. Normally, more than half the annual rainfall falls during *Gu* (FAO-SWALIM 2010, p. 11). *Gu* is therefore the most important season for both farmers and nomads, who are dependent on rain to cultivate the land and keep their livestock alive. The amount of rain can vary greatly from one year to the next, which can have serious consequences for the population (see section 4.2). For the same reason, *Jiilaal* is often the most difficult season for the population, and the Shabelle river sometimes dries out completely at this time of year (Luling 2002, p. 13).

2.3 PEOPLE AND SOCIETY

2.3.1 The size of the population

There are no reliable population figures, only estimates. Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit Somalia (FSNAU), which publishes regular analyses of living conditions for the Somali population, uses a total population figure of approx. 7.5 million, 850,651 of whom live in Lower Shabelle (FSNAU 2013).³ Lower Shabelle is thereby the most populated region in Somalia after Banadir (Mogadishu and the surrounding area). The estimates are based on projections of previous censuses. They therefore do not include internally displaced persons who are staying in the region.

² The maps are probably not exhaustive.

³ The estimates used by FSNAU were provided by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in 2005.

According to the estimates that FSNAU uses, the vast majority of the population live in the districts of Afgooye, Marka, Wanla Weyn and Qoryooley, while relatively few live in the three southern districts of Barawe, Kurtunwaarey and Sablale. The distribution is as follows (FSNAU 212):

- Afgooye: 211,712
- Marka: 192,939
- Wanla Weyn: 155,643
- Qoryooley: 134,205
- Barawe: 57,652
- Kurtunwaarey: 55,445
- Sablale: 43,055

It is assumed that almost 80 per cent of the population of the region live in rural areas.

2.3.2 Population groups

Lower Shabelle has a heterogeneous population as regards clan and group affiliation. The overview in this report is not exhaustive, but it shows certain main groups.

Historically, the region has been dominated by Digil clans. The Digil clans are farmers and differ from the Somali nomadic clans in that their members are not just linked by their ancestry but also through alliances and adoption (sheegad).

The area around the town of Wanla Weyn has traditionally been the home territory of the Digil clan Shanta Alemod,⁴ which is a federation of the five clans Huweet, Hifmoge, Irdo, Barbaro and Jambelul (Lewis 1994, pp. 37 and 221).

Afgooye is the traditional home territory of the Digil clan Geledi and the Hawiye clan Wacdan (Luling 2002). They live in and around the town of Afgooye, among other places.

Marka is the traditional home territory of the Dir clan Biimaal (Lewis 2008, p. 5). The Biimaal clan lives in and around the town of Marka, among other places (Gundel 2006, p. 37).

Qoryooley is the home territory of the Digil clan Jiddo and the Hawiye-associated clan Garre. The Jiddo clan also lives in the districts of Kurtunwaarey and Sablale (Norwegian embassy in Nairobi, minutes of meeting April 2005).

Barawe has traditionally been the home territory of the Digil clan Tunni (Lewis 2008, p. 5).

During the civil war in the 1990s, various Hawiye clans moved into Lower Shabelle (Landinfo 2007b, p. 6). There were some Hawiye clans in the region before this as well, but a large number arrived from other regions at this time (Gundel 2006, pp. 37-39). The most prominent of the newcomers was the Haber Gedir clan Ayr (see

⁴ The clan has sometimes been classified as a Rahanweyne clan, but it identifies itself today as Digil (Luling n.d.).

also section 3.1). They have settled in Lower Shabelle and have gradually become integrated into society.

In addition, Bantus (jareer) and occupational groups such as Midgan and Tumul live in the region. They have traditionally been affiliated to local clans through client-patron relationships (Landinfo 2005b; Landinfo 2013, p. 5). For more information about these groups, see Landinfo's report *Jareer (bantu) befolkningen i Somalia (The Jareer (Bantu) population of Somalia – in Norwegian only)* of 8 April 2005 and Landinfo's response *Yrkes- og lavstatusgrupper (Occupational and low-status groups – in Norwegian only)* of 25 July 2013. The former report is only available internally in Landinfo's Country Database, while the latter report is available on Landinfo's homepage www.landinfo.no.

2.3.3 Language

Like the population, the language situation in Lower Shabelle is complex. The region is a core area for May dialects, which are very different from the Somali standard dialect (Mahatiri). The Marka district does not belong to the traditional May area, however. Moreover, certain clans, such as Jiddo, have their own dialects that differ significantly from both the Mahatiri and the May dialects. It is Mahatiri that is used on the radio and in other media, and many people therefore master Mahatiri even though they actually have a different dialect. This applies in the towns in particular (Landinfo 2011, p. 15).

The language situation is described in more detail in Landinfo's report *Somalia: Language situation and dialects* of 22 July 2011. The report is available on Landinfo's homepage www.landinfo.no.

2.3.4 Livelihoods

Lower Shabelle is one of the most fertile areas in Somalia, and food production is the predominant means of making a living. Agriculture can be roughly divided into large estates and self-sufficient smallholdings. The agricultural area follows the Shabelle river. It is described in detail, with photos, maps and text, in the book *Atlas of the Juba and Shabelle Rivers in Somalia* of March 2010 by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Somalia Water and Land Information Management (SWALIM). The area is characterised by an extensive irrigation system with canals and dams for watering the fields. In combination with rainfall, this system makes it possible to farm all year round. Maize, durra, sesame and bananas are among the crops grown (FAO-SWALIM 2010). Mangos and coconuts are also grown in some areas.

In the south-western part of the region and in the inland area bordering on the Bay region nomadic herding is predominant (WFP 2012, pp. 53-55). In the coastal area, including the port towns of Marka and Barawe, trade and fishing are the most common livelihoods (Lewis 2008, p. 3).

2.3.5 Towns and villages

There are a number of towns and villages in Lower Shabelle. What constitutes a town or a village is relative. Each district has the same name as the biggest town in the

district. Marka, which is the formal regional capital, is regarded as being the most populous town in the region. According to the estimates used by FSNAU, the town has a population of around 60,000.⁵

The towns of Afgooye, Qoryooley, Barawe, Marka and Shalambod are described in more detail in the Country Database, which is only available internally. Afgooye is also described in detail by social anthropologist Virginia Luling in the book *Somali Sultanate: The Geledi City State over 150 Years* (2002).

Detailed satellite images of the towns and villages along and near the river, including Aw Degle, Afgooye, Janaale, Golweyn, Qoryooley, Shalambod and Sablale, are available in the above-mentioned book *Atlas of the Juba and Shabelle Rivers in Somalia* by FAO-SWALIM. Among other things, the images show the towns/villages' surroundings and their location in relation to the river. The book is available on the internet:

http://www.faoswalim.org/subsites/River_Atlas_Files/River_Atlas_Documents/index.html.

There are also a number of settlements or small villages in Lower Shabelle that we do not have detailed information about. This also applies to the town of Wanla Weyn. Satellite images from Google Earth give a relatively good impression of some areas.

2.3.6 Main roads

The most important travel hub in Lower Shabelle is the town of Afgooye, which is situated around 30 km from Mogadishu. Both the two main roads that connect Mogadishu with the towns of Baidoa in the Bay region and Kismayo in the Lower Juba region, respectively, run through Afgooye. The road to Baidoa continues through the town of Wanla Weyn, while the road to Kismayo runs parallel to the coast southwards through the districts of Marka and Barawe.

2.3.7 Airports

There are a number of airstrips in Lower Shabelle. The most important ones have been the former military airport Balidogle west of the town of Wanla Weyn and KM50 south-west of the town of Afgooye. KM50 has at times functioned as the main civil airport for Mogadishu. At present, none of the airstrips in Lower Shabelle are used for commercial aviation. The population of the region is served by the main airport in Mogadishu.

2.3.8 The Afgooye corridor

The so-called Afgooye corridor was long a prominent feature of Lower Shabelle. The Afgooye corridor was a more or less continuous row of settlements along the roughly 30 km long road connecting Mogadishu and the town of Afgooye. The settlements grew until 2007, when large sections of the population of Mogadishu moved to the

⁵ According to the estimates used by FSNAU, 192,939 people live in the Marka district, 129,039 of whom live in rural areas (FSNAU 2013). That means that up to 63,900 people live in the town of Marka. The figure is very uncertain, however.

area to escape the intense fighting in the city. In 2010, it was estimated that approx. 400,000 internally displaced persons had sought refuge in the corridor (Beaumont 2010). This estimate was probably too high, but it nevertheless says something about the prevalence of internally displaced persons in this part of Lower Shabelle during this period.

After the fighting in Mogadishu quietened down in August 2011, many internally displaced persons returned to the city (IRIN News 2012). Many internally displaced persons also left the corridor when the front line was pushed into the area in spring 2012 (see section 3.4) (OCHA 2012). Nowadays, many of the settlements in the corridor have been abandoned. Elasha Biyaha, one of the core areas in the Afgooye corridor, now looks almost deserted compared with what it was like before (Mohamed 2013). In September 2013, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that there were 103,000 internally displaced persons left in Lower Shabelle (UNHCR 2013). It is unclear how many of these people are staying in the Afgooye corridor.

3. POWER RELATIONS AND SECURITY CHALLENGES

Since 2006, Lower Shabelle has been characterised by unstable power relations, a situation in which different players have fought each other for control of resources and strategically important areas. There is no overview of all these players or of who has controlled each area at any given time. The available information is fragmentary, and the sources refer to the power relations on a general and regional level. This means that it is not possible to give a detailed and exhaustive account of the conditions. This report therefore only contains information about the main players and the main aspects.

The conflict between local clans and the Hawiye clans that encroached on the region in the 1990s still exists and flares up occasionally, particularly between the Haber Gedir clan Ayr and the Biimaal clan in the Marka area. This conflict was overshadowed, however, during this period by bigger lines of conflict and external players. The development can be divided into four periods: 1) Indha-Adde and the ICU, 2) Ethiopian intervention, 3) Islamist rule, and 4) the offensive against al-Shabaab. The report also briefly describes general security challenges that the population faced during the different periods, and still faces. Security, here, refers to individuals' freedom from violence and fear of violence.⁶

3.1 PRIOR TO DECEMBER 2006: INDHA-ADDE AND THE ICU

Little concrete information is available about power relations in Lower Shabelle before December 2006. The information is largely limited to the fact that the warlord Sheikh Yusuf Mohamed Siyad «Indha-Adde» from the Haber Gedir clan Ayr ruled in the region. This regime can be seen as a continuation of the incursion by the Haber

⁶ Violence is the intentional use of, or threat of, physical force or coercion against another person.

Gedir militias into Lower Shabelle in the 1990s, where they appropriated land and property and became a dominating power factor in the region (Landinfo 2007b, pp. 5-6). Indha-Adde based himself in the important port town of Marka and ruled with the help of clan militias.⁷ The local Biimaal clan, which traditionally belonged in the Marka area, was thereby repressed (Gundel 2006, p. 37). To what extent Indha-Adde's power spread to other parts of Lower Shabelle is unclear.

After June 2006, Indha-Adde joined the Islamic Courts Union (ICU). This did not entail any major upheaval, but appears to represent a continuation of existing power relations. The ICU took control of the whole of Lower Shabelle. The formal handover of power took place at the end of September 2006 (Faqi n.d.).

3.1.1 Security challenges

Like other warlords, Indha-Adde primarily used his power to exploit the population. Crime was a widespread problem, particularly in the form of militia-manned roadblocks where people had to pay taxes and were subjected to maltreatment. Members of militarily weak clans and groups were generally more at risk of such maltreatment (Landinfo 2005a, p. 2). Whether checkpoints were removed or retained under the ICU varied from area to area (UN Security Council 2006, p. 32).

3.2 FROM DECEMBER 2006 TO JANUARY 2009: ETHIOPIAN INTERVENTION

On 24 December 2006, Ethiopia declared war on the ICU in support of the Somali transitional government (TFG)⁸ (Spiegel Online 2006). Lower Shabelle was surrendered without resistance from the ICU's militias, which retreated to Mogadishu. However, the Ethiopians bombed Balidogle airport west of Wanla Weyn (BBC 2006). Ethiopian forces pursued the ICU forces through Lower Shabelle to Mogadishu and seized the city on 28 December (Barnes & Hassan 2007, p. 6). The ICU also surrendered Mogadishu without a fight and fled south to Lower Juba. Again, the Ethiopian forces took up pursuit through Lower Shabelle without fighting occurring in the region.⁹

The power situation following the Ethiopian intervention is unclear, and it is not clear which areas the different parties had control of at all times. Control of some areas appears to have changed hands several times. The period was dominated by a power struggle between the TFG and its Ethiopian protectors, on the one hand, and various anti-TFG forces, on the other. The most prominent anti-TFG forces were various militias from the Haber Gedir clan Ayr that were afraid of losing their positions of power and the property they had appropriated in the region in the 1990s

⁷ The internationally recognised Somali transitional government at that time (TNG) appointed Indha-Adde as 'governor' of Lower Shabelle in 2002 (Gundel 2006, p 39). This title was probably a reflection of already existing power relations, i.e. that Indha-Adde also had power in the area before then.

⁸ The TFG was the internationally recognised ruling power in Somalia during the period October/November 2004 until 20 August 2012.

⁹ Parts of the ICU's forces in Mogadishu disintegrated (International Crisis Group 2008, p. 2). The remainder retreated towards Kismayo in Lower Juba. The first big battle between the parties after the Ethiopians seized Mogadishu took place at Jilib in Middle Juba on 31 December (Reuters 2006).

(Landinfo 007b, p. 6; Landinfo 2008, p. 17), and the Islamist organisation Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen (al-Shabaab).¹⁰

The TFG did not succeed in establishing control of Lower Shabelle. The TFG consisted of several different clan militias. The militias largely came from the Darod clan Majerten in Puntland (International Crisis Group 2006, p. 19). Like the Ethiopians, these militias were seen as intruders by many of the local population. However, as a result of the occasional presence of TFG militias and Ethiopian forces, local clans in some places challenged the Hawiye militias, which had dominated the region since the 1990s (Landinfo 2007a, p. 11).

In the town of Afgooye, the TFG installed representatives of the local clans in the administration (Landinfo 2007a, p. 11). That was the first time for many years that the local clans in the town were able to rule themselves. The impression is that the TFG thereby held power in the town throughout 2007 and 2008. The TFG also appears to have had control of the town of Wanla Weyn throughout this period. The strategically important location of the towns of Afgooye and Wanla Weyn along the main road connecting Ethiopia and Mogadishu underpins this assessment. Furthermore, the TFG appears to have held power in the town of Qoryooley until June 2007 (Landinfo 2007a, p. 12; Ethiopian Review 2007) and Marka until November 2008 (Landinfo 2007b, p. 6; Landinfo 2008, p. 17; Hansen 2013, p. 69).

It is difficult to get a good picture of the Ethiopian presence in the region beyond the above-mentioned supply line. Ethiopian forces were stationed in Afgooye (Landinfo 2007b, p. 6). The Ethiopian presence seems to have been otherwise limited, although they established a number of temporary bases and checkpoints in different places in the region, including in the districts of Qoryooley and Marka (Garowe Online 2008a).

In June 2007, a militia loyal to Indha-Adde took control of the towns of Buulo Mareer in the Marka district and Qoryooley after intense fighting against forces loyal to the TFG (Ethiopian Review 2007). How long they controlled the towns after this is unclear, but, in October and November 2008, al-Shabaab took control of the towns of Barawe, Qoryooley and Marka (Garowe Online 2008b). Marka fell without a fight (Gettleman 2008). The Biimaal clan, which had been dominated by the Haber Gedir clan Ayr for years, welcomed al-Shabaab as liberators when they entered the town (Hansen 2013, p. 69). Whether this means that the TFG's power over the town of Marka depended on the Ayr clan is unclear.

3.2.1 Security challenges

Al-Shabaab and other anti-TFG forces carried out frequent attacks on the TFG, the Ethiopians and their supporters already from 2007. The attacks largely took the form of guerilla warfare. Many attacks were directed at Ethiopian convoys on the main road connecting Ethiopia and Mogadishu via the districts of Wanla Weyn and

¹⁰ They were both part of the ICU. In September 2007, remnants of the ICU, including Indha-Adde and his militias, united with other anti-TFG forces to form the Alliance for Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS) (BBC 2007). Al-Shabaab, which was formally founded in August 2006 in order to create a uniform, cross-clan court militia (Hansen 2013, p. 36), did not join the ARS and acted as an independent organisation after that (Hansen 2013, p. 57).

Afgooye. The Yaq Bari Weyne area west of Wanla Weyn was hit particularly hard. While the attacks appear to have been targeted, civilians also suffered as a result of being ‘in the wrong place at the wrong time’, not just as victims of remotely controlled mines or by getting caught in crossfire, but also by being subjected to partly random arrests and retaliation after attacks (HRW 2008, p. 59; Amnesty International 2008, p. 9). Civilians were also victims of abuse and retaliation by different parties based on suspicions of collaborating with the enemy. There was also widespread banditry during the period, particularly in the form of roadblocks (Landinfo 2007a, p. 12).

3.3 FROM JANUARY 2009 TO MAY 2012: ISLAMIST RULE

The Ethiopian forces withdrew from Lower Shabelle in January 2009. The withdrawal was in accordance with an agreement whereby moderate parts of the ARS were incorporated into the TFG.¹¹ However, uncompromising sections of the ARS continued the fight against the TFG and its supporters under the name Hizbul Islam.¹² Al-Shabaab also continued the fight. The Ethiopian withdrawal resulted in the two Islamist groups taking control of the region. By May 2009, the whole Lower Shabelle appears to have been taken over by the two movements. This impression is supported by the fact that al-Shabaab and Hizbul Islam launched a major offensive against the TFG in Mogadishu at this time.

Al-Shabaab took control of southern parts of Lower Shabelle already in November 2008. Hizbul Islam took power in the town of Afgooye (Burk 2009; Hansen 2013, p. 108) and parts of the Afgooye corridor (Landinfo 2009a, p. 16). Exactly where the border between them was is unclear, but it did not follow the district borders. Even though the two movements fought together against the TFG, they were also rivals and sometimes fought each other. Hizbul Islam also appears to have had control of the district of Wanla Weyn (Landinfo 2009a, p. 16). Al-Shabaab appears to have taken over this area shortly afterwards, however, when they established an administration in Yaq Bari Weyne and a sharia court in the Wanla Weyn area in July 2009 (Hansen 2013, p. 88). On 21 December 2010, al-Shabaab also took the town of Afgooye (Hansen 2013, p. 108). Hizbul Islam was then incorporated into al-Shabaab. The formal merger took place on 28 December 2010 (Hansen 2013, p. 108). Following this, al-Shabaab controlled the whole region.

3.3.1 Security challenges

In many ways, the Ethiopian withdrawal and the Islamist takeover of power improved the security situation in Lower Shabelle because it brought an end to the guerilla warfare that had been widespread in parts of the region until then. The occasional clashes between al-Shabaab and Hizbul Islam were short-lived and concentrated in the few areas where Hizbul Islam held power prior to December 2010.

¹¹ The agreement was negotiated at a series of meetings in Djibouti from March 2008, and it is often referred to as the Djibouti Agreement (Kasajja 2010).

¹² Hizbul Islam was founded in Kismayo in January/February 2009. The organisation comprised several different groups, including uncompromising sections of the ARS that did not accept the Djibouti Agreement. Indha-Adde and his militias were among the latter, but they went over to the TFG in May 2009 (China View 2009).

The security situation under al-Shabaab had two sides. On the one hand, al-Shabaab introduced a sharia regime with effective surveillance, police and courts (Landinfo 2009a, p. 9; Hansen 2013, pp. 83-84). Roadblocks were removed, crime was reduced and the population enjoyed greater freedom of movement (Landinfo 2009a, p. 9; Hansen 2013, pp. 85). The result was that al-Shabaab won popular support (Hansen 2013, p. 84). Al-Shabaab also appointed a commission that addressed the property conflict between local clans and the clans that plundered the region in the 1990s, including the Haber Gedir clan. Some rightful owners had their property returned to them, although the extent of this appears to have been limited (Landinfo 2009a, p. 16).

On the other hand, the population had to comply with strict prohibitions and orders. The penal sanctions were harsh. Critics and opponents risked liquidation (Landinfo 2009b). Women were subjected to forced marriage with al-Shabaab members (Landinfo 2012b). Moreover, al-Shabaab set up military training camps, including at Lanta Buro in the Afgooye district (Sipus 2011; BBC 2012) and near the town of Barawe (Hansen 2013, p. 93). Many people joined the organisation voluntarily, but al-Shabaab also practised forced recruitment (Landinfo 2012c). The extent of forced recruitment appears to have increased after the tide of war turned against al-Shabaab from autumn 2010 (Hansen 2013, p. 102).¹³

For further information about the above, see the following responses on Landinfo's website www.landinfo.no:

- Landinfo response of 17 November 2009: *Al-Shabaab – trusler og reaksjoner mot frivillige organisasjoner, familiemedlemmer til ansatte i frivillige organisasjoner, myndighetstilhengere og andre kritikere (Al-Shabaab – threats and retaliation against NGOs, family members of employees of NGOs, supporters of the authorities and other critics - in Norwegian only)*
- Landinfo response of 8 May 2012: *Sårbarhet – minoritetsgrupper, svake klaner og utsatte enkeltpersoner i sør (Vulnerability, minority groups, weak clans and individuals at risk individuals at risk – in Norwegian only)*
- Landinfo response of 6 July 2012: *Al-Shabaab and forced marriage*
- Landinfo response of 6 July 2012: *Rekruttering til al-Shabaab (Recruitment to al-Shabaab – in Norwegian only)*

3.4 FROM MAY 2012: OFFENSIVE AGAINST AL-SHABAAB

In May 2012, TFG militias¹⁴ and forces from the African Union in Somalia (AMISOM)¹⁵ referred to in the following as government forces, launched an

¹³ On 23 August 2010, al-Shabaab launched an offensive against the TFG and AMISOM in Mogadishu. The offensive failed and al-Shabaab suffered huge losses (Hansen 2013, p. 102). In February 2011, the TFG and AMISOM launched a counter-offensive that resulted in al-Shabaab abandoning its positions in central parts of Mogadishu in August 2011.

¹⁴ TFG militias are often referred to as the Somali Government Army (SNA). The SNA is not a regular army, however, but consists of clan militias.

¹⁵ AMISOM became part of the Somali conflict from March 2007 (Hansen 2013, p. 51). AMISOM was stationed in Mogadishu at that time to protect the TFG. AMISOM's military muscle has proved decisive in the fight against al-Shabaab.

offensive against al-Shabaab in Lower Shabelle. The offensive was called 'Free Shabelle' and it targeted the town of Afgooye from Mogadishu. The offensive resulted in thousands of people fleeing from the Afgooye corridor (Al Jazeera 2012). The fighting was not extensive, however, because al-Shabaab retreated when the government forces advanced. The government forces seized the town on 25 May (AMISOM 2012a).¹⁶

A similar pattern was repeated when the government forces advanced further into the region. The advance took place gradually and at irregular intervals. They took control of Lanta Buro in July (Garowe Online 2012). On 27 August, they took the town of Marka (AMISOM 2012b). They seized the town of Wanla Weyn on 7 October (AMISOM 2012b). Bariire and Aw Dhegle in the southern part of Afgooye district, and Janaale on the border between the districts of Marka and Qoryooley were seized on 14 February 2013 (AMISOM 2013). After that, the offensive in Lower Shabelle more or less came to a halt. It is unclear to what extent the FGS¹⁷ has established administrations or consolidated its power in other ways in the different areas that its forces, with the support of AMISOM, have taken from al-Shabaab.

In July 2012, clashes occurred between FGS militias from the Biimaal clan and the Haber Gedir clan Ayr in the Marka area (Garowe Online 2013a).

As of 17 October 2013, al-Shabaab still controls the southern part of the region, including the towns of Qoryooley and Barawe. Since towns and roads have been the primary objectives for the government forces' operations, al-Shabaab may also have maintained its influence in rural areas in districts that the government forces have entered (Landinfo and the Danish Immigration Service 2013, pp. 37 and 41). The situation map that is used by a number of media can therefore give a misleading impression of the actual power situation on the ground.

For updates on the further development of the offensive, go to AMISOM's website, where it is possible, among other things, to get daily news updates from <http://somaliamediamonitoring.org/>.

3.4.1 Security challenges

The security situation in the parts of Lower Shabelle that the FGS militia and AMISOM forces have entered appears to have deteriorated compared with the situation when al-Shabaab was in power. Al-Shabaab carries out frequent guerilla attacks against forces from AMISOM and the FGS, for instance in the form of bombings and ambushes. The latter can develop into intensive, but short-lived fighting. The attacks appear to be targeted, but civilians who are 'in the wrong place at the wrong time' also suffer. The security situation in areas that al-Shabaab no longer controls has also deteriorated in that crime in the form of militia-manned roadblocks again has become a widespread problem (Moalim 2013; Garowe Online 2013b).

¹⁶ There is some uncertainty as regards the exact timings. Dates should therefore be used with caution.

¹⁷ The TFG was replaced by a permanent government (Federal Government of Somalia, FGS) on 20 August 2012.

As regards security in al-Shabaab-controlled areas, see section 3.3.1. To what extent the offensive against al-Shabaab has resulted in a change in the security situation in al-Shabaab areas is unclear.

4. HUMANITARIAN CONDITIONS

The humanitarian situation in Lower Shabelle is very complex and it is influenced by both man-made and naturally occurring factors. This report only describes the main challenges people are facing. Although security and humanitarian challenges are dealt with separately in this report, it is important to note that these challenges are interconnected and influence each other. Poor living conditions, for example, can give rise to crime, while a poor security situation makes it difficult to engage in aid work.

4.1 HEALTH SERVICES

Like in other regions in Southern and Central Somalia, inadequate health services affect the humanitarian situation in Lower Shabelle. The public health service collapsed together with the Somali government administration in the 1990s, and it is therefore primarily aid organisations and private actors that provide health services in Somalia. They are for the most part concentrated in towns and secure areas (WHO 2010, p. 13). In a region where 80 per cent of the population lives in rural areas, this means that most people have to travel in order to get medical help. Medical services vary in quality and are consistently plagued by a lack of equipment, medicines and qualified personnel.

In the wake of the offensive against al-Shabaab, the aid organisations expanded and increased their efforts in areas over which al-Shabaab lost control (Russo 2013). Moreover, AMISOM set up hospitals and health centres in areas under its control (Said 2013). As of June 2013, according to an overview from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA),¹⁸ there were six functioning hospitals in Lower Shabelle (OCHA 2013). The towns of Afgooye and Marka each have two hospitals. The other hospitals are in the towns of Qoryooley and Barawe. There are also smaller health centres in all districts in the region. The distribution is very uneven, however. The best coverage is in the Afgooye district and in the area between the towns of Marka, Qoryooley and Kurtunwaarey. The inland area near Bay has no health services. There is only one health centre in the Sablale district, located in the town of the same name.

On 14 August 2013, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) pulled out of Somalia because of the untenable security situation for its staff (MSF 2013). This withdrawal has left a big vacuum (Ahmed & Whiting 2013). MSF supported the health efforts in the region and made it possible, among other things, for the hospitals in Afgooye to offer free treatment. Following the departure of MSF, the hospital risks running out of

¹⁸ This overview is not exhaustive.

medicines and medical equipment (Osman 2013). The ultimate consequences of the pull-out are as yet unclear.

4.1.1 Mental health

There are no services for the treatment of mental illnesses in Lower Shabelle. The nearest available service is in Mogadishu, which is the only place in Southern Somalia where mentally ill people can get help (WHO 2011). The service is in no way capable of meeting the needs that exist (WHO 2011; Reinl 2013). There is often no direct Somali translation for mental illnesses, and it is widely believed that mental illnesses cannot be treated (WHO 2010, pp. 18 and 21). Mentally ill people are stigmatised, discriminated against and isolated. Many of them therefore choose to conceal such illnesses (WHO 2010, pp. 21-22).

4.2 FOOD SECURITY

As in the rest of Somalia, the humanitarian situation in Lower Shabelle is characterised by chronic food insecurity (WHO, UNICEF, WFP, FAO & FSNAU 2010). This means that, for frequently recurring periods, households do not have physical or financial access to enough food. Better times are constantly being replaced by harder times. The food security of the population of Lower Shabelle is primarily affected by the rainy seasons. If there is too little rain, crops fail. If there is too much rain, the crops are flooded. Both situations can result in the population starving.

FSNAU carries out periodic assessments of food security in Somalia. The assessments are visualised using what are known as IPC maps,¹⁹ which are available at <http://www.fsnau.org/ipc/ipc-map>. The IPC maps provide a clear picture of the prevailing food security situation in different areas at any given time. The maps also show any areas that are particularly vulnerable if food aid from humanitarian organisations were to be reduced or cease.

4.2.1 Floods

Lower Shabelle is subject to flooding at regular intervals. Floods occur during or in the wake of rainy seasons with too much rain, and they affect local areas that are at risk. The most at risk areas are situated along the river, but areas that are not near the river can also experience flooding. One of the worst floods in recent years took place in autumn 2006, when large areas were flooded and many villages were isolated.

4.2.2 The famine in 2011/2012

The worst food crisis in Lower Shabelle in recent times took place in autumn 2011, when the region experienced famine. The famine was declared by the UN on 21 July 2011 (UN News Centre 2011). On 3 February 2012, the UN declared the famine to be over (UN News Centre 2012). People also suffered before and after the famine.²⁰

¹⁹ IPC stands for Integrated Food Security Phase Classification.

²⁰ It is important to note that famine is defined as a situation in which 1) at least 20 per cent of all households lack enough food to cover the daily human need of 2,100 calories, 2) there is acute malnutrition (lack of

According to estimates from a study authorised and funded by FAO-FSNAU and Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWS NET), 96,200 people, including 42,900 children under the age of five, starved to death in Lower Shabelle between October 2010 and April 2012 (Checchi & Robinson 2013, p. 8). The estimates also include internally displaced persons. The famine was the result of a number of factors, including failed crops caused by prolonged drought, but also a lack of humanitarian aid (Oxfam n.d.).

4.3 ACCESS FOR HUMANITARIAN AID ORGANISATIONS

As already mentioned, the humanitarian situation is affected by relief efforts. The possibility of engaging in relief work is affected by power relations and the security situation. Southern and Central Somalia, including Lower Shabelle, is regarded as among the most dangerous places in the world to engage in relief work. Even though al-Shabaab permitted emergency relief during the famine in 2011, a number of organisations are wholly or partly excluded from operating in al-Shabaab areas (Landinfo 2012a, p. 5). Humanitarian aid organisations also have very limited access to areas that are no longer controlled by al-Shabaab. OCHA regularly publishes maps that show the extent to which humanitarian organisations have access to different districts. They are available from <http://www.unocha.org/somalia/maps-graphics/humanitarian-access-maps>.

4.4 HUMANITARIAN CONDITIONS IN AL-SHABAAB AREAS

The population in al-Shabaab-controlled areas faces additional humanitarian challenges. Al-Shabaab has introduced a sharia regime with strict prohibitions and impositions that the population has to comply with. Enforcement of these rules seems to vary from place to place and over time (Hansen 2013, p. 85). Women are subject to strict dress codes and their freedom of movement is restricted. This has serious consequences for families that are dependent on female family members engaging in trading (Landinfo 2009a, p. 16). At the same time, the population is obliged to pay financial contributions (zakat) to al-Shabaab, for example in the form of agricultural produce (Hansen 2013, p. 91). The collection of these contributions appears to have increased after the tide of war turned against al-Shabaab in autumn 2010 (Hansen 2013, p. 102; Landinfo and the Danish Immigration Service 2013, p. 35). According to a number of sources, the taxes have grown more and more onerous (Jibril 2013).

For more information about humanitarian conditions under al-Shabaab, see Landinfo's response of 8 May 2012: *Sårbarhet – minoritetsgrupper, svake klaner og utsatte enkeltpersoner i sør (Vulnerability, minority groups, weak clans and individuals at risk – in Norwegian only)*

4.5 OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE PRESENT HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

In addition to FSNAU's assessment of food security and OCHA's assessment of humanitarian access, see the following sources for information about the present humanitarian situation in Lower Shabelle:

nutrients) among more than 30 per cent of the children in the population, and 3) there are two dead adults or four dead children due to starvation per 10,000 every single day (Corum 2011).

- OCHA publishes monthly reports on the humanitarian situation at the national level in Somalia. They are available from:
<http://www.unocha.org/somalia/reports-media/ocha-reports/humanitarian-bulletins>.
- UNHCR's *Population Movement Trends* is an interactive database containing information about monthly population movements at the district level in Somalia and the reasons for the movements. This information can give an indication of the humanitarian situation in Lower Shabelle. If, for example, many thousands of people are displaced in or from a district, this could indicate that the humanitarian situation in the district is poor. The database is available at <http://data.unhcr.org/horn-of-africa/country.php?id=197>.

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