



Protection Monitoring Report

IDPS IN WEST GUJI ZONE - ETHIOPIA

MAY 2019

Overview

This report covers the month of May 2019 and outlines key protection issues and challenges faced by returnee populations as well as sector related gaps that were either addressed or referred to relevant agencies/clusters for which a response is in progress. During the reporting period, joint protection monitoring in West Guji was conducted by UNHCR, UNFPA, UNICEF and OHCHR in 17 kebeles¹ in Kercha woreda, six kebeles² in Hambela Wamena woreda and six kebeles³ in Bule Hora woreda.

On 27 March 2019, Federal, Regional and zonal officials held a third round of discussions to prepare return of IDPs in Gedeo and West Guji zones. As a result, security forces, defence forces, police and local militias (approximately 600 individuals) were deployed in the different return locations as peace and reconciliation efforts continued between the two ethnic groups (Gedeos and Gujis). At the end of April, the zonal authorities communicated a plan to return of IDPs in West Guji and Gedeo that would carry out in three phases:

- 1) **Phase I:** involved the movement of IDPs by government transport to their places of origin;
- 2) **Phase II:** a transit period of 3-4 days/assistance and establishment of service delivery;
- 3) **Phase III:** recovery and rehabilitation, including peacebuilding initiatives.

As a result of this announcement and subsequent returns starting on 03 May 2019, the Joint Protection Monitoring teams started to conduct return monitoring and produced ten situational updates and joint protection return monitoring reports. The government requested all partners to support the returnees in the areas of origin and ordered all the IDP collective sites to be closed.

The voluntariness of IDP returns remains a concern. Returned IDPs were not consulted but instead promised assistance in their areas of origin. Returned IDPs reported that it was futile to disobey the government. Discontinuation of assistance, including the dismantling of sites, in current displacement

¹ Banko Baya, Banko Guduba, Banko Michicha, Bilida Saba, Egu Abayi, Gurachu Jaldy Badyia, Gurachu Jaldy Magala, Kercha 02, Kercha 01, Lemi Kercha, Kercha Enshe, Hebo Molicha, Ela Farda, Bilida Kojowa, Chiga Kibicha, Sari Saba, and Galessa Burka.

² Benti Neng, Chorso Sodu, Chorso Bulle, Goro Bedessa, Seke Bokossa, and Deri Kojowa.

³ Gerba 02, Dogo Sodu, Gerba 01, Hera Lipitu, Toma Meti, and Hera Kuto.

areas, was a means to coerce IDPs to return. This return process comes after several attempts were made by the government in August, November and December 2018 to return the IDPs. The returns in 2018 were unsustainable due to the prevailing insecurity situation exacerbated by the absence of essential services in return areas.

Methodology

The return monitoring aimed at obtaining community-level information to better understand the various challenges faced by IDP and returnees, the living conditions, protection risks and security threats in the places of return. Additionally, return figures were collected and sector gaps identified.

Interviews with Key Informants

Methodologies used to monitor during this period include: key informant interviews and discussions with IDP returnees, zonal officials, woreda officials, kebele managers, sub-kebele chiefs, Directors of Health Centres, etc. The type of information gathered includes:

- Update on the security situation and the mitigation measures taken at the kebele level to increase security for IDP returnees.
- Numbers of IDPs who are to be returned, the number of IDPs who were returned and registered, the number of IDP returnees that are expected to arrive and date of arrival.
- Assistance provided or planned by the Woreda office.
- Understand the peace and reconciliation initiatives taken at the woreda level and implemented at the kebele level.
- Identify the major gaps face by the returnees and the community in general.

Focus Groups discussions with returnees

Focus Groups Discussions (FGDs) with the returnees enable the Protection Monitors to better understand the return process from the departure to arrival point as well as identify protection concerns raised by the IDPs. The type of information gathered includes:

- The return process (i.e. if the return was voluntary; were IDPs consulted, assistance promised by the Government, etc.)
- The feeling of safety and security and identify potential security/safety risks.
- Access to basic services as well as needs and gaps.
- Access to their land and property.
- Identify potential risks that could lead to tensions between returnee's community and host community.
- Identify persons with specific needs among the returnees (e.g. persons with disabilities, persons with serious medical conditions, unaccompanied and separated children, survivors of SGBV).

Access

- In some kebeles of Deri Kojowa, Hambela Wamena as well as Kercha Inshe and Bilida Bukisa in Kercha woreda, government officials were reluctant to provide information to protection monitors, as they claimed that despite information provided to different agencies, no assistance was forthcoming.
- In collective IDP sites, the government restricted assistance as it was perceived to hinder the process of return.
- The heavy rains affected access to some of the returnee locations as some roads are out of use and bridges broken.

Key Findings

1. Population Movement

2. Statistics of the population reached and types of interview conducted per Woreda⁴

Types of interview	Kercha		Bule Hora		Hambella		Total
# kebele	18		08		07		33
# of FGDs	24		17		08		49
# of KI	32		09		09		50
# interviews	05		04		02		11
Population	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
# KI participants	29	07	09	00	07	02	54
# of FGDs participants	119	102	101	83	56	34	495
# of individual interviews	02	00	04	00	02	00	08
PSNs	16	05	16	14	10	55	100
Total	178	102	126	83	91	77	657

Situation of Return

- The overall humanitarian situation, as well as the protection environment where IDPs have returned, is not conducive. For example, basic services have yet to be upgraded, notably, health, WASH and permanent shelter facilities. Additionally, there is an ongoing need for food, sufficient shelter and NFIs, as IDPs returned with few belongings as they were promised assistance in their areas of return.
- Assistance (food, shelter materials and NFIs) provided to IDPs upon arrival, as pledged by the government, was insufficient and provided to only some returnees. Those that arrived spontaneously on foot and those who arrived without their entire family members generally did not receive any

⁴ A dashboard will not be submitted for the month of May as the Kobo Protection Monitoring tool was not utilized due to the ongoing return monitoring;; this table provides a statistical overview of the locations covered and interviews conducted.

assistance. It was observed that government resources were insufficient to cover the needs of the returnees, leaving them to fend for themselves in very dire conditions.

- For instance, the returnees were given only one plastic sheet per household and the type and quantity of assistance provided was inconsistent from kebele to kebele. For example, the first groups of IDPs returned to Kercha woreda were provided with a package of assistance (corrugated iron sheets, food, plastic sheets and blankets) while in Bule Hora and Hambella woredas, returnees either did not receive assistance or did not receive the same package of assistance.
- Lack of participation by returnees in various leadership structures at the local level and also representation in the local militia composition is reported. Before the conflict, both Guji and Gedeos were members of the militias⁵; however, the returnees observed that the militias are entirely comprised of Gujis. This imbalance in ethnic diversity has led to Gedeo's reporting a lack of confidence in the current safety and security situation in return areas.
- In Kercha 02 kebele, the host community showed resentment by throwing stones and verbal insults at returnees, while in Lami Kercha kebele in the same woreda, there was a reception ceremony in favour of the returnees.

Safety and Security

- Reports of clashes between unidentified armed groups (UAG) and the Ethiopian Defense Forces (EDF), caused fear among the returnees which was exacerbated by reports of casualties involving government officials in places like Ela Ferda and Burka Gallesa kebeles. Security updates published indicated that several government officials were either kidnapped or ambushed and there were casualties among both groups in May in kebeles in Kercha, Bule Hora and Gelana woredas. It is noted that the current security situation may likely affect the sustainability of the return, as this has already caused some returnees to go back to their initial places of displacement.
- In early May, a few reported incidents of civilian deaths in Kercha woreda have heightened tensions between the two ethnic groups (Gedeos and Gujis). Such incidents, cause uncertainty and apprehension in the communities and fuels fears there could be a resurgence in inter-ethnic tensions and conflict.
- According to FGD participants in Banko Baya kebele, despite the presence of militias, returnees still fear for their lives. Men fetch water to protection women from harassment. On a positive note, no physical violence from the host community towards the IDP returnees, has been reported in this kebele.
- In Egu Abayi, in addition to the absence of security forces in this area, the head of Egu Abayi kebele leader was imprisoned and accused of being a member of an Unidentified Armed Group (UAG).

⁵ The militias are armed community security forces working with the police and other security officials to keep law and order in a kebele.

- In most kebeles, the safety and security situation was stabilized during the reporting period, bolstered by the deployment of 600 militias across West Guji zone. The improvement in security presence is encouraging and most returnees have reported they do not have any issues visiting their house/farm/land especially during the day. Nevertheless, at Goro Bedessa kebele of Hambella woreda, Guji women FGD participants revealed that they do not have access to their original homeland because of inter-ethnic tension. As a result, they are living on the other side of the kebele in temporary shelters.
- Bringing the perpetrators of crime and violence during the 2018 conflict to justice and making the process transparent is required as returnees reported that perpetrators are walking around freely. During a visit of the State Minister of Peace stated that more than 270 alleged perpetrators have been apprehended from West Guji and currently in court for crimes committed, however, the zonal authorities pointed out in one EOC meeting in Bule Hora that no perpetrator has been arrested in the Gedeo zone. The ages and genders of those arrested is unknown to the protection monitoring teams.

3. Protection and Human Rights Concerns

Human Rights (HR)

- Spontaneous back and forth movement was observed in the kebeles bordering Gedeb/Gedeo; due to insecurity and lack of adequate humanitarian assistance, returnees are going back to Gedeb.
- Ethnic-based harassment is reported in some kebeles, more commonly, by Gedeo women and children returnees. At the time of a safety and security assessment, as part of the protection monitoring conducted in many kebeles, a mixed reaction was observed from host communities about the arrival of Gedeo returnees. In some kebeles, host community members are happy and very welcoming of returnees, while in other kebeles, discontent and community tensions were observed and reported by returnees.
- Denial of humanitarian assistance and basic services was reported by Gedeo returnees in most kebeles monitored. Part of the issue is that returnees have not been part of the re-targeting conducted in April.
- Some returnees have disclosed that Gedeo returnees are excluded from receiving assistance, while Guji members of the host community are observed receiving assistance, which is deliberate and ethnic-based discrimination by some local authorities.
- OHCHR organized two days training on basic human rights and rights of IDPs and returnees from police and public prosecutors from all six woredas of West Guji zone from 28 and 29 May 2019. Altogether 58 (56 males and two female) participants participated in the training. The training enhanced the knowledge on human rights standards applicable for IDPs and returnees. It stressed state obligation to protect, respect and fulfil the rights of affected populations. The participants raised concerns associated with political interference, lack of resources and technical skills, that negatively affect their ability to address accountability on alleged human rights violations. The local justice organizations do

not have enough representations of female officers and as a result, the overall justice system, does not have the adequate staffing or capacity to address gender issues in the region.

- OHCHR regional representative held an advocacy meeting with government officials in West Guji to raise concerns regarding their accountability and follow-up on alleged human rights violations/abuses.

Child Protection (CP)

- Many FGDs participants reported that some of the returnees left their children with their relatives in locations of displacement, as they were still attending school, so will join their parents at the end of the academic year. During FGDs, parents reported that most of the children have dropped out of school and some were not accepted in enrol in school due to the absence of school documents (destroyed during the conflict). Other children could not enrol in schools because it was late in the school year.
- Separated and unaccompanied children (UASC) that were returning to their areas of origin were identified by protection monitors and referred to child protection agencies for follow-up and case management services.
- In mid-May, child protection agencies and WoWCYA deployed social workers to the collective sites to identify UASCs and other vulnerable children. Currently a strategy to track UASCs across zones and regions is being developed by the CP/GBV Sub-Cluster and child protection agencies working in Gedee and West Guji.

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)

- Women expressed a fear of return due to the risk of being attacked and raped.
- In Kercha 02 kebele, one IDP returnee reported that his three children went missing during the conflict and were forcibly married by the host community while displaced at Gedeb.
- One SGBV survivor was identified and referred to WoWCYA and the GBV focal person deployed by UNFPA in the woreda. The alleged perpetrator was detailed.
- The monitoring teams have observed that health facilities and water points are far away, which is a risk factor women and girls, given the tense security situation in areas where there are UAG.
- Women need sanitary materials and/or dignity kits. At Gerba 02 kebele of Bule Hora woreda, there are 41 female-headed households, mostly widows with minor children, without support.

Housing, Land and Property (HLP)

- In below-listed woredas and kebeles, the officials conducted damage and loss assessment (DaLA) and the process is ongoing in other kebeles. The reports of the DaLA was shared with monitors and detailed below:
 - In Kercha woreda: Banko Michicha kebele, 32 houses covered with iron sheets, 4 houses covered with plastic sheet and 26 straw roofed houses are destroyed. In Banko Guduba

- kebele, 142 houses covered with iron sheets, 127 houses covered with plastic sheet, 49 huts, and 318 houses covered and made of various materials were destroyed. In Kercha kebele 01, 75 houses roofed with corrugated iron sheet, 15 houses with straw roofs and 4 huts belonging to Gedeo returnees are destroyed. In Sare Saba kebele, 240 houses covered with iron sheets, 113 houses covered with plastic sheets and 112 straw-thatched houses are destroyed. In Blida Saba kebele, 315 houses of Gedeo returnees were partially destroyed and 116 houses were fully destroyed.
- In Hamebella woreda: Chorso Bule, 35 houses covered with galvanized corrugated iron sheet and 150 huts made of straw were destroyed. In Chorso Sodu kebele and Toma Meti kebele, 29 houses and 47 huts belonging to Gedeos are destroyed and the Guji returnees lost seven houses that were covered with iron sheets and 79 huts made of straw. Kebele officials have added that cattle, false banana and eucalyptus trees were also destroyed, although not captured in the damage assessment.
 - In Bule Hora woreda: Hera Lipitu kebele revealed that 17 houses were reconstructed with the support of partners. In Gerba 01 kebele, houses belonging to only nine households (out of 80 returnee HHs) were destroyed while all the farms were totally damaged. In Dogo Sodu kebele, the DaLA revealed that, 457 houses of iron sheet and 795 houses of false banana were destroyed during the violence in 2018.

Persons with Specific Needs (PSN)

- In Banko Baya, two older persons without family support and with serious medical conditions were identified and need assistance for the construction of their temporary shelter. Protection monitors referred them to shelter partners for assistance.
- It was noted that PSNs did not receive and specific attention when assistance was provided, however, the monitors ensured that PSNs were prioritized by CRS who were constructing shelters for returnees in Bonsho site in Hera Lipitu Kebele/Bule Hora woreda. Below are the details of PSNs identified by kebele/woreda:
 - In Bule Hora woreda monitors identified: five older persons and one person with disabilities (PWD) in Toma Meti Kebele; ten elderly and four PWDs in Hera Kutu kebele; ten elderly and two PWDs (one with a serious medical condition and other has four minor children) in Bonsho/Hera Lipitu kebele. Referrals to available services were provided.
 - In Kercha woreda monitors identified: three PWDs in Sare Saba kebele and one of them received a wheelchair donated by IOM; two older persons without family support and with serious medical conditions in Banko Baya kebele who need assistance with construction of their temporary shelter; and 16 PWDs in Ela Ferda kebele.
 - Hambella Wamana woreda, monitors identified: in Seke Bokossa kebele, two women (single parents) with minor children are facing challenges to meet their basic needs; in Deri kojowa, there are 22 PSN (six with serious medical condition, 12 older persons and four PWD).

4. Humanitarian Assistance

Food

- in Kercha 02 kebele, World Vision is providing the new arrivals of Gedeo returnees with food assistance.
- In most kebeles, the government provided food (corn-soy-blend, lentils, cooking oil, pulse, maize, wheat and 1kg-25kg of flour per household) to returnees. However, the distribution is not structured to consider persons with specific needs and the food quantity varied from kebele to kebele.

Health and Nutrition

- Many services in return locations were inexistent or limited. Health posts in many kebeles were destroyed during the conflict and health extension workers displaced. The existing facilities are without medication and some require returnees to pay for services.
- It was observed that adult and children are suffering from medical conditions (flu, eye infection, and diarrhoea) and have limited access to health services due to long distance of 10-15 kilometres away (2 -3 hour walk away) to nearest health posts. As a result, returnees are going to health facilities only for serious medical problems. Returnees are also required to pay for some health services in some health facilities. In some kebeles, officials have reported that if returnees provided a letter of recommendation from kebele officials they can access health services for free.
- There is no organization providing health service exclusively for returnees. NGOs like MCMDO are currently providing mobile clinics, in support of government health posts and centres, available in few kebeles up to two days per week.
- Health workers reported the lack of medication in the facilities and reproductive health services (antenatal care, family planning, vaccination and nutrition screening) are not available.

Education

- In Banko Baya kebele, most of the children dropped out of school, but some are walking two hours a day to attend class in Gottiti.
- Schools in West Guji (Kercha, Hambella, Bule Hora woredas) were partially or fully destroyed during the violence in 2018. Some schools were used as transit facilities and need to either be rehabilitated or reconstructed. It is noted that some agencies have started the reconstruction of schools, while temporary learning spaces are under reconstruction, to accommodate student on an interim basis.
- Some returnee children lost an entire academic year and will need some accelerated learning programs and catch-up classes in the coming school year.

NFI and Shelter

- In Kercha Inshe kebele, houses belonging to returnees were destroyed, IDP returnees are living in the transit sites and with their relatives since they returned while others are living in poorly constructed

temporary shelter. With the rainy season ongoing, they are in the urgent need of plastic sheet to protect themselves from the weather, as many IDPs returned without any belongings. IDPs that did return with NFIs are still in need of additional NFIs and household materials. People with special needs require support, for example, pregnant and lactating women as well as widows with minor children, cannot construct their own temporary shelters.

- In Bilida Saba kebele, reception condition/shelter situation: The process of return was facilitated by the government to their kebele of origin, however, their homes are located in different villages of Bilida Saba kebele distant from the kebele.
- In Banko Guduba kebele, two tents were erected at a church to host IDPs returnees. The space is overcrowded and IDP returnees have started to construct shelter in the compound using banana leaves and plastic sheets. Those who arrived earlier are being asked by the kebele officials to build a temporary shelter and settle on their own land, as space is limited for the newcomers, at the transit site. Upon their arrival, IDPs were provided with food (5 kgs of maize, 1.5 kg of lentils and 600ml of cooking oil), blankets (to 207 HHs) and plastic sheet (to 106 HHs), by government authorities.
- In Egu Abayi, the assistance provided by the government (maize, oil and peas) is considered insufficient. For example, 80 quintals of maize were allocated for 1,610HHs. The kebele administrators reported to face difficulties to address the needs of the IDPs returnees and requested for assistance from humanitarian actors. Kebele leaders complained about the absence of humanitarian assistance for IDP returnees, with the exception of an organization providing health services.
- In Gurachu Jeldu Badyia, the tents housing returnees flooded due to the heavy rains. Plastic sheets are requested to fix the tents. It was reported that the kebele chief, escorted by militia, went to Qoche collective site and told everyone to evacuate the site by the next morning (18 May). Even those that did not receive the plastic sheet were told to vacate the site. No NFIs or any items were observed, the IDPs carry belongs in small plastic bags, that carry some clothing items.
- In Gurachu Jeldu Magala kebele, the coffee market collective site is empty of all IDPs except for one household because the family did not receive a plastic sheet and his wife was sick. Reportedly as soon as they receive a plastic sheet they will leave the site by the end of the day. It was observed that some IDPs carried materials with them such as floor mats, cooking materials and jerry cans.
- In Banko Michicha kebele, IDPs returnees are either at their place of residence or within the host community. IDP returnees were advised by the kebele administrators to construct their own shelter. FGD participants complained that plastic sheeting provided to construct their shelter was insufficient.

WASH

- In Banko Baya kebele, the closest water point (stream/river) is about an hour and a half walk from the transit centres, in Gottiti kebele.
- In Gurachu Jeldu Magala kebele, people evicted from the site have constructed basic wood structures covered with plastic sheets, they have no WASH facilities and no access to water.

- In most kebeles the returnees are using a spring and/or a water pump which is far from their residence. The water source is not adequate to cover the host community and returnees. In some kebeles, IDP returnees are using the nearby river water.
- There is no sanitary material distribution reported since their return and there is also no toilets and sanitary units constructed.

Recommendations

Humanitarian Actors

- Partners need to strengthen prevention and mainstream SGBV in their current response to mitigate risks for women and children.
- Engage and strengthen dialogue between both communities (returnees and host community) and enforce peaceful coexistence strategies through joint peacebuilding projects.
- The WASH sector needs to be enhanced, in many return locations, the absence of latrines was reported, and people are openly defecating. Water is also an issue in some locations where the population is using spring water for household use. According to reports, the government distributed some water tabs to returnees, but the quantity and locations were not specified.
- Shelter interventions should bear in mind the HLP issues when providing shelter assistance.
- Refer USACs to child protection partners.
- Monitor if the returnees have been provided with any assistance and identify basic services gaps and inform relevant authorities and clusters.

Bule Hora Protection Monitoring Project

- Request disaggregated data from ZoWCYA who are working on registering people individually in some locations. Request registration is disaggregated by age/sex and specific need (i.e. older person, female-headed household, child-headed households, persons with disabilities, persons with serious medical conditions, unaccompanied and separated children, etc).
- Attempt to find out on action taken by the government on alleged human rights violations and SGBV cases.
- Assess persons with specific needs within the returnee population, including cases of family separation, and refer to service providers for follow-up case management services as required.
- Monitor the Housing, Land and Property situation in each kebele, including the possession of documentation.

Protection Cluster Bule Hora

- Conduct a need assessment of PSNs by Protection Cluster member in all return locations in order to understand the magnitude of the problems affecting PSNs.

- Continue the capacity building of government counterparts, by the Protection Cluster member agencies and protection monitoring teams.

Child Protection/GBV AOR

- Provide hygiene materials to women and girls of reproductive age and mainstream SGBV prevention in all sectors.
- Provide continued follow-up on referrals of children at-risk and the outcomes for those referred.