

Regional News Roundup

AFRICA

New issue of "Forced Migration Review" focuses on urban displacement Globally, urbanisation continues to increase, and growing numbers of displaced people, whether refugees or IDPs, now reside in urban areas rather than camps. Relatively little is known about their precise numbers, demographics, basic needs or protection problems. The new issue of "Forced Migration Review" (FMR) focuses on urban displacement, offering insights from a wide range of authors in 26 articles. In their introductory articles in this issue, UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres and UN-HABITAT Executive Director Anna Tibajuka emphasise the complexity of the challenges faced by those displaced into urban areas and by those seeking to protect and assist them, and argue for the need for a radical rethinking of approaches by the international community. FMR is published by the Refugee Studies Centre of the University of Oxford. Read more: <http://www.fmreview.org/urban-displacement/>

ERITREA

Eritrea says refugees not fleeing political repression Eritrea said on Wednesday the thousands of people who leave the Red Sea state every year were not responding to any political persecution, but seeking economic opportunities overseas. Eritrea, with its population of 5 million creates one of the highest numbers of refugees of any country in the world not at war, according to the UN. Unemployment is high and poverty rife. Mandatory service in the armed forces is a source of great discontent among young people wary of continuing border clashes with Ethiopia. "Ninety-five percent of the population do national service very willingly, with pride," Yemane Ghebremeskel, director of the Eritrean president's office, told Reuters. "People move for economic reasons and that is a global phenomenon. People are not leaving because the political reality here is not conducive for them to lead their normal lives," Yemane said. Read more: <http://www.fcaea.org/aid=412.phtml>

SOMALIA

Drought hit Somaliland pleads for aid Officials in Somalia's self-declared independent republic of Somaliland have appealed to the international community to provide humanitarian aid for hundreds of thousands of people, especially children, in the wake of prolonged drought. About 1.4 million people are affected, according to the Minister for Planning and National Coordination. He said the situation is critical and requires rapid and fast responses. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA-Somalia), there are, however, huge funding gaps in comparison to the needs on the ground. Read more: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=88123>

UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia deeply concerned about latest casualties and displacement Mark Bowden, UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, expressed grave concern at the high number of civilian casualties and massive displacement taking place as a result of recent fighting in Mogadishu. Over the past week alone 80 civilians have been killed and more than 8,000 people displaced. Bowden believes that the high number of civilian casualties and continuing displacement in Mogadishu suggests the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force against civilians by all parties to the conflict. He appealed to all parties to protect civilians and to minimise the risks to the civilians by respecting and implementing their obligations.

Read more:

<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/JBRN-82PHWY?OpenDocument&clickid>

SUDAN

UXO remain threat to development Major routes in Sudan have been cleared of landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXOs) but there are still areas where the devices threaten civilians, as well as affecting aid and development efforts, say officials. The existence of landmines hampers the delivery of humanitarian aid and the return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), according to the South Sudan De-mining Authority, who also expressed concerns that unexploded bombs may hinder the smooth implementation of the peace accord, including the

national elections scheduled for April this year. Over 4,200 landmine victims have been recorded since 2002. Most of the UXOs were planted by the Southern Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudan national army during the civil war.

Read more: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=88073>

Independent south would be a sustainable state, senior official says An independent state in Southern Sudan will be a viable one with means to survive and flourish, a senior official in the semi-autonomous region said. The Speaker of South Sudan legislative assembly James Wani Igga told the London based Al-Sharq Al-Awsat newspaper in an interview that the South will be a nation based on law and citizenship if it chooses to secede in the 2011 referendum. He dismissed speculations that the South is not qualified to run its own affairs saying that they are circulated by parties that want the region to appear weak for "psychological pressure".

Read more: <http://sudantribune.com/spip.php?article34092>

UGANDA

ICRC distributes seed to 58,000 returnees Just ahead of the new planting season, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is distributing seeds to over 58,000 formerly displaced persons in northern Uganda. Each family receives 28kg of groundnut, cereal and vegetable seed which is enough to plant approximately one hectare of land. The recipients of the seed are farmers in the eastern Kitgum District who were most affected by the lack of rain during the first planting season in 2009.

Read more:

<http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/uganda-news-150210!OpenDocument>