

## *Access Brief, November 2017*

### *Afgooye Corridor, Lower Shabelle*

#### **Overview**

Afgooye corridor refers to a 20km long stretch between Mogadishu and Afgooye, and the villages lying on the right and left sides of that road. The Afgooye corridor extends from KM7 (the entry checkpoint to Mogadishu, also called Ex-Control Afgooye) to Afgooye town; from the coastal urbanized area to the agricultural Shabelle river valley.



It is populated mainly by Hawiye. The original Hawiye/Wacadaan has been outnumbered by post-1992 Hawiye arrivals, including the Habar-Gidir, Galjecel, Sheikhal and Abgaal, mostly from the dry central parts of Somalia. After the collapse of the central government and the eruption of the civil war, many of these clans migrated to the city, bought land in the Afgooye corridor from the indigenous Wacadaan community and settled it. Until 2006 the area maintained a mostly rural character.

During the 2007 fighting between ICU (Islamic Court Union) and Ethiopian forces in Mogadishu (known locally as the Fooriyoow War), huge waves of Mogadishu people moved to Afgooye corridor as IDPs and settled there, mainly in Tredishe and Garasbaalley of Daynile district, Siinka Dheer, Ceelasha Biyaha and Calamada villages of Afgooye corridor. The patterns of settlement in the corridor's main localities is:

- 1- Carbiska: Wacadaan, Sheikhal and members of other Somali clans.
- 2- Lafoole: Wacadaan and members of other Somali clans.
- 3- Xaawa Cabdi: Wacadaan, Habar-Gidir, Geledi, and collection of other Somali clans
- 4- Calamada: Wacadaan, Habar- Gidir and collection of other Somali clans
- 5- Ceelasha Biyaha : Wacadaan, Habar Gidir clans and collection of Somali clans.
- 6- Siinka Dheer: Sheikhal, Abgaal and Habar Gidir clans, in addition high number of IDPS.

The area was under the control of Al Shabaab from July 2008 to 2012, Ceelasha Biyaha village was the AS head office in the area. In the first quarter of 2012, joint forces of SFG and AMISOM led by Sharif Sheikh Ahmed expelled Al Shabaab from the area capturing Afgooye town. Since then the areas of influence of the government and AS have not shifted much.

Since the area was liberated from AS control, large numbers of IDPs fleeing drought and conflict, mainly from Lower Shabelle, Bay and Bakool, have also settled here. Now the area resembles an urban excrescence of Mogadishu (mostly of the shantytown type, but also with modern middle class and industrial developments such as big warehouses). Siinka Dheer is currently hosting the highest concentration of IDPs from Bay, Bakool and Lower Shabelle Region. Most of the IDP camps are set up along the main road to receive support from the INGOs and LNGOs active in this zone.

The Afgooye corridor is also important as a main transportation axe bringing goods to and from the city to the populated agricultural hub of the Shabelle Valley, and beyond. In the 1920s the Italians built a railway from Mogadishu to Afgooye and Jowhar. There is little left of it, but it serves as testimony to the area's strategic importance.

Ceelasha Biyaha used to be the main source of Mogadishu's drinking water, and until 1991 it was forbidden to drill boreholes there, to avoid contamination. Now the area provides for its own water.

There are number of companies that provide electricity for Afgooye Corridor using diesel generators, including BECO and Mogadishu Power Supply, Halgan and other small companies, they provide the service 24/7. BECO (Banadir Electricity Company) is building a huge new power plant in the outskirts of Ceelasha Biyaha, to provide electricity for the entire capital.

Internet services are provided by Global Internet Company and the Hormuud Telecommunication Company through DSL and Portable modems. The service is high speed.

There are about 115 primary and secondary schools in Afgooye corridor, and several University branches such Banadir and Islamic Universities, Somali University and others are being built.

There is no public hospital in Afgooye corridor, but there are number of private hospitals such Al Birr General Hospital and Fiqi Specialist Hospital in Siinka Dheer, Muhibbah General Hospital, in Ceelasha Biyaha and Xaawa Cabdi Hospital in Xaawa Cabdi village.

The following military bases are in the corridor;

1. Carbiska: AMISOM/SNA
2. Lafoole/Shanta Gole: AMISOM/SWS Army
3. Ceelasha Biyaha/Arbacow (ex-AS Military Camp): AMISOM/SNA
4. Siinka Dheer: NISA

## **Getting There**

**By road:** Afgooye corridor can only be accessed by an old tarmac road. It was built in Barre's time and has not been rehabilitated since then, despite the heavy traffic, so it is in bad condition, the tarmac having largely disappeared. Travel times are, approximately:

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Locality	Distance	Time *
KM 7 (exit Mogadishu)	0 km	0 min
Siinka Dheer	7 km	40 min
Ceelasha Biyaha	10 km	55 min
Calamada	11 km	65 min
Xaawa Abdi	13 km	80 min
Lafoole	15 km	90 min
Carbiska	17 km	100 min
Afgooye	21 km	120 min

Note that many drivers and officials use the centre of Mogadishu as starting point, so they will mention Siinka Dheer as being at 14 km, Ceelasha Biyaha at 17 km etc

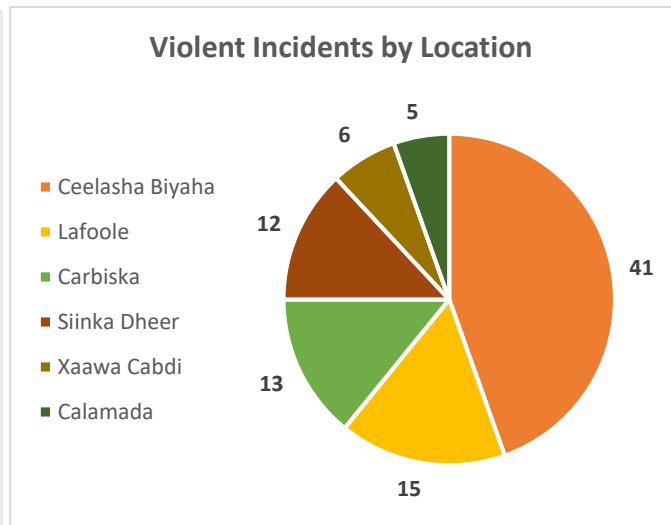
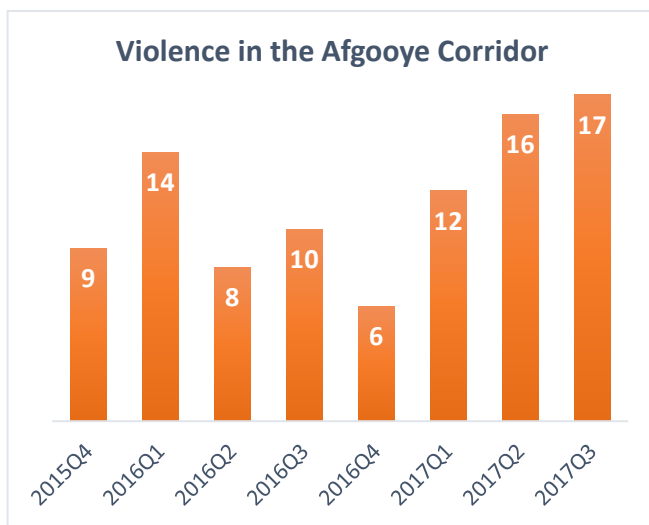
\* The time varies strongly on the time of the day and the traffic. Lately numerous checkpoints, some with dogs, have slowed down traffic considerably. Do not get impatient at the checkpoints!

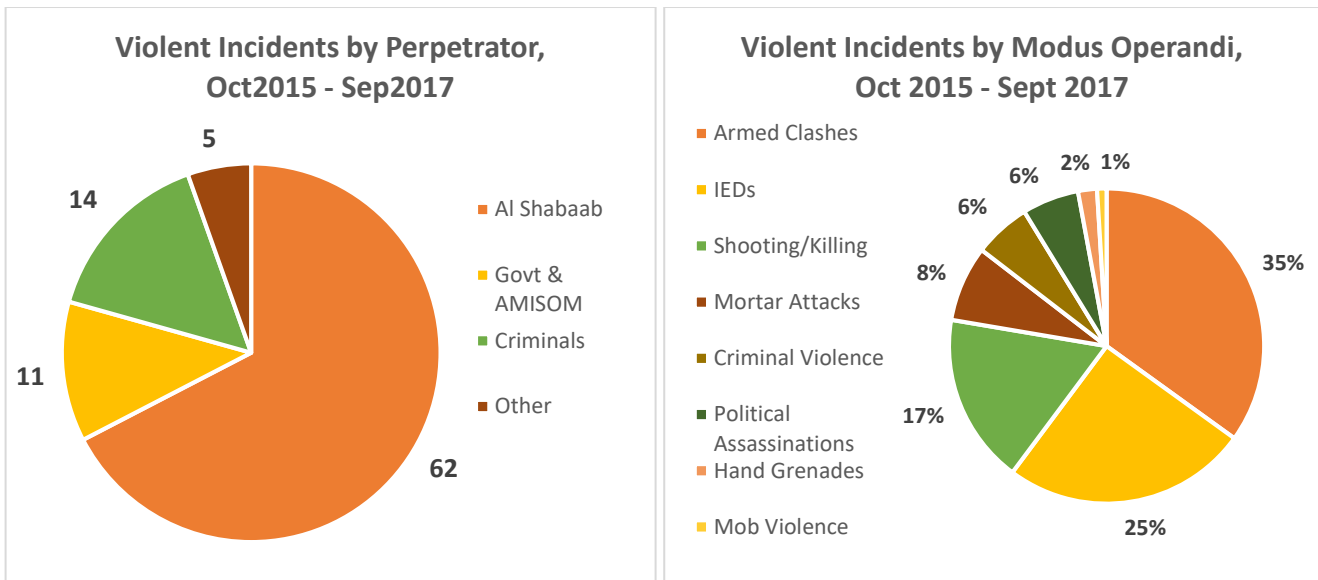
**Lodging Options**

There are two hotels in Ceelasha Biyaha namely; Al Faraj Hotel at Ceelasha Biyaha Market, and Alla Magan Hotel at the roadside near Hormuud telecommunication Company in Ceelasha Biyaha.

There are no recommended Hotels for NGOs in Afgooye Corridor and NGO workers generally return before dark to spend the night in Mogadishu.

**Violence Trends**





As noted above, the Afgooye corridor saw heavy fighting several times: early 1992, in 2007 and again in 2012, when Al Shabaab was pushed out of the area. They never went far away, and there has been a noticeable increase in violence in 2017, as Al Shabaab seems bent on recapturing this strategic access to Mogadishu as part of its ongoing Lower Shabelle offensive.

Two thirds of the violence is perpetrated by Al Shabaab, and is directed mostly at the government and AMISOM. A full quarter of the incidents over the past two years have involved IEDs – sometimes these are discoveries by security forces, but when they do explode, they almost always hit SNA or AMISOM targets. Only two civilian vehicles were hit by an IED over the past two years. As to the 36 armed clashes, all but two of them were initiated by AS, and they are mostly hit-and-run attacks on the military bases in the corridor (see above), often without serious casualties. Mortar attacks, of which there have been 8, are also all by AS against SNA. Almost all AS attacks take place at night or in the early morning.

Although AS has completely permeated local society, in the daytime the roads and their surroundings are open for use by the government and all civilians, including NGOs. As noted, there’s considerable traffic, and IDPs from many Somali regions find it safe enough to settle there. Humanitarian aid workers have not been targeted by AS so far, although recently a WFP convoy does seem to have been targeted (unsuccessfully) with an IED. Also, an Arab donor group traveling with drought committee members came under attack. NGOs have not yet faced insurgent attacks, but the case of foreign doctors killed in a private hospital, apparently for business (competition) reasons, shows that there are other threats facing NGO staff.

This leaves us with a residual category of non-AS related violent incidents. There has only been one case of clan violence (Geledi vs Habar-Gidir) and one violent clash between two groups of people fighting over a piece of land, as well as two unclaimed hand grenade attacks against SFG checkpoints. The rest of the violent incidents = were perpetrated by criminals (or civilians behaving as such) but these are only 14 over a two-year period. Tellingly, since the Mogadishu Stabilization Unit has started removing rogue security forces from the capital, there has been a rise in criminal incidents perpetrated by men wearing SNA uniforms. Most such incidents are armed banditry against minibuses and lorries, some burglaries and shootings and killings for various reasons.

### **Basic Risk Mitigation Measures**

Given the high concentration of IDPs in the Afgooye Corridor and its convenient proximity to Mogadishu and its Airport Area, NGOs cannot avoid deploying activities in this area. The area is fairly accessible in the daytime, on conditions similar to those in Mogadishu, for both international and national staff. Given the unproven but assumed risk of kidnapping, internationals, if they visit, should avoid any routine in their movements and carefully select their escorts. An extra vehicle with four armed guards is strongly advised to any international traveling in the Afgooye Corridor.

NGOs should liaise with the authorities, to keep them informed of programs and movements.

Staff traveling to this area must be well aware of current developments there and have contingency plans for the following cases: vehicle breakdown, traffic accident, getting caught in crossfire between armed groups, in that order of likelihood. Traveling with AMISOM or the SNA should be avoided, as it will bring more risk than safety. A low-key (but not hidden) presence is safest. In case a vehicle is hired, a driver who knows the area and is recognized at checkpoints should be selected.

### **ANNEX 1: Contact List**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Function</b>	<b>Contact Address</b>
Mr. Ibrahim Adan Najax	Governor of Lower Shabelle	
Abdinasir Ibrahim Calimo	Afgooye District Commissioner	
Ayan Hassan Hajji	Zonal DC of Afgooye Corridor	
Shamso Abdullahi Osman	BPPSC rep Afgooye Corridor	
Ubah Ahmed Haji	SOYDA rep Lafoole & Ceelasha	
Isse Ali Hodey	MEDAIR rep Afgooye Corridor	
Nuh Shiekh Ibrahim	ACF rep Ceelasha Biyaha	

### **ANNEX 2: Incidents affecting NGOs in Ceel Waaq District since 2008**

In the summer of 2008, three national staff working for NGOs were killed in the Afgooye Corridor. In July gunmen shot a senior staff member in Ceelasha Biyaha, in August one was killed near Afgooye town, and again in August, a INGO local staffer was shot in the head by unknown gunmen near Lafoole.

In the past five years, no violent incident affecting NGOs has been recorded in the Afgooye Corridor.