

Aid Partnerships: A Vehicle to Strengthen NGOs in Somalia?



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Acronyms

CAP	Consolidated Appeal Process
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CHF	Common Humanitarian Fund
EPARA	Emergency Preparedness and Response Action
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GHP	Global Humanitarian Platform
HAP	Humanitarian Accountability Partnership
IAO	International Aid Organisation
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	ICRC International Committee of the Red Cross
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
LNGO	Local Non-Governmental Organisation
NSA	Non State Actors
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PoP	Principles of Partnership
SHOC	Somali Humanitarian Operational Consortium
SNGO	Somali Non-Governmental Organisation
SOCSIS	Strengthening of Civil Society Organisation Involving Systems
TFG	Transitional Federal Government (of Somalia)
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

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Executive Summary

The protracted humanitarian crisis in Somalia combined with the growing insecurity and recent challenges of access to affected populations created strong reliance of international aid organisations on Somali NGOs for the delivery of humanitarian assistance. As a result, a large number of Somali NGOs (SNGOs) are working in partnership with international aid organisations (IAOs) and playing a more centre-stage role in humanitarian action than ever before. Given that most SNGOs do not have access to direct sustainable funding, many are scaling up and down according to the needs and funding of their international partners. This creates a dependency on project-based funding, which hinders investments towards coherent and effective capacity building for SNGOs.

This report examines the nature of the relationships between Somali NGOs and international aid organisations, with particular emphasis on capacity building and partnerships. The key points emerging are: partnerships between IAOs and SNGOs are often structured as sub-contracting relationships, where SNGOs deliver services to the contracting IAOs; capacity building efforts targeting the SNGO sector have been limited and ineffective so far, despite the fact that significant gaps are known and have been repeatedly acknowledged by SNGOs and IAOs alike; and there are low levels of trust between SNGOs and IAOs and on the part of donors towards SNGOs.

Stronger partnerships between Somali NGOs and international aid organisations could produce greater benefits for people in need, resulting in more timely, effective and efficient delivery of assistance. Yet the existing guidance on good practice for partnerships still needs to be more widely adopted for improved collaboration to take place. Changes are also needed on how the Somali NGO sector is financed, coordinated, assessed, and monitored.

The study suggests that the main challenges facing stronger partnerships between Somali NGOs and international aid organisations are a lack of mutual trust and confidence in each other's motives. The lack of trust of IAOs in SNGOs stems from two main issues: the perceived lack of impartiality and the perception that financial gains are the main driver behind some SNGOs. The mistrust between SNGOs and IAOs is linked to the belief that financial interests drive many IAOs and that some IAOs have ulterior motives linked to political affiliations. Identifying where this trust deficit exists, why and what can be done about it is a necessary first step for improving the working relationship between SNGOs and IAOs.

The limited investments in capacity building for SNGOs have been to a large extent affected by the ongoing humanitarian response mode in which many organisations operate. As sources for this report argued, in the midst of emergency response, all financial resources need to be directed towards delivering assistance to affected populations.

There are real trade-offs that must be managed between the need for immediate humanitarian response and longer-term capacity building. Driven by the humanitarian imperative, international aid organisations have valid reasons to prioritise targeted short-term capacity building for SNGOs when responding to a humanitarian crisis. Yet they also have a responsibility to enable Somali counterparts to play a stronger role in humanitarian work in their own country. SNGOs, IAOs and donors alike, need to recognise that short- and long-term capacity building goals require different strategies, partnerships and funding mechanisms.

Underpinning the lack of trust on the part of donors about the ability of SNGOs to handle direct humanitarian grants are perceptions about limited capacities and concerns about fraud and

corruption. In practice, neither capacity gaps nor concerns over misappropriation of funds are addressed by the current approach: Donors fund international aid organisations as more trusted deliverers of assistance, and IAOs disburse a large portion of these funds to SNGOs with what interviewees for this study identified to be little demands for accountability and ineffective investments in strengthening the capacity of SNGOs. Any move by donors towards working more directly with Somali NGOs will have to include a better analysis of fraud and corruption risks, stronger accountability mechanisms and a process of trust building.

This report suggests that SNGOs need to shift from operating in short-term survival mode to longer-term strategic planning. International aid organisations are urged to invest more in capacity building for SNGOs, as an integral part of partnership arrangements, shifting from short to longer-term engagements. The goal of capacity building for SNGOs is to increase the quality, effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and sustainability of humanitarian action. Yet each set of humanitarian actors working in Somalia today has a different range mandates, commitments and approaches for achieving these diverse goals. A more coherent capacity building strategy must be applied and the costs and benefits of different approaches carefully analysed.

The international aid organisations should not become the sole drivers of the capacity building agenda, nor should SNGOs expect this to be the case. Governmental donors, IAOs, SNGOs and other stakeholders, including representatives of Somali authorities, need to engage in an open discussion about: the role of Somali NGOs in humanitarian assistance, the capacities that need to be strengthened for SNGOs to take on such role, appropriate approaches and available resources for capacity building.

Finally, the report concludes that SNGOs, IAOs and governmental donors alike need to place more emphasis on evidence-based policy and decision making across a wide range of issues. Negative perceptions abound on both sides, and many of these may be misconceptions. In the absence of evidence, perceptions will continue to fill knowledge gaps. All stakeholders in the Somali humanitarian sector, international organisations in particular, need to invest in better understanding the strengths and weaknesses of their local counterparts, pros and cons of current partnership models and their impact on the overall quality of humanitarian assistance, and the costs and benefits of different capacity building approaches at different stages of the humanitarian response. On this basis, the opportunities presented by working in partnerships will be optimised, capacity building challenges will be addressed, the trust deficit will hopefully close and SNGOs will be given a real opportunity to transform themselves into independent, effective, efficient, accountable and altogether more sustainable institutions.



Introduction

This section starts with a note on the background and rationale of the study. The aim of the study and the research questions that were investigated are presented next, followed by the methodology used. The structure of the report is presented at the end.

1. Background and rationale for the study

Somalia declared independence from colonial rule in 1960. In 1969, Siyad Barre's coup led to a military regime, which lasted until the collapse of the government in 1991. Following Barre's fall, Somalia entered a long period of conflict and instability, resulting in the current failed state.¹ Due to the continued conflict within the country, the former greater Somalia is now divided into three territories: Somaliland, Puntland and South Central Somalia. Each of these territories is run independently and has different levels of governance. Somaliland declared its independence in 1991 after the collapse of the military government, and Puntland declared its autonomy in 1998. Both have their own functioning government and legal system, and have experienced relative stability compared to South Central Somalia.

¹ For a detailed historical overview and conflict analysis see Menkhaus (2011).

Of the three territories, South Central Somalia has seen the most instability and unrest, with civil war continuing to the present day. In the absence of a functioning government or legal system, civil society² has played prominent role in the Somali society, by taking on many of the state's functions.

The emergence of Somali humanitarian NGOs has been linked to the arrival in the country of international aid organisations – UN agencies and international NGOs working in relief and development. A first such wave of increased international presence took place in the early 1980s,³ in response to the Ogaden⁴ war (Abdi and Johnson, 2002). A second massive international intervention followed the fall of Siyad Barre. This ended in 1995 with the withdrawal of international aid organisations (IAOs) from Mogadishu and the shift of all international political, humanitarian and development coordination and management systems to neighbouring Kenya. A third major international response phase started after the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) came to power in 2004. Backed by the United Nations, the African Union and the United States, the TFG battled Al-Shabaab insurgents to assume full control of the southern part of the country (Hammond and Vaughan-Lee, 2012).

The combination of the war on terror and state-building efforts created an extremely politicised environment, in which opposition forces perceived international humanitarian assistance to be partial, biased and a weapon targeting them directly. As IAOs were largely identified with the Global North, they were seen to have a political aim and affiliation (Hammond and Vaughan-Lee, 2012, p. 9).

Local NGOs, international aid organisations and humanitarian space⁵

With the growing insecurity created by the conflict between TFG and opposition forces, IAOs found it increasingly difficult to maintain a presence in the field. Since 2006, the security situation in all of Somalia has dramatically deteriorated and international aid workers have been increasingly targeted.⁶ The situation worsened even more when, in 2010, Al-Shabaab banned

² NGOs are only a part of civil society in Somalia. Others include non-state actors such as professional associations, community-based organisations, traditional and religious leaders and members of the business community (Safer World, 2011); clan structures also play a significant role in the Somali civil society (Menkhaus, 2010).

³ This refers to international NGOs in particular, since UN agencies had been present in Somalia before. WFP, for example, had been active in Somalia since 1963.

⁴ The Ogaden war took place in 1977-1978 between Somalia and Ethiopia, the latter being supported by the Soviet bloc. This conflict caused movements of refugees to Somalia (Gebru, 2000).

⁵ The most common understanding of humanitarian space includes: a) the physical access that international aid agencies and their partners have to populations in need; b) the aid agencies' ability to adhere to the core humanitarian principles; and c) the ability of populations themselves to reach needed lifesaving assistance and protection (Overseas Development Institute, 2010).

⁶ Until 2007 the prevalence of security incidents did not disrupt programming significantly. Between 2007 and 2009, the number of incidents rose dramatically, with a record high in 2008. According to the Aid Worker Security Database, 274 security incidents took place in Somalia between 1997 and 2010, more than half (139) took place between 2007 and 2009, with 86 incidents in 2008 alone. Since the peak of 2008, there was a dramatic fall of 84% in security incidents where humanitarian staff was involved. However, Somalia today is still far from being considered safe (Stoddard, Harmer and Haver, 2011). It is important to note that there is no analysis as to the motives of the attacks and some scholars indicate that the attacks on humanitarians are a result of conflict with service providers more than a result of political targeting. Hammond argues that the political economy of aid diversion, taxation, legal and illegal business transactions has in fact increased insecurity and is partly responsible for the erosion of the humanitarian space in Somalia (Hammond and Vaughan-Lee, 2012).

IAOs from operating in some of the areas that they controlled, starting with the WFP.⁷ This led to an access crisis, where IAOs were no longer able to maintain an operational presence in South Central Somalia using international staff.

With the access crisis taking on new dimensions, humanitarian organisations adapted their modus operandi by using strategies of remote management.⁸ Some prioritised direct programme implementation to operate primarily where access was allowed through the field presence of their international or Somali staff. Others chose to work with and through SNGOs. Yet more remains to be done since both approaches have had limited impact to date; in 2011, an estimated four million people were in need of emergency food and medical assistance in Somalia, of whom only 2.2 million were being reached (OCHA, 2011).

With IAOs relying more than ever before on the delivery of aid through SNGOs, engagement between the two sectors has been largely motivated by the needs of the latter (Harvey, 1998, p. 209). Although SNGOs were better positioned than the IAOs to maintain a field presence, many had limited institutional and technical capacities to deliver complex humanitarian programmes. This may have been due to the fact that they were relatively new entities, with limited experience, lacking professional and experienced personnel, and that they were completely dependent on external funding (Abild, 2010, p. 98). In the absence of a functioning economy, it is also believed that some SNGOs may have emerged motivated purely by potential financial gains at a time of increased international presence (Hammond and Vaughan-Lee, 2012, p. 6).

The capacity of SNGOs and perceptions about motivations led many IAOs to engage with their Somali counterparts in a sub-contracting relationship, characterised by limited capacity building, short-term engagements, and IAOs' complete control over funding mechanisms. This model created a vicious cycle: the overall dependency of SNGOs on short-term project-based funding from IAOs⁹ hinders strategic investments to strengthen SNGOs' institutional capacities, which, in turn, inhibit stronger partnerships between IAOs and SNGOs.

This raises critical questions, such as how can the international community adjust its approach to humanitarian intervention in Somalia? How can SNGOs play a stronger role in delivering effective assistance to the Somali population in need? How can IAOs contribute to strengthening the SNGO sector and what is the role of donors in all this?

To address these questions and explore new ideas for moving forward, this study brought together the experience and views of staff from the SNGO, IAO and donor communities working on Somalia. This report presents the findings from the study. Its purpose is to investigate the relationship between international aid organisations and Somali NGOs, in particular their current

⁷ There is no clear account and analysis of agencies banned by Al-Shabaab and the extent to which this ban was respected by the IAOs. In total, over 17 agencies were banned (Al Jazeera, 2011). The al-Shabab statement accused the groups of misappropriating funds, collecting data, and working with "international bodies" to promote secularism, immorality and the "degrading values of democracy in an Islamic country." (Huffington Post, 2011)

⁸ "Remote management programming (or limited access programming): an adaptation to insecurity, the practice of withdrawing international (or other at-risk staff) while transferring increased programming responsibilities to local staff or local partner organisations." (Egeland, Harmer and Stoddard 2010, page xiv).

⁹ In the majority of cases, traditional Western government donors do not enter into bilateral funding agreements with SNGOs but rather fund IAOs that work with SNGOs. In the most recent years, particularly since the 2011 famine, donors from Arab and Muslim countries have been making large financial contributions, many of these directly to SNGOs. It is too early to judge the impact of such new funding sources.

partnership approaches and the factors that affect these approaches. Information is also presented on the capacity gaps of SNGOs, which, if addressed, would enable these local actors to improve their role in better responding to the humanitarian crisis in the country.

In the politicised context and protracted crisis in Somalia, strengthening the capacity of local actors and addressing their ongoing dependency on IAOs are paramount to SNGOs taking on an increasing role in delivering effective assistance to people in need. In the absence of effective national authorities prepared to respond to people in crisis, a stronger SNGO sector could reduce suffering and lead to quicker recovery for the Somali people. Given their knowledge of the local context and proximity to affected populations, Somali NGOs could be more timely and effective in responding to local humanitarian needs than international aid organisations.

2. Aim of the study and research questions

The aim of the study was to identify the specific capacity gaps of Somali NGOs and to propose ways in which these could be addressed in order to facilitate a stronger and more sustainable Somali humanitarian NGO sector. The report examines the findings of the study and addresses the following questions:

- What role do SNGOs play in the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Somali population in need?
- What is the relationship between international aid organisations and SNGOs? In particular, how do partnership approaches between IAOs and SNGOs impact on the latter? What other factors affect the role of SNGOs in humanitarian action?
- What institutional capacity gaps need to be addressed for SNGOs to strengthen their role in the sector? Why do these gaps exist and what are some of the factors that determine them?

3. Methodology and scope

Data Collection

The study is based on a review of secondary sources and on primary data collection and analysis. The author reviewed a small selection of publications and internal organisational reports relating to the capacity of SNGOs to deliver aid. The primary data was collected through forty (40) structured interviews and thirteen (13) semi-structured interviews with staff of international aid organisations (IAOs), Somali NGOs (SNGOs) and governmental donors.¹⁰ The interviews took place in Nairobi, Kenya in August and September 2012.

Two separate lists of questions were prepared in advance for the structured interviews: one for interviewees working for SNGOs and IAOs, and one for interviewees working for the donor

¹⁰ Annex 1 includes a list of all organisations that were employing the interviewees at the time that the study took place; Annex 2 includes the average annual budget and number of staff for these organisations.

community.¹¹ In the case of quantitative questions, interviewees were asked to rate a specific indicator on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. The semi-structured interviews followed in broad lines the same themes reflected in the questions for the structured interviews.

In total, 53 individuals from 44 organisations were interviewed for this study.¹² Seventeen (17) interviewees were working for SNGOs, twenty-seven (27) for UN organisations or international NGOs, seven (7) for governmental donors and two (2) for consortia of organisations. Organisations employing the interviewees were directly operational or working with partners in South Central Somalia, Puntland and Somaliland.

Members of staff from larger organisations with a longer-term presence of operating in Somalia were targeted as interviewees, although members of staff with less experience were also interviewed.¹³ Some interviewees were selected in particular due to their high level of responsibility and experience in capacity building and working with partners. Amongst the interviewees, there were twelve (12) country directors, twenty-four (24) senior programme managers or coordinators, and four (4) communication officers. Diversity in the nationality of interviewees was also sought in the planning phase of the study; in the end, more than a third of the interviewees were Somali or of Somali origin, with the rest being international (Australian, American, Belgian, Dutch, German, Italian, Kenyan, Zimbabwean).

Informed consent was obtained prior to each interview, and confidentiality was guaranteed to interviewees. Therefore, comments in this report are not attributed to specific persons or organisations.

Limitations and delimitations of the study

The focus of the study was South Central Somalia and contextual differences between South Central Somalia, Puntland and Somaliland are not taken into account unless otherwise specified in the report. This said, given that interviewees were employed by organisations that had operations or were working with partners across South Central Somalia, Puntland and Somaliland, findings from the report are likely to be relevant in all three regions. Furthermore, issues for consideration presented in the report could still be used as the basis for further discussion by organisations working solely in Puntland and Somaliland.

While the aim of the study was to focus primarily on humanitarian organisations, it became apparent that many international and Somali organisations deliver both humanitarian and development programmes or that the lines between the two are blurred at times. It is for this reason that the report makes reference to “humanitarian and development”. The two types of intervention have not been studied separately in this report.

The term Somali NGOs (SNGOs) is used throughout the report to refer to Somali-run NGOs working from Kenya, South Central Somalia and Somaliland with operations in the latter two. The researcher acknowledges that there are SNGOs working from neighbouring Ethiopia or other locations, but these have not been included in the study.

¹¹ The list of questions used during structured interviews with staff working for SNGOs and IAOs is included in Annex 3. The list of questions used during structured interviews with staff from governmental donors is included in Annex 4.

¹² More than one member of staff were interviewed within nine organisations.

¹³ See Annex 5 for interviewees’ average years of relevant experience.

The term “capacity” covers all resources, processes and structures that enable an organisation to perform a specific mission. “Capacity building” refers to strengthening an organisation so that it can perform the specific mission it has set out to do and thus survive as an organisation. It entails an ongoing process that motivates organisations to continually reflect on their work, structures and leadership and ensure that they are fulfilling their original mission and goals (Eade, 1997, pp. 35-36).

The term “donors” is used in this report to refer to governmental donors and related agencies. It does not cover private foundations or other sources of funding.

The aim of the study was not to assess or pass judgment on any particular organisation, but rather to draw on experiences, learning and other perceptions in an attempt to understand the main capacity gaps of SNGOs, the role played by SNGOs in the delivery of aid assistance to the Somali population, and the different factors that affect the two. The objective of the semi-structured interviews in particular was to understand the respondents’ point of view rather than make generalisations about broader behaviour. Interviewees did not speak on behalf of their organisation, although their views and perceptions were inadvertently affected by experience gained while working for a specific organisation or in a specific sector.

The data collected from interviews was not triangulated with information from other sources, unless otherwise specified in the report. Therefore, the report cannot claim to draw a comprehensive and definitive conclusion of the different perspectives on questions investigated here. However, the report does illustrate the key issues consistently raised by interviewees from different organisations and highlights the overall themes and trends based on the experience of a diverse group of interviewees.

Some organisations working in Somalia were reluctant to share with the researcher documentation that could have compromised their security in the field in any way. Access to secondary sources, such as partnership agreements and capacity assessments was therefore limited.

Due to logistical constraints, the researcher could not travel to Somalia.

4. Structure of the report

There are three main remaining parts to this report, as follows:

PART 1 consists of five main sections and presents findings of the study based on documentation and interviewees working with SNGOs and IAOs.

Shared vision of changing roles. This section presents the shared vision of the roles that SNGOs and IAOs should play in the humanitarian system in Somalia in the future and highlights progress made towards this vision to date.

Partnership approaches. This section introduces three models of engagement between SNGOs and IAOs in Somalia. It highlights the main approach, its impact on the capacity of SNGOs, and the factors that lead to the IAOs’ preference for this approach.

Capacity building priorities. This section identifies gaps in the capacity of SNGOs, based on

interviews with SNGO and IAO staff and on capacity assessment reports available to the researcher of this study. It then discusses the main factors that contribute to the current gaps and highlights the contrast between capacity building needs and approaches to addressing them.

Trust, reputation and perceptions. This section presents the levels of trust between SNGOs and IAOs based on the views of interviewees from both sectors. It identifies the two main factors that affect levels of trust and discusses each of these in some detail.

Representation, advocacy and coordination of SNGOs. This section offers an overview of existing forums for advocacy and coordination of SNGOs, presents factors that affect the current practice in this regard, and introduces one option that interviewees suggested for making progress in this area.

PART 2 focuses on findings from the donor community. It presents the main funding approaches of governmental donors in Somalia and discusses how perceptions of capacities, trust and reputation may affect current funding approaches.

PART 3 draws some conclusions from the study and proposes a set of issues for consideration in order to address the concerns raised in the report.



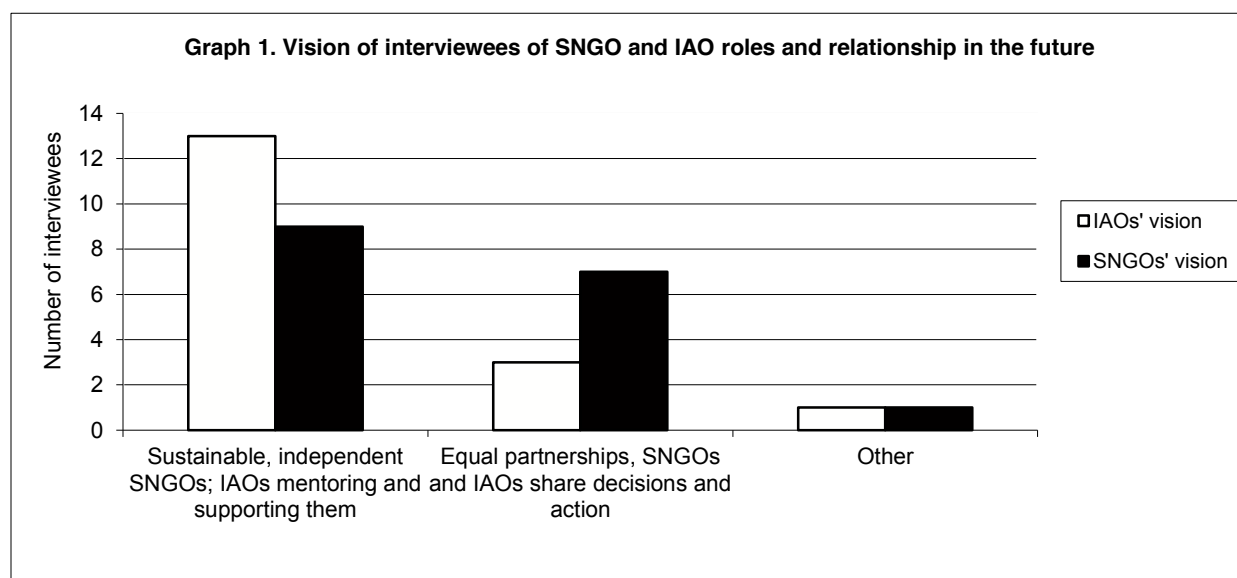
Picture Courtesy of NSP 2011

PART 1: Perspectives from SNGOs and IAOs

The role of international NGOs should be that, in 10 years they do themselves out of a job in Somalia... Somalia will always have crises... Drought every few years... Political instability..." Senior staff of IAO

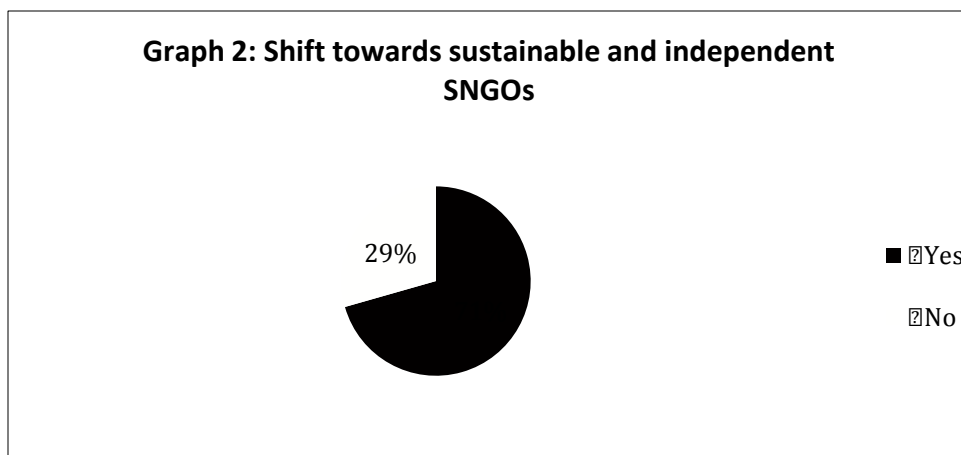
1.1. Vision of changing roles

There was general consensus among interviewees that SNGOs should assume a stronger role in humanitarian response in Somalia by becoming more independent, strengthening their institutional capacities, and improving their reputation. At the same time, interviewees agreed that it would be desirable for IAOs to phase out from their current centre-stage role in the provision of humanitarian assistance and focus more on mentoring, supporting and building the capacity of their Somali counterparts, stepping in to meet the needs of people in crisis primarily when national or local capacities are overwhelmed.



Seventy-one percent of the SNGO and IAO interviewees perceived that progress has been made in this direction in the past few years. However, the progress made remains ad hoc or piecemeal, sometimes the secondary result of other priorities rather than the primary focus of coherent strategies on the part of IAOs and SNGOs.¹⁴ This view is illustrated in partnership approaches, capacity building priorities for SNGOs, perceptions of trust between SNGOs and IAOs, and issues of SNGO representation, advocacy and coordination, as discussed later in the report.

¹⁴ See Annex 7 for an analysis of interviewees' views about the contribution of their organisations towards this vision.



Eighty percent of interviewees identified the growing humanitarian access crisis in Somalia as one of the reasons behind SNGOs taking on an increasing role in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. As IAOs become more reliant on SNGOs to deliver humanitarian assistance to people in need, SNGOs scale up and take on increasing responsibilities. The unprecedented flow of funding in South Central Somalia is another main reason for the current increased presence and activity by SNGOs.¹⁵

These funds eventually were channelled by IAOs through SNGOs, with little flexibility to invest in the organisational capacities of SNGOs to absorb large budgets and run large operations. Instead, as some interviewees pointed out, the funds and agreements attached to them led some SNGOs to set up overwhelming and unsustainable organisational structures.

If changes in the external context rather than coherent approaches within the humanitarian sector have led to an increased role and progress in this direction for SNGOs, the sustainability of this trajectory is in question. If IAOs regain access to South Central Somalia and direct implementation by international staff is once again a feasible option for programming, will SNGOs still occupy the place they do today in the Somali humanitarian system? Or will there be a return to the working relationships of the past, where IAOs deliver aid directly whenever possible and engage in partnerships with SNGOs only when absolutely necessary? What will be the impact of regained humanitarian access on the operational modalities of IAOs in the future?

While such questions go beyond the scope of this report, their answers are linked to the current partnership arrangements between IAOs and SNGOs, how partnerships will evolve, and to whether and how institutional capacity gaps of SNGOs will be addressed in the near future. Such issues are discussed in this report and their relevance may well extend beyond this study.

1.2 Partnership Approaches

¹⁵ No information on the number and reach of SNGOs is available to allow for a quantitative analysis on this issue. Therefore, an analysis into the impact of the access crisis on SNGO activity remains purely qualitative. The yearly budget of some SNGOs has registered a dramatic increase. Yet this growth cannot be attributed solely to IAOs' access difficulties, since there has been general and stable increase in funding available for aid agencies operating in Somalia since 2004.

The interviews revealed that there is little common understanding regarding the meaning of partnership. Staff of IAOs and SNGOs alike use the term to reference almost any form of engagement between SNGOs and external actors. While consensus on one definition of partnership is neither possible nor necessary, it became clear during the interviews that there is a need for more clarity when using the term.

Overall, the interviewees used the term partnership to refer to three main models of engagement between their own organisation and others:

Sub-contracting relationships: whereby SNGOs deliver services to the contracting agency but are not involved in planning and programming. Rather, they implement according to a given plan and timeline defined by the international partner who provides technical, financial and supervisory support if needed. This type of engagement is characterised by limited dialogue, limited ownership of SNGO.

Implementing partnerships:¹⁶ whereby it is expected that the SNGO implements a specific project, but has opportunities to participate in project design and to engage in an open dialogue with the IAO. However, in practice, many of the projects are already roughly defined by the time the SNGO enters the partnership, which gives little flexibility to make changes in design. The engagement is often relatively short and project specific, but it could be longer-term. Capacity building, if entailed, targets specific capacity gaps of SNGO that may hamper the implementation of the specific project.

Strategic partnerships: whereby a longer-term agreement is reached to share physical and/or intellectual resources to achieve a jointly defined objective. In such instances, the SNGO and the IAO jointly agree on roles and responsibility and participate in all stages of the project cycle from needs assessment to evaluation. Capacity building of the SNGO, if needed, is usually integrated in these partnership models, addressing areas that go beyond technical capacity. Given the current realities on the ground SNGOs' participation in fundraising and communication activities, particularly to donors, remains limited.

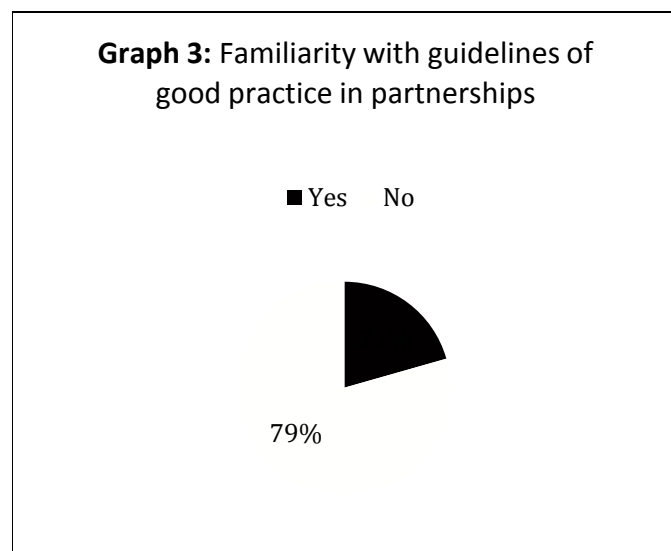
"[programming] is completely donor driven. We sign off on a subcontract, where specific outputs have been set without any reference to ourselves or to the Somali communities; it's set in Nairobi by international staff that has no stake in Somalia, so [shared programming] is a nonsense." Senior staff, SNGO

The status quo of partnerships and its impact on the capacity of SNGOs

Two thirds of the interviewees from SNGOs did not describe their organisations as strategic partners, but as sub-contractors or short-term implementing partners of IAOs. While the level of participation of SNGOs in different phases of the project (implemented in partnership with IAOs) seemed to vary strongly, a recurring theme across interviews was that SNGOs typically implement and that IAOs typically fund activities.

¹⁶ The UN Security Council defines implementing partners in Somalia as any NGO or CBO that either participates in the CAP/CHF or any recognised partner of any cluster (United Nations Security Council, 2010).

Very few interviewees could refer to any principles or codes that guide their organisations when designing and working in partnership with others. Some knew that such guidance exists, mentioned that different elements of good practice are sometimes attached to contracts with their partners, but could not refer to anything specific.



Staff from SNGOs listed the following characteristics of the overall working relationship with IAOs:

- Short term engagement between the SNGO and the IAO;
- Limited budget lines available to the SNGO;
- Limited contribution to core costs of the SNGO;
- Limited investment in strengthening the capacity of SNGO to deliver humanitarian or development aid projects;
- Limited participation of the SNGO in decision making and project planning; and
- No direct communication between the donor of the IAO (where applicable) and the SNGO.

“Implementing partnership impacts strategic management. We have a strategic plan, but it is only on paper, because the money to do that is not available...” Senior staff of SNGO

The impact of such partnerships is two-fold. First, they limit the ability of SNGOs to build new skills and capacities and to become stronger organisations in all aspects of management and operations. Second, a vicious cycle develops where SNGOs continue to be perceived and treated solely as service providers, with limited or no opportunities to become stronger partners engaging on an equal footing with the IAOs. In turn, this leads the IAOs to continue pursuing sub-contracting or implementing agreements when engaging with SNGOs. As such the relationship between the two types of organisations faces a stalemate where it cannot progress towards strategic partnerships.

The end result is that SNGOs that mostly operate as sub-contractors or implementing partners of IAOs continue to function in organisational crisis mode, fully dependent on project funding, with limited fundraising experience and limited capacities to thrive as self-sufficient entities. Some interviewees mentioned that, despite their organisation being interested in and committed to longer-term programming, the lack of continued funding makes longer-term planning irrelevant.

“On the longer term, being strictly an implementing agency retards our organisation, we are accustomed to a certain mode of operations, that keeps us on survival mode, chasing survival contracts and seriously impacts our ability to think and plan strategically.” Senior staff, SNGO

Factors that affect current partnership models

Based on the interviews, it became obvious that the organisational capacity of SNGOs is a key-determining factor in decisions about partnership arrangements. Other factors that affect this include:

- Overall strategy of the IAO and its approach to partnerships. IAOs that prioritise direct project implementation are less interested in strategic partnerships and in making major investments in building the capacity of SNGO partners.
- The duration of the project. If the project is short-term in nature, the IAO engages in shorter-term working agreements with its Somali counterpart since strategic partnerships are more resource-intensive.
- The trust of the IAO on the SNGO's capacity to contribute effectively to the different elements of project. This is based on both perceptions and actual assessments, including of the SNGO's reputation linked to its implementation record and overall conduct, and to past working relationship between the SNGO and the specific IAO or other IAOs.

The next section will focus on the capacity gaps of SNGOs before the report turns its attention to questions of trust, reputation and perceptions of SNGOs.

1.3. Capacity building priorities

“It is the responsibility of the contracting agency to make sure the local agent has the capacity to implement.” Cluster coordinator, UN agency

Capacity assessment reports and data collected through interviews are the two main sources used in this section to identify the capacity building needs of SNGOs.

Formally, IAOs (including the UN clusters) perform capacity assessments of partner organisations.¹⁷ However, a number of interviewees indicated that this is not always the case in practice: 25 percent of interviewees from SNGOs indicated that their organisation has not been assessed prior to engaging with an IAO. Interviewees stated that, when capacity assessments are carried out, findings are not always shared by the assessing organisation.¹⁸ This situation creates the perception amongst SNGOs that capacity assessments are only a screening process linked to funding and are not at all used as baseline analyses for further internal or external capacity building activities. Interviewees indicated that capacity assessment reports could be used as the basis for dialogue between the IAO and the respective SNGO, to jointly identify capacity building priorities and suitable approaches. Such report could also provide an evidence base for the two partners to identify suitable working modalities.

“We have been working with them [UN agency] since 1996. They have no idea who we are. They never sat with us, trying to understand who we are as an organisation.” Senior staff of SNGO

Current capacity gaps in the SNGO sector

For the purpose of this study, some organisations agreed to share capacity assessment reports, on which basis the following gaps have been identified as priority:¹⁹

- Financial management, reporting, auditing and basic monitoring and evaluation;
- Technical competences in sectors such as WASH and Nutrition; and
- Governance, management, strategic planning and leadership.

This list reveals gaps in relatively basic organisational capacities, which raises concerns about the ability of SNGOs and of their staff to implement large-budget projects, which IAOs delegate to them.

The gaps identified in assessment reports were to a large extent also raised by interviewees as immediate areas in which the capacity of SNGOs needs strengthening: project cycle management, strategic planning,²⁰ technical know-how and advocacy. Table 1 provides a summary of capacity building priorities that emerged during the interviews.²¹

¹⁷ The capacity assessment reports that were reviewed for this exercise were mainly based on desk reviews and did not include field visits.

¹⁸ No reasons for the lack of sharing assessment findings were mentioned during the interviews.

¹⁹ See Annex 8 for summary of findings from capacity assessment reports that were reviewed for this exercise.

²⁰ Strategic planning: clear and consistent vision and mission statements that provide focus and direction. The vision and mission of the organisation is well understood by its staff. Organisational values and principles exist and have been written down. A clear long-term (3-5 years) strategic plan document is in place.

²¹ A full list of capacity building needs identified by interviewees is available in Annex 9.

Although accountability was highlighted as priority in capacity assessment reports (see Annex 8), it was not identified as a capacity building priority during interviews with SNGOs and IAOs. This may be due to some interviewees' belief that accountability gaps could be addressed through strengthening capacities in other areas; for example, improved project cycle and financial management have a direct impact on the SNGOs' overall accountability.

Priority	Priorities identified by IAOs	%	Priorities identified by SNGOs	%
1	Project cycle management and technical know-how	50%	Strategic planning	55%
2	Strategic planning and financial management	35%	Project cycle management and fundraising skills (including proposal writing)	45%
3	Advocacy and organisational culture	30%	Leadership	40%

Factors that affect current capacity gaps

The interviewees indicated several reasons for the continuous capacity gaps among SNGOs:

- Limited availability of professionally-qualified personnel to hire in Somalia;
- Limited budget lines available to SNGO, which deters them from hiring qualified personnel, from investing in building core competencies and technical skills for their staff, and from retaining qualified staff;
- Short and insufficient capacity building interventions by IAOs with limited impact;
- Lack of strategic planning by both IAOs and SNGOs;
- Lack of demand on the side of IAOs for SNGOs to address the capacity gaps; and
- Changes in context, such as increased activities within South Central Somalia since the famine of 2011, which put increased pressure on the already limited capacity of SNGOs.

“Capacity is a function of funding. If we had funding, we could develop ourselves and hire professional staff as international organisations do.” Director of operations of SNGO

There is significant contrast between the fact that IAOs have repeatedly identified gaps in the capacity of SNGOs to perform basic financial and management tasks, yet continue to entrust these organisations with large budgets and to pass onto them the responsibility to implement projects without first addressing such gaps in an appropriate and sustainable manner. As the interviewees pointed out, by not demanding that Somali partners address the identified capacity gaps, IAOs missed an opportunity that, alongside some of the other reasons listed above, may have prevented meaningful progress in this regard.

“It’s the local agencies building capacity of international organisations in Somalia, not the opposite.” Senior staff, SNGO

Some interviewees were critical about IAOs hiring staff from SNGOs, thus depriving the latter of their most experienced workers. This reality fuels the belief that, through the transfer of staff from SNGOs to IAOs, it is the SNGOs that build the capacities of IAOs and not the other way around. According to some interviewees, many staff of IAOs gained their experience and built their skills during employment with SNGOs. While this shift of personnel from SNGOs to IAOs does not affect the overall skills set in the delivery of aid to the Somali population (staff members continue to work in the sector), it is perceived to reduce the incentives for SNGOs to invest in the capacity building of their staff.

Within this context, several Somali NGOs are perceived to have made unique progress in their organisation development and programme implementation capacity, to the extent that some of them are now operating regionally. While this study did not investigate in detail the factors that contributed to such success, it is apparent that the broader aid community would benefit from an open dialogue to share lessons and identify means for applying these in other SNGOs.

Picture Courtesy of NSP 2011



1.4. Trust, reputation and perceptions

As mentioned above, perceptions play an important role in determining trust and the reputation of organisations, which, in turn, affect how partnership models are designed and how funds are allocated. Interviewees from both SNGOs and IAOs were asked to rate indicators such as trust, accountability and impartiality on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high).

As a group, SNGO staff felt that IAOs have little trust in SNGOs (2.7 out of 5), a perception reflected in the rating that IAO staff used towards SNGOs (2.5 out of 5). When asked about specific partners, the trust rating was marginally higher on both sides, though still relatively low (IAO staff rated their trust in partners at 3.1 out of 5 and SNGO staff rated their trust in partners at 3.4 out of 5). This signals a distinction between trust in the sector versus trust in specific partners, where ratings are arguably evidence-based and trust can be built over time. However, sector-wide perceptions of trust play an important role in how IAOs engage with SNGOs overall and action is needed to tackle these perceptions and build trust.

Based on interview data, the lack of trust of IAOs in SNGOs appears to be determined by two main factors: first, perceptions of impartiality of SNGOs and, second, perceptions of the SNGOs' motivation to be engaged in the delivery of humanitarian and development aid. These two main factors are discussed in more detail in the next section.

Factors that affect low levels of trust in SNGOs

“Local agencies in Somalia operate sometimes in impossible conditions where they are pushed to the limit and probably beyond what International agencies would go for. This is not necessarily because they are less principled, but because they are the ones to do the work sometimes...” Senior staff of an INGO

Staff from IAOs rated the impartiality of their SNGO partners an average 2.8 out of 5. Those interviewed noted that the partiality of SNGOs is reflected in their practice of not assisting communities other than their own. This weakens their ability to hire professional staff and has a significant impact on the quality of their programmes.

Interviewees from IAOs also indicated that financial interests are the main drivers behind SNGOs' actions: 75 percent of the interviewees from IAOs mentioned that financial gains are an important driver for the actions of SNGOs, with 50 percent listing financial gains as the primary drive behind the existence and the activities of SNGOs.

On the other hand, interviewees from SNGOs indicated that the humanitarian needs identified at field level and the humanitarian imperative drive their organisations. Fifty percent of SNGO respondents suggested that financial interests are important drivers of the presence²² of IAOs in Somalia, and 30 percent indicated that it was political interests that motivated IAOs to intervene in the first place.

²² Some referred to the crisis in Somalia being the “milking cow” for IAOs to fund their headquarters.

“The attitude is adversarial, [IAOs] don’t trust us. This is the general attitude...”
Senior staff of SNGO

The perception that financial interests drive SNGOs is likely to stem from the realities on the ground, where limited livelihood opportunities in South Central Somalia are exacerbated by the continued state of unrest.²³ Therefore, what may drive Somalis to set up NGOs is not necessarily dedication to public service and humanitarian principles, but rather the opportunity to work and earn an income. The perception is that, in the context of extreme poverty, violence, and limited prospects in the future, Somali organisations and their staff are more susceptible to fraud and misappropriation of aid. This perception is also affected by the clan-based nature of some SNGOs and the lack of aid provision to people in need that belong to other clans (Oxfam Novib, 2008).

These two factors – clan based organisations and lack of employment opportunities – could continue to undermine principled humanitarian action. However, as some IAO staff noted, this situation does not hold true of all SNGOs. Anecdotal evidence emerged of instances where humanitarian principles seemed to have guided the actions of SNGOs.

“The Somali staff did a good work and they put ... [themselves] on the line... they did believe in what they were doing. We were being bombed, and they were hiding in the hospital with the patients... they did the best they could under these circumstances. I would say 90 percent were dedicated to their work.” Staff of an IAO

While outside the scope of this study, it is relevant to mention that many interviewees raised concerns over the limited monitoring, evaluation and reporting that takes place. According to some interviewees, such limited or ineffective monitoring is part of a wider chain of unaccountable relations, where donors do not place sufficient emphasis on accountability of their IAO grantees and IAOs do not hold their staff and SNGO partners to account. Two main reasons were mentioned for such lack of accountability: first, the understanding that conditions in Somalia do not allow accountable programming and accountability in the delivery of aid; and, second, a shared belief that, if figures on missing or diverted funds became public, the future of aid funding in Somalia would be jeopardised, ultimately depriving organisations and their beneficiaries of assistance. Therefore, the current lack of accountability was seen as a lesser of two evils. On the other hand, some interviewees argued that the decision to deliver aid at all costs caused much more harm than good in Somalia, and that real pressure from top down needs to be applied for the necessary checks and balances to be put in place in the system.

The lack of systematic information on the practice of SNGOs combined with a history of corruption and fraud in Somalia continue to contribute to negative perceptions and mistrust, which need to be addressed. This can be achieved through relationship building with the local partners – mutual transparency, dialogue and shared processes – on the one hand, and through improved accountability and stronger monitoring mechanisms, on the other hand.

²³ Somalia ranked most troubled state for 5th straight year in the Failed States Index (FSI, 2012).

1.5. Advocacy and coordination of SNGOs

While not included in the structured interviews, issues around representation, advocacy and coordination of SNGOs in different forums and in decision-making processes that affect them were raised by many of the interviewees. The SNGOs whose staff contributed to this study are already members of different forums, both international and national. However, according to the interviewees, the specific needs of SNGOs are not being addressed effectively in any such forum.

SNGO forums

There are several national forums open to participation from the broader Somali civil society, but few have been set up specifically for SNGOs. For example, the NAGAAD network is open to membership from women's organisations with a view of empowering Somaliland women in all aspects of their lives through advocacy and capacity strengthening. The SONYO network brings together youth movements on HIV and AIDS issues, eradication of female genital mutilation, promotion and protection of human rights, sports, non-formal education, culture, and environmental issues. The Non State Actors networks represent wider civil society groups encompassing other networks with the goal of strengthening democratic policy-making processes as a condition for peace, security and development in the three Somali regions.

The Somalia Humanitarian Operational Consortium (SHOC) is a newly established network, supported by the Organisation of Islamic Countries. While this new forum has objectives that represent the interests of SNGOs, it has yet to engage in any concrete activities and has no representation in Nairobi, where much of the coordination for Somalia takes place.

The Somalia NGO Consortium in Nairobi promotes information sharing, cooperation and joint advocacy initiatives amongst local and international NGOs working in South-Central Somalia, Puntland and Somaliland. The consortium is also currently hosting and supporting the NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project (NHRPII). SNGOs have the opportunity to participate in setting the agenda of the Consortium and contribute to its activities and to hold office. SNGOs have taken key roles in representing the Consortium members in the CHF Advisory Board and as Regional Focal Points or Deputy Focal Points (Regional or HQ). As all members, SNGOs participate depending on thematic and geographical focus. Few actively participate across the board. The Somalia NGO Consortium has always striven to increase meaningful participation of SNGOs. Staff has consistently endeavoured to reach out to global and local networks, with differing success. Building up on the work of the NHRPII, it is now looking into capacity building in particular of SNGOs as a key activity. To this end it is partnering with NGOs (national and international) and UN agencies.

Factors that affect current limitations and one way forward

Within this context, some interviewees pointed to the lack of a network *by* and *for* SNGOs to facilitate debate, learning and activities on issues that are relevant to them. Such network could also be a strong platform for SNGOs to use in their advocacy work, an area where efforts were identified to be very limited or ineffective. The following were raised as likely reasons for the lack of such network and the limited advocacy and representation activities in which SNGOs engage:

- Lack of leadership amongst the SNGOs;

- Mistrust within the sector and a high level of competition for resources amongst SNGOs;
- Limited sources and amount of funding available to SNGOs to engage in collective activities;
- Preoccupation with urgent operational matters and overstretched resources;
- Lack of understanding of the costs and benefits of such a network for individual organisations and the sector overall; and
- Perception that international actors would choose not to engage with such network, thus the costs of setting it up outweigh the returns.

SNGO staff who contributed to this study identified the following objectives for such a network by and for SNGOs:

- To improve the collective image and perception of SNGOs;
- To jointly advocate for the need to access direct funding;
- To identify options for SNGOs to reposition themselves in relation to IAOs by encouraging a shift from sub-contracting relationships to strategic partnerships;
- To contribute new approaches for SNGOs to move beyond short-term and project-based resource allocation to long-term resourcing and programme delivery; and
- To strengthen the institutional capacity of SNGOs.

A strong network of SNGOs could advocate on behalf of its members, improve information sharing and enhance operational coordination. Such a forum could also become an important vehicle for trust building within the SNGO community and between SNGOs and other humanitarian actors, and a catalyst for stronger accountability in the sector. As SNGOs are a critical link in the delivery of humanitarian and development assistance, it was suggested that options for establishing such network should be explored with involvement from the wider humanitarian community.





PART 2: Perspectives from donors

Seven interviewees from six of the largest donors in Somalia contributed to this study. The focus of the interviews was on perceptions of the capacity of SNGOs and IAOs to effectively deliver aid to people in need in South Central Somalia and to accurately report to donors on a timely manner. The connection between these perceptions and how they affect decisions on funding are discussed in this section.

2.1. Funding opportunities

Donors use two funding streams when contributing aid in Somalia:

- Pooled funding mechanisms such as the CAP, CHF and CERF; and
- Bilateral funding.

Overall, most donors contributing in Somalia have a list of preferred funding recipients whom they support yearly, and rarely fund SNGOs directly.

While interviewees indicated that the capacity of potential grantees and their reputation affect funding decisions in general, two specific main factors influence the preference of donors to fund IAOs: the limited capacity of donor agencies to monitor and micromanage SNGOs (seen as a necessity given challenges in the SNGOs' ability to effectively deliver aid), and the perceived²⁴ limited ability of SNGOs to prepare timely and quality reports on programme implementation and the use of funds.

"I would rather IAOs take on the responsibility of monitoring SNGOs..." Head of department, donor agency

Most donors also prefer to disburse large grants to a limited number of organisations. Making smaller grants to a higher number of organisations is seen to be too resource-intensive for donors, particularly in terms of monitoring and follow up.

Interviewees pointed out that the primary responsibility of governmental donors is to taxpayers in their own countries, which makes financial accountability a priority. Thus, as long as there is a perception that local organisations are less accountable financially as well as less able to deliver quality programmes than the IAOs, there will be limited direct funding opportunities for this sector.

Although interviewees indicated that they were aware of the constraints that the lack of direct funding raises for SNGOs, most donors do not have the systems in place to enter into direct funding agreements with SNGOs. Interviewees mentioned that donors provide funding to SNGOs indirectly through IAOs, and that it is up to the IAOs to design their strategies and partnership approaches with SNGOs. As such, donor guidance on factors for consideration by IAOs when entering into partnership agreements and disbursing funds to SNGOs, seemed inexistent. This is at odds with the fact that many bilateral donors have developed guidance or

²⁴ Perceived because the donors do not have the experience of working directly with SNGOs.

requirements for their grant recipients, including on the relationship of the latter with local partners and beneficiaries of aid.

2.2. Donor perceptions of SNGOs' capacities and trust

All interviewees from this group mentioned a lack of evidence-based knowledge in their sector about SNGOs, and that perceptions may not be a genuine reflection of reality given the lack of direct interaction between donors and SNGOs.

Staff working for donors indicated their preference for IAOs to engage in direct programme implementation rather than to deliver assistance through SNGO partners, since IAOs were perceived to have better capacity to implement effective programmes than their local counterparts. There was agreement that, despite the lengthy debates on capacity building for SNGOs, there have been limited successes and a system-wide approach might be beneficial. However, some interviewees from this group also regarded capacity building to be more of a priority during development aid interventions and less so during response to humanitarian crises. This said, all donor staff interviewed during this study expressed their own and their organisation's interest to support capacity building initiatives for SNGOs.

The interviewees expressed concerns over the ability of SNGOs to engage in principled humanitarian action. The main concerns raised were the lack of impartiality of the SNGOs and the motivation driving their involvement in the aid sector. The interviewees indicated that they expect to see more instances of fraud when operations are implemented by SNGOs than when they are implemented by IAOs. These concerns mirror those raised by staff of IAOs.

“Technical capacity on the side of SNGOs is less of a concern; the bigger concern is accountability...” Head of department, donor agency

SNGOs were perceived to be more accountable to beneficiaries than the IAOs, a point that is inconsistent with the perception of fraud and corruption in the sector. This may be linked to misunderstandings amongst the donor community as to what accountability to beneficiaries entails; arguably, in this case, accountability to beneficiaries was not seen to include financial accountability and the effective use of funds for the benefit of populations in need. Some interviewees may have referred specifically to the accountability of clan-based SNGOs to their own beneficiaries, which are not selected on the basis of need, but rather on clan affiliation lines. This inconsistency reinforces the need for the donor community to clarify their understandings of accountability and engage in dialogue with different humanitarian stakeholders on what accountability should entail in the Somali context (a point already raised by other interviewees for this study).

Overall, interviewees from the donor community rated the accountability of both SNGOs and IAOs to their respective stakeholders and to each other to be at low levels. The limited trust between SNGOs and IAOs was also highlighted by this group, mirroring the mutual mistrust between SNGOs and IAOs raised by interviewees from these two sectors.



PART 3: Conclusion and Issues for Consideration

Partnerships between IAOs and SNGOs are often structured as the relationship between a client and a service provider. The practitioners participating in this survey reported that they wish to see strong, capable, efficient and accountable Somali organisations. Yet many interviewees highlighted that the current partnership model does not help in this regard, and that many capacity building efforts have been both insufficient and ineffective so far. Some IAO interviewees stated that the conditions in Somalia do not allow SNGOs to become principled, efficient, independent, strong organisations. They mentioned that, in the midst of an emergency, all financial resources need to be directed towards delivering best quality response to affected populations and that attention and funds cannot be spent on organisational growth and capacity building. In principle, this argument seems sound and, arguably, capacity building should happen prior to the emergency in the first place.

The context in Somalia is such that much of the assistance is delivered through SNGOs. As these organisations are key in delivering assistance to beneficiaries, their capacity gaps could easily affect the quality of the humanitarian response. Therefore, stronger support to SNGOs is necessary to build the capacity of SNGOs in ways that take into account operational challenges but also lead to results. The argument that the maximum amount of available funds must be directed towards beneficiaries and none can be expended on capacity building for SNGOs may not hold true in the context of the protracted emergency in Somalia. Where funds are potentially saved on expenses related to strengthening SNGO capacity, the overall quality of the humanitarian response may suffer because of capacity gaps.

SNGOs, IAOs and donors alike play an important role in addressing some of the issues raised in this report. SNGOs should identify innovative ways to strengthen their capacity with the limited resources available, demonstrate leadership and work more closely with each other to advocate and represent their sector's needs in external forums. IAOs should use more coherent approaches to capacity building for SNGOs and consider options for shifting towards more equal, enabling partnership models. Donors should support SNGOs through direct funding when they demonstrate that they have the capacity to implement high quality projects and to manage grants effectively.

At the heart of many of these practical challenges is a lack of trust between Somali NGOs and international aid actors. This trust deficit can only be addressed overtime through closer working relationships between SNGOs and IAOs, greater investments in improving institutional capacities of SNGOs, and strengthening confidence in each other's motives.

Negative perceptions abound on both sides, and many of these may be misconceptions. There is a discrepancy between the extent to which the international community relies on SNGOs in the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the limited efforts to collect evidence-based information on the SNGO sector. For example, the last extensive mapping of Somali civil society was done in 2002²⁵ and no systematic data collection exercise has been attempted since. Given the lack of evidence, perceptions will continue to fill in the knowledge gap.

²⁵ This exercise was led by Oxfam Novib and unfortunately, the full documents of this exercise were lost and are not available.

3.1. With change come opportunities

The extent to which IAOs relied on SNGOs in response to the 2011 famine has led many IAOs to review their partnership models. Today, a number of IAOs are involved in stronger partnerships and there is growing investment in strengthening the capacity of SNGOs. The limited effects of uncoordinated capacity building approaches and activities have been recognised by the UN and, in the next CAP allocation, capacity building will appear as a stand-alone project. With the introduction of the stabilisation funding, there is more direct funding available for SNGOs, including for capacity building. Local authorities in Somalia²⁶ are becoming increasingly interested in the role of civil society and are developing their own vision for the roles of SNGOs and IAOs in the humanitarian response. Lastly, there is more investment in monitoring, with increased availability of funding for this purpose and with the establishment of the Risk Management Unit by the UN.

This is a time of change for South Central Somalia: a new president was just elected, and AMISOM, Kenyan and Ethiopian forces are regaining territory from Al-Shabaab. There is much hope that these developments will reduce conflict and widen humanitarian access. Yet improved humanitarian access for IAOs may have significant implications for SNGOs. Interviewees for this study indicated that if IAOs take on an increasing role as mentors and supporters of SNGOs and this role is reflected in new partnership arrangements, then the humanitarian access will create conditions for effective monitoring of programme implementation and for investments in building the capacity of SNGOs to become self-sustainable, more principled and accountable actors. In turn, this will erode the mistrust that currently permeates the sector. However, if this shift in roles does not happen, the regained humanitarian access may lead to a missed opportunity where IAOs return to direct implementation and become once again the main providers of humanitarian assistance in Somalia, with Somali humanitarian NGOs becoming less relevant than they are today.

Strong and weak organisations exist both within the SNGO and the IAO sectors. The aim of this study was not to promote Somali humanitarian NGOs. Strong SNGOs are not an objective in and of itself. The objective is to assist those in need. Until SNGOs make the necessary investments and improve the quality of their programme delivery, they cannot assume the central role they wish to occupy in the humanitarian system. However, it is critical that conditions for their growth are created.

On all sides, there is a need to examine perceptions and to collect more evidence-based data to inform decisions on working approaches with each other. Increased dialogue and structured direct communication would build trust and confidence between governmental donors, SNGOs and IAOs and help address many of the issues highlighted in this study.

This is an opportune time for SNGOs, IAOs, governmental donors and other key stakeholders in Somalia to engage in an open debate to revise existing practices and explore options for moving forward. Such issues for consideration are included in the final section below:

²⁶ NGO Act in Puntland and Somaliland.

3.2 Issues for further, discussion and consideration

The role of Somali NGOs in the humanitarian system will continue to evolve depending on changes in their operating context and improvements in the capacity of national authorities to respond to people in crisis. The role of SNGOs in specific humanitarian interventions should be defined through an open dialogue between key stakeholders, including the government of Somalia and international aid agencies. The role of the latter should become increasingly one of addressing the gaps left by local and national humanitarian actors and supporting Somali organisations to respond to their own population. The SNGO sector should coordinate in developing strategies and action plans towards a shared vision and agreed role.

On operational collaboration between SNGOs and IAOs:

Define different types of partnerships. SNGOs and IAOs alike should recognise that there are different types of partnerships and that some may be more appropriate to certain circumstances, interventions and types of organisations than others at any given time. Partnerships in humanitarian action are likely to be different from the understanding and practice of partnerships in development interventions.

Organisations need to define their institutional approach to partnerships, what will inform decisions on different types of partnerships, the circumstances under which they will favour one approach over another, and what the different approaches mean in practice (what is negotiable, different roles and responsibilities, communication channels, monitoring and evaluation, etc). First and foremost, such information needs to be made publicly available or, at a minimum, shared and agreed between partnering organisations at the start of their engagement.

Some have argued that detailed partnership agreements should become funding conditionality for IAOs accessing donor grants for programmes that will be implemented in partnership with local organisations (Abdi and Johnson, 2002). Donors have an important role to play in this debate and all relevant stakeholders should be consulted on such options.

From sub-contracting relationships to real partnerships. International aid organisations and SNGOs alike should assess the quality of their joint working modalities with a view of identifying areas for improvement. Interviewees in this study argued that IAOs should shift from short-term sub-contracting engagements with their Somali counterparts towards long-term strategic partnerships. This may prove to be a real challenge during relief operations due to the short-term nature of the interventions. An honest dialogue is needed about the pros and cons of current approaches and the impact of these on the overall quality of aid programmes. Such dialogue should involve a cross-section of humanitarian actors in Somalia, including representatives from the donor community.

Sector-wide agreement on good practice guidelines for partnerships. SNGOs and IAOs should engage in a process of sharing learning and reaching agreement on some basic good practice guidelines for different types of partnerships in the Somali context.

These should draw on sector-wide partnership principles,²⁷ voluntary frameworks or codes of conduct, and the participating organisations' internal policies and guidance on partnership approaches. All participating organisations should aim to use these guidelines consistently. A realistic and affordable organisation-specific or joint evaluation process should be designed to monitor progress and identify improvement areas.

Partnerships as an opportunity for capacity building. Given the dependency of SNGOs on resources from IAOs, capacity building opportunities for SNGOs are closely linked to the IAOs' partnership approaches and the related terms of agreement.

While the imbalance of power between IAOs and SNGOs may leave little room for genuine equality and autonomy in partnerships, such challenges need to be openly discussed by partners. Equality in partnerships does not mean that partners ought to contribute equal amounts of the same resources. While the IAO is most likely to bring financial resources, the SNGO may bring to the partnership direct access to the local population and knowledge of the local context. Strengths and weaknesses in the capacity of both partners to meet the jointly agreed objective of the partnership (be it a short-term project or a series of projects and initiatives, etc) should be openly discussed at the start of the engagement. Where weaknesses are identified, steps should be agreed for addressing these. IAOs should offer on the job training to their SNGO counterparts as a minimum approach to addressing some of the jointly identified capacity gaps. The terms of partnership or other relevant documentation should reflect all this, and results indicators should be designed to measure progress on both sides.

On capacity building:

Capacity building as a long-term investment. Building the capacity of SNGOs should be viewed as a long-term investment as opposed to a short-term activity added onto operational plans. A longer-term strategy is needed, which may use a combination of different approaches. All relevant stakeholders – from SNGOs, to IAOs to governmental donors – should consider ways to invest in appropriate capacity building even in times of crisis so as to ensure an effective humanitarian response over the long-term.

Capacity building approaches that work. If progress is to be made in strengthening the capacity of SNGOs to better respond to humanitarian crisis in their country, appropriate capacity building approaches need to be identified. To this end, SNGOs and IAOs should work together to identify what types of activities to date have led to improved performance, ability to adapt to external changes and sustained preparedness to respond to future emergencies.

Strengthening organisational accountability. It became obvious during the study that understanding and practice of accountability still varies greatly across sectors and organisations. Representatives from all sectors should reach agreement on what accountability means in the Somali context, and agree a plan for strengthening the

²⁷ For example, the Global Humanitarian Platform has developed Principles of Partnership for humanitarian and development organisations, which can be consulted as a reference from <http://www.globalhumanitarianplatform.org/pop.html>; the 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management includes specific sections on accountability for organisations working with partners, and can be downloaded from the HAP website <http://www.hapinternational.org>.

capacity of relevant organisations to improve their accountability. A comprehensive approach that goes beyond training should be considered when strengthening the capacity of organisations to apply the Standard in Accountability and Quality Management developed by the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership, the Code of Conduct for International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief, the Sphere Handbook, etc. All this is as relevant to IAOs as it is to SNGOs and to the donor community.

Funding for organisation development. Funds need to be made available to support institutional capacity building of SNGOs. The general lack of long-term funding and, in particular, lack of budget lines for organisation development activities are leading SNGOs to focus on securing short-term projects at the expense of designing and implementing longer-term strategies.

The use of capacity assessment reports. Capacity assessments of SNGOs that IAOs undertake prior to engaging in partnership agreements constitute one of the very few sources of evidence on strengths and weaknesses in the capacity of SNGOs. As this study highlighted, IAOs invest resources in undertaking such reviews yet rarely share reports with the assessed organisation.

Capacity assessments are in and of themselves an important tool for improvement. At a minimum, IAOs should share with SNGOs the findings sections of capacity assessment reports. Findings should be used as the basis for identifying areas that require improvement and the capacity building activities that SNGOs and IAOs can undertake to address these areas (see point above on Partnership as opportunity for capacity building). Even in instances where the capacity assessment is pre-cursor to a sub-contracting relationship, findings from these reports would still be beneficial for SNGOs as the basis for designing internal strategies to strengthen their capacity.

On the basis of capacity assessment reports, interested SNGOs could engage in an open dialogue to identify gaps across the sector and joint approaches to addressing these, with or without external support.

Internal and external approaches to capacity building for SNGOs. The capacity assessment reports reviewed and interviews undertaken during this study highlighted some crosscutting capacity gaps amongst SNGOs that need to be addressed. To this end, SNGOs should consider both internal and external approaches to capacity building. These are neither mutually exclusive nor discussed here in their entirety.

Internally, SNGOs could invest in activities such as in-house training, mentoring, and peer-to-peer support and put in place organisational processes that allow for such activities. Some interviewees for this study mentioned that colleagues in their organisation have core skills and technical competences that would be beneficial to their peers; unfortunately, in the absence of staff improvement plans for staff, there is limited interest to encourage transfer of skills within the organisation.

Externally, SNGOs could contract another organisation to train or transfer skills onto them through different types of capacity building activities. While an external approach is most likely to involve a direct financial cost to SNGOs, this need not always be the case; for example, SNGOs may be in a position to trade skills with their international partners

(see point above on Partnerships as an opportunity for capacity building). Training should not be viewed as the sole means of capacity building.

Each of these broad choices has different implications for the organisation, and different factors will have to be considered when deciding between the two.

A system-wide effort to build the capacity of SNGOs. To date, activities for building the capacity of SNGOs have been managed on a case-by-case basis and in response to specific needs arising, as opposed to an integrated strategy on the part of the SNGO itself or of the capacity building provider. According to interviewees, such decentralised and ad hoc approach to capacity building has delivered limited results at a time of high staff turnover, which led to even further “capacity drain”. Since priority areas for capacity building are shared across the SNGO sector, the view amongst interviewees was that the entire sector could benefit from a mainstreamed and more effectively coordinated approach to capacity building. For example, a project aimed at strengthening the SNGO sector overall could consider the following activities:

- Map all Somali civil society organisations, with a focus on humanitarian and development NGOs;
- Identify sector wide priorities for capacity building;
- Identify effective strategies to address the identified sector wide gaps; and
- Coordinate and manage a system-wide response identified in dialogue with IAOs, donors and other relevant stakeholders.

All this could draw and build on the current report.

On representation, advocacy and coordination of SNGOs:

A network by and for Somali NGOs. There was agreement across interviewees that SNGOs need to play a stronger role in advocacy activities. In order to achieve this, the SNGO community should engage in a consultative process for the establishment of a network by and for SNGOs. This process could also help address some of the other issues that have been highlighted in this report.

Such network by and for SNGOs could take various forms. For example:

- An independent new network: forum of Somali NGOs advocating for Somali NGOs;
- A working group within existing networks: a working group of Somali NGOs that are members of the Somalia NGO Consortium or of national networks, working within these already existing structures; or
- A reformed existing network: 53 Somali NGOs are already members of the SHOC,²⁸ which could be supported to become the focal point on matters related to SNGOs, advocacy in particular.²⁹

The success of such a network is dependent on the willingness of SNGOs to bridge the mistrust amongst them and, first and foremost, recognise that they can continue to compete for funds while simultaneously working together for their common interests.

²⁸ This was already suggested by Saif Ullah (2012).

²⁹ SHOC currently represents mainly SNGOs operating in South Central Somalia.

On the role of the donors:

Direct funding to SNGOs. Donors should consider options for funding SNGOs directly, using the same funding requirements (including preliminary capacity assessments) as for IAOs. Initially, donors could pilot an approach where SNGOs can apply for small grants, assess the success of such initiative, and then decide on how to best proceed.

Cost /benefit analysis of supporting capacity building of SNGOs in emergencies.

While most donors regard capacity building activities to be more appropriate to development projects, such activities should be prioritised in protracted emergencies where the returns are likely to be higher than the investments made and the overall quality of the response would improve in both the short and longer terms.

Open dialogue between donors and grantees. Each donor should consider engaging in a joint debate with its own grantees to:

- Identify options for extending responsibility and accountability lines beyond the IAOs that they fund, to include the SNGOs that are partners of such IAOs. For example, in specific circumstances, direct interaction between donors and relevant SNGOs may be beneficial to all three sets of stakeholders.
- Discuss the role that donors could play in supporting IAOs to strengthen the capacity of their Somali partners. This may include more flexible budget lines on institutional capacity building activities, longer-term partnership agreements between IAOs and SNGOs, etc.

Picture Courtesy of NSP 2011



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Annexes

Annex 1: List of organisations whose staff were interviewed for this study

Somali NGOs	International NGOs
ADESSO	Solidarity international
ASEP	World Vision International
Bani Adam	Danish Refugee Council
DIAL	United Nations
Faro	FAO Capacity building officer
GEELO	Food security cluster coordinator
HIJRA	Health cluster coordinator
liman relief and development	Nutrition cluster coordinator
KISIMA	OCHA CAP
MURDO	OCHA Inter-cluster coordinator
NAGAAD	UNICEF
SAACID	UN-Habitat
SADO Somalia	WFP Capacity building officer
Somali Aid	WFP
WASDA	Donors
IIDA	Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
International NGOs	Department for International Development (DFID)
CARE	European Commission's Department for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO)
CESVI	The agency for International Development (USAid) and the office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)
Concern	Norwegian Embassy
COOPI	Netherlands Embassy
ICRC	Other
International Rescue committee	External consultant on partnerships – CARE
Islamic Relief	ECB Project
Norwegian Refugee Council	Somalia NGO Consortium
OXFAM Novib	
Safer World	

Annex 2: Average annual budget and number of staff for organisations in Annex 1

	SNGOs	IAOs	Donors
Annual average budget of operations 2011	5,000,000 USD	33,000,000 USD	55,000,000 USD
Annual total budget of operations 2011	75,000,000 USD	440,000,000 USD	300,000,000 USD
Average number of employees	7 international, 80 Somali	17 international, 121 Somali	N/a

Annex 3: Interview questions for staff of SNGOs and IAOs

Personal details
Date
Name
Nationality
Organisation
Expertise
Position
Total experience working in relief/development
Number of years working on programmes related to Somalia
Number of years working in Somalia itself
Geographical areas of operation within Somalia
Number of years working in present organisation
General information
Since when is your organisation operating in Somalia?
Where is your organisation registered?
Type of intervention (WASH/Health etc.)
Relief/Development/Both
In what regions does your organisation operate (geographically speaking)?
How many international staff work for your organisation?
How many of them are Kenyans?
How many Somali staff work for your organisation?
Number of Somali staff based in Somalia
Number of international staff based in Somalia
Number of staff frequently travelling to Somalia
What was the annual budget of Somalia operations (2010, 2011, 2012)
Number of direct beneficiaries (2010, 2011, 2012)
Partnerships
What is your definition of partnership (in a humanitarian/development context)?
Which partnership frameworks/guidelines/codes of conduct that regulate such partnerships are you familiar with?
Is there an organisation/institution/group that you would not work in partnership with? Why?
Did you work in partnership with other Somali NGOs in the past two years?
Did you work in partnership with international aid organisations in the past two years? Who are your 5 principal international partners
What types of partnerships is your organisation engaged in?
How long is a typical engagement
Do you act under the flag of your partner organisation? What is the visibility policy for your international partners?
What are the sources of income of your organisation?
What are the overheads your organisation is typically paid (percent)?

What is a typical partnership for your organisation, what is the division of responsibilities? Your organisation roles, tasks and responsibilities.
International partner roles, tasks and responsibilities
Shared responsibilities
What should be the roles? What is your vision of the place Somali NGOs need to assume in the future?
Is there a shift towards this? Yes/No
What is changing?
What drives this change?
What is done by your organisation to promote a change in the sector towards the above-mentioned vision?
What are the steps taken by other stakeholders to promote this change?
Is capacity building within the mandate of your international partners?
Evaluation of IAOs' principled humanitarian action and technical capacity. Challenges of partnership
How do you define impartiality
Is impartiality important for your international partners? Why?
Please rate, according to your perception the Impartiality of INGOs you work in partnership with
What is the motivation of your International partner to be involved in Somalia?
Please rate to what extent International actors are driven by humanitarian imperative (5) and to what extent they are driven by other considerations (1)
To what extent do you feel that your IAO partners are accountable to your organisation [1 to 5 question]
To what extent do you feel your partner trusts your organisation [1 to 5 question]
To what extent do you feel that IAOs (as a group) trust SNGOs (as a group)? [1 to 5 question]
To what extent do you feel that IAOs are accountable to beneficiaries? [1 to 5 question]
To what extent do you feel IAOs are capable to negotiate access to beneficiaries? [1 to 5 question]
To what extent do you feel IAOs are capable to adapt to the changing context in Somalia? [1 to 5 question]
To what extent do you feel IAOs are capable to relate and attract resources & support? [1 to 5 question]
To what extent do you feel IAOs are capable to carry out technical service delivery and logistical tasks? [1 to 5 question]
What are the bigger challenges for your organisation in partnership with international actors? [1 to 5 question]
Evaluation of SNGOs' principled humanitarian action and technical capacity. Priorities for capacity building for SNGO
Please specify what capacities you would like to enhance in your organisation.
Is impartiality important for your organisation? Why?
Please rate, according to your perception the Impartiality of your organisation [1 to 5 question]
What is the motivation of your organisation to be involved in humanitarian action?
Please rate to what extent your organisation is driven by humanitarian imperative (5) and to what extent it is driven by other considerations (1) [1 to 5 question]
To what extent do you feel that your organisation is accountable to its international partners? [1 to 5 question]
To what extent do you feel that your organisation has trust in your international partner? [1 to 5 question]
To what extent do you feel that SNGOs (as a group) trust IAOs (as a group)? [1 to 5 question]
To what extent do you feel that your organisation is accountable to beneficiaries? [1 to 5 question]

To what extent do you feel that your organisation is capable to negotiate access to beneficiaries? [1 to 5 question]
To what extent do you feel that your organisation is capable to adapt itself to the changing context in Somalia? [1 to 5 question]
To what extent do you feel that your organisation is capable to relate and attract resources & support? [1 to 5 question]
To what extent do you feel that your organisation is capable to carry out technical service delivery and logistical tasks? [1 to 5 question]

Annex 4: Interview questions for donors

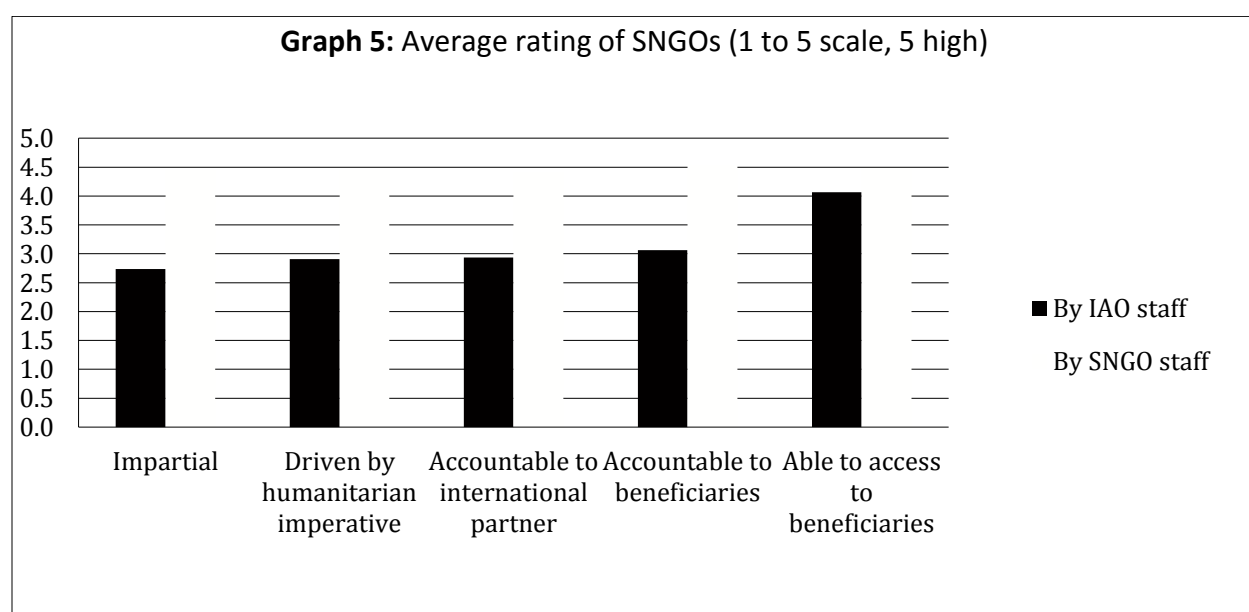
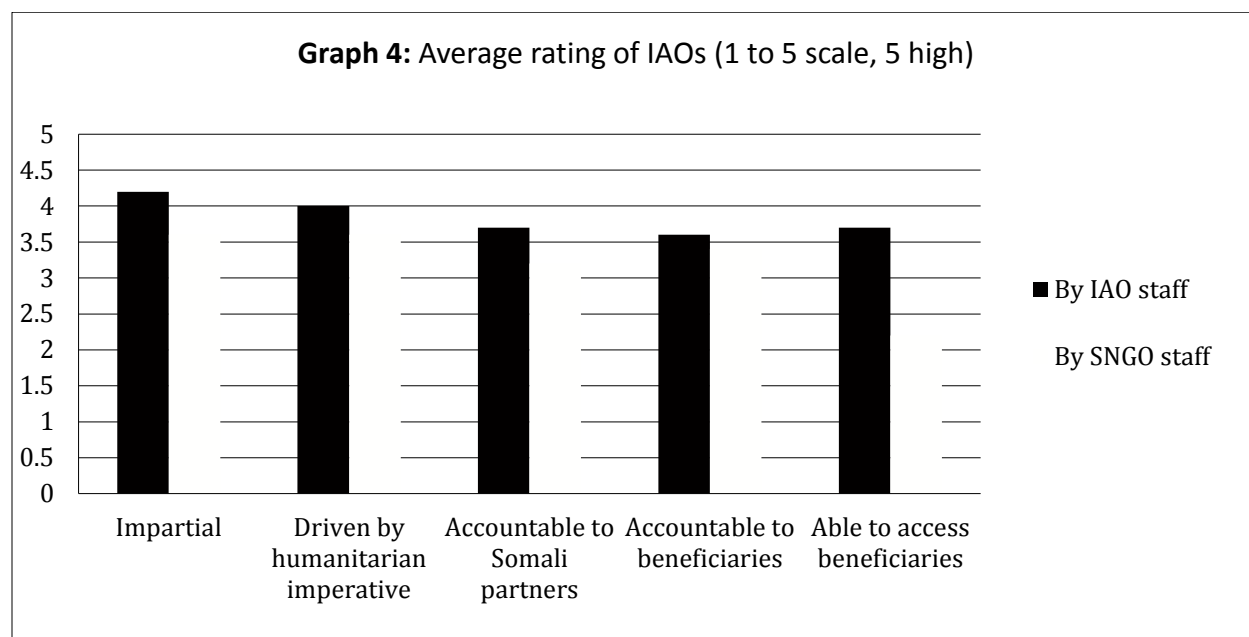
Personal details of interviewee
Date
Name
Nationality
Organisation
Expertise
Position
Total experience working in relief/development
Number of years working on programmes related to Somalia
Number of years working in Somalia itself
Geographical areas of operation within Somalia
Number of years working in present organisation
Funding streams
What operations does your programme fund? Development/Humanitarian?
What are the funding streams?
Do you support SNGOs bilaterally?
What was the annual budget of Somalia operations (2010, 2011, 2012)?
What is the percent that is delivered through SNGOs? Directly and indirectly?
The roles of SNGOs and IAOs
What are the roles of SNGOs and IAOs in the aid structure in Somalia?
Is there a model that you believe we need to aspire to? What should be the roles of the different stakeholders in humanitarian and development?
Is there a shift towards this?
What is changing?
How is this changing? What drives the change?
What is done by your organisation to promote a change in the sector?
Have you worked in the past directly with Somali actors?
What was your experience
When funding activities, are you flexible on the budget line of capacity building?
Do you encourage your international partners to invest in capacity building of local partners?
What mechanisms do you as donor have to monitor and evaluate projects?
Do you prefer to partner with international or Somali actors? Why?
What criteria should SNGOs meet to be legible for bilateral support?
What were/are the principal challenges in direct partnerships with SNGOs?
Interviewees were asked to rate IAOs and SNGOs performance from 1 to5 on the following issues
Impartiality
Driven by humanitarian imperative
Accountability to implementing partner
Accountability to donor

Accountability to beneficiaries
Capability to adapt and self-renew
Capability to relate and attract resources & support
Capability to carry out technical service delivery and logistical tasks
SNGOs trust IAO partners / IAOs trust SNGO partners (partnership specific)
SNGOs trust IAOs / IAOs trust SNGOs (general)
Effective monitoring is applied by... SNGO/IAO

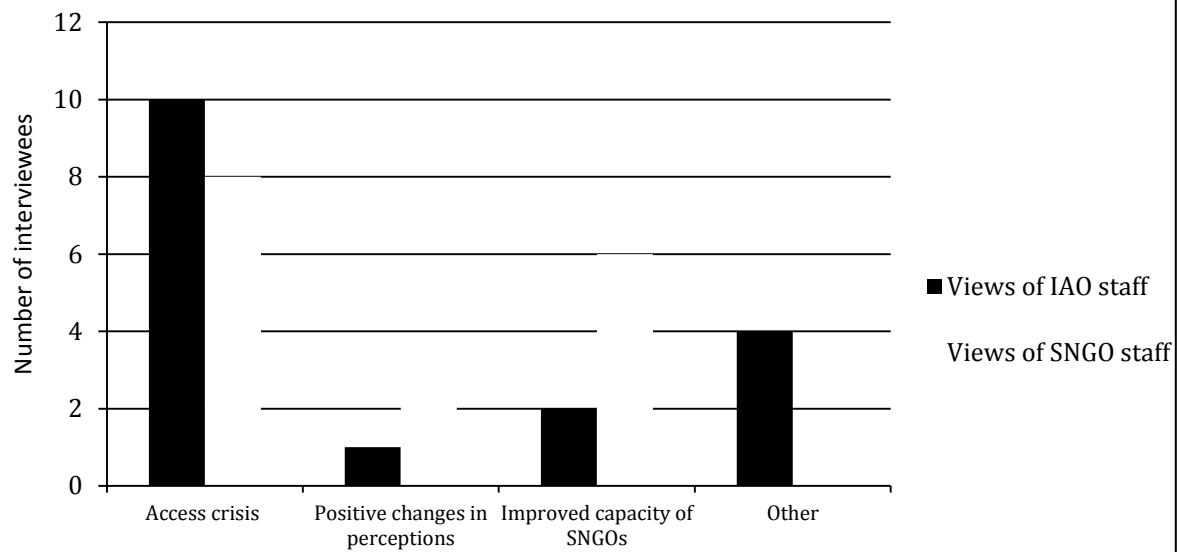
Annex 5: Interviewees' years of relevant experience

Interviewees profile	SNGOs	IAOs	Donors
Average aid work experience	11 years	15 years	18 years
Experience working on Somalia	9 years	5 years	3 years
Average experience while based in Somalia	4 years	Less than one year	0

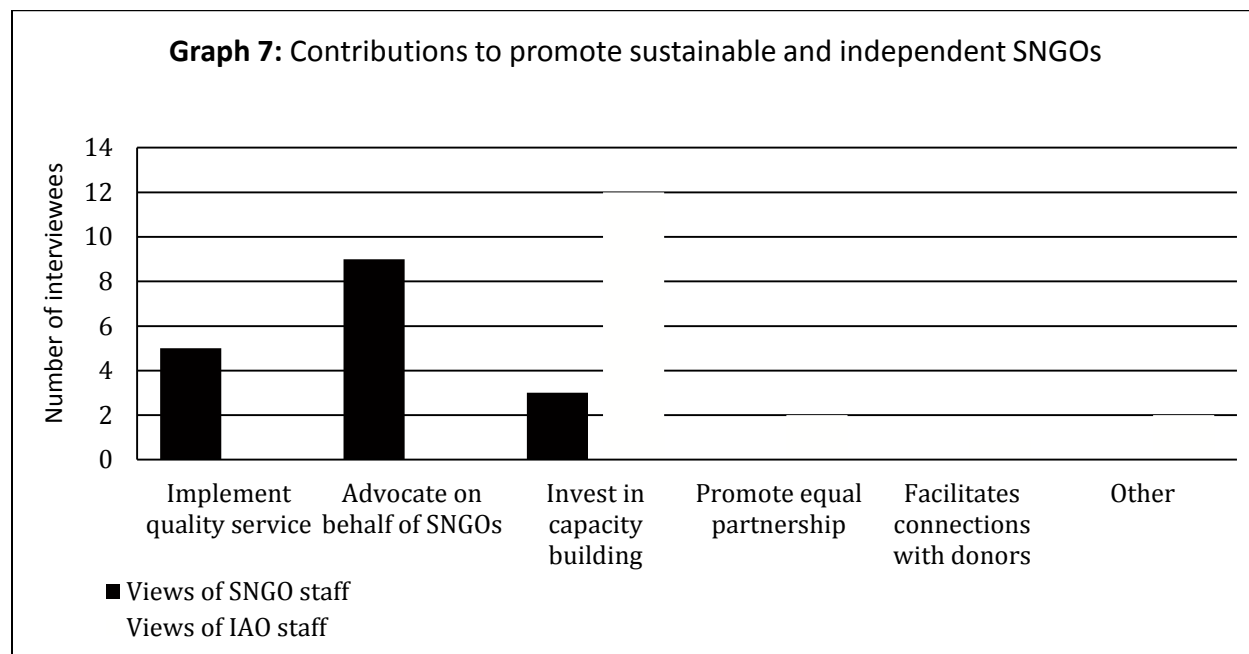
Annex 6: More reflections from SNGO and IAO interviewees



Graph 6: Reasons for SNGOs receiving greater responsibilities



Annex 7: Contributions towards a vision of independent and strong SNGOs



Annex 8: Crosscutting capacity building priorities from different sources

NB: Blue squares indicate the capacity building priorities.

Assessment area	Somali National NGO Capacity Building (SONA) ³⁰	Nutrition cluster	Evaluations of 13 INGO partners evaluation	Analysis of 4 individual capacity assessments ³¹	Perceptions of interviewees
	2012	2011	2011	2010-2012	2012
Financial management, reporting, auditing and M&E					
Technical competences					
Governance					
Leadership					
HR management and staff development					
Project management					
Strategic management					
Report writing, research and survey					
Review and development of organisational policies on issues such as Gender					
Fundraising skills					
Compliance and accountability, Principled Humanitarian Action					
External relationship management					

³⁰ SONA was a consultative process where SNGOs gathered in early 2012 to discuss capacity building. SONA's assessment is based on a consultative process rather than documentary or quantitative evidence.

³¹ Four SNGOs shared their capacity assessments and asked to remain confidential

Annex 9: Priorities for capacity building of SNGOs as identified by interviewees

Priority	Priorities identified by IAOs		Priorities identified by SNGOs	
2	Strategic planning	35%	Technical know-how	45%
	Financial management	35%	Project cycle management	
			Access to funding/proposal writing	
4	Access to funding	20%	Advocacy	30%
	Communication		For profit activities to generate income	
	Gender sensible planning		Communication	
	HR		Financial management and admin	
	Needs Assessment			
	Report writing			
6	Logistics	10%	Organisational structure, governance	10%
	Governance		Monitoring and evaluation	
	Monitoring and evaluation			

Thank you for taking the time to read this paper.

For comments or questions, please contact the ICVA Secretariat.

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