



International
Council of
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Humanitarian Aid
and Civil Protection

The NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project II

A chance to influence
the humanitarian system

NGO VOICE IN THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN SOMALIA

CHALLENGES AND WAYS FORWARD



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Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
CAP	Consolidated Appeals Process
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CHF	Common Humanitarian Fund
CLA	Cluster Lead Agency
ERF	Emergency Response Fund
FEWSNET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
FP	Foreign Policy
FSNAU	Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
HQs	Headquarters
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICWG	Inter-Cluster Working Group
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
INGO	International NGO
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHRP II	NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project Phase II
NSP	NGO Security Programme
OCHA	Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
RC	Resident Coordinator
RTE	Real-time evaluation
SAG	Strategic Advisory Group
SCS	South-Central Somalia
SNG	Somali national government
SNGO	Somali NGO
TA	Transformative Agenda
TFG	Transitional Federal Government
TWiG	Technical Working Group
UN	United Nations
UNPOS	UN Political Office for Somalia
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

Introduction

In the context of major changes in Somalia since 2012, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are facing renewed challenges to their delivery of humanitarian assistance and to the humanitarian principles which underpin their intervention. Yet many feel their collective response to those challenges has lacked authority and impact in recent times.

On issues from the structural integration of the United Nations (UN) mission to the relocation of internally displaced people (IDPs) in Mogadishu to engaging with the new Somali national government (SNG), NGO advocacy has been falling short of its potential to influence. Negative perceptions of NGOs inside Somalia, and their relative reticence on engaging with the SNG compared to donor governments and the UN, have dented their credibility. External stakeholders have been dismissing NGOs as divided, reactive and out of touch. The voice they wanted to use on behalf of Somalis in need has not been coherent and authoritative enough to be reliably heard.

The Somalia response has no monopoly on such problems, of course. Challenges for and weaknesses in NGO coordination and collective advocacy have been observed in many contexts and at many times.¹ Yet the great difficulties of organising humanitarian and development interventions in Somalia over the past two decades would seem to have created especially entrenched barriers to NGO advocacy, which warrant particular attention.

This research came out of a strong desire voiced by NGO country directors to “turn the page” on the position of humanitarian and development NGOs in Somalia, and take a more constructive and influential role in shaping the country’s future. While it seems reasonable to suggest that recently the humanitarian community as a whole has not been entirely successful in making the case for independent humanitarian action, interviews identified a series of challenges specifically for NGOs in both developing and relaying a collective position. A consensus emerged, moreover, that overcoming these challenges was necessary to make effective use of the stronger voice NGOs can have together. Between them, the NGOs interviewed for this research delivered over USD 250 million of aid to over 5 million people in need in Somalia in 2012. That should be a powerful base from which to present an alternative narrative from the perspective of the communities affected by conflict, climate and poverty.

The findings set out in this report are drawn from semi-structured interviews with 50 NGO senior and middle managers in Mogadishu, Hargeisa and Nairobi, plus 15 external stakeholders, between January and February 2013 (see full list of organisations in Appendix V). An initial discussion of issues by a group of 16 senior NGO managers helped to frame the research questions, while preliminary findings were reviewed and discussed in a group meeting with 20 country directors and their delegates. The report endeavours to reflect back accurately what the author was told, including in feedback from NGOs on an initial draft report; any errors of analysis are her own.

The research was financed through the NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project Phase II on behalf of the Somalia NGO Consortium.

The NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project is funded by the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO). The views expressed in this document should not be taken in any way to reflect the official opinion of the European Commission.

¹ See, for instance, Currión & Hedlund (2011), *Strength in numbers: a review of NGO coordination in the field*, available at www.icvanetwork.org.

Executive Summary

Somalia is experiencing a time of important changes, and so too is the organisation of the international response to humanitarian needs in the country. Yet the NGOs through which that response is largely delivered have recently been feeling sidelined in the big debates around those changes, and have been perceived as divided and having little to contribute to the discussion.

A new government with greater democratic legitimacy came to power in late 2012 and soon showed its intention of directing humanitarian and development assistance, starting by relocating IDPs out of the capital. Donor governments which have linked their aid to the War on Terror, are setting up embassies and offering grants for “stabilisation” assistance in parts of the country captured by the SNG and allied forces. The UN Security Council has opted to integrate the political/peace building and humanitarian/development arms of the UN mission to Somalia, linking aid efforts in territories controlled by insurgents more visibly to support for the government the latter are in conflict with. These are developments on which NGOs have much to say – yet their views seem to be paid little heed in recent times. Why?

Interviews with 50 senior NGO managers and a further 15 external stakeholders revealed a range of issues on which NGOs want to be influencing policy and action on Somalia, and where they felt a group of organisations speaking together could get a better hearing. But they also identified a series of obstacles to projecting that collective voice, which will require focused effort if they are to be overcome.

The analysis of informants points to a combination of factors impeding both the process of developing a shared analysis of problems, and the process of using that analysis effectively to influence others. Poor access to and exchange of information, a lack of effective coordination and low levels of trust, combine to undermine efforts to present a coherent case for improvements in humanitarian response. The result is a vicious circle, since the pool of information on the humanitarian context and response priorities is the poorer for that case not being effectively made.

Four main obstacles to improving the **information basis of NGO advocacy** were identified (and were also said to impede effective programme choices and the accountability of the aid response):

- Access constraints linked to continuing widespread insecurity limit the extent of senior managers’ direct understanding of community priorities and operating realities.
- Such insecurity has historically obliged organisations to keep a low profile, leading to issues not being raised openly in coordination forums such as the clusters; not sharing information, or even publicly requesting information of others, has perhaps become something of a default position.
- For what information is available, competition and distrust between operational organisations can discourage open communication.
- Several informants regretted the absence of an established public forum to discuss humanitarian context and plan response, which might help overcome some of these challenges.

This lack of real information sharing was agreed to have a serious impact on the **quality of coordination** between humanitarian agencies, affecting both coordination for advocacy purposes and technical coordination within the cluster system. Since clusters are the main mechanism for pooling data on humanitarian needs, challenges and response, their dysfunction has implications for NGOs’ capacity to represent the interests of beneficiaries.

Other factors were also noted:

- With certain exceptions, cluster lead agencies were felt to be providing weak leadership on making the clusters a space for effective operational and strategic coordination.
- Linking the clusters to Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) funding allocations was seen as fatal for cluster coordination, prompting a proliferation of bogus NGOs, whose actual or suspected presence discouraged substantive discussion at cluster meetings and their use for raising advocacy issues.
- Competition between NGOs, and poor NGO-UN relations, were also obstacles, and a UN-dominated cluster system seen as having failed to guard against substandard interventions during the 2011-12 food crisis, is often viewed as lacking legitimacy.
- The above factors, compounded by work overload for senior managers, often reduce NGO participation in clusters to a passive and fairly junior level; parallel structures set up to meet the needs of operational coordination can inadvertently undermine broader collective efforts.
- Coordination within the Somalia NGO Consortium has likewise suffered from patchy engagement at a senior level, creating a spiral of decreasing returns.
- As a result, expectations of Consortium staff performance are not always matched by the necessary investment of authority or collective mobilisation of individual agencies; they were also called upon to take a stronger leadership role to direct discussion and facilitate collective decision-making.

This poor coordination was described as both driven by and contributing to **low levels of trust** between agencies, which several informants compared unfavourably with their experience of other contexts. A number of factors were cited as contributing to this:

- Pervasive security concerns have prompted tight control of information sharing, which can also impede efforts to address collective issues.
- The “remote management” model and restricted access to field sites prompted by this insecurity have strained trust both within and between agencies: the challenges for a reliable internal information flow have combined with suspicions of poor accountability in other agencies, and poor aid effectiveness, to discourage visible ties between NGOs for reputational reasons.
- The parallel communication channels used in preference to more open coordination forums, while potentially strengthening trust between those involved, can leave others feeling excluded, and in some cases erode mutual trust and give an impression of division and disarray among NGOs.
- These factors tend to diminish trust among both international and Somali NGOs, and are further magnified by the differences of perspective between these two groups.

All of the above factors get in the way of **NGOs’ collective advocacy** presenting a coherent and credible voice on issues affecting people in need in Somalia.

- The sense that some recent advocacy has been dogmatic and out of touch with changing realities was linked by some to a lack of regular engagement with potential allies – particularly like-minded humanitarian donor and UN representatives.
- The (unusual) exclusion of humanitarian donors from the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) was seen as a factor in this, as was ingrained antagonism and distrust between NGOs and UN actors.
- The HCT itself, as a tool of coordination and advocacy for the humanitarian community, was described as unstrategic and focused on process more than action, the “Nairobi-

centric” discussions dominated by a small group of UN official, relegating NGOs’ concerns to “any other business”.

- Respondents called for NGOs to be less reactive and more strategic in their advocacy efforts; the basis for this was felt to lie potentially in the Consortium’s current advocacy strategy.
- It was felt that NGOs could achieve advocacy impact by presenting a field-level perspective, guided by teams inside Somalia and with a stronger connection to Nairobi.

The Somalia response has no monopoly on such problems, of course. Challenges for and weaknesses in NGO coordination and collective advocacy have been observed in many contexts and at many times, and there can be a cyclical character to such issues: a 2011 study of NGO coordination in nine countries found numerous examples of the NGO community periodically mobilising to turn around the fortunes of ailing advocacy and coordination structures.² Nor are the NGOs alone within the humanitarian community in having been less effective than they would want recently in making the case for independent humanitarian action. Yet the evidence of this sizeable but not exhaustive survey of NGO managers suggests that many want to see NGOs playing a greater role in defending the space for principled humanitarian action and influencing policies that will affect vulnerable sections of the population.

Playing that role, using the strength of a more collective voice to its full potential, will involve addressing a series of interlinked obstacles which respondents have identified. It will mean shifting from information retention to information sharing as a default position, and looking for ways to open up communication across the aid community. It will mean helping to fix the coordination systems that are currently not working, and making better use of the channels available to address issues more openly and hold duty bearers to account. It will mean taking the initiative more to propose analysis and drive advocacy efforts, drawing on NGOs’ advantage of direct contact with affected communities, and feeding new information into debates from commissioned research and agency data. The credibility of collective advocacy will hinge on the quality of NGO collaboration inside Somalia, and for that the highly visible test case of the NGO Consortium’s new office in Mogadishu, but also the success of the Consortium’s other regional offices, will be critical.

² Currian & Hedlund, op.cit.

A Vicious Circle

Interviews revealed a range of issues on which managers felt NGOs should be influencing policy and action on Somalia, and where they felt a group of organisations speaking together could get a better hearing.

A new government with greater democratic legitimacy is now in power in Mogadishu and wants to direct humanitarian and development assistance, starting by moving IDPs out of the capital. Donor governments that have linked their aid to the War on Terror are setting up embassies and offering grants for “stabilization” assistance in parts of the country captured by the SNG and allied forces. The UN Security Council has opted to integrate the political/peace building and humanitarian/development arms of the UN mission to Somalia, linking aid efforts in territories controlled by insurgents more visibly to support for the government the latter are in conflict with. These are developments on which NGOs have much to say – yet their views seem to be paid little heed in recent times. Why?

The analysis of informants pointed to a combination of factors impeding both the process of developing a shared analysis of problems, and the process of using that effectively to influence others. Poor access to and exchange of information, a lack of effective coordination and low levels of trust, combine to undermine efforts to present a coherent case for improvements in humanitarian response. The result is a vicious circle, since the pool of information on the humanitarian context and response priorities is the poorer for that case not being effectively made. The obstacles encountered at each stage of this process are explored below.

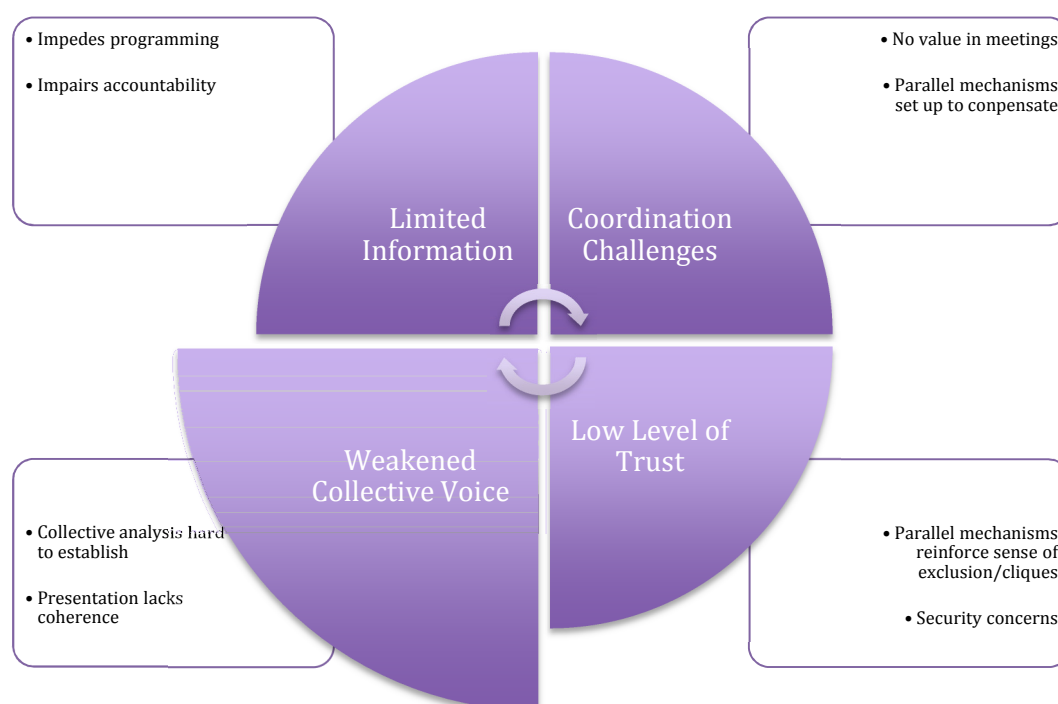


Figure 1: A vicious Cycle

Limited Information Basis

Respondents highlighted the dearth of trusted information available on the humanitarian situation in Somalia. The FSNAU/FEWSNET data system was set up to address that gap in relation to food security, and initiatives such as the Shelter cluster's survey of IDP numbers in Mogadishu camps in 2012 have attempted to obtain basic data in other sectors. Owing to the insecurity which continues to place severe constraints on access across South-Central Somalia, however, data produced by both of these initiatives has also been the subject of doubt on occasion.

"We don't speak often enough about what the communities we work with believe"

Four main obstacles to improving the information basis of NGO advocacy were identified. (The same obstacles were said to impede effective programme choices and the accountability of the aid response.)

Access constraints limit the extent of senior managers' direct understanding of community priorities and operating realities. Despite widely publicised improvements in security in some towns and cities, particularly Mogadishu, informants stressed that widespread insecurity remains a reality in their operating areas. While Mogadishu residents, including Somali staff of NGOs, are now able to travel far more freely inside the city, NGO security experts advise that the kidnap risk for foreign nationals remains high, and report over a dozen serious security incidents in the capital each week. Other areas of South-Central Somalia currently under the control of the SNG or its allies are reportedly far more unstable, as a result of hit-and-run attacks by insurgents, in-fighting between rival militia groups, undisciplined soldiers and insurgent presence within a few kilometres. While Puntland and Somaliland are considerably more stable, armed escorts remain the norm;³ a recent history of kidnapping limits expatriate staff numbers in Garowe, and during the period of this research (February 2013) agencies were for a time restricting movement even to the relatively tranquil Hargeisa.

NGOs, like UN and donor agencies, have responded by putting in place stringent security measures adapted to the various contexts in which they operate, including limitations on the time staff spend in certain field locations and outside secure compounds,⁴ and the use of armed escorts. Armed escorts are not only an exceptional measure for humanitarian organisations worldwide, but also extremely expensive, costing several hundred dollars per outing in Mogadishu, for instance. Almost all international humanitarian agencies, as well as a number of Somali NGOs, have offices in Nairobi as a result, often basing their more senior staff and centre of decision-making there.

One significant consequence highlighted by interviewees is that senior managers, even of some Somali NGOs, typically get to spend very little time in direct contact with the communities their agencies serve or observing programme implementation in action. This restricts the information basis for discussing shared problems or identifying collective

³ The Somaliland and Puntland authorities require aid agencies to use their armed Special Police Units (SPUs) in areas where they deem there to be a danger of attack. This is an additional expense and may put staff at additional risk.

⁴ In Mogadishu, this might typically entail a maximum of 30 minutes inside an IDP camp for an international staff member, or two or more stops of 15 minutes each.

priorities, particularly for South-Central Somalia, but also at the Nairobi level in relation to Puntland and Somaliland.

Another major implication is that such **insecurity has historically obliged organisations to keep a low profile**. Several respondents referred to this as a factor in decisions not to raise issues in coordination forums such as the clusters, including the need for advocacy with the SNG on the sensitive matter of reported sexual violence by its soldiers. The issues given as examples were ones on which the respondents felt action was needed, but because of a concern for the security of staff, partners and programmes, that action was not called for through the mechanisms set up for the purpose. A number of people suggested that such concerns had lessened to some degree since the last big wave of expulsions from parts of South-Central Somalia in November 2011 paradoxically lessened the sensitivity of some public information. Yet there was a suggestion in the accounts of some informants that not sharing information, or even publicly requesting information of others, had perhaps become something of a default position within the aid community as a result of this long and difficult history. One person admitted that they tended to wait until after a coordination meeting to ask the chair about follow-up on an earlier meeting's action point, rather than making it a subject of general discussion. Some acknowledged that it was likely that more information could be safely shared than is currently the case.

There was very broad consensus among respondents that for what information is available, **competition and distrust between operational organisations discourages open communication**. What was often referred to as a "culture of distrust" is discussed further below, but it is significant to note that several people interviewed highlighted difficulties obtaining information from other NGOs, even confidentially and on basic operational matters. One NGO had been struggling for months to obtain confidential information on other agencies' salary scales for a review of its own; the NGO Consortium has had similar difficulties extracting data on per diem rates. Another manager seeking to develop a programme strategy for Mogadishu reported that it took three months to secure information bilaterally from a small group of NGOs about the nature and location of their interventions in the city.

If basic operational information is hard to obtain from fellow NGOs, how much harder then to share the kind of information on beneficiary needs, operating challenges and lessons learned that would be useful for advocacy purposes?

Several informants regretted the **absence of an established public forum to discuss humanitarian context and plan response**, which might help overcome some of these challenges.⁵ The Humanitarian Forum, or "extended HCT", went some way towards that, and was well attended during the food crisis of 2011-12 as a source of information. However, information was essentially one-way, with briefings by the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) but no real space for discussion, and the Forum has not been convened since late 2012.

⁵ For example, the Humanitarian Advocacy Group in Kinshasa is a weekly meeting of senior NGO, UN and humanitarian donor representatives, chaired by the HC/RC, at which emerging needs and challenges in humanitarian response are discussed, and clusters and others are tasked and report back to the group. Brief minutes, reviewed by participants, are prepared and circulated by OCHA. Informants indicate that similar forums operate in Juba and Kampala, for example.

Coordination Challenges

This **lack of real information sharing** was agreed to have a serious impact on the quality of coordination between humanitarian agencies, and specifically between NGOs. This was felt to affect both coordination for advocacy purposes, for instance within the Somalia NGO Consortium, and technical coordination at the programme level, specifically within the cluster system. In reality, the latter also has implications for NGOs' capacity to represent the interests of beneficiaries, since clusters are the main mechanism by which data on humanitarian needs, challenges and response across a given sector can be pooled as a basis for action and advocacy.⁶

Other factors were also felt to impede effective coordination. With certain exceptions, **cluster lead agencies were felt to be providing weak leadership** on making the clusters a space for effective operational and strategic coordination. Common criticisms, from interviewees and among participants in both senior-level NGO meetings for this research, were that the clusters were simply "talking shops", where few real decisions were made and there was a lack of consistent follow-up on those actions that were decided. Senior managers largely agreed that **linking the clusters to funding allocations from the Common**

"We know coordination meetings won't get us the information, so we meet bilaterally instead..."

Humanitarian Fund (CHF) had been fatal for cluster coordination, since for many organisations it had made access to funding the principal motivation for engaging in clusters. As a result, **bogus or "briefcase" NGOs** had reportedly become a common feature of clusters. This was the case particularly since the 2011-12 food crisis in Somalia, when funds were more readily available and some were widely alleged to have been taken by unprincipled organisations which then failed to deliver the promised action for those in need. Bogus actors, being motivated by financial rather than humanitarian concerns, may not abide by the principles of humanitarian action or treat

information confidentially, and their affiliations with political and armed actors may not be known. The actual or suspected presence of such organisations was repeatedly cited in interviews as a reason for not engaging in substantive discussion at cluster meetings and not using the clusters to raise advocacy issues. The fear voiced was that information on points raised might be relayed to interested parties, potentially putting the agency or individual raising them at risk. A number of respondents even referred to unconfirmed rumours that individuals with links to armed actors had been known to attend one or other cluster meeting in Nairobi in recent years.

Some of the obstacles encountered were arguably ones on which the NGOs could have more influence, however. Several interviewees stressed **competition between NGOs** as a factor impeding effective coordination – linked largely to the funding focus of clusters and the fact that the UN agencies which lead them also act as donors. One went so far as to say that *"people see the clusters as a place where some NGOs steal ideas from others, and people focus on taking credit rather than on co-ordination"*. A number admitted that they and their NGOs tended to be fairly passive within the clusters. Some with experience of coordination

⁶ The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation also leads a separate coordination system, loosely coordinated with the UN-led clusters via OCHA, and in Somaliland some clusters have made the transition to government-led sectoral coordination groups.

in other countries regretted that the system of NGO co-leadership, which is in place in five of the eight clusters operating in Somalia, was nonetheless not yielding the benefits seen in, for instance, South Sudan.⁷ **Poor relationships between NGOs and the UN** also appear to be impeding active NGO engagement in the clusters. Several respondents voiced strong objections to what they perceived as the UN's desire to dominate through the cluster system. A system that failed to provide safeguards against substandard interventions during the 2011-12 food crisis is often viewed as having **no legitimacy to set criteria or expect engagement** now. In Mogadishu, where the UN has significantly increased its presence and the staffing of clusters since 2012, one NGO informant suggested, *"There have been humanitarian operations here for some time yet little was done before to get coordination going, so people tend to resent the demands being made now. Enthusiasm takes time to build with each new initiative."* Enthusiasm levels could reportedly be measured by the **level of NGO participation**: often junior, without decision-making power or even necessarily full information on the organisation's own programmes, and lacking in continuity of representation from one meeting to the next.

A combination of these factors contributes to making cluster meetings often fairly unproductive, according to many interviewees and country directors at the final meeting to review the findings of this research. This, in a context where NGO managers are generally overworked and juggling multiple priorities, in turn discourages more active participation, in a downward spiral of ever-decreasing returns. Yet because programmatic coordination is operationally necessary, respondents almost unanimously reported finding other, **parallel channels** for this. Groups of three or more NGOs operating in the same geographical area meet to exchange information on the nature and location of their activities and discuss problems encountered in their implementation as well as possible solutions – precisely the discussion they frequently fail to have in cluster meetings. While there are clear benefits to this pragmatic, practice-focused side discussion, some interviewees acknowledged that it could inadvertently undermine collective coordination processes if it further limits wider information sharing and if conclusions from closed-door meetings are not taken forward into collective forums. (A number of specific suggestions for addressing NGO concerns on cluster functioning are made in Appendix I.)

Some of the same dynamics have affected coordination for advocacy within the Somalia NGO Consortium. Country directors reported rarely being able to attend Consortium monthly meetings in Nairobi, and one admitted to *"sending whoever I find in the corridor."* In Hargeisa, Consortium members and staff regretted that Consortium meetings failed to engage participants in genuinely useful discussion; yet at the time of writing the advisory board had failed to meet for five months, suggesting a circular element to the problem. **Real work overload for senior managers** is a challenge for the Consortium as it is for other coordination bodies – and it affects smaller NGOs without dedicated advocacy resources especially hard. Yet it is often these agencies, too dependent on too few sources of funding to be confident of challenging the Somali authorities, donor governments or the UN alone, and without head office support to develop lobby products, who most value the Consortium's capacity for collective influencing.

At the same time, the Consortium presents the particular **challenges of an umbrella organisation**.⁸ Interviews suggested that members want the organisation to channel efforts towards collective goals, but do not always either succeed in mobilising their individual

⁷ See, for instance, OCHA Donor Support Group Field Mission to South Sudan Final Mission Report, 17 April 2012.

⁸ An ICVA review of NGO coordination in nine countries found many commonalities in the challenges faced by such bodies: Currión & Hedlund, op.cit.

efforts, or invest it with the authority to represent them to that end. The appointment of salaried personnel to staff the Consortium has sought to address the busy-ness of country directors to some extent; however, the director and regional focal points⁹ lack the individual authority of earlier volunteers, who had the weight of their respective NGOs behind them.¹⁰ In Somaliland, Consortium members have struggled in recent months to define what they wish to work on together, despite agreeing in May 2011 on the “vital” role of the Consortium and the need for a focal point to be based in Hargeisa.¹¹ A number of respondents called for the focal points in both Nairobi and Hargeisa to take a stronger leadership role to direct discussion and facilitate collective decision-making, whereas the staff members concerned had been taking a more consensual approach in the face of differences of opinion between members.

Low levels of trust

This **poor coordination was described as both driven by and contributing to low levels of trust** between agencies. Informants suggested that NGOs had a history of working in isolation on Somalia – one that is perhaps hard to break. Several NGO managers and external interviewees compared the situation unfavourably with their experience of relations between NGOs in other contexts.

A number of factors were cited as contributing to this, foremost among them **security concerns**. The pervasive nature of these concerns was stressed by several interlocutors: *“I’ve worked in other insecure environments, but nowhere else does every single management decision carry security implications”* one remarked. The sense that you cannot always trust even those closest to you is based on a long history of cases such as the shooting of international NGO (INGO) staff by a disgruntled former employee in 2011 and the involvement of NGO insiders in multiple abductions over the years, right up to the reports in January 2013 of a senior NGO staff member being expelled by insurgents on the basis of an e-mail forwarded by a colleague.

“80% of NGO staff must have changed in recent years, but there’s still the same distrust. This is a culture that has been going on for years”

Tight control of information sharing internally and a reluctance to put sensitive issues in writing have been rational responses to that situation in recent years. However, they can also impede efforts to address problems. Since 2011 in particular, various interviewees noted, a rash of bogus interventions has diverted funds intended for those in need, blocked the delivery of aid to areas where the needs are falsely presented as being covered, and encouraged negative perceptions of all NGOs among the Somali population. Yet many informants nonetheless stated that their organisations would never report or respond to

⁹ The salaried Consortium Director, based in Nairobi, leads the work of the Consortium, assisted in Hargeisa (Somaliland) and (from April 2013) Mogadishu by salaried regional focal points, who convene Consortium meetings and lead on information sharing and collective advocacy at their respective levels. In Garowe (Puntland) a member NGO has acted as elected deputy focal point on a volunteer basis, as used to be the case in Hargeisa; this post is likewise being professionalised at the time of writing.

¹⁰ Member NGOs continue to volunteer significant amounts of management time to the Consortium Steering Committee in Nairobi; advisory boards have a similar function in relation to the Consortium in Puntland and Somaliland.

¹¹ Somalia NGO Consortium evaluation final report, May 2011

queries about such cases, for fear of suffering reprisals. Some who had tried to report such issues had found that donors (UN agencies in the cases mentioned) appeared not to want to hear, whether to avoid adverse publicity or for reasons of their own security – thereby discouraging further reports. (It is important to note that some non-NGO respondents viewed such concerns as a pretext for not sharing information. In this view, which further constrains relations with the UN in particular, some unscrupulous NGOs have a vested interest in ensuring that a clear picture of needs versus response does not emerge, which might restrict their funding. And indeed, more than one NGO informant took the view that **competition for funding** had taken over from security concerns as the main component in mutual distrust between organisations.)

The “**remote management**” model and restricted access to field sites that have been the main programmatic result of this insecurity, have further strained trust both within and between agencies. Senior managers have sometimes found it harder to obtain reliable information internally, as discussed above, and to maintain effective safeguards against fraud and diversion. This has had an impact on external communication as well: a concern to keep internal accountability issues internal, on the one hand, combined with suspicions of poor **accountability** in other agencies, and some reports of poor aid effectiveness, discourage visible ties between NGOs as they seek to avoid being tainted by association. ‘*We are all very protective of our space,*’ one NGO interviewee remarked: “*we don’t want to be seen together with agencies we know are not really doing what they say.*”

The **parallel communication channels** used in preference to more open coordination forums, while building on and potentially strengthening trust between those involved, can leave others feeling excluded. There was some talk of cliques that some felt had formed within the NGO Consortium, and of personalities sometimes being the reason for involving one member rather than another in privileged conversations. Whatever the rights and wrongs of a particular case, it is clear that what may be an informal coordination group to one agency or individual can look very much like a clique to another. Once such groups start operating in parallel to the collective – not taking key conclusions to the wider forum, for instance, or in one case allegedly requesting that an external stakeholder copy them on any communication to the NGO Consortium – the consequences can be a further reduction in mutual trust and potentially a reinforced external impression of division and disarray within the NGO community.

It should be noted that these factors tend to diminish trust among both international and Somali NGOs, and are further magnified by the differences of perspective between these two groups. The implications for NGO voice, and some ideas on ways forward, are discussed in Appendix IV.

Problems projecting an NGO voice

All of the above factors get in the way of NGOs presenting a coherent and credible voice on issues affecting people in need in Somalia. Both NGO and external interlocutors described collective NGO advocacy as “strident”, instinctively oppositional and resistant to change, and insufficiently pragmatic and forward-looking.

The advocacy on UN structural integration in late 2012/early 2013 was frequently cited as a case in point: the initial position taken by a group of 17 NGOs within the Consortium in November 2012 was widely recognised to have been **out of touch with changing realities**. This was particularly apparent in its suggestion that some agencies would respond to structural integration by distancing themselves further from UN-led coordination structures – a position which no country director was maintaining just two months later, when this

research started.¹² While a subsequent lobby letter took a less uncompromising line, some respondents suggested the NGOs could be more effective in their advocacy if they had more timely and **regular engagement with potential allies** – particularly the key humanitarian donors,¹³ whose concerns may often be similar, and whose sphere of influence will be complementary. It was suggested that greater discussion with like-minded humanitarian donor and UN representatives might result in less “dogmatic” NGO positions, better geared to influencing potential targets.

One place for this kind of discussion could be the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT). However, alone of all the major humanitarian crises in Africa,¹⁴ Somalia does not include donor representatives in its HCT. The reasons for this, as one NGO informant stressed, are to do with keeping donors’ foreign policy considerations out of deliberations on humanitarian response. Yet to hold separate donor-HCT meetings, as is currently the practice, seems to be to assume that the UN and NGO representatives tend to have a shared position which will contrast with that of the humanitarian donors;¹⁵ in the opinion of the vast majority of interlocutors, that is far from being the case. (Indeed, ingrained **antagonism and distrust between NGOs and UN** actors was noted by several and displayed by others – itself an impediment to effective collaboration and advocacy.) Instead, this arrangement appears merely, in the view of several informants, to double the number of meetings while driving a wedge between potential allies and failing to address the inefficiencies and frustrations of the HCT.

“NGOs not speaking
with one voice makes
it harder to uphold
the rights of IDPs.”

According to informants from the NGO, UN and donor groups alike, the **weaknesses of the HCT** noted in the IASC real-time evaluation of May 2012¹⁶ remain largely unaddressed. Its failure to provide strategic leadership has persisted, particularly since the departure of the former humanitarian coordinator/resident coordinator (HC/RC) in October 2012. Meetings are irregularly scheduled and announced with little notice, and agendas are shared too close to the time to facilitate prior consultation of constituencies. Several NGO HCT members noted that their own points for the agenda tended to be left off until the day, then added under “Any other business” and at best included in a rushed discussion in the closing minutes of the meeting. A small group of forceful UN heads of agency tends to dominate discussions, which are widely felt to be “Nairobi-centric”, out of touch with realities inside

¹² It is worth noting that the position was prepared in collaboration with UN agencies.

¹³ One source suggested meetings had been more regular and collaboration with the humanitarian donor group (HDG) easier under the latter’s previous chair; since the change of chair in late 2012, it had become hard for the NGO Consortium to get meetings.

¹⁴ As of January 2013, Zimbabwe was the only other African country with an HCT not including donors; worldwide, humanitarian donor representatives were present on 19 out of 29 HCTs, according to data compiled by InterAction.

¹⁵ The larger donor agencies generally divide their humanitarian from their development assistance structures, and the two operate separately and at times with very different perspectives. ECHO and the European Commission for the European Union, DfID and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for the United Kingdom, and OFDA and USAID for the United States, will often hold divergent views on issues such as the politicisation of aid; interviews with the three biggest humanitarian donors for Somalia suggest their views are often likely to be far closer to NGO positions than those of their development colleagues.

¹⁶ <http://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/iasc-real-time-evaluation-humanitarian-response-horn-africa-drought-crisis-somalia>

Somalia and **focused too much on process and too little on action**. Interlocutors noted that the HCT's response to any situation was almost invariably a position paper; what use was then made of that paper – e.g. for advocacy with the Somali authorities or donor governments – and how far the group actually maintained that position over time, was often unclear.

NGOs' use of the HCT to further their own advocacy was widely felt to have been impeded by these weaknesses in the body's structure and functioning. NGO members recognised that it has also suffered from a **lack of consistent preparation by the NGO group**, including consultation with the wider NGO community and agreement between NGO representatives on how to present their perspectives. That can give an impression of disagreement and incoherence, particularly if the Consortium focal point is the only one speaking. This is especially true if the focal point is not consistent with the recommendations of NGOs at the global level that "all NGO participants in the HCT [should] ensure that they reflect and advocate for the interests of the NGO community."¹⁷

More generally, in both interviews and the final review meeting of country directors, there was a call for the NGOs to **be less reactive and more strategic** in their advocacy efforts. Responses to emerging situations will continue to be necessary. However, the 2013-14 Consortium advocacy strategy, based on a broad consultation of members, lays the foundation for work on four priority areas where NGOs can be taking the initiative by analysing the drivers of the problems identified and pinpointing where and how they can best use advocacy to leverage change. That analysis, which remains to be carried out at the time of writing, could help channel collective efforts more effectively towards points of greater impact.

It came through very strongly from interviews and group discussion among country directors that the credibility of NGO advocacy lies in a capacity to relay community concerns and present issues drawn from field-level experience. Achieving advocacy impact will therefore involve NGOs offering a "reality check" for the unrealistic or politically motivated proposals of other stakeholders, whether donors, the SNG or an integrated UN mission. Informants stressed that this will require a **stronger connection between Nairobi and "the field"** inside Somalia, with the latter needing to drive the agenda if credible arguments are to be presented. There was enthusiasm for the potential role of the forthcoming NGO Consortium office in Mogadishu in contributing to that process (on which more below).

¹⁷ Recommendations of the NGO consortia on HCT representative arrangements, 28.2.12.
See <http://www.interaction.org/document/recommendations-hct-representative-agreements>.

The Mogadishu IDP Relocation Debate

The humanitarian response in early 2013 to the SNG's plans to relocate all IDPs outside central Mogadishu highlighted a number of issues for coordination in South-Central Somalia post-2012. As the Somalia NGO Consortium prepares to deploy a full-time focal point to the Somali capital in April 2013, there are perhaps lessons to be learned from this experience that could help maximise the positive impact both of the Consortium and of humanitarian advocacy more generally.

For a series of reasons, the centre of gravity has shifted further towards Mogadishu and away from Nairobi since the SNG came to power in the final months of 2012. Perhaps because of geographical distance, perhaps differences of approach between NGOs on the one hand and UN agencies on the other (the latter part of a UN mission clearly invested in the political process), interviews with various HCT member organisations suggested that the latter did not appear to have fully grasped the implications of having a more legitimate government in place by the time the SNG made its announcement in January 2013 on IDP relocation. Internal divisions between a deputy HC keen to work with the new government and a more reticent HC/RC had not facilitated general consensus building and constructive engagement. As a result, Nairobi appeared slow to contribute productively to the debate, and anxious at being left behind. Earlier awareness that IDP relocation was going to be an issue had not crystallised into preparedness; the HCT had only an outdated position paper on evictions from government installations, and one initial response was to call for a new paper.

It would appear from respondents' accounts of the process that the SNG made appropriate use of OCHA as a channel for convening initial discussions on how to put its relocation plan into effect, and that OCHA had some discretion about which agencies to involve. Those INGOs with senior staff in Mogadishu were more likely to have a seat at the table; Somali NGOs (SNGOs) and other INGOs were not initially invited. Given the implications of these discussions for future intervention and funding opportunities, and the differences of position between agencies on engaging with the new authorities in a context of ongoing civil conflict, this differentiation bred suspicion and a sense of exclusion among NGOs and other stakeholders. At least one major humanitarian donor learned of the development bilaterally from a partner rather than through established coordination forums.

Clusters were reportedly not immediately used as a channel for discussion, information sharing and bringing a wider group to the table, but were brought in after a wider information meeting in Mogadishu. Lacking both a direct link to the SNG and a general coordination forum with the wider humanitarian community, NGOs not included in the initial meetings had no space to raise a range of concerns or discuss the implications of the move. Participation in closed-door NGO meetings in the capital increased because of a sense that information was not getting through by other channels.

Overall, interlocutors in Mogadishu were more likely than those in Nairobi to consider the SNG open to dialogue on considerations of IDP rights and aid effectiveness. The case highlighted a need for more open and consistent cross-agency coordination at the Mogadishu level, and for that level to be setting the agenda with regard to local response issues and engagement with the new government. As a number of respondents stressed, the role of Nairobi in such cases should progressively shift to one of providing support, relay and overall coherence. For some NGOs, for the Consortium and for the HCT, that will imply changes in internal business processes. Several informants felt the incoming HC/RC would have an important role to play in leading the humanitarian community in ensuring coherence with the government's sectoral strategies, while resisting the politicisation of aid efforts.

Ways Forward

Discussions with senior NGO managers point to a series of possible actions to address the problems identified above. Informants also identified a number of issues on which both individual agency and collective efforts, potentially through the Somalia NGO Consortium in many cases, are seen as both desirable and feasible. The specific recommendations below emerged from managers' own reflections, and would therefore merit explicit discussion at the country director level for practical follow-up. Key among them are taking forward the Consortium advocacy strategy regionally and centrally, addressing the weaknesses of the HCT and clusters as well as NGOs' role within them, and putting particular energy into ensuring the success of the Consortium's forthcoming office in Mogadishu.

The Virtuous Circle: Improving Processes

The **information base for advocacy** could be improved by:

- The Consortium preparing initial advocacy materials on issues prioritised in the advocacy strategy, based on existing information.
- Consortium members pooling internal data and documentation (e.g., from programme evaluations and lesson-learning reviews) within the Consortium advocacy working groups on the various priority issues.
- The advocacy working groups identifying areas of the strategy on which original research should be commissioned to provide a necessary contribution to the debate, and finding either Consortium resources or those of one or other member NGO to do so.
- NGOs working on Somalia explicitly seeking to make information sharing with other stakeholders their "default positions", and ensuring teams are guided to apply a consistent risk analysis before determining that information should not be shared.
- NGOs and the Consortium advocating for the Humanitarian Forum in Nairobi to be reconvened on a more regular basis, with a format designed to promote more open communication on emerging issues across the humanitarian community, and potentially for similar structures to be put in place in regional hubs inside Somalia.

Coordination on advocacy could be strengthened by:

- NGO country directors in Nairobi, and their equivalents in Hargeisa, Garowe and Mogadishu, committing to participating in regular meetings of the Somalia NGO Consortium (i.e., every two months),¹⁸ alongside their delegates to the intervening meetings, and using them to set strategic priorities for collective advocacy.
- Making more use of communication technology such as Skype and teleconferences to facilitate senior-level input to Consortium discussions and advocacy initiatives, and to promote closer coordination between Nairobi and Consortium members inside Somalia.
- Similarly promoting closer ties between other Nairobi coordination structures and regional mechanisms inside Somalia, including clusters, the inter-cluster working group (ICWG) and the HCT, with an emphasis on field-level analysis informing policy and action at the higher levels.
- Regular Consortium meetings with the Humanitarian Donor Group being resumed, to be used by NGOs to raise issues and garner additional information and support for advocacy where necessary.

¹⁸ This was the frequency mooted by country directors meeting to discuss preliminary findings of this research in Nairobi on 27 February 2013. It was agreed that an explicit schedule of these country director-level meetings should be shared by the Consortium to enable participants to plan ahead.

- All sides making conscious efforts to build on individual relationships of trust and on existing areas of agreement in order to overcome ingrained antagonism between NGOs and the UN on Somalia; this will be particularly challenging with the advent of UN structural integration, but there are indications of a shared desire to defend space for apolitical humanitarian action on both sides of that divide, which could be built on.
- NGOs and the Consortium making a concerted effort to improve cluster coordination, through a Consortium-led engagement of UN and donor stakeholders on the current challenges, combined with individual NGO support for the various current, mooted and possible initiatives¹⁹ to make clusters more functional by filtering out bogus members and using them to raise issues for action and advocacy (NB: an initial discussion of issues and possible responses is set out in Appendix I as a basis for a Consortium initiative on cluster coordination, as requested by country directors at the meeting to review preliminary research findings).

Presentation of collective advocacy could be strengthened by:

- NGO representatives on the HCT meeting more regularly ahead of HCT meetings to discuss issues and agree on how to present them in order to convey an accurate and coherent position, and organising to ensure regular two-way communication with the wider group of NGOs on issues under discussion at the HCT to ensure that collective positions are consistently represented.²⁰
- Tabling proposals for changes in the structure and functioning of the HCT, including bringing in humanitarian donor representatives on a rotating basis, and enlisting the support of the incoming HC/RC to ensure that the chairing and secretarial functions are made more conducive to balanced, constructive and action-focused discussion.
- Focusing less on developing written position papers at HCT level, and more on agreeing what action is needed and following up to ensure it happens.
- Individual NGOs and the Consortium team being aware of perceptions that the NGOs are divided, and avoiding any external communication that could reinforce that impression.

The NGO Consortium in Mogadishu: Getting it Right

In view of the changes both inside Somalia and in the international community's response, the Somalia NGO Consortium's move to establish a permanent office in Mogadishu is timely. NGO representatives saw a role for the Consortium supporting better information flow, trust and collaboration between Mogadishu and Nairobi, while also facilitating collective NGO dialogue with the SNG. The focal point could help present a "reality check" in relation to the real security constraints and very limited contact with communities that persist in the capital, in contrast to the sometimes unrealistic expectations of other stakeholders. And with a growing presence of senior NGO staff deployed part- or full-time to Mogadishu, the Consortium should be able to mobilise collective capacity to engage in policy-level discussion and decision-making.

¹⁹ These currently include Inter-Cluster Working Group plans for harmonised cluster-level capacity assessments, OCHA field monitoring, and other cluster-level efforts to increase field monitoring and coordination of activities, such as the Protection Cluster's Child Protection Working Group monitoring in Mogadishu, which is conducted by small teams of group members at the district level. The option of applying agreed membership criteria and delinking the clusters from CHF allocations were mooted by various informants. See also Appendix I below.

²⁰ This was agreed in broad terms at the country director-level meeting to review the findings of this research on 27 February 2013.

However, this is also potentially a high-risk initiative. Interviews suggest that the particularly high level of mutual distrust between INGOs, SNGOs and UN actors in the capital is a critical impediment to effective coordination at present. While interlocutors on all sides were keen to see the Consortium provide a “safe space” for NGO coordination, there is a clear risk that the incoming focal point could become too closely associated with one or more of these groups, leading to a loss of trust by others. In that scenario, the net effect could be a further worsening of already dysfunctional relationships, in which beneficiaries have the most to lose.

In addition, as long as Nairobi remains a coordination hub and centre of decision-making for the Somalia-wide operations of many NGOs and donor agencies, it will be important for the credibility and influence of the Consortium that the Mogadishu office is not seen to be acting in isolation. Strong and mutually supportive ties between the Nairobi and Mogadishu offices will be needed to bridge the current gap of understanding and communication, and allow the Consortium to project an informed and coherent voice on issues of Mogadishu policy and practice.

Other challenges include the high level of insecurity, which will constrain the international focal point’s contact with communities and limits NGO field managers’ space for external engagement in ways that will be hard to overcome. Communication circuits are particularly closed as a result, lacking opportunities for informal or social engagement. Expectations will need to be managed with regard to how much a small team can achieve in that context, and the Consortium may need to guard against becoming another parallel circuit to the clusters, given the highly operational focus of concerns raised by Mogadishu respondents.

In setting up this new space for NGO coordination in Mogadishu, the Consortium might do well to take on board some general pointers for establishing basic trust within diverse teams, developed by the inter-agency Emergency Capacity Building Project:

Indicators for developing a basic level of trust within teams from diverse backgrounds and organisations: **competence** (having the right organisations/people round the table), **openness** (sharing information as fully as possible, transparent decision-making), **integrity** (doing what we say we’ll do) and **reciprocity** (avoiding “us and them”).

Adapted from: Building trust in diverse teams: A concise facilitation handbook, Oxfam, 2007

Key Issues to Take Forward

Bilateral interviews and the initial and review discussions with country directors and other senior managers suggest there would be both interest and value in developing collective advocacy on four emerging issues in particular: cluster coordination, accountability, engagement with the Somali authorities, and partnerships between SNGOs and INGOs. Key points on these issues are set out in the appendices, together with suggested action points for taking them forward.

Conclusions

At a time of important changes both inside Somalia and in the way the international response to humanitarian needs in the country is organised, it seems that collectively the NGOs are currently coming across as divided and having little to contribute to the debates on humanitarian policy and practice.

While this is a problem affecting others in the humanitarian community as well, the evidence of this sizeable but not exhaustive survey of NGO managers suggests that many regret this. They tend to see a role for the NGOs in defending space for principled humanitarian action and influencing policies that will affect vulnerable sections of the population.

Playing that role, using the strength of a more collective voice to its full potential, will involve addressing a series of interlinked obstacles that respondents have identified. It will mean shifting from information retention to information sharing as a default position, and looking for ways to open up communication across the aid community. It will mean helping to fix the coordination systems that are currently not working, and making better use of the channels available to address issues more openly and hold duty bearers to account. It will mean taking the initiative more to propose analysis and drive advocacy efforts, drawing on NGOs' advantage of direct contact with affected communities, and feeding new information into debates from commissioned research and agency data. The credibility of collective advocacy will hinge on the quality of NGO collaboration inside Somalia, and for that the highly visible test case of the NGO Consortium's new office in Mogadishu, but also the success of the Consortium's other regional offices, will be critical.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Cluster coordination

Discussions at the country director-level review meeting on 27 February 2013 having indicated a degree of confusion about what the clusters were supposed to be achieving, some notes on the global aims of the system are included below.

Global developments

The cluster system was rolled out, both globally and in Somalia, in 2006²¹, as part of reforms to the humanitarian system intended to improve leadership, predictability and accountability in humanitarian response. Periodic reviews of the system since then have sought to improve its effectiveness. From 2010, in response to widely recognised failures of the system in the response to the Haiti earthquake and Pakistan floods, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) has proposed more far-reaching improvements to the system, under an initiative known as the “transformative Agenda”, or TA.

The TA stresses that coordination structures are a means to an end, the ultimate aim of the humanitarian community being to serve vulnerable populations effectively. To that end, it recognises that HCs and HCTs must be able to develop coordination arrangements suited to local requirements. Where clusters are the chosen mode of operation, the IASC Principals “agreed there is a need to restate and return to the original purpose of clusters, refocusing them on strategic and operational gaps analysis, planning, assessment and results.”²²

The core functions of a cluster at the country level

1. Supporting service delivery

- Provide a platform to ensure that service delivery is driven by the agreed strategic priorities.
- Develop mechanisms to eliminate duplication of service delivery.

2. Informing strategic decision-making of the HC/HCT for the humanitarian response

- Needs assessment and response gap analysis (across sectors and within the sector).
- Analysis to identify and address (emerging) gaps, obstacles, duplication, and cross-cutting issues including age, gender, environment, and HIV/AIDs.
- Prioritization, grounded in response analysis.

3. Planning and strategy development

- Develop sectoral plans, objectives and indicators that directly support realization of the HC/HCT strategic priorities.
- Apply and adhere to existing standards and guidelines.
- Clarify funding requirements, prioritization, and cluster contributions for the HC's overall humanitarian funding considerations (e.g., Flash Appeal, CAP, CERF, Emergency Response Fund/Common Humanitarian Fund).

²¹ The IASC formally initiated the cluster approach in December 2005, although it was first used in the Pakistan earthquake response of September 2005. The main rollout process began in 2006. See for instance Stoddard et al. (2007) Cluster Approach Evaluation Final, <http://www.odhpn.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/4955.pdf>.

²² Recommendation 26, IASC Transformative Agenda: Chapeau and Compendium of Actions (January 2012)

4. Advocacy

- Identify advocacy concerns to contribute to HC and HCT messaging and action.
- Undertake advocacy activities on behalf of cluster participants and the affected population.

5. Monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the cluster strategy and results; recommending corrective action where necessary.

6. Contingency planning/preparedness/capacity building in situations where there is a high risk of recurring or significant new disaster and where sufficient capacity exists within the cluster.

Source: Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Country Level
(<http://www.interaction.org/document/reference-module-cluster-coordination-country-level>)

Shared leadership (between the cluster lead agency (CLA) and other members, including NGOs) is seen as one of the key success factors in contexts where clusters are seen to have worked more effectively, such as South Sudan. This requires appropriate investment in the cluster coordination role by the CLA. It can also be promoted, for instance, through NGO co-leadership (including through funded full- or part-time posts where appropriate), through permanent standing committees or “Strategic Advisory Groups” (SAGs) made up of member NGOs and UN agencies who together direct the work of the cluster, and/or through short-term technical working groups (TWiGs) to lead on specific issues. The emphasis in the TA, drawing on experience in a range of contexts, is on placing resources as close as possible to the operational level, adapting structures to local needs, and ensuring international efforts build and do not undermine the capacity of national and local government and non-governmental agencies.

As part of the TA initiative, at a global level, in 2012 the three NGO consortia within the IASC²³ renewed their commitment to engaging to ensure that coordination structures remain relevant to humanitarian response and are inclusive, strategic and accountable. That includes active involvement in clusters where these are in place. They proposed that NGOs take a number of steps to realise that aim, including: ensuring their staff better understand what the coordination architecture aims to accomplish, and demanding that it meets their needs to achieve common goals; taking responsibility for setting the agenda and developing strategies within the clusters; and, where clusters are found to be lacking, recommending practical improvements.

Within the “humanitarian architecture”, the clusters, through the ICWG, are intended to channel information and key issues to the HCT. They are accountable to the HC, and should be subject to six-monthly performance evaluations facilitated by OCHA. (Three of the Somalia clusters – Food Security, Health and WASH – undertook an evaluation of this kind in early 2013, based on member consultation.)

The clusters in Somalia

The clusters in Somalia, like aid interventions generally, have been negatively affected by insecurity across much of South-Central Somalia, and for much of the period since their rollout in 2006, Nairobi has been the central coordination hub. From late 2011, however, as part of a wider move by the UN to increase its presence inside Somalia, OCHA and a number of CLAs have supported greater field-level coordination: hosting cluster meetings at the UN Common Compound in Mogadishu, deploying more cluster coordinators in Mogadishu on a

²³ The International Council for Voluntary Action (ICVA), InterAction, and the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response

full- or part-time basis, and establishing Somali NGOs as focal points to lead coordination at the provincial or local level. Most UN CLAs aim to have their country headquarters in Mogadishu from 2013.

This move to relocate closer to the operational level has been accompanied in some cases by a significant increase in resources. Some clusters have secured sufficient funds to deploy quite large dedicated teams to the coordination effort.²⁴ With this has come improved information management and technical support, according to various respondents, although the performance of field-level coordination structures reportedly remains patchy. Access constraints

The IASC's 2012 real-time evaluation (RTE) of the humanitarian response to the food crisis noted a number of serious problems with the functioning of the clusters, including the strongly top-down approach from Nairobi and low levels of engagement by the major international NGOs, due to a perception of the clusters as wholly dysfunctional. The RTE proposed a "frank exchange on this (...) between cluster lead agencies, cluster coordinators and INGOs – mediated by OCHA and the Inter-Cluster Coordinator." It would appear that this exchange has not taken place, although the greater investment taking place in field-level coordination responds to some other RTE recommendations. The RTE comment that "People started to create parallel systems of meetings because nothing useful was discussed in the main meetings" was echoed in comments from NGO managers interviewed for this research, suggesting that solutions proposed at the time have not been effective in addressing NGOs' concerns.

NGO concerns

With some exceptions, NGOs interviewed largely expressed frustration that the clusters delivered no real coordination benefits in return for the investment of time and information required. One respected and long-serving member of the INGO community described them as a "monster" which yielded no improved impact on the ground, instead merely seeking to enhance central control of the process.

The role of clusters in reviewing CHF and ERF funding allocations was seen very widely as having been fatal for the effective functioning of cluster coordination. Access to funds rather than operational and strategic coordination had become the main motivation for engagement, and meetings had become too large for strategic or even functional discussion, with 40 or 50 participants in many cases.²⁵ Since the chance of securing funding was the main attraction, significant numbers of these participants were believed or known to be bogus or "briefcase" NGOs, which had the effect of deterring serious cluster members from speaking openly at meetings.²⁶ Some respondents suggested that even some SNGOs acting as focal points for certain clusters inside Somalia were not delivering the aid they purported to. This inflated and disingenuous membership was generally felt to make a farce of cluster participation in many cases.

It was widely asserted that clusters were failing to control bogus projects/NGOs, even when the CLA is the donor. One respondent spoke of frustration that because one cluster's 3Ws

²⁴ The Food Security cluster has a team of nine dedicated officers.

²⁵ Interestingly, the 2012 IASC RTE report notes that giving clusters this role in relation to funding allocations "was felt by OCHA staff consulted to be essential to getting participation in the clusters." There would seem to be a fundamental difference of understanding between OCHA and NGOs here that warrants discussion.

²⁶ One informant suggested this was less of a problem in the Education cluster, simply because there were not the funds available for that sector to attract spurious applications.

(who does what where) matrix for a particular area showed needs being met, their own NGO was unable to secure funding to intervene, although their own assessment had revealed there to be no intervention in place and vulnerable people remaining in fact without assistance. Although the bogus project was funded by the lead agency for that cluster, invitations to the alleged implementer to meet with the cluster coordinator and the other NGO to discuss the situation were ignored. While in this case the coordinator was responsive, another informant recounted how a different UN agency failed to respond to evidence that their implementing partner had fraudulently claimed to have carried out rehabilitation work in fact already performed by another NGO, apparently preferring to turn a blind eye.

Such cases discourage cluster members from reporting, even confidentially, when they believe activities in a cluster's 3 or 4Ws (who does what where when) matrix to be false. Several respondents, from both SNGOs and INGOs, stated that the risk of reprisals against staff or the organisation were too great for them to take steps that might jeopardise another agency's lucrative source of income. The security risks for the cluster coordinator are probably the same, but perhaps the CLA as a whole is better insulated.

Again with certain exceptions (the well-resourced WASH and Food Security clusters being the most frequently mentioned, although there were criticisms there too), the clusters' contribution to the quality and effectiveness of intervention is seen as limited at best. A system which failed to provide safeguards against substandard interventions during the 2011-12 food crisis is often viewed as having no legitimacy to set criteria or expect engagement now. Clusters the world over suffer from being seen as UN-dominated, but here that impression is particularly strong: rather than boosting support to the operational level, the CLAs' increased attention to the Mogadishu clusters seems to be experienced by INGOs in particular as the UN attempting to seize control and win kudos. One informant in Mogadishu suggested, "There have been humanitarian operations here for some time, yet little was done before to get coordination going, so people tend to resent the demands being made now. Enthusiasm takes time to build with each new initiative."

As a result, NGOs acknowledge a low level of NGO participation: often junior, without decision-making power or even necessarily full information on the organisation's own programmes, and lacking in continuity of representation from one meeting to the next. Donor insistence on engagement was said to be more of a motivation than any expectation of that engagement yielding results. Many reported using parallel channels to obtain the information and hold the discussions they need to plan their interventions, address obstacles and advocate for the needs of communities. Several accepted that their passive approach to clusters made the latter's ineffectiveness and UN domination a self-fulfilling prophecy, but considered that the UN and donors needed to shoulder their own responsibilities for making clusters function better.

Current initiatives

OCHA's staff inside Somalia are reportedly beginning to monitor the 3Ws matrices to a limited extent, despite their own security concerns, with a view to reducing the space for false claims of intervention. If successful, this should help ensure more accurate data is shared within the clusters as a basis for action, and help reduce the presence of bogus NGOs, making meetings potentially more productive.

The ICWG is planning to develop a framework for harmonised organisational capacity assessments at cluster level, to address the situation whereby multiple INGOs, UN agencies and clusters conduct their own reviews, against varying standards and sometimes of the same SNGOs. This could have a similar effect.

According to the 2012 RTE, the national WASH cluster has meanwhile addressed the overcrowding of meetings by setting up a strategic advisory group whose remit explicitly excludes fund mobilisation.

The Protection cluster in Mogadishu is endeavouring to establish district-level field coordination between implementing agencies, and stepping up monitoring of activities in the process. The cluster coordinator, a Somali national, is able to conduct some monitoring herself, while the Child Protection Working Group has formed teams of its members to visit individual service providers in order to collect information at the level of detail needed to enable effective referral from other programmes.

In view of the above, country directors meeting to discuss the preliminary findings of this research agreed that it would be helpful for the Somalia NGO Consortium to engage OCHA, the UN CLAs and donors in a discussion on improving the value of clusters for the delivery of assistance to those in need. This discussion could usefully agree a time frame for a number of action points on all sides to start making all eight clusters more effective in improving the coordination of service delivery, moving on from the current investment in simply verifying basic data.

The primary obstacles to increased NGO engagement are unworkable numbers and a lack of trust: discussions should address those as a priority. In return, NGOs could agree to take steps to help fix the weaknesses of clusters from the inside, including by holding both the CLAs and themselves to account. Regular reviews of cluster performance, which are established good practice globally, could be used to track progress and set new targets.

Potential action points for OCHA, CLAs and donors

- ❖ Agree and resource minimum staffing requirements for the Somalia clusters, including NGO co-leadership. Prioritise resourcing for the levels closest to beneficiaries and ensure that adequate training and support are provided for all staff expected to act in a cluster coordination role, including the staff of cluster members acting as focal points at field level and NGO co-coordinators.
- ❖ Hold the clusters to account, with six-monthly performance evaluations reporting to the HC, and issues being taken up within the HCT.
- ❖ Use a reinvigorated Humanitarian Forum to task clusters to address emerging issues.
- ❖ Promote consistent efforts in all clusters to improve communication between the field and Nairobi levels, including through regular field visits by the CLA and other delegates from the Nairobi cluster.
- ❖ Give serious consideration to NGO recommendations on de-linking CHF and ERF allocations entirely from the clusters.
- ❖ Support and expand on OCHA field monitoring visits, using these to verify actual activities in areas where bogus interventions are suspected, while taking particular care to ensure the confidentiality of any information received on such suspicions.

- ❖ Support and follow up on the ICWG initiative on harmonised capacity assessments, ensuring they happen in clusters where briefcase NGOs are a problem.
- ❖ Consider introducing membership criteria for clusters, as has been done in other contexts, and discuss and agree these within each individual cluster. Criteria could be simply a requirement that members identify one named staff member with programme responsibilities in the sector concerned to attend, plus one named delegate to cover absences; or they could include being funded for sectoral activities in the past 12 months, taking part in local-level coordination activities, or achieving certain standards according to CHF or cluster capacity assessments.

Potential action points for NGOs

- ❖ Promote consistent efforts in all clusters to improve communication between the field and Nairobi levels, including through regular field visits by the CLA and other delegates from the Nairobi cluster.
- ❖ Instruct teams to use the clusters to raise issues and request information and follow-up from the CLA.
- ❖ Consider taking an active part in short- or longer-term cluster leadership mechanisms, such as SAGs or TWiGs, or taking on an adequately resourced co-leadership role at the national and/or field level in sectors where the NGO has specialist competence.
- ❖ Support and follow up on the ICWG initiative on harmonised capacity assessments, ensuring they happen in clusters where briefcase NGOs are a problem.
- ❖ Find safe ways to blow the whistle on bogus interventions where possible, e.g., private discussion with the CLA/OCHA/donor about how they can “discover” wrongdoing through a wider monitoring initiative without casting suspicion on the whistle blower; supporting cluster-level efforts to improve monitoring.

Appendix 2: Accountability

NGO concerns

Virtually everyone interviewed said they had concerns about accountability within their own organisation and were doing something about it, but knew there was a residual risk, which they feared to acknowledge in a meeting with more than one trusted individual. A number said they would not be thanked by their HQs for showing greater transparency.

There are three major concerns voiced by NGOs interviewed with regard to resource accountability: ensuring that assistance reaches the intended beneficiaries, mitigating the security risks involved in addressing fraud and diversion, and avoiding funding cuts linked to actual or suspected fraud or diversion.

Of these, the latter was undoubtedly foremost in the minds of informants: it could mean the end of a medium-sized INGO or an SNGO to have to return hundreds of thousands of dollars and potentially be blacklisted. Moves from donors to insulate themselves from risk were commonly seen as offloading that risk onto implementing NGOs. Several managers gave as an example CHF requirements that country directors carry personal liability for losses. For instance, the new CHF guidelines for cash-based programming state: “The agency must submit an official letter indemnifying OCHA against any claims in regards to cash loss including robbery and taxation that may arise during the transfer, transport and distribution of cash.” Some informants felt that this was not a realistic or reasonable demand in the circumstances, and that this kind of formal requirement served to discourage open reporting of problems and discussion of risk mitigation strategies. At present, as several informants acknowledged, transporters moving humanitarian supplies across the country will add a percentage onto their bill to cover the charges they will need to pay at checkpoints manned by a range of armed groups, including SNG soldiers and allied forces. The sum will never be explicit, but all sides – including the donors – know that delivering supplies is not currently possible without paying it.

There was interest from the NGO side in having the best possible systems in place ahead of time to reduce the space for fraud and diversion in the first place, plus potentially pooled resources from the overall aid budget for system-wide monitoring (call centres, satellite images, etc.). “We need to acknowledge there is diversion, show we’re doing something about it, and know the response will not be so rigid that it paralyses us.”

A number of interlocutors also called for agreement to be reached on the idea that in some extreme circumstances, such as the conditions during the food crisis of 2011-12, a higher degree of loss is acceptable, provided it is exceptional and the parameters are agreed. “Generally we should be held to a high level of accountability, and if we can do that in most situations, then when we can’t in specific cases, everyone will find it easier to accept. There is too often a perception that we fall back on a kind of “this is Somalia” complacency. We all have a responsibility to step up: the famine is over now.”

Some NGO managers stressed that the donors have so far shown an interest essentially in tackling fraud and diversion, while there are other aspects of accountability that warrant at least the same level of attention, it was felt. These include greater regard for aid effectiveness than was felt to have been the case in 2011-12, and for accountability to communities and beneficiaries.

Donor concerns

The donors interviewed were keen to see honesty from NGOs, and proposals for a way forward on improving risk management. They stressed that they have no desire to “pull the plug”, but nor can they afford surprises: risks they are aware of and know are being managed, or cases of fraud they learn of from partners rather than through audits, are likely to receive a more understanding response. In view of the current economic & political pressures on aid budgets, humanitarian donors see themselves as the allies of NGOs in maintaining aid flows where they are needed. In that context, they stressed that it is not feasible for them to give public guarantees that they will not demand restitution in certain circumstances, but keen to work together on developing effective risk mitigation. One donor representative stressed: “There has been complicity between donors, UN agencies and NGOs on accountability; it’s time for it to end.” For cash programming, there is discussion of making performance bonds for hawalas or the use of mobile phones for cash transfers a requirement.

Scope for collective action

Beyond the moral question of where responsibility lies for the effective use of aid resources, and professional scruples about interfering in another organisation’s business, it is clear that risk is pooled to some extent whether agencies like it or not. Perceptions of NGOs as corrupt, of remote management as suspect, of aid money as wasted, affect all NGOs – and their actual or potential beneficiaries. False claims of intervention doubly affect those in need, by diverting funds and by designating certain needs as covered, thereby blocking genuine assistance. When one NGO gives way to pressure for diversion of some form, it becomes harder for others to resist it.

Most interlocutors felt it was important for NGOs to overcome their reservations – including competition for funds and concern for agency profile – and work honestly together on this, potentially agreeing a common position that they could then take to donors.

Recent/current initiatives

Closed-door meetings facilitated by the NGO Consortium in November 2012 between a small group of NGOs and humanitarian donors yielded no agreement.

The cash consortium is reviewing its risk mitigation matrix and discussing it with donors; from the cash consortium’s side, the idea seems to be to agree that if best-practice standards are applied, the donors accept the residual risk. Not yet agreed, but consortium members spoke of interest in sharing the matrix more widely in order to develop it for interventions other than cash.

The CHF’s monitoring and evaluation (M&E) group, seeking to share best practice across agencies, has developed a matrix of measures that they plan to pilot with a view to helping all donors and implementers adopt most effective.

Key humanitarian donors are pushing for a working group to be set up under the HCT to lead on improving accountability and risk management; looking at bringing in a consultant to help take it forward as a collective effort.

NGOs within the cash consortium have commissioned a study into “do no harm” approaches to engagement with gatekeepers in cash programmes, which might also yield learning for other sectors of intervention.

There is clearly overlap here with the proposed work stream on engagement with the Somali authorities (Appendix III), and efforts should be pooled where possible, and coherence maintained.

Potential action points

- ❖ Cash consortium member NGOs present the risk matrix to other interested NGOs, and the group to review it alongside existing policies of individual agencies that might further strengthen it/make it more workable across a wider range of interventions.
- ❖ If there is sufficient interest/convergence, the Somalia NGO Consortium could facilitate developing a broader tool on this basis, and discussing it with donors, alongside the specific discussions on cash programming but ensuring consistency with them to avoid undermining ongoing efforts.
- ❖ Discussions on spreading good practice could touch on: more transparent/common approaches to gatekeepers, use of a small share of donor budgets for system-wide risk mitigation measures, security implications of addressing poor accountability, (donor and UN) advocacy with SNG and allied authorities to control local diversion, as well as the realism of some current donor requirements.
- ❖ Promote a culture of greater transparency internally, upwards to HQ as well as downwards to programme teams.
- ❖ Find safe ways to blow the whistle on bogus interventions, e.g. private discussion with the CLA/OCHA/donor about how they can “discover” wrongdoing through a wider monitoring initiative without casting suspicion on the whistle blower; supporting cluster-level efforts to improve monitoring.

Appendix 3 Engagement with the Somali authorities

Local authorities

NGOs report being played off one another by a range of local authorities in various areas. Local authorities are experienced as often corrupt and unreliable, and in SCS as a potential security threat. Demands range from obvious backhanders and more or less official taxes or fees (amounting in some cases to a significant percentage of total programme budget) to a say in beneficiary selection or staff hiring decisions. Implied or explicit threats include a ban on operating in the area and physical violence against the organisation's staff.

Some organisations, international and Somali, indicate that they make a judgement to negotiate some level of compromise in response to these demands, based on factors including assessments of likely programme impact on needs and the NGO's continued operating capacity. During the food crisis of 2011-12, the scale of need was more often judged to be such as to justify accepting compromises in order to get the aid through quickly. Compromises by some are then used by some local authority representatives to exert greater leverage over other NGOs which seek to resist such demands, playing on competition between agencies. Smaller NGOs are particularly vulnerable to these pressures. A lack of communication between NGOs on these issues leaves each organisation negotiating more or less in the dark, and undermines the defence of humanitarian principles.

"We could potentially negotiate better on at least some issues if we did so collectively, but honestly, it's like a prisoner's dilemma where the local authorities are trying to make each NGO confess... NGOs give up the communal long-term gain for the short-term one, often due to an emergency issue with a donor, getting a project finished, etc."

Informants state that at present there is no point reporting cases of corruption and intimidation to the central authorities, as they have no real capacity to control it, so reporting would only create further security risks. One NGO seeking support from the SNG in addressing such issues in Mogadishu was requested to put its concerns in writing, but declined for security reasons. In some areas, small groups of NGOs meeting privately have agreed to share information on these issues.

The 2009 "red lines" document provides only a very generic position on the appropriate response to demands of this nature. At least one NGO has developed more explicit policy guidance for staff on action to be taken for specified categories of incident. At the field level, however, informants suggested that it is local knowledge and connections that are most helpful in resisting corruption and extortion: knowing other organisations' practices and who might have influence over the official in question, and agreeing a common approach that can strengthen the hand of individual agencies.

Potential action points

- ❖ Building on existing informal networks at the local level, share information confidentially about specific threats and demands and organisations' responses to them, and identify collective measures that could help each individual agency better resist. Such measures might include: agreed common positions consistent with

humanitarian principles and workable at the local level, mobilisation of connections to influence officials in response to particular incidents, collective representation to higher authorities.

- ❖ Similar information exchange and cooperation between agencies could be helpful in limiting the negative impact of gatekeepers on assistance to beneficiaries.
- ❖ Discuss within these informal networks how and to what extent to escalate such initiatives to the wider NGO community, e.g., through the Somalia NGO Consortium regionally/at Nairobi level, including for collective advocacy on behalf of prospective beneficiaries.
- ❖ Ensure that locally agreed measures are consistent with humanitarian principles, and also feed into the development of feasible risk mitigation measures nationally, so that the latter do not become a purely top-down initiative.

National authorities

Engagement with the newly formed SNG presents another set of issues. While individual NGOs have enjoyed access at a senior level, there is currently no collective forum for NGOs to meet privately with senior ministers. Several informants saw this as a missed opportunity to raise issues affecting their organisations' ability to operate safely and effectively in Mogadishu in particular, while dialogue with the central government was also seen as potentially useful for facilitating aid operations in other areas of SNG and allied control in South-Central Somalia.

While NGOs take different approaches to their proposed engagement with the new government – some planning systematic capacity building of technical government services, others hoping to maintain a low-profile information exchange – there are some points of agreement. There seems to be consensus that the limited political process does afford the SNG a degree of legitimacy that the TFG always lacked, and that it is in the interests of ordinary Somalis for it to succeed in bringing a political solution to conflict in the country. Also that NGOs' activities will need to be in line with sectoral strategies developed over time by line ministries, and that it is in the interests of all concerned for NGO expertise and experience to be taken on board in elaborating those strategies. Interlocutors in Mogadishu were confident that there was openness at high levels of the government to obtaining such input to strategies and policies. All felt there was a need to ensure that the new authorities are held to observance of international laws and standards with regard to such issues as human rights, voluntary return and the status of IDPs.

Concerns were voiced, however, about a degree of misplaced optimism among some international and Somali actors regarding both current government capacity (the Ministry of Health was mentioned as one example where the minister, while dynamic and committed, lacks a sufficient team of equally able staff) and the realities of aid delivery in areas of South-Central Somalia recently brought under SNG or allied control. On these matters, several informants suggested NGOs could usefully provide a "reality check" from the operational level to other stakeholders (donors, the UN and government in particular), in the interests of ensuring that planning and coordination are effective in meeting needs and abiding by "do no harm" standards.

The recent mobilisation around the government's plans to relocate all IDPs out of central Mogadishu has highlighted the need for improved communication and coordination across the humanitarian community, and also among NGOs. Attendance at informal private meetings among a group of NGOs in Mogadishu swelled in late January/early February in response to concerns that some agencies were not privy to information and discussions on aspects of a development that would have major implications for them and the communities they serve. At present a coherent NGO stance on the issues raised by this development seems to be impeded to some extent by a sense that agencies are positioning themselves to lead on delivering particular services in the proposed new camps, creating a new focus of competition.

Potential action points

- ❖ Approach the incoming HC to lead a collective (NGOs, UN, donors) process with the SNG to develop agreed standards with local authorities for the safe and principled delivery of humanitarian aid, including in areas of SCS which have recently come under SNG or allied control; these should be developed at the local level to ensure maximum buy-in and feasibility, within a coherent overall approach.
- ❖ Possibly making use of the upcoming establishment of a Mogadishu section of the Somalia NGO Consortium, establish a regular channel of direct communication with senior levels of the SNG on issues of common concern. Ensure that, while addressing NGO-specific issues, this communication is consistent with advocacy through other channels, such as the clusters and HCT.
- ❖ In cluster, inter-cluster, HCT and other inter-agency coordination on the issue of IDP relocation, seek to present a coherent NGO stance promoting the rights and interests of IDPs and host communities, drawn from individual agencies' analysis of needs and risks for the short and medium term.

Appendix 4: INGO-SNGO partnership

Background

Several respondents highlighted growing tensions between INGOs and SNGOs as a feature of the shifting context of aid delivery in Somalia, and one which has the potential to divide and diminish a collective NGO voice.

The food crisis of 2011-12 prompted an expansion of funding for emergency assistance. Owing to the insecurity that continued to impede access to large parts of South-Central Somalia, a significant proportion of this funding was managed from Nairobi, with senior managers of the implementing INGOs or SNGOs often unable to visit project sites. This “remote management” model is widely acknowledged, by donors and NGOs alike, to have contributed to failures of resource accountability and programme effectiveness. There has been a corresponding move away from that model, with some INGOs seeking to disengage from partnerships with SNGOs in favour of implementing directly, and many seeking to increase senior management time and deployments inside Somalia to improve oversight.

The reputational cost of those failures during the food crisis is felt by INGOs and SNGOs alike. On the one hand, some INGOs reported pressure from donors to implement directly; others felt the risk of corruption in partnering with SNGOs was too high to be justified. (One informant noted that donors had earlier been pressuring INGOs to partner more with SNGOs...)

On the other hand, SNGOs may feel they are being held responsible for a failure on the part of donors and INGOs to ensure proper controls were in place. Concerns were expressed that moving to direct INGO implementation would not address capacity gaps in some legitimate SNGOs, and would tend to give the erroneous impression that cases of fraud and diversion during the crisis were both universal among SNGOs and limited to SNGOs alone. With the advent in 2012 of the SNG, viewed as having a legitimacy its predecessor always lacked, there is a sense of taking stock in Somalia, including in relation to the impact of two decades of aid interventions, which it is widely felt have failed to build Somali capacity to prevent and respond to future droughts and other shocks. Similar questions are being asked by the authorities in Somaliland, which has publicly accused aid agencies of mass misuse of funds.

Rationale for action

Somalia NGO Consortium members consulted for the organisation’s May 2011 evaluation highlighted its representation of both SNGOs and INGOs as an important source of the Consortium’s legitimacy.

From a perspective of enhancing the effectiveness of a collective NGO voice on Somalia, there would seem to be a need to:

- Ensuring common positions really do reflect SNGO as well as INGO concerns
- Making sure external audiences understand that this is the case
- Responding to growing (potential) tensions between SNGOs and INGOs as the context of aid delivery changes, to help prevent a rift that divides and diminishes NGO voice
- Responding in a practical and principled way to the change in context (improved access, greater scope for development approaches) by shifting approach as appropriate, and working together to advocate with other stakeholders for similar action

Past/current initiatives

- ❖ Research on partnership commissioned by the NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project II in September/October 2012, leading to:
 - A CARE/Oxfam project in the 2013 CAP for specific capacity building measures, developed in consultation with a wider group of SNGOs.
 - The Somalia NGO Consortium web page for information sharing on capacity building initiatives, with a view to promoting the pooling of resources and harmonisation of standards.
- ❖ The NGO Consortium advocacy strategy: “Trends in support of increased partnerships as a way of working in Somalia will be explored and member experiences, challenges and ideas for action will be promoted (see work of NHRPII). A document detailing best practices for partnership based on the experiences of members will be developed into a short brief for key targets (building on Humanitarian Partnerships: a Vehicle to Empower Civil Society in Somalia).”
- ❖ The CHF is planning to develop a capacity building strategy based on ongoing capacity assessments, and is keen to partner with NGOs/the Consortium on it.
- ❖ ICWG plans to develop a framework for harmonised cluster capacity assessments

Potential action points

- ❖ Promote the findings of the earlier NHRPII good practice research in wider forums; develop short brief for key targets as per the Consortium advocacy strategy.
- ❖ Make particular effort (SNGOs, INGOs and FPs) to ensure that SNGO perspectives are heard and addressed in Consortium and other coordination meetings, and that collective advocacy is explicit about representing both SNGO and INGO members.
 - This could include (SNGOs, FPs) working with civil society platforms/umbrella groups to ensure they effectively represent member positions in Consortium and other meetings where SNGO voices are perhaps less strong, e.g., through pre-meetings to discuss issues of common concern, with feedback and follow-up.
 - SNGO representatives in Somaliland suggested that an alternative option for NGO Consortium monthly meetings in Hargeisa, where the vast majority of participants are Somali speakers, would be to hold the meetings in Somali; INGO members could undertake to send senior Somali staff to represent them, and minutes could be in English.
 - It could also include INGOs consistently engaging their individual SNGO partners on emerging issues and priorities, and encouraging/facilitating their active involvement in Consortium, cluster and other coordination structures.
- ❖ Combine forces to offer continuous training on ethical delivery/humanitarian principles, seen as valuable by INGO and SNGO staff interviewed – through the proposed CAP project, the CHF’s mooted capacity building strategy, and/or the clusters.

Appendix 5: Organisations interviewed

Interviews were conducted with 50 senior managers of international and Somali NGOs and NGO Consortium staff, as well as 13 external stakeholders. The interviews took place in Nairobi, Hargeisa and Mogadishu, between 29 January and 27 February 2013. A planned visit to Garowe had to be abandoned owing to logistical constraints.

In total, 34 respondents from 21 international NGOs and 14 respondents from 10 Somali NGOs contributed through individual interviews, as did 15 people from 10 other aid and development organisations. A further three NGOs were represented at a country director-level meeting to review preliminary findings of the research on 27 February 2013. The organisations listed below are solely those who took part in individual interviews. The author wishes to thank all involved at each stage.

NGOs

- Agence d'aide à la coopération technique et au développement (ACTED)
- Action Against Hunger
- ActionAid
- African Development Solutions (ADESO)
- American Friends Service Committee
- Candlelight
- Care International
- Comitato Europeo per la Formazione e l'Agricoltura (CEFA)
- Cooperazione e Sviluppo (CESVI)
- Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli (CISP)
- Concern Worldwide
- Danish Refugee Council
- Horn of Africa Community Development Action (HACDA)
- Humanitarian Initiative Just Relief Aid (HIJRA)
- International Medical Corps
- International Rescue Committee
- INTERSOS
- Médecins Sans Frontières OCA
- Network against FGM in Somalia (NAFIS)
- Norwegian Refugee Council
- Oxfam International
- Relief International
- Somaliland HIV-AIDS Network (SAHAN)
- Save the Children
- Somaliland Youth Development and Voluntary Organisation (SOYDAVO)
- Somali Community Concern
- Somali Humanitarian Operational Consortium
- Trócaire
- WASDA
- Women and Children Care Organisation
- World Vision

Other organisations

- Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF)
- European Commission Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO)
- Food Security Cluster
- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)
- Somaliland Ministry of National Planning and Development
- UK Department for International Development (DfID)
- UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
- UN Resident Coordinator's Office Hargeisa