

Humanitarian Practice Network

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About HPN

The Humanitarian Practice Network at the Overseas Development Institute is an independent forum where field workers, managers and policymakers in the humanitarian sector share information, analysis and experience. *The views and opinions expressed in HPN's publications do not necessarily state or reflect those of the Humanitarian Policy Group or the Overseas Development Institute.*



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Reading about Somalia can be a depressing experience: because of the awfulness of the situation; the dim prospects for things getting any better; and the long-running nature of the crisis there. Throughout the last two decades, humanitarian actors have sought to ameliorate the worst consequences of the conflict in the country, hampered by constant insecurity and the lack of funding that goes with low-profile crises like Somalia's. While the events of 9/11 raised brief hopes of a renewed focus on failed states, attention to the potential threat of terrorism has not translated into positive action to resolve Somalia's political crisis.

As the articles collected here demonstrate, the current situation is truly dreadful. The remarkable resilience of Somalis in the face of decades of crisis and the generosity of the huge Somali diaspora may finally be stretched to breaking point. Any society, let alone one without a functional central government and reeling from decades of war, would struggle to cope with the combined consequences of massive displacement, intensified conflict, rapidly rising prices for food, fuel and water, hyper-inflation and drought. The articles here make clear that Somalis are no longer coping, and urgently need large-scale humanitarian assistance.

This issue of *Humanitarian Exchange* also includes a rich array of policy and practice articles. Kenya features in three articles, looking at the plight of people displaced in political violence, aid agency attempts to coordinate security management



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and, finally, an innovative response using mobile phones to transfer cash. Cash features again in a summary of its use by the World Bank in its responses to disasters in South Asia. There is also a refreshingly optimistic take on the impact of aid in the Central African Republic, an examination of the unreliability of data about countries in crisis on key websites and a review of World Vision's attempts to develop and roll out standards and indicators for integrating protection concerns in its humanitarian response.

As always, we welcome any comments or feedback, which can be sent to hpn@odi.org.uk or to The Coordinator, Humanitarian Practice Network, 111 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7JD, UK.

Somalia: an accountability-free zone?

Robert Maletta, Oxfam Novib

After over a decade of relative obscurity, Somalia is, once again, on the radar screen of the international community, but for all the wrong reasons. After the departure of UNOSOM in 1995 and a retreat into the shadows, Somalia is now being described with such superlatives as ‘the world’s worst humanitarian crisis’, ‘the most dangerous place for aid workers to operate’, ‘the site of the world’s largest concentration of IDPs’ and so on.¹ This negative press has forced the international community into a bout of collective hand-wringing, but little else. Millions of Somalis – some 2.6 million, at the time of writing – require emergency assistance, but until a political solution to the crisis is found, the downward spiral will continue, complicated by a dramatic rise in insecurity and threats to humanitarians as they attempt to gain access to affected populations.

Somalia’s slide into renewed notoriety began two years ago, when media coverage gathered momentum with the installation of the Council of Islamic Courts (CIC) – a home-grown confederation of *Sharia* courts. In the first half of 2006, the Mogadishu warlords attempted to dislodge the CIC, but were in turn chased from the city after months of fierce fighting. With the temporary end of warlord control, roadblocks were dismantled, and people could walk the streets in relative safety. The internationally recognised Transitional Federal Government (TFG), formed following a peace process in Kenya the previous year, remained outside the capital, unable to establish the foundation for a viable government.

This state of affairs was not to last. In December 2006, following statements that the courts might be harbouring terrorists, Ethiopian forces allied with the TFG swept through Somalia, retaking territory and arriving in Mogadishu. Attempts to establish control of Mogadishu led to bloody street battles between TFG and Ethiopian forces and a spectrum of armed opposition groups. For aid agencies, this was the beginning of a slow-motion humanitarian disaster of the first order, and a total rethinking of how to operate in Somalia. In addition, a new paradigm would undermine accountability and fuel impunity – the Global War on Terror (GWOT).

Humanitarianism bound

In December 2006, the installation of the TFG in Mogadishu was seen by the United Nations and donors as a chance to bring peace to Somalia. In January 2007, the UN Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator stated: ‘The

international aid community must take immediate advantage of the window of opportunity that now exists in Somalia by substantially re-engaging in the capital’.² For some NGOs this was uncomfortably close to instrumentalising aid for political ends.

In the following weeks, the use of heavy weaponry by warring parties in the city’s densely populated neighbourhoods tore Mogadishu apart. More than 400,000 people were displaced, and up to 1,300 killed. At about this time, the political and aid policies of the international community parted ways. Donor funds were supporting a political agenda that was seen to be driving a massive urban conflict. At the same time, funds from these same actors were being channelled to aid agencies to pick up the pieces. Such dissonance led to a warning that the European Commission could be complicit in the commission of war crimes.³ As the conflict raged on, there were reports of massive human rights violations.⁴ From March to May 2007, mortar, artillery and tank shells flew and the carnage mounted.

until a political solution to the crisis is found, the downward spiral will continue

After consultations with field offices, a carefully crafted statement was signed by international NGOs urging a cessation of hostilities, condemning war crimes, appealing for access and making other demands based upon humanitarian principles. Some agencies also began to call for all actors to be accountable to international and human rights law, as well as to good donorship principles.⁵ Meanwhile, as Somali civil society came under increased pressure, with threats, assassinations and arrests, international NGOs called for the protection of ‘civic space’. In at least one case, when challenged by political actors in the international community, perpetrators stopped their harassment of a local NGO.

Calls for increased accountability were initially downplayed by political actors in the international community and external political support for the TFG continued, despite the escalating conflict and a stalled political process. At the same time, splits seemed to emerge within the UN between

² UN Press Release, 17 January 2007.

³ ‘EU Given War Crime Warning Over Somalia Aid’, *The Guardian*, 7 April 2007.

⁴ ‘Shell-Shocked: Civilians Under Siege in Mogadishu’, Human Rights Watch, August 2007.

⁵ For instance ‘Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship’, Stockholm Principles, 17 June 2003.



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Remnants of conflict, Togdheer region

its humanitarian agencies and its political and development offices. Different mandates seemed to create divergent policies on how to engage with Somalia in the humanitarian, recovery and security sectors. The then Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator, a UNDP Representative, proved unable to mediate the competing priorities of his mixed role, leading some NGOs to doubt the ability of the UN HC/RC to robustly represent humanitarian concerns. Within donor governments, political and aid officials talked to each other as if they inhabited two different worlds when it came to understanding what was happening in Somalia. The result was a political disconnect with the humanitarian realities on the ground. Some officials, while concerned and sympathetic, privately acknowledged that a broader agenda, namely the GWOT, was driving the political process. As the international political community pushed to establish a national authority in Somalia, the opposition regrouped and stepped up its attacks. Renewed fighting, and the security sweeps that followed, triggered several waves of displacement, either into the surrounding countryside or to other areas within Mogadishu. Memories of the bombardments of previous months led people to vote with their feet, and in massive numbers: at the time of writing, it is estimated that at least 750,000 people – between two-thirds and three-quarters of Mogadishu's residents – have fled the city.

In late October 2007, as the crisis deepened, 40 national and international agencies signed a press release setting out the seriousness of the crisis and their inability to

deliver adequate aid because of insecurity. They also called on political actors to step up their diplomatic efforts. Subsequently, NGO and UN humanitarian representatives were invited to *ad hoc* meetings to advise international political officials on how they could best assist agencies in opening up access to people in need. Previously, donors had challenged humanitarian reports of the scale and seriousness of the crisis. Now, the tone was different. With 40 agencies *jointly* declaring a disaster, they could not be ignored. This was reinforced by the willingness of the new UN Special Representative, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, to call for accountability and highlight the deteriorating situation. Another statement, signed by 44 NGOs, was released in late March 2008, in time for a UN Security Council meeting on Somalia.

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Despite these efforts little has changed, except that people continue to be displaced, violence against women continues, access is even more difficult, the environment is more lethal and impunity reigns. No political solution has been found, even though the UN Special Representative has been trying his best to retrieve the situation and to bring a measure of coherence to the international political response. While there is cautious optimism that the opposition and the TFG might be brought together, past history means that many within the NGO community are planning for the worst.

Somalia: an accountability-free zone?

History has shown that outsiders engaged in Somalia do not make themselves accountable, nor are they held accountable by others. Ever since the Cold War, Somalia has been an 'accountability-free zone', with donors, businesses, aid agencies and freebooters playing out their agendas, and with plenty of self-interested Somali gatekeepers willing to indulge them. Unprincipled engagement with Somalia has contributed significantly to the humanitarian collapse we are now seeing. What are lacking at this time are transparent, consistent and even-handed measures which can be applied to everyone to make them accountable to the one constituency that has to date been ignored – ordinary Somalis.

Words like 'accountability' and 'end to impunity' have now entered the vocabulary of international discourse. Yet measures to enforce these calls are still weak, and much work needs to be done to move beyond statements of principle. Despite advocacy and growing concern around Somalia, the situation continues to deteriorate, with no clear political solution or relief in sight, and no visible improvement on the ground for affected Somalis, or for the aid agencies trying to reach them. In the interim, NGOs are attempting to implement measures to protect civilians,

while access slips away from them. The political community must realise that it has a role to play in supporting agencies' efforts. It must hold all actors accountable for their actions; otherwise protection measures will be undermined by anyone who feels they can act with impunity. Without this overarching framework regulating behaviour and curbing excesses, humanitarian

assistance (without a viable political solution) will be nothing more than a bandage for a broken bone.

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The Global War on Terror trumps all? A timeline of the escalating crisis in Somalia from January 2007 to July 2008¹

Somalia is suffering its worst civil war since the collapse of the state, with the breakdown of clan protection mechanisms complicating all aspects, including the protection of displaced people. The crisis is affecting previously peaceful areas, including Somaliland and Puntland, as well as the wider region. The lack of coherence in Western donor governments' agendas, their failure to call for accountability by the governments they fund, and their prioritisation of Western security interests over the humanitarian imperative are contributing to the escalating emergency.

This timeline provides an overview of the complex interplay of political, security and humanitarian agendas in the Somali context, the failure of the 'military solution' and the cost in human suffering. It identifies key events in the violent struggle in south-central Somalia; the attempts to advocate for accountability by all parties to basic principles of international humanitarian law; and ways in which all parties in the conflict have undermined humanitarian space to the point where there are virtually no means to reach populations in need and avert famine.

January 2007

- Transitional Federal Government (TFG) is installed in Mogadishu after Ethiopian forces defeat the Council of Islamic Courts.
- Kenya closes its border to people fleeing heavy fighting in Mogadishu and other areas of southern Somalia to prevent 'terrorists' from entering the country.
- UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator declares a 'window of opportunity' and pushes NGOs 'for immediate re-engagement'.
- Several NGOs raise serious concerns that humanitarian aid is in danger of being used for political ends, threatening neutrality, impartiality and independence.

February 2007

- UN Security Council authorises six-month African Union mission of 8,000 peacekeepers (AMISOM) – no civilian protection is included in the mandate.
- TFG President declares the first of many security sweeps in Mogadishu to disarm residents amidst worsening security.

- UN and donors begin preparations for a national reconciliation conference.

March 2007

- 1,200 Ugandan AMISOM troops arrive in Mogadishu amidst heavy battles between government and opposition forces.
- Mass displacements from Mogadishu begin as people flee the violence. Humanitarian agencies are unable to respond adequately because of escalating violence.
- Rhetoric of polarisation increases and TFG cracks down on civil society and local media.
- Opposition forces fire mortar shells from civilian areas, Ethiopian/TFG forces respond with heavy artillery. 'Any place from which a bullet is fired, we will bombard it, regardless of whoever is there.' (TFG president, radio interview.)
- UN Technical Assessment Mission begins planning for possible UN peacekeeping operation.
- Suicide bomb attacks target the Ethiopian military in Mogadishu and environs.

April 2007

- 'A massive Ethiopian-led offensive to pacify an insurgency in the Somali capital left nearly 400 people dead between March 29 and April 1. Human rights groups say many of the victims were civilians and accuse the Ethiopians of using tanks and attack helicopters to fire indiscriminately into densely populated areas.' (*The Guardian*)
- Over a third of Mogadishu's population flee the city in 3 weeks in 'the worst fighting in 15 years' (ICRC).
- European Commission receives advice that the EC and its partners may be complicit in violations of international law through the provision of financial and technical assistance to Ethiopian and TFG forces who may have committed war crimes. '[A regional analyst] ... predicted that even if there was compelling evidence of war crimes, the case would probably never get to court ... because Ethiopia is a close American ally, valued as a bulwark against Islamic militants in the Horn of Africa.' (*New York Times*)
- IGAD Communiqué (April) blames 'extremists' for the fighting and applauds Ethiopia's military intervention.
- 'Multilateral efforts to support Somalia have been undermined by the strategic concerns of other inter-

¹ The author's name is withheld to protect the safety of colleagues.



Makeshift shelters on the outskirts of Mogadishu, November 2007

national actors – notably Ethiopia and the United States.’ (Chatham House report)

- US ambassador, acting UN RHC and others protest privately to the TFG President about impediments to aid delivery, including the TFG’s closure of airstrips, insistence on inspecting aid consignments, looting of food deliveries by TFG militia, harassment of aid workers and extortion.
- ‘Somalia’s “Transitional Federal Government” is in danger of becoming a severe embarrassment to Washington. It was the US, after all, that helped to propel it to power as part of its War on Terror last December when it encouraged Ethiopia’s repressive regime to remove the Union of Islamic Courts.’ (*The Times*)
- Joint letter to all embassies/donors by a group of NGOs over humanitarian/human rights concerns. The UN and EC hold emergency meetings: the EU presidency makes the first public acknowledgement of atrocities, condemning the indiscriminate use of heavy artillery in Mogadishu and deliberate blocking of humanitarian supplies.
- Anti-NGO rhetoric by TFG Prime Minister reported in *The Times*.
- Pro-TFG forces prevail and Prime Minister declares victory.
- Conflict spreads to the wider region – militants attack a Chinese oil installation in Ethiopia.
- Suicide bomb attacks target the Ethiopian military in Mogadishu and near Afgoye.

May 2007

- Mass exodus continues; the humanitarian situation deteriorates dramatically.
- The TFG and UN agree to form a committee for humanitarian coordination but only one meeting is held and the committee fails to materialise.
- The UN Emergency Relief Coordinator calls Somalia ‘the most dangerous place for aid workers in the world’.

July 2007

- National Reconciliation Conference opens in Mogadishu, despite worsening conditions, and runs for a month.
- Mogadishu hospitals supported by the Red Cross treat 3,000 war-wounded from January–July 2007. The ICRC reiterates the need for neutral and independent humanitarian action.
- Continuing reports of assassinations of civic activists, human rights defenders and political leaders by unknown parties, and of summary executions and arbitrary arrests following house-to-house searches by TFG/Ethiopian forces, with 1,500 persons unaccounted for (report of Independent Expert on Human Rights).
- Deteriorating security and kidnapping of internationals in Puntland result in reduced international presence.

August 2007

- Human Rights Watch report covering March–April fighting in Mogadishu accuses all parties (Ethiopian, TFG and opposition forces) of war crimes, and the UN Security Council of indifference.
- Targeted killing of two leading journalists in Mogadishu brings to eight the total killed in 2007.
- AMISOM mandate is extended – still no civilian protection component, despite extensive lobbying.
- TFG-appointed mayor of Mogadishu states publicly that, by assisting displaced people, NGOs are feeding terrorists.
- Somali population in need of emergency assistance increases from 1m to 1.5m (UN Food Security Analysis Unit, FSAU).
- Humanitarian access decreases with proliferation of checkpoints (238 around Mogadishu alone) and extortion by militia (freelance and in TFG uniforms).

September 2007

- NGOs lobby the International Contact Group on accountability issues, but none of the concerns are reflected in the communiqué.

- NGO lobbying of the EU results in General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) recognition of some NGO concerns regarding lack of humanitarian access.
- Roadside bomb kills five AMISOM peacekeepers in Mogadishu.

June 2007

- UN reports that an atmosphere of fear and intimidation in Mogadishu is obstructing the implementation of humanitarian activities.
- Suicide bomb attacks on Ethiopian convoy and PM’s residence in Mogadishu.
- NGO advocacy on behalf of Somali civil society organisations increases after the TFG cracks down on local NGOs, media and human rights organisations.

- A donor representative questions whether there is any significant displacement of people from Mogadishu in a meeting with NGOs in Nairobi.
- The Independent Expert on Human Rights in Somalia reinforces the August Human Rights Watch report, but fails to persuade the UN to boost its human rights monitoring for Somalia.

October 2007

- Opposition groups form the Alliance for the Liberation of Somalia (ARS) in Eritrea.
- TFG arrests WFP officer in Mogadishu, triggering a UN outcry. The following day a donor pledges several million dollars to the TFG.
- Suicide bomb attack targets an Ethiopian military base in Baidoa.
- 40 NGOs issue a press release warning of an impending humanitarian catastrophe and lack of access due to escalating insecurity, reminding the international community and all parties to the conflict of their responsibilities to protect civilians, allow humanitarian aid delivery, and respect humanitarian space and the safety of humanitarian workers.

November 2007

- Prime Minister Gedi resigns.
- Ethiopia moves reinforcements into Mogadishu amidst the heaviest fighting since April.
- Warnings of an impending security sweep by TFG authorities drive up to 100,000 people from Mogadishu in three days. Somali NGOs attempt to respond.
- UN Senior Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) describes Somalia's crisis as the worst in Africa and suggests using the International Criminal Court as a means to curb the violence.
- NGOs send a joint statement to EU member states raising humanitarian and accountability concerns. EU Parliament calls for increased accountability.
- TFG stops aid shipments; the move is reversed after new Prime Minister Nur Hassan intercedes.

December 2007

- The SRSG calls for a clear course of action on Somalia as the status quo has failed. UN Security Council appears indifferent.
- NGOs lobby EU Foreign Ministers on Somalia, resulting in a GAERC resolution stating humanitarian concerns.
- Political actors again ask NGOs to accept armed AMISOM/TFG escorts to ease access.
- AMISOM is declared a legitimate target by hardline opposition forces. 200 Burundian peacekeepers join Ugandan troops in Mogadishu.
- Internationals are kidnapped in Puntland. Reported ransom payments by embassies (without local consultations) increase the kidnap risk; further reduction in the international presence.
- Media coverage of the Somali crisis wanes as post-election violence erupts in Kenya.

January 2008

- One year on: the security situation in Mogadishu and elsewhere continues to deteriorate. Civilians are the

primary victims of attacks by all sides. Intimidation and assassinations of different figures by unknown parties continue.

- The 15km road between Mogadishu and Afgooye town hosts approximately 230,000 people displaced in 2007.
- The same road has five checkpoints manned by competing TFG authorities all demanding 'tax', resulting in estimated costs of \$460 per truck and hindering humanitarian access to vulnerable populations. Despite letters issued by the TFG exempting aid workers from 'taxes' at roadblocks, demands continue, often by TFG forces (OCHA).
- A roadside bomb attack on an MSF convoy in Kismayo kills two international aid workers and three bystanders. The public demonstrates against the attack. (MSF subsequently closed its operation in March.)

February 2008

- The majority of the south-central population shows persisting rates of malnutrition above the UN's emergency threshold of 15% (OCHA).
- UN SRSG says the international community must focus on ending impunity in Somalia, where warlords have committed gross human rights abuses against civilians for many years.
- A UN national officer is released after 13 months' detention by Ethiopian forces: there is no public comment.

March 2008

- The scale and organisation of attacks by armed opposition groups increase and attacks spread to different areas of south-central Somalia.
- US missile strikes in Dhobley town near the Kenyan border result in over 1,700 people fleeing into Kenya and to Kismayo (UNHCR).
- A spokesman for hard-line opposition group *al-Shabaab* threatens retaliatory action against individuals working for the US government and NGOs.
- TFG Prime Minister offers to negotiate with internal and external opposition, including *al-Shabaab*.
- US State Department lists *al-Shabaab* as a terrorist organisation.
- Civil society, professionals and diaspora representatives from south-central Somalia call on all parties to the conflict to enable humanitarian access (Entebbe Communiqué).
- 44 NGOs issue a second public statement drawing attention to the deteriorating humanitarian situation and rapidly declining access in Somalia.
- 'Somalia continues to bleed ... because NGOs ... are fomenting trouble so the donor dollar can continue flowing' – Somali Political Consular in Nairobi (*Standard*, 12 March 2008).
- Mayor of Mogadishu again states publicly that, by assisting IDPs, NGOs are feeding terrorists.
- Attacks on aid agencies and aid deliveries increase.
- 'Mogadishu is more capriciously violent than it has ever been, with roadside bombs, militias shelling one another across neighborhoods, doctors getting shot in the head and 10-year-olds hurling grenades.' (*The New York Times*)

April 2008

- Two internationals are kidnapped in southern Somalia.
- Mogadishu suffers the worst fighting in months between TFG/Ethiopian and armed opposition groups, resulting in over 50 civilians dead and 120 wounded, together with credible reports of atrocities, increased lawlessness, and looting by armed elements in TFG and Ethiopian uniforms.
- Suicide bomb attack kills an AMISOM peacekeeper in Mogadishu.
- NGOs and UN humanitarian agencies again express alarm that Somalia is ‘on the eve of a humanitarian catastrophe’, with drought, food insecurity, conflict and lack of access affecting millions of Somalis.
- Attack targets UN international staff in an apparent failed kidnap attempt in Puntland; the UN reduces its international presence.
- ‘War-ravaged Somalia is in the worst shape it has been in for years – which, for this devastated country that has not had a proper government for nearly a generation, is really saying something. Yet, neither of the two resolutions currently in preparation at the UN Security Council mentions the 85 dead in Mogadishu last weekend, or the exodus of newly displaced persons from that city, or Ethiopian shelling of civilian areas or the dwindling international humanitarian response.’ (*International Herald Tribune*)
- The International Contact Group invites the humanitarian community to brief its meeting. ICG Communiqué calls on all parties to the conflict to respect International Humanitarian Law and protect civilians, but fails to include measures to hold parties accountable.
- Central Somalia joins southern regions in the humanitarian emergency phase (FSAU).

May 2008

- ‘The gates of jihad are wide open in the Horn of Africa’ – *al-Shabaab* spokesman, media interview.
- US military strike in Dhusamareeb, central Somalia, kills the military leader of *al-Shabaab*, Aden Hashi Ayro.
- *Al-Shabaab* leaders state that international aid workers are legitimate targets.
- Threats to kidnap or kill national and international aid workers increase dramatically. The UN and EC restrict humanitarian flights into Somalia.
- The number of checkpoints across south-central Somalia more than doubles since January 2007 (147 to 390: OCHA).
- Public demonstrations in Mogadishu against inflation (attributed to currency printing), refusal of traders to accept Somali currency and escalating food prices.
- Despite extensive lobbying by humanitarian agencies, both the UN Security Council Resolution on Somalia and the EU’s GAERC Conclusions are weak on accountability, humanitarian access and human rights.

June 2008

- The ICRC says that Somalia is experiencing its ‘worst tragedy of the past decade’.

- The UN-brokered Djibouti peace agreement between the TFG and a faction of the ARS is rejected by key opposition figures including the ARS based in Eritrea; the main combatants (Ethiopia and *al-Shabaab*) are not party to the talks.
- Targeting of national staff intensifies, further reducing access to south-central Somalia. A hardline jihadist group claims killings of aid workers, according to the Somali media. Three peace activists are assassinated in three weeks, bringing to six the total of aid workers killed (with a further seven abducted) in June alone.
- UN report on children in Somalia accuses both the TFG and the armed opposition of committing grave human rights violations against children. The UN monitoring report on the arms embargo says all sides in the conflict are selling weapons in contravention of the embargo, and that ‘the Somali police force no longer differs from other actors in the armed conflict’.
- UK television documentary exposes conditions in Mogadishu and Afgooye, and UK government funding of key TFG officials accused of war crimes.

July 2008

- Following the assassination of the most senior UNDP national officer in Mogadishu and other killings, *al-Shabaab*, ARS factions and the TFG blame each other for targeting aid workers. (Reuters, VoA, al-Jazeera)
- Targeted attacks on aid workers are at their highest ever levels, access at its lowest. From January–July 2008, 20 aid workers are killed and 13 currently held hostage, some for several months (NGO Security office advisory); more than eight ships have been hijacked for ransom (including food aid shipments).
- The ARS splits following an aborted meeting in Yemen.
- The mayor of Mogadishu is dismissed by the Prime Minister but says only the President can discharge him, exposing rifts within the TFG.
- US State Department official Jendayi Frazer says the US did not approve Ethiopian action in Somalia; disputed ARS leader Dahir Aweys says that the ARS will protect aid workers (VoA).
- WFP says that Somalia could face a similar situation to the famine of the early 1990s unless the security situation improves.
- The deterioration in the humanitarian situation accelerates due to hyperinflation, deepening drought and worsening security, hampering local trade and blocking humanitarian access, with proliferating checkpoints, extortion, criminality, assassinations, roadside bombs, shelling and armed clashes.
- 180,000 (1 in 6) children under 5 are acutely malnourished in south-central Somalia and in displaced populations and need immediate supplementary nutrition. Prices of all cereals (local and imported) are at record highs and rising at alarming rates; deepening drought pushes pastoralists into humanitarian emergency in central Somalia; over 2.6 million people need emergency assistance (up 40% since January 2007) and this could rise to 3.5 million by December (FSAU).

International policies and politics in the humanitarian crisis in Somalia

Ken Menkhaus, Davidson College

Aid workers and analysts seeking to explain Somalia's current humanitarian disaster are understandably preoccupied with the immediate and obvious – the combination of factors which has placed 2.5 million Somalis in urgent need of emergency relief. These include the displacement of between 500,000 and 700,000 civilians, caused by the heavy-handed Ethiopian military occupation; predatory attacks and crime by the Transitional Federal Government's uncontrolled security forces; assassinations of civic leaders by an increasingly decentralised and violent jihadist movement; economic paralysis and hyperinflation; severe local drought; global spikes in food and fuel prices; and a highly dangerous, non-permissive environment for national and international aid workers.

These are, collectively, a perfectly adequate set of explanations for what has gone wrong in Somalia in 2007 and 2008. But other factors, some of them at play for three decades or more, are also important in explaining why Somalia has been bedevilled by such persistent humanitarian crises and such high rates of failure and frustration among relief agencies. Of special importance are the international political interests shaping external responses to Somalia's humanitarian crises, and the particular international policies meant to cope with Somalia's problems.

Strategic interests and policies

For most of its existence as an independent state, Somalia has been perceived as strategically important by major powers. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union and the West vied for influence in the Horn of Africa. More recently, America's preoccupation with counter-terrorism has again made the country a top strategic priority.

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In the 1970s and 1980s, Somalia's strategic importance had enormous repercussions for humanitarian aid operations. High levels of economic and military aid, first from the communist bloc and then from the West, produced a bloated and unsustainable central government unresponsive to its own people. Corruption, gross violations of human rights and government manipulation of humanitarian relief were routinely tolerated by donors; foreign aid workers who dared complain about the diversion and misuse of aid were thrown out of the country.

Meanwhile, Siyad Barre's regime manipulated humanitarian crises to enrich itself and advance its own narrow interests, most egregiously following the Ogaden war in Ethiopia in the late 1970s, when Ethiopian refugee numbers were grossly inflated, aid intended for refugees was diverted and refugee camps were used as sites to recruit, train and encamp security forces. According to a subsequent US Congressional study, levels of aid diversion were the worst in the history of USAID. Only in 1988, in the waning days of the Cold War, was Western aid to the Barre regime made conditional on improvements in human rights.

The unhappy experiences of humanitarian and development assistance during the Cold War are germane today. Thanks to the dominance of US-led counter-terrorism policies, humanitarian action is once again subordinated to a geostrategic imperative. Elements within the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) are mirroring much of the abusive behaviour of the Barre regime – creating humanitarian crises and then exploiting the victims, manipulating humanitarian agencies and exploiting the security preoccupations of the West in order to silence critics. Donor agencies are again complicit in their silence, and in some cases are aiding and abetting security forces responsible for much of the humanitarian emergency. In sum, Somalia has long been an 'accountability-free zone', with foreign aid intended to advance strategic rather than developmental or humanitarian aims.

Links with non-state actors

The complete and prolonged collapse of the Somali state since 1991 has given rise to a plethora of non-state actors. Militia leaders, self-declared governors and mayors, clan elders, religious clerics, businesspeople and civic leaders all vie for authority, either locally or nationally. Faced with this confusing and contested political landscape, external actors have had to choose who to recognise as a legitimate authority. The results have been inconsistent and contradictory.

Problems of recognition began with the UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) in 1993, when US and UN indecision over who constituted a genuine Somali leader contributed to the tensions that culminated in the four-month war between General Farah Aideed's militia and UN forces. Ever since, external actors have swung wildly back and forth between recognising and working with militia leaders, factional leaders, clan elders and civic leaders. The international community has also vacillated between a focus on national leadership and regional or local 'building-blocks'. This issue has been most pronounced when peace conferences have been convened. In each case, the question of representation has either undermined or reinforced the standing of different political groups.



©Reuters/Yuriko Nakao, courtesy www.altertra.org

Children receiving donated food at Sheikh Omar IDP camp, Jowhar, Somalia, September 2007

The tendency to recognise militia leaders has arguably deepened the country’s problem of warlordism. But complaints have also been raised that donors and aid agencies have undermined efforts to revive governmental authority by opting to work directly with local NGOs. These competing arguments, which frame much of the discussion about what aid agencies should and should not be doing in Somalia today, are remarkably similar to debates in 1993, when UNOSOM began establishing district councils.

External resources and conflict

Because recognition by external players has the potential to yield significant dividends for local actors, power struggles in Somalia have been exceptionally fierce and often fatal. This has been most obvious in national politics, where the political elite devotes nearly all of its energies to attracting and diverting foreign aid, rather than actually governing. Millions of dollars can be at stake for top leaders and their supporters. Unsurprisingly, factional fighting over control of the country’s succession of transitional governments has been a constant feature since 1991. It is not the prospect of foreign aid *per se* that generates conflict in Somalia, but rather the prospect of foreign aid *with so little accountability over how it is spent*. Clashes can occur at the local level as well, where the principal prize is usually the resources of aid agencies. External political and humanitarian actors are, in other words, part of the fabric of conflict, thanks to the resources they introduce into the country.

Conditionality

The current humanitarian and political crisis in Somalia has raised the question of conditionality of aid, an issue that has long hovered over international policy towards Somalia. Should non-emergency assistance be made contingent on the ability of local or national authorities to meet certain minimal standards of comportment and

performance? Since 1995, the international community has imposed formal conditions on assistance to Somalia. These have changed over time, and can have a major impact in shaping local politics and conflicts. As with other policies, inconsistency has been an enduring problem. An even more difficult problem has been the fact that, in the absence of a functional central government, these conditions have been placed on non-state actors with variable levels of capacity and will to control the territory they claim to govern.

The first set of conditions was enshrined in the Somali Aid Co-ordination Body (SACB)’s 1995 ‘Code of Conduct’, which committed local authorities to ensuring the security of aid agencies as a precondition for development assistance. The Code of Conduct, while an entirely under-

standable response to the growing insecurity aid workers were facing, also produced unintended consequences. Local communities, intent on demonstrating their commitment to the security of aid agencies, imposed sharia sentences on offenders, causing the SACB to scramble to add an addendum to the Code saying that security had to be provided in a way that respected human rights. The Code also inadvertently invited spoilers to create security problems in rival communities in order to deprive them of an aid agency presence, typically the main source of employment in a town. But the main shortcoming of the Code of Conduct was that it referred only to the protection of foreigners and national staff in aid agencies. No conditions applied to the security of residents under the control of a local authority.

the current humanitarian and political crisis in Somalia has raised the question of conditionality of aid

As development assistance in the late 1990s shifted towards a greater emphasis on promoting good governance and state-building, a different kind of conditionality rose to prominence – one based on the notion of ‘performance legitimacy’. Donors began to insist that authorities claiming to control a town or region actually showed evidence of administering that area as a condition for recognition and assistance. This marked a major improvement over the days when warlords could assert a claim of authority over a town while either ignoring it or preying upon it. The performance legitimacy criterion was most in evidence with the declaration of the Transitional National Government (TNG) in 2000. Most

major donors took a 'wait and see' approach, insisting that the TNG demonstrate some actual administration over the capital before aid was earmarked for it.

The principle of conditionality was largely dropped with the establishment of the TFG in late 2004. In fact, external donors have been surprisingly detached from questions of accountability and performance with regard to the TFG, even in the face of startling problems – systematic corruption and diversion of foreign aid and customs revenues, TFG security forces which have become a law unto themselves, allegations of very serious human rights abuses, a complete lack of progress in the political transition and the absence of an even minimally functional civil service. The parallel between the international community's unconditional support for the TFG and its reluctance to impose conditions on the Barre regime in the 1980s is striking, but unsurprising given the fact that, in both cases, powerful strategic imperatives were at stake.

Neutrality and 'jointness'

A final external policy issue which has had considerable impact on emergency response in Somalia has been the loss of neutral humanitarian space. Here we see a dramatic difference between the international relief operations of 1991–92 and those of today. Whereas in 1991–92 relief agencies were able to move freely throughout the war and famine zone and were generally not targeted by warring factions, aid agencies today find themselves attacked by both sides. Over a third of all humanitarian casualties worldwide in the first eight months of 2008 took place in Somalia. Hardliners in the TFG accuse aid agencies and their staff of providing support to the insurgents and terrorists, have in some instances incited crowds to loot relief convoys and have impeded the flow of relief aid using both bureaucratic ploys and the TFG security forces. At the same time, jihadists in Mogadishu are targeting staff of NGOs and UN agencies with links to the West. This development is linked to the US decision to designate the jihadist group *shabaab* as a terrorist organisation, and the US air attack in May 2008 which killed *shabaab* leader Aden Hashi Ayro.

Efforts by humanitarian agencies to create and maintain a neutral space in which to conduct relief operations have been complicated by the fact that donor states and the UN Political Office insist that all development work should support efforts to strengthen the capacity and legitimacy of

the TFG. In theory, there is nothing objectionable about attempts to improve jointness of effort towards a common political solution in Somalia. In practice, however, this has had considerable costs. Because the TFG is a party to the war, and because UN specialised agencies have been required to provide direct support to the TFG, insurgents surmise that Western NGOs and the UN are not neutral parties, making aid agency personnel targets of radical elements of the insurgency. This has created significant tension between the humanitarian/development community and the diplomatic corps in Nairobi. The former want neutrality and distance from the political enterprise of strengthening the TFG, while the latter insist on unity of effort in support of it.

Conclusion

This brief survey of some of the external strategies and interventions that have helped to shape Somalia's prolonged humanitarian crisis leads to two main conclusions. First, the Somali crisis is increasingly driven by the interests and policies of foreign actors. In the latter half of the 1990s, when Somalia was generally given scant attention by the international community, one could make the case that the ongoing crises in the country were mainly the product of internal factors – clannism, spoilers and myopic leadership. These internal constraints may still be present, but they are overshadowed by the impact that external factors now have in Somalia. At least for the time being, Somalis have less control over their political fate than at any time in the past 20 years.

Second, the enhanced impact of external interests and policies in Somalia has become part of the problem, rather than part of the solution. External policies have generally served to exacerbate and complicate the Somali crisis, even when intended to alleviate it. This is so in part because the political context in Somalia is so complex that unintended consequences are the norm, not the exception; in part because foreign actors lack basic knowledge of Somali political and conflict dynamics, and so make avoidable errors; and in part because the strategic interests of regional neighbours and global powers trump all other policy considerations, undermining efforts to promote peace and accountable governance.

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Conflict, economic crisis and drought: a humanitarian emergency out of control

Cindy Holleman, FSAU/FAO

The humanitarian disaster unfolding in Somalia is one of the worst in world. The scale and magnitude of the crisis, and the speed at which it is deteriorating, is alarming and profound. Within the first six months of this year, the

number of people requiring emergency livelihood and humanitarian support increased by 40%, from 1.8 million to 2.6m, or 35% of the population. As the situation deteriorates, this could rise to 3.5m by the end of the year

– more than half the total population. The level of human suffering and deprivation is shocking. One in six children under the age of five is acutely malnourished, a number that is continuing to increase. Rates of acute malnutrition among the rural population in most of southern and central Somalia are above 15%, which is the internationally recognised emergency threshold, and half of the nutrition surveys conducted in the last six months reported rates above 20%. The number of severely malnourished children is increasing in many of the main towns in southern and central Somalia, as well as among internally displaced populations in the north, where nutrition rates are normally low and relatively stable.

one of the main factors driving this crisis – civil insecurity – is increasing

One of the main factors driving this crisis – civil insecurity – is increasing and is currently the worst the country has seen since the collapse of the government in the early 1990s. Direct effects include human rights abuses, violence, killings and displacement (more than a million people have been internally displaced due to conflict in the last year). Meanwhile, the indirect effects of the conflict are creating an economic crisis which is having a

wider and more devastating impact on the broader population and the humanitarian situation. Economic activities, trade and transportation networks are disrupted and the uncontrolled and excessive printing of currency, in large part to fund the conflict, has meant that Somali Shillings have flooded the markets, rapidly increasing the money supply, sending the value of the Shilling into freefall and causing hyperinflation, with price increases of between 200% and 700% within just six months. Rural and urban populations, not directly affected by conflict, are now struggling to meet basic food needs. In particular, the urban and rural poor and IDPs are dependent on the market and have limited capacity to cope with sudden and dramatic price increases. For pastoralists already struggling to cope with an ongoing drought in many parts of the country, the added economic shocks of food and water price hikes are leading to rapid asset losses, and a deterioration in food access and nutritional status.

The economic crisis

The continued and sharp devaluation of the Somali Shilling has affected all population groups in the south, centre and north-east, where the Somali Shilling is the main currency. Since January 2007, the average exchange rate against the US dollar for the Sorghum Belt, Shabelle, Juba, the north-east and central regions has increased from SoSh13,600 to SoSh35,900, or 165% (see Figure 1). In Mogadishu, the Shilling depreciated by some 50% between January and July.

Figure 1: Monthly exchange rates – SoSH and SL\$H to US\$

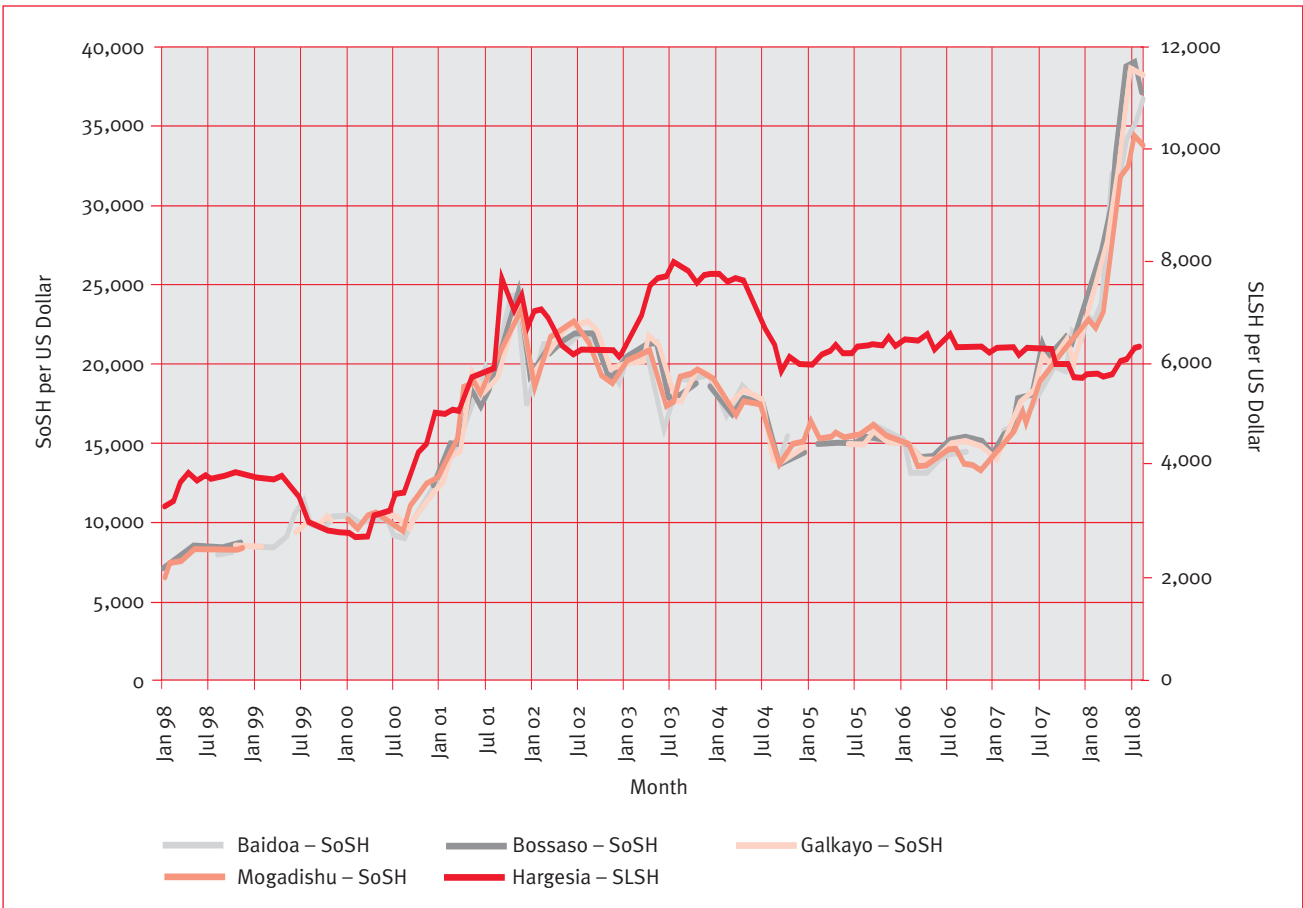
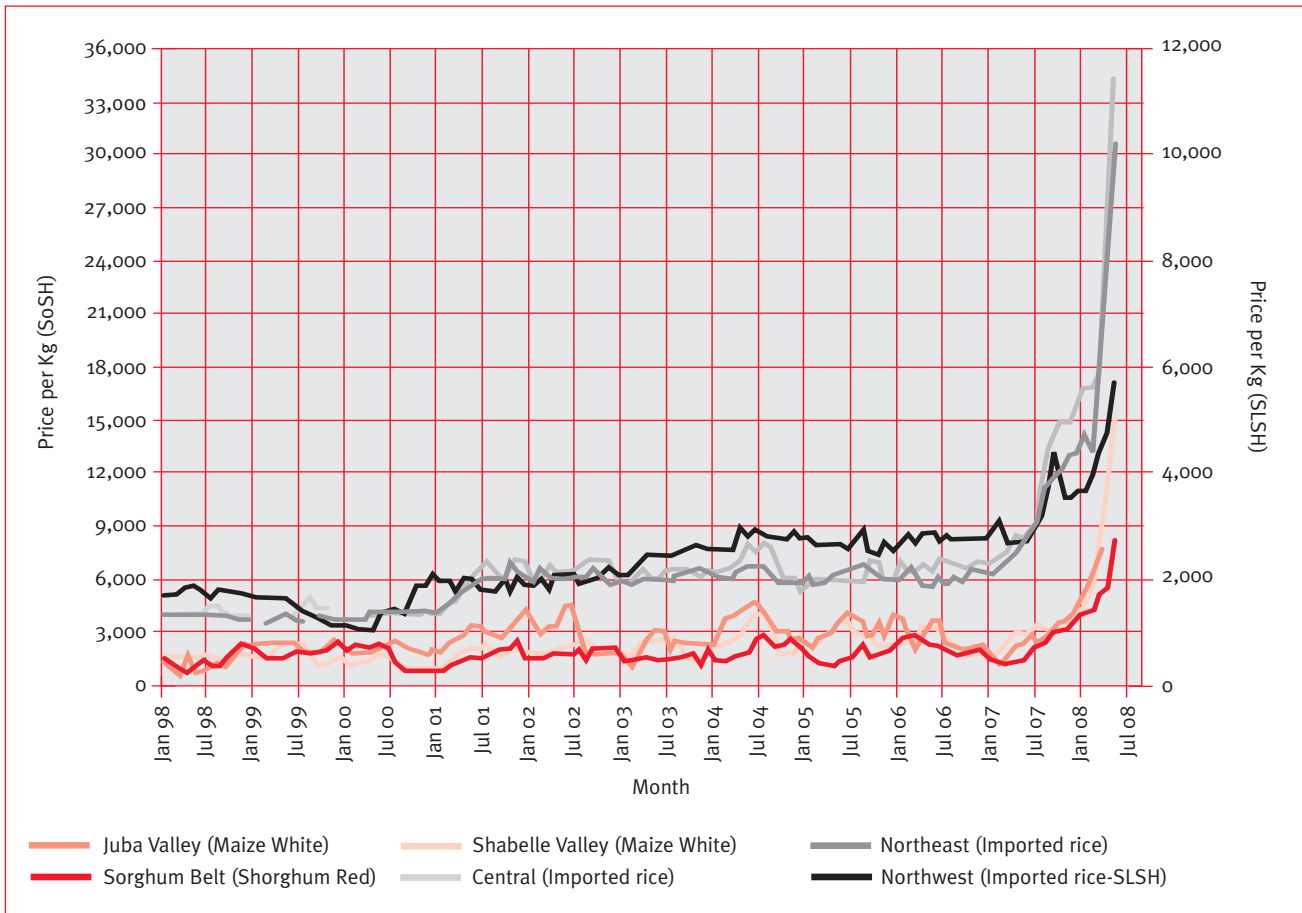


Figure 2: Regional trend in cereal prices (SoSH)

Partly as a result of this rapid depreciation, imported food and non-food commodity prices have increased dramatically (as shown in Figure 2), exacerbated by high global food and fuel prices.

The price of imported rice, the main staple food for most of the population covering roughly 60% of the country's total cereal requirements, more than tripled between January and July throughout the north-east, centre and south, from an average of SoSh14,570/kg to SoSh46,450 in July. Other imported food commodities, including basic items like vegetable oil and sugar, have also increased significantly in price.

Record price rises mean that imported cereals are beyond the reach of most poor urban and rural households, and households are switching to cheaper locally produced maize and sorghum. Even in a good production year, however, local cereal production cannot absorb any significant increases in demand. In the current context the situation is even worse, as stocks are at their lowest level in more than 15 years. Not only has the country faced three consecutive years of below-normal cereal production, but two of the last three years have seen the lowest levels of production in more than a decade. The main cereal harvest in July and August was again expected to be significantly below normal levels.

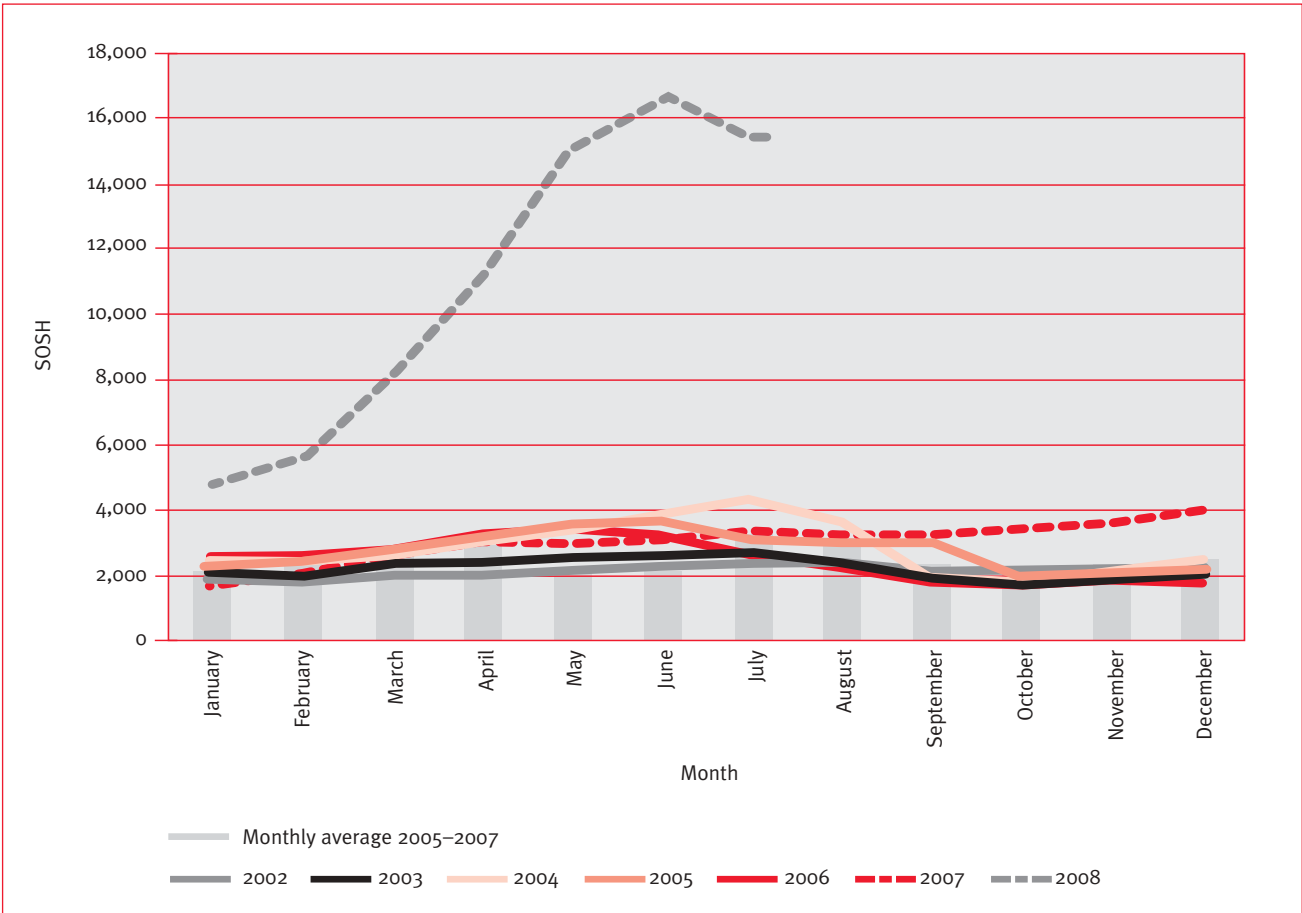
Increased demand and low availability have seen locally produced sorghum and maize prices triple in six months to

July (see Figure 3). In the main sorghum-producing area in the south, the 'Sorghum Belt', sorghum prices increased on average from SoSh4,000/kg to SoSh8,000/kg. Likewise, in the main maize production area of the Shabelle region, maize prices more than tripled, from SoSh4,700/kg in January to SoSh15,000/kg by July. Traders are queuing to purchase directly from farms for transport to cereal-deficit areas in the south, and as far away as the central and northern regions. High fuel and transportation costs mean that cereal prices are even higher once they reach their destination. In much of the central and northern regions, the price of locally produced sorghum is now as high as or higher than imported rice prices in normal times. Local cereal supplies are heavily constrained, and in many areas in the north local cereal is simply not available.

food prices, both locally produced and imported, are continuing to increase

Food prices, both locally produced and imported, are continuing to increase, are two to three times higher than five-year average prices, are at record historic levels and are still climbing. As a result, more and more people, from both rural and – for the first time – urban areas, are falling into *Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis (AFLC)* and *Humanitarian*

Figure 3: Shabelle-maize prices



Emergency (HE).¹ Poor and middling households are becoming severely indebted, and are adopting extreme coping strategies, including skipping meals, begging, selling productive assets and out-migration (*'keenan'*). An estimated 600,000 urban poor in main towns and rural settlements are facing conditions of *Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis* and *Humanitarian Emergency*, according to a nationwide Rapid Emergency Urban Assessment conducted by the Food Security Analysis Unit (FSAU) in April 2008.² This represents 21% of the total urban population.

The urban poor are adopting a number of different coping strategies to deal with this crisis, including reducing their overall expenditure on food by cutting down on the amount they buy (cereal, sugar and oils), switching to cheaper cereals (from commercial imports of rice to locally produced sorghum) and lower-quality cereals and skipping meals, all of which is contributing to lower intake of kilocalories. They are also taking their children out of

¹ *Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis* (AFLC) and *Humanitarian Emergency* (HE) refer to two phase classifications within the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), which was originally developed and implemented by FSAU (FAO) in 2004. Table 1 gives a description of the different phases in this classification system. For further information see *The Integrated Food Security and Humanitarian Phase Classification*, Technical Manual, Version 1, Food Security Analysis Unit (FSAU/FAO), at www.fsasomali.org.

² For results of this assessment and analysis, see *The Food Security and Nutrition Brief*, 9 May 2008, Food Security Analysis Unit–Somalia (FSAU), pp. 2–5.

school and reducing their purchases of medicines, as well as reducing the amount of soap, kerosene and firewood/charcoal they purchase. The survey results also indicate that many of the urban poor are searching for new opportunities for wage labour and self-employment (charcoal sales), often involving younger family members, as well as increased remittances, loans and gifts.

The impact of the drought

There is also a deepening drought in parts of southern and central Somalia (Bakool, Hiran and central regions), which is now spreading into the north. The impact of the drought on pastoralists is exacerbated by the compounding impact of food price increases, conflict and displacement, pushing more into crisis. Recent nutrition reports indicate a doubling of the caseload of severely malnourished children in feeding centres between May and July 2008 in Dhusamareb, Galgadud. Severe water and pasture shortages have led to the migration of large numbers of livestock and people – affecting up to 50% of rural settlements – who are now concentrating around permanent water sources. In the central regions, most of the remaining boreholes are being pushed beyond capacity due to a lack of maintenance and generators. Meanwhile, dramatic rises in petrol prices have significantly increased water prices due to increased costs associated with pumping and trucking water. Water prices are now between 300% and 1,000% higher than normal levels (SoSh30,000–100,000 per 200lt barrel, compared to SoSh10,000 normally).

Table 1: Integrated Food Security Phase Classification: Phase Description

| Phase | | General description |
|-------|----------------------------------|---|
| 1A | Generally Food Secure | Usually adequate and stable food access with moderate to low risk of sliding into Phase 3, 4 or 5. |
| 1B | Generally Food Secure | |
| 2 | Generally Food Insecure | Borderline adequate food access with recurrent high risk (due to probable hazard events and high vulnerability) of sliding into Phase 3, 4 or 5. |
| 3 | Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis | Highly stressed and critical lack of food access with high and above usual malnutrition and accelerated depletion of livelihood assets that, if continued, will slide the population into Phase 4 or 5 and/or likely result in chronic poverty. |
| 4 | Humanitarian Emergency | Severe lack of food access with excess mortality, very high and increasing malnutrition, and irreversible livelihood asset-stripping. |
| 5 | Famine/Humanitarian Catastrophe | Extreme social upheaval with complete lack of food access and/or other basic needs where mass starvation, death and displacement are evident. |

Livestock body condition, productivity and value have plummeted, while pack animals and small ruminants are dying. Pastoralists have no export-quality animals left, and are resorting to selling breeding animals in a desperate attempt to meet skyrocketing water and food prices. Buying on credit is limited due to levels of household debt three to six times greater than normal. As the next rains are not expected before mid-October, and food prices are expected to continue to increase over the coming months, the situation will deteriorate further without adequate humanitarian and livelihood support interventions.

Prospects

All indications are that the key factors driving this humanitarian disaster – increased civil insecurity, hyperinflation and drought – will worsen over the coming months. There is an urgent need to scale-up integrated emergency livelihood and humanitarian assistance to ensure that the growing number of people in need of assistance receive life- and livelihood-saving support, and to prevent a slide into humanitarian catastrophe. Currently, humanitarian access is insufficient to meet growing humanitarian needs. Killings and abductions of aid workers, increased troop and militia activity and threats to the

humanitarian community make humanitarian response and interventions extremely difficult, and have led to the reduction and even suspension of some humanitarian operations. Humanitarian access is decreasing at a time when needs are not being met, and are even increasing.

The escalating conflict, civil insecurity and instability in Somalia are not only directly leading to human suffering, in terms of human rights abuses, violence, killings and displacement, but are fuelling an economic crisis which is beginning to have a wider and devastating impact on the broader population, threatening to plunge the country into a humanitarian catastrophe from which it will be difficult to recover.

Cindy Holleman is Chief Technical Advisor for the Food Security Analysis Unit of Somalia (FSAU/FAO). She would like to thank the team of dedicated food security and nutrition analysts of the FSAU who collected and analysed the information on which this article is based. This includes a team of 29 Somali professionals based in Somalia, who work in extremely dangerous conditions to deliver quality information and analysis. The author takes full responsibility for views contained in this article, and any errors therein.

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Assistance and protection in a complex emergency environment: an impossible challenge?

Philippe Lazzarini, formerly head, OCHA Somalia

In Mogadishu today, some 50,000 people will line up in queues in soup kitchens to get a dollop of porridge, which for some will be their only food for the day. These are the worst off: families with so few resources that they cannot even afford to flee the short distance that separates the war zone in Mogadishu from the next district. The UN estimates that 60% of Mogadishu's population of some one million has fled, just 20km away. Somalia now has the world's largest concentration of internally displaced people; more than 250,000 are living under the most basic shelter of twigs and sheets.

The wet feeding programme is one of very few aid operations still ongoing in the war-torn capital. Although organised through a conglomeration of NGOs and UN agencies, like most aid programmes in Somalia today it is being implemented through a Somali partner. One staff member and two local authority officials who supported the programme were killed in separate shooting incidents earlier this year. The programme is neither the most efficient nor the least expensive way to ensure that people are fed and kept from the brink of starvation, yet it has been hailed as a success story. Donors have supported it and have just provided funding for an additional six months. But its modest aims beg the question: in a country where as many as two million people are reliant on humanitarian assistance, and in a context where war is spreading from the capital out to the suburbs, what can we really accomplish?

Anywhere else but here ...

Over the past two years, the humanitarian situation in Somalia has dramatically deteriorated. Following the Ethiopian government's military intervention in support of the internationally supported Transitional Federal Government's fight against the Islamic Court Union, there has been an unprecedented movement of people from the capital. In 2007, more than 700,000 fled the insecurity of Mogadishu, and many districts in the capital now feel like a ghost town. Somalis are not only escaping fighting and insecurity, but also natural disasters. Drought has tipped a large swathe of the centre of the country into the 'humanitarian emergency' category. The past two rainy seasons have been bad and the next looks like it will fail as well. At times, the trials and tribulations of the Somalis seem on a parallel with the ancient Egyptian plagues: name a disaster – locusts, floods and now drought again – and Somalia will have experienced it. Today, more than two million people are in need of urgent assistance in a country which has some of the world's worst human development indicators, including access to primary health care, education, potable water and other basic social services.

Despite Somalia's tragic record, the massive and collective international outrage that other crises have mobilised is nowhere to be seen. Darfur, for better or worse, has its

active Save Darfur and SOS Darfur coalitions, lobbying for support in the US and Europe. The latest events in next-door Kenya have inspired massive international responses, preventing the country's descent into chaos. Somalia, in contrast, has been completely off the radar screen – and, for most people, the television screen as well.

To be sure, the recent re-engagement of regional and external actors has attracted new attention. Somalia is increasingly on the agenda of the UN Security Council. The Security Council discussion on Somalia in March lasted several hours – compared with less than 30 minutes four months previously. But even so, there is no real appetite on the part of the international community to significantly increase engagement. In his latest speech before the Security Council, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah stated that 'there is, it seems, either a reluctance to go back there or a deliberate decision to punish all Somalis, many of whom were not even born during the last international intervention'.

the trials and tribulations of the Somalis seem on a parallel with the ancient Egyptian plagues

UN member states seem to be subsidising humanitarian operations as a way of filling the political and moral void. This comes with a hefty price tag: in 2007, humanitarian and development aid for an estimated population of less than 10 million topped \$500 million. Another \$1 billion in remittances is thought to flow into the country from the Somali diaspora. Although numerous humanitarian activities are ongoing, this is thanks mainly to the courage, commitment and dedication of the Somalis who deliver the vast majority of assistance, since the situation on the ground is deemed too dangerous for international aid workers. Yet the response is still far from commensurate with needs. In Darfur, there are about 15,500 aid workers; Somalia has less than 10% of this number – and about half of these are perforce based in Nairobi, 1,000km and a world away.

Slippery slope

According to the principles of humanitarian action, intervention should be independent (selecting beneficiaries without interference), neutral (not taking any political side) and impartial (based on the principle of non-discrimination). 'Do no harm' should be the *modus operandi*. For the humanitarian community working in Somalia, 16 years of functioning in an environment of 'warlordism' has made it very hard to stick to these humanitarian principles. A pragmatic choice has had to be made: abide by the

principles and cease to function, or compromise them and see that at least some life-saving humanitarian assistance gets to those who need it. This compromise has included contacts with militias for protection, conceding to historical clan influences and, without a significant presence on the ground, doing without the usual monitoring and evaluation of assistance. ‘Do no harm’ has been amended to ‘Do less harm’. The point is that, were we to insist on adhering strictly to our own humanitarian principles, aid operations in Somalia would grind to a halt.

Somalia is the most dangerous environment for humanitarian workers in the world. By the beginning of 2008, the situation in terms of access had never been so gloomy: three Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) staff were murdered by a roadside bomb in Kismayo, the expatriate kidnapping business in Puntland was booming and the targeting of humanitarian organisations’ assets continued, increasingly through the use of roadblocks and checkpoints – nearly 400 throughout Somalia, each one an opportunity for various administrations and militias to extort ‘taxes’. On top of this, the mistrust expressed by most parties towards humanitarian organisations and general insecurity have seriously impeded efforts to address humanitarian needs.

‘Do no harm’ has been amended to ‘Do less harm’

The humanitarian community appealed in October 2007 (and had done so many times before that) for a credible political process and an answer to the security crisis, to create an enabling environment for humanitarian and development activities. Meanwhile, the Security Council extended for an additional six months the mandate of the African Union peacekeeping mission, AMISOM, which is still waiting for the promised troops to fulfil its mandate (fewer than 2,500 of the 8,000 promised had been committed by January 2008).

Beyond the external factors related to insecurity and the political environment, UN humanitarian agencies are also impeded by their own internal rules and regulations. Following attacks such as those in Baghdad in 2003 and in Algiers in December 2007, the UN has become more risk-intolerant, limiting its ability to operate in the field.

Is giving up an option for the UN?

So, what in humanitarian terms can be achieved in a failed state still in the throes of a complex emergency?

Back in October 2006, the UN presence was most limited in the South Central region, where humanitarian needs were



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Displaced women carry a sack of food during a UN World Food Programme distribution in Jowhar, Somalia, September 2007

the most severe. The then Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Jan Egeland, suggested that UN humanitarian agencies should tell member states and donors that they could no longer respond to the humanitarian crisis. Instead, the UN should focus on coordination and advocacy, and let partners develop their operational capacity. Indeed, like a mother ship and speedboats, the UN would concentrate on its role of ‘supplier’, while NGOs would concentrate on delivery. The UN would move from a service provider to a service enabler.

In saying this, Egeland was expressing real concerns about the increased difficulty the UN was facing in ‘delivering’ in complex emergencies. Security rules and regulations, while intended to promote an ‘enabling environment’ for humanitarian assistance and protection, have tended to cut off aid workers from the assisted and host population. The emphasis on physical safety, while justified by the increased targeting of humanitarian workers, widens misperception, mistrust and distance between aid workers and the populations they serve. Mini ‘green zones’, in the form of heavily bunkered UN compounds, armed escorts, armoured vehicles and even bullet-proof flack jackets and helmets, all increasingly isolate humanitarian workers from their operating environment.

Some of the problem is of our own making: aid organisations in general, and UN agencies in particular, suffer from an image problem and deep mistrust among Somalis, fuelled by years of operating with very little direct engagement with communities. Mitigating measures to enhance access to populations are incomplete if not complemented with ‘tea shop diplomacy’ – engaging with communities through their own channels of communication. Even in a country as volatile as Somalia, international presence is possible, but it requires a great deal of flexibility and creativity. Alternative ways of operating could include mobile teams, which have the flexibility to move when and where necessary to carry out a mission. In Somalia, this approach has been adopted by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and some

NGOs, but the UN still has difficulty adjusting its approach in this way. Another factor stymieing an appropriately flexible response is the increasing bureaucratisation of procurement policy. There is no doubt that strict rules are essential to ensure fair process and prevent the misuse of UN assets. However, rigid application of these rules, combined with a risk-averse culture, can lead to paralysis.

Blaming the bureaucratic nature of the UN agencies is too easy. Where there is political will, a way has been found. Eighteen years ago, it took the UN agencies a mere ten days to build a temporary city in the middle of the desert to host tens of thousands people fleeing Kuwait. In Somalia, it has taken more than five months to build a compound in Afgooye which would allow humanitarian workers access to what is currently the public face of one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. What is possible in a highly visible context somehow seems impossible in a 'neglected' one.

Somalia was chosen as a pilot country in the roll-out of the humanitarian reform programme – intended to make humanitarian response more accountable, predictable and efficient. In Somalia's case, humanitarian reform has clearly enhanced the identity of the humanitarian community, which has developed a common understanding of the scope of the crisis, common strategies and a unified response plan. Pooled funding, through the Central Emergency Response Fund and the Humanitarian Response Fund, has contributed to the joint setting of priorities and improved response. That said, agencies still have a long way to go to meet the challenge of coordinating the response in their respective clusters. Two years after the roll-out, the Somalia operation still has only one fully dedicated cluster lead out of nine. The other eight must juggle conflicting loyalties and competing

demands from their agencies. The reform effort, while laudable, is not always matched by the shift in attitudes and allocation of support and resources necessary to make it truly effective.

What next?

Does this mean that, in the absence of political will and commitment from the parties to the conflict and the international community, operating in complex emergencies is not just becoming more challenging, but impossible?

Somalia in many aspects may be a special case. As long as there is no appetite to deal with the underlying causes or to address the political roots of the crisis, humanitarian organisations will have nothing more to offer than a very expensive bandage. Only by bringing the crisis higher up the agenda of the international community will humanitarian agencies be able to deal with Somalia in the way it deserves. Meanwhile, and as an immediate measure, it would be worth reminding Somalis that impunity will no longer be tolerated, and that they will be held accountable for what they say and do. With so many Somalis holding dual citizenship it should not be too difficult to send a strong signal.

Our intervention risks being a kind of transfusion extending the suffering of the population, rather than seriously alleviating it. Can we continue this way? It might be time to decide if we are going to seriously engage in Somalia: should we turn our backs for another 15 years, with the excuse that some degree of humanitarian intervention and early recovery is taking place? Or should we admit that we can no longer make enough of a difference?

Philippe Lazzarini was head of OCHA Somalia from April 2005 until April 2008. Dawn Elizabeth Blalock contributed to this article.

Protection and livelihoods in Somalia

Alexander Tyler, UNHCR

Khadra is four months pregnant. Her husband is chronically ill, making her the sole breadwinner for her family. Like many of the women in displaced persons settlements in Baidoa, a town now crammed with people fleeing the conflict in Mogadishu, Khadra's only source of income has been selling firewood, which she collects by walking tens of kilometres outside Baidoa. Taking her two young daughters with her for the journey, she sells the firewood for 30,000 Somali Shillings, or just over one US dollar, on the roadside near her makeshift home, where she has been living for over a year. Not only is collecting and selling firewood not enough to provide for her large family, but it also puts Khadra and her daughters in harm's way. 'I was chased once by several armed men,' she explains. 'That time we were able to escape, but other times some of my friends were raped.' She has tried to earn more money by cleaning clothes for wealthier families in Baidoa – some days she was paid, other days not. She has occasionally received some humanitarian aid, either in the form of food or plastic sheeting and other

household items, but the landowner, to whom her community has to pay rent, would come the next day to take his cut of the assistance, or threaten eviction.

Khadra is one of the estimated 700,000 people displaced from Mogadishu in 2007, amid arguably the most intense period of violations of human rights and humanitarian law in the city since 1992. The list of abuses linked to the conflict is long: indiscriminate attacks on civilian areas; roadside bombs and skirmishes affecting civilians; recruitment of children, on both sides of the conflict; arbitrary arrests and detention; sexual violence; looting of property; intimidation and assassinations of journalists, civil society figures and civilian administrators – the list goes on.¹

¹ Human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law have been documented and reported by a variety of sources during 2007 and 2008, including through the United Nations Secretary-General's reports to the Security Council on the situation in Somalia, and by human rights groups such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

The conflict has compounded an already poor human rights record on the treatment of minority clans, women and children around the country. Coping and survival strategies for displaced women have become increasingly desperate. Mariam, another woman displaced to one of the many settlements in Galkayo's urban sprawl, collects rubbish in town in order to survive. 'I have felt sick ever since I began collecting garbage,' she complained. 'First I was able to put the garbage on some vacant land nearby, but the landlord came and forbade us to do it anymore as he wanted to build on that land.' She now has no choice but to stock garbage sacks next to her makeshift shelter, under the hot sun. 'Now my youngest child is not feeling well either.' Other displaced women have reportedly been selling themselves for sex.

coping and survival strategies for displaced women have become increasingly desperate

Providing an effective response to the protection needs of the many survivors of the conflict in Somalia is a daunting task. Through the new Cluster Approach, piloted in Somalia since 2006, UNHCR and OCHA are responsible for coordinating monitoring and reporting of protection violations and designing and implementing responses. Protection coordination meetings are well attended by a number of other UN agencies, international and national NGOs, both in Nairobi and at field locations in Somalia. Whilst this coordination certainly needs to be strengthened, there have been some positive initiatives. UNHCR and UNICEF, partnering with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Oxfam Novib, work with over 50 national NGOs throughout the country, which monitor, report on and advocate against human rights abuses and forced displacement. This system allows the humanitarian community to track violations, conduct advocacy campaigns at the international and national levels and plan assistance for newly displaced people. Many other agencies integrate a protection and gender perspective into their programming, supported by a series of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) working groups chaired by OCHA in Nairobi and UNFPA in the field, most notably in Hargeisa, Galkayo and Baidoa. A considerable number of both preventive and remedial GBV projects – from awareness-raising to the provision of psycho-social, medical and legal support – are gaining momentum. Other agencies are involved in training local authorities, communities and other stakeholders on human rights norms, including UNDP's Rule of Law programme.

Yet it would be fair to ask whether any practical difference is being made to the lives of Somalis through these projects. Certainly, any positive stories appear to be drowned out by daily reports of the deteriorating political and security situation, accompanied by a numbing silence from the international community where there should be outrage and condemnation. We are often left asking

ourselves: what can be achieved in terms of protection in this environment?

Blinded by the 'big picture'

Part of the problem lies in the difficulties of applying meaningful and measurable indicators for the success or failure of protection activities. Compared to the quantitative percentage measurements applied by the nutrition and health sectors, protection indicators tend to be more indirect, qualitative and subjective. Counting the number of human rights training sessions held measures an agency's performance, but gives little indication whether this has led to a change in the behaviour of local authorities or other actors. Qualitative and subjective indicators, such as measuring changes in displaced women's sense of security over time, are valid, but do not translate well into the matrices that support policy decisions in Nairobi. Significant advocacy campaigns are ongoing, most notably through OCHA and an informal NGO advocacy forum, but again, measuring impact can be tricky. This is complicated by the admittedly important 'behind closed doors' advocacy conducted by senior UN staff dealing with the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and UN Member States, which by its very nature is not 'public', and the details of which may not be available to the rest of the humanitarian community, let alone to the Somali people themselves.

The problems of measuring the impact of protection activities make it very difficult to assess what has worked and what has not, certainly at the macro level. Looking at graphs showing displacement patterns and reading summaries of abuses, we might be tempted to throw our hands in the air, exclaim 'nothing can be done' and blame the Global War on Terror, local power politics and general insecurity for undermining our efforts. On the other hand, whilst the constraints we face in halting abuses at the macro level are indeed serious, we should not be blinded or paralysed by the bleak big picture. There are still ways to make small differences.

Back to basics

Take Khadra in Baidoa. She is now benefiting from a small livelihoods grant, provided and monitored by the Bay Women's Development Network, a national NGO working in Bay region. Khadra and her daughters no longer collect firewood, and they are no longer exposed to rape in the scrubland outside the town. Earning a living through petty trade, she no longer humiliates herself by begging for work from other families who might or might not pay her at the end of the day. She feels safer and is less worried about being able to provide for her children, including her soon-to-arrive newborn.

Khadra may not count for much in an aggregated Excel matrix, but she does represent a small success for protection delivery, as do a series of communities benefiting from Protection-Livelihoods projects in Baidoa and the Afgoye corridor, where over 300,000 IDPs have found a precarious refuge. The concept behind this approach is well described in a recent HPG Working Paper, which draws parallels between protection approaches and



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Displaced women in Baidoa, Somalia, part of a livelihoods project managed by the NGO Bay Women's Development Network, funded by UNHCR

more development-oriented livelihoods frameworks.² The paper emphasises the interlinked character of the strategies people use to improve their economic situation, security and future opportunities, especially in times of conflict. For instance, if people are collecting firewood in order to increase their income, but this is placing them at risk of attack and rape, livelihoods programming can assist in creating safer alternatives. Reducing asset depletion for displaced women may put them at less risk of being forced into selling themselves for sex as a survival strategy. Improving adult access to income may increase the likelihood that the family will invest in education for their children, rather than relying on the income their children get through begging or shoe-shining. The indicators used for measuring the success of such projects are not simply a percentage increase in income, but include qualitative and subjective indicators, such as the beneficiary's perception of change in her own or her family's security or future prospects.

a crucial part of protection-livelihoods programming is that it adheres to participatory methodologies

Such approaches may also represent a more cost-effective and efficient alternative to individual distributions, such as food and plastic sheeting, as they avoid the often exorbitant transport costs, as well as making it more difficult for interest groups to divert aid. That being said, the evening

² Susanne Jaspars, Sorcha O'Callaghan and Elizabeth Stites, *Linking Livelihoods and Protection: A Preliminary Analysis Based on a Review of the Literature and Agency Practice*, HPG Working Paper, December 2007. See also Simon Narbeth and Calum McLean, *Livelihoods and Protection: Displacement and Vulnerable Communities in Kismaayo, Southern Somalia*, Network Paper 44 (London: ODI, 2003).

after livelihood grants were distributed in one makeshift camp in Baidoa, young men from the town were seen hanging around the site. They were quickly removed by the local police, but this does demonstrate that any form of assistance, including livelihoods support, has to be carefully combined with detailed risk and stakeholder analysis, discussion and negotiation with the security forces and duty-bearers, as well as close and continuous monitoring at all stages of the project. 'Do no harm' principles are at stake at every turn.

A crucial part of protection-livelihoods programming is that it adheres to participatory methodologies in terms of design and implementation. The type of activities to be supported need to be determined by the beneficiaries,

rather than by outsiders – not least for reasons of sustainability and efficiency, as this approach can help to garner support from the communities themselves.

Engaging with the community can also present a safer way of investigating and addressing protection issues, both for agency staff and for communities themselves. Participatory assessments can be a less contentious way of finding out about abuses, and can create an environment, through focus groups or individual discussions, whereby participants are able to share concerns that they might otherwise be reluctant to reveal. UN national staff, often unable to raise sensitive protection issues with powerful stakeholders for fear of their own security, could potentially do so through the prism of the livelihood project itself. This in turn may counter the common perception that protection concerns can only be effectively addressed by international staff. This may be true for some advocacy approaches – for instance, denouncing abuses – but it is not always the case where more indirect means are used. With access for international staff deteriorating, strengthening national staff through training on these alternative approaches could be a crucial next step.

Of course, participatory approaches are not new, especially in development theory and practice, but they are worryingly thin on the ground in the Somalia operation – with some notable exceptions such as those pursued by UNICEF, the Danish Refugee Council and UNHCR. Indeed, UNICEF has been using community-based protection approaches in Somalia for some time, focusing on protecting the rights of children, but also touching on UNICEF's core programmes including health, education and water and sanitation. The agency maintains a network of Child Protection Advocates (CPAs) drawn from and living with communities themselves, who provide an important link between UNICEF and the Somalis it is trying to help. Over the last three years, UNICEF has reached over 1,000

communities in this way. These sorts of programmes might not make the headlines as they are often not very visible, but they can make a difference to the lives of Somali children and their communities.

Some aid workers may argue against such approaches because they are time-consuming and costly, or are not appropriate in emergency conditions. But Somalia has been in a constant emergency for decades. Failure to prepare the ground properly before starting any project – be it in health, education, water, protection or individual assistance – reflects rather our own limitations. By now, we should have learnt the lesson that, if you do not spend time engaging with communities and stakeholders, a myriad of protection issues will arise, and the assistance provided will most likely be distorted and diverted the minute the well-meaning aid agency leaves the scene.

It is true that the sustainability of protection-livelihoods projects may be questionable in a conflict zone, certainly as more and more unexpected ‘shocks’ occur, and we need to do more to incorporate a learning and adjustment process into project management in such an unpredictable environment. More research is required on the long-term impact on the protection capacities of displaced communities, through the enhancement of their socio-economic resilience. While these broader questions are debated, the small successes witnessed so far suggest that we cannot, and should not, stop trying to help Somalis like Khadra.

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Community policing in Mogadishu: a case study of Bakhara Market

Mohamed Ahmed Jama, SOCDA

Somalia has experienced a devastating conflict over the last two decades. What originally appeared to be a national civil conflict has now taken on regional and international dimensions. The fighting – directly and indirectly – has left hundreds of thousands of Somalis dead, created millions of refugees, destroyed the environment and finally reduced to ashes a heritage and civilisation more than 12 centuries in the making. Somalis have been searching for a home-grown solution that will bring lasting peace to the country. Somalis have a strong tradition of settling conflicts, but in the absence of a strong and accountable government local peace-building efforts are often fragile. More than 14 reconciliation conferences have been held, but have proven ineffective as they were donor-led and not representative of wider Somali views.

While the international community has a role to play, it often does not know how. In the past, misguided political and security policies have led to ill-fated foreign interventions. The history of Somalia in the last 17 years, and especially within the last two, has been one of interference by regional and international actors, missed opportunities and a failure to understand how to engage with Somali society.

Local peace-building

Beneath the gaze of international attention, at the local level peace-building and conflict resolution activities are resulting in real gains for Somalis. This challenges the international perception that Somalia is a country of anarchy. Rather, it is a country without a national government, but not without local mechanisms for settling disputes and apportioning power. This article describes how civic actors are addressing local conflicts, and offers some insights into how international actors can engage with Somalis.

while the international community has a role to play, it often does not know how

Life begins with security and stability, and Somalis value this just as much as anyone else. Figure 1 shows how Somalia has moved into a period of relative stability despite the absence of a centralised government. Indicators of this are the number of peace-building activities, the rate of voluntary return of displaced people and diaspora activity.

In Figure 1, the top line (stability) stands for forces of peace in the country and how they are trying to overcome local conflicts, promote stability and reduce crime rates in the country. The bottom line (armed action) shows the rate of armed conflict in the country. Together, the figure shows the frequency of armed conflict over the 12 months of 2006, and the frequency of peace attempts over the same 12-month period.

Up to December 2006, Somalia was relatively stable and predictable – not at all as anarchic as outsiders thought. In fact, the country was reaching equilibrium between the number of peace activities underway and a decline in the number of incidents of serious armed conflict. Somali civil society and other voices of peace have been calling for the international community to adopt a ‘Do No Harm’ policy and to support local peace actors to transform the situation, rather than imposing outside ‘solutions’ that result in even wider conflict.

Figure 1: Peace-building and stability performance in Somalia 2006

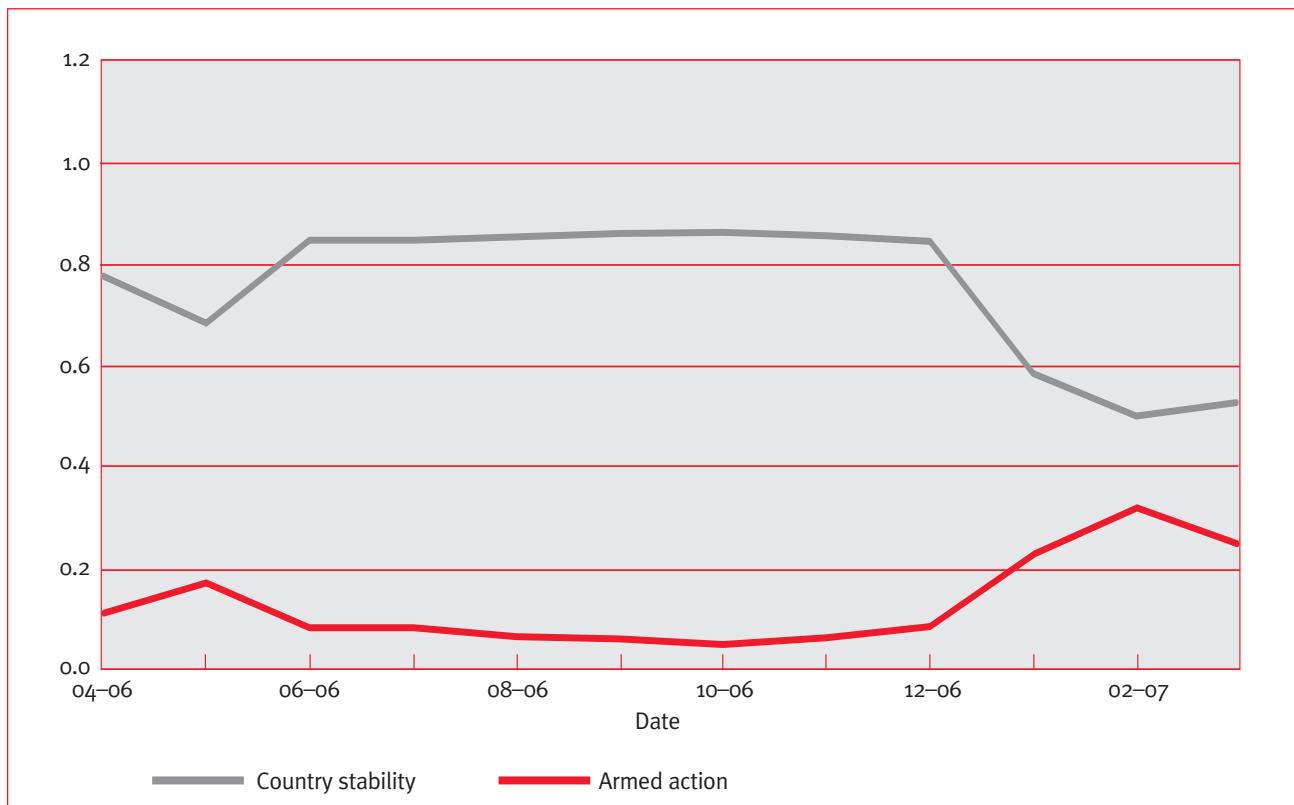


Figure 2 illustrates how stability decreased and conflict escalated soon after the introduction of the foreign-backed Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in December 2006, after TFG forces backed by Ethiopians and Americans drove out Islamic Court forces.

Opposition to this perceived imposition resulted in violent conflict with horrific humanitarian consequences, the destruction of businesses, disruption to trade and the displacement of up to two-thirds of Mogadishu's people into the countryside. What stability there had been was lost. The international community bears some responsibility for this state of affairs, along with Somalis pursuing their own agendas above a truly national one.

The attempt to force through a political process that most Somalis in Mogadishu saw as alien has created untold suffering and undermined progress towards stability. Somali communities suspect the international community and its client institutions of having a hidden agenda, whether the Global War on Terror or something else. In addition, Somalis take note that the international community is not holding the perpetrators of war crimes and human rights abuses accountable. This failure to institute measures to protect civilians is troubling, and constitutes a clear failure by outsiders to support internal calls for such measures.

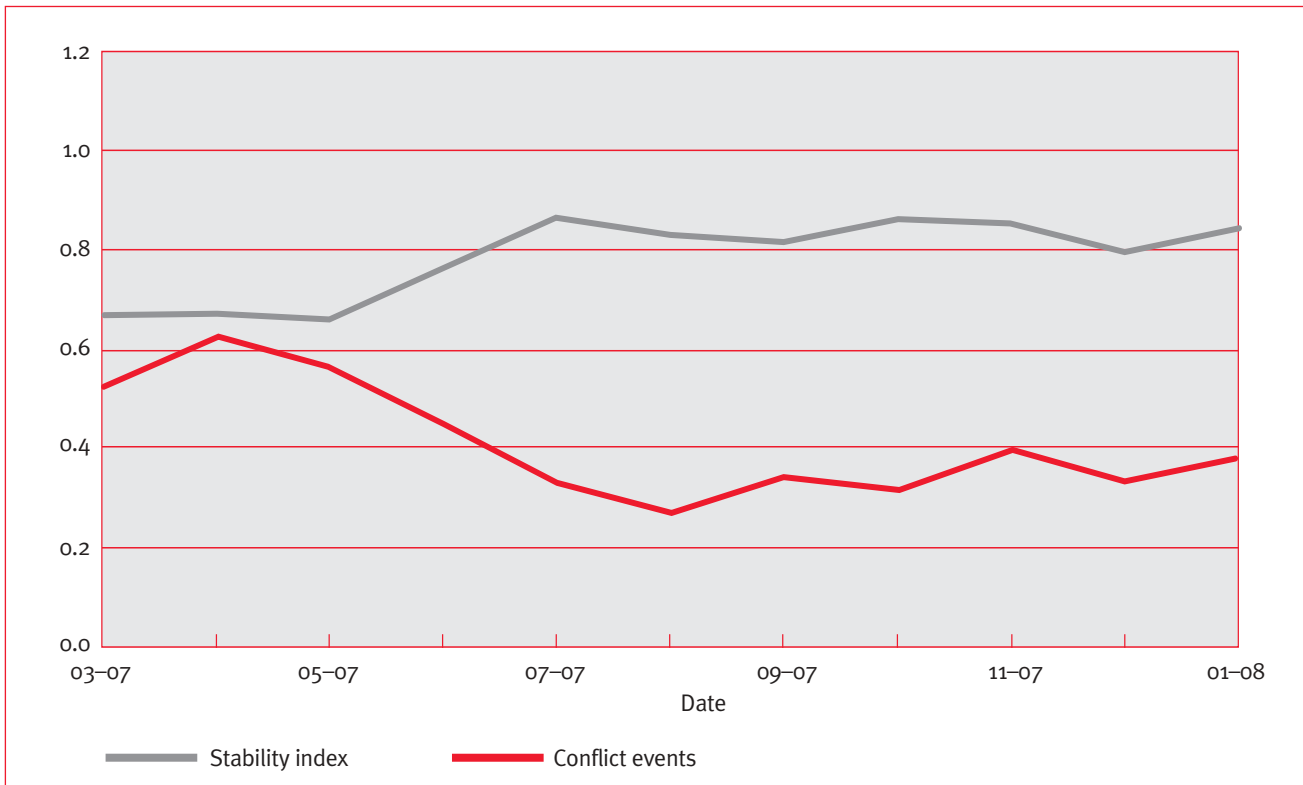
Local problems, local solutions

However, Somalis have not lost hope. The current conflict has not completely eliminated our ability to find local solutions to security problems. One example of this is the case of Bakhara Market in Mogadishu.

Bakhara Market occupies two square kilometres in the Hawlwadag district of Mogadishu. Formerly a residential neighbourhood, for the last two decades it has been a business hub, both nationally and in the larger region. It hosts financial institutions, telecommunications companies, import/export firms, media companies, manufacturers, public transport terminals, food markets and consumer goods outlets. Bakhara serves towns and cities within Somalia, but extends its reach internationally to Nairobi, Djibouti, Jeddah, Dubai, Cairo, Mumbai, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Islamabad, Beijing, Johannesburg, Addis Ababa, Minneapolis and Toronto, where substantial populations of Somalis live. This bustling market has also been an arms bazaar servicing all parties to the conflict. It was also seen as a hotbed of insurgent support by businessmen opposed to the TFG and Ethiopian forces.

because it is rich, Bakhara Market has attracted the unwanted attention of warlords, bandits, militias and soldiers

Because it is rich, the market has attracted the unwanted attention of warlords, bandits, militias and soldiers. As a resource-rich district in the midst of conflict, it has been subject to attack, extortion and looting. Between December 2006 and January 2008, local security forces targeted businesses in the district and looted substantial amounts of money. Many traders, labourers and bystanders were killed. Attacks increased in February 2008, with multiple raiding

Figure 2: Peace-building and stability performance 2007

and looting under the pretext of security sweeps. Adding insult to injury, these were the very security forces that were meant to be protecting the market. Unpaid and ill-disciplined soldiers robbed with impunity.

To address the deteriorating situation, representatives of the business community came together with other civil society actors, including rights activists and religious leaders, and formed a committee to establish a dialogue with the TFG leadership, the Ethiopian authorities and leaders of the insurgency. These discussions resulted in the market being declared a demilitarised zone. To realise this aim, the market was to have its own private security force governed by a code of conduct agreed by all parties. The committee achieved this remarkable tripartite agreement through direct dialogue, subtle negotiation and efforts to convince all sides that it was in their best interest to protect the market. Security would be provided by the business community, and would be under the control of a committee consisting of figures from the business and civic communities. This could only have worked with the support of the new Prime Minister's office, which acknowledged that a serious security problem was threatening the survival of the market.

In the end, it was agreed that 450 private security personnel would protect the market. This was funded through the Peace Fund Initiative, a funding portfolio created by the business community and supported by civil society, religious and traditional leaders. Today, the market area is one of the most peaceful parts of Mogadishu. Crime levels have plummeted and business activity has returned to normal.

This initiative has put the accountability of security forces at centre-stage, making them answerable directly to the

governing committee and ultimately to the cross-clan business and civic communities from which they were drawn. This initiative is a good example of a realistic, simple and appropriate approach to conflict resolution. As a bottom-up intervention it should send a message to the international community that top-down approaches risk crushing these grassroots initiatives.

This community policing initiative is unique in that it was able to forge an agreement that cut across clan *and* political lines. It was an initiative founded on pragmatism and based upon the realities on the ground, rather than some externally designed 'security sector' plan. When Somalis want something to work it is because it is in their interest, under their control and ultimately accountable to them.

Implications for the international community

The international community must rethink its approach to Somalia and consider how to support, rather than displace, local initiatives. International actors have a role to play, but they rarely understand what that role is or, worse, they *think* they do and end up empowering the wrong individuals and factions. The principles of 'Do No Harm' should require outside actors to develop a nuanced understanding of local actors: a comprehensive and analytical conflict-mapping of the context before diving in with their vast resources. Such a step would be a significant advance towards a principled and informed engagement with Somali society.

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Uphold your principles, don't shrug your shoulders

Reena Ghelani and Zia Choudhury

Humanitarian agencies, whose sole mandate is to save lives and ensure that those who require humanitarian assistance receive it, have been faced with tough choices during the past 17 years in Somalia. Somalia, one of the world's longest ongoing humanitarian operations, has challenged how we operate, often forcing agencies to compromise principled action for the sake of delivering assistance at almost any cost.

Somalis are suffering in frightening numbers but, even with relatively significant resources at their disposal, humanitarian workers are frequently unable to confirm that the majority of aid delivered is reaching the people who really need it. Rather, in parts of south and central Somalia, humanitarian managers admit that they sometimes have no idea how much assistance reaches its intended beneficiaries, and even less idea what impact it has. The usual principles which define our work – independence, neutrality and impartiality – cannot easily be upheld consistently, and the frameworks for improving the quality of our services, such as beneficiary participation and monitoring systems, are often bypassed.

Why is humanitarian work so difficult?

Why is humanitarian work so difficult in Somalia, and why has it become apparently acceptable to operate there outside of our normal values, principles and systems? The answer to the first question is primarily related to issues of accessibility. Security for aid workers, both Somali and foreign, is extremely poor, with intimidation a daily occurrence, whilst kidnapping and assassination are increasing. Getting access to communities in need, and then focusing on serving the most vulnerable, is often not possible, as powerful armed actors impose restrictions on aid delivery: illegal taxation of aid agencies, 'help' with beneficiary selection, coercion during recruitment and forced contractual relationships with certain service providers are just some of the many methods that reduce aid effectiveness. This way of working has existed for almost two decades, and the obstacles preventing access to people are only increasing.

why has it become acceptable to operate outside of our normal values, principles and systems?

The answer to the second question may be related to the depth of the humanitarian crisis, and feelings of collective responsibility to do something – anything – to relieve suffering. Somalia was and remains a country with some of the worst human development indicators in the world. Plagued with crisis after crisis, humanitarian agencies have been caught in a constant cycle of providing basic

assistance merely to try and help people survive. Today, Somalia is experiencing its most acute humanitarian crisis since 1993, with 2.6 million people in need of humanitarian support. This number is likely to increase in the coming months due to the significant deterioration in the food security situation and creeping drought. In addition to the food crisis, human security also fluctuates wildly, as armed groups vie for control amongst themselves.

In short, Somalia is an extremely difficult place for humanitarian agencies to operate safely. The extreme humanitarian needs, the established process for taxing and coercing aid agencies and the general disregard for humanitarian values have led to long-term and systematic compromises by aid workers in order to deliver assistance, a position accepted in practice by managers and donors.

Aside from external factors that hinder aid delivery, there are numerous internal agency-related issues, which are not specific to Somalia. These include a widespread culture of unaccountability, which results from having a largely unregulated humanitarian sector. There is insufficient emphasis on continuous improvement, even during the height of a crisis, arising in part from the fact that future funding is not necessarily dependent on past performance.

The dangers and challenges of operating in Somalia have at times left humanitarians with little choice but to abandon the drive to meet humanitarian standards and continuously improve their work. How can you deliver a high standard of work if you face such inaccessibility and insecurity? Non-Somali staff often claim that it is just too difficult to operate. Those familiar with working in Somalia will recognise the classic justification for the inability to explain quality or progress: a shoulder shrug, accompanied by 'oh, but this is Somalia'. The despondency which many aid workers feel is strengthened by regular evacuations or closures of programmes. A more worrying sentiment has also developed (which again is not uncommon in difficult contexts), whereby the responsibility for poor-quality aid work is transferred to Somalis. This sentiment has a dangerous edge to it, as increasingly aid workers seem to blame an inability to deploy expatriate staff for a large portion of their problems. The inferences are clear.

The Joint Operating Principles

The challenges and compromises discussed above affect one group disproportionately: the Somalis who are in need of humanitarian assistance. They are an unlucky group, living in a country at war, with large ungoverned areas, chronic poverty and climate extremes, and unable to benefit properly from the resources pouring into the country. This predicament alone is justification enough for the humanitarian community to seek big changes.



Displaced women and children in Jowhar, Somalia, September 2007

©Manocheer Desghat/IRIN

In 2006, UN-OCHA and a group of NGOs agreed that humanitarian agencies needed to adopt a more collective, more organised and more principled approach to fulfilling their mandate of saving lives. In line with the implementation of humanitarian reforms in Somalia, the Joint Operating Principles (JOPs) were initiated as a means of improving the quality and accountability of aid services. The approach is simple and not at all revolutionary: it involves highlighting three key humanitarian principles, which all *bona fide* humanitarian agencies claim to follow already (humanity, neutrality and impartiality); it involves following seven operational frameworks which no *bona fide* humanitarian agency would ever dispute (participation of the beneficiary population, respect for Somali culture, operational independence, transparency, accountability, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and coherence); it involves having a strategy and action plan to realise those principles and approaches; and it involves a system for transparently reporting progress, and receiving peer support when progress is a struggle. Above all, it assumes that, in the Somali context, humanitarian agencies will work better *collectively* than individually, especially when agencies are often not seen by others as separate entities, and when agencies themselves claim to follow more-or-less the same set of principles and approaches.

The JOPs attempt to untangle core humanitarian principles and operational approaches by restating them and relating them to everyday situations in Somalia. There are two key features. First, agencies are encouraged to act collectively (e.g. the current action plan proposes development of a collective complaints handling system) where possible, or at a minimum to speak with one voice and be conscious of how one agency's actions impact on another. Second, agencies must report on their level of compliance with the JOPs overall. The latter is the first step in encouraging agencies to report transparently on how they have tried to achieve a principled operational approach, and then explain

their level of success and highlight obstacles.

A rotating Steering Committee is proposed to analyse these reports, request feedback and clarification from individual agencies and prepare a non-attributed analytical summary of all the submitted reports, for general publication. The process will assist the Steering Committee to review the JOPs and the action plan. Agencies will in theory improve transparency and accountability by preparing this report. They will also be encouraged to continuously improve their performance, by being obliged to analyse their levels of compliance with the various commitments.

This peer review mechanism is designed to be supportive, and to provide objective and constructive feedback to agencies. It is also designed to provide general feedback to the public about humanitarian performance. It is not intended to replace an organisation's standard legal and moral obligations to monitor, evaluate and continuously improve its work. The peer review mechanism promotes the concept of meaningful reporting against all the principles, standards and codes that an agency commits to. It provides a safe forum to discuss any reporting of non-compliance with a principle, whether due to unforeseen operational constraints or because temporary exoneration is being sought in advance.

the JOPs have not yet been operationalised, more than two years after they were first developed

It seems simple enough, yet the JOPs have not yet been operationalised, more than two years after they were first developed. The reasons for delay are many. The current situation, whereby agencies find it difficult to uphold values and commitments, has ironically led some aid workers to marginalise them completely, leaving them to the statute books and agency websites. For some, the grave challenges in Somalia have become immovable obstacles. A self-perpetuating cycle has been created: it is too difficult to uphold values and principles, so we won't even try. However, by not trying to find solutions, we dilute those principles, to the point where, eventually, they risk losing all critical meaning.

Others view the JOPs as overly intellectual and too far removed from the everyday operational challenges faced by field staff. The JOPs have tried to highlight the key

operational concerns of field staff, and then relate them to core principles and operational frameworks. However, there remains a sense that this is not practical in the Somali context, and is simply too hard to achieve.

Reluctance to report publicly to a peer group, and to be forced to explain non-compliance, has been an issue for some agencies. The JOPs' champions recognise that this is largely due to a long history globally of 'opaque transparency' when it comes to NGO reporting. The final argument against implementation is the misperception that it is 'all or nothing'. The JOPs cannot be fully implemented overnight, but should be considered as a phased approach and process that slowly but surely attempts to address the hard issues. Some organisations remain focused on the parts of the JOPs that will indeed be difficult in practice. While this is a legitimate concern, many other basic elements can and should be implemented today.

The JOPs are not a panacea for the problems of aid delivery in Somalia. They are, however, a bold, systematic and collective mechanism to explore, engage and promote the principles our work is supposed to be founded upon. While resistance continues, a core group of organisations is dedicated to moving them forward, arguing that, by using the JOPs to try to meaningfully follow principles, we demonstrate a loyalty to our mandates, which otherwise are in danger of being eroded. The JOP process forces us to seek solutions, founded on core values, and then be transparent. A core requirement of the JOP process is to seek exoneration when a principle cannot be met. It is

more honest and constructive to explain in detail why we cannot not be impartial (for example), rather than just blaming security overall or – heaven forbid – shrugging our shoulders again. The JOPs allow us to display our humanity collectively, regardless of whether others respect our values, and also help us to lobby collectively for accepted humanitarian values.

The JOP process has led to other important discussions on how to improve the quality of humanitarian action in Somalia. For example, we need to look very closely at our overall management processes and how they work in Somalia. Clearly, Somalis have a distinct management culture of their own. We may need to change our entire management paradigm in order to be effective in Somalia, especially if agencies rely on largely Somali in-country staff. We certainly need to challenge our prejudices, to be more creative and transparent, but above all we must keep trying.

Rather than give up and compromise our values, principles and commitments, the JOPs' initiators wish to use them to revitalise, motivate and strengthen the humanitarian mission. Yes, it is really very tough to work in Somalia, but our humanitarian values are still at our core and we must uphold and cherish them. It is no longer enough simply to shrug the shoulders and say 'oh, but this is Somalia'.

Reena Ghelani is Senior IDP advisor, OCHA Somalia. **Zia Choudhury** is Deputy Regional Director, Danish Refugee Council, Horn of Africa.

Full of promise: how the UN's Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism can better protect children

Katy Barnett and Anna Jefferys
Network Paper 62
September 2008

In July 2005, UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1612 requested the immediate implementation of a Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) to keep under review six categories of grave violations of children's rights in armed conflict. This resolution is regarded by many as a groundbreaking step in the protection of children affected by conflict.

Although the implementation process of the MRM and the other provisions of SCR 1612 have been much discussed and reviewed, the Security Council has not made public any assessment of the impact of SCR 1612, and no account has yet been published analysing what changes the MRM has delivered on the ground.

This Network Paper aims to fill this gap. It describes the main components of the MRM, assesses its impact and examines the factors limiting that impact. In particular, it looks at three areas: developments in international policy debates and processes; changes in the behaviour of duty-bearers and parties to conflict; and changes in children's lives. The report concludes with key recommendations for policy-makers and practitioners engaged in assisting children affected by armed conflict.

'Do More Good' in the Central African Republic

Toby Lanzer, former Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, Central African Republic

Once there was a fairy-tale image of the brave and noble humanitarian, who would storm into conflict zones – armed only with vaccines and sacks of food – and indiscriminately save lives, having no other impact than a strictly humanitarian one. In the mid-1990s, that image was shattered. Strikingly common-sensical, Mary Anderson laid out the idea of Do No Harm, based on the realisation that humanitarian assistance takes place within a political context, and that so-called humanitarians, in their eagerness to do good, risked exacerbating tensions and deepening conflicts. Of course, this insight was not new. As long as there have been conflicts, people in violence-ridden countries have seen foreigners appear and influence the course of events. Having them arrive in white Landcruisers with colourful flags hardly changed the essential point that, in a conflict zone, everything is political.

Acknowledging that emergency aid can have unintended and potentially disastrous consequences should not, and has not, led humanitarian organisations to pack up their vaccination kits and go home. On the contrary: while the idea of Do No Harm is as relevant today as ever, there is no reason why it could not have a positive twin. This twin idea – 'Do More Good' – suggests that impartial and effective humanitarian action can have a positive impact beyond its primary aim of saving lives and relieving suffering, i.e. to create some breathing-space for conflict-torn communities and lay the foundations for stability and development. Just such a window of opportunity may exist today in the Central African Republic. Although this window may close fast, it does appear that positive change could be possible. Aid organisations are playing a central role in helping to bring it about.

The context: violence and poverty intertwined

The modern history of the Central African Republic reads like that of many other African states. The rule of a despotic and self-appointed emperor in the 1960s and 1970s was followed by a series of presidents and coups, none of which managed to bring about much tangible progress for the country's destitute population. The past decade has been particularly turbulent, marked by recurring internal conflicts and a steady decline in the



Displaced women in Kabo town, CAR, March 2008

©Anthony Morland/IRIN

standard of living for the average Central African. For the past two years, parts of the country's north have been caught in a rebellion against the government of President Francois Bozize. Fighting has displaced hundreds of thousands of people from their homes, and has prevented the state from providing any kind of services.

adding to its internal woes, CAR finds itself in a rough neighbourhood

Adding to its internal woes, CAR finds itself in a rough neighbourhood. With long and porous borders with Chad and the Darfur region of Sudan, Central Africans are caught up in complex regional refugee and returnee problems. The country's vast northern provinces provide a perfect hide-out for rebels, poachers and anyone else seeking some time away from the public eye. The virtually bankrupt and undermanned Central African state is incapable of controlling its territory, breeding lawlessness and rebellion.

The weakness of the Central African state goes beyond its inability to ensure the security of its territory. Landlocked and with extremely limited trade with the outside world, the country has never been able to develop its potential, and today lies 171st on the UNDP's list of the 177 least developed countries in the world.¹ Successive governments have been unable to manage finances to allow civil servants regularly to receive their salaries. The past years of violence, fuelled by crippling destitution and a sense of being abandoned by the state, have caused a humanitarian crisis across northern CAR. With emergency and poverty needs so closely intertwined, help is required at every level, whether distributing blankets and kitchen utensils to the displaced or helping the government to repair roads and bridges.

The stakes: a window of opportunity for change

The stakes in CAR are high, notably in terms of human suffering. The scope of the crisis is staggering. Some 300,000 people have been forced from their homes, and tens of thousands are living in the bush, too frightened even to return to their villages to collect clean water. Per 100,000 live births, 1,355 mothers die during or immediately after the delivery, compared to 550 in neighbouring Sudan. Twenty per cent of CAR's children never reach their fifth birthday, and those who survive have little chance of ever seeing the inside of a classroom or a functioning health centre. Economic opportunities are scarce; even when people have access to a livelihood, insecurity and impassable roads reduce trade to a trickle. As the security situation ebbs and flows, aid organisations are gaining access to populations previously out of reach. The level of needs they are discovering is startling.

Despite this dire situation, there are some positive signs, suggesting that stability and recovery could be within reach. The foremost of these developments is an inclusive political dialogue in Bangui, at the initiative of President Bozize and supported by the UN Peacebuilding Office in Bangui (BONUCA). It is hoped that the dialogue will help settle some of the discontent that has been plaguing the country's political scene since Bozize's ascendancy to power five years ago. Indeed, after months of discussions with militant groups and the political opposition, it looks like the President will be able to get all major political actors, including the armed opposition, around the negotiating table and that there will be a comprehensive peace agreement to end the persistent conflict with the militant group APRD in the north-west and consolidate the agreements with militant groups in the north and north-east.

In a second bid to promote stability – and reassure donors concerned about its human rights record – the CAR government has embarked on an ambitious programme to reform its security sector. The aim is to ensure that the country's security forces are adequately trained and equipped to protect CAR's population and territory, while respecting the law and human rights. The reforms also include strengthening political institutions to make sure that the security forces are under democratic control. This process will cost millions of dollars and take years to

¹ UNDP, *Human Development Index 2008*.

implement fully. However, quick support from donors, and a commitment from the government, could allow the state to project, with international supervision, a benign presence across its territory, restoring some much-needed trust between the population and the state.

There have been signs that at least some of the donor support needed in CAR could be forthcoming. In 2007, CAR was finally able to finish a national poverty reduction strategy, as set out in its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), which it presented to donors at a Round Table in October 2007. At the conference, donors pledged \$600 million for CAR's development and reconstruction. Across the country, this has raised expectations that the tide is turning. Were pledges not to materialise, there is a risk that the government's ambitions will become yet another source of frustration for the population, already tired of promises of development dividends that never arrive.

making sure that relief efforts help the CAR to move in the direction of stability and development is no mean feat

CAR is at a crossroads. On the one hand, violence and displacement continue in the north. On the other, there is a real chance of political stability and concrete progress towards recovery and development. With the PRSP, CAR's government has shown that it has a plan to pull its country out of its current state, and that it is aware of its responsibility to improve the lot of its citizens. But even with the best intentions, the government will need time and money to build up its capacity to provide basic services across the country. Aid organisations are helping to build that capacity, while covering – in the short term – the provision of key services in areas where the state is not yet present, thereby bringing home the immediate benefits of stability to the worst-affected populations.

The approach: working together to Do More Good in CAR

Making sure that relief efforts help the CAR to move in the direction of stability and development is no mean feat. It requires working closely with a broad range of partners, including the government, and aligning emergency priorities with recovery and development strategies. Humanitarian and development organisations in CAR are joining forces to meet immediate needs and, at the same time, strengthening the foundations for longer-term development.

This approach has meant bridging the often artificial divide between what is humanitarian and what is developmental. For example, the humanitarian 'clusters' have been merged with existing development sector groups, in which aid agencies engage with each other in an open and substantive discussion on humanitarian and development needs and priorities. In line with the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness, the clusters are aligned with the government's

coordination mechanism established for the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. To make sure that aid agencies are working coherently, the CAR's Humanitarian and Development Partnership Team (HDPT) meets weekly to discuss security, politics and emergency and development operations. So far, these efforts seem to have been successful. Indeed, in the 2008 CAP for CAR the HDPT (including NGOs, UN agencies and key government ministries) decided that one of three strategic priorities for the humanitarian response in 2008 would be to ensure coherence and complementarity between humanitarian assistance, early recovery and development programmes.

In addition, the HDPT has worked hard to get donors and more aid organisations engaged. Here too, efforts have paid off. In the past 18 months, the number of aid agencies engaged in humanitarian action and recovery has risen from five to 22. Together, these organisations received more humanitarian funding in 2007 than in 2004, 2005 and 2006 combined: \$69m, which – though it might seem small compared to aid giants such as DRC and Sudan – is comparable to the bigger settings when measured per capita. As for the use of funds, one way of making sure that they are put to the best possible use has been to empower sector groups to set clear priorities that are then communicated to donors. As such, all the projects included in the CAP have been prioritised by the HDPT and ranked as 'medium', 'high' or 'immediate' priority, based on six clear criteria. Another mechanism which is serving to improve coordination and the quality and coverage of humanitarian action is the Emergency Response Fund, which was set up in early 2007 to fund start-up costs and responses to breaking emergencies; to date, this has funded 66 projects, with nearly \$10m spent and \$12m raised.

While a transparent and inclusive approach is all very well, the *raison d'être* of the aid community is of course its ability to bring about positive change on the ground, first and foremost by alleviating suffering. Fortunately, in CAR, it looks like results are being achieved. In 2007, over 90% of CAR's IDPs received clothes, kitchen utensils, plastic sheeting and other non-food items. NGOs and UN agencies are giving some 2m people access to health care in hospitals, health centres and mobile clinics across the country. In the education sector, NGOs and UN agencies have teamed up to take some 97,000 children in the conflict-torn north back to school, and hundreds of wells, pumps and boreholes have been constructed or rehabilitated. In addition, increased HDPT field

presence (HDPT members' offices outside the capital, Bangui, increased five-fold in 12 months, from seven to 35), coupled with intense advocacy efforts towards the government and armed opposition groups, have contributed to a marked decrease in some of the conflict's worst human rights abuses, such as the torching of villages. As a result, aid agencies are saving more lives and alleviating or preventing more suffering than anyone could have predicted when humanitarian donors and organisations engaged seriously in 2006.

Beyond alleviating immediate suffering, these activities could be making a more lasting difference. In fact, by giving people access to livelihoods and opening previously cut-off trade routes, relief and recovery in CAR is helping the population put an end to its isolation and relaunch the defunct economy. By working in close coordination with the government to keep children in school and by rehabilitating health centres and hospitals, aid agencies are strengthening the state's capacity to provide basic services, and are 'filling the gap' to provide those services until the government can do so. By being present in conflict zones, international organisations can protect civilians and help prevent abuses. Although such contributions alone will not bring CAR out of its crisis, they help to create the breathing-space needed to put peace and stability back on the agenda. Indeed, by helping people to meet their most immediate needs, humanitarians are creating a chance for tension to dissipate, people to come together and stability and development to take root.

In short, humanitarian action in the Central African Republic is having a positive impact well beyond the immediate alleviation of suffering and the saving of lives. Far from Doing No Harm, this seems to be a case of humanitarians Doing More Good by coming together with development professionals and planning beyond the short term. The timing could not be better. For Central Africans 2008 is crucial. If humanitarian and development professionals can help tip the situation in the direction of peace, they will have made a difference which will serve the country not only in the months, but in the years and decades to come.

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A new approach to incorporating protection into humanitarian action

Kate Sutton, independent protection consultant

The debate regarding the protection role of non-mandated agencies in humanitarian responses is gradually producing some concrete answers. A recent HPG report recommends that 'every humanitarian agency should incorporate a minimum commitment to protection into their work'.¹ In a practical sense this should include the incorporation of

protection considerations into all assessments and project interventions, and in theory many non-mandated agencies have recognised this as an essential component of

¹ SORCHA O'CALLAGHAN and SARA PANTULIANO, *Protective Action: Incorporating Civilian Protection into Humanitarian Response*, HPG Report 26 (London: ODI, 2007).

humanitarian response programming. However, in practice the incorporation of protection considerations into agency programming remains *ad hoc* and dependent on the knowledge and interest of individuals. The recent response to the post-election violence in Kenya was no exception; protection assessments revealed that displaced populations were increasingly exposed to threats as a result of poor programming practices in sectors including food aid, water and sanitation and shelter.²

Part of the challenge in Kenya and other emergency contexts is the lack of clear agency standards to guide protection integration or to measure the accountability and quality of non-mandated agencies' responses to protection concerns. In order to address this gap, an inter-agency group has developed agency standards for the integration of protection in humanitarian action. This article outlines the development of these standards and examines the potential utility of the tool.

Developing standards

The impetus for developing the standards grew out of a critical review of World Vision's humanitarian and emergency affairs (HEA) strategy and an analysis of the position of protection within it. World Vision recognised two things: first, that as a non-mandated agency it needed to better define its role in protection; and second, that sector response programmes can either directly promote or hinder the protection of crisis-affected communities. A strategic decision was made to ensure that all programming would positively promote protection through its integration into all sector response programming. This led directly to a discussion regarding how this could be achieved.

In 2006, World Vision Australia funded research to identify and collate all the standards and indicators that related to protection in existing accountability documents. The research was intended to explore the possibility of using a standards format to communicate and promote the incorporation of protection into sector programmes. This seemed appropriate given that, although protection has been embedded as a cross-cutting theme in industry standards for many years, there were no standards exclusively addressing protection. It was assumed that these existing references could be extracted and combined to develop a set of standards to address that gap. The research analysed accountability tools that have already been endorsed by the humanitarian community, and it was assumed that the protection components of these tools had also implicitly been endorsed. Existing accountability documents that were reviewed included the Sphere Handbook, the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership

² World Vision Kenya Rapid Protection Assessment, February 2008.



©World Vision

Women queuing for an aid distribution in Kenya

(HAP) Principles of Accountability, the INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, the Red Cross Code of Conduct and the Good Enough Guide. Other sector-specific resources included the IASC Guidelines for Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings and Standards and Indicators in UNHCR Operations.

World Vision then began developing agency standards and indicators for integrating protection.³ In its current field-testing version, the first section details agency standards applicable to all sectors in any emergency response. The following six sections detail agency standards for integrating protection into individual sectors (water and sanitation, food aid and non-food programming, livelihoods, shelter, health and education). Each section contains standards, indicators and guidance notes in a similar format to the Sphere Handbook. (See example standard and indicators for food and non-food programmes in Box 1.)

The tool was initially developed to increase the quality and accountability of protection in World Vision sector programmes. However, insofar as the standards summarised the protection components of industry-wide tools, it was also hoped that they might be applicable beyond World Vision. The Sphere Project, the Global Protection Cluster and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) encouraged World Vision to share the tool more widely to ensure that the protection standards and indicators were in line with best practice and knowledge in the wider humanitarian sector, and potentially to allow the tool to be endorsed as an inter-agency document at a later stage.

³ *Minimum Agency Standards for Incorporating Protection into Humanitarian Response: Field Testing Version*, June 2008.

Box 1: Example standards and indicators: integrating protection into food and non-food item (NFI) programming

Agency Standard 4: Agencies prioritise safety and dignity prior to, during and after food and NFI distributions.

- Indicator 1: Agencies locate distribution points in a safe area, with appropriate policing if required.
- Indicator 2: Actions have been taken to make the routes to and from the food distribution points safe and accessible.
- Indicator 3: Clear information is provided on the fact that women and children are never required to provide sexual services or favours in exchange for food rations or non-food items.
- Indicator 4: Measures are in place to prevent, monitor and respond to intimidation, violence and sexual exploitation as associated with food and NFI distributions.
- Indicator 5: Personal data and lists of recipients are restricted to concerned actors and kept safe from unintended use.

Box 2: Extract from World Vision Protection Assessment Report from the North Rift Region, Kenya (February 2008)

Girls aged as young as 13 years are reportedly being 'sexually misused' by men, including police officers, in the surrounding community. The women reported that up to 100 girls aged between 13 and 17 years are selling sex for money to buy goods and food. The older women have tried to hold a meeting with the girls to warn them of the dangers but the girls were not interested unless the women could offer them the food and NFI they need, in particular sanitary towels and underwear. The girls involved are vulnerable because they are from poorer families and they are not getting the goods provided in distributions. This may be linked to the distribution system, whereby women say that only rich families receive food and NFI. The women believe that a targeted distribution of sanitary materials and underwear for girls between 12 and 20 years accompanied with some education sessions on the risks of sexual engagement and the rights and responsibilities of themselves as IDPs and children would be necessary.

In order to obtain industry feedback on the standards and indicators, the document was submitted for peer review by over 20 agencies and networks including the Global Protection Working Group. This preliminary review process has provided an early indication of the value of the standards and indicators, and highlighted areas that require further clarification and revision. Overwhelmingly, the document was endorsed as a useful tool for the field, and many agencies ascribe its strength to the connection to existing standards, codes and principles. In general, respondents found the language clear and intelligible. Almost all the respondents confirmed that, if attained, the standards would add value to humanitarian response programming, and largely found attaining the standards feasible. One of the most positive outcomes of the peer review process has been the development of an inter-agency group that has committed to field-testing the standards across different agency sector responses in countries including Timor Leste, Kenya, Sudan and Somalia, with funding from AusAID, DFID and World Vision Australia. CARE Australia, Caritas Australia, Oxfam Australia and World Vision have developed a field-testing methodology.

the potential utility of the tool has been confirmed by field staff

The potential utility of the tool has been confirmed by field staff. In response to the recent post-election violence in Kenya, World Vision targeted over 30,000 households with food and non-food items both in camps and surrounding communities. A protection assessment highlighted substantial concerns (see Box 2). In response to the findings the teams reviewed the standards for integrating protection into food and NFI programmes, and developed an action

plan for improving agency practice and advocacy to partner agencies. Measures including more specific targeting of vulnerable groups and protection mechanisms for girls vulnerable to sexual exploitation were put in place.

The relevance of the standards in Kenya is likely to be replicated in other contexts where safety issues in sector programmes are consistently documented. For example, agency assessments in contexts including Darfur, Sudan (2006) and Mozambique (2008) continue to highlight concerns related to food aid programming, and refer to issues including women having to pay for their own ration cards and a lack of representative inclusion in food aid committees.

In March 2008, the inter-agency group and external advisors including representatives from UNHCR, the Sphere Project and NGOs met at a workshop to discuss some of the significant challenges in the redrafting process and to develop a methodology for field-testing the standards. Key issues arising from the workshop included the necessity of clarifying the definition of a 'standard', and in the context of this tool referring to 'agency standards' rather than 'industry standards'. This is a critical distinction in the field of protection, where the ultimate standards must necessarily be international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law. It was therefore strongly recommended that the tool refer back to the legal basis for each section, as well as referring to relevant existing industry standards such as Sphere. The proposed definition is: 'the standards articulate a minimum level of agency performance to be reached and maintained in sector responses. The standards are qualitative and meant to be universal statements, so that they apply in all emergency contexts'.⁴ It was also recommended that the inter-agency

⁴ *Minimum Agency Standards for Incorporating Protection into Humanitarian Action: Workshop Report*, 25 and 26 March 2008.

group explore the development of agency standards for livelihoods and peace-building. Oxfam Australia has developed standards for incorporating protection into livelihoods programmes, and these have been incorporated into the field-testing version.

The field-testing started in August 2008, initially in Timor Leste and Kenya. The process will test the standards against the following agreed criteria: clarity, feasibility, measurability, value-added and cost-effectiveness. A baseline survey of current agency practice and community perceptions of agency practice will be conducted, followed by a six-month period in which agencies will make amendments to existing projects in order to comply with the draft standards. Amendments may include anything from changing information provided at food distributions to putting ramps in schools to ensure disabled access. Successful field-testing will be heavily dependent on a strong training component prior to testing, so that agencies have a common understanding of protection and how the standards tool should be used. Communities will be directly involved in the training and testing process, and their feedback will be sought against the testing criteria. At the end of the testing process an end-line survey will be carried out to establish not only agency practice and

feedback against criteria, but to the extent possible community perceptions of changes in safety and dignity. The developed field methodology has drawn considerably on the experience of Sphere, HAP and INEE.

The field-testing stage will provide a real indication of the utility and potential impact of the standards for staff and communities in the field. It will also hopefully provide the basis for a final version and the roll-out of the standards. In the meantime, what has already been achieved is an important step towards providing clarity and consistency in the integration of protection into sector programmes. The initiative has moved the discussions regarding the measurement and mainstreaming of protection forward by providing a concrete document for critique and feedback. The inter-agency group continues to learn from the feedback and ideas of agencies and communities, and it is hoped that the final standards will provide agencies with a tool to effectively address community protection concerns in sector programming.

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A review of the quality of data on agency websites

Richard Garfield and Philip Skinner

As the scrutiny of information for humanitarian programming grows, the quality of that information becomes ever more important. There is growing interest in both the presentation of information for key variables, and transparency regarding its origins and accuracy.

This article reviews eight websites which we believe to be the most widely used sources of basic information on health and wellbeing by those interested in humanitarian conditions. Data from these websites frequently finds its way into analytical reports and orients humanitarian workers in the field. Typically, press and publicity reports are unclear as to the sources of their data, often simply indicating that the presenting organisation is highly regarded and thus deserving of trust. Because of this high impact, and the poor visibility of the sources, we considered it important to examine the information that they present.

We reviewed data for a possible 12 variables present on the websites of eight major humanitarian and development agencies, accessed in August 2007. We sought to characterise the existence or absence of, sources for and reliability of data presented across these agencies.

Methods

We reviewed and collected into a database data on 12 social indicators for six countries of high priority for

Box 1: Sources reviewed in the preparation of this article

UNDP: <http://hdr.undp.org>
UNSTATS: <http://unstats.un.org>
UNICEF: <http://www.unicef.org>
WFP: <http://www.wfp.org>
WHO <http://www.who.int>
World Bank: <http://web.worldbank.org>
UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs:
<http://www.un.org/esa>
AlertNet: <http://www.alertnet.org>

humanitarian actors in recent years (Afghanistan, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe). These variables were drawn from eight websites, comprising five humanitarian or development agencies of the UN system, the statistical agency of the UN, the World Bank and a humanitarian web press portal (see Box 1). The data was reviewed to establish if a numerical variable was provided, and if a source and dates for the variable were given. Data was then examined to determine the level of agreement and the frequency of common source origins. Numerical indicators were compared across websites for consistency by identifying

Table 1: Results of the survey

| Variable examined | Average number of observations per variable | Percent of observations that were numerically identical | Coefficient of variation |
|----------------------------|---|---|--------------------------|
| Total population | 7.8 | 38 | .06 |
| Urban population | 3.8 | 50 | .02 |
| Life expectancy at birth | 5 | 33 | .04 |
| Infant mortality rate | 4.8 | 66 | .06 |
| Under-5 mortality rate | 4.5 | 80 | .05 |
| Population under 15 years | 1.8 | n/a | n/a |
| Improved water source | 2.8 | 100 | .01 |
| Improved sanitation source | 2.8 | 100 | .02 |
| Adult literacy | 3.5 | 100 | .10 |
| HIV prevalence | 4 | 50 | .08 |
| Income per capita | 5 | .60 | .09 |
| Health spending per capita | 1 | n/a | n/a |

repeated values, and for variance by calculating the coefficient of variation (CV). The CV is a measure of dispersion of a probability distribution, defined as the ratio of the standard deviation to the mean.

Results

There was a high level of heterogeneity among data presented across these websites. Table 1 shows the average number of data points provided per variable for the six countries examined. If all the websites had a variable for each of the countries, a perfect score of 8 would have been generated. The average, instead, was 3.9, meaning that slightly less than half of all possible data entries were provided among the eight sites examined.

Some variables derived from modelling were also presented. These include percent of population urban, percent of population under 15 years, and life expectancy at birth. Variables derived from modelling or household surveys, or a combination of the two, were provided less frequently (about half the time). They include mortality rates among under-15s and under-5s. Data derived exclusively from surveys was provided less frequently than other variables. This data includes water and sanitation source, literacy and HIV prevalence. Data derived from financial accounts was also infrequently cited; while five of the eight websites provided data on income per capita, only two unique entries were provided as four of the five websites used a common source and identical estimates. It is notable, however, that the variable was labelled using a variety of terms, including GDP, GNI and GNI atlas method. On one site different measures were used for different countries, making comparisons meaningless. Data on health spending per capita was provided by only one site.

The average coefficients of variation were very small for demographic variables. This is probably due to common source estimates for most of this data. Data for adult literacy, however, was calculated differently on each website. Not surprisingly, the average CV for this variable was wider.

Discussion

Without more information than is available on the examined websites, it is not possible to examine the accuracy, definitions or original sources for data presented.

It is little wonder that those preparing reports on countries are often left confused. Data is missing for many countries from major relevant websites that provide this information. Often, data is not provided for the same variables, making comparisons difficult or impossible. When common variables are used, the sources of data are often not provided. With or without specification of sources, the presentation of identical numerical variables is common, providing many users with a false sense of comfort that sources are in agreement (rather than repetitive), and thus likely to be accurate.

it is little wonder that those preparing reports on countries are often left confused

Repetition of a common source can provide a sense of reliability, without providing insight into the validity of the source data used. This mindset is rapidly shattered when variables from more than one source are provided, and a high degree of unexplained variability is observed. Data is often widely and uncritically used by academics, journalists and policymakers. This emphasises the need for the editors of these websites to provide documentation on the sources used, and to raise concerns regarding the reliability and accuracy of the data. Confidence in data should be based on a combination of validity (meaning that the data reports what it intends to report) and repeatability (meaning that multiple observers would come up with similar counts). As Warren Buffett put it: 'It is better to be approximately right than precisely wrong'.

To interpret and monitor progress on a variable over time, sources of data should always be provided. Most websites did provide at least some information about their data sources. Alertnet did not, leaving the user without guidance. UNSTAT provides 'official statistics' (for example, government sources), and states that some are of 'uncertain reliability'. UNDP and UNSTATS provided no operative definitions, and WHO and the World Bank provided no sources. DESA was clear both on sources and data definitions used.

It is worth noting that, although population data is widely provided and shows little variance, this does not necessarily mean that population figures are accurate. The frequent absence of values and the heterogeneity among the data provided was surprising in light of the increased coordination among development and humanitarian agencies in recent years. It is possible that evaluation staff are not working closely with their publicists and website editors. Whatever the reason, the poor presentation of data on humanitarian variables by a wide range of agencies appears to be a vestige of the era prior to Sphere and the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative. These limitations can probably be overcome if several principles are followed:

- Data sources should be presented as reference in the interests of transparency, comparability and interpretation.
- Website data summaries should be reviewed and updated at least once a year.

- Those managing data on websites should receive training to better present and interpret their sources.

In recent years there has been an upsurge in efforts to improve the collection and analysis of data on humanitarian conditions. SMART¹ and WFP² have created manuals to help standardise approaches to field surveys for nutrition and mortality. CRED³ has contributed to the standardisation of reporting of these surveys to a common database. The Health and Nutrition Tracking Service (HNTS) has begun to improve the triangulation of these and other data on health and nutrition. To date, a similar effort to improve and standardise the reporting of information on humanitarian conditions has not yet been made. Such an effort is needed if we are to evaluate and improve humanitarian response.

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1 Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions, <http://www.smartindicators.org>.

2 WFP, CDC, *Measuring and Interpreting Malnutrition and Mortality* (Rome: WFP, 2005).

3 Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters: <http://www.cred.be>.

Kenya's displacement crisis

Lucy Hannan, journalist and filmmaker, Voxcom Ltd, Kenya

Kenya's post-election violence in January and February displaced at least 300,000 people. When President Mwai Kibaki made resettlement a priority, after appointing the coalition cabinet in March, a resolution to the crisis seemed to be in sight. No one wanted the displaced camps to become institutionalised. Lessons from the region show that long-term camps are killers – incubating HIV/AIDS, deepening impoverishment and promoting dependency – as well as a political blight on the nation. Better to push for resettlement than leave the displaced vulnerable to rain, disease and political manipulation.

However, instead of seizing the political initiative and properly resettling the displaced, Operation Return Home – *Rudi Nyumbani* – was in fact a good example of why uneasy fears about post-crisis Kenya should be taken very seriously. In its haste to empty the camps, the government failed to first establish a reconciliation process between hostile communities, and instead sent people home with no adequate safety net in place on the ground.

The politics of displacement

The Grand Coalition – an agreement which saved Kenya from all-out conflict when it was established on 28

February – is effectively based on ethnic representation, but is an imperfect compromise. The issue of the displaced immediately became a source of political division. Displacement during the conflict is almost exclusively associated with Kikuyu populations, the ethnic majority, even though other ethnic and economic groups have suffered. Displacement in the Nairobi slums and among migrant workers from Western Kenya has not yet been addressed – and is unlikely to be addressed soon, because the repercussions of ethnic conflict in the capital and balkanisation in Western Kenya will require long-term economic and political solutions. These displaced groups have never really been acknowledged by Kibaki; humanitarian workers and mediation actors say that the president's obsession with resettlement has, from the start, focused on his own Kikuyu community. Issues of resettlement – or return to historically disputed land – have been concentrated in the Rift Valley. Raila Odinga, now prime minister, and his Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), have fallen silent as far as displaced non-Kikuyu groups are concerned – even though they constitute the ODM's support base. This 'invisible displacement' bodes ill for Kenya. Affected migrant and slum populations are the poorest of the poor and, disenfranchised and



Eldoret IDP camp, April 2008

dispossessed, among the most likely to turn to violence again in their frustration.

Local and international aid workers have emphasised that the 300,000 displaced during the post-election crisis did not constitute a humanitarian disaster – the situation was adequately handled by the local Kenya Red Cross society as lead agency without major international intervention – but there could be one if no political solution is found, or at least genuinely attempted. Conflict and displacement has always been an issue around every Kenyan election in flashpoints like the Rift Valley – it was only the magnitude of the violence this time that was unexpected. The primary humanitarian challenges during the crisis were insecurity, access and the problems posed by multiple displaced sites, rather than the enormity of need. The major issue now is political resolution and the security of resettlement – meaning a government commitment to community reconciliation, resolving historical land issues and addressing criminal and political justice.

the repercussions of ethnic conflict in the capital and balkanisation in Western Kenya will require long-term economic and political solutions

The politics of resettlement

Since its launch in May, *Rudi Nyumbani* has been carried out more like a security operation than a resettlement strategy. It was executed immediately, on announcement, through the President's Office, with trucks turning up at the camps the following day with armed guards. The displaced were promised protection, building materials and basic

assistance. Some humanitarian agencies, among them Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), complained of 'forced resettlement', with the security forces going from tent to tent and compelling people to get on trucks against their will. More typical, though, are people dismantling their tents and moving off on the basis of empty promises, or because they feel they have no choice in the matter.

Humanitarian agencies, while reiterating the principle of voluntary resettlement, are trying to provide continued support for the displaced. In some of the worst-affected places, like North Rift and Molo, displaced people, without any food or basic supplies, have optimistically pitched their tents next to their charred and destroyed homes. There is little confidence that the security forces

will be able to protect them – despite much being made by the government of 40 newly built police posts. Again, numbers are not the issue. Without a political solution to the underlying causes of the crisis, the security forces will not be able to provide protection. There has been no attempt by the government to face up to the failure to provide protection during the crisis – or to examine the political and ethnic divisions that continue to undermine the security forces. It is a common lament among the displaced that the police either took no action or actively participated in the post-election violence – the ultimate civilian disillusionment with a force that has always been perceived as corrupt, weak and brutal. Even the much-heralded professionalism of the Kenyan army has been called into question this year, with the military facing accusations of torture in a counter-insurgency operation in Mount Elgon, launched just after the post-election violence receded in March.

So far, the reception offered by host communities has varied. In a few heart-warming cases, people who had attacked their neighbours with machetes and paraffin came to meet the displaced and welcome them home. Others, however, have simply refused to allow the displaced back. Many of those coming from the camps – still traumatised by the violence they experienced – can only hope that the silence that greets their arrival constitutes acceptance. This is not always the case. When the first truckload of hopeful returnees left Nakuru Showground Camp for Timborora in the Rift Valley they turned round and came back the same day. The camp manager explained that there was 'an issue' – the local Kalenjin community sent a message to the displaced that they were not welcome. Movement fluctuation and unease mean numbers are unclear, and we do not know how many have really been returned under *Rudi Nyumbani*. Some have chosen to remain in the camps. Some went back to their homes, then returned to the camps. Others are becoming increasingly impatient as they wait in

destitution for the government to follow through on promises of compensation, building materials and food. A second round of *Rudi Nyumbani* in August was meant to compel anyone remaining in camps to return home. Many of the displaced are under the impression that this is their 'last chance' to be transported home, even though no significant reconciliation efforts have been made to date.

we do not know how many have really been returned under *Rudi Nyumbani*

There are other serious practical obstacles to resettlement. During the conflict, there was massive theft as well as destruction and reclamation. Businesses were looted and thousands of maize bags seized, along with farm tools, stocks and agricultural inputs. Some families have returned to find cattle being grazed on their crops. It is generally acknowledged that an entire planting season has been missed in some of Kenya's most productive

areas, and there is no predicting the impact of this resettlement exercise on the rest of the farming year.

Reconciliation talks between communities have so far mainly depended on individual initiatives, of the local administration and elders, encouraged by humanitarian workers in the camps. Community reconciliation and justice for the displaced has not been given any obvious priority by the cumbersome, bickering Grand Coalition. Calls for an amnesty for post-election crimes to encourage receptive and constructive relations between communities have only demonstrated the absence of a policy. Simply put, the political class shows no genuine intention of addressing the causes of Kenya's greatest crisis since independence, and is focusing instead on the leadership battle in 2012. Kenya, it seems, is heading at an extraordinary pace back to square one: with the dangerous evasion of basic justice and accountability; the breathtaking opportunism, corruption and disengagement of the political class, across party lines; and the demise of the security forces, from the local policeman to the professional soldier. The displaced and the resettled alike are now squarely back on the frontline of Kenya's unresolved conflict.

Security for humanitarian organisations in the Kenya crisis

Nik Bredholt and Steve Penny, IAWG

This article reflects on experiences in Kenya following the eruption of violence there in the wake of presidential elections on 27 December 2007. The crisis continued for two months until the announcement of an agreement between the two main political parties. However, insecurity persists, arising either directly or indirectly from the initial political crisis. Generally, the post-election crisis was fuelled by 'old' grievances that long predate the election, and will not be solved quickly.

The learning points presented here are based on the experiences of the Interagency Working Group (IAWG) Security Subgroup. The group, which was active throughout the crisis, comprises dedicated security officers and more general project staff from a number of international and local NGOs, the Red Cross Movement and representatives of the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS). The IAWG is an innovative structure in the NGO world, bringing together NGOs and UN agencies to work collaboratively to strengthen disaster preparedness in East and Central Africa. Although the IAWG has a regional remit, the Security Subgroup has limited its work to Kenya.

Background

The Security Subgroup started working on a template for a security contingency plan related to possible election violence in November 2007. This work was completed by the beginning of December, when the situation was still peaceful. The plan focused on expatriate staff with regard to relocation, hibernation and evacuation, but considered

all staff (national and international) in terms of overall planning. The group started meeting in early January 2008, immediately after the crisis began. In the very tense days that followed meetings were held at least once a week and sometimes more. Some meetings had to take place in cafes or private houses as offices were closed and travel through certain parts of Nairobi was unwise. The following learning points and challenges emerged from this experience.

most security plans are written with expatriate staff in mind

National staff are more vulnerable than expatriates

Most security plans are written with expatriate staff in mind. The security of national staff is very much a secondary consideration, and yet national staff were the very people most in danger in this crisis. Agencies in the Security Subgroup presented their approaches to issues such as temporary shelter arrangements and extra allowances for national staff, relocation plans and extra time off to accommodate family needs arising from insecurity. This served to establish a common view so that the different agencies took the same line on these delicate matters.

Many agencies preferred to conduct field operations using expatriate rather than national staff, as *musungos* (Kiswahili for ‘whites’) would not be perceived as implicated in the ethnic conflict that was such an important element of the violence, and would generally be less vulnerable to harassment. Depending on their community of origin, national staff already in the field when the violence broke out either remained in place or were relocated.

Hope for the best – prepare for the worst

By setting up a template for an evacuation plan from Kenya to another country, for instance Tanzania, and a policy document for relocation, the group was able to provide all interested agencies with at least a minimum level of preparation. This was particularly important for smaller agencies that did not have dedicated security staff, as they could use the templates to make basic security preparations.

Whilst evacuation seemed an unlikely prospect in November, as the crisis escalated it soon became a very real possibility: some agencies evacuated non-essential staff and dependants, and the preparation of evacuation plans was a sensible and necessary provision. Although the security template prepared before the crisis identified what subsequently unfolded as the worst-case scenario, the impact of the crisis was more serious than expected. Agencies when writing contingency plans rarely act on the worst-worst case scenario.

Establish indicators and keep monitoring them

While drawing up a template for evacuation, it became clear that the group would need to establish and monitor indicators to create a basis on which to take informed, objective decisions. Colour-coded security levels of green, yellow and red were adopted, with the group agreeing on specific indicators that would suggest that the situation was changing from one category to another. Indicators included riots, political and social breakdown, regular and widespread armed conflict, increased checkpoints and security force operations, heightened tension throughout the country and in towns, civilian transport considerably reduced due to security concerns and international staff members restricted to major towns without clearance to move to the field. This was useful for NGOs based in Kenya, as the UNDSS security levels were not uniformly followed by NGOs before the crisis. Obviously, many agencies have their own sets of indicators, but in situations such as this it would make sense if a standardised set of security levels and indicators were used, to avoid confusion.



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During the crisis, it was often safer to fly than to drive

Involve UNDSS and local Kenyans

Soon after the crisis hit, the UN established cluster coordination for all major sectors. However, there is no cluster for security and it is unlikely that one will be established. Nonetheless, it is advisable to establish a strong relationship between non-UN agencies and UNDSS, ideally prior to any crisis arising. A senior UNDSS official made themselves available for many of the subgroup meetings, providing updates, analysis and advice. This input was extremely helpful. A small but not insignificant success was that, by the end of February, UNDSS had decided to share its sitreps with NGOs, via a list of those agencies that were well-established in Kenya and had been present at the subgroup’s meetings.

The Security Subgroup contained both Kenyan nationals and expatriates. The Kenyans were able to provide much deeper contextual analysis and historical background explaining the crisis in terms of politics, economics and ethnic rivalry, subtleties which expatriate members would not otherwise have fully comprehended.

Setting up an SMS network takes time

The subgroup worked on an SMS system, whereby breaking news could be distributed quickly and efficiently through short messages via the mobile telephone network. While there was agreement about the usefulness of such a system very early on, it took a long time to set it up and get the hardware to work. The system had to be hosted (the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) eventually volunteered), and adequate hardware and software bought and installed. The system was only tested at the end of February, by which time the situation had started to improve. Any such system in the future should have clear standard operating procedures (SOPs) and, information often being sensitive, it should be made available only to a known, defined group of members.

Information-sharing is difficult in a volatile environment

Sharing information about incidents such as attacks on staff and damage to agency offices and vehicles requires a certain level of trust, and establishing this can be a huge challenge when participants keep changing. No two meetings had the same composition. In the end, the group decided that information could be shared between known agencies and in particular a pre-established list of names which would not change from meeting to meeting.

establishing trust can be a huge challenge when participants keep changing

Security in the field varies significantly

The security situation in field locations varied greatly: some provinces were severely affected by violence, while others were not. In some locations, good coordination mechanisms were established, where security issues were discussed and common approaches agreed. One example of this was in western Kenya, where agencies engaged local youth groups to promote peace-building. Elsewhere, however, there was little inter-agency collaboration, and repeated calls to establish the UN cluster mechanism at provincial level were heeded too late or not at all. Agency personnel were often exposed to extreme threats when travelling to distribution sites, especially when aid organisations were seen to be assisting internally displaced people of different origin than the host community. Agencies had to resort to air evacuation of their staff on a number of occasions.

Nairobi: a huge expatriate community

Security contingency plans are often designed for small, contained field locations, for instance where a small team

lives together in a compound. Nairobi, however, presents very different challenges. Many agencies have a huge presence, with regional offices and support offices for Somalia and Sudan, and many staff dispersed across the city. The large slums, estates and residential areas spread all over the city mean that Nairobi does not lend itself to easy evacuation route planning. This presents unique challenges in terms of hibernation and evacuation planning, reinforcing the need for adequate plans and preparations *prior to any crisis*. These plans should not only cover Nairobi and the suburbs, but also the operational environment in Kenya as a whole.

Conclusions

Each crisis is unique, and there will always be shortcomings as we cannot plan for all eventualities. However, it is important that at the least minimal plans and guidelines are prepared in advance, including security indicators, evacuation and hibernation plans and clearly established methods of communication. Such plans should be communicated to and understood by all relevant staff. In fact, while many agencies in 'Nairobbery' had plans in place to deal with criminality and terrorist attacks, few had thought about election violence as Kenya, unlike other countries in the region, was generally regarded as politically stable.

Careful attention should be paid to the different risks to national as opposed to expatriate staff. The risks to nationals should not be underestimated and agencies should provide a forum for national staff to express their concerns. Individual agencies should also clearly understand their contractual obligations to staff on different (national, international, consulting) contracts.

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Mobile phone-based cash transfers: lessons from the Kenya emergency response

Dipankar Datta, Anne Ejakait and Monica Odak, Concern Worldwide – Kenya Programme

Kenya is the first country in the world to use mobile phones for cash transfers. The service, called M-PESA, was developed by Safaricom Limited. Concern Worldwide pioneered the use of M-PESA for bulk cash transfers during the post-election emergency in early 2008 in the Kerio Valley, one of the remotest parts of Kenya. During the violence, cattle rustlers attacked communities in the Kerio Valley, looting their livestock and displacing them. Concern's initial response was to provide food aid, but carrying and distributing food proved very costly and insecure. Cash transfers were seen as a way of overcoming

the challenges posed by the terrain and the security situation. In all, 570 households were targeted with cash transfers. A total of €36,000 (about \$53,000 or 3,600,000 Kenya Shillings) was disbursed in two instalments.

An overview of M-PESA

The M-PESA service does not require users to have bank accounts. All they need to do is register at an authorised M-PESA agent by providing their Safaricom mobile number and their identification card. Once registered, the user can buy digital funds at any M-PESA agent and send that

electronic cash to any other mobile phone user in Kenya by SMS. Recipients can either redeem this for conventional cash at M-PESA agent outlets or buy Safaricom airtime for themselves and other subscribers. An M-PESA-enabled mobile phone can also function as an electronic wallet, holding up to €500 (50,000 Kenyan shillings).

The first step involved developing a customised system allowing for bulk transfers to hundreds of beneficiaries simultaneously. Safaricom set up Concern as a corporate user of M-PESA. Concern's computers were enabled to access M-PESA's administrative website, from which the disbursement was done. Money for disbursement was deposited into Concern's M-PESA account, including service charges. Next, the list of beneficiaries, amount due and their mobile phone numbers were entered into a database that could be uploaded into the M-PESA system. Safaricom staff trained Concern on using the M-PESA system for bulk payment and to generate relevant reports.

Targeting

The emergency response team of Concern and its partner, the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret, conducted a number of sensitisation meetings to establish women as beneficiaries of the project. The team also discussed the nature of the intervention, targeting, timeframe and resource allocation. Sensitisation meetings were conducted with the help of the local administration and religious leaders. In association with community volunteers, the team also conducted household assessments to verify the number of people in each household and how the household was affected by the crisis; possession of national identification cards and numbers; and household access to mobile phones and numbers. Further verification and targeting exercises were conducted in public community meetings to ensure that the most vulnerable people and households were included.

Kenya is the first country in the world to use mobile phones for cash transfers

Registration and cash transfers through M-PESA

Registration was a painstaking process, presenting the team with a number of challenges. Although women were targeted as recipients of the cash transfer, most lacked identification



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A beneficiary using a mobile phone

documents, which are a key requirement for receiving cash at M-PESA centres. Second, M-PESA runs on an SMS platform, meaning that users need to be literate, but a large number of beneficiaries could not read or write. Lastly, about 60% of the targeted beneficiaries did not have access to mobile phones.

To overcome these problems, targeted households were clustered into groups of ten or less, and one literate person was nominated as cluster leader. Beneficiaries without identification documents nominated a trustworthy adult member of the household to receive cash on their behalf, with the close monitoring of the cluster leader. Where no cluster member had access to a mobile phone, cluster leaders were provided with one, along with a solar charger, and trained on how to use the equipment. It was made clear to cluster leaders that they would not individually own the phones, and could not sell them or charge cluster members a fee to use them. Although the equipment was shared by all cluster members, each beneficiary received his or her own SIM card to register for M-PESA, to reduce the risk of cash transfers falling into the wrong hands.

The standard procedure is for people to go to an M-PESA agent with their identification documents to register and withdraw money. In Kerio Valley, the nearest M-PESA agent was 80km away from the target area. Travel costs were prohibitive, and security risks high. A remote M-PESA service was accordingly established at the Kinyach Police Station in Kerio Valley. Kinyach is a secure, central market for all the targeted communities. The Safaricom agent was dispatched there during market days, giving beneficiaries easy access to the cash and allowing them to use it

immediately to buy their food. It was estimated that households had a food deficit of about 50%, so the size of the cash transfer was calculated to cover this. Based on local market conditions, it was calculated that each person needed €3.20 every two weeks to enable households to meet 100% of their food needs – half with the cash transfer, the other half with food from other sources. The transfer, equivalent to two weeks' food ration for every household, was calculated based on the number of members in each household multiplied by €3.20.

Cost-benefit analysis of the M-PESA-based cash transfer

Analysis shows that the M-PESA-based cash transfers were secure, enabled a quick emergency response, were cost-effective, respected people's choices and empowered communities.

1. Direct costs

The cost of transporting and distributing emergency food from Eldoret to the Kerio Valley (relief food for 100 families for two weeks) was €350 or 18.5% of the cost of the food (€1,900). A cash transfer of a similar amount to 100 households cost €55, mainly in Safaricom transaction charges. In addition, six out of every ten household clusters received a mobile phone and a solar charger, i.e. six phones and chargers per 100 beneficiaries, which cost €250. The transaction and equipment costs came to €305, or 16% of the €1,900 assistance package. While this is lower than the food distribution costs it should be noted that providing the equipment was a one-off cost, as opposed to the food distribution costs which recur with each distribution.

2. The recipients and the local market

A market assessment in Kerio Valley revealed that sufficient food was available on the market, and that prices of basic items like maize and beans were half those in Eldoret town. This meant that the cash transfer gave targeted households access to a wider range of commodities at a lower cost. The injection of cash also strengthened the local economy.

the cash transfers were secure, enabled a quick emergency response, were cost-effective, respected people's choices and empowered communities

3. The role of information technology in empowering the poor

Every beneficiary received a SIM card and a shared mobile handset with solar charger. The ability of mobile phones to send SMS expands the range of cheap communication available to the poor. This isolated community now knows how to receive remittances by using M-PESA. Communities also see advantages in using their mobile phones to

develop early warning and security alarm systems to prevent cattle-rustling. Women also see income-generating opportunities by offering informal payphone services to other members of the community.

4. NGO-private sector partnership

The private sector has a unique ability to enhance the effectiveness of emergency response. Although Safaricom waived none of the M-PESA transaction charges for cash transfers, it brought its talent and technology to bear in the partnership by developing a customised version of M-PESA for bulk transfers. Safaricom also provided support in training the community on the use of M-PESA and mobilising the M-PESA agent in the target area.

5. Might alternative delivery mechanisms have been simpler?

Concern had three options: continuing direct food distributions, implementing a food voucher scheme and cash transfers. We have already seen that food distribution was not the best option for Concern. A voucher scheme was not a viable option in the absence of any local partner organisation to set up and run it at the local level. In addition, a large number of beneficiaries were displaced and living in temporary camps, making it difficult to establish a voucher scheme because people were expected to move back to their original settlements as the security situation improved. For a voucher scheme to run effectively it requires a formal agreement between a local organisation and established businesses, mainly shops. This was not possible since the main food items purchased were bought from open markets, which are normally too fluid to allow such arrangements. Finally, direct cash distribution was not viable: security risks for staff and beneficiaries were too high, and Concern would have incurred high personnel costs during every round, just as in a food distribution. With M-PESA, neither Concern nor Safaricom staff members needed to maintain a long-term presence in the area after beneficiaries had been registered.

Lessons learned and common concerns

Some of the key concerns over cash transfers include: cash is difficult to target because everyone wants money; a cash injection may cause inflation and may increase security risks; women may not have control over the income; and it may be spent on the wrong things. However, field experience shows that many of these perceived risks and fears are not borne out in practice.

Taking into account people's natural attraction to cash, a deliberate decision was made to conceal the nature of the assistance until beneficiary identification was complete. Targeting women for the assistance generated some resistance from the men, but the sensitisation meetings helped people to understand why women were being targeted and to motivate the community. Once the cash transfer was completed, Concern's emergency team conducted a number of focused group discussions and interviews with beneficiaries and the wider community to assess the impact of the cash transfer. Concern also engaged an external evaluator. Neither the emergency

response team nor the evaluator registered any gender-related incidents either at the household or community level. There was no evidence that men had taken any money from the women or used it inappropriately.

The direct observation and evaluation findings show that more than 95% of families spent most of the money received on basic foodstuffs. Some beneficiaries bought meat or chicken in addition to basic food. A few families used a large portion of the money to pay school fees and buy school uniforms for their children. The families who saved some livestock from the raid spent a large chunk of the cash on medicine to treat their animals. A few families also tried to revitalise their businesses by restocking goats, starting mobile phone airtime businesses or setting up shops.

A number of households mentioned that the cash was not enough to buy food for two weeks. Some households that had moved away from the target area to escape the violence were not included. Beneficiaries explained that they shared their food or cash not only with these returnees but also with neighbours, friends and relatives, using up the cash within the first week. Culturally, the community does not believe in food rationing, but rather eats large meals when food is available.

A number of beneficiaries complained about an increase in the price of goods after the first round of cash transfers. A market survey and interviews with community members indicated that food commodities such as maize and beans had increased in price by an average of 25%. Community members and some traders explained that the rises were due to the impact of the post-election violence. Price inflation was common all over Kenya during this period. Given the size of the cash injection it is unlikely that it could have caused the levels of inflation witnessed, though it may have been a contributory factor.

Concluding remarks

The overall success of this pilot project offers opportunities to scale-up. However, the following issues need to be considered:

- The beneficiary database needs to be improved to detect errors relating to mobile phone numbers and national identification numbers. The capacity of M-

PESA to cope with bulk transfers in the scale-up programme needs to be strengthened.

- Mobile phones are not robust enough to cope with frequent changes of SIM card. The ratio of mobiles to families will have to be increased. The best option for a long-term cash transfer project is to ensure that the targeted households have mobile phones and M-PESA-compliant SIM cards. However, literacy levels need to be taken into account.
- The second transfer round was expected to be easy. Unfortunately, 20 of the 570 beneficiaries lost their SIM cards. Concern had to recall the money and then do the transfer again once those who had lost their cards received replacements. A quick mechanism to deal with lost SIM cards needs to be developed.

Having successfully implemented this project in one of the remotest parts of Kenya, it can be concluded that it is possible to do similar work anywhere in the country as long as the area has a mobile phone network. The challenges of implementing this project in urban environments or in developed rural areas will be less significant, as more people in these kinds of areas are educated and have access to mobile phones. Although Concern used M-PESA in an emergency, this model could be replicated in development contexts for a variety of social protection activities. The project was also a valuable learning experience for Safaricom. The company was made familiar with the needs of communities in Kerio Valley, and given an opportunity to test new ways in which M-PESA could be used. This experience remains an asset in the future development of the M-PESA cash transfer system, and has shown the product's potential.

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The World Bank's experience with cash support in some recent natural disasters

Rasmus Heltberg, World Bank

Compared to the famine-inducing disasters of earlier periods, South Asia has progressed in its ability to cope with disaster. Although several major natural disasters have hit the region in recent years – the tsunami, the Kashmir earthquake, floods and cyclones in Bangladesh – it has not experienced a famine for decades. Thanks to

better disaster responses in the region, large natural disasters no longer trigger massive food insecurity and high post-disaster mortality.

This article looks at the role of cash support in the wake of natural disasters, drawing out lessons from the World

Bank's use of large-scale cash support in South Asia and Turkey. In the past, the World Bank often focused on reconstruction and long-term development, leaving humanitarian relief to others. But starting with the earthquake in Turkey in 1999 and continuing through the South Asian disasters of 2004 and 2005, cash support to affected households has played a growing role in the Bank's disaster response. This article reviews some of the lessons from Bank-supported large-scale cash support.

Cash support has performed well. Large-scale cash income support directly to affected households complements other relief and reconstruction efforts and seems to have had positive impacts on short-term food security and long-term recovery. To perform even better in future disasters, donors should consider building up their own capacity and that of implementing agencies to deliver timely and high-quality cash support.

Why income support?

The purpose of cash transfers and other social protection instruments, when used in disasters, is to protect the basic consumption of the affected population and to help preserve and recover assets and human capital. They are a basic safety net in times of critical need, when community support mechanisms are exhausted. The support aims to prevent famines and food insecurity, speed up the recovery of assets and livelihoods and protect a population's schooling and health status after a disaster. All of this will prevent poverty from deepening.

Income support complements other types of post-disaster efforts, such as housing and infrastructure reconstruction. This complementarity became clear to the Bank in Gujarat: 'earthquake victims' need for cash assistance became apparent to the Bank in an indirect way following the 2001 earthquake. Families were using the first installment of house construction funding to purchase food and other necessities to survive, rather than using it toward the construction. As a result, when it became time to issue the second installment, many of the families did not have the first phase of the house to show in order to receive the second installment¹.

Cash or food?

Cash remains underutilised in humanitarian relief, although there is growing evidence of its efficacy.² The World Food Programme, for example, has embraced cash and voucher-based safety nets in its Strategic Plan for 2008–2011. Cash confers dignity and choice and tends to have lower transaction costs and higher value to beneficiaries than in-kind support. Cash is best delivered through cash transfers or workfare. Cash support must be timely, temporary, not too large and distributed in communities of regular residence, and it must end as

livelihoods bounce back. Cash support is inappropriate where food markets are weak or non-existent.

Success requires careful attention to the details of design and implementation: how will support be targeted and distributed, to whom, how much and for how long? Success also requires speedy deployment. Therefore, there are clear advantages on speed and efficiency grounds of drawing up plans for disaster response and helping to build implementation capacity *before* disaster strikes.

Income support in South Asia and Turkey

Many agencies help countries respond to large disasters. The role of the World Bank in disasters has often been as lead donor, trusted advisor and coordinator of reconstruction and long-term development, but not relief. Since 1984, the Bank has financed natural disaster activities in 528 projects, worth \$26 billion, constituting some 10% of total global Bank lending in the last two decades. India and Bangladesh alone had 71 disaster projects from 1984 to 2005. Government agencies implement most of these projects and fund them through a combination of new loans and grants and reallocations from existing loans.

Bank support in major disasters generally comprises a multi-sectoral mix of interventions, such as budget support, emergency preparedness and rehabilitation and reconstruction of schools, housing, infrastructure, agriculture, forestry and health facilities. The World Bank assisted in the deployment of income support as part of its response to disasters in Turkey (1999), Sri Lanka (2004), the Maldives (2004) and Pakistan (2005).

While many different agencies have experience with post-disaster cash transfers, the uniqueness of the World Bank's recent experience is the scale of the transfers. The marriage of government implementation channels and Bank support (mostly financial, but also some technical assistance) allowed cash grants to be offered on an unprecedented scale. In the Maldives, all affected households (one-fifth of the population) received tsunami cash assistance, most of them within one month. In Sri Lanka, cash grants were given to some 250,000 households (in the first round), covering all of the affected households and even some that were not directly affected (later tranches were therefore targeted more narrowly). In Pakistan, Bank-supported cash grants were given to 250,000 households, approximately 30% of all those affected. Key design details are summarised in Table 1.

The variation in the basic design of post-disaster cash support across countries shown in Table 1 is remarkable. It is particularly surprising that the amounts offered to affected households varied widely. Pakistan, after the Kashmir earthquake, provided the most generous support, especially when compared to GDP. In Pakistan, affected households received between \$300 and \$2,000, the equivalent of 7–48% of per capita GDP per member. It seems unlikely that Pakistan would be able or willing to finance transfers of this magnitude in future disasters. The comparable amounts per person are 3–9% of per capita GDP in Turkey, 3% in Sri Lanka and 1.5–4.5% in the Maldives. These amounts are in all cases substantially

1 Independent Evaluation Group (IEG), *Hazards of Nature, Risks to Development*, 2005, p. 152. See also Renos Vakis, *Complementing Natural Disasters Management: The Role of Social Protection*, SP Discussion Paper 543, World Bank, 2006.

2 Paul Harvey, 'Editorial: Mini Special Issue on Cash Transfers', *Disasters*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2006, pp. 273–76. See also Paul Harvey, *Cash-based Responses in Emergencies*, HPG Report 24 (London: ODI, 2007).

Table 1: Income support following major disasters in the Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Turkey

| | Post-disaster income support, approximate (\$ total for a family of six, excluding housing support) | Post-disaster income support (per person, in % of GDP per capita per year) | Eligibility criteria | Disbursement mechanism |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| Maldives: house flooded, lost belongings | 234 | 1.5 | House damaged by wave | Cash delivered by task teams |
| Maldives: house damaged | 469 | 3.0 | | |
| Maldives: house lost | 703 | 4.5 | | |
| Pakistan: no deaths in household | 300 (livelihood grants) | 7.2 | House damaged and household vulnerable* | Livelihood grants: banks; Death/injury compensation: cash delivered by army teams |
| Pakistan: serious injury/amputee | 1,133 (injury compensation and livelihood grants) | 27.4 | As above, and any member seriously injured | |
| Pakistan: one or more deaths | 2,000 (death compensation and livelihood grants) | 48.3 | As above, and any member dead | |
| Sri Lanka | 200 (if qualified for all four rounds of cash grants) | 2.9 | 1st round: broadly affected Later rounds: affected and no regular income‡ | Bank accounts |
| Turkey: 2nd-degree disability | 653 | 3.4 | Disability resulting from earthquake | Bank accounts |
| Turkey: 1st-degree disability | 1,088 | 5.7 | | |
| Turkey: death in household | 1,632 | 8.6 | Death resulting from earthquake | |

Note: This table excludes support distributed by NGOs in kind or cash to affected households

* The vulnerability criteria selected households with no senior government employee that were headed by unmarried women, contained a disabled member or contained five or more children.

‡ It appears that local officials had considerable discretion in determining eligibility and criteria may have varied between areas.

higher than the benefits provided to regular social assistance beneficiaries in these countries (typically the chronically poor).

There is limited evidence of the impact of this income support. The most detailed is from the Maldives, where a survey carried out six months after the tsunami showed that the support was adequate, well-targeted and helped people to cope and recover. Targeting appears to have been good and few eligible households, if any, were missed. The cash grants infused purchasing power into affected islands and helped to revive retail trade. Incidences of food shortage fell rapidly after peaking one week after the tsunami. Six months afterwards, household income was higher than it had been before the disaster.

From Pakistan, there are anecdotal reports that the government's decision to pay compensation for death may have led to inflated casualty figures: verification of claims for death compensation proved difficult as the dead had often been buried without vital registration.

There is little solid evidence on the extent of corruption. In Sri Lanka, reports found mistargeting (inclusion of unaffected households) but not corruption. Nevertheless,

risks are large. Many studies of South Asia's safety nets – albeit from non-disaster settings – have pointed to leakages. Most reported problems arise with workfare and in-kind transfers, such as India's subsidised food grain programme. There are fewer reports of mistargeting and leakages of cash transfers, probably because they are simpler to implement.

Implementation arrangements are critical and a particular challenge is to combine speed and quality in the delivery of assistance. It proved difficult to align technical assistance for design and implementation with the desire to roll out cash transfers swiftly. Some governments went ahead with disbursing cash transfers without waiting for technical assistance: Pakistan (death/disability grants), Sri Lanka (cash grants) and the Maldives (cash transfers) all started without external technical assistance, while Pakistan's livelihood grants benefited from technical assistance but were paid out somewhat later. As a consequence, monitoring arrangements were often simple, with little or no data collection, sometimes hampering ex-post verification and audits.

Lessons learned

The main lesson that emerges from these experiences is that speed is of the essence: if donors are slow, governments will

design and implement programmes on their own. Some further tentative lessons are listed below.

Cash preference: Income support should be in cash unless there is evidence that food markets are disrupted. In rapid-onset disasters, food and other in-kind support can be useful if the disaster has disrupted markets. However, in-kind support should subsequently be converted into cash support except where food markets remain interrupted. In slow-onset disasters (with the possible exception of conflicts) food markets are more likely to function and the case for cash is therefore stronger.

Duration and target group: Cash support should be provided only for a limited period for most households, but could be stretched into the medium term for the most vulnerable. In small-to-medium emergencies, the best approach may be to provide an initial fairly large transfer to all those affected, followed by a second, smaller transfer (perhaps after three months). Later transfers should be targeted to vulnerable households. In very large emergencies, household targeting within affected areas may be required for all transfers. For the most vulnerable groups (such as orphans and disabled people), additional social services are also required.

Benefit levels: The amount of support should be adequate for subsistence but not so high as to jeopardise work incentives or cause inflation. Larger amounts should be given only as one-off compensation, for example triggered by the loss of a house.

Eligibility: Eligibility criteria would ideally be predefined, transparent, easy to explain and simple to administer. Criteria could emphasise loss of house or other assets for immediate support (but without discriminating against renters), shifting to poverty criteria and possibly even a proxy means test for medium-term support.

Delivery agency: Income support would ideally be coordinated and delivered by one or more of the regular safety net or social security programmes with experience in handling cash transfers. Given the logistical challenges in large emergencies, support from others such as army staff or local governments will probably be needed.

Delivery channel: For rapid support to people who do not have bank accounts, cash-in-hand may be used to avoid the delays of opening bank accounts. Cash is also often the best way to pay workfare participants. For medium-term support, bank or post office accounts should be used. In the future, transfers via mobile phones may become more common.

Systems are needed: Systems for targeting, implementation and monitoring and evaluation should be prepared in advance.

Conclusions

Large-scale cash support has been an important and effective part of the response in several recent major disasters. As cash transfers will continue to be needed, it makes sense to improve their design and seek to make them swifter, more equitable and more consistent. Affected countries and donors should work this into their disaster preparedness plans. Ex-ante planning should answer the core design questions: in what form, amount and duration should income support be offered? which households should be eligible for support and how can they be targeted? which agency is responsible for delivery? Implementing agencies should start building the necessary response capacity. These steps would help the international humanitarian community to respond better and faster to the next emergency.

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Measuring the effectiveness of Supplementary Feeding Programmes in emergencies

Carlos Navarro-Colorado, Frances Mason and Jeremy Shoham
Network Paper 63
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Emergency Supplementary Feeding Programmes have been widely implemented for a number of decades as part of the standard toolkit of emergency response. Programmes are normally implemented in conjunction with general food distributions in order to address moderate malnutrition in emergencies.

While individual implementing agencies routinely monitor and evaluate programme performance, findings are rarely published in peer-reviewed literature. There have been no large-scale studies of the effectiveness of these programmes in emergencies, despite frequent claims of poor performance.

This Network Paper reports on a study to determine the efficacy and effectiveness of emergency SFPs, conducted in 2005–2006 by Save the Children UK and the Emergency Nutrition Network. The paper begins with a short summary of the study, explaining its rationale, scope and methodology, and setting out the key characteristics of the emergency SFP interventions it investigated. The paper then explores in depth the main findings of the study as they relate to impact at individual and population level. Finally, the paper sets out the main conclusions arising from the research, and discusses some of the implications for emergency Supplementary Feeding Programmes.

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