Somali capacities to respond to crisis are changing; how are humanitarian actors responding?

Somali capacities to respond to crisis are changing; how are humanitarian actors responding?

October 2023

Humanitarian Outcomes

Centre for Humanitarian Change | What Works

United Kingdom Humanitarian Innovation Hub

www.humanitarianoutcomes.org
www.aidworkersecurity.org

info@ukhih.org

Summary

Somalia's most recent humanitarian crisis (2022–23) was severe, with an unprecedented series of failed rainy seasons leading to widespread suffering and significant excess mortality.[1] The drivers of the near-famine – drought, conflict, and fragile governance – were largely similar to previous crises in 2011 and 2017; but Somali society is much changed, and the crisis was less devastating than initially feared. Although the humanitarian response started slowly, it grew in scale, with humanitarian aid contributions reaching over US$2.2 billion in 2022 and played an important role in addressing humanitarian needs. But the international response was only part of the story. Somali capacities to respond to crisis were also vital – and yet they remain poorly understood. Somalia is often seen from the outside as a failed state, home of terrorists and pirates, chronically corrupt, and prone to famine and crisis. But in the decade since the 2011 famine, Somali capacities to respond to crisis have grown, and international aid needs to support those capacities more effectively.

This review, which encompassed 118 interviews with local and international aid actors, government, business people, and academics as well as Somali citizens from different backgrounds – and together with a phone survey with 760 respondents – focused on the resilience capacities of the country's citizens and systems, and how the humanitarian system has engaged with these. The review is not intended to be an evaluation of the 2022–23 humanitarian response. Rather, it attempts to offer a forward-looking perspective on how humanitarian aid might better engage with the changing Somali context to do better and cause less harm in the face of accelerating climate change and ongoing conflict.

The review's key findings are as follows.

Aid actors in Somalia began to work in more integrated ways across development, humanitarian, peace- and state-building, but still lack a vision of their role in a long-term and complex crisis.

The aid response in 2022–23 made some successful adaptions to better engage with Somali capacities. However, after years of continuous humanitarian funding being sustained at or near

US$1 billion a year, many changes in the approach to delivering humanitarian aid in the most recent crisis only seem to have happened as the response started to scale up. This resulted in delays, hurried implementation, and sometimes inappropriate interventions.

An important development in the 2022–23 crisis was the expanded role of development actors, particularly the World Bank, able to pivot support to respond to the drought. Given that humanitarian aid is likely to be needed for decades to come, a longer-term vision is required to ensure that it helps complement growing state and civil society capacities – and that any risks associated with it, such as the potential to drive marginalisation, are mitigated.

Mobility is a key Somali resilience capacity, which the aid system misunderstands.

A significant reason for avoiding widespread famine conditions appears to be the growing strength and resilience of Somali systems, capacities, and agency. Mobility is an important resilience strategy to maintain and diversify livelihoods and seek out resources. Networks between rural and urban areas are critical in decisions to stay, leave, or return, and are growing in strength, leading to more resilient livelihoods.

---

[1]   Estimated at 43,000, with half of these deaths occurring in children under 5 years of age. Checchi, F. Inferring the impact of humanitarian responses on population mortality: methodological problems and proposals. *Conflct and Health* 17, 16 (2023). https://doi.org/10.1186/s13031-023-00516-x

Populations that move during crisis do so for a complex mix of reasons – but the aid system tends to consider mobility as predominantly a distress strategy of people seeking humanitarian resources. This reductive understanding of mobility and the rigid categorisation of internally displaced people is resulting in inappropriate programming that reinforces corruption and marginalisation and increases vulnerability to future crisis.

Programming adaptations to better support mobility that builds resilient livelihoods can only work if approaches to humanitarian aid, resilience and durable solutions collaborate. Organisations are attempting to adapt and test interventions such as area-based programming and are piloting approaches to channel assistance through social networks rather than to individuals. But without a more concerted effort to engage with the complexity of displacement opportunities for better programming are missed.

There is a pressing need for aid actors to change how mobility and displacement are understood, and for this to lead to a rethinking of the categorisation of internally displaced people (IDPs) and camp-based models of assistance. Put simply, there is a need to shift from a system in which people have to leave home and enter into exploitative relationships in order to access assistance.

Marginalisation and exclusion need greater system-wide attention and emphasis.

The 2022–23 response sharpened focus on the challenges of people being marginalised and excluded from access to aid. Discussions about social and political drivers of exclusion have become less taboo, and some initiatives have been successfully rolled out. For example, adaptations to assessments and targeting to more purposefully include marginalised groups, support to minority-led organisations, attention to minority languages in accountability processes, and efforts to focus on minorities in recruitment. However, the issue is often consigned to the protection cluster, or seen as a development issue, rather than being treated as a system-wide humanitarian priority. The humanitarian aid system is still unwilling to reckon with its own role in driving marginalisation. Aid itself is a driver of marginalisation and that means aid will increase future risk unless it does more to tackle the problem.

International aid remains problematically embedded in a political economy where diversion of aid is systemic and widespread.

Serious concerns about corruption and aid diversion have re-emerged in the lessons arising from the 2022–23 humanitarian response. Reputational risks for aid organisations create a temptation to shift accountability to others, especially Somali institutions and individuals such as gatekeepers. The international community and Somali government need to acknowledge diversion of aid as an ongoing and systemic problem, involving all actors. Without a willingness to accept this, there is a danger that mitigating action will be too simplistic and short-term to make a meaningful difference to such a complex problem. This will require a determination to look hard within international organisations and a sustained, systemic and collaborative approach that involves local, national, and international actors. Without this the aid economy will continue to drive diversion that worsens marginalisation and risks undermining people's resilience to future crises. More effectively tackling diversion is therefore crucial for aid to be less harmful and better able to support resilience to future crises.

Maintaining and extending operational presence in hard-to-reach areas requires sustained commitment to building partnerships.

Many of those most in need are in areas that humanitarian aid finds hard-to-reach, particularly those areas controlled by Al-Shabaab. The socially marginalised are concentrated in these locations, compounding their vulnerability. These hard-to-reach areas also have the highest security and reputational risks for aid actors working in Somalia. Humanitarian actors have struggled to maintain the investments in negotiation capacities, skills and experience needed to operate in in hard-to-reach areas.

However, the 2022–23 response saw a significant push by local and international aid agencies to work in hard-to-reach areas, supported by a slightly increased appetite for risk among some donor governments. An important lesson has been that working through intermediaries in hard-to-reach areas requires time, capacity building and, most crucially, trust. This trust cannot be built in a few short months at the beginning of a crisis and so requires greater efforts to maintain an operational presence in between crises.

Aid agencies need to build on programming approaches that support opportunities for greater mobility in and out of hard-to-reach areas, and to leverage social networks to facilitate mobility strategies.

The humanitarian system needs to adapt its information and analysis tools to effectively adapt to the changing context.

The key humanitarian information systems used for situational analysis – the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU) and Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) analytical frameworks – have changed very little in the last 10 years. Currently very few humanitarian information systems adequately take into account either the ongoing transformations within Somali society or system resilience capacities. For instance, livelihood categories of pastoralism, agropastoralism and agricultural/riverine still dominate humanitarian analysis and do not sufficiently consider livelihood diversification linked to increased urbanisation and urban rural linkages.

Despite some progress, there is not sufficient focus on understanding the severity and magnitude of needs in hard-to-reach areas. And while the 2022–23 response has seen some first steps at adapting and creating systems that monitor marginalisation and incorporate the evidence into wider humanitarian analysis, this is still lacking across the information ecosystem.

The aid response must reckon with a period of volatility in violence and conflict, which is likely to persist for some time.

There has been a marked escalation in levels of conflict which has important implications for the aid response. The mobilisation of clan-based militias and the retreat of Al-Shabaab from some areas has led to the resurgence of clan-based conflict over grazing pasture and water in some places. Such dynamics may contribute to further displacement, disrupt trade, hinder humanitarian access, and threaten civilian casualties. Aid agencies will need to ensure that their resources are not instrumentalised for any group's territorial expansion, as has happened in the past. The recovery of territory by the government of Somalia could allow greater access to aid in areas previously inaccessible due to Al-Shabaab control, but this is complicated by the need to maintain perceived neutrality and avoid the political instrumentalisation of humanitarian aid.

A stronger set of Somali government, national civil society and private sector capacities has emerged, which needs to be better taken into account in humanitarian responses.

Ministries responsible for humanitarian aid, line ministries, and both state and local government actors have been more involved in the coordination of response, but still have challenges in establishing their leadership and trust in their principled approach to humanitarian governance. However, government actors felt marginalised in the conceptualisation, planning and strategy of the response. For their part, Somali NGOs felt that their role remained narrowly sub-contractual with risks being transferred but insufficient resources provided to develop capacities to manage risks.

Somali NGOs have an important role, including in hard-to-reach areas. Despite commendable efforts from within Somali NGOs and their coordination groups, local NGOs are still associated with a lack of integrity and accountability, by both international and Somali actors. Leaders of Somali NGOs and

networks, with support from internationals organisations, should scale up efforts to build trust and demonstrate that they are making progress in accountability and integrity crucial to establishing a fuller partnership role in humanitarian aid.

Private sector and diaspora were seen as having responded quickly and as they normally do. However, there remains a significant gulf in understanding between the private sector and the humanitarian aid community that would need to be bridged for fuller collaborations to be possible.

Areas for action

The success in warding off widespread famine in Somalia during the 2022–23 crisis should rightly be celebrated. But it also presents a pivotal moment for the international aid community, which needs to reflect on and address the limitations of development and humanitarian responses, and to build on promising new approaches and strengthened Somali capacities before the next crisis looms.

There is a need to profoundly rethink how aid responds to displacement, which is currently reinforcing diversion and marginalisation and does not support resilience strategies. Greater collaboration between humanitarian, durable solutions and resilience approaches is needed – as well as adaptations to assessment, targeting and distribution processes – in order to better support mobility and social networks.

The ways in which aid has become problematically embedded in exploitative political economies leading to diversion, corruption and marginalisation need to be more explicitly tackled. In doing so, aid actors need to examine both their own systems and work with local actors and can build on positive progress in efforts to tackle marginalisation. Stronger analysis of new risks arising from shifting conflict dynamics should help aid actors to build on and maintain new efforts to get aid to people in the most hard to reach areas.

The growing and significant capacities of the Somali government, civil society and private sector are starting to be better recognised and engaged with but are still too often sidelined from meaningful roles in strategy, planning design and implementation of humanitarian responses. As aid actors learn lessons from the response to crisis in 2022 and 2023 the growing resilience of the Somali people in the face of crisis and Somali capacities to lead aid responses must be better supported.

Lessons emerging from the Somalia response around how to maintain access in hard-to-reach areas, find ways to better support marginalised groups and the need to rethink approaches to displacement and diversion can also help to inform global humanitarian policy and responses in other crises.

From the outside, Somalia is often described as a failed state, home of terrorists and pirates, chronically corrupt, and prone to famine and crisis. Once again, throughout 2022 and the first half of 2023, Somalia was on the brink of famine. In response, the international aid system undertook a huge scale-up of the humanitarian response, pushing other objectives aside in an urgent bid to 'prevent famine'. To many aid workers there was a sense of déjà vu. While there was widespread agreement among Somalis that help was needed, there was also considerable scepticism about the aid system's motives and reservations about the potential repercussions of yet another humanitarian scale-up with very little control over the narrative or the form of the response. Somali citizens associate these crisis response moments with harm, such as upsurges in corruption, displacement into urban areas, and marginalisation. As the '2022–23 Drought Crisis' draws to a close, the prevailing narrative around having prevented famine only serves to reinforce the sense of déjà vu. Will the humanitarian aid system simply move on to the next crisis? As old hands rotate out, will it forget what was learnt about how to do less harm in the Somalia context? Or will it engage more effectively with the growing skills, capacities and resources of Somali civil society, government, and private sector?

The urgency of famine prevention brings much needed attention and humanitarian resources but too often over-simplifies causes, paying scant attention to the capacities and vulnerabilities that put some parts of Somalia at much higher risk of famine and extreme crisis than others. There is even less attention to how the structure and processes of the aid system can at times reinforce vulnerabilities and undermine capacities.

Research has shown that key vulnerabilities associated with famine and extreme crisis are related to gender, age, and kinship group, with the most marginalised having the biggest risk of suffering the most.[2] The 2022–23 response took place within a much-transformed context since the 2011 famine. We suggest that these changes, while they have come with great suffering, have resulted in increased resilience to crisis. Better understanding of these changes is critical to designing effective and equitable interventions.

Figure 1: Net development assistance vs humanitarian aid: 2009–2022
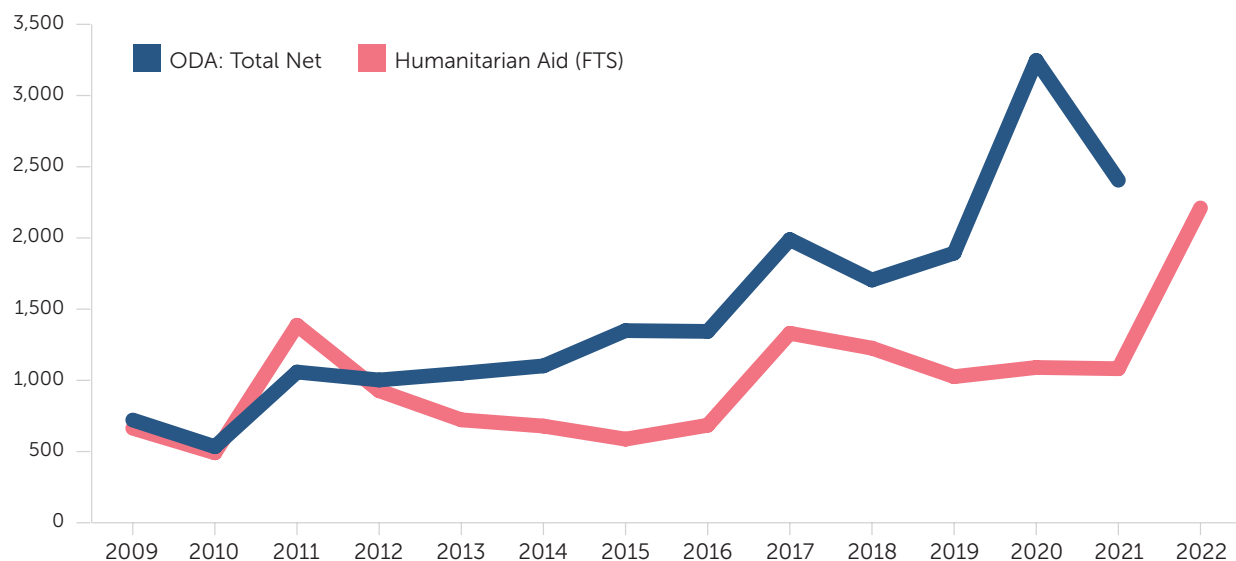
Source: OECD vs FTS Dataset 2009-2022

[2]   Maxwell, D. and Majid, N. (2016). *Famine in Somalia.* Competing imperatives, collective failures, 2011-12. Hurst Publishers.

The latest crisis saw a significant increase in financial resources with over US$2.2 billion available for the humanitarian response in 2022 - double the amount available in each of the previous six years. There was a marked shift in the proportions of funding received by the food security sector. In 2011 and 2017 the food security sector received 29% and 26% of the funding respectively. However, in 2022 food security received 57% of the funds, showing the even more significant role that cash and vouchers played in 2022 when compared to 2011/17.[3]

However, the bulk of the funds arrived in the second quarter of 2022, delaying the scale-up of the humanitarian response and rushing the scale-up once it began. Development funds have been increasing steadily since 2009, in line with the establishment and strengthening of the Somali government, demonstrating the shifting role of humanitarian aid as it moves from the dominant or only source of funding and decision-making power to being a powerful partner with others but with a more limited mandate.

Overall purpose

The purpose of this review is to bring Somali systems and Somali agency into focus – their respective strengths and weaknesses, how they interact with the more formal aid/humanitarian system, and what can be learned from this interaction for future crises. The review focuses on five key themes, chosen in consultation with an expert group.

- **Displacement and mobility** – emerging analysis suggests the need to think broadly about population movement beyond narrow categorisations of internal displacement and binaries around whether people are displaced or not. People are being displaced, return, move, and migrate. They use movement as part of their livelihood strategies and tactics around access to aid. We look at what this might mean for how humanitarian actors seek to support people.

- **Marginalisation, access, and exclusion** – we examine what lessons have been learnt on addressing marginalisation, and dealing with exclusion risks relating to conflict, Al-Shabaab controlled areas, clan and ethnicity based-exclusion and gatekeeping. We look at the role played by aid in reinforcing drivers of marginalisation.

- **Corruption and diversion** – recent reviews have led to renewed attention to ways in which aid is diverted and we examine where attention needs to focus in order to understand and mitigate risks.

- **Conflict dynamics** – we examine the humanitarian implications of new counter-insurgency tactics and recent shifts in the conflict, such as the arming of clan-based militia.

- **Shifting Somali systems for aid response** – our review looks at shifts in Somalia's government, civil society, and private sector capacities to respond to crisis, and what that means for how international humanitarian actors engage with them.

Methodology

The review was carried out between April and August 2023. A mixed methods approach was used, consisting of a literature review, key informant interviews, field research with clan elders and community members in Somalia, and a telephone survey. The team was able to draw on the substantial expertise of the authors' research on Somalia over decades to deepen the analysis.

Literature review: The team conducted a review of published and grey literature on the above themes within current humanitarian response in Somalia as well as literature on lessons learnt from previous crises. The team also reviewed and analysed published data with regards to the overall humanitarian response and its resourcing, as well as operational data.

---

[3]   The FTS reporting system has changed definitions of sectors since 2011. There are a number of other discrepancies when comparing years so it is difficult to have an exact comparison.

Interviews: The team conducted 81 interviews with Somali and international aid actors (international NGOs, local NGOs, UN and Red Cross), donors, local, state and federal government representatives, business people, academics, and experts on Somalia. Interviews were conducted in Nairobi and Somalia in person, as well as by telephone. Interviewees were intentionally selected to represent a wide range of actors present in the current humanitarian response in Somalia. Snowballing techniques were used to identify people with particular sectoral expertise or knowledge. Interviewees were asked questions around Somali response capacities and resilience, and how these interacted with the international response in the 5 key areas described above, during the 2022/23 crisis.

Field research: The team conducted 37 community interviews with clan elders, community members, internally displaced people, and business people. There was a particular focus on the Leysan, Gelidle and Jiddo, three sub-clans within the Digil and Mirifle clan family, who make up the vast majority of internally displaced people and those affected by famine. Interviews were conducted in Mogadishu, Baidoa, Galkayo and Bardera as well as over the phone. This included the following.

a) Interviews with clan elders, in order to develop an overview of how their clan/group have been affected and how life and livelihoods have changed over the 10-12 years following the 2011 famine.

b) Life-history interviews (individual, clan-based and household-level) focused on how different populations have been affected by shocks (natural and man-made) over the past 10-12 years, and how have they responded at both individual and collective levels.

c) Individual interviews were conducted with members of the diaspora in various countries, including members of the business community, to deepen understandings of social networks and their evolution over time. Interviews with clan elders were with men, as selected elders were able to provide an overview of clan-level changes and issues. Interviews with women focused at the household and individual level.

Telephone survey: GeoPoll conducted a telephone survey for this review in the south and central regions of Somalia to better understand the barriers that people faced in accessing aid in 2022 and 2023, and what this has meant for mobility, displacement, and types of exclusion. The survey focused on Somali people who reported needing – but not having had access to – aid. There was a total of 760 responses, from 506 men (67%) and 254 women (33%). The age breakdown of respondents was 22% people aged 15-24, 32% aged 25-34, and 46% aged 35 and above. The survey was carried out remotely, via computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) using live operators speaking Somali. Respondents were randomly sampled, reached via random digit dialing across 8 regions of South and Central Somalia between 7 July 2023 and 19 July 2023.

Research limitations

Community interviews focused deliberately only on three sub-groups of the Digil and Mirifle – Leysan, Gelidle and Jiddo – to provide an insight into dynamics among these groups over time. This provided a particular analytical lens and insights within relatively coherent social groups. However, this means that, while findings may be more widely applicable, they are not necessarily generalisable to all of Somalia and other clans/groups.

For key informant interviews, while care was taken to attempt to cover the broadest range of actors involved in the humanitarian response in Somalia, a number of actors were more difficult to find; these include non-traditional donors and actors, businesses at various levels, financial institutions, and some government actors at the federal level. These voices are therefore underrepresented.

In terms of the survey limitations, while the sample size is above the technical threshold for representativeness at a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of +/- 5%, a potential for gender bias exists in patterns of mobile phone ownership and the willingness of women to respond to survey calls. Despite efforts to maximise the representation of women, they represented just 33% of the final sample, which is similar to past remote surveys conducted in Somalia.

2   Mobility as a resilience strategy

Mobility is both a key positive and negative factor in Somali society and relates strongly to the concepts of resilience, vulnerability, and prosperity. Mobility is strongly influenced by shocks like drought and conflict, and the availability of aid resources. But the motivation to leave a place of origin cannot be assigned to a single event, such as drought, or a single factor, such as aid. However, mobility is an issue the humanitarian and aid sector struggle to understand in general. Recognising the complex mix of motives, causes, and types of mobility within livelihoods is a necessary step in rethinking approaches to aid.

2.1 Aid-driven mobility

Discussions about displacement abound, with many unchallenged assumptions, and tend to focus on detrimental effects for rural livelihoods and increased pressure on urban resources, leading to large numbers of people living in a state of urban precarity.[4] These views are reinforced by the UN definition of what an internally displaced person is – "[A] person or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence".[5] The definition identifies the decision to move as being a distress or forced decision, and it implies a static view of residence. This results in targeting categorisations such as 'newly displaced' or 'long-term displaced', and a focus on displaced sites/camps with less attention to movement to places that are not camps or IDP sites, or to mobility as a strategy.

Many of the people working in aid agencies that we interviewed for this study, both Somali and international, saw displacement primarily as a survival strategy to reach aid and as the cause of negative outcomes, including marginalisation and increased risks of diversion. Cash disbursements were seen as a key reason people were being 'pulled' to major urban centres. This largely negative understanding of mobility as synonymous with displacement neglects positive aspects of mobility as a resilience and livelihood strategy that has long been fundamental to Somali culture and society. A recent report on the drivers of displacement highlights that, "Displacement is not an event but is part of Somalia's socio-political fabric."[6] Analysis of mobility tends to focus on immediate triggers and neglect structural and underlying factors. Drought may be an immediate driver of movement – but can be preceded by years of conflict, marginalisation, and long-term strains on livelihoods.[7]

4   Bakonyi, J. and Chonka, P. (2023). *Precarious urbanism displacement, belonging and the reconstruction of Somali cities.* Bristol University Press.

5   OCHA (2004) *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement,* United Nations, https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/ocha-guiding-principles-on-internal-displacement

6   Gist research and Laasfort Consulting (2022). *Understanding the key drivers of displacement in Somalia - during the 2021/22 drought.* International Organization for Migration. https://dtm.iom.int/reports/understanding-key-drivers-displacement-somalia-during-202122-drought

7   Lindley, A. and Hammond, L. (2014). Histories and contemporary challenges of crisis and mobility in Somalia, in *Crisis and Migration,* edited by Anna Lindley, Routledge.

The crisis in 2022–23 did create displacement where people were forced to move, having exhausted resources and coping options where they were, and needing to try to access aid in urban areas. For example, mortality data for displaced people in their first three months in Baidoa was at famine thresholds at the peak of the crisis. However, a simplistic framing of "no choice" displacement and aid 'pulling' people to urban areas may have been more of a factor for large-scale distress displacements in 2010–11. GIST research describes the decision to displace in terms of being the best option in a very difficult context.[8]

Some monitoring information systems, such as in the camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) cluster, have tried to gather and analyse real-time information on displacement but are still struggling to influence interventions. However, most of the aid system's information and predictive tools still take little account of the complexities of displacement.

In the phone survey conducted for this review, which focused on Somali people who reported having needed aid but having not been able to access it, just over 50% had relocated in the previous six months to try to access aid or other resources (Figure 2). Of these, most reported staying in temporary communal sites or encampments, followed by formal IDP camps. A further 6% were staying with family or friends in a "main town". When asked if they had current plans to relocate in the near future, most (61%) said no, 32% said yes (the entire household would move), and 7% said that only one or some household members would move and send or bring back the aid to the rest of the family.

Figure 2: Were you displaced to another location in the last 6 months in order to access and/or meet other economic needs?

Yes - To temporary communal site 26%

Yes - To IDP site 19%

Yes - To the home of family or friends in town 6%

No 49%
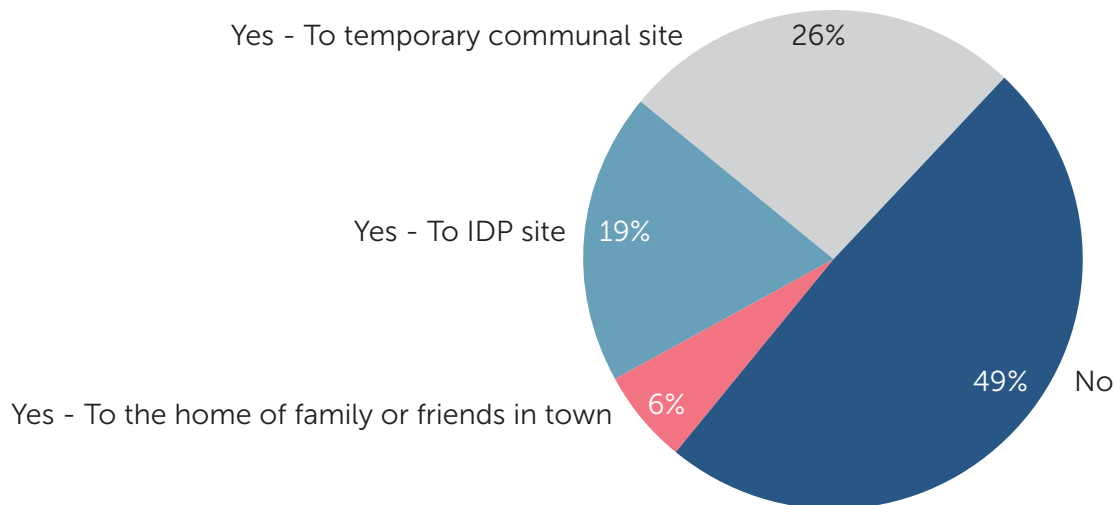
Source: GeoPoll mobile telephone survey, July 2023. N=760

Although beset by repeated humanitarian crises, Somali society is in an ongoing process of transformation (measurable in decades rather than years), where the ability to move and to keep in contact with each other is a critical aspect of resilience to drought and conflict. People with relatives in urban employment (including in the aid sector), in the diaspora, and with businesses will support more vulnerable kin. Those who have not been able to harness the positive opportunities of mobility and networks have been shown to be the least resilient.[9]

---

[8]   Gist research and Laasfort Consulting (2022).

[9]   Majid, N., Adan, G., Abdirahman, K., Kim, J.J., and Maxwell, D. (2015). Narratives of famine: Somalia, 2011. Feinstein International Center, Tufts University. https://fic.tufts.edu/publication-item/somalian-famine-narratives/; Maxwell, D., Majid, N., Adan, G., Abdirahman, K., and Kim, J.J. (2016). *Facing famine: Somali experiences in the famine of 2011.* Food Policy, Volume 65, pp. 63–73. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodpol.2016.11.001; Majid, N., Abdirahman, K. and Hassan, S. (2017). Remittances and vulnerability in Somalia. Assessing sources, uses and delivery mechanisms. Rift Valley Institute. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/633401530870281332/pdf/Remittances-and-Vulnerability-in-Somalia-Resubmission.pdf; Elsamahi, M., Ochieng, G.A., and Bedelian, C. (2023). Coping with the drought crisis in Somalia: Formative research findings from the Resilience Population Measurement (RPM) project. Mercy Corps and ACDI/VOCA. https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/coping-drought-crisis-somalia-formative-research-findings-resilience-population-measurement-rpm-project-may-2023

2.2 Mobility and resilience

The following section provides examples of the range of adaptations that clans and groups have experienced over 10 years, which indicate underlying processes of social change that are enabling greater resilience to crises. Our interviews focused on three sub-clans – Leysan, Gelidle and Jiddo – which have been historically marginalised. We found that these sub-clans have been 'catching up' over the last 10 years, gaining more connections to the urban economy, including the aid sector, diversifying livelihoods and using more complex mobility strategies. This is most usefully understood as a process of 'mixed displacement strategies' where forced displacement and strategic choice inform a variety of factors that influence mobility.[10]

People from within major marginalised population groups, the Digil and Mirifle and Somali Bantu were historically excluded from processes of urbanisation, education, and government employment and opportunities for moving and working abroad, during the 1970s and 1980s.[11] As a result they were also not well placed to develop a diaspora, or new businesses. However, interviews for this study show that over the last 10 or more years, these historically marginalised groups have developed their urban connections, including business enterprises and employment in government and the aid sector.

The Leysan are part of the Digil and Mirifle. Interviews reflected a positive process of transformation. Over the last 10 years, many younger Leysan men have moved to Mogadishu, Puntland, Somaliland, central regions, and Kenya. The Leysan now have a significant business community. As one elder put it:

> "Those young boys who were 10 years old in 2011 are now working and are breadwinners of their families – parents and siblings and supporting their close relatives. The change is very big. There is a lot to learn from these droughts and after every drought, the capacity to manage humanitarian crisis increases … It is very uncommon for a Leysan person to die of hunger unless he/she kept it for him/herself because he/she will always find someone to cry to, and if he does it, he/she will be assisted."

Leysan elders felt that, through collective support mechanisms – and being well-positioned within the aid sector and able benefit from its resources – they are now better able to manage crises:

> "Leysan as a clan can manage humanitarian crises better … For example, due to both drought and direct conflict with Al-Shabaab, over 500 Leysan households were evicted from Goofgaduud Shabellow and displaced to Baidoa. Before any humanitarian or government support, the clan managed to settle them in a camp and provided tents and plastic sheets for shelter, water, latrines, and two months of food. Every household was given enough food and some cash."

One of the most devastated clans in the 2011 famine were the Jiddo (of the Digil and Mirifle) who suffered significant mortality, loss of cattle, and displacement to Mogadishu. The Jiddo are an agropastoral clan thought to comprise the largest single clan grouping in the three districts at the end of the Shabelle river. Prior to the 2011 famine, they were considered relatively wealthy.[12] Jiddo interviewees pointed out that they were not prepared for the 2011 crisis as they had not previously faced displacement. Since 2011, the Jiddo have become adept at incorporating the urban economy into their lives. The men commonly work in construction, and the women in cleaning and in the market, carrying goods for others. Many of their younger men have become soldiers, for both the

---

[10]   Lindley, A. (2010). Leaving Mogadishu: Towards a sociology of conflict-related mobility. *Journal of Refugee Studies,* Volume 23, No 1. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fep043

[11]   Maxwell, D. and Majid, N. (2016). *Famine in Somalia. Competing imperatives, collective failures, 2011-12,* Hurst Publishers.

[12]   Ibid.

government and Al-Shabaab. A strong cattle culture and large landholdings by the river mean they have kept a strong connection to the land but accessing aid resources in Mogadishu during times of crisis is now an established part of livelihood strategies. Jiddo livelihoods are likely to remain restricted by the presence of Al-Shabaab and other local conflicts, and increasing water insecurity due to climate change. This means that the new development of urban livelihoods, including access to aid, will continue to be an important part of Jiddo resilience to crisis in the coming years. At the same time, there is a strong emphasis on maintaining and developing livestock (cattle) numbers. This example of livelihood diversification may be generalisable to many of those currently having a foot in IDP sites.

The Jiddo experience suggests that aid actors should include more attention to supporting more diverse formal or informal job opportunities in urban centres. Efforts also need to be made to enable access to aid that can flow fluidly between urban and rural areas as well as supporting urban rural mobility as opposed to static settlement in IDP sites, host communities, or new settlements. More attention should be given to climate change adaptation projects that impact on mobility strategies, for example climate smart water projects that optimise mobility choices. There should also be more consideration to ensuring information is widely available to support better quality decision making on issues such as security (urban and rural), work opportunities, and aid entitlements.

2.3 Mobility, communications, and networks

One of the most important changes within Somali society, with implications for resilience, livelihoods, and mobility strategies, is the increased access to and use of mobile phones.

Figure 3: Mobile phone penetration (as % of population), 2021
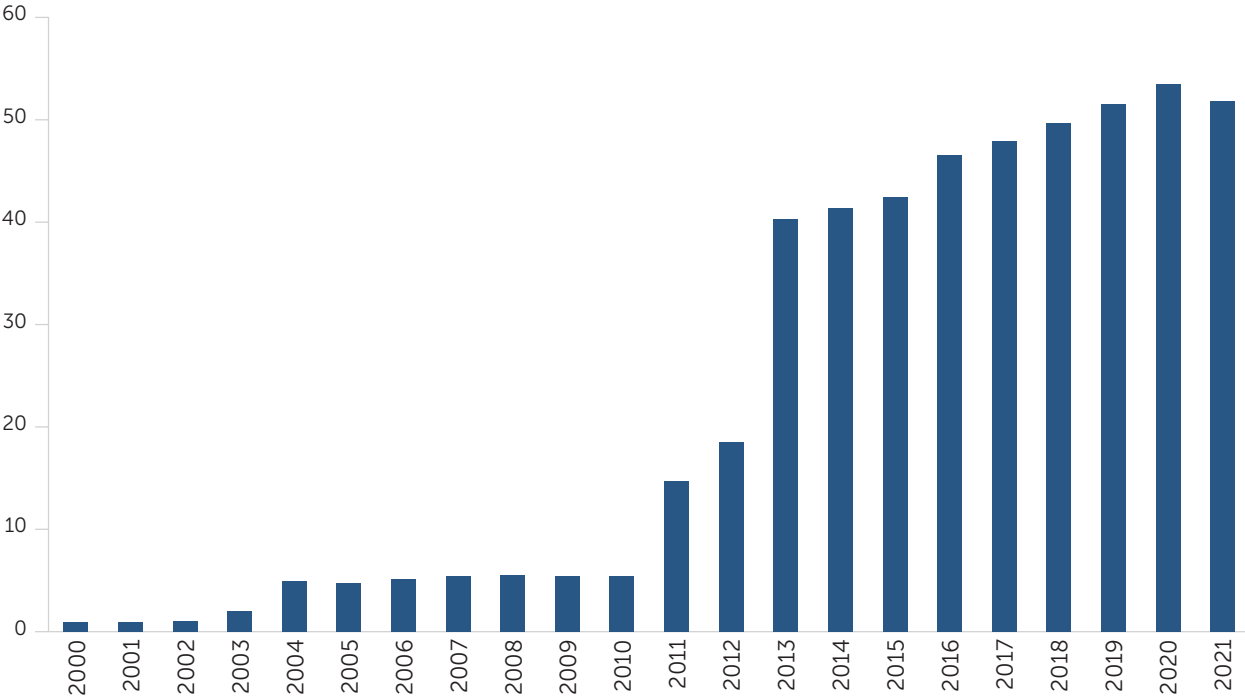
Source: World Bank. (2023, 1 July). Mobile phone penetration (as% of population). Retrieved July 2023 from HelgiLibrary.
https://www.helgilibrary.com/indicators/mobile-phone-penetration-as-of-population/

Urban rural linkages have long been a mainstay of Somali connectedness and resilience capacities. The ubiquity of mobile phones means that information and money can be sent in any direction for very little cost within Somalia. Greater connectedness through the internet, and increased mobile phone ownership by women and other often marginalised groups, has strengthened individual, household, and group resilience capacities. For example, better communication allowed people to connect with relatives already in town and hear about aid distributions: as one UN respondent said, "People know the drill… they make the call… go to the towns, unlike in 2011." The large humanitarian cash response in 2022, which at its peak was reaching 4.7 million people using mobile money, may have increased phone penetration.

The Gelidle are an agropastoral clan of the Digil and Mirifle, with few urban or diaspora connections. One Gelidle elder put it, "The 2011 drought affected us very badly, many people died, and many others were displaced to Kenya and Ethiopia." He also reported that in 2022, many Gelidle villages (in Qansahdheere, Dinsor and Baidoa districts) became deserted as their people were in IDP camps and it is mainly the men that move back and forth from IDP sites in order to continue farming. The same elder stated, when asked to reflect on some of the changes from 2011:

> "Yes, we learned a lot from these droughts because it is not killing people the way people died in 2011. Thanks to telecommunication companies and their mobile phone systems. In the event of drought and depletion of resources, people call each other and send money to each other to support those trapped in the villages to come to cities where there is aid.' A second elder reports that what is important is 'finding out or knowing where there is humanitarian aid and going there. Splitting families between the rural villages and IDP settlements and complementing livelihood resources between the two."

Interviewees from the Gelidle also reflect on changes that have occurred to their members over the last 10–12 years, in terms of growing connections and networks. For example, one Gelidle respondent reported that:

> "Those who were displaced to Kenya in 2011 were lucky, and their children went to school and came back. Some of them are working with humanitarian actors and the government. For example, in Baidoa which is the centre of Mirifle clans, we only have two business people and less than 10 humanitarian staff."

While affecting only a small number of people, this reflects the changes that have taken place since 2011, when there were virtually no connections of this type for the Gelidle.

The links between the different crises are also evident in our analysis. For example:

> "We depend on old IDPs [internally displaced people] of 2011 and 2017 for assistance. Yes, they really assisted because they supported the new arrivals to settle and mobilise resources for trapped people to manage to move out, but this was very limited …Yes, unlike in 2011 and 2017, this time we have a good representation in the local authorities. Yes, there is a big difference when you have people in the local authority and humanitarian staff, and you don't have."

Pastoralism is the dominant livelihood in north-east and central Somalia. These areas also have very strong connections between pastoralists, urban centres (including Galkaio and Mogadishu), and diaspora relatives. Urban trader-relatives supply credit to pastoralists as well as support water-trucking and livestock trucking in difficult times.

Diaspora support

Mohamed is a businessman based in the UK, from the Galkaio area. His sub-clan have a WhatsApp group to support different initiatives. Mohamed claims that they were better organised in this drought than previous droughts. Previously, people lost all of their animals and had to settle in town, living with relatives. On this occasion, they focused on keeping the animals alive so the nomads were not forced to move to town and then depend on diaspora and other better off relatives to survive. This group provided US$150 per month for three months to their pastoral relatives that they identified as most needing their support. This funded water trucking, food for families, and fodder for the animals. Animal feed was available from Ethiopia during this drought where it had not been previously.

Urban-rural networks are critical in decisions to stay, leave, or return when it comes to diversifying livelihoods and transforming lives to be more resilient to climate and conflict shocks. These networks support people's decisions to stay in rural areas, organise a move to urban areas, or to return 'home' by channelling resources from aid, diaspora, private sector, the mosque, and others. The networks also act as a vital information source on security; in the place of origin, along the road to urban areas and security in the IDP sites and among host communities. Information on centres of aid distributions, registration timing, and eligibility for aid resources is critically important in decision making for both primary and secondary displacement. Finally, the establishment of a foothold in urban livelihoods through prolonged displacement for parts of the whole family (more broadly defined than in the western sense of a nuclear family) is emerging as a critical transformation process for Somali society particularly for those kin groups that have not traditionally had such a foothold.[13]

2.4 Aid engagement with mobility and internally displaced people

Displacement is clearly one of the factors that can leave people in need of humanitarian assistance – but there can be a tendency, especially in the heat of responding to prevent famine, to see internally displaced people as dependant on aid resources, and victims of forced or distress migration and not also as people with agency, capacity and choices. Using mobility as a framing of how Somalis cope with crisis highlights opportunities to better leverage the emergency response, resilience and durable solutions approaches to support positive ways in which mobility strengthens resilience to crisis.

Insecurity and associated risk management strategies have meant that, since the early 2000s, the humanitarian system in the south and centre of Somalia has evolved from one that concentrates on rural interventions to one that has a much greater focus in urban centres, and specifically the rural displaced. Over the last 10–20 years, aid and mobility/displacement strategies have co-evolved, with IDP targeting and registration becoming a major driver of aid diversion and marginalisation dynamics.

The strengthening of federal and state government structures has led to increased attention to the use of administrative areas such as districts for the planning, targeting, and monitoring of aid resources. Geographic area-based targeting is at the core of USAID resilience programming in Somalia and humanitarian organisations experimented with several different adaptations of area-based targeting in 2022-23, with some successes and failures. These approaches need to better consider urban rural

---

13   Kamau, C., Muchunu, G. Mohamoud, M., Munyaviri, A. and Bryld, E. (2023). *Urbanisation and displacement in Mogadishu: Developments, actors and interests.* The University of Manchester. https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/urbanisation-and-displacement-mogadishu-developments-actors-and-interests; Migliorisi, A. Tonnarelli F. (2021). *Settlement patterns in Somalia.* UN Habitat. https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2021/08/settlement_patterns_in_somalia.pdf

linkages and mobility as well as better connecting hard to reach areas with urban centres. Consideration should also be given to exploring how to support virtual social networks that spread far outside of local geographies.

Aid reporting, funding, advocacy, and compliance monitoring still reflects out of date conceptualisations and categorisations of who internally displaced people are, their motivations and needs, and how to organise the delivery of aid resources. Many organisations are attempting to adapt and test interventions to consider the more complex and dynamic reality – but without a more explicit system-wide engagement, there is increased risk of aid doing harm by facilitating the displacement/aid economy, empowering extractive gatekeeping practices, and driving marginalisation. It is time for the aid community to radically adapt and transform how it understands the changing processes of displacement and to rethink outdated categorisations of the displaced and camp-based models of assistance.

3 Marginalisation, corruption, and diversion

Marginalised people in Somalia have borne the brunt of suffering and mortality and have again been hit the hardest in the 2022−23 crisis.[14] Excluded groups are least able to access both Somali and international sources of support. A lack of inclusion within the political economy of Somalia is compounded by the structures and strategies of the aid system, which have reinforced underlying vulnerabilities such as marginalisation. The aid system has grappled with issues of corruption, diversion, and marginalisation for many years but has struggled to adapt its ways of working.[15] Aid has become embedded in the political economy of Somalia.[16]

The large scale-up of aid in 2022 has led to concerns about a possible upsurge in the scale and scope of diversion as was seen in 2011 and 2017. A 2023 report commissioned by the UN Secretary General (Post-Delivery Aid Diversion in Somalia) has also led to renewed attention to the issue within the aid system.[17] Humanitarian aid actors, however, risk repeating a problematic cycle where renewed attention during periods of crises fades and efforts to tackle the fundamental challenges are too sporadic to make a difference.

This review considers marginalised populations in two groups – those who are hard to reach geographically (section 4), and those that are hard to reach socially. Many of these marginalised and excluded groups are found in geographically hard-to-reach areas, further increasing the challenges for their inclusion in aid and wider political economy and social processes. Other drivers of marginalisation – including age, disability and gender – are important but are not the focus of this report.

---

[14]   Maxwell and Majid (2016); Somalia Resilience Population Measurement. (2023). *Role of social networks in coping with the current drought in Somalia: Research brief.* Mercy Corps. https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/role-social-connections-coping-current-drought-somalia-research-brief-somalia-resilience-population-measurement-may-2023

[15]   The United Nations Accountability Project—Somalia (2018). Neither inevitable nor accidental: The impact of marginalization in Somalia. In: *War and Peace in Somalia: National grievances, local conflict and Al-Shabaab.* Edited by Michael Keating and Waldman Matt, Oxford University Press. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780190947910.003.0002

[16]   Bryld, E., Kamau, S., Knudsen Møller, S. and Mohamoud, M. (2017). *Engaging the gatekeepers: Using informal governance resources in Mogadishu,* Tana Consulting. https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/engaging-gatekeepers-using-informal-governance-resources-mogadishu; Harmer, A. and Majid, N. (2016). *Collective resolution to enhance accountability and transparency in emergencies: Southern Somalia Report.* Transparency International. https://www.humanitarianoutcomes.org/publications/collective-resolution-enhance-accountability-and-transparency-emergencies-southern; Human Rights Watch (2013). Hostages to the gatekeepers. https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/03/28/hostages-gatekeepers-abuses-against-internally-displaced-mogadishu-somalia

[17]   Unpublished report

Humanitarian actors have sometimes seen marginalisation as too complex a long-term issue to tackle with the result that it has too often been consigned to the protection cluster or is seen as a development issue rather than a system-wide humanitarian priority. The 2022–23 humanitarian response saw both continued resistance and denial of the dynamics of marginalisation and aid's role in driving these dynamics as well as, crucially, an upsurge in efforts to address it.[18] Whether this has led to the implementation of better programming is a more challenging question to answer, and it is probably too early to say. Nevertheless, the efforts and leadership, particularly by donors, must be acknowledged. The challenge is to sustain this momentum as attention shifts to the next crisis.

3.1 Barriers to accessing aid

To better understand the barriers that people faced in accessing aid and what that meant for mobility, displacement and types of exclusion in the 2022–23 crisis, we conducted a survey of Somalis in the south-central regions (see Appendix 2). The survey responses point to a dire situation among Somalis who were unable to access formal aid resources, despite many of them having already relocated at least once for subsistence reasons. Almost a quarter of these aid-excluded people reported a lack of informal sources of support such as remittances from family abroad or help from neighbours and community members.

The survey targeted people in south-central Somalia who were excluded from aid access – that is, people who reported having needed aid in the year prior to the survey but not having had access to it.[19] Out of a total of 824 calls where the responder agreed to take the survey, 98% reported that they needed aid. Of those, only 2% received it (10 from international NGOs, 7 from local NGOs, and 1 from Gulf State assistance). The remainder of the questions were answered by people who needed and did not receive any formal humanitarian assistance.

Most survey respondents did not have any other forms of support. For those that did, the main sources named were neighbours and fellow clan members. Only a small number of them cited remittances from family abroad (4%) or Zakat from businesses (3%).[20]

Figure 4: Other forms of support
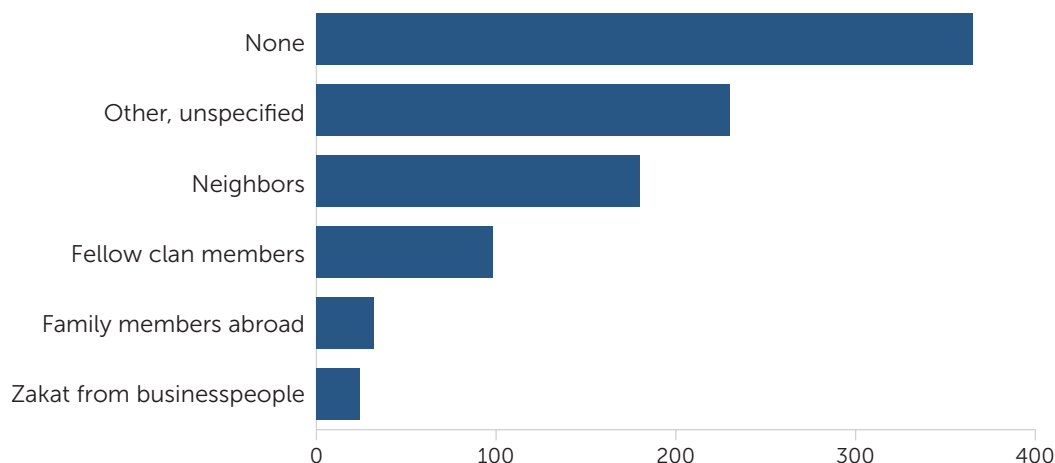
Source: GeoPoll mobile telephone survey, July 2023. N=760

---

[18] Majid N., Mohamed J., Adan G., Daar A., Abdirahman K., Hailey P., Balfour N., Seal A., and Maxwell D. (2022). *Another humanitarian (and political) crisis in Somalia in 2022.* Feinstein International Center, Tufts University. https://fic.tufts.edu/publication-item/another-humanitarian-and-political-crisis-in-somalia-in-2022/

[19] The question was, "Now or over the past year, did you/your household need assistance?"

[20] Zakat is an Islamic term referring to the obligation that an individual has to donate a certain proportion of wealth each year to charitable causes.

There were many different reasons why the people surveyed were unable to access aid. When asked for their own understanding of the obstacles facing them, lack of information about what aid was available, and where, was the most common answer, suggesting a gap in the humanitarian sector's communications efforts. The second most common answer was obstruction/corruption by gatekeepers who controlled the aid coming into communities, followed by aid being located too far away.

Figure 5: Why do you think you were unable to access or receive the humanitarian assistance from NGOs coming into Somalia?
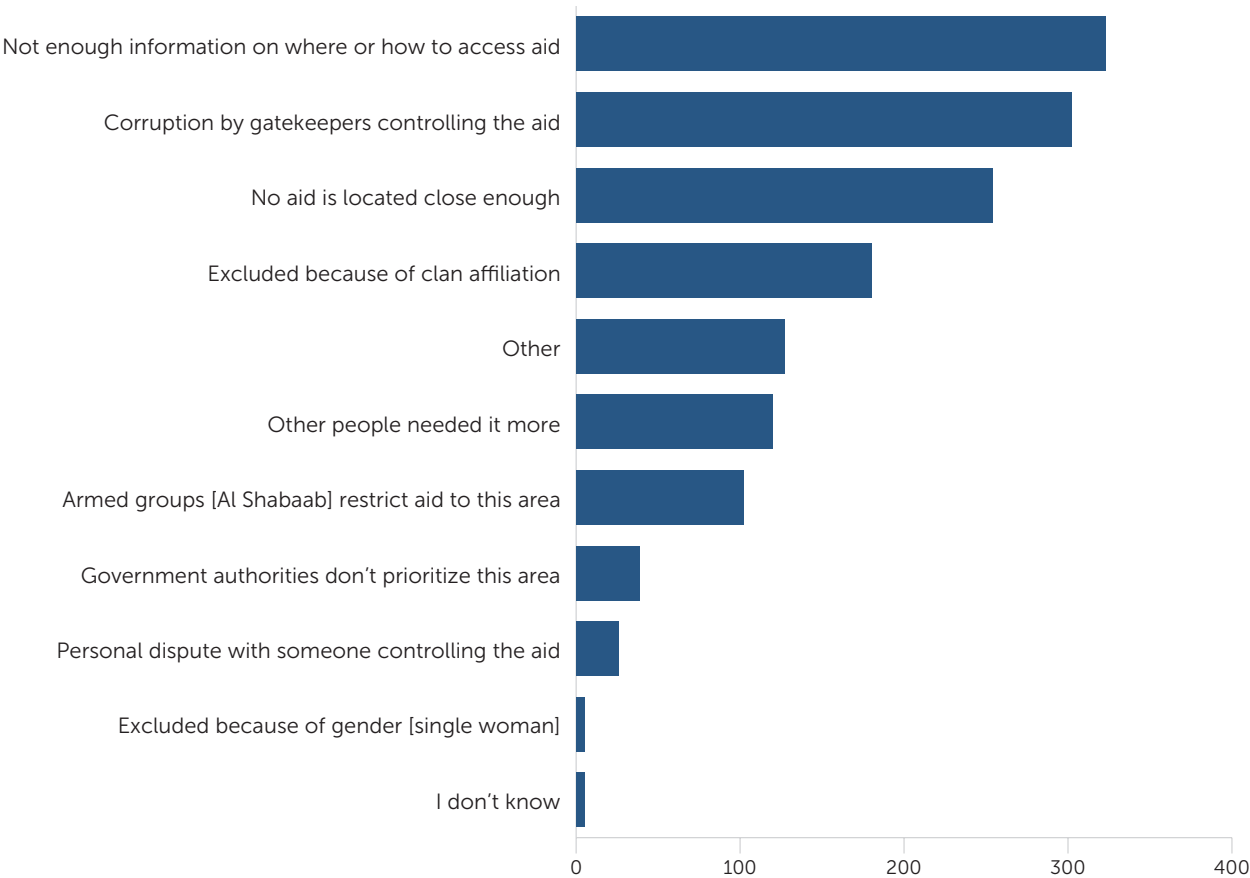
Source: GeoPoll mobile telephone survey, July 2023. N=760

3.2 Corruption and diversion

Corruption and diversion of aid are major barriers to people being able to access aid and are drivers of exclusion. One aspect of this is the role of gatekeepers – actors with power who manage and control aid and access to internally displaced people at various levels. Studies have found that multitiered networks of gatekeepers play a complex role in the provision of services and security to internally displaced people.[21] Practices exist on a spectrum, from relatively benign support to very serious exploitation. Aid workers interviewed for this study reported that they perceived an upsurge in the role of gatekeepers and involvement of local government and business people in the 2022–23 aid response, with increased complexity and sophistication of how these networks control and divert access to aid.

---

[21] Bryld, Kamau, Knudsen Møller, and Mohamoud (2017).

Perspective of a camp manager in Mogadishu

"The IDPs [internally displaced people] from Shabelle believe that Bay region will not give them better job opportunities like Mogadishu, So, the IDPs in my camps request me to bring their relatives or family members to the camps where they live and promise to pay me when aid is received. I send a truck to Lower Shabelle and all the people I informed will be brought to the IDP camps in Mogadishu.

We have not been supported by any business people or other aid organisations recently, but there are women from abroad who send aid to the IDP community. I send them the receipt which I bought food with and the distribution videos so that they don't think I mismanaged the money. She is from the UK. She said she has a sick child and she asked for special prayers from these displaced communities. She also collects from other women, especially during Ramadan time. But nowadays I don't hear from her, she normally sends £6,000–£7,000. The first time, she sent £3,000 through Taaj for a sick girl's medical bill. She saw me giving interviews on a TV station and she took my contacts and directly contacted me.

We believe, giving alms can even save one from death, so I used to buy 10kgs of flour, rice, a big tin of powdered milk, 10kgs of sugar, 5 litres of oil, 10kg spaghetti, spices for the 50 to 100 households with the most vulnerable individuals. I do a work placement for them; I find the maid job for the girls and laundry for the women.

When work is not available, I borrow food from food stores for each household until aid arrives and promise to pay. Currently, I have a debt of US$1,800 with which I took food for these people."

Despite limitations to the evidence base, it seems clear that diversion of aid resources is probably significant. For example, research in Mogadishu suggested that between 10% and 30% of resources are taken by gatekeepers.[22] Cash Barometer respondents report between 5% and 50% diversion.[23]

The people interviewed for this study about the IDP economy that exists within and around Galkaio town reported that a common practice is to divide assistance into three parts – one third for the government, one third for the implementing NGO and one third for the recipients:

"If 300 people were to be supported, the camp leaders would provide 300 names from the camp. If they were to take $120 a month, each will get only $40 but will sign for receiving $120. And the other two thirds will be divided between the implementing NGO and the government members. Aid recipients are 'conditioned' to say he or she has received the full/correct amount and signs for it."

Interviews for this study suggest that there is more awareness on the part of international aid agencies around the fact that gatekeepers are not all 'bad', and there is a growing recognition that they are part of a complex system that is providing a service to internally displaced people, which can be more or less exploitative. However, interviewees, recent research, and responses to recent reports are polarised in their opinions about what to do about gatekeepers. Interviewees for this study noted that engaging with gatekeepers is a "double-edged sword" as this risks "de facto legitimising and formalising a

22   Bryld, Kamau, Knudsen Møller, and Mohamoud (2017).
23   Ground Truth Solutions. (2023). *Overcoming power imbalances: Community recommendations for breaking the cycle.* https://www.groundtruthsolutions.org/library/overcoming-power-imbalances-community-recommendations-for-breaking-the-cycle

structure ... [that] results in the exploitation and abuse of IDPs [internally displaced people]". Others advocate engaging with the gatekeeper structures to improve their accountability (upwards and downwards) and to better link the formal and informal processes of protection and provision of services to internally displaced people.[24] A few organisations are trying to work with gatekeepers as a positive part of the aid systems in areas such as targeting criteria, training, and awareness-raising.

Despite many years of efforts to replace or significantly mitigate the negative effects of the gatekeeper system, it has remained remarkably resilient and instead has become more sophisticated, and embedded. Some interviewees identified the current IDP aid response model as one of the most important basic drivers of the IDP aid economy and suggested that significant change in how humanitarians engage with internally displaced people was what was required "not just tweaks". As one interviewee said:

> "The international aid system is the main contributor to the commodification and the business of hosting and abusing IDPs [internally displaced people]. That barrier between displaced citizens and their government, including the district commissioner, created by the gatekeeping structures and networks is just growing in strength. It is more and more institutionalised and accepted in practice. At some point there needs to be a discussion on how we re-inject state authority and accountability into that structure – because otherwise displaced individuals are entirely governed by people who have neither accountability nor acceptance."

The current focus on post-distribution diversion and on gatekeepers risks reproducing a tendency in how diversion is framed that blames others and fails to look hard enough at aid organisations' own practices. A crucial point is that aid diversion in Somalia is systemic; it pervades the entire aid system and has become part of the wider political economy of Somalia.[25] In this light, there is a tendency when incidents of corruption become visible to look for scapegoats. International actors often look to blame others, especially local actors, and in so doing absolve themselves of responsibility and accountability. This defensive reaction contributes to the silence around the issue further hampering much needed agreement on how to take sustained systemic actions to make the fundamental changes needed.

On a system-wide scale, the formal aid system responses tend to concentrate on risk management actions. Risk management activities include strengthening of joint risk registers, guidance on risk mitigation, strengthening of targeting, registration and monitoring mechanisms. There is also attention to communication of selection criteria, rights and entitlements and feedback mechanisms to recipients. These are all necessary. But insufficient.

In the latest draft recommendations in response to a 2023 report on diversion commissioned by the UN Secretary General (Post-Delivery Aid Diversion in Somalia) there is increasing attention to strengthening the role of government to mitigate corruption and diversion. This demonstrates a shift away from a purely technological and risk control response to the reports of diversion and corruption but still blurs the role that aid itself plays in the aid economy and does not fully embrace a long-term vision for increasing accountability and integrity in the aid response. Many organisations, and aid recipients themselves, call for increased attention to the representation, participation and decision-making role of aid recipients as camp managers, in oversight committees and feedback mechanisms, particularly for marginalised and minority groups.[26]

---

[24] Kamau, Muchunu, Mohamoud, Munyaviri, and Bryld (2023).

[25] Transparency International and Humanitarian Outcomes (2017). *Collective commitment to enhance accountability and transparency in emergencies: synthesis report.* https://images.transparencycdn.org/images/2017_CREATE_Synthesis_EN.pdf

[26] Ground Truth Solutions (2023).

Corruption risks exist across the programme cycle. Identifying partners, awarding and pricing contracts, negotiating access, hiring staff, selecting and registering aid recipients and monitoring processes are all points at which corruption happens. Aid agencies were described by local actors in interviews as detached, distant, and overpaid and the structuring of the aid system itself as a driver of corruption.

The identification of local partners, and the awarding of contracts (to private contractors and humanitarian agencies), are two points of particularly significant corruption risk. The practice of staff of international agencies colluding around the sub-contracting of local NGOs is reported to be widespread and involve payments to secure contracts. Once such relationships are established, the two parties work together, and the respective staff of the contracting agency work to ensure that monitoring and investigation processes are compromised.[27] An important message is that corruption and aid diversion must be acknowledged as a systemic problem. Without a readiness to accept this there is a danger that mitigation actions taken will be too simplistic and short-term to make any meaningful difference to such a complex problem. This will require a determination to look hard within international organisations and unequivocal recognition of their role in driving the aid economy. Better tackling corruption and diversion requires a systemic approach and collaborative process, involving local, national, and international actors, sustained attention, and a long-term vision of strengthening each stakeholder's accountability to people in need.

3.3 Tackling marginalisation in 2022 and 2023

One of the characteristics of being marginalised or excluded is that you are unseen by those with power and resources. Marginalisation exists across a spectrum from culturally excluded minority groups through to large groups who are not necessarily a minority in their traditional homelands (e.g. Bantu groups) but are often marginalised in the political economy of those areas. Another aspect of being socially hard to reach is when a group is a minority in the place they are living, regardless of the national "strength" of that clan or sub-clan, for instance due to displacement or urbanisation. Nationally the Rahanweyn or Digil and Mirifle are sometimes referred to as marginalised clans, but in terms of vulnerability to shocks, there is huge diversity within the sub-clans of this group – and even within the less vulnerable clans, ranging between very resilient and very vulnerable.

Remote management and high staff turnover inhibit understanding of these complex issues and slow the consideration of exclusion risks in monitoring systems, targeting mechanisms, procurement, human resource decisions, and other parts of aid programming. For example, most information systems such as the Food Security Needs Analysis Unit (FSNAU) and needs assessments, are not adequately set up to identify marginalised groups, and therefore miss an important aspect of vulnerability. Paradoxically, people living in hard-to-reach areas have tended to receive more attention from the humanitarian system when compared to those who are marginalised in easy-to-reach areas, such as IDP sites.

2022–23 has seen a wide variety of attempts to increase the visibility of marginalised people within the aid system. Several organisations have been working with experts and advisers, including minority-led groups, to commission area based political economy analysis (PEA) of the presence of minority and marginalised groups and to identify the major drivers of marginalisation. At the start of the crisis, the protection cluster and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) undertook region-by-region briefings to partners to discuss who is marginalised in which area and why.

Several aid actors have started asking questions about clan identity and find that, for the most part, people are willing to provide this information, allaying previous concerns that it might be too sensitive. Communities that use minority languages face higher barriers to accessing information, aid, and basic services.[28] Therefore, some agencies have incorporated questions about languages into analysis, targeting and monitoring systems as a proxy indicator of access to aid and marginalisation.

---

[27] Harmer and Majid (2016).

[28] Clear Global (2022). *Language use in Somalia: Quantitative research findings. An analysis of language data collected in REACH's assessment of hard-to-reach areas.* https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/language-use-somalia-quantitative-research-findings-analysis-language-data-collected-reachs-assessment-hard-reach-areas-march-2023

Building on the improved understanding of who, where, and why people were marginalised in an area, many organisations tested adaptations to their targeting mechanisms to include marginalised and minority groups. Approaches included the purposeful targeting of IDP sites strongly associated with marginalised and minority groups. The CCCM cluster used its information system to select sites predominantly inhabited by minorities to conduct initial screening on the structural risks of exclusion, and then applied more usual household and vulnerability criteria within those sites.

There is increasing awareness that community-based targeting methods can increase exclusion if not carefully managed and this is leading to moves to more vulnerability-based approaches. Agencies have included minority or marginalised status as a component of vulnerability score-based targeting systems. Several agencies have tested area-based targeting approaches, such as selecting an area with a high density of minority and marginalised groups, and then targeting household vulnerabilities within those areas. In a minimum response package (MRP) programme, UNICEF, IOM and WFP agreed on an area-based approach and a vulnerability index with a scoring rate for each household and member that included whether they belonged to a minority household. The protection and CCCM clusters have started a pilot fast-track referral system for minorities at risk of exclusion from aid, which aims to prioritise IDP sites where people have particularly high risks of exclusion, and tries to provide fast-track referrals to food assistance. However, it is facing challenges in absorbing people referred onto lists of people targeting for assistance that are not updated in a timely fashion.

There are also a growing number of minority-led organisations and networks such as the Marginalized Communities Advocacy Network (MCAN) which has emerged, with support from Minority Rights Group. These new groups, however, are facing significant obstacles to pass formal vetting processes to access support from international aid agencies. At the time of writing, only one minority-led organisation had received approval to receive pooled funding, though several others were being assessed. Minority-led organisations now have one representative on the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), though some question how much it can influence and participate in decision making in practice. In a partnership between Minority Rights Group and M-CAN, supported by USAID, people from minority groups are trained in a fellowship programme and then receive work placements in the aid sector or local authorities. This aims to overcome structural barriers that lead to minority exclusion and has so far included one fellow who is now the water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) coordinator in Baidoa.

Despite most minority organisations not having received official implementing status, some organisations are finding ways around this. For example, pairing a minority organisation with an existing NGO, where the minority-led organisations support in targeting and the NGO then delivers the assistance. Despite the weaknesses of minority organisation capacity and continued challenges to achieve more equitable inclusion and participation in humanitarian aid processes, this initiative has already broken down many barriers and should continue to be prioritised. At local levels, more attention should be paid to increasing the representation of relatively less easily identified marginalised groups in aid decision making, such as IDP site committees.

There have also been efforts to make the marginalised and excluded more visible in accountability to affected people (AAP) mechanisms, which have often excluded minorities due to accessibility, language, and discrimination barriers. For instance, minority-led organisations are working with an independent feedback mechanism (Loop), which has a specific objective to help affected communities, including minorities and excluded groups, to be more vocal in their feedback. Loop operates in multiple languages and uses an oral methodology through its interactive voice response and reply technology, making it is easier for people to access, regardless of literacy level.

Aid agencies are also making greater efforts to tackle the question of marginalisation in human resources and recruitment. In the recent past most aid organisations have avoided asking about ethnic

or kinship identity either at recruitment stage or in risk assessments about aid diversion. More organisations are now attempting to be more purposeful in recruiting a diverse spectrum of staff and in supporting staff to manage potential conflicts of interest arising from kinship and clan identities. This is challenging and interviewees noted that, "good women and minority staff are like gold dust", due to issues including more limited education and experience of minority and marginalised groups. However, knowing better who you are working with and supporting Somali staff to better manage the pressures of divided loyalties have emerged as a key positive learning of the 2022−23 crisis.

Greater attention to marginalisation has sparked debates about possible risks arising from efforts to tackle exclusion. There are concerns about potential security, conflict, and corruption risks arising from attempts at positive discrimination in favour of previously excluded groups. For example, fears have been raised that using minority quotas in distribution lists can lead to false claims of minority or marginalised status. One donor commented, "Once you give minority organisations a preference − everyone becomes a minority-led organisation." Several organisations reported that they are already finding it difficult to distinguish the genuine minority-led organisations. Others thought it would be more useful in the longer term to reform existing local and national NGOs to include minority groups rather than create separate categories. There is a need to guard against these fears being used an excuse for inaction, to evidence whether they are being borne out in practice, and where there are genuine risks, to develop mitigation strategies.

It has long been seen as sensitive or taboo to ask about clan and kinship groups. However, some of the reluctance to openly confront marginalisation could be seen as powerful vested interests protecting the status quo by overstating risks in tackling issues more openly. Organisations are exploring different ways to talk to government officials and informal authorities about this issue in a way that is not confrontational. For example, one organisation explained how it was trying to remove the word 'marginalisation' − perceived as too sensitive − from the discussions with local authorities, and is instead talking more about area-based solutions. NGOs are taking more steps to communicate targeting strategies that aim to better include minorities clearly to avoid resentment.

3.4 Reaching hard-to-reach areas

The 2022−23 response saw a significant push by local and international aid agencies to work in hard-to-reach and extremely hard-to-reach areas. These areas are often those that have significant Al-Shaabab control or are contested.[29] At this time there were also discussions about the extent to which more aid in hard-to-reach areas might prevent anticipated large-scale displacements into urban areas.

There were also debates about whether trying to access people in hard-to-reach areas should be a priority given that it was likely to be more expensive, or whether more cost-effective aid should be prioritised in order to reach larger numbers of people in areas that were easier to access. These debates created delays in efforts to provide aid in hard-to-reach areas but ultimately, the aid community rejected the zero-sum perspective of choosing between those who were more at risk or the greater number in need.

District-scale prioritisation was endorsed by the HCT in March 2022 and regularly updated based on a prioritisation methodology. Somalia was divided into three drought operational priority areas − immediate, phased, and monitoring. Large amounts of aid were concentrated in priority 1 and 2 districts with less attention to other districts. At the same time there was a scale-up of interventions in hard-to-reach areas. REACH/IMPACT has attempted to monitor the situation in hard-to-reach areas, but the analysis has not been as regular as needed. The wider humanitarian information system has been reluctant to accept data from hard-to-reach areas as it is thought to be less reliable. As many

---

[29] REACH Somalia (2022). *Hard-to-reach assessment - South and Central districts: Somalia, December 2021 - January 2022.* https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/hard-reach-assessment-south-and-central-districts-somalia-december-2021-january-2022

hard-to-reach area interventions were new, assumptions about relative cost effectiveness of hard-to-reach or easy-to-reach interventions were also made without adequate evidence. Delay in finding a consensus and implementing it could have been avoided or reduced if more evidence was available on the location, situation and needs of people in hard-to-reach areas.

This change in approach to hard-to-reach areas was in part driven by some donors that pushed (and enabled) agencies to be less risk averse. Interviewees reported that donor support felt very different to the response in 2017. Despite a strong donor lead there remain concerns over aid agencies feeling pressured into taking more risks without assurances of being protected from the associated reputational risks. There remain divisions among donors on this issue – while some push this higher-risk approach quite hard, others are more cautious regarding aid agencies' capacities and ability to manage these new risks.

The adoption of Resolution 2664 by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in December 2022, which is a cross-cutting humanitarian carve-out for all UN sanctions regimes, including Somalia, also meant that there was a loosening of the Office of Foreign Assets Control US Treasury (OFAC) guidelines, which allowed agencies more room to innovate and adapt without fear of being in contravention of the sanctions regime.[30] The December 2022 resolution was a modest expansion of a previous UNSC carve-out for Somalia. That meant that in 2022, in contrast to previous crises, the carve-out was well understood and had been factored into operational agency risk management, although there remain different organisational perspectives on the extent to which these carve-outs have affected fiscal and reputational risks.

The combination of donor incentives, and urgency to prevent famine, resulted in a willingness to take greater risks to reach the most vulnerable and has meant that many agencies have implemented programmes outside of their usual areas of operation. Most aid organisations in Somalia have worked in particular areas for extended periods of time. As such, they have built up extended networks with important political and social players and have tailored their staff and logistics capacities accordingly. Lack of familiarity with a new hard-to-reach area brings new risks. In 2022–23, these risks were compounded by the late and hurried activation of interventions in hard-to-reach areas and by a lack of preparedness and consolidation of experience on how to implement programmes at a scale commensurate with the urgency of preventing famine. However, some organisations and interventions have pointed the way for new ways of operating in hard-to-reach areas in the future as well as approaches to avoid. Documenting, adapting, and maintaining such approaches is critical to improving the effectiveness of any scale-up in hard-to-reach areas in future crises.

[30]   Chowdhury Fink, N. and Sarfati, A. (2022) *Milestone in the Security Council: What the New Humanitarian "Carve-out" Means for UN Sanctions Regimes.* IPI Global Observatory.
https://theglobalobservatory.org/2022/12/new-humanitarian-carve-out-un-sanctions-regimes/

Working on health programming in Al-Shabaab areas

"We have been working in Al-Shabaab areas on an infectious disease programme for a while, using a network of local NGOs. Disease control is a difficult programme to steal from as the drugs are very specific and it is a highly desired service on both sides of the conflict. Al-Shabaab recognises this, so they support these services through local NGOS. But in some greyer areas when you want to provide a multitude of services we explored three different operational models – 1) third party to negotiate 2) local NGOs access negotiation for multiple assistance 3) community to community negotiation process. The local NGO-led model is the longest standing and most successful from our experience, but it also depends on the type of service you want to provide. Cash is ok but not vehicles, staff, etc.

The major change for us has been the retiring /loosening of the OFAC licence – this has increased the ability to have an open conversation, has freed up the thinking and is why we are having different conversations also with donors on what is possible."

"Sometimes the community takes responsibility – there was a terrible disease outbreak with many cases in the main stabilisation centres – but we weren't able to access the community. So with the severity of the situation, community elders got in touch and asked us and said, 'Please, you have to come back'. There was then a meeting with the programme team and their representatives and the district health board. Here there were previous community health workers from a centre there and they said, 'We will take responsibility that our health workers will have security and will be going to families doing A, B, C, D'. Having oversight over this was very complicated. But it has proven successful."

Negotiations

The geographic boundaries between government and Al-Shabaab control can be blurred and, in many cases, both exert influence in the same places. Developing and maintaining some access to areas partly or fully controlled by Al-Shabaab means that negotiating with them is essential. In 2022–23 there does not appear to have been any joined-up, high-level UN and government discussions, or negotiations with Al-Shabaab concerning humanitarian access. This is likely to have been influenced by the government and internationally backed, concurrent counter-insurgency activities, but also a lack of clarity on how to pursue parallel and linked humanitarian, development, and stabilisation agendas in a crisis.

At the local level, our interviews found that a few international NGOs and many local NGOs had been accessing areas under Al-Shabaab control through local-level negotiations, prior to 2022. NGOs report communicating the essentials of their interventions by phone with local area commanders. Access continues to be small-scale and for the most part appears to involve pushing access slowly outwards from easier-to-reach areas into the margins of hard-to-reach or extremely hard-to-reach areas, and testing what is possible. While this is not a new strategy it remains a little-discussed process, and is very much organisation-dependent.

There are risks with this agency-specific, localised approach, especially due to the lack of coherence across the negotiating tactics, methods used, and risks taken. Greater exchange of learning concerning these local negotiations will always have to be behind closed doors – but failure to discuss common principles for the negotiations and lessons learnt significantly increase risks to the negotiating organisation and to the entire humanitarian aid system.

Collective action to negotiate access to a hard-to-reach area and population

Near Dolo, across the Juba River, there were six villages that had not been accessed by aid agencies. Dolo local authorities had no interest in serving them because of the population's different and less powerful clan identities. They strongly discouraged aid agencies from accessing the areas across the river, stating that they were inaccessible due to Al-Shabaab presence. The protection cluster did its own analysis and reopened negotiations with the local authorities, saying its security assessment showed no such security risks. A small consortium of a UN agency, international NGOs and Somali NGOs together negotiated for access using various entry points with local authorities on both sides of the river. They found that a degree of collective action helped in gaining traction and they ultimately managed to reach and deliver aid.

Access through local organisations

International organisations have worked with local committees and structures such as health boards, beneficiary committees, imams, elder committees, and business people to facilitate access negotiations and targeting and monitoring exercises. Pre-existing connections and relationships are seen as important, as it allows trusted community members from different walks of life (e.g. trusted headteacher, health worker, community worker, Imam etc.) to be utilised on committees. These committees can help with targeting and with resisting Al-Shabaab and government pressures. Monitoring is then done over the phone to other trusted members of the community or by talking to people who have come out of the village even on a temporary basis. Such projects can be initiated by an NGO or by local communities, through elders.

Building trusted networks and avoiding the many pitfalls of working remotely through community committees takes time, skill, and capacity. Interviewees pointed out that donor funding for these activities in extremely hard-to-reach areas needed to be very flexible – in terms of timings, but also in terms of the types of assistance the funding is for, and the kind of monitoring that can be done – as the situation and the kind of permission they obtain from Al-Shabaab can be very fluid and changeable. Local organisations, communities, and community committees very much take responsibility and shoulder the risks of extending the humanitarian response into extremely hard-to-reach areas. Interviewees pointed out that more training for local partners and committees was important – for example on how to negotiate and discuss respect for red lines – but that despite the overall donor push to increase access to these areas, little money was available to support any associated capacity building. Capacity strengthening of this type takes time and the most successful interventions to reach in the hard-to-reach areas were based on networks built in the years prior to the 2022–23 crisis.

Incremental approaches

In some cases, interventions in hard-to-reach areas were new or had not been used recently, and therefore an incremental approach was used to roll them out. Less sensitive interventions, such as water trucking, were often tried first. International NGOs used different experiential approaches: one explained how they initially used internal funding to test interventions. Another said they mobilised money from businesses and initiated water trucking and parked the water truck in the middle of the village so everyone could access it. Once these less controversial activities were successfully completed, other types of activity could be undertaken.

One NGO highlighted that standardised approaches will not always work and that there was a need to work with trusted often very local organisations and to adapt to changes in leadership that require rebuilding relationships. Each type of intervention comes with its own constraints; interventions that require physical assets such as vehicles were seen to be more complex than responding to disease outbreaks at the request of the local committees and authorities. Key informants felt that it was very unlikely that a multisectoral response would be possible in these areas. The iterative approach to rolling out interventions helps agencies to manage risks but delays access to aid at scale.

Supporting freedom of movement and people's ability to access aid and services

From the point of view of the affected hard-to-reach population, Al-Shabaab mediated freedom of movement (mobility) is crucial to enabling access to services and assistance in urban areas, and the ability to return to the rural hard-to-reach areas. While some constraints remained, in 2022–23, freedom of movement to seek aid and to return was reported to have been easier than in 2011, and similar to 2017.

However, people in hard-to-reach areas are not without agency and will pursue their own efforts to access aid. A common assumption of aid agencies is that proximity to aid recipients is necessary to manage risks such as diversion and to run a better quality and equitable programme but that this proximity comes at a cost of increased institutional risks and costs of logistics and human resources. The nature of the Somali crisis is that proximity to recipients is hugely challenging, even in easy-to-reach areas. In hard-to-reach areas it is even harder to achieve this desired proximity. As one interviewee put it:

> "[The choice is] us going there [hard-to-reach areas] rather than us going to where they are [IDP sites] or enabling people to move where they would like to go (..). Access should be to enable freedom of movement as much as possible – it's not about us taking a helicopter to step out and meet the clan elders – it's an insane idea that is propagated as innovative practice – it is not innovative at all."

Helping people in hard-to-reach areas to access to aid resources is a complement to efforts to increase humanitarian access. An example of this strategy is the 'safe delivery hubs' set up by UN agencies, where people could come and collect assistance – often enough for several months – and return to their home areas.[31] Security is also an important consideration for people in hard-to-reach areas in terms of accessing aid. Security along the road to urban areas and security in those urban areas are often mentioned as key issues that are taken into account when deciding to move.

---

[31] WFP Somalia (2022). *Access expansion framework for hard-to-reach and inaccessible areas.* Unpublished.

In this section we analyse new patterns of conflict that have emerged in 2022 and 2023 and what the implications of these new trends are for humanitarian actors.

4.1 New patterns

Conflict between the government and Al-Shabaab escalated significantly following the election of Hassan Sheikh Mohamud in May 2022, prompting the highest incidences of political violence since 2018, with many civilian causalities.[32][33] The government offensive has relied on collaboration with clan militia, referred to as macawisley, as well as occasional international air support.

Fighting has been most intense in Hirshebelle and Galmudug, where the government has made significant territorial gains. The gains have not been absolute, with towns often changing hands multiple times. While Al-Shabaab has lost territory it has not suffered major losses in its core territories in the South West State or Jubaland, where, crucially, the majority of its revenue is thought to come from. Moreover, the group has generally adopted the tactic of avoiding major conflict with Somali security forces, instead withdrawing from settlements to avoid losses in force strength. This has meant the group has maintained a strong offensive capacity, able to mount counter-attacks as well as significant strikes in Mogadishu. More broadly, many social groups and clans remain under the influence of Al-Shabaab, and the group has long maintained an influence beyond its areas of direct control, including the ability to collect revenue from private sector actors across the country.

In the telephone survey conducted for this review, the majority of respondents indicated that the effects of the latest round of conflict had been overall negative, irrespective of region (Figure 6). However, some responded that the situation had made certain aspects of life easier for them "because it is easier to access services (like health care) with the shift in control" and "we have more security with the shift in control" (Figure 7).

Figure 6: Conflict effects
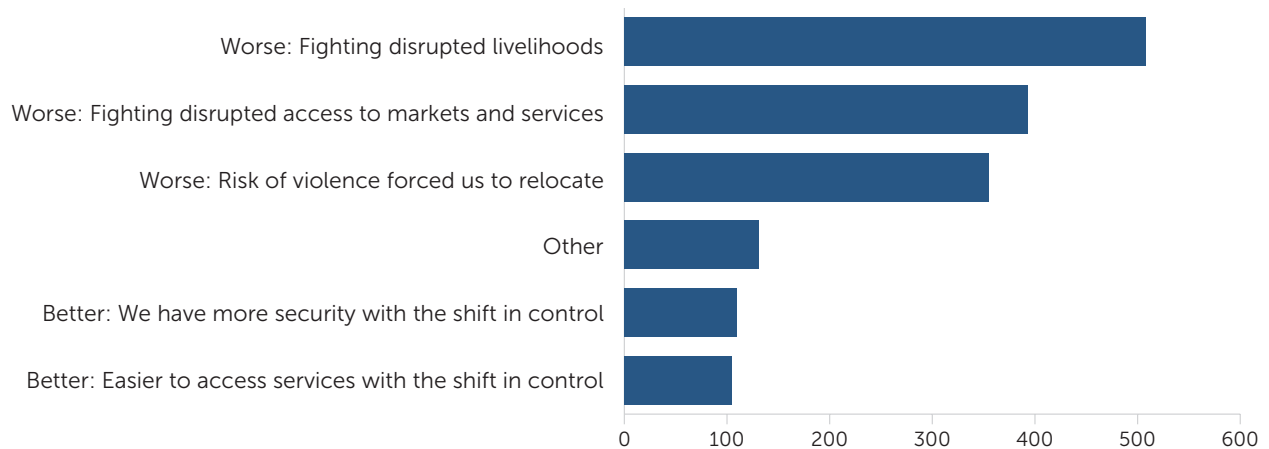
Source: GeoPoll mobile telephone survey, July 2023. N=760

---

[32] ACLED. (2023). *Context assessment: Heightened political violence in Somalia.* https://acleddata.com/2023/03/03/context-assessment-heightened-political-violence-in-somalia/

[33] UN Security Council. (2022). *Final report on the panel of experts of Somalia.* https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3990958?ln=en

Figure 7: It is easier to access services (like health care) with the shift in control
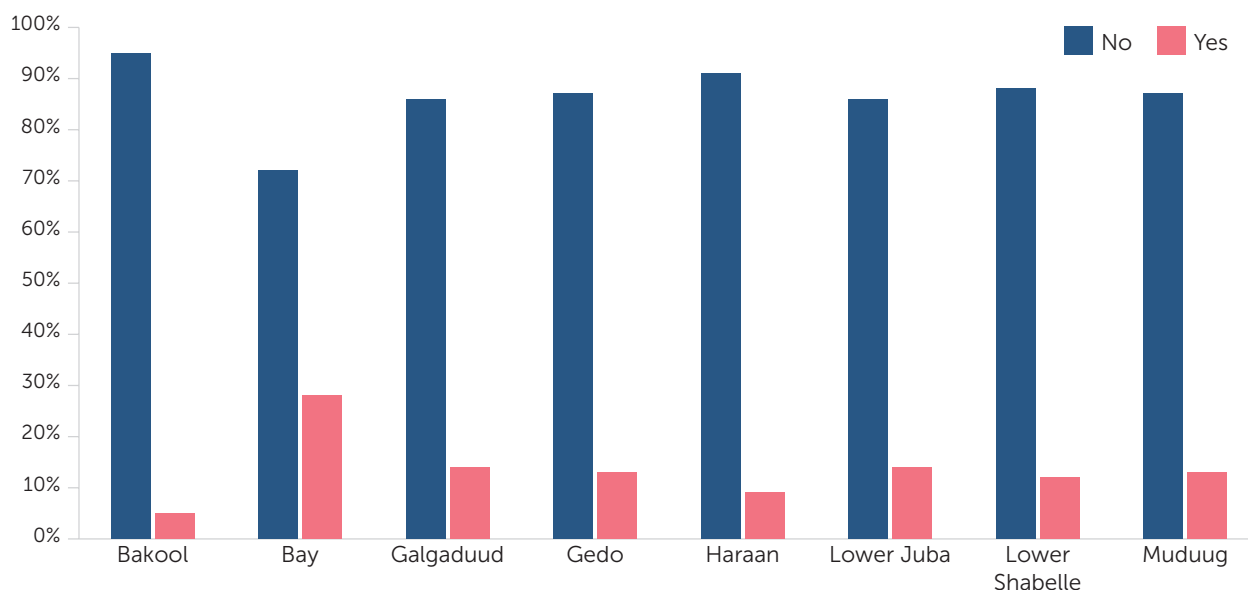
Source: GeoPoll mobile telephone survey, July 2023. N=760

4.2 Implications for humanitarian action

The latest round of conflict has had a direct – but so far limited – impact on humanitarian need. In part this is because the majority of operations have taken place in less populated regions far from the areas most at risk of famine, notably Bay and Bakool.[34]

Overall 2022 saw an uptick in conflict-related displacement with 607,000 people displaced, compared to 554,000 in 2021 and considerably higher than previous years.[35] [36] However, it appears most people did not leave their home regions.[37] Where people did leave their regions, interviewees noted that many often returned home as soon as it was safe to do so – this is in contrast to the more protracted caseload created by drought-related displacement.[38] There was also no clear shift in food commodity or livestock prices in Hiraan or Galgaduud attributable to the conflict, and despite some reported disruptions to trade, markets reportedly remained functional.[39]

There are also a number of less direct effects on humanitarian operations. First, the combination of mobilising clan-based militia and the retreat of Al-Shabaab from areas where it had frozen tensions between groups, has led to the resurgence of clan-based conflict over grazing pasture and water.[40]

---

[34] Integrated Food Security Phase Classification. (IPC). (2022). *Nearly 8.3 million people across Somalia face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse acute food insecurity outcomes.* https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/Multi-Partner-Technical-Release-on-Updated-IPC-Analysis-for-Somalia-fo-October-2022-to-June-2023-Final-(English)-13-Dec-2022.pdf

[35] UN High Commissioner for Refugees. (UNHCR). (2023a). *Somalia internal displacement; Displacements monitored by UNHCR Protection & Return Monitoring Network (PRMN).* https://prmn-somalia.unhcr.org/yearly-displacement

[36] UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (OCHA). (2023, 8 February). *Humanitarian Needs Overview, Somalia.* https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-humanitarian-needs-overview-2023-february-2023; UNHCR. (2023b). *Somalia: Internal displacements monitored by Protection & Return Monitoring Network (PRMN),* https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-internal-displacements-monitored-protection-return-monitoring-network-prmn-february-2023

[37] Ibid

[38] Ibid

[39] FEWSNET. (2023). *Somalia Price Bulletin.* https://fews.net/east-africa/somalia/price-bulletin/july-2023

[40] Hiiraan Online. (2022, 16 November). *Former Hirshabelle President: 'Dark forces' fuelling clan conflicts in recently-liberated areas.* https://www.hiiraan.com/news4/2022/Nov/188734/former_hirshabelle_president_clan_conflicts_in_recently_liberated_areas_a_worrying_development.aspx; Hiiraan Online. (2023, 18 July). *Somali president arrives in Jowhar to address political conflict and clan fighting.* https://www.hiiraan.com/news4/2023/July/192288/somali_president_arrives_in_jowhar_to_address_political_conflict_and_clan_fighting.aspx; Hiiraan Online. (2023, 24 July). *Somali clans reach preliminary agreement to halt deadly inter-clan fighting in Middle Shabelle.* https://www.hiiraan.com/news4/2023/July/192349/somali_clans_reach_preliminary_agreement_to_halt_deadly_inter_clan_fighting_in_middle_shabelle.aspx

A second, related, issue concerns the changing power dynamics following the removal of Al-Shabaab from an area, where armed militia from dominant clans have reportedly used the offensives to expand their territorial claims along valuable riverine farming land around the Shebelle River at the cost of marginalised groups in the area. Efforts to understand the political economy of areas where this is a risk should be considered an urgent priority, particularly as significant new international investments are being planned in some of these areas. Aid agencies will need to ensure that their resources are not used to support the territorial expansion of one group over another – a practice that has a long history along both the Juba and Shabelle rivers, and which remains under-assessed by international agencies.

Thirdly, it is also worth noting some of the destabilising political effects of the offensive. Political divisions can lead to further conflict and displacement and create further complications for aid actors in negotiating access.

Finally, the offensive has arguably distracted Somali authorities and international partners from humanitarian response. The offensive has been the overriding priority of the government since mid-2022, and this, according to interviewees, diverted attention from responding to the prospect of famine towards the end of last year. This tension between humanitarian and politico-military priorities was also evident in the government's reported concerns that a declaration of a famine might detract from development priorities and resources.

The impact of the escalated war on access issues is proving complex. On the surface of it, the recovery of territory would allow a more effective response in areas previously inaccessible due to Al-Shabaab control. However, the expansion of humanitarian response into these areas appears to have been patchy for several reasons. In the areas where Al-Shabaab has been dislodged, the reliance on clan militia has led to the proliferation of irregular forces alongside the national army, both of which have established checkpoints that can hinder timely aid access.[41]

Access has also been complicated by the perceived need to maintain humanitarian neutrality. Stabilisation actors are clearly mandated to provide support in newly recovered areas with an explicit objective to enhance government legitimacy and enhance security.[42] Humanitarian actors, by contrast, have been less willing to operate in these newly recovered areas due to possible risks to their neutrality, which can be compromised by quickly moving into liberated areas and being seen to legitimise government authority and work with security forces. This came under criticism from some interviewees, who felt that the people facing a huge range of needs were being ignored, even as a minority of agencies appear to be successful in delivering aid without government association.

This is a particularly pertinent issue, due to the large differences in funding flows between humanitarian and stabilisation programmes, with US$904 million pledged for 2023 on the humanitarian side, and a budget of less than US$20 million for the combined stabilisation programmes, according to one key informant. Interviewees noted a lack of effective coordination between stabilisation and humanitarian actors, even where they offer similar outputs – cash assistance, water trucking and infrastructure, and health services. The government's revised stabilisation plan, launched in June 2023, sought to provide both a strategic and coordination framework for bringing together a range of Somali institutions and international partners on key areas of work such as the provision of basic services. But it remains unclear if this will shift these dynamics, especially in a context of distrust between the government and the donor community noted by interviewees.[43]

41 OCHA Somalia. (2023, 31 March). *2023 Quarter 1 humanitarian access overview.*
    https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/ocha-somalia-2023-quarter-1-humanitarian-access-overview-31-march-2023

42 Mubarak, M. and Jackson, A. (2023). Playing the long game. *Exploring the relationship between Al-Shabaab and civilians in areas beyond state control.* Centre on Armed Groups. https://www.armedgroupscentre.org/reports-and-articles/playing-the-long-game

43 Federal Government of Somalia, Revised FGS Stabilisation Plan, Undated

Overall, the aid response must reckon with a period of conflict volatility that is likely to persist for some time. This is especially clear regarding a possibly second phase of government operations which has had a rapidly changing and uncertain scope. In the first few months of 2023, this was dubbed 'Operation Black Lion', and appeared to include the participation of Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF), as well as other foreign forces – a prospect that would have had very significant and unpredictable impacts for the Somali political, security, and humanitarian context. While this prospect appears to have dwindled significantly, the government appears committed to taking the fight to Somalia's southern regions. This is a scenario the aid community needs to be prepared for.

Although the exact impact of further operations remains uncertain it could include areas with historic and current higher levels of vulnerabilities – Bay, Bakool, and Gedo – and the shock and disruption of military operations may therefore impact humanitarian needs more significantly. Multiple interviews with experts and practitioners also highlighted that displacement is likely to be much more significant, likely putting pressure on already high humanitarian caseloads in Baidoa, Kismayo, and Mogadishu.

Jubaland and South West State, the areas that would be covered under a second phase, also include Al-Shabaab's heartlands, and it would be reasonable to expect the fighting to be more disruptive, especially as Al-Shabaab would have less scope to retreat. Interviewees also noted that Al-Shabaab has greater influence among some social groups south of the river and that this may exacerbate clan tensions and marginalisation even further, especially in places like Lower Shebelle, increasing the prospect of larger numbers of civilian casualties.

The aid response also needs to prepare for the ongoing drawdown of the African Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), which, while having little offensive capacity, has been a key provider of security, especially in urban areas. From a force strength of 18,586 at the beginning of year, an initial drawdown of 2,000 was completed in June 2023, and a second drawdown of 3,000 troops is planned by the end of September 2023 in anticipation of the conclusion of its mandate by the end of 2024.[44]

The intersection between the current military campaign and ATMIS withdrawal is likely to be the defining, if deeply uncertain, dynamic shaping the broader security environment and its impact on the humanitarian situation and response going forward. Interviews expressed concern that, given the reliance on ATMIS for effective operations, especially in securing roads, any withdrawal will impact access.

44 ACAPS (2023, 17 August). *Somalia: Risk of worsening existing humanitarian needs in conflict-affected areas.* https://www.acaps.org/en/countries/archives/detail/somalia-risk-of-worsening-existing-humanitarian-needs-in-conflict-affected-areas

5 Shifting national capacities for response

We examined how the international humanitarian system was relating to Somalia's systems and capacities to respond to crisis. Changes in 2022–23, compared to 2017 and 2011, include a more active and stronger government (in the areas that it controls), aid agency commitments to localisation, and the significant involvement of World Bank-funded, government-led programmes, such as Baxnaano.

5.1 Government

Government structures and capacities, as well as in the ways in which the international aid response has engaged with government, are very different compared to previous crises. Basic constitutional structures and institutions are now in place. In the 2011 drought, the federal government was not even formed, and in 2017 the last federal member state had only just been formally incorporated. There is also much more government presence at state and district level.

The government has taken a much more visible role in the coordination and leadership of the response, through the Somali Disaster Management Agency (SoDMA) and the early appointment of a drought envoy. At the same time, continued political rivalries, as well as competition over resource allocation between both the government and some of the member states, also affect the way they engage with the crisis response.

More specialised ministries and focal points for key areas – such as durable solutions, disaster management, and stabilisation – have been put in place, and dedicated envoys for drought and stabilisation have been appointed. But even though there were more functional government structures in place at the beginning of this crisis, government mobilisation and engagement were seen by interviewees as slower than in 2017. This was due to factors including government distraction with elections and an uncertain political transition, ongoing political rivalries, and the offensive against Al-Shabaab. The federal government reportedly did not want to declare famine due to fear of loss of development funds that are crucial for overall government support as well as bankrolling the Al-Shabaab offensive, though some of the state and lower levels of government felt very differently about this. While the appointment of the drought envoy in 2022 helped in terms of raising international attention for funding purposes, a number of interviewees felt that the government focused most of its attention on raising funds to the detriment of establishing systems and structures that would have been more conducive to a better response, such as removing barriers around taxation on imports for aid agencies, access negotiations and support with framework agreements with business and other entities to ensure better cooperation overall.

Government agencies also reportedly lack clear mandates and roles, and much depends on the power of a certain minister or individuals within a ministry in terms of how visible they are and how much they can achieve. Structures are confusing to engage with, with ministerial roles changing and new ministries being established. Aid agencies report suddenly getting letters saying they should now coordinate with one ministry over another – often upending recent investments in relationships.

Some international agencies have started bypassing the federal government level due to the perception of them as 'resource takers' without adding much in return and have focused more on working more at state and district level. A long-running dispute about tax exemptions on humanitarian cargo in 2022 also damaged trust between humanitarians and the government. State governments have also reportedly been approaching donors and aid organisations directly for resources. A respondent reported that, across the humanitarian and development aid spectrum, it is becoming standard practice to include budget lines,

sometimes disguised, that are effectively a facilitation payment for action. While in the short term this may help in getting things done, it risks undermining state-building processes as it encourages rent-seeking and undermines important discussions that need to be had around accountability and integrity.

Government actors in key informant interviews highlighted that international agencies want to coordinate during the implementation phase but engage less at the conceptualisation and planning phases. Government officials also lamented the fact that there is no data sharing and common data management, with every aid agency having its own system of registering recipients. This results in duplications and incentivises abuse of the aid system, which they blame for some of the post-distribution resource diversion.

The biggest change has been in the way the government and the World Bank and others have been engaging on the delivery of the social safety net – Baxnaano. Through the scale-up of shock-responsive safety nets, urban and rural water, livelihood and health interventions, the World Bank is now a significant donor, with Baxanano included in the national budget – although the funds themselves are still coming from the World Bank on grant terms. By September 2023, the government had reached over 3.9 million people with different forms of assistance. The key difference is that the government, through the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA), is contracting out the delivery of the emergency cash transfers to WFP, has more of a role in deciding on contracts and what resources it wants to commit (albeit within the limits of the World Bank overall vision for the project). The World Bank objective for Baxnaano is not only about delivery but about building government systems. This movement of systems under government ownership is also meant to encourage other partners to work more with the government in the future, as the government builds up the credibility of its leadership and monitoring systems.

Interviewees felt that it had changed the social protection conversation, as the government is now sitting around the table as a key stakeholder, with resources behind it, part of the decision making as well as the learning. It also means the government has to grapple with technical dilemmas around targeting and exclusion, which should support capacity building and learning in these areas. However, there continue to be significant concerns around structural factors that lead to marginalisation and exclusion. Interviewees with good knowledge of the issues reported significant corruption and diversion challenges. More consensus is required on how to navigate these issues as government systems are increasingly used and formalised.

Helped by the social protection policy adopted in 2019, European Union and World Bank funding came in ahead of the current crisis, but still experienced bureaucratic challenges to implement an early response. Nevertheless, the availability of funding allowed for piloting of shock-responsive programmes. In 2021 Baxnaano was extended to 50 districts in coordination with humanitarian agencies and expansion continued throughout 2022 and 2023. The SAGAL social transfers project worked with longer term EU funding and European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) provided additional funding for shock responsiveness. Both Baxnaano and SAGAL have provided important lessons learnt for how social safety nets can progressively be adapted to provide shock responsive social safety nets. There are ongoing discussions around how to align the humanitarian cash 'landscape' with the social safety net 'landscape' and what that implies for different targeting and implementing modalities, transfer values and deduplication efforts.

The World Bank and the government worked together very differently in the 2022–23 crisis due to the availability of International Development Association (IDA) resources and a multisectoral development portfolio that could be pivoted to respond to drought.[45] Whereas in 2017 the World Bank funded partners such as the FAO and ICRC through the IDA Crisis Window, this time the government was in a position to scale up existing development projects, either reprioritising or raising additional resources

---

[45] World Bank. (2020). *Reengaging with Somalia for Long-Lasting Development Outcomes,* https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2020/10/01/reengaging-with-somalia-for-long-lasting-development-outcomes; World Bank. (2023). *The World Bank in Somalia.* Overview. https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/somalia/overview

to increase their shock-responsiveness. For example, the government had existing partnerships with private sector actors to rehabilitate water sources. The government then sat with the water cluster, which gave it a list of water sources in priority areas. The government then agreed to prioritise and rehabilitate boreholes and water points. This shock-responsive approach holds potential for conceptualising better programming across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus.

5.2 Localisation

There was agreement in interviews that there was much more engagement with local NGOs in the 2022–23 response – including an increase in resource allocation to local partners, with some local NGOs managing substantial amounts of money. Some of this shift was driven by the push to extend humanitarian operations to hard-to-reach areas.

However, according to key informants, this has not necessarily translated into real partnership. Very limited amounts of money get contracted directly to Somali NGOs – according to the UN Financial Tracking Service (FTS), only 0.34% of funding in 2022 went to local NGOs or civil society organisations, and 0.69% to national ones. Most other funding continues to pass through the UN and international NGOs as well as pooled funds. National NGOs interviewed argue that relationships are often still very transactional with no commensurate longer-term investment or institutional support to carry out their work, including for example equal allocation of overheads. As one national NGO respondent said, "There is this fixation on indirect costs – you are told you get US$80,000 but zero dollars for staff salaries or vehicles for a five-year project". Some donors, such as the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, are now insisting on coverage of fair indirect costs for all downstream partners, including Somali NGOs. However, the policies of some international NGO headquarters are proving an obstacle in pushing fairer sharing of overheads.

Local NGOs also report not having been involved in decision making and planning, as many projects are already designed and then sub-contracted. While the UN says that it gives at least 60% of its funding to local partners, many report this does not translate into supporting their capacity to grow and make joint decisions. As one respondent said, "WFP is the Manchester United in the drought response – local NGOs are not in the premier league'. Some international NGOs were seen by national NGO interviewees in a positive light, especially those that have had long-term engagements over many years and are really committed to developing their partnerships. Others, however, thought there was a lot of competition for funding between local and international NGOs, as well as turf battles to be the main implementer in certain areas.

Local NGOs, and in particular minority-led organisations, face an uphill battle in terms of passing the stringent vetting process to become UN agency implementing partners, or even becoming eligible for funding from the Somalia Humanitarian Fund (SHF). Many interviewees highlighted how there is no money allocated to get their systems to the required standards and argue that, as part of its mandate to build capacity, the fund should have a capacity-building window or should consider funding an enabler to provide that function.

Many of the opportunities for funding and growth for local NGOs are in insecure areas. A lot of local NGOs are very willing to take more and more security and reputational risks to increase their funding streams but are not receiving commensurate support in terms of training, risk sharing, or integrated safeguarding. There are, however, some signs of progress, such as increasing conversations around risk mapping and sharing. However, while there are more conversations around risk and donors have more risk appetite, many still rely on the local NGOs, clan elders or village committees to facilitate access discussions and therefore ultimately cascade the risk to those who are at the forefront of the response. Some interviewees pointed out that what is needed is much more collective, strategic engagement and dialogue around humanitarian space, risk, and access.

A significant challenge to localisation and the building of equitable partnerships are perceptions around the role played by local organisations in the political economy of aid and risks relating to corruption. Many international and Somali observers, including the government, point to investment in construction and business in Nairobi being evidence of the corruption of funds being channelled through local NGOs. As a local NGO respondent said:

"It's a major blunder [to try to partner with local NGOs] – there is a mushrooming of NGOs in Somalia, everybody who can speak two words of English whether local people, politicians or others will form an NGO. Then there is so much leakage and corruption."

In the last 10 years there have been commendable efforts by groups of local NGOs to reform and strengthen integrity and accountability. These efforts have received some support from international organisations, but a system-wide effort is now required whereby the risk management processes such as vetting, contracting, capacity building and, crucially a stronger focus on partnership processes, combine to reward local NGO integrity and accountability and punish corrupt and rent-seeking behaviour.

Local organisations also report that the government is not 'local organisation-friendly'. One local NGO respondent said, "They are weak but they want to control everything." Some reported that the government was at times very prescriptive in terms of the organisations it would work with or the regions covered. Some local NGOs also felt that they were treated differently to international NGOs, with more bureaucratic hurdles to jump over. While some of the reasons for this conflict can be attributed a struggle over power and resources, it also reflects the government's lack of vision about the future role of civil society in Somalia and how to achieve that vision.

Local NGOs are also not the only form of localisation in Somalia – though rhetorically most discussions focus on them. Many NGOs work with other types of associations such a district health boards, community committees and other informal entities, though these do not feature highly in discussions around resource allocations, capacity or their role in a future civil society. There may be scope to encourage more inclusive and collaborative forms of associations and provide support to also other types of civil society organisation, rather than continue to encourage a singular focus on local NGOs.

5.3 Business and diaspora

Somali business actors were, together with diaspora actors, seen as the fastest in terms of reaching affected communities – both through their charity arms or by providing food, cash, and other resources through their networks and telecommunications companies, including in remote areas.

There was consensus from those interviewed that the Somali market systems proved resilient throughout the crisis, with most markets continuing to function. Market systems and resourcing adjusted quickly to the Ukraine crisis, with supply lines immediately switched to India and elsewhere. A Norwegian Refugee Council study found that, in Baidoa, people across the food systems value chain said they were supporting each other, extending the credit phases and completing transactions much later, as it was in no one's interest for markets to collapse.[46]

The flow of diaspora remittances continued and was at times actively supported by the private sector during the crisis. Some financial service providers waived fees for remittances in instances where a whole village was supported – for example for building a well or a communal project. For individual transactions, fees were reduced during the crisis but not waived completely. There is no reliable evidence on the relative scale of this response when compared to similar responses in the past.

---

[46]   Eco Sprew Consult Team. (2023). *Market systems resilience assessment report. Milk, cowpeas, leafy greens, Baidoa Somalia.* BRCiS Consortium. https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/market-systems-resilience-assessment-report-milk-cowpeas-leafy-greens-baidoa-somalia-april-2023#:~:text=This%20report%20looks%20at%20the,April%205%2D20%2C%202023

Several of those interviewed highlighted that aid actors could develop more strategic partnerships with large-scale business and telecommunications companies, large importers, and even local business people around critical areas for the response. For example, agreements to lower transfer fees for diaspora remittances during the crisis, discussions around guaranteeing loans or how to reach more inaccessible areas. While some cooperation has been happening with businesses at a local level, for example around water trucking and water vouchers, there have been fewer investments in strategic framework agreements for wider collaboration. Most aid agencies continue to see companies such as the big telecommunications companies more as 'service providers' who they can use as a means to an end, rather than engaging them in more innovative ways around what could be done in between profit and charity, and how to involve them in the conceptualisation of joint projects.

Financial service providers point out they are keen to be seen not just as a service provider but as a co-creator and co-investor in sustainable projects – in particular around climate adaptation and finance, water and food systems. One such partnership is already ongoing in some areas with an international NGO for example where finances are matched to co-design and implement a project around climate adaptation. Many of these programmes and partnerships can be done and continued during a crisis if they are set up and arrangements put in place before the crisis.

While there is potential in humanitarian and development partnerships with large businesses, the picture at a more local level in relation to the diaspora is complex. The diaspora – which includes individuals, businesses and groups of individuals and businesses supporting their communities or contributing to more regional or national response funds – plays a significant role in organising the 'Somali response'. This response is certainly faster and has fewer access issues, as well as fewer problems of corruption and diversion, but it is not necessarily more effective, efficient, or equitable and does not share the same understanding of humanitarian principles as the formal response. Perhaps most damaging is the view from the majority of diaspora actors interviewed that the formal humanitarian response does much more harm than good and that, by associating with it, they will be tarred with the same brush. Future partnerships may be possible but there are significant challenges related to trust that must be overcome first.

6   Conclusions and recommendations

Over the last 10 years, processes of economic and livelihood diversification have been taking place within the social groups or clans that have traditionally been most vulnerable to famine and that make up most of the internally displaced population. As a result of these transformations, people have more choice and agency in the timing and processes of displacement. One of the major findings of this review is that some clans that have not been part of historical processes of migration, have been 'catching up' over the last 10 years, gaining more connections to the urban economy and the aid sector. An important part of these changes and transformations has been the strengthening of the social networks of vulnerable groups, particularly in terms of urban–rural linkages.

Greater use of mobile phones has made people even more connected and has helped inform their decisions around where and when to move, how to organise their families, how to support each other, and how to get access to resources, including aid. These transformations have made Somali society – and particularly more marginalised groups – more resilient to famine. The growing strength and

resilience of systems and capacities in the country appears to have been an important factor in avoiding widespread famine conditions in 2022–23. As Somali society continues to adapt and transform, it is essential for the humanitarian response to change.

Change the 'displacement' paradigm

We have discussed how mobility is a complex, multifaceted process. But despite some progress, aid actors still do not sufficiently recognise people's motivations for moving and too often assume that it is a distress strategy, or that aid is 'pulling' them into displacement. An overly rigid and static view of internally displaced people and how they can be assisted is resulting in inappropriate programming that reinforces corruption, diversion, and marginalisation and the long-term risks associated with these. There is a need for better collaboration between humanitarian, resilience and durable solutions approaches based on principles of maximising choices around mobility strategies and facilitating the deepening of social networks.

This review has found a pressing need for aid actors to change how mobility and displacement is understood and for this to lead to a rethink in terms of the way internally displaced people are categorised, camp-based models of assistance, and the conceptualisation of 'return'. There is a need to get away from a system in which people have to leave home and enter into exploitative relationships in order to access assistance. An aid system where diversion and marginalisation are entrenched is both reducing the effectiveness of immediate assistance and undermining people's resilience to future crises. Adapting current approaches to use urban-rural, area-based programming and piloting approaches to channel assistance through social networks rather than to individuals may be ideas to explore. This post-crisis period provides an opportunity to rethink how this could be done and what it would mean for processes for assessment, targeting, registration, distribution monitoring, and the nexus between humanitarian, development and peace efforts.

Transparently face diversion challenges

Concern about aid diversion in Somalia is again prominent as a result of findings from evaluations and audits of the 2022–23 response. The current focus on post-distribution diversion and on gatekeepers risks reproducing a tendency in how corruption risks are framed that blames others and fails to look hard enough at practices within aid organisations. Evidence and experience have shown that diversion is a problem across the whole of the aid programme cycle and from international to the most local parts of the aid structure and processes. Better tackling diversion requires a collaborative process, involving local, national, and international actors, sustained attention, and a willingness by international organisations to step up. Despite at least 12 years of efforts to replace or significantly reduce the negative effects of the gatekeeper system, it has remained remarkably resilient and instead has become more sophisticated and embedded. There have been positive experiences of working with gatekeepers to increase their accountability, make stronger formal-informal authority links so that they can continue to provide needed services with less recourse to negative aspects of diversion and outright corruption. These positive experiences should be used to inform future steps in engaging with gatekeepers.

Continue and intensify efforts to tackle marginalisation and access people in hard-to-reach areas

The 2022–23 response saw a welcome move from rhetoric to action in addressing marginalisation and exclusion. A positive development is that the issue has become less of a taboo, but misconceptions and tensions remain. Increasing efforts to improve the equity of the response are inevitably met with pushback, denial, and fears about increased security and corruption risks. Unexamined assumptions about how increased visibility of the marginalised can increase risks are slowing and distorting efforts to improve how aid actors interact with the marginalised. It is critical that progress is sustained, improved upon and that assumptions about the negatives of addressing equity in aid responses do not give any excuse to delay any further.

Promising approaches to do this include making it standard for organisations to conduct regular political economy risk analysis for their areas of operation, putting in place mechanisms to know who staff are and supporting them to manage the competing imperatives of being a principled humanitarian and a member of Somali society. There is also a need for further action at multiple levels on increasing participation and inclusion of minority and marginalised groups in humanitarian decision-making processes.

People in hard-to-reach areas are a particularly vulnerable subset of marginalised groups. In the past, higher security, reputational and fiduciary risks, and a low-risk appetite among aid agencies have effectively combined to exclude people living in these areas from access to aid resources. In 2022–23, the response made a deliberate attempt to (re)access people by working through local intermediaries, iterative testing of programming and, in some cases, through remote programming such as cash transfers. The heightened risks involved and having to relearn lessons from past experiences of working in these areas, conspired to delay the programmes and limit their scope. Working through intermediaries in hard-to-reach areas requires time, capacity building and, most crucially, trust. This trusting relationship cannot be built in a few short months at the beginning of a crisis. All involved in working in these areas need more training on negotiations, red lines, and how to respect these. There is a need for more political engagement by donors to support agency efforts and for risks that are currently cascaded down to local individuals or groups to be better shared. To avoid the delays and inappropriate programming experienced in 2022–23, humanitarian actors should ensure that a limited number of organisations maintain their operational presence in hard-to-reach areas.

Involve Somali government, civil society, and the private sector in strategy, planning, and design – not just implementation

The 2022–23 response has seen positive progress in terms of engagement by all levels of Somali government, civil society, and the private sector. However, Somali actors remain too sidelined from the more strategic level of humanitarian response and need to be more involved in planning and design processes in order to move from narrow sub-contracting and information-sharing roles to more meaningful partnerships. However, in a partnership, both partners have responsibilities and accountabilities. A stronger partnership, Somali ownership and leadership will only happen if both partners demonstrate increased accountability to each other and, most importantly to the Somali people.

As aid actors learn lessons from the 2022–23 crisis response and prepare for a future of overlapping and increasingly volatile cycles of drought, other climate-driven extremes, market shocks and conflict, there is a need to more effectively engage with Somali capacities and systems that have again demonstrated the extraordinary resilience of the Somali people in the face of crisis.

We suggest that a priority starting point for this engagement is to transform the way that the aid system deals with displacement. This engagement needs to be politically informed, building on positive progress for example in tackling marginalisation and developing strategies for hard-to-reach areas. But it also needs to take a fundamental look at how aid accelerates and deepens vulnerabilities to future crisis and how aid has become embedded in exploitative political economies around displacement. Lessons emerging from the Somalia response around how to maintain access in hard-to-reach areas, find ways to better reach marginalised groups and the need to rethink approaches to displacement and diversion should also help to inform global humanitarian policy and responses in other crises.

References

ACAPS. (2023, 17 August). *Somalia: Risk of worsening existing humanitarian needs in conflict-affected areas.* https://www.acaps.org/en/countries/archives/detail/somalia-risk-of-worsening-existing-humanitarian-needs-in-conflict-affected-areas

ACLED. (2023). *Context assessment: Heightened political violence in Somalia.* https://acleddata.com/2023/03/03/context-assessment-heightened-political-violence-in-somalia/

Bakonyi, J. and Chonka, P. (2023). *Precarious urbanism displacement, belonging and the reconstruction of Somali cities.* Bristol University Press.

Bryld, E., Kamau, S., Knudsen Møller, S., and Mohamoud, M. (2017). *Engaging the gatekeepers: Using informal governance resources in Mogadishu.* Tana Consulting. https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/engaging-gatekeepers-using-informal-governance-resources-mogadishu

Checchi, F. (2023). Inferring the impact of humanitarian responses on population mortality: methodological problems and proposals. *Conflict and Health* 17, 16 (2023). https://doi.org/10.1186/s13031-023-00516-x

Chowdhury Fink, N. and Sarfati, A. (2022). *Milestone in the Security Council: What the new humanitarian "carve-out" means for UN Sanctions Regimes.* IPI Global Observatory. https://theglobalobservatory.org/2022/12/new-humanitarian-carve-out-un-sanctions-regimes/

Clear Global. (2022). *Language use in Somalia: Quantitative research findings. An analysis of language data collected in REACH's assessment of hard-to-reach areas.* https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/language-use-somalia-quantitative-research-findings-analysis-language-data-collected-reachs-assessment-hard-reach-areas-march-2023

Development Pathways and Samuel Hall. (2022). *Targeting evaluation of Somalia's shock-responsive Safety Net for Human Capital Project (SNHCP),* https://www.samuelhall.org/publications/development-pathways-targeting-evaluation-of-the-somalia-shock-responsive-safety-net-for-human-capital-project-snhcp

Eco Sprew Consult Team. (2023). Market systems resilience assessment report. Milk, cowpeas, leafy greens, Baidoa Somalia. BRCiS Consortium. https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/market-systems-resilience-assessment-report-milk-cowpeas-leafy-greens-baidoa-somalia-april-2023#:~:text=This%20report%20looks%20at%20the,April%205%2D20%2C%202023

Elsamahi, M., Ochieng, G.A. & Bedelian, C. (2023). Coping with the drought crisis in Somalia: Formative research findings from the Resilience Population Measurement (RPM) project. Mogadishu, Somalia: ResiliencePopulation Measurement (RPM) Activity, https://www.mercycorps.org/somalia-resilience-population-measurement

Federal Government of Somalia, Revised FGS Stabilisation Plan, Undated

FEWSNET. (2023). Somalia Price Bulletin, July 2023. https://fews.net/east-africa/somalia/price-bulletin/july-2023

Financial Tracking Service. Retrieved July 2023 https://fts.unocha.org/

Gist research and Laasfort Consulting. (2022). *Understanding the key drivers of displacement in Somalia - during the 2021/22 drought.* International Organization for Migration. https://dtm.iom.int/reports/understanding-key-drivers-displacement-somalia-during-202122-drought

Ground Truth Solutions. (2023). *Overcoming power imbalances: Community recommendations for breaking the cycle.* https://www.groundtruthsolutions.org/library/overcoming-power-imbalances-community-recommendations-for-breaking-the-cycle

Harmer, A. and Majid, N. (2016). *Collective resolution to enhance accountability and transparency in emergencies: Southern Somalia Report.* Transparency International. https://images.transparencycdn.org/images/CREATE_Somalia_report_2016.pdf

Hiiraan Online. (2023, 18 July). *Somali president arrives in Jowhar to address political conflict and clan fighting.* https://www.hiiraan.com/news4/2023/July/192288/somali_president_arrives_in_jowhar_to_address_political_conflict_and_clan_fighting.aspx

Hiiraan Online (2023, 24 July). *Somali clans reach preliminary agreement to halt deadly inter-clan fighting in Middle Shabelle.* https://www.hiiraan.com/news4/2023/July/192349/somali_clans_reach_preliminary_agreement_to_halt_deadly_inter_clan_fighting_in_middle_shabelle.aspx

Hiiraan Online. (2022, 16 November). *Former Hirshabelle president: 'Dark forces' fuelling clan conflicts in recently-liberated areas.* https://www.hiiraan.com/news4/2022/Nov/188734/former_hirshabelle_president_clan_conflicts_in_recently_liberated_areas_a_worrying_development.aspx

Human Rights Watch. (2013). *Hostages to the gatekeepers.* https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/03/28/hostages-gatekeepers/abuses-against-internally-displaced-mogadishu-somalia

Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC). (2022). *Nearly 8.3 million people across Somalia face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse acute food insecurity outcomes.* https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/Multi-Partner-Technical-Release-on-Updated-IPC-Analysis-for-Somalia-fo-October-2022-to-June-2023-Final-(English)-13-Dec-2022.pdf

Kamau, C., Muchunu, G. Mohamoud, M., Munyaviri, A. and Bryld, E. (2023). *Urbanisation and displacement in Mogadishu: Developments, actors and interests.* The University of Manchester. https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/urbanisation-and-displacement-mogadishu-developments-actors-and-interests

Lindley, A. (2010). Leaving Mogadishu: Towards a sociology of conflict-related mobility. *Journal of Refugee Studies,* Volume 23, No 1. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fep043

Lindley, A. and Hammond, L. (2014). Histories and contemporary challenges of crisis and mobility in Somalia, in *Crisis and Migration,* edited by Anna Lindley, Routledge.

Majid, N., Adan, G., Abdirahman, K., Kim, J.J., and Maxwell, D. (2015), *Narratives of famine: Somalia, 2011.* Feinstein International Center, Tufts University. https://fic.tufts.edu/publication-item/somalian-famine-narratives/

Majid, N., Abdirahman, K. and Hassan, S. (2017), *Remittances and vulnerability in Somalia. Assessing sources, uses and delivery mechanisms.* Rift Valley Institute. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/633401530870281332/pdf/Remittances-and-Vulnerability-in-Somalia-Resubmission.pdf

Majid N., Mohamed J., Adan G., Daar A., Abdirahman K., Hailey P., Balfour N., Seal A., and Maxwell D. (2022). *Another humanitarian (and political) crisis in Somalia in 2022.* Feinstein International Center, Tufts University. https://fic.tufts.edu/publication-item/another-humanitarian-and-political-crisis-in-somalia-in-2022/

Maxwell, D. and Majid, N. (2016). *Famine in Somalia. Competing imperatives, collective failures,* 2011-12. Hurst Publishers.

Maxwell, D., Majid, N., Adan, G., Abdirahman, K., and Kim, J.J. (2016), Facing famine: Somali experiences in the famine of 2011. *Food Policy,* Volume 65, pp. 63–73. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodpol.2016.11.001

Migliorisi, A. Tonnarelli F. (2021). *Settlement patterns in Somalia.* UN Habitat. https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2021/08/settlement_patterns_in_somalia.pdf

Mubarak, M. and Jackson, A. (2023). *Playing the long game. Exploring the relationship between Al-Shabaab and civilians in areas beyond state control.* Centre on Armed Groups. https://www.armedgroupscentre.org/reports-and-articles/playing-the-long-game

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2023). *Aid (ODA) disbursements to countries and regions [DAC 2a].* Retrieved July 2023, https://stats.oecd.org/viewhtml.aspx?datasetcode=TABLE2A&lang=en

REACH Somalia. (2022). *Hard-to-reach assessment - South and Central districts: Somalia, December 2021 - January 2022.* https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/hard-reach-assessment-south-and-central-districts-somalia-december-2021-january-2022

Somalia Resilience Population Measurement. (2023). *Role of social networks in coping with the current drought in Somalia: Research Brief.* Mercy Corps. https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/role-social-connections-coping-current-drought-somalia-research-brief-somalia-resilience-population-measurement-may-2023

The United Nations Accountability Project—Somalia. (2018). Neither inevitable nor accidental: The impact of marginalization in Somalia. In: *War and peace in Somalia: National grievances, local conflict and Al-Shabaab.* Edited by Michael Keating and Waldman Matt, Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190947910.003.0002

Transparency International and Humanitarian Outcomes. (2017). *Collective commitment to enhance accountability and transparency in emergencies: synthesis report.* https://images.transparencycdn.org/images/2017_CREATE_Synthesis_EN.pdf

UN Financial Tracking Service (FTS). (2023). *Financial Tracking Service.* Retrieved July 2023 https://fts.unocha.org/home/2023/donors/view

UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2023a). *Somalia internal displacement; Displacements monitored by UNHCR Protection and Return Monitoring Network (PRMN).* Retrieved 15 September 2023 from https://prmn-somalia.unhcr.org/yearly-displacement

UNHCR. (2023b). *Somalia: Internal displacements monitored by Protection & Return Monitoring Network (PRMN).* https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-internal-displacements-monitored-protection-return-monitoring-network-prmn-february-2023

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). (2023, 8 February). *Humanitarian needs overview, Somalia.* https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-humanitarian-needs-overview-2023-february-2023

UN OCHA Somalia. (2023, 31 March). *2023 Quarter 1 Humanitarian access overview.* https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/ocha-somalia-2023-quarter-1-humanitarian-access-overview-31-march-2023

UN OCHA Somalia. (2023, 6 June). *Somalia humanitarian overview.* https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-humanitarian-overview-vol-4-issue-6-june-2011

UN Security Council. (2022). *Final report on the panel of experts of Somalia.* https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3990958?ln=en

WFP Somalia. (2022). *Access expansion framework for hard-to-reach and inaccessible areas.* Unpublished.

World Bank. (2020). *Reengaging with Somalia for long-lasting development outcomes.* https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2020/10/01/reengaging-with-somalia-for-long-lasting-development-outcomes

World Bank. (2023). *The World Bank in Somalia.* Overview. https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/somalia/overview

World Bank. (2023, 1 July). *Mobile phone penetration (as% of population).* Retrieved July 2023 from HelgiLibrary. https://www.helgilibrary.com/indicators/mobile-phone-penetration-as-of-population/

Appendix 1: People interviewed

Peter Chonka, Senior Lecturer in Global Digital Cultures, King's College London

Simon Levine, Research Fellow, Humanitarian Policy Group, ODI

Christine Kamau, Senior Consultant, Tana Copenhagen

Laura Bennison, Chief of Party Scaling Solutions/ Danwadaag Programme Manager, IOM

Benjamin Conner, CCCM Cluster Coordinator, IOM

Laura Turner, Senior Programme Officer/Deputy Head, WFP

Balqis Mohamud, Focal point Marginalisation, WFP

Justin Brady, Head of OCHA

Aisha Hummeida, Chief of Emergency, UNICEF

Damon Bristow, Development Director, FCDO

Nicola Murray, Humanitarian Team lead, FCDO

Jens-Peter Dyrback, Team Leader and Chief Technical Advisor, Governance, Danish government

Javier Rio Navarro, Head of ECHO

Matthias Mayr, Senior Operations Officer, World Bank

Christoph Oberlack , UN-World Bank liaison officer

Magnus Baumann Lorentzen, Head of Humanitarian, Norwegian Embassy

Dustin Caniglia, Adviser at USAID Centre for Resilience

Jonna Karlsson, Humanitarian/Nexus Advisor, Swedish Embassy

Cyril Jaurena, Deputy Head of Delegation, ICRC

Filipa Counho, CCM Coordinator, Danish Refugee Council

Freddie Carver, ReDSS Regional Manager

Abdi-Rashid Haji Nur, Country Director, Concern

Claire Thomas, Co-Deputy Director, Minority Rights Group

Alex Ross, Loop Lead

Richard Crothers, Country Director, IRC

Mohamed Hussein Nasib, EDR Manager, IRC

Yusuf Ahmed, Country Director, Islamic Relief

Paul Healy, Country Director, Trocaire

Ahmed Khalif, Country Director, Action Against Hunger

Sameer Kariya, Regional Resilience Manager, Oxfam

Kevin Mackey, Country Director, World Vision

Perrine Piton, Chief of Party, BRiCs Consortium

Nimo Hassan, Director, Somalia NGO Consortium

Francesca Sangiorgi, Programme Coordinator, Somalia Cash Consortium

Nina Schrepfe, Protection Cluster Coordinator, UNHCR

Simon Karanja, Nutrition Cluster Coordinator, UNICEF

Erna van Goor, Health Cluster Coordinator, WHO

Aydrus Sheikh Daar Director of WASDA NGO

Jelena Savic, Advisor, READO NGO

Abdiwahab, Director of ASEP Somalia

Alinur Aden, Director of GREDO NGO

Ibrahim Hassan , Director of MCADVOC

Yusuf Abdi Lare, Director of LRDO

Burhan Abdullahi, Director PWDO

Salat, , AMARD

Ayan Hararex, Special Assistant to the Drought Envoy, Government of Somalia

Mohamud Ma'alim, Director of SoDMA

Hasan, focal point for CCCM cluster, SoDMA

Samira Ahmed Gaid, Security Expert Consultant with Ministry of Interior

Mohamed Bare, Chief Economic Adviser, Office of the Prime Minister

Abdinasir Abdi Arush, Minister for Humanitarian Assistance – South West State

Nadira Maxamed Cabdi, Director of Social Affairs for local government, Galkayo North

Jihan Abdullahi Hassan, Defense Consultant with government Galkayo

Ja'far Yusuf Abdallah, Somali Red Crescent Society, Galkayo

Mohamed Dhoof Ilkacase, Businessman, with money transfer business

Aydid M Ali, Mudug Youth Leader, Former Mudug Humanitarian focal point

Prof Salim caliyow Ibrahim,MP

Abdullahi Watiin, Mayor of Baidoa

Mohamedweli Yusuf Qorah, District Commissioner, Bardera

Abdirashid Duale, CEO of Dahabshiil

Hassan Ali Chief Officer Dahabshiil

Chief of Microfinance Dahabshiil

Stephen Harley, Stabilisation Expert

Ric Goodman, Social Protection Expert

Daniel Molla, Chief Technical Adviser, FSNAU

Abdi Roble, Food Security Field Analyst, FSNAU

Abdirizak Nur Deputy Country Representative, FEWSNET

Lark Walters, Decision Support Advisor, FEWSNET

Helen Pittam, Senior Research Manager, REACH initiative

Belihu Negesse, Regional Coordinator, IPC

Duaa Sayed, IPC

Gordon Dudi, Food Security Cluster Coordinator

Nicolas Joannic, Programme Officer, WFP

Fernando Moyle, Humanitarian Assistance Officer, USAID

Nick Hutchings, Humanitarian Adviser, FCDO

Andy Seal, Associate Professor, UCL

Mohamed Sheikh Adam, Chairman of African Relief Fund, UK

Abdikadir Ibrahim aka Arab, BRCiS – CWW

Mohamed Bile Mohamed, Humanitarian Consultant, Baidoa

Ahmed Mohamed Gandi, GRRN, Mogadishu

Qasim Mohamed , BRCiS – NRC Mogadishu

Appendix 2: Survey questionnaire

How old are you?

[OPERATOR: RECORD THE AGE IN YEARS – ROUND UP TO NEAREST WHOLE NUMBER. IF THE RESPONDENT GIVES BIRTH YEAR, REPEAT THE QUESTION. ENTER 00 for DON'T KNOW]

What is the gender of the respondent?

[OPERATOR: LISTEN TO THE VOICE AND CHECK THE BOX WHETHER THE RESPONDENT IS MALE OR FEMALE]

1) MALE
2) FEMALE

Which region do you currently live in?

[OPERATOR: SINGLE RESPONSE]

1) AWDAL
2) BAKOOL
3) BANADIR
4) BARI
5) BAY
6) GALGADUUD
7) GEDO
8) HIRAAN
9) LOWER JUBA
10) LOWER SHABELLE
11) MIDDLE JUBA
12) MIDDLE SHABELLE
13) MUDUG
14) NUGAAL
15) SANAAG
16) SOOL
17) TOGDHEER
18) WOQOOYI GALBEED

Now or over the past year, did you/your household need assistance?

[OPERATOR: SINGLE RESPONSE]

1) Yes
2) No
98) DON'T KNOW
99) REFUSED

Were you able to access any humanitarian aid?

[OPERATOR:SINGLE RESPONSE]

1) Yes - Received from local NGOs
2) Yes - Received from International NGOs
3) Yes - Received in-kind aid/zakat from Gulf States
4) No - We didn't receive any humanitarian aid
98) DON'T KNOW
99) REFUSED

Which of these other (informal) forms of support did you receive, if any?

[OPERATOR: MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

1) Family members sent you money from abroad
2) Fellow clan members helped you
3) Neighbours helped you
4) We received zakat from businesspeople
5) Other
6) None
98) DON'T KNOW
99) REFUSED

Were you displaced to another location in the last 6 months due to lack of resources to access aid or other help/meet other economic needs?

[OPERATOR: SINGLE RESPONSE]

1) No - You haven't relocated

2) Yes- To IDP site

3) Yes - To temporary communal site/ encampment

4) Yes - To the home of family or friends in a main town

98) DON'T KNOW

99) REFUSED

Why do you think you were unable to access or receive the humanitarian assistance from NGOs coming into Somalia?

[OPERATOR:MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

1) No aid is located close enough to home and you were unable/unwilling to move

2) Other people needed it more

3) Not enough information is available on where or how to access aid

4) Excluded because of clan affiliation

5) Excluded because of gender [single woman]

6) Corruption by gatekeepers controlling the aid

7) Armed groups [Al Shabaab] restrict aid to this area

8) Personal dispute with someone controlling the aid

9) Government authorities don't prioritise this area

10) Other

98) DON'T KNOW

99) REFUSED

Are you planning to relocate or move out of your location in the near future to access aid or other help/meet other economic needs?

[OPERATOR: SINGLE RESPONSE]

1) Yes - The whole household will relocate

2) Yes - But only one or more household members will relocate and bring/send back the assistance

3) No - We plan to stay where we are

98) DON'T KNOW

99) REFUSED

How has the conflict in Somalia affected you over the past year?

(OPERATOR: MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

1) Risk of violence forced you to move

2) Fighting disrupted our livelihoods

3) Fighting disrupted access to markets and services [like health care]

4) Increased taxation to pay militias

5) It's better because we have more security with the shift in control

6) It's better because it is easier to access services [like health care] with the shift in control

7) Other

98) DON'T KNOW

99) REFUSED

Thank you for your time. The interview has come to an end, you will receive your #TOPUP# airtime credit on this phone within the next 2 days.
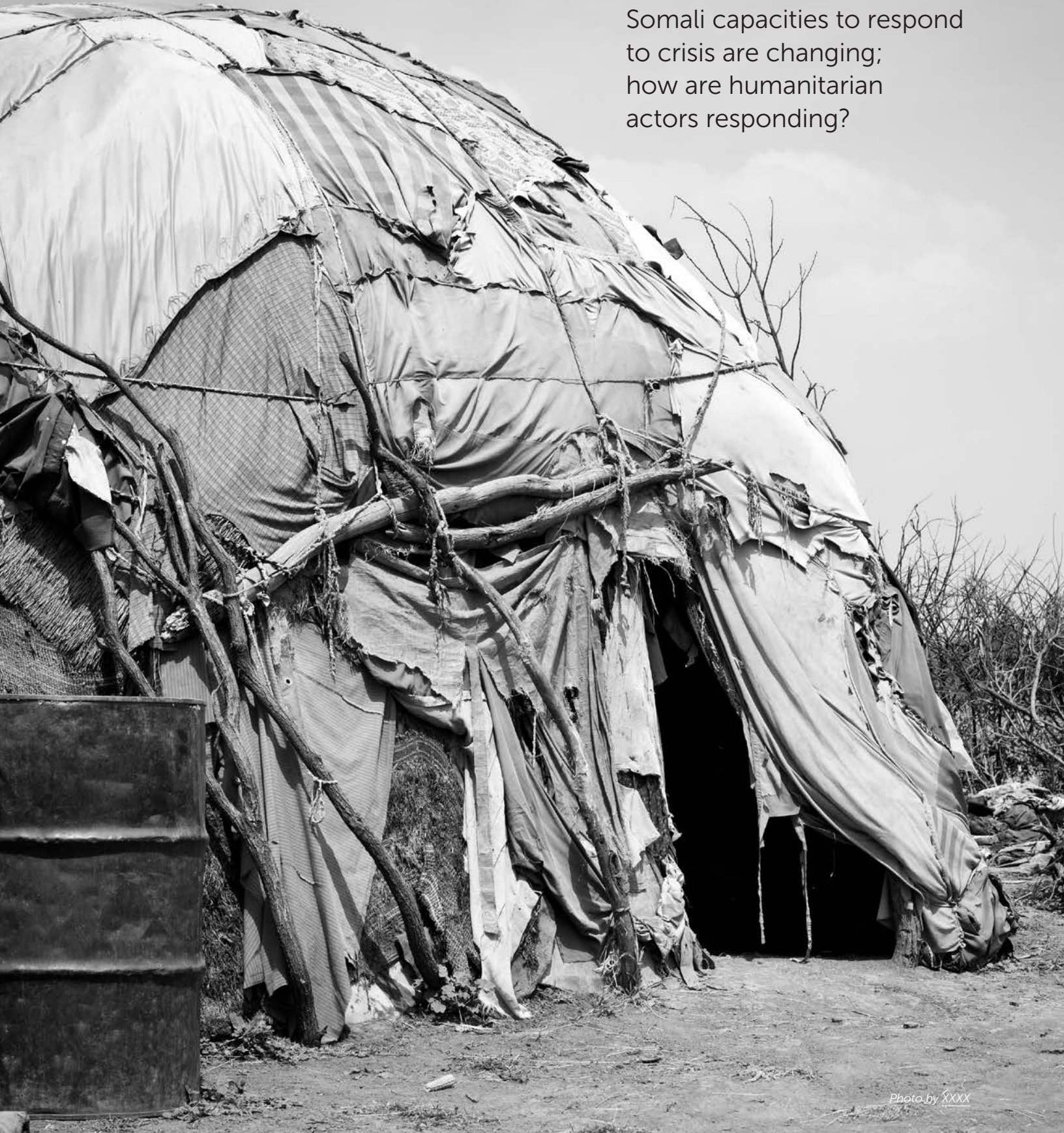
Somali capacities to respond
to crisis are changing;
how are humanitarian
actors responding?

Photo by XXXX

United Kingdom
Humanitarian
Innovation Hub

UKaid
from the British people

Humanitarian Outcomes