

A Shift in Focus

Putting the interests of Somali people first

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Young residents of an IDP settlement in Mogadishu. Photo: HIJRA

More than six months after the UN declared a famine, Somalia is still in the throes of its worst humanitarian crisis in decades, with 325,000 children suffering acute malnutrition and 31 per cent of the population estimated to be in crisis. A large scale-up of the international response from July, combined with the efforts of Somali communities and civil society, saved many lives. But access to those in need has deteriorated due to expulsions of aid agencies and also to intensified, internationally backed military operations. The impact of drought is receding, yet the outlook for the more than 2.3 million Somalis still in need of humanitarian assistance is bleak.

Responsibility for this situation lies first and foremost in Somalia, where warring factions are accused of impeding and diverting aid flows, but the international community has also been at fault. Policies focused more on international security concerns than on the needs, interests and wishes of the Somali people have inadvertently fuelled both the conflict and the humanitarian crisis.

In February 2012, key governments and institutions from the region and the wider Islamic and Western world will meet in London to chart a way forward. They must seize this opportunity to refocus on the Somali people that past policies have failed, developing more coherent strategies to ensure that aid and protection reach those who need it and addressing the root causes of the protracted conflict and chronic vulnerability in the country.

Introduction

More than six months after famine was declared by the United Nations (UN), Somalia is still in the throes of its worst humanitarian crisis in decades. More than 325,000 children are suffering acute malnutrition inside Somalia, and 31 per cent of the total population are estimated to be in crisis,¹ while hundreds of thousands have fled to neighbouring countries.

An earlier response to famine warnings would have saved many more lives;² nonetheless a large scale-up of the international response since July and the endeavours of Somali communities and civil society have brought about significant improvements in malnutrition and mortality rates.³ But the ability of those in direst need to access life-saving assistance has in some areas deteriorated, threatening these gains and constraining the scale-up of vital livelihoods support that can build people's resilience to future environmental shocks. A key factor was the expulsion of seventeen aid agencies from opposition-controlled regions of south and central Somalia in November 2011 and January 2012, suspension of operations by two agencies in response to insecurity and to constraints imposed by local authorities. This has drastically reduced the response capacity in many areas.⁴ In addition, although it is hard to predict how the situation will evolve, renewed fighting since the end of 2011 is preventing many civilians in parts of southern Somalia from seeking aid across shifting front lines, and causing others to flee.⁵ The impact of the drought is receding, yet the outlook for the more than 2.3 million Somalis the UN estimates are still in need of assistance remains bleak.

Responsibility for this situation lies first and foremost within Somalia, where factions on both sides of the long-running conflict stand accused of impeding and diverting the flow of life-saving aid.⁶ Yet the international community too must share some responsibility. While the conflict in Somalia remains a source of legitimate concerns for regional and international security, policies focused more on these concerns than on the short and long term needs of Somali people have not worked, inadvertently fuelling the conflict and exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. As some governments accept, it is time to move on to a new set of policies that allow Somalis' immediate needs for life-saving aid to continue to be met, and provide space for their long-term aspirations for sustainable peace and development.

An opportunity for a new approach

In February 2012, key governments from the region and the wider Islamic and Western world, together with institutions such as the UN, African Union (AU), Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and League of Arab States (LAS), will meet in London to review their approach to Somalia and chart a way forward. They must seize this opportunity to develop more coherent policies to ensure that those who need it most receive the aid and protection they are entitled to, while

more effectively addressing the causes of the conflict in Somalia. In doing so, they should make renewed efforts to abide by their commitments that the provision of humanitarian aid should be consistent with the basic humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality and independence.⁷

No single conference can change everything. However, the London conference does provide an exceptional opportunity to stake out a new approach to the country by refocusing international humanitarian efforts, abandoning counter-productive policies and taking practical steps towards an inclusive political solution to the conflict and crisis.

Priorities for the future

The London conference's success must be judged against the international community's response to three issues, which between them will determine whether international efforts ultimately support the interests of Somalis:

- Actors from the region, the West and the Islamic world must use their influence with all relevant parties to ensure broader access to humanitarian assistance, while upholding humanitarian principles. This should take place alongside donor governments and aid organisations scaling up both humanitarian and longer-term resilience programming;
- The conference must take action to ensure that political and security strategies do not undermine humanitarian assistance; and
- Prioritising non-militarised and sustainable solutions to the conflict and humanitarian crisis, in particular through ensuring that a wide section of the Somali population is engaged in the process of developing these solutions.

The next section of this paper offers recommendations from Oxfam's own experience on what is needed for a new agenda in Somalia. The following sections provide more detail on the operating environment and the effects of different policies on the humanitarian relief effort. The success of the London conference depends on everyone working together to set a new course for the future, one that will ultimately be guided and defined by the needs, interests and wishes of the Somali people.

2

A new agenda for Somalia

We call on all parties involved to adopt the following recommendations in order to build a new, coherent policy framework that is geared towards a long-term, inclusive political solution and puts the interests of the Somali people first.

1. Ensuring access, coordinated delivery of relief, and long-term development

People are dying in Somalia because too many affected communities cannot access life-saving assistance. Putting this right is a global responsibility. Influential actors such as Turkey, Gulf States (including Qatar and Saudi Arabia), as well as institutions such as the LAS and the OIC, have the potential to promote dialogue with relevant parties in co-ordination with the UN and AU.

All those attending the London conference should:

- Work with influential local actors such as elders, women, religious leaders, and the Somali business community, as well as individuals within the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and moderate elements of opposition groups, regional governments and inter-governmental bodies, to promote humanitarian access, while not claiming to represent humanitarian agencies, which must remain independent;
- Build on the recent global Memorandum of Understanding between the OIC and UN to develop a shared approach to the core humanitarian challenges of access and co-ordination in Somalia;
- Call for a high-level humanitarian conference, led by the UN, co-sponsored by the LAS,⁸ OIC and AU, to further develop and implement strategies to maximise affected communities' access to aid, building on humanitarian commitments made at the London conference side event and maintaining focus on humanitarian priorities until the conference led by Turkey, provisionally proposed for June 2012. The overall aim should be to enhance analysis and information sharing, map needs against coverage, manage risks, develop effective partnerships, and ensure the impartial and independent delivery of aid;
- Support aid agencies to work within community structures, acknowledging the challenges and high costs of working in certain areas, helping them to raise women's voices, and develop disaster preparedness and response activities, as well as longer-term plans to enhance communities' resilience to cope with future shocks;
- Prioritise resilience programming by: increasing the funding directed to livelihood recovery and resilience; incorporating disaster risk reduction into humanitarian programming; establishing multiannual funding mechanisms in line with the timeframes of livelihood development; and building in flexibility to allow responses to adapt rapidly to early warnings of a new food crisis.⁹

2. Preventing political and security strategies from undermining humanitarian assistance

To date, the military component of the international community's approach to peace and security in Somalia, combined with internationally imposed state-building efforts, have failed to deliver stability and the establishment of accountable government authorities. Instead they have at times exacerbated the humanitarian crisis and made it harder for those in need to receive assistance.

All governments and international forces engaged in Somalia must:

- Ensure that any measures proposed at the London conference with regard to international security and political agendas are considered in the light of their possible impact on humanitarian needs and access, and the protection of civilians. They must also maintain a clear distinction in language on such measures between security and political goals, on the one hand, and humanitarian action and objectives, on the other;
- Systematically review current policies in relation to their potential negative impact on humanitarian impartiality and independence in consultation with humanitarian implementing agencies, and adjust accordingly;
- Ensure that international diplomatic, financial and military support for the TFG and allied forces is linked to respect for international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law; this requires assessment of the risks of violations and monitoring compliance;
- Ensure that any ground, air or naval forces deployed in Somalia receive practical training on IHL, backed up by support and supervision to reduce civilian harm, and held accountable for their efforts to this end. This should include resources and support to establish a mechanism to monitor, report on and respond to civilian casualties;
- Ensure that the impact on humanitarian needs and assistance is taken into account in the planning and execution of any military strategies; ensure that Somalis fleeing across international borders receive the assistance and protection they need and that their right to voluntary return in safety and dignity is upheld. This should include additional international financial support for the efforts of the countries hosting huge numbers of refugees.

3. Supporting inclusive political solutions for the benefit of all Somalis

Ultimately, sustainable reconciliation and peace-building will only be achieved within Somalia, through inclusive processes. Regional and international actors can play an important facilitating role, but external political engagement must support Somali-led efforts, inclusive of grassroots civil society and women in particular, to bring about peace and stability – and eventually the prospect of sustainable

development. Given the absence of an effective central government in Somalia, it may seem unclear where that leadership resides. Yet a number of local-level initiatives have succeeded in establishing political and administrative arrangements, many of which are proving stable.¹⁰

The international community should:

- Facilitate dialogue between Islamic, Arab and Western actors on developing a longer-term strategy for Somalia, which links with and builds on Somali approaches to peace-building in order to make international mediation more effective and enduring. Strategies should explicitly recognise and invest in building the capacities of Somali women and men to resolve the conflict on their own terms;
- Ensure that any state-building and peace-building agendas and initiatives place a stronger emphasis on Somali ownership – including through systematic engagement with sub-national authorities – and maintain a clear distinction between these and humanitarian efforts;
- Give Somali civil society groups and humanitarian organisations the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to international forums on peace and security, and on humanitarian issues in Somalia. In particular, opportunities should be created to work with women’s groups to harness Somali women’s contribution to these efforts;
- Use diplomatic linkages and engagement with religious and other leaders to support improved dialogue between Somali factions in the interests of building lasting peace and safety for all Somali people;
- Ensure that there is sufficient space for political dialogue with moderate elements within opposition groups, to provide the foundations for a sustainable political settlement.

3

A call for international policies focused on the needs of Somalis

For many years, preoccupied by the implications of a ‘failed state’ for regional and international security, the international community has sought to ‘stabilise’ Somalia and re-establish an effective central government, while at the same time attempting to respond to a prolonged and worsening humanitarian crisis. During this period, significant humanitarian and development aid has continued to flow, at an average of \$439m a year.¹¹ Yet rather than being complementary and coherent, at times there has been inconsistency between international support for state-building and military intervention, on the one hand, and humanitarian initiatives, on the other.

‘There are a lot of actors inside and outside the country with differing interests pulling Somalia apart. My worry is, how they can focus on fostering the peace and stability of Somalia, and leave decisions about how Somalia can peacefully rebuild with the Somali people.’

Somali civil society representative

Humanitarian effort has taken a back seat to sometimes short-sighted policy responses that are focused on externally imposed state-building efforts and often driven by the international security and counter-terrorism agenda. While such policies are a reaction to real security and stability concerns at a regional level in particular, not only have they failed to build the long-term peace that Somalis desperately need, they have at times exacerbated the humanitarian crisis.

The past focus has been on ‘quick fixes’ aimed at neutralising immediate threats, particularly through military action and support, rather than a long-term approach that addresses the fundamental causes of the conflict while at the same time protecting the Somali people and meeting their basic needs.¹²

The consequences of this international agenda came into stark relief in 2011, at a time when Somalia and the wider Horn of Africa was struck by a severe drought. The severity of the situation was unparalleled in Somalia’s recent history. Yet it was only once famine was declared by the UN that a consensus emerged that the humanitarian response needed to be scaled up quickly. At that point, however, the response was too late and efforts to deliver aid on the ground were severely hampered by ongoing insecurity, controls imposed by armed groups, and donor restrictions on the delivery of aid, based on anti-terrorism legislation.¹³

4

The challenges of aid work in Somalia

Twenty years of conflict and state collapse have long made Somalia an extremely difficult place to deliver humanitarian assistance.

Aid agencies operating in Somalia face restrictions both from the TFG and from armed opposition groups on a daily basis, making it more difficult for them to operate. The TFG has imposed restrictions on the movement of foreign aid workers outside TFG-controlled areas (10 aid workers were arrested in September 2011, including three Turkish nationals returning from distributing aid in Lower Shabelle region).¹⁴

While the experience of humanitarian actors in securing access varies in degree, warring factions on all sides have also tried to use the aid effort for their own advantage, including by demanding payments in the form of taxation on humanitarian assistance. If paid, such concessions may lead to some short-term improvements in access. However, payments of this kind, in addition to diverting aid from the intended beneficiaries, risk further eroding the perception of aid agencies as impartial in the eyes of Somali communities, and inviting accusations of 'taking sides'. Failure to agree to such demands, on the other hand, means that aid programmes have often been delayed due to lengthy and time-consuming negotiations. In some cases, funds have had to be reallocated or even returned to donors, where access could not be successfully negotiated.

Box 1: The challenges of ensuring principled assistance - Oxfam's experiences in South Central Somalia

Oxfam and its Somali partners take a strict position against payments to any armed group in Somalia. Somalia is an extremely difficult context in which to monitor movements of funds on the ground, due to persistent insecurity and a lack of governance systems. Oxfam's rigorous and multiple monitoring mechanisms, as well as our long standing and robust relationships with partners, help ensure our aid programmes meet global humanitarian quality standards and maintain transparency and accountability.

This firm stance reinforces the independence of our programmes, but in numerous cases it has made the timely and predictable delivery of assistance to those in need more difficult. There are no easy answers, and Oxfam continuously tries to learn from the difficulties it encounters.

In August 2011, an Oxfam partner running established water and sanitation projects planned to expand an existing programme in a district under the control of an armed opposition group to include direct cash assistance to support livelihoods. The local authorities demanded 20 per cent of the project budget, which the partner refused to pay.

As the negotiations became more drawn out, Oxfam indicated to the partner that they would need to re-allocate the funding to a different project site, as the funding was only for a three-month period. Hearing that the project funds were likely to be re-allocated to another district, the local authorities finally gave provisional, but unconditional, approval for the project. It took another four to five days before approval was confirmed, as the local commander was travelling to another part of the country. Although it was eventually delivered, overall the project was delayed for two months.

5

A situation set to get more complex

Widespread international backing for the intensification of conflict since the end of 2011 has focused on security objectives, yet the humanitarian implications of such action remain low on the world's agenda. The increased presence of regional forces has been welcomed right up to the level of the UN Secretary-General,¹⁵ but the risks which the expansion of intense conflict poses to civilians and the obstacles it creates for their access to humanitarian assistance demand greater public attention.

The perception in many of the world's capitals is that military action will improve security both in the region and for Somali civilians, but the reality to date has often been very different. So far, moving front lines, a wider area in open conflict, and shifting control of populated areas by the various parties have in many cases had the effect of jeopardising an already precarious and limited space for providing humanitarian assistance to those in need [see Box 2]. Concerns are all the more acute in a context where shelling and aerial bombardments in populated areas and alliances with local militia groups with questionable human rights records are among the tactics deployed.¹⁶

'Is it going to bomb us?' asks nine-year-old Aisha, in Afgooye district, whenever she hears an aeroplane overhead. Her mother says Aisha is afraid to sleep on her own for fear of war planes: 'It has got so that she even hates to hear the noise of night insects.'

Report from a Somali NGO

Box 2: Delivering aid in a war zone - local NGO experiences of military operations in south and central Somalia

While it is hard to predict how the situation will evolve, a number of Somali NGOs working in parts of southern Somalia report a deteriorating situation since the start of 2012 as a result of expanded military operations. In some areas, the response of armed opposition groups to increased military pressure has been to relax previous restrictions and authorise certain aid distributions to go ahead. But elsewhere, civil society organisations interviewed for this report indicated that the expanded military operations have made it harder for people to receive assistance, while forcing more civilians to flee in search of safety.

In northern Hiraaan region, where the TFG and allies made gains at the start of 2012, continued fighting is blocking a key entry point for aid supplies, delaying the arrival of emergency foodstuffs needed to treat severely malnourished children. In some localities captured by TFG allies, confusion about who is in charge, and shifting front lines as the fighting continues, is preventing some aid getting through. In parts of Gedo, where access used to be better than in neighbouring regions, it is now severely impeded by increased insecurity linked to renewed fighting, with an upsurge in airstrikes and hostage-taking in recent weeks. Aid interventions here are going ahead wherever possible, but the precarious and unpredictable situation is causing delays in the delivery of vital assistance.

In parts of Lower Juba, fear of fighting or airstrikes is causing residents to flee towns, hindering the provision of assistance, while internally displaced people (IDPs) in Kismayo remain largely cut off from outside help. In Afgooye, NGOs reported continuing to operate in conditions of deteriorating security, amid fears of a further influx of IDPs from the west, where fighting was even more intense, and potentially a mass exodus from the area in the event of attack from the east.

Civilians in Somalia were often unsafe before the latest regional military operations were launched. Many already faced risk of death, injury, rights abuses, and reduced access to aid from parties to the conflict, sometimes as deliberate attacks, sometimes in cross-fire. Yet, while well-intentioned and carefully conducted military operations can at times address some of the threats to civilians from belligerents, they can also aggravate such threats.

In January 2012 alone, the UN reported more than 19,000 Somali civilians fleeing insecurity, most of them from the areas affected by clashes between TFG allies and opposing forces.¹⁷ Yet the camps and settlements where many IDPs have sought refuge have not been safe from attack: IDP camps in Mogadishu and Jilib have been targeted by warring factions on opposing sides, killing and wounding residents.¹⁸ Nor are other humanitarian installations spared: a hospital, a feeding centre and an aid agency compound are among the recent targets.¹⁹ Reports of reprisal killings of civilians highlight the risks which residents continue to face in areas captured by TFG-allied forces.²⁰

The risks which these operations pose for the civilian population and their access to aid deserve high-level, intense engagement from the international community. Although more concerted efforts must be pursued in accordance with its obligations in relation to all parties to a conflict, the international community has limited opportunities to influence how opposition groups respond to their obligations under international law. Where it has both opportunity and an international obligation, on the other hand, is to ensure that TFG and allied forces comply with IHL and international human rights law (IHRL).²¹ International support should be provided to the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in order to monitor and reduce civilian casualties and take consistent account of the impact its actions can have on humanitarian access.²² Separately from these humanitarian considerations, but no less importantly, the international community also has a role to play in helping to ensure that the door remains open to political dialogue, and that any military interventions do not undermine the development of a far-sighted plan for an inclusive political solution for Somalia's conflict, in which Somali civil society, the wider Somali population, women's groups and sub-national authorities all have their part.

6

Humanitarian impartiality and independence undermined

'A few women's groups are consulted, but otherwise women are not involved [in peace-building]. There should be programmes that target women at the grassroots level to empower them to raise their voice.'

Somali NGO worker

While responsibility for the conflict which generates Somalia's ongoing humanitarian emergency, and for the obstruction and diversion of aid efforts in many cases, lies first and foremost in Somalia itself, the policies of the international community can have a major influence on the conditions in which aid agencies are able to help those affected. Armed groups who oppose the TFG, and control much of south and central Somalia, have accused international aid agencies of being proxies of Western governments. This argument has been used to justify attacks on aid workers,²³ bureaucratic impediments to aid operations, and expulsions of a large number of agencies from parts of south and central Somalia, most recently in January 2012.²⁴

At the same time, some international policies have inadvertently fed perceptions on the part of Somali armed groups that there is no distinction between the political and security policies of foreign governments and the humanitarian interventions of international organisations. While the UN helps coordinate much of the humanitarian effort, it also has a high profile on political and security matters, now increased through the operations of the UN Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS), and has controversially supported the widely contested TFG. The international community's state-building, humanitarian, and in some cases counter-terrorism objectives have, in the eyes of many Somalis, become dangerously intertwined. Aid agencies have felt pressured to help legitimise state-building efforts backed by the UN and major donors – in particular, building the credibility of the TFG. In the past, key donor states, and even the former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Somalia, have pushed for humanitarian aid to be channelled directly through the TFG,²⁵ while the former UN Humanitarian Coordinator encouraged aid agencies to resume 'high-impact' projects in Mogadishu that supported stabilisation efforts following the ousting of the Islamic Courts Union.²⁶ Although such drives to work through the TFG have diminished more recently, various public statements by the UN and foreign governments continue to highlight their support to the TFG against opposing armed forces.²⁷

The January 2012 call by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) for humanitarian agencies to 'encourage voluntary repatriation of refugees to the liberated areas of Somalia' is among the more recent challenges to humanitarian independence. Voluntary repatriation must be precisely that: voluntary. Aid

agencies should and will provide information, support with making an informed decision, and assist with the process, once a refugee has opted to return, in order to ensure that it happens in dignity and safety; they should not seek to exercise undue influence on that choice, or be seen to do so. In relation to perceptions of independence, if aid agencies were to 'encourage' returns to areas captured by TFG-allied forces, they would face a still greater risk of being seen as aligned with counter-insurgency efforts.²⁸

In most countries, it is absolutely right for international aid agencies to work with the national government to deliver aid to the people who need it most, and in many crises, international agencies still fail to do this sufficiently.²⁹ But Somalia is not 'most countries', and the TFG is not accepted as legitimate by much of the population. Unelected and widely perceived as externally imposed, through a process that sidelined sub-national authorities and wider civil society, the transitional federal institutions face strong allegations of corruption and aid diversion.³⁰

In this context, therefore, there are various reasons for aid agencies to be reticent about working with or in support of the TFG: issues of maintaining independence from all parties to an armed conflict, of efficiency with regard to the limited capacity of the transitional administration, and of transparency in view of reported aid diversion.³¹

7

Unintended consequences of counter-terrorism policies

Following the attacks on the USA in September 2001, the challenges of Somalia became more acute for Western governments who increasingly viewed Somalia through the lens of international and regional security and counter-terrorism. This shift has too often meant that scant attention is paid to the impacts of these policies on Somali people.

'In 2011, the international community committed \$1.32 billion in humanitarian funding to Somalia's humanitarian appeal. Whilst this makes Somalia one of the largest humanitarian responses in the world, this is just over half as much money as was the spent by the international community (\$2.41 billion) in combating Somali piracy in 2010.'

The Economic Cost of Maritime Piracy, One Earth Future Working Paper, December 2010

There was a noticeable policy shift in 2008, when the United States (US) listed the armed group in control of most of south and central Somalia, as a terrorist organisation under US law. (Other governments later followed suit.)³² In addition, as a result of the regulations, some US agencies stopped working in south and central Somalia while others had to introduce stringent due diligence measures or curtail operations.³³

As a result of this move, assistance from the US – formerly the single largest donor to Somalia – dropped eightfold between 2008 and 2010, with considerable knock-on effects on other Western donors' policies and funding.³⁴ In 2008, the UN humanitarian appeal for Somalia received \$429m, 74 per cent of the amount requested. The smaller appeal in 2010 received \$246m, only 67 per cent of the total requested,³⁵ even though at least 2.1 million people were still in need of life-saving assistance.³⁶

US government restrictions on aid to south and central Somalia were eased after famine was declared by the UN in 2011,³⁷ but there is still ambiguity around the new, expanded licence issued by the US Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), which protects aid agencies from legal action under US anti-terrorism laws for humanitarian activities in areas controlled by groups designated as terrorists.³⁸ This legislation has had impacts on Somali people in other ways, too. In December 2011, for instance, the main US bank providing money transfer services through the *hawala* system suspended its service, threatening the \$100m lifeline of remittances from the US diaspora to family members in Somalia each year.³⁹ Without a bank to transfer the money, the *hawala* money transfer companies in the US were forced to close. They resumed services in January 2012 in response to a public outcry, but great uncertainty still surrounds this vital service, and it is not clear for how long other banks that have taken up this work will judge that they are able to continue to operate with the *hawalas* in the complex and restrictive legislative environment.

Past donor statements linking humanitarian assistance to counter-terrorism strategies, combined with vocal international support for regional military intervention, help create an extremely dangerous environment for those – whether Somali or, less commonly, foreign nationals – delivering aid to the people most in need. While it is rarely possible to make a direct connection between individual pronouncements or policy decisions and particular attacks on aid workers, and other factors do come into play, the case for making a general link seems compelling. In 2008, at the height of the conflict pitting the TFG and its international allies against opposition groups, 37 aid workers were killed in Somalia – two-thirds of all aid workers killed worldwide.⁴⁰ That same year, in response to US air and missile strikes on opposition forces, armed insurgents accused aid agencies of collaborating with foreign forces and announced that they would henceforth be considered ‘legitimate targets’.⁴¹ Despite a significant reduction in the number of aid workers killed since 2008, security incidents related to humanitarian personnel and assets, including kidnappings, looting and arrests, have risen again since July 2011, when the famine response began to be scaled up.⁴²

Such insecurity has severe consequences for those in need of assistance. In Dadaab refugee camp in northern Kenya, for instance, aid to the 463,000 mostly Somali residents has been scaled back to critical life-saving interventions only, in response to abductions and attacks with explosive devices in the area.⁴³

8

Current situation and future prospects

From July 2011, in the face of a mounting humanitarian crisis and significant operating challenges, humanitarian actors managed a huge response to the famine, scaling up activities significantly, although with continued challenges around long-term programming especially on disaster risk reduction and resilience. Despite continued insecurity and the associated risks to aid workers, the number of aid agencies in Somalia (particularly in Mogadishu) substantially increased in the second half of 2011. Oxfam's own programmes in Somalia are currently reaching 1.5 million people through collaboration with Somali partner organisations.

Both Islamic and Western institutions and donors have played an important role in responding to the current crisis. The OIC and the Humanitarian Forum – a body that works to improve relationships between Muslim humanitarian organisations and their Western counterparts – are among those who have also shown a growing interest in addressing longer-term development, recovery and reconstruction issues in Somalia.⁴⁴

These efforts have resulted in some important achievements. According to the latest assessments by the Food Security Nutrition and Analysis Unit – Somalia (FSNAU) and the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET), there have been significant reductions in mortality and malnutrition rates across south and central Somalia.⁴⁵ All six regions previously classified by the UN as famine areas have been downgraded to the status of emergency-level food insecurity or better – thanks in part to the scaling up of humanitarian assistance, supporting the efforts of the Somali people themselves. But there have also been some challenges in ensuring the large number of actors work effectively together, with parallel co-ordination mechanisms in some areas and gaps in information sharing.

Ensuring life-saving humanitarian assistance reaches those in need is only part of the answer however, and it is essential that resilience-building efforts are scaled up drastically to have the required impact. Some agencies have been able to do meaningful work and achieve positive measures to build people's resilience to cope with future droughts and other environmental stresses, despite a lack of funding and challenging conditions.

The progress made remains incredibly fragile, and any reduction in current levels of assistance is likely to worsen the situation further. The expulsions of November 2011 and January 2012, and suspensions

of some other aid activities in response to insecurity,⁴⁶ represent a major challenge for maintaining overall levels of humanitarian capacity.

It is unclear how long the current period of intense conflict across much of southern Somalia will continue. But we do know that as long as it does, the food crisis will persist in the affected areas. If millions of people in need are to benefit fully from the aid efforts of Somali civil society and international agencies, more systematic account must be taken of the humanitarian fallout of regional and international political and security initiatives.

The new agenda set out in this paper if followed, would start to help put Somalia on a sustainable footing. Decisions made at the London Conference should focus on the needs, interests and views of the Somali people and support Somalia to achieve the development and security that has eluded it for so long.

Notes

- ¹ Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit – Somalia and Famine Early Warning Systems Network (2012), 'Famine ends, yet 31% of the population remain in crisis', 3 February, available at: <http://www.fsnau.org/downloads/FSNAU-FEWSNET-Technical-Release-Feb-3-2012.pdf>
- ² D. Hillier (2012), *A dangerous delay: the cost of late response to early warnings in the 2011 drought in the Horn of Africa*, Oxfam, 18 January, available at: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/policy/dangerous-delay>
- ³ FSNAU-FEWSNET, *op. cit.*
- ⁴ The UN estimates that 1.8 million people in need in the south did not receive emergency food assistance from food cluster members in December due to the ban. OCHA (2012) 'Somalia – Famine and drought situation report No. 31', 18 January, available at: <http://reliefweb.int/node/471296>
- ⁵ See, for example, 'Wounded in southern Somalia have difficulty reaching medical facilities', 2.1.12, <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/africa/east/Wounded-in-Southern-Somalia-Have-Difficulty-Reaching-Medical-Facilities-136528663.html>
- ⁶ M. Bryden *et al.* (2011), *Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea pursuant to Security Council resolution 1916 (2010)*, July, UN Security Council
- ⁷ In 2003 the Government of Sweden convened a meeting to discuss good humanitarian donorship, during which a set of 'Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship' was agreed. The meeting was attended by representatives from 16 donor governments as well as the European Commission, the OECD, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, NGOs, and academics. Full details available at: <http://www.goodhumanitarianandonorship.org/gns/principles-good-practice-ghd/overview.aspx>
- ⁸ The League of Arab States, during the Foreign Ministers Council meeting on 13 September 2011, agreed to the need for two conferences – one on ensuring effective delivery of humanitarian assistance to 'all affected people', and another looking longer term towards rebuilding and reconstruction – both in co-ordination with the OIC, AU and UN.
- ⁹ Donors are discussing appropriate indicators and monitoring strategies in the Donor Group: Somali Joint Needs Assessment, United Nations & World Bank Co-ordination Secretariat, Reconstruction & Development Programme (RDP) Reports, available at: http://www.somali-ina.org/index.cfm?module=ActiveWeb&page=WebPage&s=rdp_implementation_i
- ¹⁰ M. Bradbury and S. Healey (2010) *Whose Peace is it Anyway? Connecting Somali and international peacemaking*, London: Accord, Conciliation Resources.
- ¹¹ J. Norris and B. Bruton (2011) *Twenty Years of Collapse and Counting: The Cost of Failure in Somalia*, Joint Report from the Center for American Progress and One Earth Future Foundation, Washington D.C.: Center for American Progress, p.15, available at: <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/09/pdf/somalia.pdf>
- ¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 23–24.
- ¹³ For details of the US legislation on 'providing material support to terrorists', see http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/usc_sec_18_00002339---A000-.html
- ¹⁴ A. Cadde (2011) 'TFG officially bans travel of foreign workers', *Somalia Report*, 16 September, available at: <http://www.somaliareport.com/index.php/post/1582>
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