

# Humanitarian Exchange

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**Special feature**  
**The crisis in the  
Horn of Africa**

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### About HPN

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

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## Editorial



Katherine Bundra Roux/IFRC

The special feature of this issue of *Humanitarian Exchange*, co-edited with HPG Research Fellow Simon Levine, focuses on the crisis in the Horn of Africa. Although predicted more than a year in advance, the response to the crisis in many areas of the Horn has again come far too late. As Debbie Hillier argues in the lead article, the aid system overall needs to be reviewed, focusing on longer-term programmes which build resilience, reducing the risk of crisis and the need for short-term life-saving interventions. We also need to rethink how assistance is delivered in the Horn. As Breanna Ridsdel outlines in her article, humanitarian organisations are increasingly using cash and vouchers, raising particular issues of coordination.

Turning to specific country cases, Matt Hobson and Laura Campbell review how the Risk Financing Mechanism of the Ethiopian Productive Safety Net Programme has been used to expand the caseload in time of transitory crisis and enable households to receive assistance before the crisis hits. Adrian Cullis highlights positive developments in the management of drought in Ethiopia, with particular reference to the drylands. Based on experience from Northern Kenya, Andreas Jenet and Eunice Obala discuss how reciprocal grazing agreements can contribute to increasing the resilience of pastoralists, and Wendy Erasmus argues that longer-term risk reduction approaches enhanced the resilience of pastoralists in Moyale district in Northern Kenya. Riccardo Polastro highlights the key findings from the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) evaluation of the humanitarian response in South Central Somalia. Sara Pantuliano and Victoria Metcalfe analyse the operational impact of counter-terrorism legislation on humanitarian action in the country, while Samir Elhawary explores the impact of UN integration arrangements. Finally, Damien Mc Sweeney highlights how drought, conflict and insecurity have led to a massive deterioration in security in the Dadaab camps.

Articles in the policy and practice section of this issue include an analysis of how Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has adapted its approach to providing emergency medical care in the Middle East; an update on major changes in the 2011 edition of the Sphere Handbook; reflections on the activities and potential impact of the Nepal Disaster Risk Reduction Consortium; military and humanitarian cooperation in managing Haiti's air operations following the 2010 earthquake; and AidLink's experience of using text messaging to help streamline humanitarian aid delivery.

## Managing the risk, not the crisis

Debbie Hillier, Oxfam

Why is the response to drought almost always too little too late? Evaluations find the same failures and make the same recommendations again and again, and the response to the Horn crisis is no exception. The draft Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) evaluation classified it as ‘a *qualified success*’, and highlights the general failure of preventive action from late 2010. Much the same was said in evaluations from the Sahel in 2005 and 2010, and in Kenya in 2005/6 and 2008/9.

Whilst humanitarian response is improving in many areas, drought is not one of them. Paradoxically, we are better at responding to fast-onset crises. This means that lives, livelihoods and dignity are lost, with greater impacts on women who generally eat last and least. Drought can also permanently retard children’s development, and thus damage future generations. This is a failure of the international system – both ‘humanitarian’ and ‘development’. Late response also appears to contravene the principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship, which commit donors to ‘prevent and strengthen preparedness’ for disasters, and the Sphere Standards, which commit us to ‘preventing the significant loss of livelihood assets’. So where is our accountability?

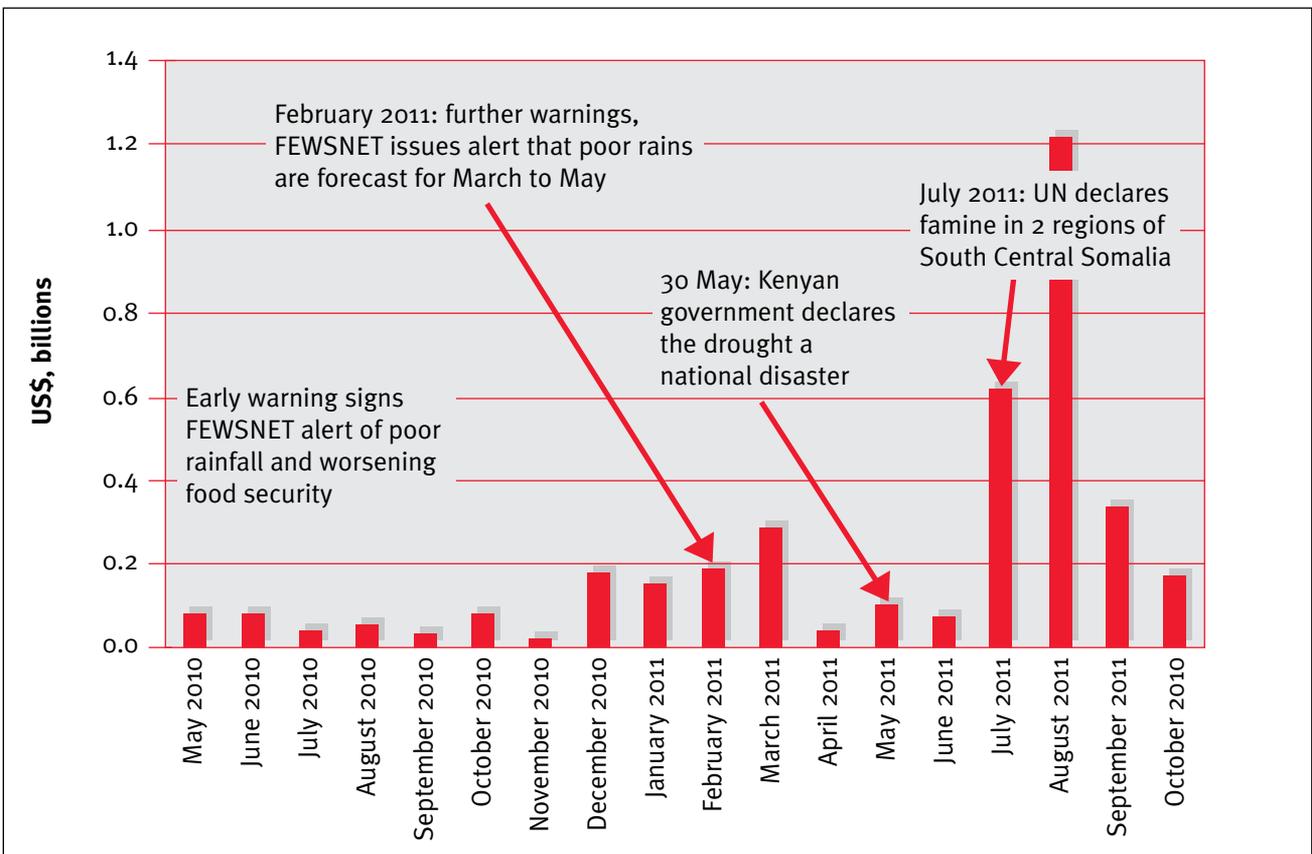
Late response is also costly financially. One estimate from a previous drought in West Africa put the cost of preventing a child from suffering malnutrition at \$1 per day, compared to \$80 per day for treating acute malnutrition and saving that child’s life.

The UN’s appeal for the Horn crisis was \$2.4 billion. That such a large sum was needed is not in doubt, but what is also not in doubt is that at least part of this cost was incurred because the international response to the crisis was so late. Figure 1 shows that major funding was only received from July onwards, after major media coverage of the suffering and when the UN had declared a famine in two areas of South Central Somalia.

### What went wrong?

Did the early warning system (EWS) fail? The simple answer is no. The early warning systems in the Horn of Africa are now highly sophisticated. FEWSNET was born out of the Ethiopia famine of 1984, but it has come a long way since then; FSNAU is one of the most respected systems in the region, with a huge amount of information and analysis, producing high-quality output. And the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) system has been a major step forward in

**Figure 1: Humanitarian funding for Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya, May 2010 to October 2011**



regional early warning, developing standardised criteria and boosting understanding of the food security situation.

Ultimately, the early warning systems performed, but decision-makers chose not to respond. The scale (numbers of people) and depth (severity) of the crisis still caught many by surprise. There is perhaps some fine-tuning to be done to the EWS – experience suggests that the system is more likely to be used appropriately if decision-makers have a stake in it – but the fundamental problem is not the early warning system, but the lack of response from decision-makers. They need to be challenged to develop early warning systems which they *will* respond to – or perhaps the money is better spent elsewhere.



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*Collecting water in Turkana, Kenya*

So it was only when the crisis reached a tipping-point – when the March–May rains had definitively failed and the only possible trajectory was down – that the humanitarian system began to respond at scale. Arguably, the system then responded adequately, but how can we do better next time? Clearly, it is ultimately national governments that bear the responsibility for food security, and there is much work to be done in developing institutions, policies and practices to respond better to impending crises and to build resilience for the long term. In Somalia, more support needs to be provided to traditional leadership in the communities to bear this responsibility.

From an international perspective, we need to move away from standalone, quick in-and-out humanitarian interventions, which keep people alive but do little to protect livelihoods. We need to change our long-term programmes, and ensure that our humanitarian work is more preventative.

### **Long-term programmes must be flexible to crises and reduce risk**

It is clear that, where agencies already have long-term programming, where they are already working with communities and understand their vulnerabilities, their emergency response is better – this was one of the outcomes of the DEC evaluation. So is it not better to explicitly combine our development and humanitarian work? Can we work to one programme with both development and emergency elements, to deal with both the acute/transitory food crisis phase, whilst also reducing risk and building resilience?

Drought cycle management is one practical tool that can be used to prompt a different suite of interventions in the different phases of ‘normal, alert/alarm, emergency,

recovery’. However, donors rarely fund in this holistic way and often prefer to support work in just one of these phases. This inevitably means that work is less well connected, and also requires greater administration. There is a clear need for more advocacy with donors to break this down, to encourage the use of ‘crisis modifiers’, pioneered by USAID/OFDA in Ethiopia, thus enabling a more integrated, agile and flexible approach.

Self-evidently and empirically, prevention is better than cure. However, in practice, too often long-term programmes are not disaster-proofed and their monitoring and evaluation do not consider risk reduction. Disaster risk reduction is abysmally funded – according to the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report, DRR represents a mere 0.5% of total ODA. We do not have figures for government expenditure, but there are no indications that spending is much higher. No one argues with the principle of insurance or vaccination – paying upfront to prevent high losses – but for some reason there is less support for disaster prophylaxis.

### **Humanitarian work must be preventative**

Currently, the humanitarian system is not finely tuned for preparedness and early response. This is partly due to overstretch – there are competing demands from crises happening today that will be given more weight over any crisis in the future, no matter how robust the prediction – and partly due to a lack of prioritisation and funding. This must change.

A major shift is required to manage food security risk responsibly through disaster risk reduction and early response, rather than transferring this burden to vulnerable people who are least able to cope. An organisational stance of risk management rather than risk aversion

is essential in order to stimulate early response to the crisis and thereby save livelihoods as well as lives. Key is the recognition amongst practitioners, governments and donors that sometimes the predictions may be wrong, but that overall this is better risk management, and that governments and the international community, rather than poor people, should absorb this risk.

Practically, we need to work together to develop triggers for early action and an associated suite of measures that can be undertaken on the basis of forecasts, rather than certainty. Developing this together will improve donor confidence – just as the IPC has improved confidence in food security information. We need to develop ‘no regrets’ measures that build capacity and disaster preparedness but have no negative effect even if the worst forecasts are not realised – either because the cost is very low or because they build resilience. This would include activities such as putting human resource systems in place, developing proposals and talking to donors, building links with private sector partners and a range of practical measures such as assessing borehole operations, prepositioning stocks, market assessments and mapping the capacity and coverage of traders.

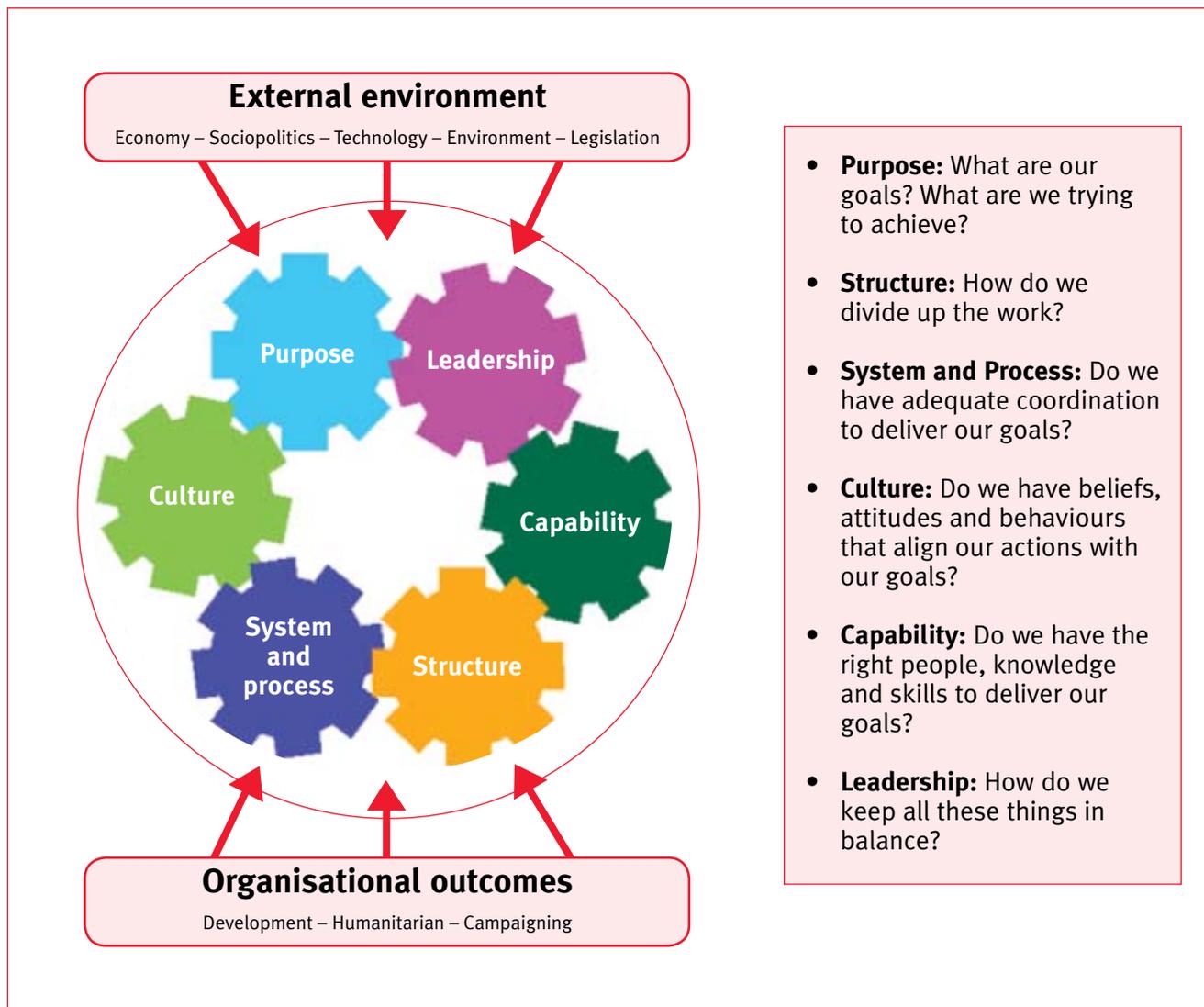
## Organisational change

Most of these ideas have been around before, and certainly the problem is well known, so why are we still struggling with these issues? Perhaps previous attempts to address this problem have only looked at certain aspects when what we actually need to do is look at the whole system; we need to take an organisational development approach.

Figure 2 shows Oxfam’s approach to organisational development; all six aspects must be addressed in order to achieve sustainable change. Currently, we are not systematically implementing integrated programming, disaster risk reduction and early response, and we need to consider what changes need to be made, in all these spheres, to make this happen.

Certainly people skills are key. In terms of capability, do we have staff and partners who are able to build risk analysis into their work and are thus able to adapt what they do, and how they do it, as the situation and the needs change? Have our teams developed a state of readiness or preparedness, so that they can be more dynamic in their approach to risk management and

**Figure 2: Organisational development model**



adaptable to whatever crisis occurs? Just as managing security risks is a key element of day-to-day work in insecure environments, so should be discussing and managing other types of risks.

Leadership is of course important. Very few senior managers have strong experience in both emergency and development contexts. Have we even developed a clear understanding of the competences required for senior managers in contexts with recurrent disasters? They and others may need significant ongoing training and mentoring to maximise their skills and understanding, as well as appropriate systems in place to support them.

Structures can also be a major block: typically, organisations separate development and humanitarian work. What can be done to overcome the silo approach? Humanitarian and development strategies are often developed separately, whereas a risk management approach requires common thinking and planning. Practically, physical proximity (yes, it does actually make a difference where people sit!) and being part of one team matter. An effective coordination and integration approach with various mechanisms for direct cooperation, joint programming and implementation, in combination with shared learning cycles, can help to merge development and response.

### Where now?

There seems to be significant momentum on these issues now. Already we are seeing a much more timely response to the possible crisis in West Africa from national governments, the UN, NGOs and some donors – although funding has only just topped \$100,000 and needs to increase significantly if a

crisis is really to be averted.

Three issues then remain:

- How can we make the most of this momentum and embed some significant changes in our organisations? Whilst West Africa is indeed showing us what early response might look like, we should not be complacent – there is still much to do to institutionalise this learning, adapt our structures and systems and invest in our staff.
- How can we get political commitment that the Horn of Africa will be the world's last famine? The Charter to End Extreme Hunger offers an opportunity to garner political and financial support.
- And finally what happens if we are successful in West Africa? If this early action does indeed avert a crisis, will we be accused of crying wolf? Aid detractors will say that we exaggerated the problem and suggest that we are not to be trusted, and thus funding for the next potential crisis will not be so forthcoming. We need to do more work on the counterfactual – we need to be able to show clearly to funders and decision-makers that the early response did prevent a crisis, otherwise we risk losing our moral standing and financial support. This is perhaps the greatest danger of getting it 'right' in West Africa.

**Debbie Hillier** is Humanitarian Policy Adviser at Oxfam. The Oxfam/Save the Children report *A Dangerous Delay: The Cost of Late Response to Early Warnings in the 2011 Drought in the Horn of Africa* is available at <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications>.

## Coordinating cash transfers in the Horn of Africa

Breanna Ridsdel, CaLP

Humanitarian organisations in the Horn of Africa are increasingly using cash and voucher transfers, particularly in areas of insecurity where access problems have led to a rethink of traditional ways of delivering aid. An estimated four million people in the region are now receiving assistance via cash or voucher programmes from a wide range of national and international NGOs, UN agencies and other humanitarian actors.

The sheer scale of the response and the number of agencies involved has brought coordination to the forefront of the discussion around cash transfer programming in the region. While technical coordination groups in the region are functioning well, these remain ad hoc and are not linked to the broader humanitarian coordination system. This article explores the need for coordination of cash transfer programming, examines what is working and what gaps remain and calls for high-level engagement and leadership to integrate cash transfer programming into humanitarian information systems and coordination frameworks.

### What's so special about cash?

Cash transfers are not a type of programming – they are a tool to achieve programme objectives. So why is there a need to pay special attention to coordinating cash-based responses?

First, cash transfers or vouchers allow beneficiaries to meet multiple objectives (food, shelter hygiene...) in one intervention. This makes it difficult to fit cash-based responses into existing sector-based coordination mechanisms, such as the Clusters. Second, cash transfer values in emergency responses often are not standardised, since they are calculated according to different, often agency-specific criteria and to meet various objectives. While this has been dealt with to some degree through the cluster system and technical coordination groups, this coordination is voluntary and rarely extends between sectors. When agencies implement different sector-based responses in the same community, the modality (e.g. in-kind, cash-for-work,



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*A cash distribution in Wajir, Kenya, in July 2011*

vouchers or cash transfers), transfer amounts, frequency and targeting criteria are often radically different. This has the potential to cause tension within communities, in particular with those who are excluded from the programme – an issue that is probably exacerbated by the desirability of cash. If not properly addressed, this could reduce the effectiveness of programmes and even create security risks for beneficiaries and agency staff or partners. In these cases, inter-sector coordination and transparency are critical in order to maintain the ‘do no harm’ principle and respect the dignity of beneficiaries.

Third, cash-based programming emphasises the need to gather and analyse information in new ways, particularly information about markets. Agencies and donors are also increasingly regarding coordinated information analysis as a measure to mitigate risk, by ensuring that programmes can adapt to market fluctuations and do not have a detrimental impact on prices or the functioning of markets. Fourth, coordination provides a joint platform for negotiation and advocacy. In many contexts, cash is perceived to be more politically sensitive and higher-risk than in-kind assistance. This requires careful coordination with national governments, local authorities and implementing partners. Where key stakeholders, in particular governments, are sceptical about the use of cash transfers, harmonised messages and joint representation are generally more effective and have greater impact. Cash transfer programming also requires humanitarian stakeholders to enter into negotiations with new partners, for example private sector providers such as banks, mobile phone companies

and remittance agents. Joint negotiations usually give better rates on transfer costs and other services, as well as enabling agencies to share learning and experiences.

### **Coordination in the Horn of Africa**

The scale of cash transfer programming in the Horn response has pushed humanitarian actors to look for new ways of coordinating both within and across sectors. There is arguably more coordination around cash transfers in the Horn of Africa than in any other previous disaster. There are technical working groups for the response in Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia and South Sudan, along with government-level policy groups, inter-cluster coordination mechanisms and consortia of organisations implementing joint cash-based responses. While this article cannot go into detail about all of these, a few emerging trends arising out of the response are discussed below.

On a technical level, aid agencies in two consortia implementing cash transfers in Somalia are using a common monitoring and evaluation plan and tools in order to gather data on whether cash and vouchers provide a viable, effective and accountable large-scale response to the humanitarian crisis. While working in consortia is not new to large-scale emergency responses, this forum is unique in that it is the first time a joint monitoring framework for data collection has been put in place for cash transfer programming.<sup>1</sup>

Humanitarian actors in the Horn have also pushed for the use of online information systems and coordination groups. At the request of the technical working groups, an online mapping tool has been developed to track cash responses in Somalia. The tool tracks beneficiary numbers, modalities and transfer amounts, and aims to reduce overlap and identify potential risks resulting from poor coordination.<sup>2</sup> The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) invited the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to a virtual inter-agency technical reference group for cash-for-work. At the time of writing this group is still in the start-up phase and its membership is restricted, so it is not yet clear what results it will produce.<sup>3</sup>

At the policy level, an inter-cluster coordination mechanism for Somalia has been created. A full-time cash response coordinator has been hired under FAO, and each cluster was asked to establish a cash focal point reporting to the coordinator.<sup>4</sup> Humanitarian actors recommended a similar mechanism for Kenya, but it has not yet been put in place. However, the Kenyan government has taken an active role and has created a sub-committee on cash-based responses under the Kenya Food Security Steering Group (KFSSG). The aim

<sup>1</sup> The plan and tools are available online at [www.cashlearning.org/where-we-work/somalia-cash-and-voucher-monitoring-group](http://www.cashlearning.org/where-we-work/somalia-cash-and-voucher-monitoring-group).

<sup>2</sup> This tool has been developed by FAO. It has not been made public due to security concerns.

<sup>3</sup> The Cash Learning Partnership maintains another virtual reference group, an email-based discussion forum with more than 600 active members from NGOs, UN agencies and academic and research institutes.

<sup>4</sup> At the time of writing it is too early to draw lessons about the effectiveness of this inter-cluster approach, but in 2012 CaLP will be conducting a review of the different coordination mechanisms in the Horn.

of the sub-committee is to improve the quality and effectiveness of cash-based responses to food insecurity in Kenya by coordinating information-sharing, acting as a review and steering body and developing guidelines. The group provides an inter-agency forum of NGOs, UN agencies and representatives from the government, including the Ministry of Livestock, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Gender.

### Too much coordination, or not enough?

While there is a great deal of coordination and collaboration around cash transfers in the Horn, key gaps remain. First, coordination is reactive rather than strategic, and usually has not taken place at the decision-making stage. Generally, coordination mechanisms arise after agencies have separately done their response analysis and decided to implement cash programmes, and they are attended by technical staff, not decision-makers. Thus, the current coordination mechanisms do not foster harmonised programming, and fall short in managing the potential risks caused by different transfer amounts or the use of multiple modalities in one target community (although they can help to mitigate the consequences to some extent).

Second, while cash transfer coordination mechanisms are effective and functional, they are often ad hoc and usually sector-based. This has given rise to numerous different coordination bodies – in Nairobi alone there are at least six – with no clear lines of communication between them. Since attendance by technical staff at the coordination meetings is usually not overseen by senior managers, it often does not result in systematic information-sharing between or even within organisations. Additionally, it is not clear how the technical and policy-level groups should work together.

The ad hoc nature of these groups also means that, in most cases, their sustainability depends on individual, as opposed to institutional, commitments. The experiences of the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) and other coordination groups in this and other emergencies, for example in Haiti, Pakistan and Côte d'Ivoire, have shown that having a dedicated field-based coordinator or focal point adds value and ensures the institutional knowledge and continuity of these mechanisms; however, there is no systematic consideration of this need by donors or implementing agencies. Without funding for such a role, coordination groups have collapsed.

Third, while technical coordination groups are effective at gathering and sharing information relevant to cash transfer programming, such as market assessments, there is no systematic integration of that information into humanitarian reporting frameworks. This is further hampered by the sector-based organisation of humanitarian information systems.

Finally, none of these forums has captured the substantial experience of social protection programmes in the region. This reflects the general isolation of humanitarian coordination mechanisms from longer-term programming. Many humanitarian stakeholders in the region are now

calling for advocacy and dialogue with donors and governments on how to carry over the gains achieved and protect beneficiaries from future disasters.

### Where do we go from here?

The market-based and cross-sectoral nature of cash transfers in humanitarian response is pushing humanitarians to find new ways of working. This has implications not just for cash transfer programming, but also for the way we do humanitarian response as a whole, because cash transfers are challenging the boundaries and sectors by which we organise ourselves. While there is clear evidence that there are substantial advantages in having forums for information-sharing around cash transfers, there has been little dialogue or evidence gathered as to the best ways of doing this. Given that practitioners assert that current ways of working are not adequate, where do we go from here?<sup>5</sup>

There is a growing recognition that coordinated collection, analysis and information-sharing on markets should not be limited to cash transfer programming but needs to be systematically integrated into humanitarian coordination systems and information frameworks from the outset of a disaster response. Donors and implementing agencies must ensure that market analysis is routinely used to inform the consideration and selection of response options, and make greater investment in gathering baseline market data. Moving this process forward will require strong leadership and further research. The cluster system may not provide the most effective solution, and new ways of working may need to be found.

We have yet to see a truly multi-sector coordinated response to a crisis, with different agencies working together across sectors to meet the diverse needs of affected people through a combination of resource transfers (cash, in-kind or both) and other critical services. Yet it is not so farfetched to imagine that this could be possible. The effective coordination of humanitarian response, whether in-kind, cash-based or a combination thereof, should not be limited by agency mandates or our own habits of working. The sector-based classification of beneficiaries' needs is an artificial construct. In reality, people do not categorise their needs into sectors or view them in isolation from each other. By challenging the traditional barriers of sector-based responses and coordination, cash transfers are providing us with both a tool and an opportunity to build ways of working that recognise the dynamism of local market systems and reflect the diverse reality of people's needs in a crisis or after a disaster.

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<sup>5</sup> This theme came out strongly from CaLP's Fifth Global Learning Event on cash transfer programming, held in Nairobi in November 2011, and again at the Cash and Risk Conference in Copenhagen the following month.

# How Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) is responding to the current humanitarian crisis in the Horn

Matt Hobson and Laura Campbell

The Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in Ethiopia was set up in 2005 by the government as part of a strategy to address chronic food insecurity. The PSNP provides cash or food to people who have predictable food needs in a way that enables them to improve their own livelihoods – and therefore become more resilient to the effects of shocks in the future. However, there are times when a shock results in transitory food insecurity, the scale of which is beyond the mainstream PSNP to address. This requires additional temporary support. In this event extra funding comes from the PSNP's Contingency Budget and, when that is exhausted, the Risk Financing Mechanism (RFM). The RFM allows the PSNP to scale up in times of crisis, and is designed to reduce the 'typical' timeline for humanitarian response, so that households receive assistance *before* a crisis makes itself felt. As the RFM is part of the PSNP, it can only be implemented in existing PSNP districts.



Women at a water hole in Borena, Ethiopia

## Addressing transitory food insecurity in Ethiopia

One of the main problems with the humanitarian system is that responses are often delayed and can be inappropriate. Needs assessments are often conducted only once the effects of a crisis have manifested themselves. An appeal for funds then follows, and resources are mobilised and delivered, usually some months after the need has been identified and the crisis has hit. In Ethiopia, the process of early warning, assessment, appeal and response typically takes around eight months.

The RFM is designed to dramatically reduce the typical humanitarian timeline by temporarily extending support to current PSNP clients and new clients with transitory needs. For it to function correctly, four preconditions have to be met.

- *Early warning:* effective early warning systems need to be in place to indicate the need for a response as early as possible.
- *Contingency plans:* plans need to be put in place so that, when a shock is indicated, key actors in the system have already thought through how they should respond.
- *Contingency financing:* resources need to be ready and available to avoid the major time delays associated with the appeal process.

- *Institutions and capacity:* adequate institutional arrangements and capacity need to be in place to allow the pre-prepared plans to be implemented.

By putting in place effective early warning systems, contingency financing, contingency plans and institutional capacity ahead of a crisis, the 'typical' timeline for humanitarian response can be significantly reduced, to as little as two months from warning to response.

## The RFM in 2011

Early indications of a drought and possible crisis began to emerge in the highlands of Ethiopia in February 2011. In most years, the PSNP provides transfers to chronically food-insecure households between February and August. In 2011, between these months, the needs of transitory food-insecure households were met through the PSNP Contingency Budget in the usual way. However, it became increasingly clear that highland areas of the country would need support in the months preceding the November 2011 harvest, after the PSNP transfers ceased in August. Accordingly, the federal government triggered the RFM in August 2011 to address the transitory food needs of approximately 9.6 million people living in PSNP districts. Of these 9.6 million people, 6.5 million were existing PSNP clients. An additional 3.1 million people living in PSNP areas, who in a normal year do not need additional assistance, received up to three months' support to ensure that they could meet their food needs until the harvest in November.

Figure 1 (page 10) shows how the humanitarian system compared to the RFM system in 2011, in terms of timeliness of assessment, appeals, financing and response.

**Table 1: Comparing the RFM and 2011 humanitarian responses**

	2010		2011												
	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	
2011 Humanitarian Appeal – non-PSNP districts	Semi-Annual Seasonal Assessment	Semi-Annual Seasonal Assessment			HRD released	Appeal financing sought	Appeal Financing	Semi-Annual Seasonal Assessment and Revised HRD released	Appeal Financing sought – ongoing (as at December 2011, funding had been secured for 94% of needs) <sup>1</sup>						
Risk Financing Mechanism response 2011 – PSNP districts	Emergency transfers made, when resources available														
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing minimum criteria for RFM to be in place</li> <li>Existing PSNP caseload and transitory caseloads' needs met through PSNP and contingency budgets</li> </ul>														
													Rapid verification of needs	RFM monies released for 100% of needs	
													Request for release of RFM resources	RFM transfers using PSNP	

<sup>1</sup> In fact achieving 94% of the total requested is unusually good.

The humanitarian appeal was launched in March 2011, five months after the semi-annual seasonal assessment was completed. While the March appeal resulted in some resources being available for response, as at December 2011 (nine months after the appeal was launched and some 13 months after the original assessment) 94% of the funding for the humanitarian appeal was in place. By contrast, in August 2011, when regular PSNP transfers stopped, the RFM completed a rapid verification of needs in highland areas within a month of the request for RFM resources, and financing was disbursed within two weeks of the request. From request to disbursement took six weeks. This shows that, when the preconditions are met, the RFM easily outperforms the humanitarian system in terms of verifying needs and disbursing resources for response to be delivered through government systems. While an assessment is required to determine the impact on livelihoods of the RFM, the RFM's early and preventive response to an identified need means that it has a far higher chance of helping affected people avoid negative coping strategies and asset depletion as a result of a shock.

### Lessons and future areas of priority

Only three of the RFM's four preconditions had been met by August 2011, namely financing, planning and capacity. The fourth precondition for the RFM relates to an effective early warning system. In 2011, the decision to trigger the RFM was made only after Regional governments requested the release of RFM resources, based on their regional early warning information. According to the RFM Guidelines, early warning should be provided by the PSNP's regular reporting, the Livelihood Early Assessment Protection (LEAP) system and the federal government's Early Warning System (specifically the Livelihood Impact Assessment Sheets (LIAS), a predictive tool for assessing need).<sup>2</sup> At the time of writing the LEAP system remains under development and there is a need for clarity regarding the harmonisation of the use of the LIAS in RFM and in the calculation of humanitarian requirements. So, while there was a warning that people in PSNP areas would require additional support, this warning was not provided by the 'official' early warning process as set out in the RFM Guidelines.

Although the early warning system was not as strong as it needed to be, the first year of RFM operations demonstrates that responses to transitory food insecurity can be improved. There are a number of reasons for cautious optimism. First, the RFM was faster than the humanitarian response mechanism in releasing and disbursing resources from donors through government systems to poor people – implying that the RFM may be an appropriate instrument outside of the current PSNP districts. Second, government systems for implementing the RFM were tried and tested during this period and will improve over time. Third, there are clear accountability mechanisms in the RFM that are absent from the emergency response facility. Finally, the RFM contains a clear framework for evaluation and impact assessments, which are unlikely to be completed with comparable rigour under the emergency system, ensuring

<sup>2</sup> The LIAS is also the basis for calculating the total number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in Ethiopia.

that lessons can be learned and impact credibly assessed. Looking forward, the focus should be on finalising an RFM that is tailored to the pastoral context<sup>3</sup> and the possible use of the RFM instrument outside of PSNP districts.

## Conclusion

The RFM has proved to be an effective instrument enabling an early and preventive intervention before a shock becomes a crisis. The release of resources through the RFM is likely to have prevented households from having to engage in destructive coping strategies during the months leading up to the November harvest.

Addressing transitory as well as chronic food insecurity is integral to a sustainable transition from relief to development in Ethiopia. A scalable safety net is a necessary (but not sufficient) part of a Disaster Risk Management strategy. As vulnerability increases as a result of climate change, resilience will become increasingly important, and the RFM is likely to become an even more critical instrument in the response to transitory needs.

Although there are areas for improvement, the RFM has shown its responsiveness and flexibility and has successfully contributed to addressing transitory food needs in Ethiopia. If implemented as designed, the RFM is likely to become the backbone of Ethiopia's fight against transitory food insecurity. However, this implies that the

<sup>3</sup> This may mean linking the RFM to existing government guidelines, for emergency livestock interventions for example.

financing, plans, capacity and early warning systems for a scalable response are in place well before the impacts of a crisis can be felt. To achieve this, further investment in Ethiopia's early warning system is required. While we cannot know the impact of the RFM response on livelihoods this year until an independent assessment is completed, the actual response (in terms of processes, systems, scale and timing) was effective.

Given the events of 2011, there is also reason to suggest that the RFM, as a stand-alone instrument, could be scaled up across Ethiopia to cover areas outside of the current PSNP. Prepositioning financing, capacity, institutions, plans and a strong early warning system across the entire country would lead to a faster, more effective response than is possible under the current system. Even without nationwide coverage, the RFM is the largest example of risk insurance in a humanitarian context in Africa, and the 2011 experience shows us that it works. A clear precedent has been set. The RFM can of course be improved – but it can also be copied. This would however require a paradigm shift in how the humanitarian community looks at slow-onset humanitarian crises.

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## Improving drought management systems in the Horn of Africa

Adrian Cullis

The Horn of Africa is synonymous with drought and famine, and the region returned to the media spotlight in 2011 as a result of a region-wide *La Niña* drought. There was, however, much less mention of the fact that Ethiopia has recorded double-digit economic growth rates in recent years and is the third fastest-growing economy in Sub-Saharan Africa. The country has also made important efforts to address chronic food insecurity through the launch in 2005 of the Food Security Programme, the largest social protection programme in sub-Saharan Africa outside of South Africa. This article highlights positive developments in the management of drought in Ethiopia, with particular reference to the drylands.

### Ethiopia's drylands

Ethiopia's drylands account for 65% of the country, but support less than 20% of the nation's population of 85 million. In contrast to the highlands, which are dominated by smallholder farming, extensive livestock-keeping plays a central role in the livelihoods of people living in the drylands. Livestock provide milk and are sold to exporters to raise cash for food and clothes, to cover health and school fees and for other general household purposes.

The dryland year is divided into two wet seasons (one short and one long) and two dry seasons (again, one short and one long). Livestock are trekked between wet- and dry-season grazing in much the same way that livestock are moved into and out of summer Alpine pastures in Europe. Dryland livestock systems in the Horn produce more milk and meat per unit area than ranching systems in areas of similar rainfall in Australia and the United States. Domestic and export sales of livestock from the Horn of Africa are worth an estimated \$1 billion a year.

Despite high levels of efficiency and large inflows of foreign currency, the drylands are under pressure from population growth, the fragmentation of pastures and conflict, and there is no coherent policy framework to reconcile different interest groups. Dryland communities continue to adapt to changing conditions and are now herding fewer cattle and more drought-tolerant camels and goats. Households are also moving to alternative, non-livestock livelihoods. Resourceful as they are, however, an increasing number of poorer households in the drylands are no longer able to bounce back after the failure of two consecutive rains. Indeed, as confirmed by the 2011 drought, some very poor households cannot support their



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*Garissa cattle market, Kenya, October 2010*

families through a single extended dry season. Increased development assistance is required to help them complete the transition to alternative livelihoods, while at the same time continuing to ensure the long-term future of dryland livestock production and export.

### **Emergency assistance to social protection and drought management**

With the support of donors, the Ethiopian government has taken important steps to better manage drought. The Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) was established in 2005, considerable amounts of food are routinely distributed to poor and very poor households, early warning systems have been strengthened and the government is moving beyond the 'food first' culture to ensure higher levels of livelihood support. A Disaster Risk Management Technical Working Group (DRM TWG) has been established to coordinate sectoral Task Forces including the Agriculture Task Force (ATF), which covers hazard management for drought, flood, livestock disease, crop pests and diseases and volatile food prices. The government has also developed a draft Disaster Risk Management Policy and an associated Strategic Policy Investment Framework (SPIF). All of these steps meant that Ethiopia was perhaps better prepared to manage the 2011 drought than ever before.

The National Meteorological Agency (NMA) issued guidance on the emerging La Niña episode in October 2010. Forecasts outlined drier conditions in the equatorial parts of Ethiopia including the southern drylands, and wetter than normal conditions in the western and northern sectors of the country. In the southern drylands the forecast was for far lower or failed 'autumn' 2010 and 'spring' 2011 rains. The forecast proved accurate. The DRM TWG made the coordination of drought preparedness and response a priority, as did the ATF. ATF monthly meetings routinely featured weather, food price and agency response presentations and updates. To coordinate and guide

drought interventions, the ATF produced a briefing paper on disaster preparedness, response and recovery. While recognising that drought phases would vary from location to location, a generic typology was outlined:

- Alert/alarm phase – November 2010 to March 2011.
- Emergency phase – April 2011.
- Alert/alarm phase – May and June 2011.
- Emergency phase – July to November 2011.
- Early recovery phase – December 2011 to December 2012.

In September 2011, the ATF released a further briefing paper on early recovery and rehabilitation.<sup>1</sup> Anticipating better 'autumn' 2011 rains, the paper recommended the following interventions:

- Animal health.
- Restocking with local breeds.
- Rangeland management, including the safeguarding of dry-season grazing reserves.
- Supplementary feed and support to local irrigated fodder production.
- Stabilisation of food prices.
- Cash transfers (direct and cash for work).

The ATF also encouraged donors to increase their support for livelihood interventions, in particular through flexible funding facilities along the lines of the USAID-funded Pastoral Livelihoods Initiative (PLI)'s 'crisis modifier', which had successfully supported a range of livestock interventions including animal health, livestock feed supplementation, commercial and slaughter destocking and water point rehabilitation in the 2006 drought.

<sup>1</sup> The two briefing papers are Disaster Risk Management–Agriculture Task Force Briefing Paper 3, 'La Niña Related Disaster Preparedness, Response and Recovery Road Map' and Disaster Risk Management–Agriculture Task Force Briefing Paper 4, 'La Niña Early Recovery and Rehabilitation Road Map'.

## Emerging lessons

The 2011 drought offers ATF members some useful learning points.

### 1. The importance of markets

In times of drought, livestock prices tend to fall and grain prices rise, resulting in much-reduced household purchasing power. In the drought of 2006, PLI support to market traders resulted in the off-take of an estimated 20,000 cattle, which were transported to feedlots and eventually exported to Egypt. Other livestock were slaughtered, again supporting livestock prices. More robust by the time of the 2011 drought, livestock markets functioned well and livestock prices remained stable. Livestock off-take was further assisted by humanitarian agencies supporting commercial and slaughter destocking. However, grain prices rose by as much as 100% in some market towns, requiring poorer households to sell more animals to buy the same amount of grain as in 'normal' times. Clearly, the ATF has more to do to monitor grain prices and help the government to stabilise them in drought-prone areas during future droughts.

### 2. The importance of increased flexible funding

Despite increasing donor interest in livelihood support, actual funding for livelihood interventions in 2011 was estimated at between \$15 million and \$20m, or roughly one-fiftieth of total international humanitarian assistance in the country, estimated at \$800m. This is not far short of the total donor support to the Ministry of Agriculture's budget for 2011. This is neither sustainable nor is it in the long-term interests of governments in the Horn of Africa or drought-affected communities. The ATF must promote increased development assistance in the drylands with an integrated 'crisis modifier facility'. If successful, increasing donor assistance would increase the availability of funds for more timely support of livelihood-based drought management interventions in Ethiopia and in the region. If unsuccessful, drought management will continue to cost more and achieve limited impact, even if delivered in a more timely fashion than is currently the case.

### 3. The importance of coordination

Progress is being made to improve drought management coordination, including by the ATF at federal and regional levels. Whilst this is encouraging, more needs to be done to harmonise interventions and improve geographic coverage. For example, while the ATF harmonised prices for livestock destocking, inadequate progress has been made to harmonise animal health interventions, livestock feed supplementation and water point rehabilitation. While remaining enthusiastically supportive of innovation, the ATF must continue to improve levels of agriculture sector drought coordination and harmonisation amongst humanitarian actors at federal, regional and local levels. As a number of ATF members confirm, this is all the more important for agencies that, in times of drought, rely on short-term emergency 'surge' personnel, including team members with little or no previous experience of drought management in the region.

## Conclusion

Drought is recurrent in the Horn and can be expected to return to the region in much the same way that it periodically returns to the drylands of western Australia and the south-west United States. Considerably poorer than their Australian and American counterparts, drought-affected communities in the drylands of the Horn of Africa are more vulnerable to drought and its effects and are more seriously affected. This article highlights some of the progress being made in the agriculture sector by the sector itself and local and national government, supported by development and humanitarian partners. This message was inadequately reported in the international media coverage of the drought of 2011. The recommendations for the ATF outlined above, if appropriately supported, could further strengthen and consolidate the progress being made to more effectively manage drought in the drylands of Ethiopia and reduce the costs associated with emergency drought response.

**Adrian Cullis** is the Co-Chair of the Disaster Risk Management–Agriculture Task Force. This article is based on a series of discussions including the December 2011 DRM–ATF Monthly Discussion Forum.

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## How reciprocal grazing agreements can increase the resilience of pastoralists

Andreas Jenet and Eunice Obala, VSF Germany

Droughts in arid areas are caused by failed rains and exacerbated by the strategies affected people use to counter the depletion of resources and weakened coping mechanisms. A VSF consortium programme is focusing on the approaches and practices communities use to support dialogue and negotiation as a prerequisite for creating disaster-resilient communities. Such practices include reciprocal resource agreements, which are a common feature in pastoralist customary traditions.

Reciprocal resource agreements govern the use of shared resources: resources that are under the custody of

one community, but are also open to a neighbouring community in times of drought. These agreements are intrinsically connected to pastoral mobility, and thus form an essential legal basis for mobile livelihood systems. They are also an essential part of pastoralist coping strategies. By strengthening these agreements it is possible to enhance climate change adaptation among pastoral communities.

### Approach

Vétérinaires Sans Frontières (VSF) uses a participatory process to facilitate reflection among communities, based

on customary knowledge and community water and rangeland management plans. A VSF team supports groups that represent the broad community. Maps are drawn using participatory rural appraisal (PRA) techniques, so that all relevant information is included. This is followed by a mapping validation process. Reciprocal grazing agreements are one of the key milestones in this process.

VSF's approach is designed to encourage communities to make a holistic analysis of their problems and needs (e.g. for water and pasture) in order to develop conflict-sensitive solutions. The aim is to establish mutual agreement and understanding, and resource-sharing action plans with a clearly described operational framework (rules and regulations). It is worth noting that such an agreement needs to be elaborated predominantly for times of drought, as during normal times no resource sharing may be necessary.

### Process steps

- Step 1:** Mobilisation and sensitisation of communities using a participatory approach (Community-Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR)).
- Step 2:** Establishment of core working groups consisting of people with a clear understanding of the community and existing resources and detailed historical knowledge.
- Step 3:** Drawing of resource use maps showing boundaries, neighbouring communities, existing resources, dry, wet and reserve grazing areas, migration routes to markets, water points and conflict-prone zones and institutions.
- Step 4:** Community validation of resource use maps.
- Step 5:** Inter-community meetings. Special focus is given to the identification of grazing areas with unused or under-used pasture and water resources, as well as the zoning of existing resources for potential sharing.
- Step 6:** Strategic planning of inter-community resource use. The elements are put into a systematic framework that can be monitored, and which forms the terms and conditions under which resources are used. The plans consist of a Reciprocal Agreement Framework Matrix setting out what has been agreed, who is responsible for the agreement, how it is going to be implemented and the penalties for transgression.
- Step 7:** Ratification and validation of the proposed plan.
- Step 8:** Final signing of the Reciprocal Agreement. Once the Reciprocal Agreement is approved or endorsed by community members, it is then signed by the representatives of the two communities concerned, in an event witnessed by local leaders. The inclusion of



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*A community meeting between Dasanach communities in Kenya and Ethiopia to address cross-border security and resource sharing*

government representatives is particularly important in cross-border plans. There must also be documented proof of an agreement to allow cross-border movements of livestock and people in times of disaster.

**Step 9:** Implementation by the communities, with outreach at community meetings and forums, chiefs' *barazas* and markets to increase publicity and awareness of the agreement's terms and conditions.

**Step 10:** Monitoring of the Reciprocal Agreements. Community committees are responsible for monitoring the implementation process through scheduled meetings, taking note of violations and sharing these with leaders and government representatives. This is a difficult task for the local authorities since customary agreements were traditionally carried forward only orally, and written agreements need to be regularly revisited.

### Impact

Gabra and Hamar communities who have lived in conflict for years have developed a reciprocal grazing agreement that has been instrumental in enhancing pasture and water resource sharing around Sabare, Minongerti and Hado areas along the Ethiopia–Kenya border. The arrangement increased resilience and reduced the impact of the drought in 2010 and 2011. A very successful community-managed monitoring system has ensured regular dialogue meetings, the return of stray cattle, meetings to improve social cohesion and improved security among the communities involved. As Chief Tuye Katelo of the Dukana community in Dukana put it: 'We are very grateful for the peace meetings to bring us together with the Hamar community with whom we fought for years ... The peace and reciprocal agreements we made and respect has created peace, and now we have cross-border joint grazing'. Reciprocal grazing agreements between the Dasanach and Gabra are also in place, starting with the sharing of grazing areas in Sabare, Darate and Bulluk, which for decades were used only

rarely due to conflict. Gabra traders visiting Dasanach sleep over in the village, and Dasanach trucks have been allowed to travel to Illeret to transport food relief and for commercial de-stocking to Nairobi. Likewise, reciprocal agreements between Dasanach and Hamar communities developed steadily in 2011, leading to peaceful sharing of pasture and water around Surge, El-Nyakuwanga and Langai along the Kenya–Ethiopia border. These areas were not fully utilised in the past due to conflict.

The Gabra and Borana developed a reciprocal agreement to enhance resource sharing in 2009–2010. The Gabra had pasture around Hurri Hills, which is their dry season reserve, but had no water, whilst the Borana of Dillo *woreda* had water but no pasture. The two communities agreed to share resources with each other, leading to increased coping capacity and resilience during the drought. The reciprocal grazing agreement between the Dodoth community of Uganda and the Turkana community of Kenya included Naporoto, Loile, Pire, Matakul and Kalopeto, which, after the agreement was signed, became accessible to the communities bordering these areas. Other steps taken by the village planning committees of the two communities included land use planning, early warning sensitisation and drought preparedness planning. Finally, a meeting between the Kenyan government and an Ethiopian government delegation was facilitated in February 2010 to address the closure of the Kenya (Marsabit North) and Ethiopia (South Omo Zone) border. The Kenyan District Commission for Marsabit North closed the border in September 2009 after a Gabra community was raided by a Dasanach community, resulting in five deaths and the loss of thousands of livestock at Darate. The restrictions

on movement imposed by the closure had a devastating effect. The meeting concluded with the two governments agreeing to reinforce the reciprocal grazing agreements developed by both communities and to reopen the border. In addition, the two governments agreed to regular future meetings in order to share information and to improve the coordination of their actions across the border. Cross-border security has improved since a ‘border security team’ was deployed, made up of police from the station in Illeret and Eubua and division officers in Omorate, Turmi and North Horr.

## Conclusion

Recognising that mobility is intrinsically linked with access to resources in neighbouring communities, and that these access rights were traditionally negotiated and codified in customary settlements, resource agreements play an essential role in pastoral resilience to drought. The key to making reciprocal resource agreements successful is to integrate them within different approaches, such as conflict-sensitive programming, water resource management and participative rangeland management (planned grazing). Reciprocal resource agreements are a powerful tool in increasing resilience, particularly in cross-border areas. It is crucial to recognise that it is not the agreement document that is important, but rather the opportunity to link customary traditions with national authorities, and the establishment of permanent dialogue and understanding between different communities. It is the process itself that makes the methodology a success.

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## Mitigating the impact of drought in Moyale District, Northern Kenya

Wendy Erasmus, Leina Mpoke and Yacob Yishak, Concern Worldwide

Moyale District in northern Kenya is a sparsely populated area. Livestock account for 70% of household income, and 67% of the population live below the poverty line. Droughts have eroded household assets and further reduced the coping mechanisms available to the pastoralist residents of Moyale. Yet a recent survey revealed that severe acute and global acute malnutrition rates in Moyale are much lower than in the neighbouring areas of Marsabit and north-west Wajir, where similar conditions prevail. Why has Moyale fared better? This article argues that Concern’s approach to working in the district was key to improving both malnutrition rates and resilience.

The key components of Concern’s approach are:

- Creating resilience over the long term.
- Strengthening government capacity to respond.
- Early scaling up of food, nutrition and livelihood interventions.
- Good coordination.

By diversifying livelihoods, switching to more drought-resistant livestock species and breeds, improving rangeland management, mitigating resource-based conflicts and lengthening the water availability period, the ability of pastoralists in Moyale District to withstand the 2011 drought affecting Northern Kenya was enhanced. Working closely with communities and local government authorities (and simultaneously building capacity), WFP and other NGOs operating in the area was critical to achieving impact.

## Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR)

Concern has been implementing an integrated set of initiatives designed to create resilience among pastoralist communities in Moyale District since 2006. The central component is community dialogue. Concern uses the Community Conversations (CCs) approach, which places pastoralists at the centre of the changes and initiatives described in this article. In this way we are able to

learn from and build on traditional pastoralist mechanisms and systems for managing drought.

Managing drought is a normal part of pastoralism. In the past, drought came in ten-year cycles, enabling pastoralists to build up their herds and regenerate pasture and water resources to withstand the next drought. Over the past 30 years, however, drought cycles have been shrinking to every five years and now every two years – and the droughts are more prolonged. Ever-shrinking drought cycles hinder pastoralists' traditional drought management strategies, making them less resilient. CMDRR aims to help pastoralists to adapt their strategies to take into account changing climatic conditions. Specific CMDRR activities are designed to reduce poor communities' risk and vulnerability to drought and enable them to prepare for future drought by strengthening traditional coping mechanisms.



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*A woman in Nana Village, Moyale*

Communities undertake a range of inter-related development activities whose flexible timeframe and scope can be adapted as a crisis develops. As drought conditions worsen, pastoralist communities focus more and more on basic survival. They are forced to migrate in search of pasture and water, and they move to areas where relief food distributions are likely to take place. Concern shifts its focus to emergency and recovery as pastoralists shift theirs. Reducing and expanding development activities as drought conditions progress requires flexibility from both development and emergency donors. Concern integrates this principle into its project documents and communicates changes in operating conditions to its donors at an early stage.

#### Promoting diversified livelihoods

Being solely dependent on livestock is a risky livelihood strategy. Moyale town in particular benefits from a booming petty trade market with a strong cross-border element and a vibrant international and regional livestock market, giving it an advantage over Marsabit and Wajir. This well-developed market infrastructure has resulted in fewer pastoralists being completely dependent on livestock and livestock products. Nevertheless, Concern's target group, poor pastoralists who are handicapped by their distance from the town and lack of access to capital, do not necessarily interact with these markets. Concern's aim is to create conditions that enable poor pastoralists to interact with markets by strengthening the livestock product value chain and encouraging and supporting livelihood diversification.

Concern has introduced retail businesses, hide and skins trade, veterinary pharmacies and dryland farming. Dryland farming is of particular note; it has enabled the production of kale, onion, tomatoes and fruits (papaya, oranges and passion fruit), which are marketable and improve dietary

diversity. Concern provided the resources and developed a link between interested communities and the Department of Crop Production in the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) to facilitate procurement, installation and the provision of technical advice to community-managed micro irrigation. Seeds suitable for the dry climate were part of the package.

#### Switching to drought-resistant livestock

One of the changes resulting from Community Conversations was that poor pastoralist communities came to understand the potential benefits of diversifying their livestock holdings to include camels. Camels are more drought-resistant and their milk is more nutrient-rich than cow's milk for children under five years of age. Pastoralist communities subsequently began acquiring camels through marriage, gifts and the sale of cattle, sheep and goats. In addition to facilitating the CCs, Concern has promoted this community-driven shift by providing technical advice to communities and livestock health workers on how to manage camels and camel herds.

#### Rangeland management

CCs were also the vehicle through which Concern addressed rangeland management issues. Through CCs, pastoralist communities were able to distinguish between positive traditional grazing practices, such as controlled grazing to avoid livestock trampling and destroying grazing areas, and negative practices, such as letting animals graze in the rainwater catchment area and damage the catchment capacity. Building on the existing community-based Environmental Management Committees (EMCs), Concern gave communities training and technical advice on using deadwood and tree prunings for fencing and firewood, rather than completely destroying the tree. Concern

provided information on how managing animal grazing (reducing overgrazing and uncontrolled random grazing) reduces pasture degradation and enables its regeneration, and how it contributes to the control of livestock disease.

### Conflict mitigation

Conflict in Moyale often flares up when neighbouring communities vie over scarce resources. Working through traditional peace committees, Concern brought groups together to discuss and agree on solutions to conflict. One solution has been to organise and enforce grazing patterns designed to avoid conflict. As resources became scarcer in 2011, these committees met more frequently and agreed to allow livestock to move freely between water and pasture, prolonging animal production to support households that would otherwise have suffered from malnutrition. Lastly, Concern linked community peace committees to the District Security Team to enable more rapid interventions by the authorities when conflict did arise.

### Increasing water availability

Water points in Northern Kenya are managed by Water Users Associations (WUAs). In collaboration with WUAs, Concern constructed water catchments – dams and underground tanks – to harvest rainwater. This contributed to resilience in two ways: it reduced the distance pastoralists had to travel in search of water, and it increased the availability of water between rains by increasing storage capacity.

### Strengthening government capacity

Concern has been implementing a nutrition project in collaboration with the Moyale District Health Management Team (DHMT) since the drought in 2009. Following the acute emergency phase, Concern's aim was to reduce health- and nutrition-related morbidity and mortality while enabling the DHMT to prevent and treat acute malnutrition and establish systems to mount an early response to the next crisis. This included technical training to DHMT staff including Community Health Workers (CHWs), establishing technical protocols and quality of care oversight systems and adopting interventions with the highest impact on mortality.

### Scaling up food, nutrition and livelihood interventions

In 2010, the Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWSNET) indicated that Moyale District was at risk of becoming 'highly food insecure'. This warning led Concern, in collaboration with the Kenyan government and local partners, to begin scaling up High Impact Nutritional Interventions (HINI) across the District.<sup>1</sup> One hundred and twenty-three CHWs were recruited to increase coverage around health facilities offering nutrition services. This was instrumental in the early detection of malnutrition cases, which allowed for admission in Supplementary Feeding Programs before children's health deteriorated further. The Ministry of Health was supported in the opening of six

<sup>1</sup> HINI is a package of interventions proven to reduce mortality rates. It includes management of acute malnutrition, vitamin and mineral supplementation (Vitamin A, Zinc, etc), immunisation, de-worming, promotion of appropriate child feeding and hygiene practices, and nutrition education.

new health facilities, and formal and on-the-job training was provided for health workers. At the start only two staff members from rural health facilities had received Integrated Managing Acute Malnutrition (IMAM) training; currently more than 46 are trained. Vulnerable households within Moyale were linked to other programmes, such as World Vision's Project for Emergency Assistance in Kenya (PEAK) programme. These additional programmes provided livelihood, agriculture and educational support. High Impact Nutrition Interventions were adopted at health facilities and through outreach, and aggravating factors, such as poor water quality, were mitigated through the distribution of water purification tablets to households and at health facilities. As the situation continued to deteriorate with the approach of the rains, and indicators confirmed a breakdown in coping mechanisms among poor pastoralists, Concern initiated a food voucher scheme for 3,000 poor households not receiving other assistance. These households were identified through community-based targeting mechanisms. In all, these interventions reached 33,935 direct beneficiaries, including 7,000 children under five and 1,500 pregnant and lactating women.

### Coordination

A concerted coordination effort was made between Concern, World Vision, WFP and the DHMT to streamline supply pipelines of both food and nutrition treatment commodities. Families of children and women admitted to nutrition treatment programmes were also targeted for food aid. Recovered children were therefore discharged into a household environment where sufficient food was available. This enabled faster recovery and a reduction in the number of cases slipping from moderate to severe malnutrition.

Targeting DRR interventions to strengthen the resilience of families at high risk of or with malnourished children was another important aspect of Concern's approach. Coordinating these sectoral inputs made a visible impact in terms of lower rates of malnutrition in Moyale.

### Impact

Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) in Moyale was at 1.5% in June 2011, one-third of the 5% found in Marsabit and one-quarter the SAM rate of 6.8% found in north-west Wajir. Moyale has a Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rate of 13.7%, which is half that of Marsabit and Wajir. Moyale experienced only a 1.4% increase in GAM between June 2010 and June 2011, despite severe drought conditions. During the same period GAM rates in neighbouring Marsabit and Wajir north-west rose by 13.7% and 8.1%, respectively. All nutrition health services in Moyale exceeded Sphere standards, including Cured Rate, Death Rate, Coverage Rate and Defaulter Rate, with 85% of health facilities adhering to national IMAM protocols.

### Conclusion

The need for a humanitarian response in Moyale was delayed by four months largely as a result of greater resilience among Moyale residents in general, and poor vulnerable pastoralists in particular. There is considerable

scope for building further resilience among Moyale's poor pastoralists. Concern's future plans include the introduction of drought-resistant crops such as cassava, millet and sorghum and further livestock diversification, with the introduction of Gala Goats to smallholder herders. Goats' milk and meat is relied upon heavily during droughts as a food and income source, and Gala Goats are more drought-resistant than the common East Africa Goat and have higher milk and meat yields. Despite the existence of water resource management systems in northern Kenya, effective management of water sources in pastoralist areas remains a challenge. Building on what we know of pastoralist movement and culture, Concern is exploring alternative management systems that exploit public-private partnerships.

Strengthening local government capacity will also be a strong focus for Concern in the future. With the DHMT, this will involve participating in DHMT budgeting processes to ensure that adequate government resources are made available, setting thresholds, strategies and protocols for the scaling up and down of health and nutrition strategies and monitoring mechanisms aimed at informing triggers for scaling up. Concern will also form stronger links with the local government arms of the Ministry of Livestock Production and the MoA.

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## Humanitarian response in conflict: lessons from South Central Somalia

Riccardo Polastro, DARA

The scale and scope of the humanitarian crisis in South Central Somalia challenges the humanitarian system's capacity to deliver assistance. More than two decades of conflict, combined with cyclical, slow- and fast-onset disasters, have displaced millions of Somalis. In the absence of a central government, the few basic services available are mostly provided by humanitarian aid organisations (mainly through local staff and partners) and food crises are recurrent. Many of the lessons from this crisis can also be applied to other complex emergencies where the humanitarian response capacity has been overstretched, and where security and access constraints make it difficult for agencies to establish a regular presence on the ground.

### The humanitarian response

This article highlights the key findings from the report of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) evaluation of the humanitarian response in South Central Somalia between 2005 and 2010.<sup>1</sup> These findings and recommendations have been validated by the Humanitarian Country Team, and the evaluation is considered 'one of the most comprehensive evaluations of aid in Somalia ever conducted'.<sup>2</sup>

Despite critical access and security constraints the overall response was successful in key areas such as food distribution, health, nutrition, water and sanitation. From 2005 to 2010 there was no large-scale disease outbreak even though millions of people fled from their homes in a very short period. There were a number of

innovative features in the response, especially around remote management (monitoring, participation and accountability). The Somali diaspora and the population in IDP-influx areas and in the region as a whole played a major role in the response.

Despite successful lifesaving efforts, most assistance focused on responding to short-term emergency relief needs, with much less attention to recovery and mitigation, including sustainable livelihood programmes and disaster risk reduction. The response was often reactive, utilising supply-driven approaches focused on short-term humanitarian objectives. Funding cycles were too short-range. While pooled funding mechanisms allowed more organisations to access financial resources, the slow screening and approval procedures prevented them from providing more timely assistance. Insecurity and access constraints were major problems. Conditions imposed on humanitarian aid made it difficult for humanitarian actors to respond impartially and proportionately. By 2010, increasing insecurity and funding constraints had forced most UN and international aid organisations out of South Central Somalia. Data is limited, but there are indications that being based in Nairobi and working remotely through local partners has increased transaction costs for humanitarian organisations. While diversion of humanitarian assistance has been reported in recent years, the international community is taking steps to improve risk management and reduce waste. However, monitoring is hampered by lack of access and presence on the ground, and joint monitoring and reporting mechanisms are generally missing.

### Strategic lessons and conclusions

#### Humanitarian space

From 2005 to 2010 control over South Central Somalia was consistently disputed and humanitarian space shrank dramatically. Some key donors blended security

<sup>1</sup> Neither this article nor the larger report refer to the current crisis in Somalia. The evaluation was funded by Danida, DFID, SDC and SIDA, and managed by the DRC and OCHA on behalf of the IASC/HCT. The full report (*IASC Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response in South Central Somalia 2005–2010*) is here: [http://daraint.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/HCT-Somalia\\_Evaluation\\_2005-2010\\_DARA\\_Report.pdf](http://daraint.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/HCT-Somalia_Evaluation_2005-2010_DARA_Report.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Foreword by the Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, *IASC Evaluation*, p. 8.



Riccardo Polastri

Armed escorts during the evaluation field mission in Abudwaq Somalia, June 2011

and humanitarian agendas, and parties to the conflict have repeatedly violated international humanitarian law by conducting indiscriminate attacks against civilians and impeding humanitarian access. As a result, neutral and independent humanitarian action has lost ground and humanitarian organisations have faced increasing difficulties in gaining access to populations in need. Ways need to be found – through dialogue – to ensure that combatants are distinguished from civilians and that warring parties accept and facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance according to need, regardless of clan or political affiliation.

#### Needs-based response

Humanitarian assistance to South Central Somalia has focused on relief activities, particularly food aid, with limited support to recovery activities. Insufficient investment in livelihood and disaster risk reduction programmes has contributed to a continuing need for relief aid.

#### Box 1: Causes of GAM

Global acute malnutrition (GAM) was widely considered to be a consequence of persistent poverty caused by recurrent crop failure, very scarce rainfall, food price inflation and severe local shortages of supplies. Drought, conflict and displacement also contributed to high malnutrition rates. Droughts in 2006 meant that GAM rose to 30% in some areas.<sup>3</sup>

#### Joint approaches

Joint efforts, such as health and education activities implemented during a polio immunisation campaigns, have been more effective than individual cluster activi-

<sup>3</sup> IASC Evaluation, p. 24.

ties. Similar approaches should be used in other sectors, such as livelihoods, agriculture and disaster risk reduction. Successful joint approaches may also help reduce internal displacement if provided equitably and in people's places of origin. Geographically unequal aid distribution and contracting humanitarian space have acted as 'pull factors', increasing the number of displaced people moving to Mogadishu and the Afgooye corridor, as well as other urban areas.

#### Differentiated assistance

Few organisations adequately analysed the needs of IDPs according to place (urban or rural), cause of displacement (drought – pastoralist; conflict) or length of time displaced. According to local authorities

and aid recipients interviewed the specific needs of displaced populations in host families, as well as host family needs, were largely overlooked. The diaspora has played a significant role in helping communities to cope with otherwise unsustainable stresses. While initiatives have been taken to foster stronger links between the humanitarian community and private actors, further steps are needed to ensure that humanitarian efforts are coordinated more closely with the support received from the diaspora and other private sources.

### Operational lessons and conclusions on efficiency and effectiveness

#### Funding

Funding mechanisms, including the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF), are still too slow despite efforts to speed them up. There is an urgent need to make the process more efficient to ensure that aid reaches affected populations in time. This is particularly critical for lifesaving assistance and aid intended to prevent life-threatening situations from worsening. Funding cycles are also too short, creating a significant additional workload for OCHA and cluster leads and reducing the time available for project implementation. Longer-term and more flexible funding would permit quicker responses, which could be adapted to changing needs and provide opportunities to strengthen resilience. Unfortunately, donor rules often do not allow humanitarian funding to be used for preparedness, recovery and development.

#### Management and transaction costs

The humanitarian response to Somalia has largely been managed from Nairobi; decisions made, and those making them, have been removed from the field. This adds to the transaction costs of humanitarian operations as intermediary levels have been introduced to channel or administer funding and projects. Although most

agencies agree that remote management is far from ideal, some organisations have accumulated knowledge and experience that others could usefully learn from, given that remote management appears to be here to stay. One important challenge of remote management in South Central Somalia is the heightened exposure of national staff to risks. There is considerable scope for humanitarian organisations to provide national staff with adequate security resources, support and capacity-building.

### Box 2: Monitoring – lessons learned

Monitoring, including through remote structures, depended on local capacity and establishing the technological means to verify whether work had been done. Those organisations that have managed to continue monitoring activities in Somalia have:

- instituted regular field-based reporting (weekly and monthly);
- developed simple action plans and checklists;
- maintained regular contact with ground staff by phone, Internet and video (mostly used as part of remote management);
- increased recruitment and training of monitoring staff or use of third-party private monitors;
- developed standards;
- regularly dispatched local staff to visit project sites;
- made field visits when ‘access windows’ were open;
- conducted peer-to-peer reviews;
- used third-party mobile monitors to verify deliveries;
- used photographs and videos to supplement written reports; and
- improved vetting of implementing partners with a contractor database under the auspices of the office of the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator.

### Assessments, monitoring and accountability

Lack of access meant that humanitarian organisations were not always able to conduct assessments or implement and monitor their assistance safely and effectively. There has been an increasing (and positive) tendency to undertake more joint (or coordinated) assessments, which can reduce costs for humanitarian organisations as well as easing the burden on affected populations. However, individual assessments were still carried out, with the result that affected populations often felt over-assessed and too much data was produced at cluster levels.

Assessments have been characterised by a general absence of predefined standards governing the type of information to be gathered, by whom and where. The fact that relatively little assistance arrived despite the many assessments carried out created distrust among the population, and very few organisations told people what assistance they should expect. Overall, accountability towards beneficiaries has been very limited. Monitoring could be improved substantially and more rigorous use of indicators is needed, particularly for measuring activities beyond output level.

### Box 3: Engaging with communities

Understanding perceptions of affected populations and clearly explaining programme objectives and inputs is vital. People must see that consultations are transparent and that aid is distributed fairly between communities without any suggestion of bias. By involving beneficiaries and stakeholders it is possible to achieve this. As the evaluation team was told by a local NGO representative in Mogadishu: ‘you have to be transparent with the community, telling them what you do and letting them know what the outcome is. You must call the people and explain what you are going to do and agree on selection criteria’. Some NGOs stress the importance of open dialogue and consultation with local elders, community leaders and women.

### Recommendations<sup>4</sup>

- Donors should always ensure the provision of unconditional funding that is independent from political objectives and consistent with Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles.<sup>5</sup>
- Humanitarian access to civilian populations can be denied by parties to the conflict for political or security reasons. Humanitarian agencies must maintain their ability to obtain and sustain access to all vulnerable populations and to negotiate such access with all parties to the conflict through sustained dialogue and principled approaches. The HCT should immediately foster dialogue to address fundamental challenges related to humanitarian assistance, with special emphasis on access, protection of civilians and impartiality. The Humanitarian Coordinator, OCHA and cluster leads should ensure that only activities aligned with ‘Do No Harm’ principles are funded.
- The humanitarian community should immediately strategise and actively promote more timely, integrated responses that are adapted to local realities on the ground. The strategy should prioritise areas of origin to prevent further displacement, promote the return of displaced populations, target host communities and IDPs and include contingency planning for likely scenarios (such as changes in lines of confrontation).
- The HCT members should ensure that experience of remote management and good practice for protecting national staff is documented and shared with other HCTs using similar management modalities in places such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Sudan and Yemen.
- Humanitarian organisations should position senior managers in the field and give them sufficient decision-making authority to ensure that operations run smoothly and flexibly. If this is not possible, humanitarian organisations should put in place a capacity-building strategy for field managers to enhance their decision-making capacity.
- Humanitarian organisations should seek to lower transaction costs by reducing the number of intermediary

<sup>4</sup> Many of these recommendations have already been implemented and taken into account in the Consolidated Appeal, the humanitarian strategy for Somalia in 2012.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.goodhumanitariananddonorship.org>.

levels of administration and by using more direct implementation modalities, such as cash transfers and local procurement, based on market analysis.

- Cluster leads and members should, together with OCHA, use common assessment tools to carry out joint needs assessments – prioritising food, nutrition, water sanitation and hygiene, health, shelter/non-food items – and ensure that essential data is disaggregated in terms of vulnerability, gender and age. When areas are not accessible local enumerators, mobile phones and satellite imagery should be used.
- Cluster leads should ensure that member organisations regularly inform affected communities of their rights and duties and monitor whether beneficiaries receive the

assistance that they are entitled to. Agreements with implementing partners should make this compulsory. In areas of South Central Somalia where access is limited, mobile phone technology could be used.

Implementing these recommendations will not be easy in Somalia, one of the most difficult and complex working environments in the world. Many of these lessons are not new, and most of these recommendations could be applied to other complex emergencies. Given this, we should ask ourselves: ‘when will we ever learn, or rather, why do we never learn?’.

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## Neutrality undermined: the impact of counter-terrorism legislation on humanitarian action in Somalia

Sara Pantuliano and Victoria Metcalfe, HPG

Counter-terrorism laws and other measures are having a significant impact on humanitarian action in Somalia. Research by the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) suggests that they have increased operating costs, slowed down administrative functions and operational response, curtailed funding and undermined humanitarian partnerships. They have also prevented access and altered the quality and coordination of assistance, making it more difficult for humanitarian actors to operate in accordance with the principles of neutrality and impartiality.

### Counter-terrorism legislation

The development of counter-terrorism legislation and measures relating to Somalia must be seen in the context of global counter-terrorism efforts. Although there is no legal definition of terrorism, in practice the term has been used to describe politically motivated violence intended to cause death or injury to civilians, with the aim of intimidating a wider audience. What constitutes terrorism is however highly subjective: states tend to characterise violence perpetrated against them by non-state armed groups as ‘terrorist’, whereas similar acts perpetrated by groups politically or ideologically closer to them may be considered part of a ‘liberation struggle’. Today, there is a complex array of domestic, regional and international legislation and policy addressing specific acts of terrorism, or targeted at specific ‘designated’ groups or individuals.

Whilst the objectives of counter-terrorism legislation and international humanitarian law (IHL) coincide over the need to protect civilians from attack, in some instances this body of law is in contradiction with the provisions of IHL. In particular, counter-terrorism legislation considers one party to a conflict as criminal per se, whereas IHL regulates the behaviour of *all* parties to the conflict in equal fashion. While IHL balances the principle of military necessity with that of humanity, and places limits on the waging of war, counter-terrorism laws threaten to

erode these limits, and make it more difficult for people affected by conflict to receive humanitarian protection and assistance. Although anti-terrorism laws do not prohibit discussions with designated terrorists, and IHL clearly provides for humanitarian actors to offer their services to all conflict parties, some humanitarian actors have been instructed not to engage with certain armed groups, even though this limits their ability to reach populations under their control.

### Undermining neutrality: the operational impact of counter-terrorism legislation in Somalia

The sanctions regime in Somalia dates back to 1992, when an arms embargo was imposed under UN Security Council Resolution 733. Resolution 1844 in 2008 added targeted sanctions against listed individuals and entities. UN member states have implemented the resolution through a range of measures, including criminalising the provision of resources and material support to those named on the list, which currently comprises Al-Shabaab and ten individuals.<sup>1</sup>

Resolution 1916, passed in March 2010, introduces a humanitarian exemption to the sanctions, but this applies only to ‘the United Nations, its specialised agencies or programmes, humanitarian organisations having observer status with the United Nations General Assembly that provide humanitarian assistance, or their implementing partners’. This excludes independent organisations like Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), which are neither part of the UN nor an implementing partner. It also leaves diaspora organisations vulnerable.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the exemption is not mandatory. In the US, for example, whilst the substance of Resolutions 1844 and 1916 has been implemented, the humanitarian

<sup>1</sup> See ‘List of Individuals and Entities Subject to the Measures Imposed by Paragraphs 1, 3, and 7 of Security Council Resolution 1844 (2008)’, [http://www.un.org/sc/committees/751/pdf/1844\\_cons\\_list.pdf](http://www.un.org/sc/committees/751/pdf/1844_cons_list.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> L. Hammond and H. Vaughan-Lee, *Humanitarian Space in Somalia: A Scarce Commodity*, HPG Working Paper (London: ODI, forthcoming 2012).

exemption has not been incorporated into domestic law.<sup>3</sup> While the humanitarian exemption in Resolution 1916 could be seen as an example of how to mitigate the humanitarian impacts of sanctions and counter-terror legislation, there are fears that it sets a precedent in which humanitarian action is exempted only in particular circumstances, rather than this being the norm in situations of humanitarian need.

The sanctions regime has compounded the difficulties facing humanitarian organisations operating in South Central Somalia, a highly volatile area mostly controlled by Al-Shabaab. Funding has declined by half between 2008 and 2011, mainly as a result of a drop in US contributions, and humanitarian organisations are being asked to introduce extensive risk mitigation measures. These include pre-vetting finance checks, tracking systems, real-time monitoring, verification of partners' shareholders, a bond system (requiring a deposit of 30% of the value of goods transported) and a contractual assumption of 100% financial liability for shipments lost or stolen by contractors. Humanitarian organisations that fall within the terms of the exemption in Resolution 1916 are required to inform the UN Humanitarian Aid Coordinator for Somalia of any instances of diversion of assistance, as well as on the implementation of the exemption. This information is included in reports to the UN Security Council.

In 2009, fears that Al-Shabaab was benefiting from the influx of humanitarian assistance, particularly food aid, led the US Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) to suspend over \$50 million in humanitarian aid for Somalia.<sup>4</sup> These concerns were compounded by a report by the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia in March 2010, which alleged that three contractors were diverting over half of all food aid in Somalia – allegations that were contested by the World Food Programme (WFP). While risks of aid diversion certainly need to be addressed, the requirements on agencies in Somalia far exceed what is considered acceptable in other contexts. The costs of these measures are high, both financially and to the flexibility and responsiveness of emergency operations. Several organisations report being unable to spend funds quickly because of the pre-vetting checks and other risk management procedures they are required to adopt, particularly in relation to OFAC

<sup>3</sup> Kate Mackintosh, 'Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project: Implications for Humanitarian Action – A View from Médecins Sans Frontières', *Suffolk Transnational Law Review*, Volume 34, Symposium 2011, Number 3, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> M. Bradbury, *State-building, Counterterrorism, and Licensing Humanitarianism in Somalia*, Feinstein International Center Briefing Paper, September 2010.



UN Photo/Stuart Price

*A Ugandan soldier serving with AMISOM in Mogadishu, November 2011*

regulations. There are also concerns that these measures increase the risk to aid workers by aligning them with a regime that explicitly targets one actor in the conflict – and one that is already hostile towards aid agencies.<sup>5</sup> Two US organisations, International Medical Corps (IMC) and CARE, were expelled from areas under Al-Shabaab control in 2008 for allegedly spying and gathering intelligence that led to the assassination of an Al-Shabaab leader in a US air strike.<sup>6</sup>

The current famine in Al-Shabaab-controlled areas has placed these restrictions in the spotlight, with the critical humanitarian situation forcing donors to relax their requirements. In the US, OFAC restrictions have been loosened and licences granted to the State Department, USAID and their partners and contractors to operate in Somalia. OFAC has also announced that non-USAID partners can work in Somalia without a licence, and that 'incidental benefits' to Al-Shabaab, such as food and medicine that might fall into their hands, are 'not a focus for OFAC sanctions enforcement'.<sup>7</sup> Any organisation facing demands for large or repeated payments is however required to consult OFAC prior to proceeding with their operations. Although the US has eased its restrictions on agencies working in Somalia, there is no guarantee that OFAC will not take action in the future, nor does this mean that agencies will not face prosecution in the US in relation to the material support statute, which prohibits provision of support to designated terrorists.

<sup>5</sup> 'Dilemma for US NGOs: Counterterrorism Laws v. the Humanitarian Imperative', Transcript of a panel discussion hosted by the Charity & Security Network, 1 July 2009, <http://www.charityandsecurity.org/system/files/July%201%20transcript.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Department of Political Affairs and Regional Administrations Press Release, Harakat Al-Shabaab Al-Mujahideen, 20 July 2009, [http://patronusanalytical.com/files/Al\\_Shabaabs\\_NGO\\_liaison\\_office\\_announces\\_closure\\_of\\_UN\\_offices\\_in\\_Somalia.php](http://patronusanalytical.com/files/Al_Shabaabs_NGO_liaison_office_announces_closure_of_UN_offices_in_Somalia.php).

<sup>7</sup> Office of Foreign Assets Control Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Private Relief Efforts in Somalia, 4 August 2011.

## Conclusion

The application of counter-terrorism legislation and other measures to humanitarian operations in Somalia and other countries is challenging principled humanitarian action. Complying with conditions in donor funding agreements and curtailing operations in areas controlled by designated individuals or groups has affected the ability of humanitarian organisations to provide assistance according to the principles of neutrality and impartiality. Whilst preventing terrorist acts is an important objective, the steps many states are taking to achieve this are having an unnecessarily adverse impact on efforts to provide life-saving assistance to those caught up in conflict.

In Somalia and elsewhere, the potential and actual adverse impact includes the threat of criminal sanctions against humanitarian actors considered to have provided support to terrorist groups in contravention of the various domestic, regional and international laws. The fear of prosecution will continue to undermine humanitarian operations, at least until there is greater clarity on the interpretation and application of these laws to humanitarian operations. In addition, the range of regulatory measures that have been introduced are raising operating costs, slowing down administrative functions, curtailing funding, undermining partnerships, reducing access and altering the quality and coordination of assistance. Islamic charities operating in Somalia and elsewhere have been most severely affected, but the impact has been felt across the humanitarian sector.

As HPG's research demonstrates, dialogue on this issue between humanitarian organisations and donor governments, including in Somalia, has been neither constructive nor transparent. Many donor officials working for the humanitarian branches of their governments are sympathetic to the concerns of humanitarian actors, but Finance, Home and Justice Departments are the key decision-makers, and any dialogue between humanitarian organisations and donors should include these departments as well. Crucially, a more transparent

dialogue is essential to break through the climate of confusion and fear amongst all stakeholders.

A coherent dialogue with donor governments is not possible if humanitarian organisations do not first share information amongst themselves on the specific requests made by donors, how they have responded to these demands and what impact any restrictions are having on their operations. Greater transparency and a shared understanding of donor demands will allow humanitarian organisations to develop common positions and appropriate risk management frameworks. This in turn will help provide greater reassurance to donors around the use of resources, and help increase their appetite for risk. One useful course of action would be to reframe the legitimate goals of much counter-terrorism law and policy in terms of IHL. This would help avoid the compromises to neutrality involved in many donor funding agreements, and ensure that the humanitarian imperative is central in any discussions about how to provide assistance in sensitive regions.

Reaffirming humanitarian principles is central to mitigating a broader trend in many conflicts, whereby established providers of humanitarian assistance are increasingly seen as agents of Western governments. Rigid and over-zealous application of counter-terrorism laws to humanitarian action in Somalia and other conflicts undermines the independence and neutrality of humanitarian organisations in general, and could become an additional factor in the unravelling of the legitimacy and acceptance of humanitarian response in many of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

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## The impact of UN integration on aid worker security in Somalia

Samir Elhawary, HPG

UN integration arrangements are the strategies and structures developed to facilitate greater coherence and coordination among UN agencies, funds and programmes, with the aim of maximising the collective impact of the UN's response. The benefits and risks of UN integration for humanitarian space have been intensely debated for many years. Most humanitarian actors accept the need for greater coherence within the UN system, at least at a strategic level. However, many NGOs object to greater structural arrangements because they claim that this would result in the subjugation of humanitarian priorities to the UN's political objectives. UN humanitarian actors have expressed similar concerns. On the other side, the UN political and peacekeeping community argues

that there is little evidence to suggest that this is the case, and that humanitarians have misunderstood the concept of integration. Some proponents of UN integration also believe that hostility towards these arrangements among some humanitarian actors stems from resistance to greater scrutiny over aid diversion and other sensitive issues. This article examines the impact of UN integration arrangements in the context of Somalia, with a particular focus on the security of humanitarian workers.

### Strategies and structures: UN integration arrangements in Somalia

UN Security Council Resolution 1772 (2007) called on the UN to intensify its efforts to promote peace and stability

in Somalia. At the time, the various UN agencies, funds and programmes engaged in the country were deemed to be working at cross purposes and duplicating their efforts. The political and humanitarian components of the UN were at loggerheads over the delivery of assistance to Al-Shabaab areas, the need to work with and through the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and issues of aid diversion.<sup>1</sup>

Within the framework of the UN's integration policy, an inter-agency Integrated Task Force (ITF) was established in 2007 to develop an integrated strategy for Somalia and to serve as a mechanism for coordination, planning support and information exchange between the UN Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS) and the UN Country Team (UNCT). At the strategic level, there is a Joint Planning Unit (JPU), a mechanism to provide regular information exchange and facilitate joint planning between the UNCT and UNPOS, a high-level Senior Policy Group, which discusses issues of general concern, and an Integrated Strategic Framework, a UN-wide strategy for engagement in Somalia. At the structural level, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG), concerned with the political side of the UN presence, has been kept separate from the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator, who is responsible for the UN's development and humanitarian operations. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is also separate from UNPOS.

### The impact of integration on the security of humanitarian workers

Between 2006 and 2011, there were over 150 security incidents against aid workers in Somalia. These incidents are not confined to one specific actor, and UN agencies, NGOs and both international and national staff have all been affected. Although the number of incidents has declined dramatically from the high point in 2008, this is largely believed to be the result of a reduced humanitarian presence in South Central Somalia.

The primary factor affecting the security of humanitarian workers is the overall security environment, which since 2006 has been characterised by pervasive insecurity and a complete absence of rule of law. However, there are also more specific factors at play. First, attacks on humanitarian workers are often economically motivated, as humanitarian assistance has become part of the war economy. Second, divisions and loose alliances between various armed groups

<sup>1</sup> Ken Menkhaus, 'Stabilisation and Humanitarian Access in a Collapsed State: The Somali Case', *Disasters*, vol. 34, Special Issue: 340-41, October 2011.



UN Photo/Mark Garten

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon visiting Mogadishu, December 2011

have made it difficult for humanitarian organisations to identify who is in control in certain areas, and determine whether security assurances made by commanders or leaders will be respected in practice by other allied groups or junior members.<sup>2</sup> Third, the absence of rule of law has meant that most incidents are not investigated by the Somali authorities, perpetrators are not brought to account and there is therefore no effective deterrent. Fourth, and most relevant to the discussion on UN integration, some armed groups are suspicious of humanitarian organisations and feel that they have ulterior motives, such as collecting intelligence for Western governments, supporting the TFG or opposition forces, pursuing personal enrichment or wanting to proselytise the Christian faith.<sup>3</sup> This has led to abductions, interrogations and threats against some humanitarian organisations and staff.

In addition, actual or perceived association with the TFG, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the US government has been used by Al-Shabaab to justify attacks against humanitarian workers. In a letter dated July 2009, the group warned humanitarian organisations against association with opposition forces, and accused several UN agencies of supporting the government, training its troops and raising funds for AMISOM. The UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Department for Safety and Security and UNPOS were expelled from Al-Shabaab areas. International Medical Corps (IMC) and CARE were expelled in 2008 for allegedly spying and gathering intelligence that led to the assassination of Al-Shabaab leader Sheikh Maalim Adam Ayro in a US air strike.

<sup>2</sup> Amnesty International, *Somalia: Fatal Insecurity: Attacks on Aid Workers and Rights Defenders in Somalia* (London: AI, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> J. Gundel, *Humanitarian Action in the New Security Environment: Policy and Operational Implications in Somalia and Somaliland*, HPG Background Paper, 2006; Amnesty International, *Somalia*; Mark Bradbury, *State-building, Counterterrorism, and Licensing Humanitarianism in Somalia*, Briefing Paper, Feinstein International Center, September 2010.

UN integration arrangements could potentially exacerbate or enhance the perception that humanitarian actors are not neutral, independent and impartial by strengthening the visible links between UN humanitarian agencies and UNPOS, through joint leadership, advocacy, programmes and presence. Since UNPOS is perceived by national actors and local populations as being aligned with the TFG and AMISOM, such structural arrangements may reinforce the perception that UN humanitarian agencies are part of the UN and international community's broader (and contested) political effort in Somalia, and may increase the risk of attack or expulsion. In addition, the situation in Somalia is characterised by fear and uncertainty, rumours amongst the local population abound and unfounded accusations are often made against humanitarian actors. In this context, visibly linking UN humanitarian actors with the political mission could fuel accusations that humanitarian agencies are spying for the TFG and its allies. Some NGOs fear that any information they give to their UN agency partners may be used by UNPOS, and have threatened to dissociate themselves entirely from UN humanitarian coordination mechanisms if further structural arrangements are put in place.<sup>4</sup> In this context, highly visible UN integration arrangements are an additional risk factor in an already extremely difficult environment. Security officials in Nairobi support efforts to maintain a distinct identity for humanitarian actors as a means of mitigating the high levels of risk they face.

## Conclusion

Highly visible UN integration arrangements can further associate UN humanitarian agencies and, to a lesser degree, their NGO partners with UNPOS. This is problematic from a humanitarian perspective since the UN Security Council has explicitly mandated UNPOS to support the TFG and AMISOM, and it is not therefore viewed as a neutral actor in Somalia. Whilst strategic integration is important in that it can ensure that the UN system as a whole works towards an agreed vision for Somalia, highly visible structural arrangements may mean that UN humanitarian actors, and to a lesser extent their partners, are also seen as partial, thereby raising their risk of being attacked.

These risks have been identified in Somalia, and only limited structural arrangements have been put in place to date. A separate OCHA office has been maintained and the RC/HC is also separated from the mission, allowing UN

<sup>4</sup> Somalia NGO Consortium, 'A Joint NGO Statement on UN Integration in Somalia', Nairobi, 2010.

humanitarian agencies and NGOs to maintain a sufficient level of visible independence from UNPOS and its partners, the TFG and AMISOM. Reaching agreement on these arrangements has, however, taken time and resources, and efforts have been undermined at times on both sides by a lack of awareness of the content of the policy on UN integration, a limited understanding by some political staff of the operational relevance of humanitarian principles, limited buy-in from some UN humanitarian actors, a lack of transparency around decision-making and, at times, weak leadership and a lack of accountability for non-compliance with the policy.

It is also important not to overstate the impact of UN integration arrangements on the ability of humanitarian organisations to operate in accordance with humanitarian principles. The evidence suggests that the security of humanitarian workers is closely related to other factors in addition to integration, such as staff behaviour, the proximity and quality of aid programming, sources of funding, the level of engagement with the government and *de facto* authorities, the ideology of belligerent parties, the level of aid diversion and the level of coherence and coordination within the humanitarian system. Greater efforts should be directed at mitigating these other risks.

Equally, there is a need for greater efforts from UN political staff and the UN political leadership to build trust with UN humanitarian actors and their partners. This will require demonstrating that humanitarian concerns are taken into consideration and that there are, even in a context such as Somalia, potential benefits to increased coherence within the UN system, including improved context analysis to inform more appropriate humanitarian *and* political strategies and programmes. With regard to the security of humanitarian workers in particular, increased dialogue and sharing of analysis can support a deeper understanding of the security environment including the motives for attacks, key risk factors and changing threat levels, thereby allowing for more effective security management.

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## System failure? Revisiting the problems of timely response to crises in the Horn of Africa

Simon Levine, with Alexandra Crosskey and Mohammed Abdinoor

*Network Paper 71, November 2011*

Humanitarian response in pastoral areas in the Horn of Africa has consistently been late, despite an enormous investment in early warning over the past 25 years. Why is response least timely precisely where we have the most warning and the most practice? This Network Paper offers a fresh explanation of why so many apparently simple problems have proved so intractable, and sets out ideas for moving forward.

Download Network Paper 71 at <http://www.odihpn.org/download/networkpaper071pdf>

## Conflict and deteriorating security in Dadaab

Damien Mc Sweeney

The Dadaab refugee complex in north-east Kenya was established in 1991. Originally designed to accommodate 90,000 refugees, the camps now hold over five times their intended capacity, making Dadaab the third-largest population centre in Kenya after Nairobi and Mombasa. The region is remote and harsh, with temperatures of up to 48 degrees Celsius in the dry season and extreme flooding in the rainy season. The main Dadaab complex consists of the 'older' Dagahaley, Hagadera and Ifo refugee camps, with three further sites, Ifo East and Ifo West (combined they are known as Ifo 2) and Kambioos. These sites are being developed to help cope with the influx of over 154,000 people in the past 12 months, bringing the total population to over 463,000. The refugee population is largely Somali (95%), with small numbers of Sudanese, Ugandans, Eritreans and Ethiopians.

### Refugee population in Dadaab (as of 30 November 2011)

Dagahaley	124,837
Hagadera	140,778
Ifo	123,009
Ifo East	27,504
Ifo West	37,166
Kambioos	10,213
<b>Total</b>	<b>463,507</b>

### Operational difficulties

The UN in Dadaab has two *de facto* operations running side by side, one serving the long-term refugee population, and an emergency operation to deal with the influx of new arrivals. In addition, the UN has begun to support projects targeted specifically at the host community in order to try to alleviate tensions between them and the refugees. The long-term refugee population could be seen as a developmental intervention, with the camps in need of updated and more permanent infrastructure, including water systems and additional schools, hospitals and police posts. The second, emergency-based operation focuses on providing basic resources and services for new arrivals. Working with its 30 implementing/operational partners, UNHCR is struggling to provide items such as tents, blankets, sleeping mats and plastic sheeting.

### Deteriorating security

North-east Kenya has always been very insecure, with special Kenyan government permission needed before any travel is allowed by anyone to Dadaab. The presence of armed bandits and Islamist militias such as Al-Shabaab, as well as periodic outbreaks of clan feuding, means that the threat of violence against humanitarian workers is very real. The UN mission in Dadaab operates under UN phase three security restrictions stipulating travel by convoy and with an armed police escort, no free movement of staff without armed guards in the camps and a curfew for humanitarian workers, who have to be in a secure compound from 6 pm to 6 am.

In the past few months the security situation has deteriorated further. On 13 October 2011 two Spanish aid workers from Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) were kidnapped and their driver shot by Al-Shabaab in broad daylight in Ifo camp. In September a Kenyan driver working for CARE was kidnapped. There have been reports that Al-Shabaab has sold the MSF workers to pirates for \$100,000 each, and that they are now being held in the pirate town of Harardhere on the Somali coast.<sup>1</sup> In response to the deterioration in security, the Kenyan military launched Operation Linda Nchi (Operation Protect the Nation), moving its troops into Somalia on 16 October. The Kenyans have seized a number of towns held by Al-Shabaab militants some 100km inside Somalia, and have said that they will advance as far as Kismayo. Al-Shabaab retaliated with grenade attacks in Nairobi on 26 October, which injured 30 people, and bomb attacks on the police and humanitarian convoys in Dadaab. One police officer was killed and three others were seriously injured in a bomb attack while escorting UN officials in Ifo camp in December, and a landmine blast in Hagadera killed another police officer and seriously injured two more. Al-Shabaab have also begun targeting refugee leaders whom they believe are cooperating with UNHCR and the police, with the killing of the chairperson of the Community Peace and Security Team (CPST), a community policing initiative, in Hagadera camp on 29 December. The CPST Chair for Ifo camp was shot and killed on 1 January 2012.

The escalation of attacks by Al-Shabaab has prompted UNHCR and its partners to significantly scale back their operations in the camps. As an indication of the level of insecurity, during a visit in December the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, did not even venture into the camps, instead remaining inside the secure UNHCR compound in Dadaab town. The withdrawal of many humanitarian workers from the camps has had a negative impact on the security and protection of refugees. The Kenyan authorities have imposed a curfew in the camps and have deployed more police, with reports of mass arrests and beatings of refugees during police sweeps for Al-Shabaab fighters.

The ability of Al-Shabaab to operate within the camps and in surrounding areas such as Garissa seems to confirm the fears of many Kenyans, who believe that Dadaab is being used as a base for militants. A recent opinion piece in one of Kenya's largest newspapers, *The Daily Nation*, compared Dadaab with the refugee camps set up in Goma in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide: 'Dadaab presents a huge threat to Kenyan security. Like Goma, the refugee camp is probably crawling with militia. What better way for Al-Shabaab to penetrate Kenya's borders than to become refugees within our borders?'<sup>2</sup> It is much more

1 Tristan McConnell, 'Kenya News: Al Shabaab Sold Doctors Without Borders Hostages to Pirates?', *Global Post*, 10 January 2012, <http://www.globalpost.com>.

2 R. Warah, 'Dadaab Refugee Camp Poses a Huge Threat to Kenya's National Security', *The Daily Nation*, 23 October 2011.



Damien Mc Sweeney

*Police guard a food distribution in Ifo Camp*

of Somalia, declared himself president of 'Azania'. 'Azania' is more virtual than real, since much of the area that it is meant to occupy is under the control of Al-Shabaab and Gandhi actually lives in Nairobi. However, with the Kenyan military advancing on Kismayo this may change. The creation of even a marginally stable buffer zone against Al-Shabaab could have major implications for the refugees in Dadaab as it would allow Kenyan officials and ministers to argue that refugees should be accommodated in Azania instead of Kenya. This could lead to the closure of most of the Dadaab camps and the relocation of the Somali refugee population to an area that the Kenyan government

likely however that there are a small number of trained fighters operating in the camps supported by a small minority of refugees, while the rest of the population lives in fear of them.

### **Azania/Jubaland: Kenya's solution to the problem?**

The security concerns associated with Dadaab have led some Kenyan politicians to call for new camps to be set up in Somalia to facilitate aid delivery, and the winding down of the Dadaab operation. These calls, as well as the invasion of Somalia, demonstrate a significant shift within the Kenyan government towards a more hawkish and hard-line position. Internal Security Assistant Minister Orwa Ojodeh believes that the international community must now consider setting up IDP camps inside Somalia near the Kenyan border, and offer services to Somalis there in order to reduce the number of refugees entering Kenya. Echoing his sentiments, Aden Duale, the MP for Garissa, has asserted that 'The best solution is to build camps in Jubaland. Kenya and Ethiopia can play a role in protecting them'.<sup>3</sup> This more hard-line response to the current emergency is believed by many to be part of a coordinated longer-term strategy to push Al-Shabaab from Central and South Somalia and set up an autonomous buffer zone inside the country.<sup>4</sup> Over the past two years Kenya has recruited and trained a large Somali militia, and its original military objective of defeating Al-Shabaab now seems more about establishing a 'safe zone' inside Somalia, with Kismayo as its capital.

Technically this safe zone was created in 2011, when Mohamed Abdi Gandhi, the former Defence Minister

<sup>3</sup> Human Rights Watch, *'You Don't Know Who to Blame': War Crimes in Somalia* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> W. Ross, 'Kenya's Inursion into Somalia Raises the Stakes', *BBC News*, 17 October 2011.

would assert was safe and conflict-free, thus resolving one of Kenya's most significant security concerns. Although any forced repatriation of refugees would violate Kenya's obligations under international law, the absence of any significant enforcement mechanisms or sanctions and the reluctance of the international community to intervene when it comes to Somalia and Dadaab may make this an infringement that Kenya is more than willing to risk, and the international community more than willing to ignore.

### **Conclusion**

There are now over 6,000 grandchildren of the original 1991 refugees who were born in Dadaab. Like many of their parents, these children have never seen Somalia and are virtual prisoners, 'warehoused' and aid dependent within the overcrowded camps. It is inconceivable to think that things could get any worse – but they have. Famine, conflict and now invasion have driven an extra 154,000 people to Dadaab within the last 12 months. Now conflict has followed them there, leading to the scaling back of the UN operation, a curfew and security crackdown by the Kenyan authorities and sustained attacks by Al-Shabaab. Meanwhile, the Kenyan military campaign in Somalia may have longer-term objectives that may well include the mass refoulement of Somali refugees from Dadaab. The UN and the international community must monitor this situation closely and insist that Kenya honours its commitments under international law, otherwise the ongoing tragedy of the past 20 years in Dadaab could end with an even bigger tragedy of the forced deportation of hundreds of thousands of Somali refugees.

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## MSF in the Middle East: a challenging context

Caroline Abu-Sada, MSF Switzerland

The Middle East is an atypical context for Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). The increasing complexity of humanitarian action, particularly the blurring of the lines between humanitarian and military actors and the increasing use of humanitarian language to justify wars, have made it even more difficult for MSF to negotiate independent operational space. This is especially so in some countries in the Middle East. Moreover, we are unaccustomed to working in middle-income countries where addressing non-communicable diseases is the priority. Although MSF is used to responding to acute crises, the Middle East suffers mostly from the chronic consequences of conflict.



Dina Debbas

*A therapy session with an MSF psychologist in the Burj el-Barajneh Palestinian refugee camp in Beirut, Lebanon*

In Iraq, for example, the health system – considered one of the best in the Middle East – started to deteriorate during the 1980–1988 war with Iran, and continued to decline following the 1991 Gulf war. Sanctions imposed in 1990 by the UN Security Council, followed by the 2003 invasion, disrupted the Iraqi medical system at all levels. Since 1990, a progressive loss of qualified and experienced health workers has led to a serious shortfall in the coverage and quality of healthcare services. Laboratory services are poor due to a lack of equipment and chemicals. Essential medical equipment has not been maintained, and health facilities are in poor condition. Medical care is not available in remote areas and there are problems in ensuring regular and adequate supplies of electricity and clean water.

Iraq, like other middle-income countries, is undergoing an epidemiological transition. Before 2003, communicable diseases such as malaria, respiratory tract infections and diarrhoeal diseases accounted for most deaths. Now, non-communicable diseases are more common.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, two decades of conflict have created a third category of patients, namely war victims. Violence has been one of the leading causes of death in Iraq, reaching its peak in 2006, with more than 27,000 civilian deaths according to one estimate.<sup>2</sup> Since 2003, the Ministry of Health has prioritised war victims, diverting resources from other parts of the health system to meet their needs. Although the number of war victims has diminished in recent years, this category of patient remains the first priority, not only for the government but also for national and international NGOs.

<sup>1</sup> Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases Risk Factors Survey in Iraq, WHO, 2006, [www.who.int/chp/steps/IraqSTEPSReport2006.pdf](http://www.who.int/chp/steps/IraqSTEPSReport2006.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> This estimate is from Iraq Body Count: [www.iraqbodycount.org](http://www.iraqbodycount.org).

Gaza is also experiencing a protracted political and socio-economic crisis. It has a population of 1.44 million, with the sixth-highest population density in the world. A fifth of the population (18%) are under five years of age, and 45% are under 15. Three-quarters of the population are registered as refugees, and supported by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Around 50% are unemployed and the proportion of people living under the poverty line is increasing (48% in 2006; 79.4% in 2011).<sup>3</sup> In 2009, four-fifths of the population were dependent on humanitarian aid. Morbidity and mortality patterns are similar to other middle- and high-income countries. Chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension are increasing, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO). Less than 5% of mortality is related to infections. In 2007 the leading causes of mortality were heart and cerebro-vascular diseases, accounting for 32% of all deaths in Gaza; the second-highest cause was trauma/accidents (17.8%), most of which were war-related. There are almost 4,000 physicians, 4,200 nurses and 24 hospitals in the Gaza Strip (12 Ministry of Health, ten NGO-run and two small private hospitals). In total there are 13.6 hospital beds per 10,000 people in Gaza.<sup>4</sup> Of the 2,000 hospital beds available, only 164 are designated for specialised and intensive care. UNRWA runs 18 of the 130 Primary Health Care clinics, while NGOs and the Ministry of Health run 57 and 55, respectively.

### A change in approach?

MSF has been working in the Middle East for more than

<sup>3</sup> See 'Fast Facts: Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People', UNDP, [www.undp.org/cpr/whats\\_new/Regions/papp.shtml](http://www.undp.org/cpr/whats_new/Regions/papp.shtml).

<sup>4</sup> This compares with 17 per 10,000 in Jordan, 22 in Egypt, 36 in Lebanon and 63 in Israel.

20 years. Unlike Sub-Saharan Africa, where MSF has traditionally focused on emergency vaccination programmes, epidemic control, reducing malnutrition and support for primary healthcare centres, in the radically different health landscape of the Middle East MSF has concentrated on filling health gaps or niches, such as support for a dialysis unit in Iraq, reconstructive surgery in Jordan for Iraqi patients and innovative medical approaches in Lebanon, rather than providing basic healthcare. Changes in the health profiles of Iraq, Gaza and other countries in the Middle East suggest that the number of war victims in these countries is decreasing, and that addressing non-communicable diseases is becoming a greater priority. MSF's experience and expertise, however, lies in responding to emergency medical needs (traumatic injury and communicable diseases) arising from humanitarian crises. As such, MSF has had to change its approach to working in these areas.

In the occupied Palestinian territories, the MSF programme deals with three areas: mental health, post-operative care and physiotherapy. In Syria, MSF is providing primary healthcare and mental health services to Iraqi refugees. In Lebanon, which has a highly privatised health system and a very low number of psychologists, MSF is providing mental health support to Lebanese and Palestinian refugees. In Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen, MSF donated medical equipment and supplies to healthcare facilities to enable health staff to treat people who were injured during the recent demonstrations in these countries. The teams also provided training to Tunisian and Egyptian medical staff on managing large caseloads of injured people and helped set up additional emergency preparedness systems (triage, medical kits, etc.). In Bahrain, MSF teams provided medical supplies and psychological support for medical staff. Importantly, it also spoke out (*temoignage*) regarding the government's use of medical facilities in Bahrain to crack down on protesters. This unacceptable practice made it impossible for people injured during clashes to seek treatment.<sup>5</sup> MSF has also provided care to people fleeing Libya.

### Challenges in the Middle East

One of the main challenges for MSF is the requirement to engage in networking activities with all stakeholders, not only the most accessible, as a starting point for acceptance, acknowledgment and recognition of its humanitarian intervention. While MSF has not always prioritised this in contexts where it is already well-known, civil–military and security issues in the Middle East make investing time and effort in explaining its principles and approaches to stakeholders crucial to MSF's work.

Networking represents a key component in developing MSF's activities, making sure that all key stakeholders are aware of its activities and principles. In these conflict or post-conflict contexts, access to the most vulnerable people, security for MSF teams and networking are key challenges for the organisation. It requires the building of humanitarian space to enable medical teams to access those in need, as well as independent evaluations of needs and programming options. Developing and maintaining

<sup>5</sup> See 'MSF Calls for End to Bahrain Military Crackdown on Patients', 7 April 2011, [www.msf.org](http://www.msf.org).

relationships also requires continuous follow-up work. This is challenging for MSF, which often engages in short-term programming, has correspondingly high staff turnover and lacks a continuous presence in some countries.

Undertaking (and updating) good context analysis is also extremely important in this complex region. For example, the Israeli occupation in Palestine and the internal conflict between Fatah and Hamas have required MSF to improve and update its context analysis. MSF had a rather simplistic understanding of the context and dealt only with the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Israel, without realising the growing importance of Hamas as a political actor. For example, MSF continued to sign operating agreements for Gaza with the Ramallah authorities almost two years after the Hamas takeover. Teams also found it very difficult to assist torture victims (especially Hamas militants tortured by Fatah security forces) in the West Bank because of MSF's longstanding bilateral relationship with Fatah. In Jordan and Iraq, non-state actors' strategies had to be understood in order to negotiate with them to gain access to vulnerable populations without compromising the security of MSF teams.

Engaging elites in the Middle East in a constructive debate on the impact that humanitarian medical action can have on their societies is also important. Humanitarian principles need to be explained and demonstrated operationally. However, it is also important to explain to the wider public the reasons behind operational and programming choices. For example, some have questioned MSF's neutrality because it does not have medical activities in Israel. The reality is that MSF does not need to intervene in Israel, where medical needs are already met by a sophisticated healthcare system. This also requires improving our knowledge on how to intervene effectively in urban settings. In fact, Palestinian camps in Lebanon or in the Gaza Strip and IDPs in Northern Iraq are challenging contexts partly due to their urban settings.

In 2008, but published in 2011, MSF conducted research on perceptions of the agency in the region.<sup>6</sup> From the research it was clear that, while MSF's identity as a health organisation is recognised and valued, most people were not aware of the high proportion of independent funding MSF has at its disposal. In the Middle East, several criteria are used to judge the effectiveness and coherence of an organisation: its public position towards the conflicts in the region, its sources of funding and its knowledge of the various contexts involved. This is where the neutrality and the financial independence of MSF play an important role in its acceptance. In Northern Iraq, people vividly remember MSF's 1991 intervention, as it was the only organisation working in the most remote areas of the region at that time. Challenging as it may be, being in Iraq or in the occupied Palestinian territories resonates throughout the entire Arab world.

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<sup>6</sup> Caroline Abu-Sada, 'Dans l'oeil des autres, Perception de l'action humanitaire et de MSF', MSF Suisse, Editions Antipodes, Lausanne, 2011.

# The Sphere Project: taking stock

Aninia Nadig, the Sphere Project

Since it was established in 1997, the Sphere Project has played a central role within the humanitarian community. By defining minimum standards, the initiative strives to enhance the quality and accountability of humanitarian assistance. The publication of the Sphere Handbook *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response* 2011 edition has spurred renewed interest in the Sphere Project. It also coincides with intensified discussions on professionalising the humanitarian sector. This article outlines the major changes in the 2011 edition of the Handbook and offers a few reflections on the challenges that lie ahead.

## The role of Sphere

The Sphere Project has come a long way over the past 15 years, establishing itself as a force for convergence and collaboration within the humanitarian community. Starting out as a project of international NGOs and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, it initially focused on training and institutionalising Sphere principles and standards within NGO families and networks. Over time, it earned recognition within the broader humanitarian sector. Today, the UN largely embraces the Sphere minimum standards, and governments – both donors and disaster-affected countries – increasingly turn to Sphere when looking for benchmarks of quality and professionalism in humanitarian aid. Several countries, including India and Guatemala, base their national disaster management guidelines at least in part on the Sphere indicators. This is due largely to the successful advocacy work by Sphere focal points.

### Box 1: Country focal points

Humanitarian agencies have set up a Sphere focal point in a number of countries. One of the most recent cases is Bangladesh, where 11 national and international humanitarian agencies joined forces at the end of 2011 to better coordinate their work on Sphere. They created a Sphere secretariat, which functions as country focal point and rotates among agencies on a yearly basis. During 2012, this role has been taken on by the IFRC Bangladesh Delegation. One of its activities will be to create a pool of Sphere trainers. Sphere India has taken on a prominent coordination role for NGOs working in disaster response. In Latin America there are similar Sphere country groups in Honduras, El Salvador, Ecuador, Guatemala and Mexico. Some of these groups include government agencies engaged in disaster management. Advocating with governments to use the Sphere minimum standards as a reference for their disaster management plans is an important task for Sphere country groups.

## The Sphere Handbook 2011 edition

The Sphere Project's continuing relevance is in part due to the considerable effort put into its revisions, the

most recent of which took over two years. Worldwide consultations collected input from over 650 individuals working for some 300 organisations in more than 20 countries. Current issues within the humanitarian sector were discussed and, contingent on consensus and established best practice, taken on board. The updated Sphere Handbook therefore represents current best practice in humanitarian response. All the chapters are compatible with other relevant sets of guidelines and humanitarian structures, and refer in particular to the Humanitarian Cluster system, inter-agency networks and UN agencies.

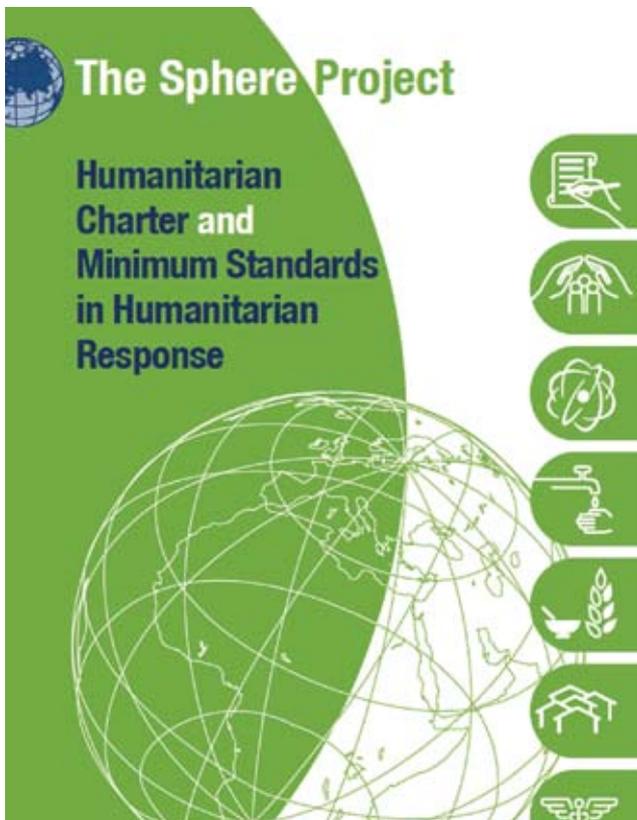
## The Humanitarian Charter, Protection Principles and Core Standards

These three sections set out the ethical, moral and legal principles upon which Sphere is built. The technical chapters refer to them at all times, and should be read in conjunction with them.

The Humanitarian Charter, the cornerstone of the Sphere Handbook, was completely rewritten to make it more accessible and intelligible. It is also more explicitly linked with the rest of the Handbook, in particular the Protection Principles and Core Standards. The Charter is based on three common principles: the right to life with dignity, the right to receive humanitarian assistance and the right to protection and security. An annotated reference section called 'Key documents that inform the Humanitarian Charter' was added in order to strengthen the link between the Charter and the legal framework it is based on.

Four Protection Principles, applicable to all facets of humanitarian activity, have been added to the Handbook. They reflect the dual nature of protection in the humanitarian sector: on the one hand, protection is a mindset and approach pertaining to all humanitarian response activities; on the other, protection is a specific activity, for which there are now specific protection standards developed by ICRC. Accordingly, Principles 1 and 2 (do no harm and access to impartial assistance) are very broad and will apply to all humanitarian agencies. Principles 3 and 4 (protection from physical and psychological harm and the provision of assistance with rights claims and access to remedies and recovery from abuse) may require protection-specific actions. Agencies not engaged in such activities should still be aware of these principles and integrate them into their advocacy work where possible. More specific sets of standards should be based on the four Protection Principles.

In the Core Standards, the Sphere Handbook expresses the conviction that humanitarian response should support the capacity of people affected by disaster or conflict. It recognises the need to build humanitarian response on local coping and self-help mechanisms whenever possible. This includes working with local and national



authorities. Coordination with a variety of actors and the importance of understanding local contexts (including conflict sensitivity) are also referred to. The importance of addressing psychosocial needs is reflected in the Protection Principles and Core Standards, and in one standard of the Health Action chapter. Disaster risk reduction and early recovery are mainstreamed, reflecting concern about changing risk patterns due to environmental degradation and climate change.

#### The technical chapters

The relevant Humanitarian Clusters contributed significantly to the revision of the technical chapters, thereby strengthening the link between the traditionally NGO- and Red Cross/Red Crescent-based Sphere Project and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) system. The chapters are structured more coherently and reflect a growing need for coordination within and between the technical sectors. Cross-cutting and emerging themes<sup>1</sup> were represented by focal points from the beginning of the revision process. Their emphasis on common concerns resulted in stronger wording on vulnerabilities and capabilities of affected populations throughout the Handbook.

#### Water, sanitation and hygiene promotion

In close coordination with the WASH cluster, this chapter integrates initiatives to strengthen system-wide preparedness, coordination and technical quality. The very first WASH standard in the chapter highlights the

<sup>1</sup> Children; older people; persons with disabilities; gender; HIV and AIDS; environment; climate change and disaster risk reduction (DRR); early recovery; and the Sphere companion standards (INEE for education in emergencies, LEGS for livestock responses in emergencies and SEEP for economic recovery).

need to better coordinate WASH activities and hygiene promotion. WASH survey methods, including the Rapid Assessment, Comprehensive Assessment and Monitoring tools developed by the cluster approach, are referred to and used. Specifically, there is new wording on the implementation and use of water treatment at household level, and on the Water Safety Plan.

#### Food security and nutrition

The food security and nutrition chapter<sup>2</sup> has been restructured to reflect and promote a more integrated approach to the prevention and treatment of malnutrition and sustaining livelihoods in emergencies. Central to this is the conceptual framework of the wider causes of undernutrition. The framework identifies poverty as an underlying cause of undernutrition and details the short- and long-term consequences of undernutrition.

Whereas malnutrition was previously introduced within the chapter's nutrition component, this conceptual framework now underpins the entire food security and nutrition chapter, recognising that all the areas it covers, as well as many others dealt with in the other three technical chapters, lie within this framework. A new standard on cash transfers was included in the food security section.

#### Shelter, settlement and non-food items

New developments in the shelter sector include the consideration of transitional longer-term recovery and reconstruction issues during the initial or emergency response phase; the need for strategic planning; and the use of a wide range of programming options including cash, vouchers and promoting access to local markets. A diagram explains the issues at hand for displaced and non-displaced affected populations. It outlines different emergency response scenarios and highlights the different settlement options that can be considered.

#### Health action

Increasingly, affected populations live in non-camp settings dispersed among local populations and in urban contexts. The health chapter reflects this fact. It recognises the need to support and strengthen local health systems while providing life-saving health services, and to adopt a long-term vision during disaster response to provide an opportunity for 'building back better' – hence the link to the WHO Health Systems Framework (2007), which promotes common understanding of what makes up a health system.

With ageing populations, the disease profile of many low- and middle-income countries is changing, and chronic diseases are creating an extra burden in addition to the more familiar problem of infectious diseases. Acute complications and the exacerbation of chronic diseases, which have become a common problem in many disasters, are addressed in this chapter. The health of newborns receives more attention in a new section on child health.

#### Challenges ahead

The power of the Sphere Handbook lies in its adaptability

<sup>2</sup> The content of the former section on food aid is now covered in the section on food transfers.

to local contexts. Each of the Handbook revisions has taken into account developments in humanitarian contexts. For example, the 2011 edition makes reference to urban contexts, which are attracting increasing attention. Despite continuous updating, the Handbook must be used wisely. If the Sphere indicators are not adapted with sufficient understanding of specific local circumstances, aid programmes may exacerbate existing tensions among and within populations. As a result, the Handbook may end up doing more harm than good.

The importance of the Humanitarian Charter, the newly added Protection Principles and the Core Standards must be emphasised. The people-centered, rights-based approach expressed in these chapters makes Sphere more than a mere set of technical standards. Efforts to promote the right use of Sphere, as well as diversified training and outreach activities, are ongoing. Institutionalisation remains important so that agencies and governments are prepared for sudden emergencies. This may be an issue for organisations to tackle as part of a wider reflection on the functioning of the humanitarian sector as a whole.

This wider reflection is also ongoing in the form of a debate around the professionalisation of the rapidly

evolving, increasingly complex humanitarian sector. In line with this increased interest in standards, three of the main standard-setting initiatives – the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP), People In Aid and the Sphere Project – are working to achieve greater coherence among themselves, with the aim of making it easier for aid workers to find their way around the numerous sets of standards and to put them into practice. Consultation with stakeholders will determine how these standards are being used, and how they can be made more coherent. A Humanitarian Standards Forum, to be held in Geneva in September 2012, will discuss the results of this consultation and possible future directions proposed by the initiatives. In the meantime, the Joint Standards Initiative, a collaboration between HAP, People In Aid and Sphere, was deployed to the Horn of Africa crisis. Beginning in October 2011, the team's principal aim has been to support humanitarian agencies in providing accountable and appropriate programming that meets accepted standards of quality and accountability.

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## The Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium

### NRRC Secretariat

Nepal loses an average of two lives a day due to natural disasters. These disasters include floods, landslides, drought, hail, avalanches, glacial lake floods and earthquakes. According to the EM-DAT 2009 database, earthquakes and floods are the biggest hazard in terms of mortality, affected populations and economic losses – and this in a country recovering from conflict, with a rapidly increasing, and increasingly urban, population, poverty and poor economic growth. While flooding poses an annual problem, a mega-earthquake – which could occur at any time – will kill more than 100,000 people just in the Kathmandu Valley, seriously injure another 300,000 and displace up to a million.

### Earthquake risk

The border between India and Nepal follows a major fault line between the Indo and Asian plates. The area is highly active, and these plates are moving about 33mm a year. Historically, Nepal experiences a mega-earthquake every 60 years; the most recent significant earthquake was in 1934, which means that the next one is overdue. The 1934 earthquake caused the deaths of approximately 8,000 people and brought down an estimated 60% of houses in Kathmandu. At the time, Kathmandu was a town of about 150,000 residents; today, the city is a sprawling metropolis with a population close to 2.5 million. It is built upon an area of liquefaction, where the ground literally becomes liquefied as it is shaken. Construction work and the position of critical public facilities has not

been undertaken with this in mind, meaning that critical infrastructure and key buildings such as schools may be in the most vulnerable locations.

The Kathmandu Valley is the centre of government and commerce in Nepal, and contains the country's only international airport. Like much of the infrastructure in the Valley, surveys have indicated that the airport is extremely vulnerable to an earthquake. This, combined with the likely blockage of the three main access routes into the Valley through landslides and collapsed bridges, suggests that it may be some time (potentially weeks) before outside assistance arrives. Emergency services in Nepal itself are sorely lacking: the country has just three working fire engines, and no medium or heavy urban search and rescue capacity.

Humanitarian agencies are likely to face many of the same challenges that confronted them following the Haiti earthquake in 2010. Almost every essential service is inadequate; many Nepalis rely on tankered water or wells and there are electricity cuts of up to 18 hours a day in winter. The water, sewerage and communications systems are all likely to fail after an earthquake, and accommodation and services for the million people likely to be displaced will be limited. As in Haiti (where up to 40% of civil servants died) we can expect significant losses amongst essential service providers and in key government ministries. In every emergency the first



Angela Rutherford, via flickr

Kathmandu

Under the NRRC, government and non-government actors work together to address agreed priorities in the National Strategy for Disaster Risk Management. The Strategy is based on the commitments made by the government with regard to the Hyogo Framework for Action.

The NRRC is led by the government with the engagement of a range of ministries, some of which humanitarian agencies are accustomed to working with, such as Education and Health, and others that humanitarians are less familiar with, such as Planning and Finance. Commitment across government is essential to ensure that sustainable and comprehensive risk reduction is embedded in government development plans and within all donor budgets.

responders are local and national. In Nepal this period of self-reliance is likely to be prolonged. This means that Nepal must be as resilient as possible, with enhanced capacity to provide that self-reliance. The government of Nepal, the international community and national NGOs are working to do this through the unique collective mechanism of the Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium (NRRC).

### The Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium

The Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium (NRRC) was conceived in 2009 and formally launched in 2011. It has been driven by key individuals within the government and in key agencies and donors. The NRRC seeks to mitigate the potential effects of known risks, as well as preventing new risks from arising. This work has to be undertaken within the context of reconciliation, the preparation and agreement of a new constitution (and uncertainty about what this will mean for local government structures) and local elections at some point in the future. Unlike other countries in the region, Nepal has no National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), though one is planned.

#### Box 1: The Hyogo Framework

The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) is a global ten-year plan which articulates what needs to be done across all sectors to reduce risk and thereby reduce losses from disasters. The priorities outlined in the HFA were agreed and signed up to by 186 UN member states including Nepal, which also committed to regular progress reporting against agreed priorities for action. The HFA runs from 2005 to 2015.

The government works with international and national partners through the Steering Committee of the NRRC. This currently includes the development arms of the UN system, OCHA, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the International Federation of the Red Cross/Crescent (IFRC), the US, UK and Australian governments and the European Community. The UN/International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) has been involved from the outset, and continues to offer support.

A recent Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) preparedness study points to the strengths of this consortium model, with its multi-stakeholder approach involving development and humanitarian actors and funding.<sup>1</sup> The authors of the study are also positive about the level of engagement with international finance institutions (IFIs), the strong leadership at senior levels and across relevant ministries and the holistic approach that combines DRR policy development with programme implementation.

The NRRC's \$150 million budget was about 45% funded at the end of 2011. This means that, for example, in 2012, funding is available to retrofit over 250 schools, as against the 15 which were scheduled to be retrofitted by the Ministry of Education in the Nepal financial year 2011–12. As this funding has largely been earmarked this means that there are critical funding gaps which are impeding progress on certain issues, such as the establishment of seismically resistant warehouses in strategic locations and the preparation of pre-identified open spaces for IDPs. Although we will continue to fundraise to cover these gaps, our focus in 2012 will be ensuring implementation

<sup>1</sup> *Analysis of Financing Mechanisms and Funding Streams To Enhance Emergency Preparedness*, Synthesis Report, Development Initiatives, October 2011.

## 5 Flagship areas

Flagship Area 1: School and Hospital Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinator: ADB/MoE/WHO/MOPH</li> <li>Focuses on reducing mass casualties and damage in hospital and schools through retrofitting, training and raising awareness</li> </ul>
Flagship Area 2: Emergency Preparedness and Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinator: OCHA/MOHA</li> <li>This flagship seeks to enhance the government of Nepal's response capacities at the national, regional and district level in a coordinated manner with all in-country resources including the armed forces, as well as integrating incoming international humanitarian and military assistance</li> </ul>
Flagship Area 3: Flood Management in the Koshi river basin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinator: World bank/MoI</li> <li>This flagship is designed to address the risk of floods in Nepal. Managing water-induced disasters, focusing on the Koshi basin, is a priority for the government. Short-term goals focus on enhancing institutional capabilities in flood management, while the long-term goals focus on implementing effective flood mitigation</li> </ul>
Flagship Area 4: Community-based Disaster Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinator: IFRC/MOLD</li> <li>This flagship seeks to capitalise on Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) at VDC level by developing a set of minimum characteristics for disaster-resilient communities and adopting a minimum package of common elements to be included in all CBDRM projects. One thousand VDCs will be identified and consulted</li> </ul>
Flagship Area 5: Policy/Institutional Support for Disaster Risk Management (DRM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinator: UNDP/MOHA</li> <li>This flagship recognises that institutional, legislative and policy frameworks are essential for DRM system building and embedding DRM into Nepal's development efforts. This flagship will work to ensure new risk is minimised</li> </ul>

and raising awareness of risk at both national and local level in Nepal.

### Flagship programmes

The NRRC has an ambitious workplan to address critical points of vulnerability at scale, while working to prevent new risks. The breadth of the task resulted in the creation of five Flagship programmes to address the priorities within the National Strategy. Appropriate international organisations, working with the relevant ministries, lead these programmes. This is not work that the humanitarian community can, or should, attempt to undertake alone. Resourcing and expertise from the government and development actors is essential for success and sustainability. Increased awareness and demand from the public will also be a critical factor.

The Flagship programmes are ambitious in scale and scope. The objectives are both operational and policy oriented. They include retrofitting 900 school buildings and a dozen large hospitals in the Kathmandu Valley, community preparedness in 1,000 of Nepal's 4,000 Village Development Committees, equipping an urban search and rescue force and capacity-building for the planned National Disaster Management Authority. Other work is under way to improve meteorological forecasting and measures are being taken to reduce flooding in the Koshi River basin. Capacity to ensure appropriate risk-sensitive land use planning in the Valley, and to ensure more effective monitoring and application of building codes, is being developed at both national and local government levels.

While the work of the NRRC is Nepal-wide, responding to all risks, there is a particular focus on the earthquake risk in the Kathmandu Valley given the potential magnitude of

an earthquake disaster and the developmental consequences. A critical part of this work is supporting the government's capacity to coordinate and direct incoming international assistance, and to reject offers which, while well meaning, will be duplicative or will fail to add significant value.

Given the ambitious nature of the workplan, in terms of the range and scale of activities envisaged and the number of government ministries, local authorities, agencies, implementers and donors involved, effective coordination will be a challenge.

While the NRRC is already being presented by others as a success story, we are cautious about this. Despite what is being achieved on

the ground, there are challenges as we attempt to scale up implementation. To cite one of the examples already given, although our objective is to retrofit a total of 900 school buildings over the duration of the programme, and we now have the funding for approximately a third of these, the government retrofitted only 15 schools last year. The implementation challenges are clear, and will be compounded by the need to simultaneously address critical needs in multiple sectors. Having said that, the NRRC has succeeded in bringing together a diverse range of actors under an agreed set of priorities, and has raised significant resources which will contribute to making Nepal more resilient. More significant, however, is the increasing awareness and commitment across government and amongst those at risk as visible implementation takes place.

This commitment needs to be sustained as the challenges of responding in Haiti fade across the humanitarian sector, and potentially in the minds of donors as well. We also need to find ways to address some of the continuing challenges involved in planning effective civil-military engagement to ensure that we know in advance what contributions we can expect from the national army and police and from incoming militaries. We need to use science and technology to support preparedness and risk awareness, while testing our assumptions about how this might transform programming and address practical difficulties. Particularly in an urban context, this needs to lead to more realistic programme planning and an awareness of what working at scale will require in terms of partnerships with the private sector and new and traditional media. We are already talking to individuals working in other countries about the replicability of the NRRC, and seeking to learn from them about how work can be done to the scale required.

# Military and humanitarian cooperation in air operations in Haiti

Sourced from team research edited and compiled by Michael C. Whiting

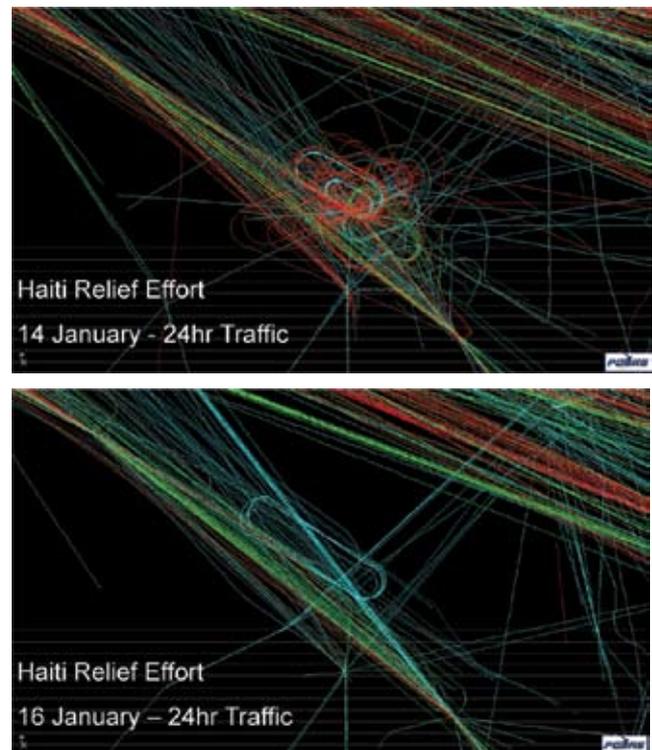
The earthquake that struck Haiti in January 2010 was the most destructive ever to hit the island. Over 215,000 people were killed and more than 1.3 million displaced from their homes. With the destruction of the seaport, the immediate focus of the international aid response was the Toussaint Louverture International Airport (MTPP) in the centre of the capital, Port au Prince. The world responded immediately with a massive airlift. US Air Force Special Tactics Team members from the 1st Special Operations Wing re-established tower control services a mere 18 minutes after arriving at the airport, and immediately began receiving humanitarian aircraft. Working from a table-top next to the runway the airmen accommodated an average of 50 aircraft a day – an incredible feat considering that the controllers had to sequence aircraft in and out of one small cul-de-sac style parking ramp littered with small aircraft and debris. With no single authority managing air traffic flow from the high-level jet routes into MTPP, the airspace above the airport became a complex of holding patterns, frequent diversions and frustrated aid donors. Aircraft arriving over Port au Prince from all over the globe were unable to deliver their desperately-needed medical supplies, water and food.

## Operation Unified Response

On 15 January 2010, the Haitian government signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with the US allowing the Department of Defense to control airflow into MTPP. Immediately, the 1st Air Force activated the 601st Regional Air Movement Control Centre (RAMCC), and a slot coordination programme was established. In this context, a 'slot time' is a specific reserved time on the parking ramp at MTPP. A system of one-, two- and four-hour time blocks was created, which enabled the deconfliction and metering of airflow into the airfield. Concurrently, a Joint Task Force Port Opening (JTF-PO) team deployed to receive and unload aircraft at MTPP. At 06:01 GMT on 16 January 2010, the RAMCC, renamed the Haiti Flight Operations Coordination Centre (HFOCC), officially took over control of the airflow into and out of MTPP.

The challenges were many: being internationally employed on a sovereign nation's airfield; covering a broader scope beyond the normal Federal Aviation Authority and Homeland Defense agencies, to include the Haitian government, other nations, the United Nations, NGOs, INGOs, Congressional offices, the Department of State and donor governments, to name just a few; limited ramp space: the main ramp was small and could only accommodate ten narrow-body aircraft at one time with adjustments required for wide-bodied aircraft; and political sensitivities in determining what priority or order of precedence would be given to aircraft, while not affecting the critical flow of relief into Haiti. The MoA gave the RAMCC 72 hours in which to prove its capability, and the Haitian government retained the right to terminate the

**Figure 1: Flight paths before (top) and after the HFOCC (bottom)**



MoA at any time if it felt the airflow was being improperly managed.

The US did not have the authority to deny any country access to Haiti's airspace, so no slot allocation requests were ever denied. The situation was further complicated by the fact that several commercial chartered aircraft failed to complete the electronic Flight Plan Box 18 correctly highlighting that they were a humanitarian flight. The slot allocation process attracted the attention of the media and the US government. One flight from Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) was reported by the media as not being allowed to land. In fact, the operators of the aircraft chartered by MSF had failed to comply with the Notice to Airmen (NOTAM), which stipulated the need for a slot time at MTPP. The media failed to correct the mistaken impression they had created on this issue.

During the second week of the crisis, at the request of the USAF, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) deployed three aviation management personnel to provide guidance on the humanitarian element of the operation – the author was one of those individuals. The role involved apportioning slots and ensuring that the priorities of humanitarian need established by the leadership in Haiti were met. As apolitical arbiters, the UNHAS representatives were able to negotiate and reconcile 'priority conflicts' between non-US agencies. The presence of non-military personnel in the HFOCC

gave the organisation more international legitimacy, and helped counter press criticism directed at the US Air Force.

There was a danger, as the operation unfolded, that the slot allocation process would become over-managed. When demand for slots exceeds availability, strict control is essential. However, a high proportion of no-show aircraft (those failing to arrive and take their allotted slot at MTTP) and the slowing pace of humanitarian relief as the operation progressed meant that on occasions the ramp at MTTP was empty. As the operation matured, negative trends were identified and corrected by the UNHAS representatives, including wasted slots, where carriers would procure slot times without a consignee or mission requirement, and subsequently leave the slot time unused. The UNHAS representatives were able to provide feedback to the carriers as third-party arbiters, and reclaimed a large number of unused slots without any political repercussions. It may have been prudent to build in a degree of queuing by holding aircraft in circuit for a short time before either allowing them to take empty slots or diverting them to San Domingo in the Dominican Republic, thus minimising the number of empty slots.

As the operation unfolded, the Royal Canadian Air Force used Kingston airfield in neighbouring Jamaica as a decoupling bridge: a location where the ‘push’ response of generous donors can be converted into the ‘pull’ demand of the humanitarian actors at the scene of the disaster without causing a bottleneck near the end of the supply chain. This limits congestion and reduces the impact of unsolicited and inappropriate aid on an already overloaded supply chain.

Like other humanitarian disasters, decision-makers at all levels requested feedback and metrics to gauge the progress of the humanitarian relief effort. When leaders did not receive the information requested, they frequently changed the data or metric in an honest effort to get feedback on the operation. In-transit visibility of cargo arriving at Port au Prince was virtually non-existent as carriers loaded whatever food, water, medicine and relief supplies they could fit onto each aircraft bound for Haiti. Data collection is difficult during any humanitarian crisis, but evolving and changing metrics in the middle of an operation can slow down the decision-making process. Below is the final list of metrics collected by HFOCC and JTF-PO personnel at MTTP. These are recommended as a benchmark for future crises, as they provide realistic and useful data. This information was recorded during the initial request for a slot time, and updated as real-time data allowed.

- Flight purpose: relief delivery (food, water, shelter, medical supplies, logistics), diplomatic, search and rescue, security, reconstruction, aeromedical evacuation, evacuation/relocation, relief effort sustainment, movement of human remains, salvage, mail/courier, relocation/evacuation, other
- Aircraft type

- Call sign
- Registration/tail number
- Carrier country
- Carrier affiliation: civil, military, government, private, other
- Consignee name and contact information
- Requestor name and contact information
- 24-hour operations centre phone number (in case of slot time changes)
- Cargo weight in tons
- Cargo configuration: palletised, rolling stock, loose
- Number of passengers
- GDSS mission number if applicable (USAF transport aircraft only)
- Comments
- Status of aircraft (not recorded on slot request sheet, but catalogued in Excel or SharePoint): assigned, confirmed, inbound, on-ground, complete, cancel >24, cancel <24, no-show, accommodated, diverted, unverified, delayed on ground, cancelled by RAMCC, refused

The HFOCC coordinated with the Federal Aviation Administration and set up a Traffic Flight Management System Display that provided a real-time picture of air traffic inbound to Port au Prince. Using this tool, HFOCC operations personnel were able to track and query aircraft inbound to MTTP to check slot time numbers, timeliness, update cargo loads and accommodate unscheduled aircraft. The ‘status of aircraft’ metric listed above was updated by operations personnel as they tracked aircraft across the screen towards MTTP.

The success of the RAMCC’s application to disaster response and humanitarian aid was recognised by the Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force with the 2010 Chief of Staff of the Air Force Team Excellence Award. Seventy-three teams from the USAF competed for the award, which recognises creative ways to improve mission capability and operational performance. HFOCC members also received the 2010 Chief of Staff of the Air Force’s ‘Best Practice’ Award acknowledging the critical procedural and process improvements initiated for the Haiti crisis.

‘Coordination between civilian and military actors is essential during an emergency response. The increasing number and scale of humanitarian emergencies, in both natural disaster and conflict settings, has led to more situations where military forces and civilian relief agencies are operating in the same environment.’

Sir John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, January 2007–August 2010

## Lessons

The key is for both military and humanitarian actors to engage in a more meaningful and focused way. There needs to be a paradigm shift in doctrine and policy to



US Air Force photo/Teoh. Sgt. James L. Harper Jr

*Aircraft on the ramp near the mobile air traffic control tower at Toussaint Louverture International Airport, Port au Prince, 24 January 2010*

emergencies.<sup>1</sup> Operation Unified Response also highlighted the need to examine, at the start of a disaster response, the prospect of setting up a practical decoupling bridge – an airfield removed from but close to the area of the disaster.

Humanitarian assistance is and must remain a predominantly civilian function; however, foreign military assets can play a valuable and vital role in natural disaster relief. There is a clear need for joint military and humanitarian planning, scenario-building and training at all levels to promote greater mutual understanding and build trust. The more we understand one another the better the result for all stakeholders and particularly the beneficiaries. USAID and the US military have started to invest in joint training with the Joint Humanitarian Operational

enable the considered and appropriate use of foreign military aviation and associated logistics assets during the response phase of sudden-onset emergencies. Doctrine and policy must be clear and unambiguous and leave no room for misinterpretation, so that, in an emergency situation, there are clear and unequivocal standard operational procedures to follow. Current guidelines are too woolly and open to individual interpretation.

Current planning in both the Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance and the UK's Department for International Development is understood to be predicated on the ability to respond simultaneously to three sudden-onset emergencies. Prudent resource management would argue that all available options should be explored to ensure a predictable, consistent and appropriate response to the needs of those affected by these emergencies.

The current policy is enshrined in the Oslo Guidelines Revision 1.1, dated November 2007. The definitions of 'Indirect Assistance' and 'Last Resort' are currently open to individual interpretation and are ambiguous. This lack of clarity has probably resulted in lost opportunities in the Pakistan flood response and in the repatriation of third-country nationals fleeing the fighting in Libya in 2011. Joint planning and training with providers listed in the OCHA Register of Military, Civil Defence and Civil Protection Assets (the MCDA Register) will further improve and reinforce the predictability and consistency of responses to

Course (JHOC), which has been well received. In the UK the NGO–Military Contact Group (NMCG) aims to improve and strengthen communication between non-governmental aid organisations and the British armed forces and relevant UK government departments. The NMCG facilitates information sharing, learning and dialogue on policy, technical and operational issues concerning civil–military relations in humanitarian response. The NMCG Conference in 2011 on the theme 'Civil–Military Relations in Natural Disasters: New Developments from the Field' indicated the diversity of views, the range of issues raised by the involvement of the military in disaster response and the amount of work that still needs to be done in civil–military coordination by both military and humanitarian actors.<sup>2</sup>

It is hoped that, when applied, these lessons will provide the framework and guidelines necessary to rapidly re-establish civil–military aviation operations in a constrained environment where close coordination is necessary to ensure that both civilian and military flights are properly prioritised, synchronised and executed in order to meet disaster response requirements in a timely and effective manner.

**Michael Whiting** is a Visiting Lecturer in Humanitarian Logistics at Cranfield University.

<sup>1</sup> See <http://ocha.unog.ch/cr/register.asp?MenuID=1&MenuEntryID=2&SearchTypeID=1>.

<sup>2</sup> See [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full\\_Report\\_3072.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full_Report_3072.pdf).

# Mobile phones and crisis zones: how text messaging can help streamline humanitarian aid delivery

Jacob Korenblum, Souktel

When the 2010 Haiti earthquake struck, text messages sent by trapped survivors became crucial catalysts for aid delivery. When the 2009 Gaza conflict broke out, cell phones were the only medium of communication left largely unaffected by bombings. Landline wires and web servers are often the first to fail during a natural disaster, but cell phone towers are typically more reliable, built to withstand extreme weather events and harsh climate conditions. This method of communication can therefore play a pivotal role in coordinating aid distribution when crisis hits – conveying information to communities, and even mitigating conflict by providing updates that counteract incitements to violence.

Crisis zones demand large-scale aid distribution, but the very cause of a crisis can create obstacles to achieving this. Whether ravaged by war or natural disaster, crisis-affected regions are often characterised by destroyed buildings, ruptured roads and damaged public infrastructure. A properly coordinated response becomes nearly impossible, resulting in delayed or costly aid efforts and an insufficient supply of medicine or food aid when help is needed most. In these settings, one of the biggest problems is a lack of reliable information; one very simple solution lies in basic mobile technology.

In many crisis-affected regions, mobile phones are ubiquitous – found in refugee camps and informal settlements – and they represent the cheapest and easiest method of communication when compared with traditional landlines or the Internet. Mobile phone ownership has increased enormously across the global South in recent years: in the Horn of Africa (Somaliland, Puntland and South-Central Somalia), penetration has jumped 1,600% in a single five-year period; Egypt is home to five times as many mobile users as it has web users. In the past decade, this technology has come to form a regular part of life across any number of demographics and geographies, be it a farmer in East Timor or a young student in Pakistan. The text messaging function is often the devices' most frequently used feature in many crisis-affected countries, given its low cost and its availability on any handset.

## A growing trend

Growing numbers of aid agencies have come to recognise the value of SMS-based crisis response. For aid agencies with in-house software development teams, the open source RapidSMS platform (the brainchild of UNICEF and Columbia University programmers) offers a free code base that developers can customise to suit the needs of their project. To date, the platform has been used in a range of settings, including UNICEF emergency food distribution tracking in Ethiopia and nutrition data collection campaigns in Malawi. For local community-based organisations or smaller messaging campaigns, FrontlineSMS is a free downloadable software application that turns any laptop

## Souktel

Souktel was founded in 2006 by Palestinian software developers and Canadian and American graduate fellows at Harvard and MIT. Primarily serving crisis zones in the Middle East and East Africa, the organisation's first goal was to combat unemployment among young Palestinians by linking them with employers via text message. However, Palestine's ongoing need for food and medical aid led to a second service, called AidLink.

Launched in 2007, this alert and survey system lets aid providers send out information rapidly, on a large scale, to targeted groups of community members segmented by gender, age, location or other factors. The system also allows aid providers to collect data directly from crisis-affected communities through simple SMS surveys, on a massive scale (a recent deployment in East Africa saw close to 250,000 community members polled on their basic needs). Built 'by people from a crisis zone for people in crisis zones', the software connects directly to the messaging gateways of national mobile networks. The system can also be managed on the ground locally, through simple commands sent via SMS from a basic mobile phone, and via web simultaneously, so that NGO staff in head offices and at field sites can run campaigns together.

into a messaging centre by connecting it by cable to a mobile handset. This platform is used extensively, particularly by grassroots local NGOs.

Technology trends, many argue, come and go in an instant – something newer and fancier is always around the corner. Text-messaging, of course, is neither new nor fancy, but it is important to remember that people in crisis zones are not necessarily looking for flashy, high-cost camera phones. Instead, they often need the cheapest, quickest way to communicate. There are three reasons why SMS will remain invaluable in such regions. First, it saves time: it is quicker than downloading an app or sending information in areas with poor data coverage. Second, it saves money: messages cost pennies, and basic handsets (if not already in the hands of community members) cost tens of dollars, rather than hundreds. Third, because it is so accessible, it can reach many more people than traditional communications methods.

## Saving time

In late 2008, as conflict began in Gaza, several international aid agencies used SMS-based technology to communicate with their staff and beneficiaries. The Red Cross/Red Crescent immediately signed on to a software programme to create a text-message alert group for different blood types, adding thousands of registered donors' numbers to



Amber Fares

*A Palestinian man on his mobile phone in Jerusalem's Old City*

every group. In one day, staff sent alerts to 2,000 Type O donors, instructing them to give blood immediately at the nearest clinic. More than 500 donors flooded hospitals in the first two hours after the messages were sent. Trying to make regular voice calls to 2,000 blood donors would have taken close to a week, during which time many needy recipients would have gone without critical blood supplies. A one-touch send-out of SMS alerts ensured that donors began giving blood within two hours of the campaign's start.

#### **Saving money**

In almost any crisis zone, text messaging is the cheapest available form of communication, costing between \$0.01 and \$0.05 on average. As a result, an alert sent to 1,000 staff or aid recipients costs about \$40 or less, a price that is well within reach of most aid providers, and far cheaper than delivering information via traditional phone calls or print media. Where a 30-second phone call can cost up to \$0.15 in the Middle East, for example, an SMS alert or data report costs less than half that amount. With aid agencies typically sending hundreds of alerts and reports per day, the cost savings add up quickly.

#### **Reaching more people**

As a feature that is available on any mobile phone, at minimal cost, text messaging allows outreach to a much wider range of community members than comparable smartphone applications, web-based services or phone polls. In 2010, when new UN agency Global Pulse was tasked with carrying out a multi-country survey on the effects of the global economic downturn, its staff decided on SMS as the medium for data collection, given its ubiquitous presence in all survey sites. This year, UNDP chose text messaging as a primary medium for gathering data from more than 50,000 Somali community members across the Horn of Africa. With response data relayed instantly to in-country staff for aid delivery planning, the

power of this simple technology, and its ability to reach huge numbers of people, is clear.

#### **Challenges**

The introduction of text messaging platforms into crisis zones has not been without its challenges. In some instances local communities have been initially sceptical about using SMS to find a job or access aid, either because they see mobiles as frivolous 'toys' for the young or because they feel intimidated by SMS sign-up and search processes. Many community members, especially women, are reluctant to share their information via text message. In order to address these challenges, practitioners have offered training in the communities being served. Delivered by local field staff or community 'technology champions', these training sessions give users a chance to ask questions and try the service first-hand.

Implementers of SMS services in crisis zones have also had to counter widespread concerns that the technology could be misused for commercial or political purposes. To allay these fears, field staff routinely organise public, transparent presentations of the software, where they outline the wide range of system security features (from password-protected phone log-ins to content verification) which prevent unauthorised or unsanctioned use.

From Japan to the Horn of Africa, the year 2011 – like those before it – bore witness to horrifying humanitarian disasters. This is unlikely to change in 2012. Fortunately, simple technologies like text messaging are helping aid agencies mitigate the effect of these catastrophes. They are also empowering local communities by giving them a voice in crisis response, and streamlining access to critical services so that help can be obtained, quite literally, at the push of a button.

**Jacob Korenblum** is president and co-founder of Souktel.

## Humanitarian Practice Network

The Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN) is an independent forum where field workers, managers and policymakers in the humanitarian sector share information, analysis and experience.

HPN's aim is to improve the performance of humanitarian action by contributing to individual and institutional learning.

HPN's activities include:

- A series of specialist publications: *Humanitarian Exchange* magazine, Network Papers and Good Practice Reviews.
- A resource website at [www.odihpn.org](http://www.odihpn.org).
- Occasional seminars and workshops bringing together practitioners, policymakers and analysts.

HPN's members and audience comprise individuals and organisations engaged in humanitarian action. They are in 80 countries worldwide, working in northern and southern NGOs, the UN and other multilateral agencies, governments and donors, academic institutions and consultancies. HPN's publications are written by a similarly wide range of contributors.

HPN's institutional location is the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), an independent think tank on humanitarian and development policy. HPN's publications are researched and written by a wide range of individuals and organisations, and are published by HPN in order to encourage and facilitate knowledge-sharing within the sector. The views and opinions expressed in HPN's publications do not necessarily state or reflect those of the Humanitarian Policy Group or the Overseas Development Institute.

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