



**Rapid Real-Time Review**

**DFID Somalia Drought Response**

**January 2018**

Marc DuBois, Paul Harvey and Glyn Taylor

**Humanitarian Outcomes**

The views expressed and information contained in this report are not necessarily those of or endorsed by DFID, which can accept no responsibility for such views or information or for any reliance placed on them.

# Contents

I. Executive summary.....	iii
II. Introduction .....	1
A. The 2017 crisis.....	1
B. Methodology.....	2
1. Limitations.....	2
III. DFID’s response .....	3
A. The right timing? Responding to needs at a time of crisis .....	3
1. Was the response adequate? .....	3
2. Analysis and timeliness of the response.....	6
B. The right approach? Engaging the right partners.....	10
1. Did DFID fund the right organisations to do the right things? Did DFID provide them with high-quality support? .....	10
The right four sectors? .....	11
The right agencies and funding instruments? .....	11
2. Did the response reflect DFID’s Grand Bargain commitments to work as directly as possible with local and national actors and provide them with quality support? .....	13
3. Did the response incorporate and value Somali knowledge and expertise? ..	16
4. Encouraging a nexus: Was the response appropriately linked to resilience and development where appropriate?.....	17
C. The right stuff? Effectiveness of the response .....	19
1. Overview .....	19
2. Sectoral observations .....	20
3. Was the response well-coordinated? .....	24
D. The right targets? Coverage and principled humanitarian action.....	25
1. Impartiality, neutrality and independence: Were strong efforts made to reach people in need in hard-to-reach areas and to reach marginalised groups? ...	25
E. The right level of risk? Ensuring accountability .....	27
1. DFID’s investment in third-party monitoring .....	27
2. Was communication with and the participation of disaster-affected people central to the response? .....	31
F. The right lessons? Looking forward to 2018.....	32
IV. Conclusions .....	33
A. Key findings, lessons learned and conclusions .....	33

B. Food for thought: Are we doing the right things? .....38

References .....40

People Interviewed .....42

Abbreviations and Acronyms .....44

## I. Executive summary

Our overall assessment of the DFID response and the assessment of all of those interviewed is largely positive. DFID's funding was timely, significant and helped to avert a potential famine. It helped to galvanise other donors and action on the part of the overall humanitarian system. DFID staff were well informed, actively engaged in working within the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and coordinated well with other donors. DFID robustly encouraged the agencies it was funding to swiftly scale up their response.

DFID provided £170 million of humanitarian funding in 2017 in response to a clear humanitarian crisis where there was a threat of famine, crisis levels of malnutrition, a cholera outbreak and a million people displaced. DFID funding was focussed on health, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and food security. It supported large-scale cash transfers to alleviate food insecurity, treatment of acute malnutrition, support to health care and access to clean water. Funding was provided to UN agencies and NGO consortia.

DFID played an important role beyond the provision of funding in advocacy and coordination around the response. Its early funding and political focus on the crisis encouraged other donors to step up. DFID strongly supported the establishment of Drought Operational Coordination Centres (DOCCs) in Somalia and pressed to galvanise a more effective response to the cholera outbreak.

DFID acted on clear early warning analysis and information. This provided a definite picture of a large-scale, rapidly deteriorating crisis in which there was a real threat of famine and a humanitarian imperative to act swiftly and decisively to save lives and alleviate suffering. There was a strong collective sense of responsibility across the humanitarian system to try and prevent a new famine so soon after the previous one in 2011.

The decision to focus on just four sectors as the highest priorities for immediate life-saving assistance was appropriate. DFID support enabled the organisations it funded to rapidly scale up humanitarian action and, according to monitoring data, this did save lives and reduce suffering. It is reasonable to attribute the absence of famine in part to the speed and scale of the humanitarian response, in conjunction with community's own strategies, remittances and other forms of support. However, it is impossible to definitively state that DFID's support, as part of the overall humanitarian response, averted famine; we do not know if famine would have occurred had the response been less generous or whether the Somali peoples' own efforts would have been sufficient. It is also reasonable to assume that humanitarian assistance played a part in helping to stabilise levels of displacement and in keeping displacement more localised than in 2011. With the threat of famine looking likely to persist into 2018, sustained support is required.

Somalia remains an enormously difficult context in which to undertake humanitarian action. Levels of insecurity and conflict are high, and the staff of humanitarian agencies take considerable personal risks to deliver assistance. In 2016, there were 12 major security incidents and Somalia was the fifth most dangerous place for aid workers in the world (AWSD 2017). During the first ten months of 2017, 130 violent incidences impacted humanitarian organisations and accounted for the death of 15 staff, along with scores of humanitarians who were victims of injury, assault, abduction and detention (OCHA Somalia 2017).

DFID and the organisations it funds have made major investments to ensure aid is delivered as accountably as possible in this difficult operating environment through intensive monitoring, both directly on the part of agencies and through third-party monitoring. This helped to adjust and improve the response and gave DFID confidence that aid was reaching the people it was intended for.

The response was timely in part because DFID had an existing four-year humanitarian programme upon which the 2017 response could be built. Funding was provided to existing partners to scale up work for which they already possessed established networks, relationships and a track record of performance. The Internal Risk Facility (IRF) was used as the main funding mechanism and this allowed speedy disbursement and contracting. The response showed the value of multi-year funding.

The review team's key recommendations, lessons learnt and main areas for improvement are summarised below. The findings and recommendations in some cases reflect the overall system wide response and are not specific to DFID. Action on commitments to better supporting local and national actors are still more rhetorical than concrete. Whilst progress has been made in monitoring and accountability there is large scope for improvements in rigour, triangulation and coordination. Although the response in 2017 was relatively timely, there was still scope for more effective early action in 2016 and for stronger preparedness and contingency planning.

### **Theme 1: The right timing? Responding to needs at a time of crisis**

**There was potential for more effective early actions in 2016 and stronger coordinated preparedness and contingency planning for a large-scale response.**

1. Scope existed for greater early action by agencies in mid/late 2016 to begin scaling up cash and expanding WASH and livestock programming.
2. There is a need for better preparedness on the part of aid agencies to expand their geographic scope beyond existing areas of operation, and for DFID support to enable that to happen.
3. Both donors and aid agencies should take greater advantage of the existence of multi-year financing to enable flexible programming, preparedness and early action, with the aim of building stronger links to resilience and development programming.
4. To avoid an over-reliance upon quantitative information, DFID action should be based on an appropriate balance of evidence, 'boots on the ground' perspectives and forward-looking analysis.
5. DFID should engage with political decision-makers in a long-term effort to build the best-practice of early/timely surge based on the analytical probability of saving lives rather than on quantitative triggers or the promise of averting a crisis of unprecedented scale.

### **Theme 2: The right approach? Engaging the right partners**

**DFID must take forward its commitments to better support local and national actors. Alternative financing mechanisms should be considered to enable new organisations to be funded.**

6. Engagement should be stronger with the government of Somalia to encourage and support it to fulfil its responsibilities to assist and protect its own citizens in times of crisis.

7. Greater efforts should be made to ensure Somali knowledge and expertise informs strategy, design and planning at senior levels, in Nairobi as well as in the field.
8. DFID should explore the potential for alternative financing mechanisms to enable innovation and avoid a closed shop.
9. Both DFID and international aid agencies need to explicitly tackle the barriers to better support to national and local actors. These include rules and regulations inconsistent with Grand Bargain commitments and perception biases in assessing risks.

### **Theme 3: The right stuff? The effectiveness of the response**

**The four priority response areas identified by DFID – food security, health, nutrition and WASH – provided an adequate basis for the crisis response, with issues of reactivity and/or quality affecting some programmes.**

10. Claims being made about the pros and cons of cash versus voucher approaches in relation to efficiency, effectiveness and accountability need to be rigorously reviewed.
11. Further action is needed to tackle weaknesses and capacities in the WASH and health sectors and the systems in place to tackle outbreaks (including cholera).

### **Theme 4: The right targets? Coverage and principled humanitarian action**

**Greater attention to principled humanitarian action can contribute to ensuring that relief reaches those most in need, with a particular focus on reaching marginalised groups and maintaining adequate coverage in areas not under government control.**

12. Support should be continued for innovative measures to enable access to hard-to-reach areas.
13. Continued support is needed for measures to better ensure that marginalised and discriminated-against groups are not excluded from assistance.
14. Agencies (and DFID) should undertake stronger political, economic and social analyses to ensure that humanitarian action is politically savvy and conflict sensitive.
15. Reflection is needed on the implications of the growing urbanisation of the Somali population and the aid response's contribution to it. In particular consideration is required for how international aid supports livelihoods should these IDPs not return to rural areas.

### **Theme 5: The right level of risk? Ensuring accountability**

**Investments in agencies' own monitoring systems and third-party monitoring are strengthening accountability and risk management but more needs to be done to improve quality and to coordinate approaches.**

16. Further improvements in support to monitoring carried out by partners and independent third-parties can be made, with more triangulation and a greater diversity of methodological approaches.
17. More support should be given to investments in robust mechanisms to minimise corruption risks and develop strong risk management systems.
18. DFID should drive greater coordination of monitoring approaches to avoid a proliferation of third-party monitors and call centres across donors and agencies.

19. More support is needed for measures to communicate with and enable the participation of disaster-affected people, throughout project cycles.

**Theme 6: The right lessons? Looking forward to 2018**

**In looking forward to 2018 and an emerging situation that holds elements of crisis and early recovery, greater flexibility in DFID funding should aim to enable a full range of responses that are explicitly integrated into longer-term programming.**

20. Strong efforts are needed to ensure that support to humanitarian action continues into 2018 where needed.
21. Continued efforts should be made to forge links between humanitarian and development work within DFID and the agencies it funds whilst maintaining humanitarian principles.

## II. Introduction

This is a rapid review of DFID's ongoing humanitarian response to the 2017 humanitarian crisis and threat of famine in Somalia, including Somaliland and Puntland. It is not a comprehensive evaluation but a review intended to support DFID to identify areas for improvement to current programme delivery, shape the on-going response in 2018, and strengthen DFID Somalia's response to crisis. It sets out to identify lessons learned and contribute analysis and learning to forthcoming and more in-depth evaluative work. The findings and recommendations in some cases reflect the overall system wide response and are not specific to DFID.

### A. The 2017 crisis

DFID mounted its 2017 Somalia drought response in one of most desperate and least hospitable environments to humanitarian action. The Somali government's recent (draft) assessment succinctly captures the situation:

*The latest in a cycle of devastating protracted dry spells over the last 25 years, the current drought and the resulting humanitarian emergency have worsened existing humanitarian and development challenges in Somalia. Decades of insecurity, political instability, drought and food insecurity have disrupted desperately needed services, devastated human capital and physical infrastructure, and contributed to systematic impoverishment and displacement of the population.<sup>1</sup>*

Early warning signals throughout 2016 suggested that if the drought continued, then a crisis was likely in 2017. The international aid system, the Somali government and Somali civil society were all determined to try and avoid a repeat of the devastating famine in 2011 that killed approximately 260,000 people.

The impact of drought in Somalia is compounded by climate change and the ongoing conflict and insecurity facing large parts of the country. Significant parts of south and central Somalia continue to be contested or controlled by Al Shabaab. The conflict impacts directly on people in terms of displacement and disruption to livelihoods and severely restricts the ability of aid organisations to access large parts of the country, particularly rural areas.

The crisis in 2017 was both extensive and multi-dimensional. Following the post-*Gu* assessment by the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU) in August 2017, an estimated 6.2 million people fell into Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) Crisis and Emergency classifications 2, 3 and 4, and were hence in need of humanitarian assistance (compare to 3.2 million following *Gu* 2015), with over 3.1 million people facing acute food insecurity (IPC phases 3 and 4). Overall, some 388,000 acutely malnourished children needed critical nutrition support, including life-saving treatment for more than 87,000 severely malnourished children. Over 900,000 people have been internally displaced by drought and conflict since November 2016. Additionally, 77,000 cholera/acute watery diarrhoea (AWD) cases and 16,000 reported measles cases occurred in 2017.

---

<sup>1</sup>'Somalia Drought Impact and Needs Assessment', 13 November 2017, p. 11.

To date over \$1.2 billion has been raised towards the \$1.5 billion revised UN appeal and a major international humanitarian response has been mounted. As in previous crises, Somalis themselves also responded in ways that are important to understand but are less well documented. Remittance flows, as always, are much greater than aid flows and the fledgling Somali government, state authorities, private sector, diaspora and civil society have all played important roles.

Early warnings that include a fourth below-average *Deyr* (short rainy season) from October to December 2017 and likely *La Niña* weather phenomenon, indicate that the threat of famine could persist in the worst affected areas well into 2018 and raise fears that climate change might be creating long-term shifts for agriculture, livestock and water resources. Continued and scaled-up humanitarian assistance must be sustained to prevent further deterioration of the food security and nutrition situation of the affected population. Discussions are happening about how to simultaneously maintain a humanitarian response whilst investing in resilience, early recovery and development programming where possible.

## **B. Methodology**

The review team interviewed a wide range of stakeholders in person in Nairobi and via skype/telephone, making a total of 73 interviews. A workshop was held with DFID humanitarian staff in Nairobi. A thorough review of available literature and project documentation was carried out. Interviews focussed on DFID and the organisations that it has funded in 2017.

### **1. Limitations**

This rapid review is intended to provide initial lessons to help shape the on-going response in 2018. It should not be confused with either a comprehensive evaluation or a sector-by-sector (or agency-by-agency) analysis. The limited scope meant that the team was not able to visit Somalia, the team did not include Somali researchers and talking directly to disaster-affected people was not possible. However, the review team endeavoured to incorporate information from the wealth of existing monitoring data to ensure that the perspectives of disaster-affected people are reflected in the review.

### III. DFID's response

#### A. The right timing? Responding to needs at a time of crisis

##### 1. Was the response adequate?

Over the course of 2017, the UK government provided £170 million in emergency relief funding to the Somalia drought response, using its Internal Risk Facility (IRF). DFID's support formed part of an overall international humanitarian response to which donors have contributed \$1.2 billion as of 26 October 2017. The UK government was one of the first donors to commit major humanitarian funding and DFID is the second-largest bilateral donor to the 2017 UN Appeal. Other major donors include the US, EU and Germany.

The DFID approach focused on:

- Meeting immediate needs of the most vulnerable, including those in hard-to-reach areas, through multi-sectoral humanitarian assistance in *cash, food security, nutrition, WASH and health*;
- Building resilience of individuals and institutions and providing early warning, through multi-year humanitarian funding; and
- Improving the effectiveness of the international response and mobilising resources through international engagement.

DFID Somalia IRF funding per agency 2017 (millions GBP)			
WFP	41.00	ICRC	7.00
UNICEF	33.40	Monitoring & Evaluation	0.98
NRC*	50.30	WHO	0.50
FAO	20.00	OCHA	0.50
Save the Children**	15.00		
* Led food, security and water consortium			
** Led nutrition and health consortium			

Working through a consortium of INGOs, UN agencies and the ICRC, to date DFID support has provided:

- Access to safe drinking water for more than 1,117,918 people;
- Emergency food assistance for more than 1,575,516 people;
- Nutrition for more than 458,035 malnourished children and mothers;
- Emergency health care for more than 704,035 people; and
- Vaccinations for more than 4,000,000 animals.

This emergency response must be seen within the broader UK government commitment to Somalia, including the DFID Somalia 2013–2017 Multi-Year Humanitarian Programme (hereafter, Humanitarian Programme) that aims to build the resilience of individuals and communities and provide early warning.

The £170 million emergency relief funding was provided primarily to existing international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and United Nations (UN) and Red Cross partners. UNICEF was funded for health, education and water/sanitation (WASH), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) for food security. Two NGO consortia – Building

Resilient Communities in Somalia (BRCiS) and Strengthening Nutrition Security in South Central Somalia (SNS) – were funded. Funding to BRCiS was for food security primarily through cash transfers. Funding to SNS was for health and nutrition. Funding to the SNS consortium was stopped in mid-2017 due to value-for-money concerns and transferred to BRCiS. The consortium members are Cesvi, Concern Worldwide, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) (lead agency), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Save the Children and Action Contre la Faim (ACF).

Local actors were not funded directly but UN agencies and INGOs carried out a combination of direct implementation and sub-contracting of Somali NGOs. DFID also provided £10 million to the Somalia Humanitarian Fund (SHF) in 2016/17, 37 percent of which was allocated to local actors.

Support to food security was primarily focussed on cash transfers with FAO and NGOs also providing some support to agriculture and livestock. Nutrition support was largely focussed on treatment and prevention of severe and moderate malnutrition. Health support was provided to primary health care through support to an essential package of health services. WASH programming supported access to safe water through chlorination, water trucking, water vouchers and rehabilitation of water sources. Hygiene kits were provided to more than one million people and support to latrine construction and desludging for IDPs and in cholera treatment facilities.

DFID's funding for the response was significant and generous and represents an appropriate level of burden-sharing when compared to other major donors. The successful mobilisation of funds for Somalia is particularly commendable at this time, with the global context marked by huge demands on the humanitarian system. During this period, DFID also responded to the threat of famine in South Sudan, Yemen and Nigeria and maintained high levels of funding to the Syria crisis.

DFID also played a vital role in galvanising action on the part of other donors and encouraging organisations to scale up their responses. DFID's leadership role was well-recognised by various actors across the system. In particular, DFID made a concerted effort to parlay its timely action into timely action by others, leading by example, with the UK government having approved £10M in January and then a further £100M in February.

The UK's message was clear: 'The UK has been the first to announce a substantial uplift in our response. We welcome your plans for additional, significant contributions to the 2017 Drought Response. But we must act now to prevent a famine. Will you urgently disburse these funds?'<sup>2</sup> The UK government convened a technical meeting in London in February to push its agenda, and it utilised a series of high-profile visits – Mark Lowcock, the Permanent Secretary for DFID, UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson and then-International Development Secretary Priti Patel – to galvanise both internal and external commitment.

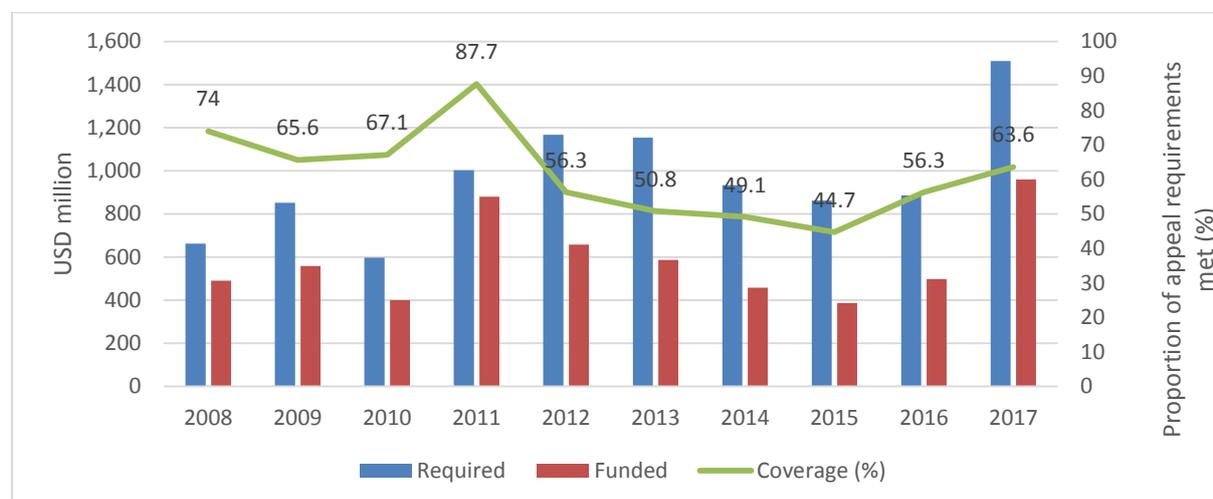
The 2017 UN appeal for Somalia was the largest humanitarian funding appeal for Somalia to date, at USD1.5 billion. By year end, contributions of USD 959.3 million had been received (63.6% of funds required) (see Figure 1). This is by no means the largest *proportion* of funding needs met within an appeal (the record within the ten-year period 2008-2017 is at 101.4% for the 2009 Kenya Humanitarian Response Plan), nor within 2017 (the 2017 Kenya Flash Appeal received 101.8% of requested funding), nor even for Somalia (notably, in 2011, the Somalia appeal received 87.7% of

---

<sup>2</sup> 'DFID Somalia Humanitarian Script', 1 March 2017, tailored message to like-minded donors.

revised requirements). Comparing the Somalia 2017 appeal with other appeals in excess of a billion dollars, the Somalia 2017 appeal was the 21<sup>st</sup> most successful in terms of meeting funding requirements (see Figure 2).

Figure 1: Funding appeal requirements and funds received 2008-2017



Source: UN OCHA Financial Tracking Service (FTS). Accessed 15th January 2018.

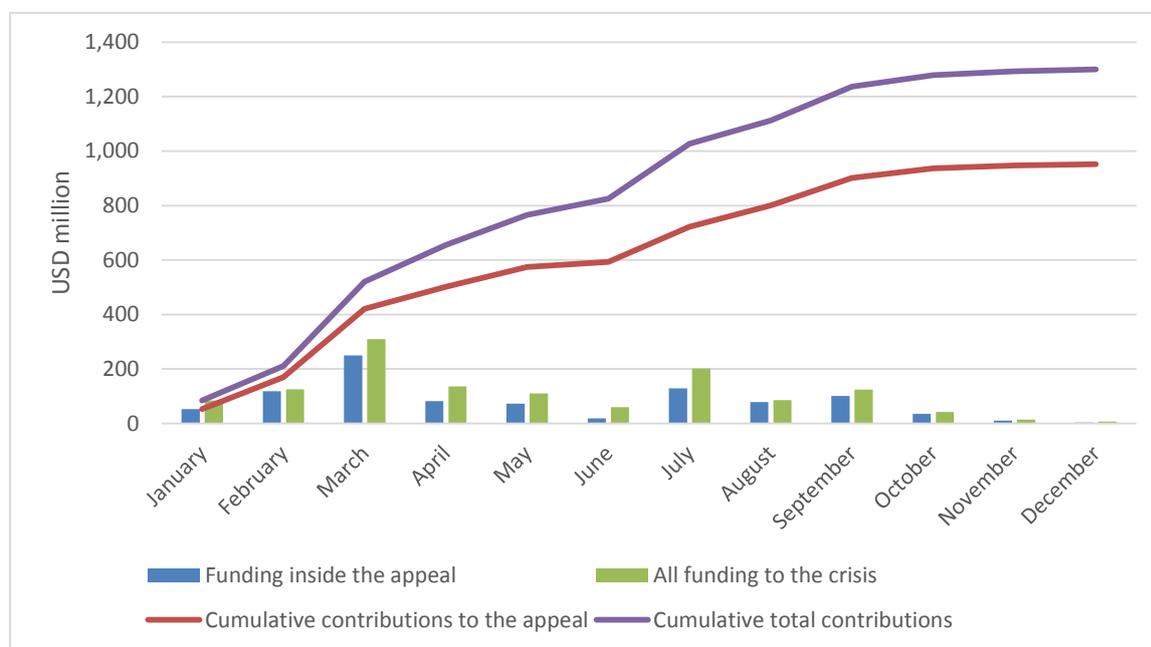
Figure 2: Share of funding appeal requirements met within appeals greater than one billion US dollars 2008-2017

Appeal	Coverage (%)	Required (USD million)	Funded (USD million)
Republic of South Sudan 2016	92.5	1,291	1,194
Republic of South Sudan - Crisis Response Plan 2014	88.4	1,802	1,592
Somalia 2011	87.7	1,003	880
Haiti Humanitarian Appeal (Revised) (January - December 2010)	73.8	1,502	1,109
Syria Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) 2013	73.1	2,982	2,181
Republic of South Sudan 2017	72.7	1,640	1,192
Republic of South Sudan 2013	72	1,072	772
Sudan 2011	71.7	1,133	812
Iraq 2014	70.9	1,113	789
Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan 2017	70.5	2,339	1,648
Nigeria 2017	70.4	1,054	742
Sudan 2009	70.3	2,111	1,483
Pakistan Floods Relief and Early Recovery Response Plan (Revised) (August 2010 - July 2011)	70.3	1,963	1,380
Sudan Work Plan 2008 (Humanitarian/Early Recovery )	70.1	2,005	1,405
Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP) 2013	68	1,410	959
Republic of South Sudan 2012	66.9	1,177	788
Sudan 2010	66	1,843	1,217
Republic of South Sudan 2015	65.8	1,636	1,076
Syria regional refugee and resilience plan (3RP) 2015	65.7	4,320	2,837
Syria Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) 2014	63.7	3,741	2,381
Somalia 2017	63.6	1,509	959

The *volume* of funds received however is significant in the context of appeals for the Somalia crisis, being almost twice as much as the funds received within the appeal in the previous year (2016) and 8% more than the total funds received within the appeal in the 2011 famine year (USD 879.9 million) (see Figure 1).

The *timing* of contributions is also significant in the context of appeals for the Somali crisis. In 2011, funding contributions were initially slow – with just 21% of the total funds received within the appeal received in the first six months of the year. Funding contributions increased rapidly from July 2011. By contrast, in 2017, 44% of total contributions within the appeal were received in the first quarter, and 62% within the first six months of the year. It is also worth noting that in 2017, a far larger proportion of contributions to the crisis were channelled within the appeal (in 2011, 43% of funds to the crisis were channelled within the appeal, in 2017, 73%), indicating a more coordinated financing response overall.

Figure 3: Funding contributions to Somalia in 2017



Source: UN OCHA FTS. Note months indicate 'decision date' recorded in the FTS. Contributions with decision dates recorded in the preceding year have been assigned to January 2017.

In sum, although the UN appeal has not been fully funded, the general consensus of those interviewed, and the review team is that overall funding in 2017 for the priority sectors reviewed has been sufficient and appropriate for the level of need and implementing capacities of the organisations able to respond.

## 2. Analysis and timeliness of the response

The timeliness of DFID's response must be read against the backdrop of the drought, conflict and eventually famine that struck Somalia in 2011/12, where the international humanitarian response was uniformly judged as significantly, tragically late. DFID not only responded earlier this time; it galvanised an international response that has thus far managed to avert potentially catastrophic

levels of suffering and loss of life. That the response was earlier than that of 2011 sets the bar too low. The surge in early 2017 represented a laudable, ongoing commitment to Somalia by the UK government, and DFID's country team should be recognised for having managed the strategic and political choices to ensure the funding necessary for an early 2017 surge and avoid accusations of 'crying wolf'.

The review team has nonetheless identified three key areas for improvement. First, questions exist as to the sufficiency and analysis of the data/information. Second, while we acknowledge that gaining an earlier commitment may not have been politically feasible, we nonetheless believe that future response to (potential) crises should mobilise even earlier.<sup>3</sup> Third, and given the context, humanitarian agencies must be better committed and prepared to respond swiftly to the unsurprising advent of crisis in Somalia.

### *The Analysis of the Situation*

DFID's analysis of the situation was clear: 'The situation in Somalia was as bad as or worse than the situation in 2011', where the death toll reached an estimated 260,000.<sup>4</sup> As DFID said in March 2017, the 'window of opportunity is closing fast'.<sup>5</sup> Among interviewees, DFID received considerable praise for its longstanding investment in the capacity and expertise required for tracking and understanding the situation in Somalia, contributing to a robust analysis of the context, timely awareness of the humanitarian situation and specific sectoral expertise. DFID has provided long-term support to FSNAU and has invested heavily in creating a dashboard to enable implementing agencies to monitor and react to the situation in Somalia.

Overall, and subject to known limitations, early warning was available and did point clearly to a large-scale crisis and a risk of famine. There is always room to improve analysis and data quality but DFID acted upon the best available information and was right to do so.

#### **DFID's role as galvaniser**

DFID was tracking the situation in Somalia and prepared the ground in London to advocate with other donors for a large-scale response in 2017. DFID did act decisively in early 2017. The joint FEWSNET/FSNAU declaration in mid-January on the risk of famine and the visit of Mark Lowcock, permanent secretary for the Department for International Development, helped to galvanise action. In late February, DFID made an early commitment of £100 million and this marked an important signal to other donors about the scale and seriousness of the crisis.

DFID was widely acknowledged, including by other donors, as having been earlier than other donors in providing significant funding for the 2017 response and as having played an important role in encouraging other donors. One donor noted that there was a common assessment of the situation and sense of urgency across the donor group and broader response community. The ability of DFID to act swiftly in this instance was attributed to its devolved decision making, relatively flexible internal mechanisms and an ability to leverage high-level interest across the UK government. The visit of Foreign Secretary Johnson in March 2017, the hosting of a major Somalia conference in May 2017 and the visit of then- DFID Secretary of State Patel in June all helped to maintain a high-level focus on Somalia and galvanise action from DFID and, by extension, other governments.

<sup>3</sup> See also our discussion of early action below.

<sup>4</sup> 'DFID Somalia Humanitarian Script', 1 March 2017.

<sup>5</sup> 'DFID Somalia Humanitarian Script'. 1 March 2017.

Some interviewees pointed to a risk of over-reliance upon the information provided by FEWSNET and FSNAU, which is largely quantitative and heavily focussed on food security. DFID personnel see a need for greater integration and harmonisation between SWALIM,<sup>6</sup> FSNAU and FEWSNET and for them to be more consistent in their presentation of key information. One question on the horizon (and beyond the scope of this review) concerns how these technical units will be situated vis-à-vis the government of Somalia. Other key issues emerging from interviews were the following:

- The analysis seems overly based upon technical humanitarian definitions of need or vulnerability (e.g., IPC classifications) which, though highly useful, do not reflect the complexity of the Somali context. Factors relating to conflict and social exclusion may not be sufficiently considered.
- As a previous DFID review of the IRF concluded with regard to efforts to develop an agreed set of triggers for response, ‘The efficacy of the trigger depends on timely, complete, and multi-variant quantitative and qualitative data. Such data is often elusive in the context of Somalia and yet such systematic approaches to humanitarian response depend on data that can provide a sufficient level of predictability’.<sup>7</sup> We reiterate this conclusion, noting the degree to which an analysis of directionality needs to be weighted heavily both in the analysis of the situation *and* in the political decision-making process (Oxfam 2017).
- Several people interviewed felt that there was an over-reliance on waiting for twice yearly FSNAU/FEWSNET analyses of the food security situation; this undermines early action and means that agencies under-invest in their own monitoring and early warning systems.
- At a community level, the massive information available via mechanisms such as FSNAU or DFID’s own third-party monitoring (TPM) initiatives does not, as one development expert pointed out, provide an understanding of the lives of ordinary people.
- A thorough review of the quality of early warning analysis and information was beyond the scope of this review, however. Given the scale of the humanitarian response in 2017, largely triggered by clear warnings of the risk of famine, a more in-depth review would be useful.

### *Early warning and early action*

Despite DFID’s significant investment and effort in analysis, Somalia will remain a context rife with unknowns for the international humanitarian community. As is often the case, the big issue seems to have been not a lack of early warning and analysis but a gap in translating early warning into early action. There was more that could have been done in 2016 in terms of early action, preparedness and contingency planning given clear rising levels of need and the growing risk of a serious large-scale crisis.

The Humanitarian Programme’s multi-year funding and the IRF facility should have enabled an earlier surge, aimed at alleviating the threat of famine. Overall, there seems to have been less early action than might have been possible if partners had budgeted more flexibly within their multi-year funding and made a stronger case to DFID for further IRF funding. Starting to expand cash-based programmes, supporting livestock and enabling access to water are all examples where greater early action could have occurred.

---

<sup>6</sup> FAO unit providing information on water and land.

<sup>7</sup> La Guardia and Poole 2016

Some partners did put measures in place. Concern for instance started a cash safety net project for the poorest 10 percent of people in its project locations in July 2016, further extending this assistance in November, along with an accelerated focus on access to water and further fodder provision. WFP started adding people into its SCOPE system for registration as a preparatory measure.

Did the response avert a famine? Interviewees within DFID and the agencies appear unequivocal on this question. Several outsiders interviewed are less willing to predict that a famine would have emerged, even with the very clear worsening conditions. The review team is unequivocal as well – this is the wrong question. Beyond the difficulty of proving a negative, we see a risk in setting the bar too high, leaving a system unable to respond in timely fashion unless one can establish a looming crisis of unprecedented proportions or ‘perfect storms’ of disaster. Averting high levels of death should be a sufficient standard, and it is counter-productive to reinforce a culture of frightening decision-makers with apocalyptic costs of inaction. We comprehend the objective of gaining approval for substantial funding, but does winning that short-term political goal interfere with the long-term aim to normalise early and preventative crisis response? Further, does it make the decision-making process too dependent upon the certainty of pre-defined triggers (for example, as suggested by ICAI’s report on the 2011 famine response) rather than acting at a time of uncertainty on the basis of ‘forward-looking analysis and reflection’?<sup>8</sup>

### *A lack of contingency planning and readiness for emergency response*

DFID moved early and decisively at the outset of 2017 to respond to the crisis. However, it is less clear that the majority of INGOs and UN agencies, or their local implementing partners, were able to match the speed of being funded with the speed of adapting their existing activities, expanding into new areas and scaling up ahead of the looming crisis. We note with concern that the ICAI 2011 review concluded that in general agencies failed to switch gears, to move rapidly into assessment of emerging emergency needs and implementation of programming. DFID expressed frustration over this very same dynamic in 2017 and used its power as a donor to press responders to act more swiftly. The pressure exerted by DFID in this and other areas was seen as a double-edged sword by partners. One UN partner commented that constant pressure from DFID was challenging, but had some positive consequences, most notably enabling programme sections to leverage external pressure to break down internal barriers to action.

McDowell and McDowell found ‘that there was no leadership or guidance on Jilaal early actions’ – only ad-hoc coordination efforts – and that some organisations would only act once FSNAU or FEWSNET provided an ex-post analysis. ‘It would have been more helpful for early actions to be discussed, planned and coordinated prior to *Deyr* (autumn 2016)’. DFID staff felt that agencies ‘proved to be extremely slow when they did have money and initially proposed unimpressive early actions’ (McDowell and McDowell 2017).

Whilst individual agencies had preparedness plans, overall levels of readiness for a large-scale drought seemed surprisingly low given the predictability of such an event in Somalia. By way of

---

<sup>8</sup> See commentary of Simone Levine, ‘Rising to the Challenge? DFID’s Successes in the Horn of Africa Relief Response’, 17 September 2012, ODI, <https://www.odi.org/comment/6777-rising-challenge-dfid-s-successes-horn-africa-relief-response>

illustration, the cash working group had lapsed and had to be reinstated in 2017, meaning that no coordinated plans were being made in 2016 for what turned out to be the scale up of cash and vouchers from 500,000 households in 2016 to 3 million households by the middle of 2017.

There have been some examples of good practice. McDowell and McDowell note that ACF worked with the disaster management agency of Puntland to prepare contingency plans for Eyl district, which was affected once it was clear that the *Deyr* rains had failed. Strong coordination and preparedness did take place at the level of the Drought Operations Coordination Centres (DOCCs) established in 2017. DFID played a strong role in supporting the establishment of these centres, which importantly helped to shift the locus of coordination and leadership from Nairobi to Somalia.

Organisations have a tendency in Somalia to work within well-defined geographic areas. The reasons for this are good, not least that the slow build-up of networks and relationships with communities and local authorities is critical to effective and safe programming in Somalia. However, as a result, agencies find it harder to scale up geographically and reach people in areas and districts where they have not previously been programming. There was scope for organisations to better recognise this problem and to invest further in the capacity to extend operations into new areas.

Compounding this issue, and clearly a frustration for DFID staff, is that agencies can over-claim their field presence, hence coverage exists on paper rather than in operations. Agencies were often limited to urban centres and their immediate environs with little access to more rural areas. Incentives still exist to over-claim presence in order to maximise funding; this points to the need for a more honest and open conversation about actual capacity to respond in different areas and sectors (SAVE 2017).

Given the context, we believe that all ongoing programming – sector by sector and agency by agency – should reflect the likelihood of emergency needs generated by Somalia’s ‘big five’: drought, malnutrition, acute watery diarrhoea (AWD) or cholera, measles and, in many areas, conflict. This requires aid agencies to have contingency plans and operational capacity in place for each of their projects, including pre-positioned supplies (e.g., chlorine, ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF), appropriately trained staff and/or surge rosters, and other emergency preparedness measures. DFID should ensure that such contingency planning and preparedness is linked to funding opportunities, or is made a precondition. Further, organisations need to do more to hasten the shifting of gears into emergency mode. This continuous monitoring and assessment of needs, essential to maintaining impartiality, requires greater attention by many operational agencies. They also need to develop the relevant organisational architecture and culture of risk taking (e.g., decision-making structures/procedures and skills); which are key enablers of speedy emergency decision-making in agencies such as the ICRC or MSF.

## **B. The right approach? Engaging the right partners**

### **1. Did DFID fund the right organisations to do the right things? Did DFID provide them with high-quality support?**

In the context of the 2017 response, the question of whether DFID funded the right organisations to do the right things boils down to two interrelated questions:

- Did DFID make the right decision to focus the response on four priorities: nutrition, food security, WASH and health?
- To what extent does the balance of factors favour DFID's decision to limit the use of IRF funds to a set of its existing partners?

### **The right four sectors?**

The first question strikes us as less problematic. It is refreshing to see a donor take difficult, politically-charged decisions to establish response priorities. While we question elsewhere in this review the almost exclusive focus upon relief aid, we have not seen evidence that undermines the soundness of selecting these four areas. In a context such as Somalia, issues such as protection and gender require particular attention, but we believe DFID is correct in viewing protection and gender as transversal to nutrition, food security, WASH and health.

### **The right agencies and funding instruments?**

With the goal of building an early 2017 surge of humanitarian relief to the drought in Somalia, and to do so at scale, DFID decided to fund exclusively its existing partners. The flexibility provided by a combination of existing multi-year funding and a responsive financing mechanism within that funding (the IRF) meant that DFID could rapidly scale up funding to its existing partners. These partners included the main UN agencies, ICRC and two significant NGO consortia, and this broad portfolio enabled a strong response across the four priority sectors. On balance, the majority of respondents acknowledged that the use of the IRF was reasonable in that it allowed DFID to quickly fund organisations in which it already had confidence, i.e., with a demonstrated capacity to deliver. From DFID's point of view there was a strong risk management element to the decision and a concern that other options – such as an open call for proposals – would have delayed the response.

The IRF demonstrated the capacity to make funding decisions without undue (bureaucratic) delay using a streamlined approach to decision-making that leveraged existing partners/relationships. McDowell and McDowell (2017) note that decisions to act were enabled by new or improved financing arrangements (forward financing, risk financing mechanisms and crisis modifiers).

Essentially, this decision was founded upon DFID's prioritisation of scaling up quickly, its ability to make rapid decisions because the agencies were already known (i.e., to reduce risk), and the added value of being able to leverage existing relationships. The latter appears to have allowed DFID to push agencies to move swiftly and to have provided DFID with valuable technical input based on existing ties. Staying with the same first-order partners was not just a political or programmatic choice. DFID's Smart Rules require it to conduct due diligence of all organisations receiving UK funds and that takes time and effort. The context of Somalia requires this, especially in light of wider UK legislation.

This decision to work with its existing partners involved trade-offs between the ability to scale up quickly with known and trusted organisations and the risk that this excluded other capacities and skills that could add value to the response. The IRF was designed to enable preventative and early actions as a crisis modifier within multi-year programming (LaGuardia and Poole 2016), rather than to act as the main funding vehicle for a major humanitarian response. Even in cases where multi-year and predictable approaches to humanitarian funding and programming are entirely

appropriate, there are theoretical weaknesses to funding additional humanitarian programming solely through these same platforms. These have been variously referred to as the prioritisation dilemma or 'the mortgage problem'. Both refer to the tension between the use of an updated, impartial, needs-based assessment as the basis for new humanitarian funding decisions versus the use of existing geographically fixed networks.

Our review highlighted a number of issues related to DFID's approach of working through a limited number of existing international partners: coverage, localisation and the risk of constraining innovation and new approaches. Some organisations that were not existing DFID partners felt that they had no avenue for accessing IRF funding, which led to important capacities being overlooked and risked patchy and uneven coverage. There are also issues regarding what using the IRF meant for commitments to more direct and better funding for national and local actors (see the next subsection).

Some of the agencies funded by DFID raised concerns about the limited amount of time given to organisations to develop proposals and plans for IRF funding within four-to-six-month cycles. They felt this made planning properly particularly hard in terms of the division of labour within consortia. They were also concerned that throughout 2016 and 2017, the amount of funding that would be available was not clear. This became an obstacle to forward planning.

A final concern relates to the capacity of the IRF to ensure timely, appropriate funding as the crisis moves into 2018 (e.g., the gap between the IRF's ability to move £170M in a short amount of time and regular, multi-year programming). Looking forward, some areas appear ready for early recovery programming (accordingly, for example, the ICRC has already begun scaling back its emergency activities in some locations). In this respect, ensuring that the next phase of multi-year humanitarian funding remains as flexible and adaptive as possible is important.

The geographic coverage of international agencies working in Somalia is highly inflexible in comparison to other crisis contexts. This is due to their lack of direct presence on the ground, the need to work through gatekeepers, the high time/investment (resources) necessary to enter a new area and a high level of residual security risks. To aggravate matters, DFID and several interviewees expressed their concern that agencies seek funds based on overly optimistic commitments in terms of delivery, with the particular risk of not having access to all parts within 'their' area.

The trouble is turf and its high cost. Absent a broader set of actors, DFID's response will struggle to align with the geographic or ethnographic contours of the crisis, to access new rural areas or even to engage with a different set of implementing local partners. Moreover, this general difficulty with access pushed the aid response towards the islands of government control, in particular the towns. This led to what one agency described as an 'aid circus' atmosphere in Baidoa.

Given the regularity of crisis response in Somalia, donors such as DFID should consider options for better ensuring *future* coverage by exploring options to fund a broader set of partners and by insisting upon, and investing in the efforts of agencies to establish access to areas beyond existing programming. There could also be a greater focus on donor coordination and humanitarian leadership in terms of contingency planning to ensure stronger coverage. DFID did coordinate strongly with USAID, FFP and ECHO but the different funding approaches and timing of donors made a clear division of labour difficult.

It is beyond the scope of this review to be too prescriptive about the options for funding new partners within the constraints of DFID's procedures. The need for strong risk management and due diligence and to work within staffing constraints makes managing large numbers of contracts difficult. Options to explore are pre-qualification exercises and due diligence assessments in advance, the availability and suitability of other financing mechanisms such as the SHF, the Start Fund, the Rapid Response Facility and the CERF. Another option would leave a proportion of the response open to competitive bidding to allow innovation and new entrants. To keep contracting manageable, this could be managed by a contracting agent or restricted to a small number of large grants.

## **2. Did the response reflect DFID's Grand Bargain commitments to work as directly as possible with local and national actors and provide them with quality support?**

The way in which the overall humanitarian response and DFID's support to it worked with local and national actors is a disappointment. DFID's direct funding went entirely to international actors, other than £10 million to the SHF (37 percent of which funds Somali NGOs). DFID did promote discussion of how to take forward Grand Bargain commitments to localisation in the context of Somalia through support to events in Mogadishu and Nairobi and we recognise that ways to take forward commitments had not been agreed at global or national levels in time for the 2017 response. Nevertheless, there is scope to turn support for local actors from discussions into concrete actions.

### *Perception issues*

The localisation agenda has given new impetus to longstanding discussions of 'Somali-led approaches' and 'Somali solutions for Somali problems'. The inaction is as familiar as the pattern – there is a lack of trust in the capacity and/or integrity of Somali organisations, in particular their capacity to (a) scale up effective operations, (b) ensure robust accounting for funds received or (c) adherence to the principle of impartiality.

Decision-making appears heavily shaped by the perception of international actors that Somali NGOs will be guided by overriding personal/community/clan political and economic interests. As in 2011, concerns exist that aid could be diverted to Al Shabaab.<sup>9</sup> However, SAVE's (2017) research, Somalis we interviewed and noted experts outside of the aid agencies all indicate that while serious problems of capacity and integrity exist, Somali organisations exist that can be trusted to effectively deliver aid inside Somalia. There is hence a counter-opinion that sees Somalia as possessing an increasingly vibrant civil society and private sector that can contribute effectively to humanitarian response.

We understand the oft-repeated rationale that it is difficult to channel significant funding directly through Somali organisations given the reality of donor governments' political constraints. The humanitarian and home-society political cost to the diversion of aid is high, making the system

---

<sup>9</sup> Though not an area sufficiently covered by the review team, our impression is that the chilling effect of counter terrorism legislation has played a less prominent role in decision-making than it is reported to have done in 2011/12.

particularly averse to this risk.<sup>10</sup> However, the reality of sub-contracting implementation through chains of Somali agencies does not eliminate problems of mismanagement or corruption so much as it effectively shifts responsibility downward and reduces political risk.

DFID funds do go to a wide range of Somali organisations. DFID's partners rely on Somali NGOs for a significant proportion of the response as sub-contractors; they interact with local and national authorities at different levels and they work with the private sector. OCHA mentioned some evidence of Somali organisations feeling more valued and listened to by international organisations.

Contrary to the commitments of the Grand Bargain, we are concerned that the capacities of local NGOs are being built to deliver assistance *tout court*– not a bad thing, but not the same as one agency head put it, 'to be the NGOs of the future'. The review team also heard some opinions that localisation is happening in that local organisations are being engaged in the implementation ('working through local NGOs'), or by the 'community engagement' that results from call centre conversations with aid recipients. These measures serve various purposes, but they do not satisfy the commitments of shifting direct funding, decision-making and power to local actors.

There is an element of double standards being applied with national actors assumed to have weaker risk management systems and the risks faced by international organisations downplayed. Issues such as senior management staff being restricted in their ability to be in Somalia, management from Nairobi and a lack of knowledge on the part of international staff of the ethnic composition of Somali staff are particular problems for international agencies in terms of their upwards and downwards accountability. For localisation to progress there needs to be a more equitable weighting of shortcomings on both sides.

#### **Challenges facing Somali NGOs**

The following challenges were highlighted in a NEAR roundtable (Poole 2017):

- The proliferation of capacity assessments, which are extremely burdensome, divert already stretched organisations from their core functions, and focus largely on fiduciary controls rather than considering operational capacity and legitimacy.
- Draconian controls and disproportionate responses to risk, which do not provide local and national actors with opportunities to improve and manage problems.
- The predominance of donor-driven project-based funding, which does not allow organisational development.
- Unwillingness of donors to provide overhead costs which limits the ability of organisations to invest in core functions and development.
- The tendency of donors to drive down staff salary costs, which leaves local and national NGOs struggling to retain staff.
- The prevalence of short-term unpredictable funding, which limits the ability of organisations to think and plan for the longer term and imports unpredictability. This in turn impacts efficiency and staff retention.
- The prevalence of transactional relationships rather than partnerships. Among the

<sup>10</sup> DFID press briefing documents for the drought response in Somalia pay particular attention to the question of whether UK aid is being diverted.

established and well respected Somali NGOs, there has often been a supportive long-term partnership. However, the majority of funding is provided in ‘partnership’ in name only, and from the perspective of local and national NGOs it is essentially sub-contractual.

- A lack of visibility of local and national actors. Dialogue with donors, reporting and promotional activities are controlled by international intermediaries. Opportunities for local and national actors to directly represent and talk about their work are extremely scarce, limiting their ability to build relationships of trust with donors and potential wider supporters.
- Competition with and instrumentalisation by INGOs. Local and national actors are facing increasing competition with INGOs who are ‘localising’. INGOs are also reportedly co-opting local and national NGOs to demonstrate presence to donors.

### *Contradictory commitments, rules and regulations*

The review team found little evidence of concrete actions (as opposed to discussion) to change the type and quality of support to national and local actors in the spirit of the Grand Bargain commitments. Not only was funding not flowing more directly but there was little evidence of changes to contracting arrangements such as a fairer share of overheads, greater support to management costs or further investments in capacity building. It should be noted that we were not able, within the scope of the review, to talk to all the organisations funded by DFID so this should be seen as a tentative finding. However, a recent review similarly found that, ‘despite commitments made under the Grand Bargain, donors consulted indicated no appetite for increasing direct funding to local and national NGOs’.<sup>11</sup>

DFID staff felt that they had encouraged the organisations it was funding to look at new ways to support national actors better but that there was limited appetite for establishing new ways of funding. DFID and its partners made the point that there was an urgency to act fast in the face of the threat of famine and that is a difficult time to establish new approaches or financing mechanisms. DFID also made the argument that DFID staff had insufficient capacity to manage the transactional costs of new partnerships with local NGOs during an emergency, even if DFID rules, legal considerations and wider UK government policy decisions could allow it.

These arguments hold an element of truth, yet at the same time it is necessary to guard against using urgency and existing rules as excuses for business as usual. Large crises are also times when large-scale funding is available and when local and national actors particularly need better support to enable them to scale up and continue to provide high quality and accountable humanitarian action. They are also arguments not for inaction but for investing more in pre-crisis preparedness to have in place partnerships with local actors that are established with strong risk-management frameworks. For example, including strong local organisations as equal partners in consortia within multi-year funding approaches would then enable stronger support to flow more directly when humanitarian action needs to be scaled up. The ‘we can’t contract multiple local NGOs’ argument is also one that risks maintaining an unsatisfactory status quo. If DFID is serious about its Grand

---

<sup>11</sup>L. Poole (2017), ‘Scoping Study Somalia’, NEAR Network.

Bargain commitments then it needs to review its contracting rules and staff capacities to manage contracts to enable better and more direct support to flow to national and local actors. Otherwise, we are left with a proverbial commitment to make an omelette which leaves in place prohibitions on breaking any eggs.

To move forward on commitments to stronger support local actors, DFID should explore how best to directly fund Somali organisations through either existing or new mechanisms. The review team also found it unhelpful to shift the risks and burden of localisation to the international agencies given a DFID contract –this seems to expect too much of agencies under pressure to scale up operations. Beyond adapting or developing new funding mechanisms there is a need to improve the ways in which local actors are funded within existing mechanisms. That might for instance include encouraging international organisations to share a greater percentage of overheads with national actors, to increase support to core management costs and to enable organisations to invest in stronger risk management and accountability systems. As discussed below, broadening the localisation discussion is needed – going beyond questions of how Somali NGOs are funded to include how international actors relate to the Somali government, private sector and broader Somali civil society.

### *The primacy of government responsibility*

A similar disconnect appears in relation to the coordination or integration of DFID's response into Somali governmental structures. One of the key changes from the situation in 2011 is the nascent presence of a Somali federal government, the creation of a Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and the functioning of state-level disaster authorities, such as drought committees. While this Review afforded only limited capacity to assess the engagement with Somali government authorities or to question them directly, DFID's engagement seems more ad hoc than systematic, and does not appear to support the Somali government to play a leadership role in responding to the drought.

Therefore, engagement with the government of Somalia by DFID and the organisations it funds should be more strategic, with clear goals to encourage and support the fulfilment of the state's responsibilities towards its own citizens. Whilst difficult given the political and security climate, DFID and its partners should also be advocating to other parties to the conflict to fulfil their responsibilities under International Humanitarian Law (IHL) to assist and protect people in the areas that they control and to allow unhindered access for humanitarian actors.

There were some examples of good practice that could usefully be further documented and analysed. UNICEF, for instance, worked with the government of Puntland to regulate the price of water and encouraged the local government in Baidoa to negotiate water prices with the private sector and to take leadership of the water response in camps. The UN leadership engaged the Somali President in tackling issues with roadblocks.

### **3. Did the response incorporate and value Somali knowledge and expertise?**

Some of those interviewed argued that international humanitarian actors seemed to have taken a step backwards in terms of their detailed knowledge of Somali politics, economy and society. Understanding and acting on clan dynamics for instance is crucial in human resources (avoiding having all of your staff from one clan) and in reducing the risks of some groups being marginalised or

excluded from assistance. SAVE's (2017) research found that respondents considered understanding clan and local dynamics to be weak across the humanitarian sector in south-central Somalia.

Whilst difficult given the separation between staff in Nairobi and staff in Somalia, more could be done to ensure that Somali voices are heard at senior leadership levels and are informing strategy, design and planning both within DFID and the organisations it funds.

SAVE's (2017) research found that positive examples of approaches to programme quality included

- conducting analyses of the local context, including political and conflict dynamics and finding ways to regularly incorporate this into programme approaches;
- restructuring so that senior Somali staff and/or international staff are based closer to programme sites; avoiding middlemen and finding ways for senior staff and/or donors or partner organisations to visit programme sites; and
- prioritising the employment of Somali staff in Nairobi and in middle management positions in Somalia.

Some DFID-funded partners are doing this but more could perhaps be done to spread good practice, to encourage partners that are not doing as much to do more and for DFID itself to do more.

McDowell and McDowell (2017) note that a 'disconnect between the international community and Somalis was felt to undermine the impact of early action'. "Coyotes" who bring people from Gedo to relative safety in Mogadishu, food wholesalers, health, water or power suppliers have reach to all communities in Somalia and provide essential services and resources, but international humanitarians cannot or will not work with them'. Examples of potentially innovative practices exist that need to be documented and evaluated. For example, the Somalia Resilience Programme (SOMREP) piloted a matching funds initiative for diaspora remittances.

Much discussion continues of ways in which the international humanitarian system might capitalise on the strengths of the Somali private sector and diaspora communities but there is little evidence of concrete changes in ways of operating. By way of a good examples: DFID did engage early with the Somali private sector about the role that it could play and for example got Hormuud to commit to standardised administrative fees for future transfers. As in previous crises, an important and generous local response through the diaspora and the private sector took place largely in parallel but with little interaction with the international humanitarian response.

#### **4. Encouraging a nexus: Was the response appropriately linked to resilience and development where appropriate?**

In following through on the 2011 Humanitarian Response Review (HERR) commitments to reforming its humanitarian policy and the new 2017 Humanitarian Reform Policy DFID's programme in Somalia clearly situates humanitarian relief within the broader framework of building resilience and development (DFID 2017 and Ashdown 2011) For example,

*The impact of humanitarian assistance –beyond keeping acutely malnourished children alive etc. will be diminished if it is delivered in isolation, rather than as a component of a wider package of support. To promote resilience, lifesaving humanitarian action needs to be delivered in conjunction with more*

*developmental forms of support, as well as a clear government commitment to safety net programming.*<sup>12</sup>

The review team applauds the stated intention of DFID's approach to the Somali context, yet finds room for improvement in terms of implementation. In addition to addressing emergency needs, this may involve better situating, on a principled basis, the early humanitarian response within the larger framework of development and even stabilisation. As discussed above, the first question is whether an earlier scaling up of resilience activities might have modified the crisis itself, in terms of enabling people to overcome or withstand shocks.<sup>13</sup> The programming funded through the IRF in 2017 comprised traditional humanitarian relief – water trucking, therapeutic and other feeding programmes, IDP health and humanitarian cash primarily spent on food.

Interviewees did not suggest that organisations had contingency plans on how to integrate or link emergency relief with the resilience agenda, or how to avoid or mitigate the negative impact of relief on long-term efforts. Indeed, one aid interviewee remarked that resilience was often viewed as a vertical programme itself, rather than as a transversal approach to other programming. The crisis in 2017 should also provide an opportunity to assess the impact of ongoing resilience work and to learn from the experience. We heard anecdotal evidence that communities where resilience programming had been targeted were indeed more resilient (e.g., they were able to withstand shocks or reach out to and help neighbouring communities). DFID is in the process of conducting an impact evaluation of resilience as part its humanitarian programme in Somalia, intended to 'assess longitudinal change and the impact of different combinations of interventions activities.'<sup>14</sup>

As is the case globally, it is unclear if the humanitarian system had developed a sufficient understanding of how to incorporate resilience into relief, or vice versa. This is also true for other long-term-friendly programming, and a disconnection between DFID's humanitarian work and stabilisation is surprising given the weight of the latter in Somalia.<sup>15</sup> Certainly, cross-programme discussions between DFID siloes can be further encouraged. Having humanitarian teams talk with development teams is a first step, for example, to planning based on the importance of the local market to shaping the design and anticipating the potential impact of cash programming.<sup>16</sup>

A number of interviewees noted one specific area where attention to resilience and to other longer-term efforts intersects the drought response. The drought response, by prioritising IPC classifications 3 and 4, places insufficient attention to IPC 2, thus missing an opportunity to prevent large numbers of people from declining and eventually requiring more urgent forms of intervention. In a similar vein, one donor pointed out that the situation in Somalia resembles 'resilience without safety nets'. DFID, ECHO and others are engaged in discussions about the potential for longer-term approaches to

---

<sup>12</sup>Terms of Reference: Monitoring and Evaluation for the Somalia Humanitarian, Health and Resilience Programmes (MESH 2)', (draft) at ¶78.

<sup>13</sup> An equally legitimate question is whether *any* sort of resilience activities can significantly mitigate protracted drought of this severity, given also the lack of government services, conflict and market instability.

<sup>14</sup> 'MESH: Measuring Resilience (No, really! Measuring Resilience.)', DFID Somalia Comms briefing document, undated.

<sup>15</sup> Per concern for the impact on principled humanitarian action, we do not suggest integration.

<sup>16</sup> One expert on social exclusion opined that development or resilience programming – in particular income generation – may ease some forms of gatekeeping activity, such as where landowners demand a slice of aid distributions from IDPs camped temporarily on their land.

safety nets and these should be taken forward. The large-scale cash transfers provided and registration processes conducted in 2017 provide opportunities to develop a system better able to flex between medium-term support to chronically vulnerable populations and expanded short-term emergency support.

## **C. The right stuff? Effectiveness of the response**

### **1. Overview**

The overall response was perceived by those interviewed as a success in terms of delivery of outputs and activities, meeting targets and adhering to quality standards. Significant numbers of people were reached with cash transfers and other support to food security, support to access health care and clean water and treatment for malnutrition. Both third-party and agencies' own monitoring suggested that ambitious targets for scaling up support across the four key sectors were met and that people received timely support.

DFID focussed hard on value for money and efficiency. Having worked with the organisations that they were funding over the last four years, there was already a good understanding of DFID's approach to value for money and a degree of confidence on DFID's side that organisations were set up to provide effective and efficient assistance. DFID did push agencies to reduce management costs and had a series of meetings to push for efficiencies. Third-party monitors helped DFID to push for rationalisation in terms of the facilities being supported for health and nutrition, and they encouraged agencies to stand down support to units where demand was limited. DFID pushed agencies to share data within clusters to allow a more coordinated approach to areas of operation and to enable integrated packages of support to be provided. The DOCCs also played an important role in coordinating and rationalising assistance. A separate pipeline for nutrition supplies was set up by NGO consortia partly because it was seen as more efficient, but that raised questions about coordination and effectiveness.

Whilst the organisations that DFID funded appreciated the need to show VFM and be as efficient as possible, some concerns were raised of an over-focus on VFM at the expense of programming quality. Some felt for instance that the decision to set up a separate pipeline hindered a more coordinated response. As ever, getting the balance right between driving efficiencies and providing enough support to management to ensure strong oversight and programme quality is a difficult balancing act.

As noted above, a particular need is to focus on the issue of how effectively local organisations in sub-contracting chains are supported in terms of their management and overhead costs. A particular concern of local partners to INGOs and the UN was that overhead support costs are not passed down to enable the building of organisational capacity and professional systems and processes. In the context of commitments to localisation, DFID may need to increase support to management but work with INGO partners to ensure that a fair and significant percentage of overheads are passed down to local organisations being sub-contracted to deliver at field level.

## 2. Sectoral observations

It was not within the scope of this review to undertake a detailed analysis of each of the sectors that DFID funded or rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of responses. What follows are therefore analytical observations on the issues emerging from the interviews conducted and the documents reviewed.

### *Nutrition*

By end of October, the nutrition cluster had reached 921,065 out of 1,155,000 people. This is 87 per cent of the annual target. In October, nutrition cluster partners admitted 19,894, new beneficiaries. The cluster and partners also treated 393,235 beneficiaries. The nutrition cluster partners reached 446,391 beneficiaries with nutrition preventive services including the Blanket Supplementary Feeding Programme, Maternal and Child Health Nutrition and Infant and Young Child Feeding (OCHA 2017b). DFID funding was provided to UNICEF and to an NGO nutrition consortium, originally SNS+ but with management then transferred to BRCiS.

Malnutrition levels have risen since the beginning of the drought, with a steady increase in number of malnourished children and number of IDP sites with malnutrition rates surpassing the 'emergency' threshold of 15 per cent global acute malnutrition (GAM). At the national level, the median prevalence of global acute malnutrition has steadily increased from 12 per cent in 2014 to 17.4 per cent in late 2017. Severe malnutrition rates are showing a similar deteriorating trend since 2014 (Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017).

The nutrition sector did succeed in substantially scaling up treatment for both moderate and acute malnutrition. Whilst malnutrition has not been reduced from emergency thresholds nor has it peaked and mortality has been kept below emergency thresholds. DFID support was seen as crucial by organisations funded to scale up support to a greater number of centres, maintain supply chains and treat greater numbers of children. Whilst focussing on treatment was necessary, given the severity of the situation and high malnutrition levels, more could perhaps have been done to support action on the underlying causes of malnutrition relating to WASH, food security and health and to focus on moderate as well as severe acute malnutrition.

One of the widely perceived successes of the nutrition response was good cooperation and coordination between agencies enabling an integrated package of health, nutrition, WASH and food security support to be provided where possible. Mobile teams reached inaccessible areas. MESH monitoring highlighted issues with stock-outs and staff being absent at centres, although the agencies felt that issues existed with the accuracy of this data. DFID established a separate pipeline for RUTF through the NGO consortia, which divided opinion with some seeing it as needed and others arguing that it complicated coordination and increased risks of duplication. The decision to switch management of the consortium from SNS+ to BRCiS was seen by some as appropriate and by others as disrupting programming at a critical moment.

### *Food Security*

The food security sector successfully scaled up support quickly and by mid-2017 was reaching more than three million people with support through cash and vouchers. In contrast to 2011, cash and vouchers were widely accepted as appropriate modalities in the context of Somalia, and

organisations had established systems and processes for effectively and accountably getting cash to people.

MESH call centre monitoring found that ‘the first and foremost aspect of the DFID supported cash programme is that cash recipients are receiving the intended amount at the right time’ (MESH 2017). A GroundTruth (2017) survey found that respondents who receive cash support are overwhelmingly satisfied with it. MESH did identify early issues with WFP and UNICEF related to the SCOPE system, where recipients who reported not receiving the cash reached 17 per cent and recipients reported retailers charging higher prices or fees for using the SCOPE card. People called by MESH expressed a preference for mobile payments over the SCOPE voucher system. MESH monitoring also found that only 1.8 per cent of recipients reported having to pay tax, commission or other forms of payment from the cash received.

There were two main approaches to the delivery of cash. The NGO consortia that DFID funded provided cash to people through mobile phones, with people getting transfers on their phone and being able to redeem that in cash with mobile money agents. WFP registered people biometrically on the SCOPE system and provided people with SCOPE cards that could be used with selected shops and traders to buy a set range of food items.

Views varied on the effectiveness of these two approaches. WFP saw its system as providing an extra layer of accountability through the biometric registration system and ensuring that it met its food mandate because vouchers could only be spent on food items. WFP argued that an extensive network of retailers where the vouchers could be redeemed meant that people did not have to travel far to use the vouchers. Those using cash through mobile payments argued that this allowed more choice to recipients, was more efficient and that the extensive network of mobile agents meant people had to travel less to redeem vouchers. Importantly, mobile cash also enabled people to send cash to relatives in areas that were hard for agencies to access and to send support in situations where households had been split.

It was beyond the scope of this review to make judgements about these sets of arguments and which method was most effective. However, given the scale of support given through cash and vouchers this is an important area for further rigorous independent investigation. A study like the BCG study<sup>17</sup> in Lebanon is clearly called for.

Also controversial in the food security sector was how much cash to give people. FSNAU analysis based on calculations around a minimum expenditure basket (MEB) recommended different rates for different parts of the country. DFID saw problems with the way these calculations had been made and argued for a flat transfer value of \$60 per month per household on the grounds of simplicity and equity (avoiding tensions from different regions receiving different amounts). It insisted on the flat transfer value for the organisations it was funding whilst other donors stuck with different rates. It’s beyond the scope of this review to undertake a detailed analysis of the rights and wrongs of this issue. Some of those interviewed felt that DFID’s insistence on a flat rate undermined a more coordinated approach to cash-based responses. Other felt that, given issues with the MEB

---

<sup>17</sup>Frauke Uekermann , Felix Schuler , and Mohammed Taki, ‘Is Cash Better than Food Vouchers for Syrian Refugees?’ 18 May 2017, <https://www.bcg.com/en-gb/publications/2017/strategy-development-social-impact-is-cash-better-than-food-vouchers-syrian-refugees.aspx>.

calculations, DFID's position was an appropriate one. A coordinated approach to transfer values has now been agreed for 2018 between DFID and ECHO.

Other food security interventions primarily focused on livestock asset protection. This included support to water trucking and emergency treatment for livestock. Pestes des Petits Ruminants (PPR) and Sheep and Goat Pox (SGP) vaccinations, livestock treatment and livestock feed or fodder distribution including rangeland cubes were the main livestock asset protection activities. The on-going feed resources distribution – such as rangeland cubes, molasses and mineral blocks – by FAO will help to protect 'productive stocks' by addressing the prevailing feed shortage. The distribution of agricultural inputs, land preparation support with tractor hours account for about 20 per cent of beneficiaries reached in October (SHF 2017).

Some interviewees were concerned about an over-focus on areas categorised as IPC 3 and 4 and under-focus on preventing areas in IPC2 from worsening to 3 and 4. They saw a need to attend to acute food insecurity and chronic food insecurity in tandem. Whilst the decision to focus primarily on the worst hit areas was appropriate given the urgency, the scale of need and limited resources, how to better maintain support to areas that might still lapse into crisis does merit further consideration. ECHO, DFID and others are taking forward initiatives to develop more safety net style programming to tackle chronic food insecurity bringing in longer-term, more predictable development funding. Whilst clearly more difficult in the context of Somalia than in more stable contexts such as Ethiopia and northern Kenya, it remains a key way to improve support for chronically vulnerable communities.

The registration and successful delivery of resources to such a large number of people provided the potential for improving long term support to vulnerable people. WFP now has 4 million people biometrically registered on its SCOPE system and discussions are ongoing about how to enable databases between organisations to be more inter-operable whilst maintaining strong commitments to data security.

## **WASH**

Since the beginning of 2017, UNICEF and partners have provided close to 1.79 million people with temporary access to safe water. Activities under this heading have included chlorination, operation and maintenance, water trucking, vouchers and household water treatment. UNICEF is also supporting the rehabilitation of sustainable water sources, reaching 630,213 people. UNICEF has constructed or de-sludged latrines in IDP sites and cholera treatment facilities benefiting 298,744 people. To support safe hygiene practices, household water treatment and safe storage, UNICEF, through the regional supply hubs, has provided hygiene kits benefiting 1,274,076 people. In response to drought-related displacements, UNICEF is providing WASH services in multiple towns hosting new displacement, servicing close to 150,000 IDPs in Doolow, Luuq, Baidoa, Marka, Bossaso, Garowe, Burco, Gaalkacyo and Buuhoodle. Over 76,000 people were supported with sustained access to safe water through newly built and/or rehabilitated water points during the reporting period (UNICEF Situation Report 2017).

Some of those interviewed expressed concerns over the right balance between quantity and quality, because of the large number of NGOs in the response. Particular concerns were voiced over the quality of borehole construction. Given the centrality of water to livelihoods in Somalia, the

importance of understanding the inter-connections between water and livestock and the centrality of access to water to displacement, the WASH cluster seems to have been under-funded and technically strong WASH implementation capacity was lacking, as has been often seen in other emergencies.

### *Health*

The nutritional crisis caused by the drought and conflict was clearly joined by serious public health emergencies, in particular cholera (or AWD) and measles.<sup>18</sup> These scourges strike us as more easily predicted than the rains: The former is endemic to Somalia, seasonal and a particular problem facing IDP settlements. Regarding the latter, it is academic that displaced children from rural areas will bring measles. In Somalia, responsiveness to cholera and measles outbreaks must be planned with due consideration to the reality of an extremely weak governmental public health capacity and very poor epidemiological surveillance outside of a few major cities, Somaliland and Puntland. Better systems for tackling outbreaks need to be seen as both development and humanitarian priorities. Both long-term health systems investments and stronger emergency preparedness are needed.

This highly visible backdrop highlights aid agencies' lack of contingency planning as well as the long-term need to close gaps in capacity building for local organisations or the establish government health programming. Adding to this gap in responsive capacity to health emergencies was the absence of MSF,<sup>19</sup> uniformly described by interviewees as sorely missed in the 2017 emergency response.

The 2017 crisis fell at an unfortunate moment for the health sector in that long-term support to health care through JHNP (Joint Health and Nutrition Programme) had ended and new support through SHINE was not up and running. This lack of funding continuity was perceived as having negatively affected the health response. DFID did attempt to put in place bridging funding to cover some of the gaps but more could perhaps have been done. Whilst there were problems with the initial cholera response, credit should be given for the fact that the outbreak was bought under control within a reasonable period through the use of integrated teams and strengthening case management systems.

DFID did provide important support to WHO, which allowed it to strengthen the coordination, leadership and monitoring of the health sector, which was initially weak. It enabled the posting of a health cluster coordinator and the establishment of sub-national cluster coordination structures that proved important in the cholera response. A monitoring and information system also helped to track staffing, supplies, outcomes and demand across facilities.

Data/information and funding existed, but organisations struggled to convert these into action, forcing DFID to push agencies. The increased information provided by TPM, for example, should have allowed organisations to change the ways they acted, and this seems not to have met

---

<sup>18</sup> Such a statement necessarily ignores profound, ongoing public health issues facing Somali society, such as maternal and child health and tuberculosis. It also underplays the relationship between health and nutrition: At the time of this review, MSF was seeing increased numbers of malnutrition cases in Galcayo, which it attributed primarily to illnesses associated with the beginning of rains (e.g., diarrhoea, respiratory infections).

<sup>19</sup> Following its withdrawal in 2013, MSF has returned to Somalia, though on a much smaller scale, with only one operational project at the time of this review (in Galcayo).

expectations. The long-standing problem of not having the necessary funding to act gave rise to and masked slow decision-making structures and cultures within organisations.

Given the predictability of cholera and other disease outbreaks, better preparedness was clearly needed, particularly at sub-national levels, as were capacities to sustain a response beyond short term crises. For example, since the cholera outbreak has been controlled, none of the cholera treatment centres have been maintained. WHO and UNICEF are exploring the potential to provide longer-term support for centres of excellence for cholera treatment. Health sector coordination also needs to take place beyond short-term emergency response. Those interviewed noted a lack of information sharing beyond the immediate emergency and a lack of forums for sharing longer-term strategies for health sector support.

### **3. Was the response well-coordinated?**

DFID staff have played an active role in the HCT and have been active participants in the key clusters that DFID was funding. Those interviewed largely appreciated DFID's informed and strong positions in trying to drive forward timely action and ensure issues in the response were addressed. The influence of DFID was expressly viewed in terms of following through on the humanitarian reform objectives of acting early, effectively and in coordination with one another, and its Grand Bargain commitments, in particular to improve coordination and prioritisation of humanitarian responses.<sup>20</sup> As discussed elsewhere in this report, DFID made a strategic decision to prioritise four areas of intervention, and both its funding commitments and lobbying reinforced those four priorities. DFID also viewed the need to improve data sharing as part of this Grand Bargain effort to ensure a better collective response.

Efforts were made to move the locus of the coordination and leadership of the response from Nairobi to Mogadishu, which DFID strongly supported, notably the establishment of the Drought Operations Coordination Centres (DOCC). These were widely seen as having played an important and critical role in planning the response at a more local level and in tackling issues such as duplication risks and improving coverage and access. DFID was seen as having played an important and critical role in supporting their establishment and more generally in being pivotal in getting key operational agencies to be present in Mogadishu.

However, concerns arose on a number of specific issues:

- The transfer value debate – DFID insisted on a flat \$60 per month per household cash rate whilst the Cash Working Group (CWG) was recommending variable rates by region.
- The SNS consortium – DFID changed the management of the nutrition and health consortium in mid-2017, which some of those interviewed felt disrupted the nutrition response.
- The separate nutrition pipeline – DFID supported the SNS consortium to establish a separate pipeline for nutrition supplies, which some felt caused problems for coordination.

---

<sup>20</sup> See e.g., 'DFID Somalia Humanitarian Script', 1 March 2017.

The rights and wrongs of these debates are beyond the scope of this review but clearly the feeling of a number of interviewees was that DFID, at times, had been overly directive in ways that made collaborative coordination harder.

## **D. The right targets? Coverage and principled humanitarian action**

The Somali context posed two substantial threats to delivering assistance and protection in accordance with core humanitarian principles. The first is the challenge to reach those most in need. The second, undergirding the first in many locations, is the neutrality and independence to do so.

### **1. Impartiality, neutrality and independence: Were strong efforts made to reach people in need in hard-to-reach areas and to reach marginalised groups?**

The review team's qualified opinion is that the overall coverage of the drought response has been positive in light of what did not happen – morbidity and mortality remained largely within 'normal' bounds, and the much-feared famine did not occur. Coverage, nonetheless, marked an area of concern in a number of ways. To begin with, asking to what degree humanitarian relief reached people in need may be the wrong question. In many locations the more accurate question is likely the inverse: To what degree do people in need or people in crisis reach humanitarian aid? A number of respondents expressed their concern over the degree to which the aid response, given the above-discussed poor ability to expand to new geographic areas, acted as a pull factor, forcing people and their livestock to travel to locations where humanitarian assistance was available. Forced displacement in this crisis has been high, generating almost one million new IDPs, and to some degree the lack of coverage, especially in rural areas, acted as a driver.

This dynamic is of particular concern when seen against the backdrop of a rapidly urbanising Somali population, and the de-pastoralisation of Somali society. One donor representative characterised the displacement to aid hubs as 'a necessary evil' of the Somali context. We believe the 2017 response did a better job than that of 2011 of reaching areas of need (a) through a 'hub and spoke' strategy and (b) because of the greater accessibility of at least some urban areas in south and central Somalia. This situation helped to keep displacement relatively localised when compared to 2011. As discussed above, more could perhaps have been done, however, on the 'spokes' part of the strategy to avoid assistance being concentrated in urban areas and their immediate surroundings.

There are particular problems, and an unclear situation, regarding coverage in Al Shabaab controlled areas in south and central Somalia. We are concerned that, now five years after the 2011/12 crisis demonstrated the cost of poor access, only a small number of international agencies have managed to build direct negotiated access. There are no simple solutions. The situation does not mean agencies deliver no aid to Al Shabaab areas, more that much aid delivery there works through tenuous or 'don't ask, don't tell' chains of contract.

Access remains a stubbornly problematic issue in the context of counter-terrorism legislation, UK domestic politics and the different risk appetites of DFID, donors and implementing agencies. Some organisations seem more willing to accept a degree of risk and to explore creative options to maintaining some sort of access. DFID was generally perceived as being supportive of agencies willing to take a degree of risk and to programme creatively. Some agencies piloted approaches

using trusted community members able to take resources into hard-to-reach areas. Mobile clinics provided some access for health and nutrition and agencies claimed some success in working with small local organisations able to maintain some level of access.

The neutrality, perceived and actual, of the aid system warrants particular attention now, as US-led (Western) military counterterrorism efforts have increased substantially over the course of 2017. The review team did not probe this issue. As has been the case in other countries (e.g., Afghanistan, Iraq), the overt use of aid in support of such counterterrorism efforts raises concerns.

Since Western-backed efforts drove the Islamic Courts Union from much of Somalia in late 2006, the proximity of aid agencies to the TFG creates, at the very least, a perception of humanitarian relief being linked to TFG objectives. That adherence to the principles enables access is not to suggest that being principled guarantees it. Nonetheless, we are concerned that the neutrality essential for humanitarian aid to reach those most in need is being compromised when certain UN agencies appear unwilling to engage with Al Shabaab or when they hold fast to preconditions for access that effectively preclude access to Al Shabaab areas. At the same time, if Al Shabaab defines UN agencies and certain NGOs as military targets –owing to their participation in stabilisation efforts – and if attacks against aid workers continue to present a serious security risk, then we appear to have arrived at a stalemate, leaving access to large areas of rural southern Somalia worryingly tenuous or dependent on ‘unofficial’ or ‘informal’ relationships.

Private contractors interviewed for SAVE (2017) described often severe risks faced in transporting goods and the feeling that they were managing those risks with little support or back-up from the humanitarian organisations that were sub-contracting them. Similarly, Somali NGOs and Somali staff of international organisations were expected to take risks to negotiate access but described feeling ‘abandoned’ if things went wrong. The lack of risk management frameworks or discussion of red lines continues to be an issue. It is also noteworthy that the issues of localisation and impartiality seem to cut both ways, involving different sets of risk. DFID has maintained a distance from directly funding local organisations in part because of concerns that, captured by local clan/power dynamics, they will deliberately funnel aid to their own constituencies, excluding certain marginalised groups. This is undoubtedly a rational risk in the Somali context. But it is also true that local organisations offer a unique opportunity to fund groups that have a deep understanding of the context and who know exactly where and how to find these same marginalised groups.

Getting the balance right between giving agencies the leeway to explore opportunities for access without demanding too much detail, enabling the sharing of experience and being clear about what is and is not acceptable in risk terms is more of an art than a science. DFID played what was generally seen as a positive and supportive role. They supported some important analytical work by the Centre for Humanitarian Change (CHC), were willing to allow agencies to explore opportunities and innovative approaches for access and fears about counter-terrorism legislation do not seem to have been too much of a constraint. There is much to build on in taking forward promising approaches and continuing to find safe forums for the sharing of good practice around approaches to risk management. Innovative approaches need to continue to be supported and pilots taken to a larger scale.

An equally challenging issue related to coverage, and one well-targeted by DFID, is that of social exclusion and marginalisation. In the years since 2011/12, evidence has emerged that clan dynamics

and marginalisation played an important role in determining vulnerability, destitution, illness and, ultimately, mortality. DFID's response to the 2017 drought took specific steps to target assistance not solely on generic IPC classifications, but blended this data with knowledge about the impact of social exclusion and historical disempowerment. Laudably, DFID engaged with the Rift Valley Institute early in the year, convening a roundtable discussion on how the lessons of 2011 could be applied in 2017, and DFID contracted the CHC to provide an analysis of marginalisation.

The problem is complex, to say the least, and we note the example given by one health actor interviewed in regard to nutritional figures in Baidoa: Among certain IDP settlements, ample coverage existed on paper, yet a poorly connected clan/group was effectively cut off from aid, marginalised in plain sight. Solutions will remain difficult for crisis responses that are distant – aid not reaching certain marginalised groups in Somalia is a socio-political problem that at some stage will require political action. For an international community, it will remain a thorny issue, one that places a premium on having talented, known people on the ground who understand the context. It will also involve agencies taking risks, such as attempting to identify partners and staff coming from those marginalised communities, or, more generally, breaking free of cookie-cutter approaches.

MESH work and other research and impact evaluations suggest that socio-cultural and geographic divisions within Somalia result in some people receiving support from the international community, some receiving support from other social capital sources (clan, religious), some receiving support from abroad (remittances), some receiving support from a combination of all three, and some receiving no support whatsoever. What seems to be the case, is that in 'normal' periods there is some parity in key nutrition- or resilience-based outcomes between those receiving support from the international system and those receiving support from more indigenous social capital structures. Yet, there is a tipping point in a food security crisis when many indigenous systems break down and the international system assumes a bigger load. What remains unclear is whether people remain who are simply not privy to the networks of international or indigenous supports systems, who have suffered most and will continue to suffer in the current food security crisis. The international aid system still needs to do a better job of identifying people that have fallen out of these networks and are most vulnerable.

Hence, we reiterate the advice of experts and of agencies with a track record of having successfully maintained a presence in field locations. Invest in having good people on the ground, and build the capacity necessary to reach those most in need in Somalia. This means the capacity to employ humanitarian principles to negotiate access, location by location, and to have a detailed contextual understanding of the politics and social dynamics that may lead to marginalisation and exclusion. In this regard we commend the actions of the ICRC, expelled by Al Shabaab five years ago, and now able to maintain – with great effort – presence in a significant number of locations.

## **E. The right level of risk? Ensuring accountability**

### **1. DFID's investment in third-party monitoring**

DFID's monitoring of, and accountability in, the 2017 drought emergency needs to be seen as an extension of its pre-existing monitoring and accountability activities, developed as an integral part of the Humanitarian Programme. That innovative approach to the Somali context effectively traded multi-year funding commitments to agencies for enhanced monitoring on the part of DFID.

supported both the in-house monitoring and learning by its partners and invested in a TPM system through MESH, the latter tasked with ‘developing new and innovative ways to monitor implementation and outcomes, and building an evidence base to understand and ensure maximum impact for UK Aid.’<sup>21</sup>

Primarily, MESH TPM involved exploiting digital technology to track and aggregate input from field-based monitoring agent visits to project locations and a call centre that engaged in systematic phone monitoring of beneficiary views. As reported in an internal MESH report, its TPM struggled and evolved due to a number of factors, among others:

- lack of timely monitoring data from DFID partners, distrust/fear of TPM and scepticism over its value;
- partners viewing MESH TPM as a ‘free’ resource to fill gaps; and
- lack of a coherent definition of early, preventive action, meaning that there was no definitive trigger for how TPM activities might complement/provide deeper intelligence on early response activities.

DFID’s TPM system generated mixed opinions amongst those interviewed, with some seeing it clearly having added value and others questioning both the accuracy and the quality of the data and whether it duplicated agencies’ own efforts. More disturbingly, some IPs viewed DFID’s TPM as a threat to their continued funding, or as donor micromanagement and interference in their independence.<sup>22</sup> During the emergency response, MESH field monitors conducted visits to health and nutrition facilities, checking on the availability of supplies and the presence of staff. DFID’s TPM did highlight issues with stock-out and absenteeism that were fed back to agencies and that in places proved more reliable or sophisticated than agency in-house monitoring. It also revealed a gap between supplies reaching Mogadishu and supplies reaching individual health and nutrition centres. MESH also operated a call centre which monitored the cash programmes funded by DFID. This found that cash and vouchers largely reached its intended beneficiaries but did pick up issues at the start of the response with the SCOPE system run by WFP.

MESH also played a role in supporting partners’ own monitoring systems. For instance, MESH staff helped to build the monitoring architecture for BRCiS which they now run independently. UNICEF has adopted the Ona platform as the standard for East Africa, another outgrowth from MESH, as Ona is the primary technology partner for MESH.

Somalia remains an enormously challenging context in which to provide assistance *and* understand its effectiveness. Aid agencies have very limited access for international staff and severe constraints even for Somali staff and, after more than two decades of high-level international intervention, aid remains very embedded in the political economy. This highlights the issue of the objectives of TPM. In the course of its development, MESH TPM shifted deliberately from monitoring and information exchange with implementing partners (IPs) that aimed to improve programme effectiveness on an individualised basis, to monitoring and information exchange for the primary purpose of verification

---

<sup>21</sup> ‘Somalia Humanitarian Business Case 2013–2017.’ DFID, March 2014. Page 5.

<sup>22</sup> See, e.g., ‘Cross Cutting Evaluation of DFID’s Approach to Remote Management in Somalia and North-East Kenya: Evaluation Report’. Integrity Research & Consulting and Axiom Monitoring and Evaluation, January 2015.

for DFID. This approach has been criticised as steering TPM too far from programming impact and instead filtering data in the direction of political risks. In the end, MESH and partner M&E systems too often seem to have been developed in silos. We believe there is room for greater trust and for balancing the two objectives: for MESH to better engage with partners over the operational value of its monitoring and to be clearer about how more qualitative issues would be addressed.

The review team held a positive overall impression of DFID's TPM/accountability efforts. In conducting this review, a number of issues emerged.

1. *Greater openness among aid agencies*. Transparency International (TI) research (Majid and Harmer 2017) notes that agencies continue to find it difficult to accept negative information and that there are widespread cultures of defensiveness where learning is not sufficiently cultivated. The aid environment in Somalia has been described as one of 'fragmentation, competition and distrust', which contributes to an environment where honest conversations about operational challenges are difficult.

TI and SAVE both found confusion and concern over 'zero tolerance' policies, which inhibit transparency and discussion and learning over actual risks and how better to manage them.<sup>23</sup> Majid and Harmer (2017) find that a 'lie to me nicely' approach risks becoming the working solution between donors and partner agencies in Somalia.<sup>24</sup> Given these challenges, DFID could perhaps do more to ensure that future TPM does more to balance data-driven approaches with deep contextual knowledge.

Aid actors and affected people interviewed inside Somalia for SAVE (2017) research described some agencies as able to stand up to corrupt authorities and gatekeepers and others much less able to do so. It found good practice among both national and international agencies and in those implementing directly and through partners. SAVE (2017) work indicates a risk to some organisations that are overly reliant on individuals, who later emerge as internal gatekeepers.

There is no silver bullet solution. The review team believes DFID should take steps to tackle the unevenness of organisational performance. Funding is one tool for this – funding the best performing agencies more generously and reducing funding to those performing less well – but it is a blunt instrument. We suggest more collaborative approaches, with DFID encouraging operational agencies to share learning and good practice in terms of approaches to accountability and remote management (and prodding other donors in the same direction). The aim is to break down the culture of secrecy and a lack of sharing that inhibits learning between organisations, such as by encouraging more inter-agency dialogue on corruption and accountability challenges for the effectiveness of aid operations.

2. *Establishing the right level of monitoring*. Risks occur in two directions, the first though not directly encountered by the review team, is of the growing donor use of TPM-based approaches leading agencies to do less monitoring, analysis and learning themselves. DFID

---

<sup>23</sup> Moreover, risk aversion in this direction militates heavily against localisation.

<sup>24</sup> One particular concern is the belief, expressed by one involved interviewee, that false information perpetuates itself, where historical figures are known to be incorrect and they are yet unable to be corrected due to institutional interests.

needs to continue to provide adequate support for strong agency capacities and systems. The second is in the reverse direction: the widely observed risk of ever more layers of monitoring and a lack of coordination around the proliferating number of third-party monitors and call centres among donors and operational agencies. Beyond unnecessary multiplication and duplication, this also raises concerns in terms of the impact upon the communities receiving aid and risks of ‘monitoring fatigue’

By way of redress, the situation leaves a clear scope for rationalisation and donor coordination in approaches. Ideally, independent monitoring would look across the response in particular geographies, highlighting issues across donors and organisations rather than focussing on one organisation or one stream of funding. As a leader in this endeavour, DFID should play a role in supporting more coordinated approaches.

3. *The constraints of data on its own.* Strong monitoring also requires methodological diversity, strong analytical capacity and the ability to triangulate across multiple sources and approaches. There seems to be a risk with the current system of an overly technological and data-driven approach not sufficiently complemented by in-depth contextual knowledge and qualitative insight, leaving one MESH official with the impression that the information being compiled is under-exploited by the agencies that produce it. Even where capacity exists within the same organisation, siloes may demarcate monitoring, evaluation, research and learning.

Issues of cost limit what MESH can achieve within budget. As it stands, TPM is able to flag issues that arise from the data. It is not able to undertake the detailed analysis that will unpack the issues raised. DFID funding can be used to ensure that TPM is complemented by organisations’ own analytical capacities and by more in-depth evidence-based research, learning and evaluation. Absent such in-house capacity – *integrated* monitoring, evaluation, research and learning – operational agencies cannot gauge integrity, effectiveness and impartiality of their work.

4. *How do we understand the bias in TPM data?* Given concerns that the Somali population constitutes an aid-sophisticated community of beneficiaries, there is the potential for call centre questions to be answered strategically. Concerns were raised in both directions: that some beneficiaries would inaccurately deny the receipt of aid in order to prompt delivery, while others would inaccurately deny diversion/capture of aid in fear of it being cut off. Furthermore, TI research (Majid and Harmer 2017) noted the risk that TPMs can be co-opted into established patterns of corruption and collusion and the importance of having staff with deep knowledge of the context. This points to a need for TPMs to be evaluated in order to determine their accuracy, and to better understand how and in what direction bias enters the responses.
5. *What happens to the data?* Data governance and security remains unclear. MESH staff do not see the information they gather as holding a particular strategic (military or political) value, but confirm that it could be useful to those purposes if paired with other information.

This raises the issue of how the information is governed and the security of the data.<sup>25</sup> As yet DFID has not established a policy to govern the sharing of data, for instance to cluster leads or other humanitarian actors.

The Somalia crisis response is being managed and driven by a relatively limited set of international donor and humanitarian agencies, a group heavily compromised in terms of its level of understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics or the crisis situation on the ground. Monitoring by agencies (in-house or TPM) and/or TPM by donors is thus all the more necessary as well as all the more challenging in terms of getting it right. MESH TPM has already proven itself effective in improving the humanitarian action of operational agencies and building the confidence of DFID that aid is reaching its destination. That said, the review team believes there is no substitute for presence and proximity and sees an enhanced need for building both approaches into monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

## **2. Was communication with and the participation of disaster-affected people central to the response?**

The 2016 and 2015 annual reviews of the Humanitarian Programme both highlighted accountability to affected populations as an area where improvements could be made. The 2016 review calls for DFID support for more effective feedback loops and points to uneven approach and a reliance on little used hotlines. This appears to continue to be an area of relative weakness.

The focus on monitoring and substantial investments in third-party monitoring all remain primarily extractive – getting information from people about what they have received. A commensurate investment does not yet seem to have been made in more two-way communication and participation, with disaster-affected populations able to express a view and influence decisions across the programme cycle. Efforts to

### **New lease for an old technology**

The review team can only encourage further innovative initiatives to overcome access barriers in the Somali context. The use of radio seems promising in this regard, and we note DFID's recent engagement with BBC Media Action (there is also Radio Ergo, an offshoot of IRIN), as radio now offers both great reach into Somalia and two-way engagement via a number of paths.

develop stronger collective feedback mechanisms have been hampered by a lack of resources and capacities (in contrast to other emergencies where more has been invested), a business-as-usual mentality and an organisational reluctance to share data.

Improving accountability to and communication with disaster-affected people in line with commitments to participation in the Grand Bargain should be a priority for future responses. In a context with severe insecurity and access challenges and where much management is remote, that is clearly hard but creative approaches to making communication more genuinely two-way should be explored.

<sup>25</sup> See e.g., Ben Parker, 'Security Lapses at Aid Agency Leave Beneficiary Data at Risk', IRIN News, 27 November 2017, <http://www.irinnews.org/investigations/2017/11/27/security-lapses-aid-agency-leave-beneficiary-data-risk>.

## **F. The right lessons? Looking forward to 2018**

The threat of famine and serious levels of acute humanitarian need look set to persist into 2018. Maintaining a strong and effective humanitarian response in the face of possibly declining overall levels of funding will be a key challenge. DFID again needs to lead the way in generously funding critical humanitarian needs and encouraging other donors to do the same.

There is also a need to simultaneously invest in recovery and continuing support to development. ICRC, for instance, is starting to scale down some of its relief and is moving to early recovery. Several interviewees mentioned the need for a bridging or early recovery fund. The next phase of DFID's multi-year humanitarian funding should be important in this respect and it is being designed with a greater degree of flexibility to allow the scaling up of emergency response, which is welcome. Critical reflection will be needed on the strengths and weaknesses of the pre-2017 resilience programming and the extent to which it did manage to strengthen peoples' ability to weather drought in 2017.

## IV. Conclusions

### A. Key findings, lessons learned and conclusions

This review sees DFID's response to the drought in Somalia as timely, decisive and effective. We also believe that DFID responded to two droughts, because the spectre of the Somali and international communities late response to the 2011/12 drought clearly drove both resolve and risk appetites in 2017.

The overall success of the response is in itself a lesson to be learned, demonstrating in particular the possibility of averting catastrophic suffering and mortality if global leadership moves timely and urgently to ensure an appropriate response. DFID deserves great praise for its resolve and effort, and is recognised as having galvanised an effective, better-coordinated emergency response to the drought. This overall positive conclusion does not mean that the response could not be improved. Findings and recommendations for future responses across the six main themes are discussed below.

#### **Theme 1: The right timing? Responding to needs at a time of crisis**

##### *Key findings*

DFID has earned praise for its swift, decisive and substantial response to the onset of drought, effectively launching an international response that gathered other key donors and implementing agencies together in a comprehensive drought-relief effort. This limited review did not examine the parallel efforts of the Somali authorities, civil society, diaspora communities or private sector.

Focused on four priority areas, the response leveraged existing DFID partners to move swiftly, but did not take sufficient advantage of the potential for moving earlier, in the second half of 2016, to scale up existing programming (e.g., resilience, economic security, food security) in an effort to mitigate the development of the crisis. Even as the crisis unfolded in 2017, we believe there was (and remains) space to work more proactively across inter-disciplinary teams, to ensure that relief efforts link with efforts across the spectrum of resilience, stabilisation and development.

DFID Somalia was unusually well placed to scale-up its response given its investment in multi-year humanitarian and resilience funding for key partners. Given this, organisations should have been more ready to mount a large-scale emergency response to a predictable drought crisis. DFID and its partners need to review preparedness and contingency plans to shift from focussed resilience programming to larger scale emergency programming. Beyond routine matters such as prepositioning emergency stock and rosters of potential, qualified human resources, a need exists for a realistic mapping of the geographic access of implementing agencies, followed by plans/action to enable expansion in response to crisis.

##### *Recommendations*

**There was potential for more consequential early actions in 2016 and robust coordinated preparedness and contingency planning for a large-scale response.**

1. Scope existed for greater early action by agencies in mid/late 2016 to begin scaling up cash and expanding WASH and livestock programming.
2. There is a need for better preparedness on the part of aid agencies to expand their geographic scope beyond existing areas of operation and for DFID support to enable that to happen.
3. Both donors and aid agencies should take greater advantage of the existence of multi-year financing to enable flexible programming, preparedness and early action, with the aim of building stronger links to resilience and development programming.
4. To avoid an over-reliance upon quantitative information, DFID action should be based on an appropriate balance of evidence, 'boots on the ground' perspectives and forward-looking analysis.
5. DFID should engage with political decision-makers in a long-term effort to build the best-practice of early/timely surge based on the analytical probability of saving lives rather than on factual triggers or the promise of averting unprecedented calamity.

## **Theme 2: The right approach? Engaging the right partners**

### *Key findings*

DFID's rationale for electing to work through its existing partners marks a major element of its successful drought response. It enabled DFID to quickly fund organisations it trusted, with established track records and that had been through due diligence processes. The use of the IRF as the main financing mechanism for the response enabled rapid scale-up and efficient contracting. However, a selection limited to existing partners risks closing off options for innovation and taking advantage of additional capacities. Given these drawbacks, future responses should consider complementary financing options for at least some portion of the response, to allow an element of competition and space for new entrants.

More specifically, the review finds that more effort should have been made, perhaps through alternative financing mechanisms, to engage and directly fund Somali organisations. This localisation aims not only to fulfil Grand Bargain commitments, but to strengthen the response by engaging with actors who have superior knowledge of the context, needs of people and greater presence. There is also long-term value in building both the delivery *and* leadership/ownership capacity of Somali local and national organisations.

To accomplish such direct engagement, DFID will have to take risks, and in particular risks of poor quality implementation and corruption/diversion; but we must also insist that subcontracting through international agencies does little to avoid these risks. Put differently, DFID must unpack the pervasive distrust of local organisations within the international system and engage with a more diverse set of actors.

The lack of direct funding to Somali organisations strikes us as both a cause and product of DFID's low-level incorporation of Somali voices (community, government, humanitarian/NGO) into its operations or decision-making. Such knowledge would seem pre-eminently necessary to effective programming given security (and other) constraints on international presence. More could also be done by DFID to support principled engagement with government and local authorities at national, regional and local levels to encourage and support them to fulfil their responsibilities to assist and protect their own citizens.

### *Recommendations*

**To ensure effective response/coverage, DFID must establish a concrete plan of action to allocate emergency relief to a wider set of actors. This includes methods to take forward commitments to better supporting local and national actors through improved and more direct engagement.**

6. Engagement with the government of Somalia should be stronger to encourage and support it to fulfil its responsibilities to assist and protect its own citizens in times of crisis.
7. Greater efforts should be made to ensure Somali knowledge and expertise informs strategy, design and planning at senior levels, in Nairobi as well as in the field.
8. DFID should explore the potential for alternative financing mechanisms to enable innovation and avoid a closed shop.
9. Both DFID and international aid agencies need to explicitly tackle the barriers to better support to national and local actors. These include rules and regulations inconsistent with Grand Bargain commitments and perception biases in assessing risks.

### **Theme 3: The right stuff? Effectiveness of the response**

#### *Key findings*

Whilst our review found that the prioritisation of four key sectors and focus on immediate life-saving assistance was appropriate given the scale and severity of the crisis, room remains to reflect on the relative balance of investment across the four sectors, what was left out in prioritising those four sectors and the quality and effectiveness of the sectoral responses. Given the centrality of water and access to water to both livelihoods and health, several of those interviewed argued for the WASH sector to be given greater priority. This is a technical area where NGO capacity globally has been weak, a fact compounded in Somalia by the limited presence of key WASH NGOs. A more in-depth review of the WASH response and what more could have been done would be useful.

The health sector response was also highlighted by a number of people as a weakness, with the humanitarian response falling at a difficult moment between cycles of longer-term funding for health support. DFID could perhaps have done more to ensure continuity between funding cycles to avoid gaps at a critical moment. Similar issues in terms of the continuity of support and gaps arising from the change of support from one consortium to another arose in the nutrition sector. Whilst DFID support was critical in eventually ensuring stronger coordination, leadership and information management in tackling the cholera outbreak, we believe stronger systems should have been in place earlier.

The fact that the system as a whole was able to scale up support with cash and vouchers to more than 3 million people by mid-2017 shows impressive progress since 2011. DFID is supporting two main approaches – a voucher system being implemented by WFP and cash through mobile payments, implemented largely by NGOs. If one of these approaches is more effective and efficient, that could have important implications for the numbers of people that can be reached and the impact of the assistance. A rigorous review is urgently needed to test the relative merits of the two approaches. Looking at food security in the big picture, there is a need to take forward initiatives to develop more safety net style programming to tackle chronic food insecurity bringing in longer-term, more predictable development funding.

### *Recommendations*

**The four priority response areas identified by DFID – food security, health, nutrition and WASH – provided an adequate basis for the crisis response, with notable issues of reactivity and/or quality affecting many programmes.**

10. Claims being made about the pros and cons of cash versus voucher approaches in relation to efficiency, effectiveness and accountability need to be rigorously reviewed.
11. Further action is needed to tackle weaknesses and capacities in the WASH and health sectors and the systems in place to tackle outbreaks (including cholera).

### **Theme 4: The Right targets? Coverage and principled humanitarian action**

#### *Key findings*

Somalia has long presented numerous challenges to delivering aid on an impartial basis, given a restricted security environment that often blocks direct management of resources and a demonstrated risk of aid being captured to serve social, political or military interests. On top of that, Somalia is a so-called ‘Global War on Terror’ context, where armed groups deeply distrust and will target humanitarian aid linked to pro-government stabilisation efforts, and where Western agencies must strain to avoid any perception of aid falling into the hands of designated terrorist groups. The current US/Western escalation of military activities threatens to stoke these tensions further.

The lack of geographic flexibility – the time/investment necessary to access new areas – requires agencies to develop geographic reach prior to the onset of crisis. In the 2017 response, the lack of access to populations produced an approach based on aid hubs, often forcing marginalised groups (rural pastoralists) to displace in search of assistance, thus leaving them further marginalised. This dynamic underpins the need for innovative measures to reach, communicate with and ensure the participation of marginalised groups.

With a few exceptions, Western agencies seem not to practice negotiating access directly with armed groups, some even deliberately rule out any contact. This leads to access being dependent upon ‘informal’ channels or chains of sub-contracting.

#### *Recommendations*

**Greater attention to principled humanitarian action can contribute to ensuring that relief reaches those most in need, with a particular focus on reaching marginalised groups and maintaining adequate coverage in areas controlled by gatekeepers or those not under government control.**

12. Support should be continued to innovative measures to enable access to hard-to-reach areas.
13. Continued support is needed for measures to better ensure that marginalised and discriminated-against groups are not excluded from assistance.
14. Agencies (and DFID) should undertake stronger political, economic and social analyses to ensure that humanitarian action is politically savvy and conflict sensitive.
15. Reflection is needed on the implications of the growing urbanisation of the Somali population and the aid response’s contribution to it. In particular consideration is required for how international aid supports livelihoods should these IDPs not return to rural areas.

## Theme 5: Accountability

### *Key findings*

An extensive TPM facility, managed by TRANSTEC/MESH, formed an integral component of DFID's multi-year Humanitarian Programme (2013–17). TPM remained in place as DFID's partners shifted to the 2017 drought response. TPM proved capable of providing a reliable feedback loop, free from the institutional interests of the implementing aid agency, that has contributed to ensuring aid is delivered effectively and to the right parties. In Somalia, a context with a history of capturing and diverting aid from its intended beneficiaries, TPM helps to mitigate the substantial distance between international agencies, decision-makers and the front line. In the 2017 response, TPM proved effective in signalling stock-outs or absenteeism and identified early problems with cash transfers in WFP's use of SCOPE cards.

There needs to be a more thorough evaluation of TPM within the context of the drought crisis response, with a focus on three issues. The first is to understand better its reliability and the biases in its application, for example the potential bias in call centre data due to strategic responses or falsification of other monitoring efforts. The second is to develop a strategy for ensuring that the enhanced use of TPM in humanitarian response can be carried out in a coordinated fashion across a given crisis. Of particular importance is the need to develop TPM strategies that bridge its different objectives – programme feedback, verification, institutional learning and community engagement.

The third issue is to situate the data produced by TPM within a larger analysis, one that allows for triangulation between multiple sources of information. As important as the data might prove, it cannot be justified as a replacement for 'boots on the ground'. Nor can monitoring itself contribute to improved humanitarian action if it is not accompanied by and integrated into investments in analysis and evaluation – TPM reveals what is happening, thus placing a burden on aid agencies to better understand the attendant consequences and underlying causes.

### *Recommendations*

**Major investments in agencies' own monitoring systems and third-party monitoring are strengthening accountability and risk management but more needs to be done to improve quality and to coordinate approaches.**

16. Further improvements in support to monitoring carried out by partners and independent third-parties can be made, with more triangulation, a greater diversity of methodological approaches and an integration of monitoring into evaluation, research and learning.
17. More support should be given to investments in robust mechanisms to minimise corruption risks, understand internal biases and develop strong risk-management systems.
18. DFID should drive greater coordination of monitoring approaches to avoid a proliferation of third-party monitors and call centres across donors and agencies.
19. More support is needed for measures to communicate with and enable the participation of disaster-affected people, throughout project cycles.

## Theme 6: The right lessons? Looking forward to 2018

### *Key findings*

Humanitarian needs will persist into 2018. As a result, DFID and other donors will need to maintain high levels of funding to sustain an effective humanitarian response. Doing this in the context of possible donor fatigue will be a key challenge and one where DFID again needs to exercise its leadership. DFID funding should also allow agencies to seize opportunities to support recovery and (early) development where that becomes possible. Encouraging agencies to take greater advantage of the flexibility and adaptability offered by the next round of multi-year funding should be part of DFID's strategy, as should better integration of DFID's humanitarian, economic and social development and governance teams.

### *Recommendations*

**In looking forward to 2018, DFID funding should enable flexibility in response to an emerging situation that holds elements of crisis and early recovery and to the need to feed into longer-term programming.**

20. DFID leadership will be needed to ensure that support to humanitarian action continues into 2018 where needed.
21. Continued efforts should be made to forge links between humanitarian and development work within DFID and the agencies it funds whilst maintaining humanitarian principles.

## **B. Food for thought: Are we doing the right things?**

*Are we doing the right thing?* Somalia tests the international aid system's answer to that question in a number of ways. First, the answer depends on the problem analysis. Given climate change, one can question whether the current drought may in fact reflect a permanent evolution in the climate and environment. Such a problem analysis would yield an entirely different set of programme objectives, especially in the long term. The need would be to think about how to sustain the population in the face of chronic climate shocks (alongside ongoing conflict and insecurity) and to transition to a different way of life.

Second, reflection on the successes and failures of resilience programming and the overall approach and strategy is needed. Is resilience the right tool in a context with a propensity towards major shocks? Do programmes essentially erect 10-foot levees along a river that regularly crests at 20 feet? Put differently, can we expect even effective resilience programming to enable people to withstand Somali shocks and long-term changes from climate change? And if not, are we transparent about these limitations and focussed on what needs to be done to cover the gap so that communities develop sufficient resilience?

Third, how do we acknowledge the monumental nature of the humanitarian effort while simultaneously recognising the insufficiency of the humanitarian approach? As McDowell and McDowell pointed out, it takes an entire society to respond to drought.<sup>26</sup> So even a response we judge very positively in its reactivity and impact cannot serve as a model for future drought response in Somalia. It is a least-worst model, certainly in need of improvement – moving beyond rhetoric to better link international humanitarian action to Somali NGOs, government, private sector and diaspora efforts – and even more in need of transformation to a response of Somali society itself.

---

<sup>26</sup> See forthcoming report, McDowell and McDowell, 'Briefing Paper: Early Action', Jilaal and Haggaa 2017.

Finally, questioning the rightness of DFID's response points to the fundamental flaw in scrutinising Somalia through an international humanitarian lens; it is a hammer that sees a world of nails. The international humanitarian community views Somalia as it does the likes of CAR or South Sudan: as a profoundly tragic context or, more bluntly, one of the worst places on Earth. Several interviewees noted, however, the contrast between those perceptions of the international aid community and Somalis, or the 'mood' of the people in Mogadishu. As one DFID team member described, Somalis seem 'optimistic'. Further reinforcement comes from Ground Truth's recently published survey results, showing a full 76 percent of Somali respondents believe that life is 'mostly' or 'very much' improving and that they feel safe.<sup>27</sup>

Well beyond the scope of this review, we note the results of the recently released World Happiness Report.<sup>28</sup> This scientific study ranks Somalia in 5th place in Africa, far above South Sudan (37th) or CAR (44th, and dead last) and with a higher 'daily happiness' rating than either the UK or USA. This suggests the possibility to look beyond discussions about the funding and structure of international aid and engage directly with the Somali narrative on Somalia. In other words, to move beyond the reduction of Somalia to conflict, corruption, failure and crisis in order to connect with the optimism felt by so many of its people, exploring with them more creative options for international action in times of crisis.

---

<sup>27</sup>See Ground Truth (2017).

<sup>28</sup>See National Geographic, November 2017, or Valerie Møller, Benjamin Roberts, Habib Tiliouine, and Jay Loschky, 'Waiting for Happiness in Africa', in 'World Happiness Report 2017' by John Helliwell, Richard Layard and Jeffrey Sachs, United Nations, 2017, [http://worldhappiness.report/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/03/HR17-Ch4\\_w-oAppendix.pdf](http://worldhappiness.report/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/03/HR17-Ch4_w-oAppendix.pdf).

## References

- Ashdown, P. (2011) *Humanitarian Emergency Response Review*
- AWSD (2017) *Aid worker security report 2017*, Humanitarian Outcomes
- Byrld, E., et al. (2017) *Engaging the Gatekeepers: Using Informal Governance Resources in Mogadishu*, Somalia Accountability Programme, TANA
- Caniglia, D., and Baran, S. (2017) *Added Value of Resilience Programming to the ongoing 2017 Drought Response*, BRCIS, Building Resilient Communities in Somalia
- DFID (2016) *Annual Review 2016: 2013–2017 DFID Somalia Multi-Year Humanitarian Programme (MYHP)*
- DFID (2017) *Saving lives, building resilience, reforming the system: the UK Government's Humanitarian Reform Policy*
- DFID (2017) *Somalia Drought Response 2017 Topical Brief Water*, Updated 14 March 2017
- DFID (2017) *Somalia Drought –Core Brief*
- DFID (2017) *Somalia Drought Response 2017 Topical Brief Inclusion*, 6 April 2017
- DFID (2017) *Somalia Drought Response 2017 Topical Brief Displacement*
- DFID (2017) *Somalia Drought Response 2017 Topical Brief Cash*, 1 April 2017
- DFID (2017) *Note on Social Identity and Networks in Somalia*
- DFID (2017) *Somalia Drought Response 2017 Topical Brief Food Security and Livelihoods*, 6 April 2017
- GroundTruth (2017) *Field Survey and Analysis: Survey of Affected People and Field Staff in Somalia*, OECD
- IMC Worldwide (2017) *Rapid Performance Review of the DFID MESH Programme*
- LaGuardia, D., et al. (2015) *A Catalyst for Change and Results? DFID's Approach to the 2013–2017 Humanitarian Programme in Somalia*, Final Report, TRANSTEC
- LaGuardia, D., and Poole, L. (2016) *Review: DFID's Internal Risk Facility: Changing the Humanitarian Financing Landscape for Protracted Crises?* Final Report, TRANSTEC
- Majid, N. and Harmer, A. (2017) *Collective resolution to enhance accountability and transparency in emergencies: southern Somalia report*, Transparency International
- Majid, N., et al (2016) *Narratives of Famine, Somalia 2011*, Feinstein International Center
- McDowell, S., and McDowell, C. (2017) *Briefing Paper, Early Action, Jilaal & Haggaa 2017*, A brief prepared by the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre for the Somalia Government, Donors and Implementing Agencies pioneering early action
- MESH (2017) *Analysis: DFID Supported Cash Response*, DFID Somalia Humanitarian Programme: Emergency Response
- MESH (2017b) *Analysis: Cash Recipient Expenditure Patterns*, DFID Somalia Humanitarian Programme: Emergency Response
- OCHA (2017a) *Humanitarian Bulletin Somalia, 1–30 November 2017*
- OCHA (2017) *Using Cash Based Interventions to Prevent Famine in Somalia*
- Oxfam (2017) *From Early Warning to Action in Somalia: What Can We Learn to Support Early Action to Mitigate Humanitarian Crises*
- OCHA (2017) *Humanitarian Needs Overview*
- OCHA (2017b) *Somalia Humanitarian Dashboard – October 2017*
- Poole, L. (2017) *Scoping Study Somalia*, NEAR Network

SAVE (2017) *Somalia Background Brief: Enabling Access and Quality Aid in Insecure Environments, Secure Access in Volatile Environments, Humanitarian Outcomes*

SHF (2017) *Somalia Humanitarian Fund Dashboard*

SNS (2017) Learning Brief 5, *The Strengthening Review of the SNS Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) System, Nutrition Security in South Central Somalia (SNS) Consortium*

UN (2017) *Humanitarian Response Plan Revision, Somalia, May 2017*

UNICEF (2017) *UNICEF Somalia Concept Note: Pre Famine Response*

UNICEF (2017) *Situation Report*

USAID (2017) *Horn of Africa Complex Emergency, Fact Sheet #11*

WFP (2017) *WFP Somalia – Drought Emergency Response Plan, February 2017*

## People Interviewed

1. Samson Agbo, UNICEF Chief of Health
2. Mark Agoya, DFID
3. Degan Ali, ADESO
4. Alexandre Farine, ICRC Coordinator for Water and Habitat
5. Amila Suriyanthne, ICRC ECOSEC Deputy Coordinator
6. Carmen Sofia Carrillo Jaimies, ICRC Medical Coordinator for Somalia
7. Mahboob Ahmed Bajwa, UNICEF
8. Sarah Baran, NRC
9. Mark Bradbury, Director, Rift Valley Institute
10. Laurent Bukera, WFP
11. Ailish Byrne IYCF/BCC Adviser, SNS
12. Dustin Caniglia, Concern
13. Gautam Chatterjee, MSF Country Representative, Somalia
14. Raheel Nazir Chaudhary, Country Director, CARE International, Somalia
15. Jordi Raich Curco, ICRC
16. Peter De Clerk, UN
17. Delphine Dechaux, WFP Deputy Head of Programme
18. Samson Desie, Nutrition Cluster Coordinator, UNICEF
19. Evaline Diang'a, MESH Project
20. Niamh Dobson, Second Secretary (Somalia/Humanitarian) Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
21. Jens-Peter Dyrbak, DFID
22. Rose Simone Foran, CWC Coordinator, OCHA
23. Seb Fouquet, DFID
24. Job Gichuki, SNS Researcher
25. Tsedeye Girma, Emergency Manager, UNICEF Somalia
26. Emily Gish, OFDA
27. Kate Greany, DFID
28. Peter Hailey, Centre for Humanitarian Change
29. Hassan Haji, MESH
30. John Haskew, WHO
31. James Hedges, Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist, Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation Section, UNICEF
32. Johan Heffinck, ECHO
33. Naema Hirad, Nutrition Office, Deputy Nutrition Cluster, World Food Programme
34. Vincent Hoedt, Deputy Director for Operations, MSF
35. Charles Hopkins, Food Security Cluster Coordinator
36. Liljana Joceva, WFP
37. Milhia Kader, DFID Shine
38. Amy Kesterton, DFID
39. Nancy Kiario, DFID

40. Matija Kovac, OCHA
41. Dorian LaGuardia, MESH
42. Steven Lauwerier, Representative, UNICEF Somalia
43. Quentin LeGallo, ECHO
44. Ezatulla Majeed, Chief of Nutrition, UNICEF
45. Amin Malik, FAO
46. Micol Martini, DFID
47. Stephen McDowell, Consultant
48. Rita Maingi, OCHA Regional Office, Community Engagement and Communication Specialist
49. Mahesh Mishra, DFID
50. Mohamed Osman Mahamoud, SDRI
51. Daniel Molla, FSNAU Head
52. Shibru Mulugeta, Food Security Cluster Coordinator
53. Angela W. Muriithi, BBC Media Action
54. Tom Newby, CARE
55. Frederic Patigny, WASH Cluster Coordinator Somalia
56. Abdi RizakNur, FEWSNET
57. Charles Obayi, Building Resilient Communities In Somalia(BRCiS)Project, Coordinator,  
Norwegian Refugee Council for South and Central Somalia
58. Sylvia Odera, CWW Nutrition and Health Coordinator
59. Paul O'Hagan, DFID
60. Alessandro Pisani, DFID
61. Jordi Raich, ICRC Head of Delegation
62. Deqa Saleh, ADESO
63. Kaitlyn Scott, NRC
64. Abdurahman Sharif, Director, Somalia NGO Consortium
65. Anne Shaw, Food for Peace
66. Barnaba Shokole, DFID
67. Carmen Sofia, ICRC
68. Mohamed Takoy, Deputy Country Director, ADESO
69. Leo Thomas, Social Development Adviser, DFID
70. SofieGarde Thomle, OCHA
71. Rudi Van Aaken, FAO
72. Nynne Warring, WFP
73. David Womble, Consultant with UNISOM

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACF	Action Contre la Faim
AWD	acute watery diarrhoea
BRCiS	Building Resilient Communities in Somalia
CAR	Central African Republic
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CHC	Centre for Humanitarian Change
CSI	Coping Strategy Index
CWG	Cash Working Group
DFID	Department for International Development
DOCCs	Drought Operational Coordination Centres
DRR	disaster risk reduction
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Aid Office
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FCS	food consumption score
FEWSNET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
FFP	Food for Peace
FSNAU	Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit
GAM	global acute malnutrition
HADMA	Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management Agency
HCT	humanitarian country team
HDDS	household dietary diversity score
HERR	Humanitarian Emergency Response Review
ICAI	Independent Commission for Aid Impact
IDP	internally displaced person
INGO	international non-governmental organisation
IPC	integrated phase classification
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IRF	Internal Risk Facility
JHNP	Joint Health and Nutrition Programme
M & E	monitoring and evaluation
MEB	minimum expenditure basket
MESH	Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) project for the Somalia Humanitarian Programme
MSF	Médecins sans Frontières
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PPR	Pestes des Petits Ruminants
RUTF	ready-to-use therapeutic food
SGP	sheep and goat pox
SHF	Somalia Humanitarian Fund
SHINE	Somali Health and Nutrition Programme

SNS	Strengthening Nutrition Security in South Central Somalia
SWALIM	Somalia Water and Land Information Management
TFG	Transitional Federal Government
TI	Transparency International
TPM	third-party monitoring
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VFM	value for money
WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation