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INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT IN SOMALIA

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Front Cover Photograph: A man rests on a bag of rice distributed by Qatar Charity for internally displaced people affected by flooding and clan conflict in Jowhar, Somalia. (UN Photo, Tobin Jones, November 12, 2013).

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ACRONYMS

AMISOM	African Union Mission to Somalia
AU	African Union
CHF	Consolidated Humanitarian Fund
DMA	Disaster Management Agency
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
FEWS NET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
FGS	The new Federal Government of Somalia
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDPs	Internally displaced persons
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
RMU	UN's Risk Management Unit
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOSAT	United Nations Institute for Training and Research Operational Satellite Applications Programme
UNSOM	United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia
USCR	U.S. Committee for Refugees
WASH	Water Sanitation Hygiene
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization

INTRODUCTION

Somalia has the seventh-largest internally displaced population in the world. It is the scene of one of the world's longest continuous humanitarian assistance operations, dating back to the late-1980s.

Many defining characteristics of the international humanitarian response in Somalia – extremely dangerous conditions, deliberate targeting of aid workers, terrorist threats, protracted population displacement mixed with new rounds of population upheavals, Balkanization of government authority, failed or problematic peacekeeping operations, remote programming – have unfortunately become more common in humanitarian operations around the world by 2014. In an environment like Somalia that is detrimental to effective humanitarian action, it is relatively easy to document disappointing results, but rather more difficult to decipher what should be done better and more effectively in the face of overwhelming odds.

This analysis is based on 18 days in the region from September 14 to October 1, 2014 including time in Mogadishu, Somaliland (Hargeisa) and Nairobi, Kenya where most humanitarian organizations base their Somalia operations. Security restrictions – a daily fact of life and death for humanitarian workers in most of Somalia – forced late cancellation of travel plans to two other locations in the country. The analyst met with 115 individuals working for UN humanitarian and human rights organizations, international NGOs, local NGOs, Somali government officials, donor government representatives and the African Union peacekeeping operation. The analyst met with internally displaced persons, although far too few due to security restrictions.

Displacement Situation Ten Years Ago

In 2004 when Brookings published its landmark study on the serious protection gaps confronting the world's internally displaced persons, population displacement in Somalia was already pervasive, protracted and supremely challenging to the international community's existing system of humanitarian response.¹ A modern-day review of the humanitarian conditions that prevailed in Somalia ten years ago is a disturbing exercise: at first glance, it appears that little has changed for the better. For today's reader, a summary of the Somali humanitarian landscape as it existed in 2004 tends to provoke an unsettling sense of traveling backward in time to the present day.

By 2004, 16 years of armed conflict had devastated Somalia and its people. Rebel forces had overthrown the authoritarian regime of President Siad Barre in 1991, resulting in a collapse of the state and a power vacuum that fueled prolonged struggles among rival clans and well-armed warlords. Serious drought aggravated local tensions and worsened the humanitarian emergency. International peacekeeping efforts largely failed.

By 2004, after a 13-year absence of functioning national governance, an estimated 400,000 Somalis had fled their homes to other parts of Somalia. Another 300,000 were living as refugees outside the country – most of them just across the border in Kenya's crowded Dadaab refugee camps that were beginning a second decade of operation. Humanitarian organizations struggling with limited mobility inside Somalia estimated in 2004 that about a quarter-million IDPs had flocked to some 200 sites in the capital, Mogadishu, while about 70,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) had congregated in the country's autonomous Puntland region and 40,000 IDPs had gathered in Somaliland, which considered itself politically independent from the rest of the country. Tens of thousands of Somalis were believed to be displaced in central and southern zones of the country as armed clan militia clashed amid the worst drought in three decades.²

An estimated 1.3 million Somalis required food assistance in 2004.³ Seventeen percent of Somali children were malnourished during the 2002-2004 period, with rates as high as 37 percent in pockets of the country.⁴ Displaced children suffered mortality rates 60 percent higher than other Somali children.⁵ Crowded makeshift IDP sites were prone to repeated fire damage. Relief agencies reported in 2004 that individuals known as "gatekeepers" controlled humanitarian

¹ Brookings Institution and UN-OCHA, *Protect or Neglect: Toward a More Effective United Nations Approach to the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons* (November 2004).

² Two main sources for 2004 refugee and IDP statistics: U.S. Committee for Refugees, *World Refugee Survey 2004* (2004); and Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) website, www.internal-displacement.org

³ ReliefWeb, "FEWS Greater Horn of Africa Food Security Update Sep 2004: Deterioration of pastoralist livelihoods," September 30, 2004, <http://reliefweb.int/report/eritrea/fevs-greater-horn-africa-food-security-update-sep-2004-deterioration-pastoralist>.

⁴ USCR *World Refugee Survey 2004*, http://www.refugees.org/resources/uscri_reports/archived-world-refugee-surveys/.

⁵ IDMC, "Somalia: Displacement and worsening humanitarian situation as a result of ongoing violence and conflict," July 30, 2010, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/assets/library/Africa/Somalia/pdf/Somalia-July-2010.pdf>.

access to IDP sites and extorted as much as three-quarters of the assistance distributed to displaced households.⁶ Gender-based violence was known to be a serious problem in and near displacement locations.

In 2004, restrictions on financial transfers imposed by some donor governments as a counter-terrorism measure were placing additional strains on the already weak local Somali economy and a frayed humanitarian safety net. Authorities in Somaliland sought to accentuate their separateness from the rest of the country by treating displaced southerners as unwelcomed foreigners deserving of squalid conditions and discrimination. Somali government officials, to the extent they existed in 2004, dismissed the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement as a non-binding “western” creation, according to UNDP.⁷

Distressed international relief and human rights workers in 2004 lamented that “humanitarian assistance is a drop in the ocean” amid conditions “so miserable and inhumane that you could hardly imagine.”⁸ A prescient humanitarian report ten years ago predicted that “most of the southern and central regions of the country will stay in a state of chronic complex emergency [with] little authoritative government, high levels of criminality, sporadic armed conflict, lack of economic recovery, endemic humanitarian needs, minimal health care and education and population displacement. As a result, most operational humanitarian activities will remain ad hoc, lack sustainability and depend on security.”⁹

International humanitarian organizations resolved to push forward with emergency programs despite the difficult operating environment of 2004. Relief agencies collectively agreed to pursue three strategic goals in 2005 at a price tag of USD \$164 million: to save lives through programs that deliver emergency assistance and build local resilience; improve protection of conflict and drought victims while enhancing respect for all human rights; and strengthen the capacity of government officials and civil society.¹⁰ The UN’s Inter-Agency Internal Displacement Division (the unit no longer exists) selected Somalia as a priority country in hopes of steering more resources and expertise to IDP issues there. In addition, multiple humanitarian agencies in 2004 pledged to strengthen operational links to long-term recovery and development activities.

Specific to protection, the OCHA IDP Unit of 2004 identified a range of critical gaps in need of priority attention, including lack of basic services, poor access to education, IDPs trapped inside the territory of rival clans and hostility toward IDPs by Somaliland authorities. OCHA called for creation of a Protection Working Group within the UN Country Team. The UN Country Team

⁶ IDMC, “Somalia: Window of opportunity for addressing one of the world’s worst internal displacement crises,” January 10, 2006.

⁷ Global IDP Project, “Profile of Internal Displacement: Somalia,” A compilation of the information available in the Global IDP Database of the Norwegian Refugee Council, November 24, 2004, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/assets/library/Africa/Somalia/pdf/Somalia-November-2004.pdf>.

⁸ USCR *World Refugee Survey 2004*, http://www.refugees.org/resources/uscri_reports/archived-world-refugee-surveys/.

⁹ Global IDP Project, “Internally displaced Somalia face uncertain future after years of state collapse,” November 24, 2004, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/assets/publications/2004/200411-af-somalia-internally-displaced-somalis-face-uncertain-future-country-en.pdf>.

¹⁰ UN-OCHA Financial Tracking System website, including *Somalia Year-End Review of Consolidated Appeal 2004 and 2005*.

proposed that a Protection Coordinator position be established within the office of the UN Resident Coordinator in Somalia. OCHA, UNHCR and NRC conducted local workshops to raise awareness about the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

Humanitarian agencies adopted these plans in 2004 fully aware that funding for their efforts would likely be insufficient, given donor weariness with the chronic nature of the Somalia crisis and newer emergency needs emerging at that time in Darfur, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sri Lanka and elsewhere. Only about 60 percent of the 2004 Consolidated Appeal for Somalia received funding.¹¹

In short, the 2004 humanitarian situation in Somalia was harsh, dangerous, extremely vulnerable, susceptible to manipulation and underfunded. In November 2004, the Brookings Institution and OCHA published the influential report, *Protect or Neglect? Toward a More Effective United Nations Approach to the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons*, with findings and recommendations drawn in part from the Somalia experience. In 2005, the UN system adopted significant reforms in an effort to make the humanitarian response in Somalia and globally more predictable, timely and effective.

Population Displacement in 2014

A decade later, in 2014, estimates of the displaced population have roughly tripled to 1.1 million, including some 370,000 in Mogadishu and its outskirts, 500,000 or more in other parts of southern and central Somalia, about 130,000 in Puntland and 40,000-80,000 in Somaliland.¹² However, these are gross estimates with a potentially high margin of error due to years of limited humanitarian access to many areas of the country and a lack of reliable IDP registration procedures. A reliably accurate count of IDPs does not exist. The number of Somali refugees outside the country has grown to more than a million, about half of them in neighboring Kenya.¹³

Some relief workers believe that the actual number of IDPs might be far lower than the 1.1 million official estimate because of significant manipulation of population counts by actors in Mogadishu with a vested interest in inflated numbers. Local employees of one NGO believe that some IDP settlements they serve in Mogadishu contain fewer than half the officially cited population.¹⁴ Local staff of a UN agency in Mogadishu estimate that official IDP numbers are inflated by an average of 25 percent at sites they visit frequently.¹⁵ Distinguishing displaced persons from Mogadishu's urban poor residents poses an additional obstacle to accurate counts.

Other humanitarian workers, on the other hand, speculate that the total number of IDPs might be far larger than official estimates in view of significant population upheavals caused by military offensives in central and southern Somalia that freshly uprooted as many as 150,000 people

¹¹ UN-OCHA Financial Tracking System website, including historical funding table in *Somalia Year-End Review of Consolidated Appeal 2011* (October 2012).

¹² IDMC website, summary reports of 2013 and 2014; and Key Informant interviews, Nairobi and Mogadishu, September 2014.

¹³ UNHCR website, Somalia country report statistical table, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e483ad6.html>.

¹⁴ Multiple Key Informant interviews, Nairobi, September 2014.

¹⁵ Multiple Key Informant interviews, Mogadishu, September 2014.

during 2013-2014. In addition, humanitarian workers point out that significant numbers of displaced households reside uncounted with local families rather than in easily identifiable camps.

While estimates about the size of internally displaced populations are often imprecise in many IDP situations worldwide, the extent of uncertainty about Somalia's internal displacement, particularly in the capital city where more than 40 international relief agencies have operated in recent years, speaks volumes about the international community's ongoing struggles to mount an effective humanitarian response nearly a quarter-century into Somalia's chronic crisis. Similarly, data about the number of IDP sites found in Mogadishu diverge dramatically, from 513 sites identified by UNOSAT to 1,341 IDP settlements counted by ICRC, to 432 settlements mapped by the interagency cluster system.¹⁶

The interplay between drought and armed conflict continues to be a driving force behind the displacement. General lawlessness, human rights violations and evictions also continue to push people from their homes or prevent them from returning. Forty percent of the displaced households in Mogadishu reported that they had fled to the capital city in the previous 12 months, according to a 2013 partial survey based on secondary data.¹⁷ Mogadishu and other parts of the country are a complex mosaic of new emergency displacement flows layered on top of protracted displacement that some families have endured for 20 years, mixed with substantial serial displacement as uprooted families have moved from one site to another every few years to escape new threats or seek better services to help them survive.

OCHA characterizes Somalia's humanitarian situation in 2014 as "extremely fragile," with 850,000 persons in need of emergency assistance – primarily IDPs – and 2 million Somalis struggling to meet minimal food requirements.¹⁸ IDPs in Mogadishu currently suffer strikingly high child malnutrition rates of nearly 19 percent – significantly above the 15 percent threshold that signals a nutritional emergency.¹⁹ "Conditions today are disturbingly similar to the pre-famine period of 2010 when the combination of reduced access, declining funds and consecutive failed rainy seasons led to Somalia's most devastating famine in 2011" that killed an estimated quarter-million people, OCHA warns.²⁰

UN relief officials describe the country's basic humanitarian indicators as "shocking" not only for displaced persons but for all Somalis. The country has among the world's highest rates of child mortality and maternal mortality. Seventy percent of the population lack access to safe drinking water. More than three-quarters of Somalis live without adequate sanitation facilities.²¹ Health care, including basic vaccinations, is extremely limited or nonexistent. Dire living

¹⁶ Emergency Shelter Cluster, WASH Cluster, and REACH, *Mapping and Information Management for Effective Humanitarian Programming in Somalia*, (July 2013); and Key Informant interview, Nairobi, September 2014.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ UN-OCHA, *Somalia Humanitarian Key Messages: Authorized by the Humanitarian Coordinator* (May 2014); and UN-OCHA, *The Somalia Humanitarian Narrative* (May 2014).

¹⁹ UN-OCHA, *Humanitarian Bulletin Somalia* (June 2014).

²⁰ UN-OCHA, *The Somalia Humanitarian Narrative* (May 2014).

²¹ Oxfam et al, *Risk of Relapse: Somalia Crisis Update* (May 2014).

conditions “which are considered alarming and unacceptable in other countries tend to be regarded as acceptable in Somalia,” OCHA laments.²²

Most of the protection threats confronting displaced Somalis in 2014 are similar to those of ten years ago. IDP sites in most of the country are still controlled by self-appointed gatekeepers who charge fees to households for the right to live in decrepit IDP settlements and receive sporadic relief distributions. As in 2004, economic exploitation of IDP families, gender-based violence, trafficking and discrimination against IDPs who are members of weaker clans or minorities remain pervasive in 2014. UNHCR points out that “who you are” is absolutely key to how much protection a displaced family can expect to receive.²³ IDPs who are members of the Rahanweyn and Bantu communities, or who belong to weak sub-clans within predominant clans, face extra vulnerabilities and protection threats. Clan membership and identity are “predominant factors in the security and safety of people...and plays a key part in protection,” UNHCR states.²⁴

While few if any protection problems have disappeared in the past ten years, an additional new protection threat has emerged in the past year. Forcible evictions of displaced persons have increased dramatically as Mogadishu landowners, including government officials, choose to clear out displacement settlements mainly in order to convert rising land values into lucrative economic development. Evictions have increased in several other towns as well. Nearly 50,000 persons have been forcibly evicted from their shelters since the start of 2013, often with little or no warning.²⁵ Gatekeepers are known to be complicit in the forced evictions. Forcible returns of refugees and IDPs to unsafe areas of origin have also emerged as risks in 2014, linked in part to an eagerness by the national government and its supporters to demonstrate that the country is becoming more stable.

UNHCR’s protection strategy for 2013-2015 emphasizes the stark linkage between widespread protection problems and assistance shortcomings: IDPs’ “precarious position within a predatory environment has led to severe levels of exploitation in the labor market and widespread social exclusion in terms of access to traditional justice mechanisms and basic services such as education and health care,” the strategy states. “Although many IDPs have settled within the confines of the urban poor, the levels of discrimination they encounter means that their lives are entrapped in much worse destitution than their impoverished neighbors.”²⁶

The UN Consolidated Appeal for Somalia received about half of the funds requested for humanitarian operations in 2013. In 2014, about one-third of the funds requested had been received by late-year.²⁷

In summary, the 2014 humanitarian situation in Somalia is harsh, dangerous, highly vulnerable, operationally fragile and loosely monitored, susceptible to manipulation and underfunded. Given

²² UN-OCHA, *Somalia Humanitarian Key Messages: Authorized by the Humanitarian Coordinator* (May 2014).

²³ UNHCR, *A Protection Strategy on Internal Displacement for UNHCR Somalia—2013-2015* (2013).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ UNHCR, *UNHCR Somalia Key Messages to the Somali Federal Government* (June 2014); and IDMC website, summary reports of 2013 and 2014.

²⁶ UNHCR, *A Protection Strategy on Internal Displacement for UNHCR Somalia—2013-2015* (2013).

²⁷ UN-OCHA Financial Tracking Service, “Somalia: Funding Received 2014,”

<http://fts.unocha.org/pageloader.aspx?page=emerg-emergencyCountryDetails&cc=som>.

the immensely difficult environment, how effectively have the Somali government and the international humanitarian system responded?

NATIONAL EFFORTS TO ADDRESS INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

Government Structure

The new Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) was established in 2012 after two decades of struggle to construct a locally legitimate and internationally recognized sovereign government. Creation of the FGS is regarded locally and internationally as a major achievement yet merely a first tentative step on the long and difficult path to achieve national stability. The stakes for the country and the region are high as the fragile new government attempts to survive, exert authority, defeat Al-Shabaab militarily and begin to address the long-neglected needs of the Somali people.

The government in its first two years has shuffled Cabinet positions and re-organized ministerial responsibilities – a sometimes confusing but typical sequence of events for a new government reacting to shifting political pressures and struggling to find functional competency. Currently the Ministry of Interior and Federalism has authority over policies affecting internal population displacement and humanitarian assistance. However, in its short existence the Ministry of Interior itself has undergone a major reorganization that temporarily slowed humanitarian policy development. In addition, a turf battle over IDP policy erupted in 2013 when the President announced creation of a National Commissioner of Repatriation and Resettlement of Refugees and IDPs. The position reportedly would report to the Prime Minister rather than to the Ministry of Interior. The IDP Commissioner position does not appear to be functional as of late-2014, however. UN, NGO and government humanitarian personnel continue to consider the Ministry of Interior and Federalism to be the government’s lead agency on displacement issues.²⁸

A 20-person Disaster Management Agency (DMA) within the Ministry of Interior is the focal point for IDP issues among the agency’s other responsibilities. In the opinion of UN personnel, the IOM-funded DMA staff members have displayed an impressive combination of knowledge and commitment to the country’s humanitarian challenges. This has produced optimism that the FGS, at least at the technical staffing level, intends to give humanitarian programs the attention and expertise they deserve. The DMA has been deeply involved in recent efforts to conduct profiling surveys of selected IDP populations. The profiling surveys are intended to help the government and international organizations develop strategies and programs that might lead to durable solutions. The Ministry of Interior also employs humanitarian advisors – some with OCHA funding – as well as a senior advisor on internal displacement. Several of these humanitarian positions within the government are held by young, well-educated members of the Somali diaspora who have repatriated from European asylum countries with a strong sense of idealism about rebuilding their homeland.

Beyond the Ministry of Interior, the FGS established an inter-ministerial Emergency Drought Response Committee with staffing support from the Ministry of Interior. With concerns growing about the possibility of renewed famine, the Emergency Drought Response Committee became increasingly proactive in the second half of 2014 trying to provide food support in affected areas

²⁸ Multiple Key Informant interviews, Mogadishu, September 2014.

in order to avert population displacement, according to government staff members interviewed. The effectiveness of those drought response efforts were not yet clear.

Given the inexperience and fragility of the country's national government, local government officials are equally key to the success or failure of humanitarian programs – perhaps more so. Historically, for example, many of Mogadishu's 16 neighborhood District Commissioners were complicit in the extortion racket practiced by gatekeepers who steal relief distributions intended for IDPs in the city's hundreds of settlements.²⁹ After two decades of weak or non-existent national government, local powerbrokers such as District Commissioners do not automatically defer to policies handed down by the FGS. In recognition of that fact, authorities moved aggressively to install new District Commissioners with allegiances to the new federal government rather than to traditional warlords and clan leaders. While it is premature to judge the benefits of this political realignment at the local level, most observers welcomed the political risks taken to change the local status quo.

Somalia, however, is far more complicated than just a country with a new national government struggling to become organized and operationally functional. The regional and clan competitions that fueled the country's disintegration linger. Somalia remains a nation of fragmented governance. A UN official points out that present-day Somalia counts no fewer than six governments simultaneously: the Federal Government of Somalia based in Mogadishu; the government of self-proclaimed independent Somaliland; the government of autonomous Puntland; a half-formed government in the Baidoa/Bey region seeking autonomy; a nascent autonomous government in the Jubba area; and a separatist group that claims to possess a government structure.³⁰ The effect that this governmental Balkanization has on humanitarian policies and programming is not entirely clear at all locations.

In Somaliland, a governmental structure for addressing IDP and humanitarian issues is fairly well-established. Somaliland's Ministry of Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction works on issues of internal displacement, refugee returns and migration issues. The Ministry states that 60,000 households (approximately a quarter-million persons) are displaced in Somaliland primarily because of drought that has destroyed the livestock that pastoralists depended upon to support themselves. Smaller numbers of displaced persons from southern and central Somalia have also made their way to Somaliland. The Ministry's claim is substantially higher than the 40,000-80,000 Somaliland IDPs estimated by humanitarian organizations.

The main priority of the Somaliland Ministry is to relocate IDPs to permanent planned sites in the Hargeisa and Burao areas.³¹ The Ministry's office walls display aerial photographs and diagrams of the local authorities' planned relocation sites. The Ministry points with pride to a permanent relocation site on the edge of Hargeisa where 900 households have settled. Somaliland officials expressed strong interest in forging a closer relationship with UNDP to support the Ministry's ambitious strategy to achieve durable solutions.

²⁹ Local Somali government officials have belatedly announced creation of a 17th district within Mogadishu.

³⁰ Key Informant interview, Mogadishu, September 2014.

³¹ Interview with Somaliland government officials, Hargeisa, September 2014.

Good Policies... on Paper

Global experience has shown that when a new national government emerging from years of population upheaval commits in writing to state-of-the-art policies, standards and guidelines protecting the rights of displaced persons, it tends to mean either that the government recognizes that IDPs' well-being must be a central priority for national reconciliation and development, or that the government is willing to make any number of empty promises to appease international donors. The next few years will demonstrate which mixture of factors motivates the Federal Government of Somalia.

The FGS has made an impressively strong commitment on paper to address the rights and needs of displaced persons. Within days of its creation, the FGS announced a far-sighted Six Pillars Policy to alleviate suffering and build effective state institutions. Pillar three of the policy explicitly pledges to reintegrate refugees and internally displaced persons to their home areas. In 2013, the FGS announced what it called a "New Deal" for Somalia and reached agreement with the international community on a "Somali Compact" to chart a "path to long-term peace and state-building."³²

The Somali Compact pledges the government's commitment to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and operational independence. It reaffirms the government's commitment to allow "full humanitarian access to people in need wherever in Somalia they are found and will not interfere with humanitarian actors' neutrality, impartiality and independence." The Compact states that the rights of vulnerable groups, including IDPs, are "a cross-cutting issue" that must be respected and protected. The document calls for a strategy of "ongoing transition" from crisis to early recovery to sustainable development. It asserts that the Somali government is "fully committed...to resilience programming that is necessary to break the cycle of crisis."

Under the FGS, Somalia became one of nearly two dozen countries that voted to ratify the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (also known as the Kampala Convention) in November 2013. However, the terms of the Convention are not legally binding on Somalia until government officials submit the proper ratification documents to the AU in Addis Ababa – a step that FGS officials have been slow to take. The Kampala Convention commits Somalia to make efforts to prevent population displacement and to provide IDPs with services such as identity documents, family tracing and consultations with IDPs to determine their priority needs. The Convention compels governments to protect displaced persons from discrimination and to ensure they enjoy the same rights as other citizens. Under the Convention, Somalia is obligated to seek a satisfactory solution for displaced households in the form of voluntary return home, local integration, or relocation to viable sites with safety and dignity.

The FGS announced in April 2013 that it would formulate a national IDP Policy. The Ministry of Interior led the drafting effort with extensive technical help from the UN Office of the Special Rapporteur for the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons and UNHCR. The draft IDP

³² Federal Republic of Somalia, *The Somali Compact* (2013).

policy was submitted to the national Cabinet for consideration in mid-2014. The document awaited formal approval as of September 2014.

With forcible evictions of displaced families climbing to alarming levels, the government agreed in late 2013 to work with UNHCR and the UN Special Rapporteur for the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons to develop guidelines on evictions. The guidelines, however, have not managed to reverse the trend of forcible evictions in the Mogadishu area. A Ministry of Interior employee acknowledged that the government is well aware of the discrimination and stigmatization routinely suffered by displaced families, particularly those who have been pushed into territory controlled by rival clans. “We try to talk to communities about the fact that IDPs have rights, but it falls on deaf ears within the clan system mentality,” he said.³³

The national government, eager to free up government buildings occupied by IDPs and perhaps realizing that a program to move IDPs to organized, viable relocation sites would be a solution to ad hoc evictions, announced in 2013 an ambitious plan to move 200,000 displaced persons from sites in Mogadishu to planned transit sites on the city’s outskirts. Humanitarian organizations, including UNHCR, expressed cautious support for the objectives behind the government’s relocation plan but warned that the chosen relocation sites were unsafe and lacked land tenure assurances for IDPs. The FGS temporarily shelved its relocation program. Some government officials insist, however, that they have only temporarily suspended the massive IDP relocation scheme and will resurrect it when more international humanitarian organizations are operational in Mogadishu to provide services.³⁴

Somaliland, with assistance from international humanitarian organizations including the local interagency protection cluster, has drafted a new IDP policy that is “comprehensive and good,” according to protection officers for an NGO that has followed the process closely.³⁵ Somaliland officials stated in September that the draft policy will go to the Somaliland Cabinet for formal approval after the text is translated. Authorities in Puntland, meanwhile, received praise from donor governments for developing IDP policy guidelines in 2012.³⁶

On paper, the Federal Government of Somalia and even some of the autonomous government entities have made exactly the type of principled, enlightened commitments that humanitarian advocates anywhere in the world would want authorities to endorse. The commitments made by Somali officials go far beyond what many governments with large IDP populations are willing to promise. “The challenge,” several NGO protection officers warned privately, “is implementation.”³⁷

Challenge for Humanitarians: Dealing with Fragmented Government

The fragmented nature of governance in Somalia – and the fractious nature of Somalia’s clan-based society – pose a supreme challenge to humanitarian organizations, particularly on matters

³³ Interview with Somali national government staff member, Mogadishu, September 2014.

³⁴ Interview with Somali government official, Mogadishu, September 2014.

³⁵ Key Informant interview, Hargeisa, Somaliland, September 2014.

³⁶ Key Informant interview with donor government official, Nairobi, September 2014.

³⁷ Multiple Key Informant interviews in Mogadishu and Hargeisa, September 2014.

of IDP protection. Effective humanitarian advocacy means that each government entity or sub-clan leader must be approached on their own terms and with an awareness of the different political pressures and limited capacity that dominate each jurisdiction. Agreements and best practices forged with the Federal Government of Somalia might have no authority in the northern half of the country or anywhere outside of Mogadishu, for that matter.

“Do not underestimate the power of clan dynamics,” a UN protection specialist warned. “If a clan disagrees with a humanitarian plan, the plan cannot move forward – period.”³⁸ Long and difficult negotiations over the national government’s ambitious IDP relocation plan in 2013 taught an important lesson about the importance of developing parallel relationships not only with national authorities but also with Mogadishu’s District Commissioners and other local officials whose support is absolutely essential if relocation or local integration schemes for IDPs are to succeed in the future. Finding durable solutions might be a national policy objective, but actually making it happen via permanent relocation or local integration requires navigating local sensitivities.

Many officials of the FGS are more preoccupied with scouring for basic office equipment, staffing and supplies to make their bureaus functional than they are with service provision, a donor government representative observed.³⁹ Ironically, both the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Health – two bureaus with important IDP responsibilities – are hampered by the fact that the designated buildings of both ministries are occupied by IDPs, forcing ministry staff to locate elsewhere.⁴⁰ International humanitarian workers credit Somalia’s national and regional government officials for participating in cluster meetings – not always a common practice in countries with IDP populations – but some Somali officials’ lack of knowledge and limited capacity are glaringly obvious at those meetings and can lead to unproductive discussions.⁴¹

Government authorities tend to deny that pro-government militia and gatekeepers are complicit in rapes and other human rights abuses despite evidence to the contrary, Human Rights Watch reports.⁴² Conversely, UNICEF staff members say that years of quiet advocacy and gradual awareness raising have prompted some national government officials to finally acknowledge the existence of child protection problems, particularly the need to crack down on the recruitment of children into armed militia.⁴³

Authorities in Somaliland persist at times in using terminology suggesting that persons who fled to Somaliland from south-central regions of the country are either foreign refugees with limited rights or illegal migrants with no legal rights – a policy that, if implemented, would pose serious protection concerns for many IDPs in Somaliland. Relief agencies have chosen not to press Somaliland authorities on the matter, however, because Somaliland officials have recently refrained from taking discriminatory actions against displaced southerners. In Puntland,

³⁸ Key Informant telephone interview in Geneva, Switzerland, September 2014.

³⁹ Key Informant interview, Nairobi, September 2014.

⁴⁰ Multiple Key Informant interviews with Somali national government official and UN staff member, Mogadishu, September 2014.

⁴¹ Multiple Key Informant interviews in Nairobi, Mogadishu, and Hargeisa, September 2014

⁴² Human Rights Watch, *Hostages of the Gatekeepers: Abuses against Internally Displaced in Mogadishu, Somalia* (March 2013).

⁴³ Key Informant interview, Nairobi, September 2014.

meanwhile, local officials have imposed fees on international agencies, a policy that has disrupted some humanitarian projects.⁴⁴

In response to these challenges at the field level, relief and development organizations must dialogue with each government entity separately and approach each one differently. It is a complicated situation that accentuates the need for solid coordination and well-orchestrated messaging by humanitarian organizations working together in the cluster system, in close collaboration with the UN Humanitarian Coordinator.

⁴⁴ Key Informant interview, Nairobi, September 2014.

THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE: THREE DOMINANT REALITIES

An analysis of the international humanitarian response in Somalia must begin with an understanding of three core realities that strongly influence the humanitarian situation and the character of the response. These three over-arching issues have created a broad context for everything else that humanitarian actors have done well or poorly in Somalia.

Extremely Dangerous Operational Environment

No fewer than 363 aid workers have been killed, wounded, or kidnapped in Somalia during the 1997-2014 period in 200 separate attacks. At least 147 aid workers have been killed during that 18-year period.⁴⁵ In the past two years alone, 13 separate attacks in Somalia have victimized 35 aid workers, including 18 killed.⁴⁶

Al-Shabaab militants killed eight persons inside a supposedly secure UN Mogadishu compound in June 2013. A car bomb attack against a UN convoy in Mogadishu injured the UNHCR country director and her colleague in February 2014. A mortar attack targeted an IDP camp in Mogadishu minutes after it was visited by a UNHCR staff member in March 2014; at least one camp occupant was killed.⁴⁷ A month later, two UN consultants were gunned down upon arrival at an airport in Puntland. In July 2014, Al-Shabaab expanded its threat against UN personnel when it explicitly threatened, for the first time, to kill Somali nationals working for the UN. In August 2014, AMISOM and Somali government troops battled Al-Shabaab militants in a Mogadishu suburb in response to a series of assassinations by Al-Shabaab. In September 2014, UN security officials warned of potential revenge attacks by Al-Shabaab in retaliation for a U.S. air strike that killed the group's leader.

“The attack on the UN compound in 2013 set us back a full year,” a UN humanitarian official said.⁴⁸ Prior to the attack, UN and NGO personnel were filtering back into the country in greater numbers, eager to ramp up humanitarian programs and engage directly in hands-on relief and recovery projects instead of relying on “remote programming” through local NGO partners who often lacked experience. By late-2014, more than a year after the attack on the UN compound, most UN agencies continued to deploy far fewer international staff in Mogadishu than before the attack.⁴⁹ The deployment situation was beginning to change in favor of Mogadishu, however. By October, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator and the head of OCHA/Somalia were spending a substantial percentage of their time in Mogadishu rather than in Nairobi and a growing number of UN agencies' country directors were either shifting their base to Mogadishu or were spending at least half their time there each month. The Humanitarian Coordinator had shifted regular meetings of the Humanitarian Country Team from Nairobi to Mogadishu.

⁴⁵ Humanitarian Outcomes, Aid Worker Security Database <https://aidworkersecurity.org/> (September 2014).

⁴⁶ Ibid; and additional unrecorded incidents obtained during multiple Key Informant interviews in Nairobi and Mogadishu, September 2014.

⁴⁷ Key Informant interview, Mogadishu, September 2014.

⁴⁸ Key Informant interview, Nairobi, September 2014.

⁴⁹ Multiple Key Informant interviews in Nairobi and Mogadishu, September 2014.

As of October, a modest number of UN humanitarian workers – including the Humanitarian Coordinator – had resumed working in the refurbished UN compound with reinforced security. “The number one issue here is how do we deliver protection and assistance in an asymmetric warfare environment, where there are no front lines,” a UN country director explained. “How to do our humanitarian work when the UN t-shirt I wear makes me [viewed as] an enemy” by Al-Shabaab. “I needed 22 armed guards in order to travel across town today for a meeting with the mayor of Mogadishu.”⁵⁰

In mid-2014, humanitarian work in Somalia’s environment of “asymmetric warfare” looked like this: All UN personnel were required to participate in a two-hour security briefing in Nairobi, Kenya before setting foot in Mogadishu, followed by an additional security orientation immediately upon arrival in Mogadishu. UN staff in Somalia on extended deployments were obliged to undergo four days of more extensive security training. Expatriate humanitarian staff lived and worked a bunker existence surrounded by armed guards, blast-resistant walls, barbed wire and strategically located blast-reinforced “safe rooms” in the event of a prolonged siege by attackers. Even short one-kilometer journeys “outside the barbed wire” required an armored vehicle with bullet-proof blast-resistant windows, a specially trained driver, three truckloads of armed escorts, instantaneous radio communications, protective flak jackets and helmets. Some relief workers took the added precaution of prominently displaying their blood type on their flak jacket in the event of serious injury when venturing onto the streets of Mogadishu.

National Somali staff working for the UN on humanitarian projects are able to circulate in Mogadishu less obtrusively than expatriates but nonetheless must travel in unmarked vehicles, visit IDP sites without giving advance notification, can linger at a relief project only a limited number of minutes (usually well less than an hour) and refrain from divulging their UN affiliation. International and local staff members of NGOs are able to move about under security restrictions that are more flexible but still pose impediments to humanitarian operations.⁵¹

The need for extensive security precautions slows the pace of humanitarian response, undermines the quality of humanitarian projects and limits what can be accomplished.

Humanitarian Ambivalence and Low Expectations

The international humanitarian effort in Somalia has persisted through more than two decades of chronic conflict, droughts, floods, food shortages, human rights abuses and clan rivalries. More than two decades of population displacement in wave after wave, routine theft of aid deliveries, and killings of aid workers. More than two decades of struggling to overcome limited access to populations in need and making do with programs inadequately funded by international donors. More than two decades of dysfunctional or non-existent national governance and multiple international peacekeeping operations using problematic tactics.

The cumulative effect, according to some close observers and participants, is a humanitarian system in Somalia that has become complacent and mired in inertia. This is not a precisely

⁵⁰ Key Informant interview, Mogadishu, September 2014.

⁵¹ Key Informant interview, Mogadishu, September 2014.

accurate description, however. Many humanitarian institutions and individuals involved in Somalia care deeply about the country and their work there, and are receptive to new approaches.

More accurately, the cumulative effect of the past two decades in Somalia has produced a humanitarian system wracked by ambivalence and inured to low expectations. The ambivalence surfaces in at least four ways.

1) Ambivalence about the proper balance between staff security and quality programming

Relief organizations – particularly those affiliated with the UN – are ambivalent about the amount of security risk they are willing to accept in order to enlarge their staff presence in Mogadishu to give humanitarian programming the qualitative boost it sorely needs.

The deadly attack on the UN compound in mid-2013 temporarily reversed staff expansion plans. The delay has fueled a divisive debate in humanitarian circles about the three-tiered disconnect that exists between humanitarian decision makers (including agency country directors, cluster coordinators and donor government officials) based in the relative safety of Nairobi, a relatively modest number of humanitarian program managers based in Mogadishu, and field staff deployed in locations of Somalia that are judged to be sufficiently safe.

Critics of the complicated arrangement assert that the separation has aggravated poor communication, atrophied the cluster system and shielded decision-makers from the impact of their decisions in the field. They charge that the geographical separation between Nairobi and Mogadishu has produced a strategic separation contributing to internal disagreements over a series of issues that include humanitarian priorities, IDP relocation and the emphasis on durable solutions. Staff in Mogadishu point out with admiration that the top UN official for humanitarian affairs in Somalia – the Humanitarian Coordinator – has shifted from Nairobi to Mogadishu, working out of the restored UN compound.

Many humanitarian workers in Mogadishu refer to the so-called “Nairobi-disconnect” with a tone of contempt. “Of course they should be here in Mogadishu. It is ridiculous that they are not,” one UN official said of Nairobi-based colleagues.⁵² “UN Somalia offices based in Nairobi should cease to exist tomorrow. There is much better humanitarian information in the field than in Nairobi,” another UN worker advised.⁵³ Said another UN official, “Keeping the humanitarian decision-makers in Nairobi feeds a perception that the UN is not really here for the Somali people but instead is [based in Nairobi] for the Nairobi lifestyle. Somalis tend to see no value” in UN programs managed from a different country. “If cluster coordinators and agency directors insist on staying in Nairobi, at least they should visit Mogadishu more frequently.”⁵⁴

Humanitarian personnel based in Nairobi counter that Mogadishu remains extremely dangerous and remains just one car bomb or assassination away from another large-scale evacuation of staff. They point out that transferring to Mogadishu at this time would mean living and sleeping “behind barbed wire” with limited opportunities for interaction with Somali counterparts and

⁵² Key Informant interview, Mogadishu, September 2014.

⁵³ Key Informant interview, Nairobi, September 2014.

⁵⁴ Key informant interview, Mogadishu, September 2014.

irregular contact with donor government officials based in Nairobi. Some reportedly have vowed to resign rather than be forced to cope with what they view as the unacceptable dangers of working in Mogadishu.

The acrimony is no small matter. In Somalia as in virtually every country dealing with an emergency, how well the humanitarian system functions depends in large measure on the strength of personal relationships to facilitate collaboration within and among agencies and clusters. The geographical separation between staffs in Nairobi and Mogadishu has inadvertently severed and antagonized some of the personal relationships on which the humanitarian system depends.

2) Ambivalence about humanitarian effectiveness against overwhelming odds

Some humanitarian agencies are ambivalent about their ability to fundamentally impact a seemingly intractable situation in which IDPs live in virtual hostage to corrupt gatekeepers controlling camps; where efforts to achieve durable solutions for protracted IDPs and refugees are regularly interrupted by population upheavals requiring new emergency programs; where relief supplies are often unable to reach vulnerable populations; where year after year of “remote programming” in a dangerous environment has degraded the quality of projects; and where many humanitarian donors signal that they cannot afford to make the country’s problems a priority.

For years, the concept of “remote programming” has been a creative answer as well as a trap for humanitarian agencies struggling to maintain programs in Somalia. Remote programming is a tactic whereby international humanitarian organizations contract with local NGOs to carry out relief projects at locations too dangerous or inaccessible for international agencies. The tactic has been necessary and useful given Somalia’s volatility. Some Somali NGOs have developed impressive skills.⁵⁵

However, years of reliance on remote programming tended in many cases to produce weak program management, superficial project monitoring and poor quality control. It resulted in many projects that were ineffectual or, worse, fraudulent. One international NGO counts 27 local implementing partners in a single programmatic sector – a dubious managerial task.⁵⁶ “The context of humanitarian operations in Mogadishu for many years is that programming has been done remotely with very few qualified implementing partners available,” the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia said.⁵⁷

Relief organizations find themselves trapped between the humanitarian imperative of responding to emergency needs and a relentlessly difficult operating environment that prevents anything close to best practices. “Aid agencies and donors have acquired an increased tolerance for the very high risk that programs they invest in will not have an impact,” the Somalia director of a leading international NGO stated. “They know Somalia is a failed state that means programs are

⁵⁵ Multiple Key Informant interviews in Nairobi and Mogadishu, September 2014.

⁵⁶ Key Informant interview, Mogadishu, September 2014.

⁵⁷ Interview with Humanitarian Coordinator, Mogadishu, September 2014.

always three steps forward and two steps backward.”⁵⁸ Another relief worker put it this way: “Somalia has been a failed state for 20 years. Our objective in the next few years with a lot of hard work, danger and expense is to somehow manage to elevate Somalia from a failed state into a fragile state.”⁵⁹

The 2011 famine that swept the Horn of Africa posed the ultimate test for the effectiveness of emergency programming in Somalia and the Humanitarian Country Team’s ability to formulate a coherent emergency strategy from its base in Nairobi. The humanitarian system in Somalia was unable to rise to the challenge in Somalia’s difficult operational environment. An estimated 260,000 Somalis perished in the famine.⁶⁰

An IASC evaluation of the famine response concluded that “famine could have been avoided” but was not because “the Humanitarian Country Team’s misreading of the crisis led to insufficient urgency, an inappropriate strategy and a late response.”⁶¹ The evaluation found that the distance between the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) based in Nairobi and relief workers inside Somalia caused the HCT to discount early warnings. Somalia’s cluster system “failed to design and deliver a coherent strategy on time” and managed to ramp up programs to scale only “when the worst had passed.” The evaluation stated that emergency response efforts were undermined by a “Somalia mindset” of constrained engagement, risk aversion and “entrenched pessimism about donor generosity.”

A coalition of 28 NGOs warned in mid-2014 that another potential famine could produce the same mistakes by the existing humanitarian system.⁶²

3) Ambivalence about the new national government

Relief workers are ambivalent about the future of the new Federal Government of Somalia and whether it truly represents a new era for the divided country, or another false start.

International humanitarian organizations have reached out to government ministries to offer technical and financial support for specific government initiatives and key humanitarian staff positions. Training programs for government officials are readily available. More such support is needed.

However, international humanitarian officials are concerned that donor enthusiasm for the Somali national government’s stabilization and development program – what Somali officials refer to as their “New Deal” initiative – might siphon funding from relief efforts that remain

⁵⁸ Key Informant interview, Nairobi, September 2014.

⁵⁹ Key Informant interview, Mogadishu, September 2014.

⁶⁰ Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), principle authors Francesco Checchi and W. Courtland Robinson, *Mortality Among Populations of Southern and Central Somalia Affected by Severe Food Insecurity and Famine During 2010-2012* (May 2013).

⁶¹ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), Synthesis Report by Hugo Slim, *IASC Real-Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to the Horn of Africa Drought Crisis in Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya* (June 2012).

⁶² Oxfam et al, *Risk of Relapse Call to Action: Somalia Crisis Update* (July 2014).

essential.⁶³ Humanitarian officials are also wary of what they regard as efforts to politicize humanitarian assistance in order to bolster the credibility of Somalia’s fledgling national government. Fueling that concern, the UN’s Integrated Strategic Framework for Somalia explicitly states that all UN agencies “will support appropriate linkages between humanitarian action and the UN’s peace consolidation priorities.”⁶⁴ OCHA countered with a statement in May asserting the independence of humanitarian operations: “Humanitarian agencies will continue to provide assistance on the basis of assessed needs and will not be party to a preconceived stabilization agenda of ‘winning hearts and minds.’”⁶⁵

4) Ambivalence about the integrity of humanitarian efforts

A degree of ambivalence exists – rarely discussed openly – about the integrity of a humanitarian system in Somalia that for years has been riven by manipulation, diversion and fraud... displacement sites occupied by “ghost IDPs” ...implementing partners who file inaccurate or brazenly false project reports... agency decisions on hiring, firing and contracts dictated by clan politics. These factors over time have gradually eroded the probity of the humanitarian endeavor in Somalia. Experienced and thoughtful humanitarian workers know it.

“In Somalia, being an IDP is also a business,” a UN official offered.⁶⁶ “We are supporting an industry,” another humanitarian official observed.⁶⁷ “We all profit from the IDP situation in one way or another,” a Somali relief worker said.⁶⁸ Somalis with extensive experience working for international humanitarian agencies voice some of the sharpest criticisms of how the humanitarian system has been exploited by Somalia’s political and cultural dynamics.

A blunt study by Tufts University’s Feinstein International Center in August 2014 found a Somalia “humanitarian aid system deeply divided, whose aims are contested and manipulated, whose impacts may be helpful but can also be very harmful and whose distance – both geographic and psychological – from intended beneficiaries is growing.”⁶⁹ The study identified “a deep sense of malaise” and lack of candor in the humanitarian community operating in Somalia. Relief agencies and donors are loathe to acknowledge the scale of aid diversions and the dearth of program monitoring “for fear that anything that admits mistakes will lead to blame and stigmatization,” the study stated. It reported that many organizations are reluctant to share useful humanitarian information because of competition with other agencies over limited amounts of donor funding. A yawning gap exists between organizations’ rhetoric about their humanitarian programs and what those programs actually accomplish, the study charged.

“Accounts of the diversion and the ‘elite capture’ of aid abound in Nairobi, but no one can speak openly about either... This makes an honest discussion about operating in Somalia very

⁶³ Multiple Key Informant interviews in Nairobi and Mogadishu, September 2014.

⁶⁴ UNSOM, *UN Somalia: Somalia Integrated Strategic Framework 2014-2016* (draft) (undated document).

⁶⁵ UN-OCHA, *The Somalia Humanitarian Narrative* (May 2014).

⁶⁶ Key Informant interview, Nairobi, September 2014.

⁶⁷ Interview with donor government official, Nairobi, September 2014.

⁶⁸ Key Informant interview, Nairobi, September 2014.

⁶⁹ Tufts University Feinstein International Center, Daniel Maxwell and Nisar Majid authors, *Another Humanitarian Crisis in Somalia? Learning from the 2011 Famine* (August 2014).

difficult,” the study by the Feinstein Center concluded. The study interviewed humanitarian workers who believe “the aid system in Somalia corrupts both benefactors and beneficiaries; it is beholden to political agendas that have little to do with protecting human lives or livelihood; and under current circumstances, little is being done – or can be done – to fundamentally change things.” The study warned that “these concerns are not going away any time soon.”

From a purely protection perspective, the basic question is: Has the humanitarian system managed to “do no harm” in Somalia? The sobering but truthful answer is that even the mundane act of convening a humanitarian strategy meeting in Mogadishu does potential harm by exposing local staff to possible retribution for collaborating with a UN system that Al-Shabaab despises. “The humanitarian system has certainly done harm. That cannot be denied,” a senior UN humanitarian official stated. “But has it been more harmful than supportive? I would be interested in a study to measure this.”⁷⁰

Humanitarian Assistance Is Not Neutral in Somalia

This is the third reality that dominates humanitarian assistance in Somalia.

The UN Security Council voted in 2007 to authorize a Chapter VII mandate for the African Union Mission for Somalia (AMISOM) in its battle against militants. In 2013, with AMISOM still waging war against Al-Shabaab, the UN Security Council voted to establish an integrated mission in Somalia, known as the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM). This means that the UN’s political and humanitarian objectives have been merged for the sake of coordination and consistency. The twin actions by the UN Security Council mean that UN humanitarian operations in Somalia are formally aligned with UNSOM, which in turn supports peace and reconciliation efforts by AMISOM and the Federal Government of Somalia. Although UNSOM and AMISOM are separate entities with separate management and reporting structures, close coordination exists between the two structures. As a consequence of this relationship, UN humanitarian operations in Somalia are not neutral and cannot credibly claim to be. Some humanitarian staff in OCHA and elsewhere argue otherwise; they assert that relief operations remain neutral because they are based on need.

Most humanitarian agencies, including OCHA, opposed the creation of a UN integrated mission in Somalia, arguing that the arrangement would endanger relief workers by violating the core humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence.⁷¹ Some UN relief officials state that the current arrangement has been carried out in a way that preserves the impartiality and independence of assistance organizations. The humanitarian principle of neutrality, however, no longer exists in Somalia.

With full authorization from the UN Security Council and the Federal Government of Somalia, AMISOM has launched aggressive military offensives to push Al-Shabaab out of Mogadishu and, more recently, from key towns that Al-Shabaab long held in central and southern Somalia. AMISOM’s “Operation Eagle” in early-2014 caused an estimated 70,000 persons to flee their

⁷⁰ Key Informant interview, Mogadishu, September 2014.

⁷¹ Key Informant interview, Nairobi, September 2014.

homes.⁷² Al-Shabaab has countered AMISOM's territorial gains by blocking road access to newly "liberated" towns, which has choked economic commerce and complicated humanitarian access. The Al-Shabaab blockages threaten to cause "further deterioration in humanitarian conditions" and, in combination with factors such as drought, poor access and weak funding, increase the possibility that "Somalia runs the risk of losing the fragile gains made in 2013," the UN Secretary General acknowledged.⁷³

"The Humanitarian Country Team has been surprised to realize that the AMISOM offensive has not improved humanitarian access much, and in fact has made the situation even more complex," according to an HCT participant.⁷⁴ The HCT has worked to overcome access problems in areas recently re-captured by AMISOM, including bolstering air access for humanitarian staff into blocked towns. Some relief workers predict that the Al-Shabaab retreat might cause some areas to become less secure as simmering clan tensions previously subdued by Al-Shabaab begin to erupt in Al-Shabaab's absence. An AMISOM official agreed that areas recently captured from Al-Shabaab might remain unsafe for some time.⁷⁵ Analysts also warn that militants might choose to escape ongoing AMISOM offensives in the south by heading north to Puntland, creating new security threats in that part of the country.⁷⁶

The relationship between humanitarian organizations and AMISOM is doubly uncomfortable for some humanitarian workers because of human rights violations committed by AMISOM troops. A Human Rights Watch report in September 2014 documented sexual abuse and exploitation of Somali women and girls by AMISOM soldiers despite human rights training provided by UNSOM human rights officers.⁷⁷ UNSOM is also aware of serious human rights violations committed by Somali government troops, including executions, disappearances and arbitrary arrests. "The Somali National Army is one of the worst armies I have ever worked with," a frustrated UN official confided.⁷⁸

Considerable tension exists within UNSOM over how aggressively it should push for accountability for violations committed by Somalia military and AMISOM. Numerous UN personnel believe that UN advocacy on human rights has been muffled in favor of burnishing the public image of the national government and AMISOM.⁷⁹ Some UN officials dispute this characterization.

While the UN's establishment of an integrated mission continues to cause consternation among humanitarian actors, there have been some positive results. UNSOM and AMISOM have provided helicopter transport for rapid humanitarian assessments of remote towns captured by AMISOM. AMISOM's formal mandate includes support to humanitarian efforts and helping to

⁷² Multiple Key Informant interviews in Nairobi and Mogadishu, September 2014.

⁷³ UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary General on Somalia* (May 12, 2014).

⁷⁴ Key Informant interview, Nairobi, September 2014.

⁷⁵ Interview with AMISOM official, Mogadishu, September 2014.

⁷⁶ UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary General on Somalia* (May 12, 2014); and multiple Key Informant interviews in Nairobi and Mogadishu, September 2014.

⁷⁷ Human Rights Watch, *"The Power These Men Have Over Us": Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by African Union Forces in Somalia* (September 2014).

⁷⁸ Key Informant interview, Mogadishu, September 2014.

⁷⁹ Multiple Key Informant interviews in Nairobi and Mogadishu, September 2014.

create secure conditions for relief programs. Protection of civilians is not explicitly in AMISOM's mandate. However, the UN Security Council "encourages AMISOM to develop further an effective approach to the protection of civilians" and has urged AMISOM to establish a Civilian Casualty Tracking, Analysis and Response Cell.⁸⁰ AMISOM has expressed interest in the idea of "mainstreaming" civilian protection into its existing operations.

The UN's Integrated Strategic Framework for 2014-2016 pledges that humanitarian assistance will remain a priority, that it will be based on needs and that the UN system will work "to ensure that humanitarian space and the operational independence of humanitarian agencies remain safeguarded."⁸¹ The strategy document provides assurances that "the foundation for all programming will be ensuring that vulnerable groups such as women, children, IDPs and refugee-returnees are properly protected and included in all levels of strategy and decision-making." The document states that "promotion of comprehensive solutions to end displacement" will be a key component of human rights work.

The UN's alignment between humanitarian programs and political-military activities is uncomfortable for relief organizations. In Somalia, however, it is an immutable condition of humanitarian work.

⁸⁰ UN Security Council Resolution 2093 (2013); and African Union's *Report of the Workshop on Mainstreaming Protection of Civilians Considerations into the Operations of the African Union Mission in Somalia*, (Nairobi, Kenya, June 21-22).

⁸¹ UNSOM, *UN Somalia: Somalia Integrated Strategic Framework 2014-2016* (draft) (undated document).

INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO ADDRESS INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

Leadership and Advocacy

A consensus exists among humanitarian workers that the UN hierarchy is more aware and engaged on population displacement issues in Somalia than was the case ten years ago as described in the *Protect or Neglect* report. Field visits, statements and other forms of engagement by the UN Secretary General, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, the UNSOM Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, the UN Special Rapporteur for the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons and other key UN officials are not always as frequent or effective as desired, but relief workers express satisfaction that attention is paid at high levels.

The position of the Humanitarian Coordinator – the highest-ranking UN humanitarian position in Somalia – drew criticism three years ago for the system’s slow response to the famine that killed more than a quarter-million Somalis. The current Humanitarian Coordinator, installed in 2013 after an unfortunate half-year vacancy, possesses a strong background in humanitarian operations and protection work. He receives praise from humanitarian workers for his relative accessibility and his decision to spend considerable time in Mogadishu and accompany inter-agency assessment missions – an important display of leadership that has not gone unnoticed by humanitarian colleagues.

Warnings about the potential of another serious food shortage in 2014-2015 mean that the leadership and coordination skills of Somalia’s Humanitarian Coordinator position might be tested yet again, with hopefully better results than in 2011. It remains to be seen how effectively the current Humanitarian Coordinator will balance his humanitarian role with his other UN duties as a Resident Coordinator and a Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General.

The Humanitarian Coordinator leads a Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) that will need years to salvage the HCT’s reputation after its abysmal performance during the 2011 famine and the group’s previous reputation for bitter turf fights, personal animosities and general dysfunction. As recently as 2013 the HCT had “a horrible reputation,” one HCT member acknowledged. “Some members would not talk to each other. The body language was terrible.”⁸² Ironically, the situation demonstrated yet again the truth of what relief workers worldwide say consistently: while the cluster system has strengths and weaknesses, good coordination ultimately depends on personalities.

Personnel changes and a strategic workshop to improve functionality have strengthened cohesion within the HCT during the past year, but the body still is viewed skeptically – even by some of its own members.⁸³ The HCT is struggling to become more strategic and action-oriented. To do so, it must work to overcome a lingering tendency to “talk and sit” and complain about insufficient funding, some HCT participants say. HCT participants credit donor governments for attending HCT meetings and posing questions that help elevate the group’s discussion.

⁸² Key Informant interview, Mogadishu, September 2014.

⁸³ Multiple Key Informant interviews in Nairobi and Mogadishu, September 2014.

The UN hierarchy has engaged in advocacy on IDP issues in Somalia. Periodic reports of the UN Secretary General have cited IDP and other humanitarian concerns. In 2009, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons (the title was subsequently changed to “Special Rapporteur”) conducted a field mission to Somalia and filed a report warning of “deep concern” about malnutrition in displacement camps and calling for more attention to IDPs’ food, shelter, water, health care and education needs. The report concluded that “the Somali situation, albeit difficult, can be improved, but a greater degree of international attention is needed and intensified concerted efforts by all actors involved...are necessary.”⁸⁴

More recently, UN humanitarian officials have raised concerns in writing to the Somali government about the growing number of IDP evictions and the government’s plans for large-scale relocation of IDPs.⁸⁵ The Humanitarian Coordinator introduced himself to humanitarian colleagues in 2013 by calling for stronger advocacy efforts to improve protection and overcome impunity in Somalia. A number of humanitarian and human rights workers complain, however, that high-level UN officials should advocate more aggressively against human rights violations committed by Somali soldiers and AMISOM troops.

At the technical working level, human rights workers praise UN agencies for a willingness to cooperate with independent investigations of human rights violations – a subtle but useful form of protection advocacy.

Cluster System Coordination

The international community globally adopted the cluster system in 2005 in an effort to strengthen the quality and consistency of humanitarian operations in emergency situations, with a particular focus on improved coordination. The cluster system became partially operational in Somalia by 2007. Seven clusters currently exist in the Somalia emergency: Protection and Emergency Shelter/Non-Food Items (led by UNHCR); Nutrition, Water/Sanitation/Hygiene and Education (led by UNICEF); Food Security (led by WFP); and Health (led by WHO). (A Health cluster led by WFP functioned briefly during the famine response of 2011-2012.) In some clusters, international and local NGOs serve as co-chairs at the national or local field levels. Somali government officials participate unevenly in some cluster meetings held in Mogadishu and other parts of the country.

Operational Clusters ⁸⁶	National-level Cluster Lead/Co-Lead Agency	Activation ⁸⁷
Food Security	FAO/WFP	2006
Education	UNICEF	2006
Health	WHO	2006

⁸⁴ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, Walter Kälin: Mission to Somalia* (January 21, 2010).

⁸⁵ Multiple Key Informant interviews in Nairobi and Mogadishu, September 2014.

⁸⁶ Humanitarian Response, “Somalia,” <http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/somalia>.

⁸⁷ OCHA Annual Report 2006, “Somalia,” http://www.unocha.org/annualreport/2006/html/part3_somalia.html.

Nutrition	UNICEF	2006
Protection	UNHCR/Danish Refugee Council	2006
Shelter	UNHCR	2006
WASH	UNICEF	2006

It can be difficult to assess the performance of the cluster system in Somalia. Important components of the cluster system are not operative inside Somalia, residing in Nairobi instead. The cluster system has had limited opportunities to function inside Somalia in the manner clusters are supposed to function, due to constraints imposed by security concerns, limited presence of humanitarian staff, restricted access to emergency areas and counter-terrorism restrictions imposed at key moments by donor governments.

That the humanitarian and protection response in Somalia has been inadequate is beyond argument. However, the reasons that the humanitarian response has fallen short and what the Somalia experience teaches about the value of the overall cluster system, is a matter of prolonged debate.

Widespread agreement exists that all components of the cluster system in Somalia have embraced the concept of protection mainstreaming, whereby protection concerns are integrated into the design and implementation of specific sectoral projects in shelter, food, WASH, etc.⁸⁸ Several project managers remarked, only half-jokingly, that the push to educate their constantly rotating staff members about a wide range of protection issues – including separate training sessions on gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, gender sensitivities, child protection, lesbian/gay/bisexual/trans-sexual discrimination, protection mainstreaming and protection monitoring and confidentiality – regularly competes for time with project implementation. Doubts exist as to whether efforts to raise awareness about protection within the cluster system have produced much impact on protection.⁸⁹

The WASH cluster consistently drew praise for its recent work in Somalia. The shelter cluster earned positive comments as well, although less effusive. Reaction was most divided on the performance of the health cluster. When pressed to evaluate the efforts of specific clusters, the consistent refrain was that “it all depends on the personalities involved,” particularly the skill of the cluster coordinator.⁹⁰

The long history of humanitarian operations in Somalia has accumulated a long list of criticisms about the cluster system. At the top of the list is a sense that humanitarian agencies have fallen into a dangerous habit of focusing on Somalia’s protracted assistance needs while ignoring emergency needs that are more dire and require a rapid priority response.⁹¹ That occurred during the 2011 famine and might be repeating itself on a smaller but no less troubling scale in 2014 as a malnutrition emergency has erupted in Mogadishu’s IDP camps directly under the gaze of relief agencies which, again, have responded slowly.

⁸⁸ Multiple Key Informant interviews in Nairobi and Mogadishu, September 2014.

⁸⁹ Multiple Key Informant interviews in Nairobi and Mogadishu, September 2014.

⁹⁰ Multiple Key Informant interviews in Nairobi and Mogadishu, September 2014.

⁹¹ Multiple Key Informant interviews, Nairobi, September 2014.

“How could this happen?” a senior UN official said indignantly. “We have access to these camps. This has happened right under our nose. This is a failure of the humanitarian system. I don’t buy the excuses.”⁹² Donor governments have noticed similar failures of emergency response. Somalis displaced by the AMISOM offensive earlier this year began showing up in poor physical condition at a location in central Somalia. Urgently needed assistance reportedly did not arrive for several weeks. “The humanitarian reflex was slow. The clusters were nowhere to be seen,” a donor representative charged.⁹³

Some humanitarian organizations agree that the criticisms are accurate but note the operational difficulty of switching on a moment’s notice from protracted care and maintenance programming to unforeseen emergency projects. They say that rapid programming changes are particularly difficult with tight budgets, limited staffing and restricted field access.

In some respects, the complicated situation in Somalia conspires to accentuate vulnerabilities inherent in the cluster system. With security conditions and access shifting weekly and sometimes daily, Somalia is a “stop and go” operating environment that does not synchronize well with the consensus-building, collective strategy approach prized in the cluster system. New emergencies require well-focused, action-oriented planning meetings that are far different from the large, verbose, often inefficient “talk-fests” into which many clusters have devolved. With so many agencies unable to talk knowledgeably about programming after years of limited humanitarian access and reliance on remote programming through local partners, some clusters in Nairobi have learned to compensate by focusing on broad policy discussions and procedural paperwork in lieu of the operational programming decisions that are supposed to be the *raison d’être* of the cluster system.⁹⁴

In short, the humanitarian system – based in Nairobi, managed from Mogadishu and implemented in towns and rural areas of Somalia – lumbers forward under a triple burden: remote priority-setting ... for remote management ... of remote programming.

In addition to the peculiarities of working in Somalia, participants in Somalia’s cluster system have encountered many of the same challenges common to clusters in other countries. Cluster meetings too often are unmanageably large, poorly run and dominated by informational presentations of questionable value instead of decision-making and priority setting. Not all participants understand the meaning of coordination in practical terms, and some misunderstand the core purpose of the cluster approach.⁹⁵ Participation by government officials in cluster meetings is a mixed blessing, at times facilitating decision-making and at other times skewing discussions in unproductive directions.⁹⁶ Some clusters, including the protection cluster, have attempted to compensate for these systemic flaws by holding full cluster meetings less frequently and creating different levels of technical meetings with restricted attendance.

⁹² Key Informant interview, Nairobi, September 2014.

⁹³ Interview with donor government official, Nairobi, September 2014.

⁹⁴ Multiple Key Informant interviews in Nairobi and Mogadishu, September 2014.

⁹⁵ Multiple Key Informant interviews in Nairobi and Mogadishu, September 2014.

⁹⁶ Multiple Key Informant interviews in Nairobi and Mogadishu, September 2014.

The coordination skills of cluster coordinators vary significantly, as do the bureaucratic grade levels that impact the authority of coordinators to make decisions. In an operationally difficult country such as Somalia, humanitarian agencies are not uniform in the way they subdivide the country geographically for project management, leading to complications when managers of different agencies try to synchronize program decisions.⁹⁷ An administrative step as simple as a chart listing the names, locations and contact information of cluster field coordinators would be useful to colleagues, some said. Others proposed that better synchronization in the scheduling of cluster meetings in Nairobi, Mogadishu, and in the field could help ensure that Nairobi-level meetings are better informed by field clusters, and vice versa.

Numerous relief staff pointed to the challenge of coordinating decisions among multiple clusters – the so-called “cluster silo” problem – and urged tighter collaboration among the shelter, health and WASH clusters in particular. Cognizant that inter-cluster coordination is a challenge, some UNHCR staff members have floated the idea of discontinuing the cluster approach in stable areas of Somalia in favor of a “working group” approach that might better facilitate multi-sectoral recovery and development needs in those areas.⁹⁸

Humanitarian officials in the Federal Government of Somalia exhibited a reasonably good understanding of international humanitarian organizations operating in their country, including the cluster system. While they emphasized their gratitude for international assistance, FGS staff members criticized relief agencies for a lack of flexibility, poor transparency, weak coordination, puzzling priorities and “presumptuous decision-making” that sometimes only pretends to consult with the government.⁹⁹

A number of international humanitarian officials working in Somalia with considerable experience in other countries were strikingly introspective about the current status of the world’s system of emergency response. For them, the rigors of managing and monitoring programs in Somalia appear to have sparked larger existential concerns about the health of the global humanitarian system. “The humanitarian landscape has changed, especially in 2014,” a senior UN official said. “Ten years ago, at the time of the *Protect or Neglect* report, Darfur was the big new emergency. Now there are probably ten emergencies the size of Darfur. I hope the system catches up with the changed landscape, but so far we have not caught up. I am very frustrated.”¹⁰⁰

Said another: “I have not in all my years seen a system so fragmented as in Somalia. The pervasive incentive is to continue the status quo. There is a kind of complacency. Donors are complicit in this. The global humanitarian system is really creaking at the seams. The system cannot cope, but it pretends to be coping. The global system is in a bit of a crisis. We cannot honestly say we are delivering the best possible services.”¹⁰¹ In his opinion, the three most essential improvements needed within the humanitarian system are fewer bureaucratic turf

⁹⁷ Key Informant interview, Mogadishu, September 2014.

⁹⁸ UNHCR, *A Protection Strategy on Internal Displacement for UNHCR Somalia—2013-2015* (2013).

⁹⁹ Interviews with Somali government officials in Mogadishu and in Hargeisa, Somaliland, September 2014.

¹⁰⁰ Key Informant interview, Nairobi, September 2014.

¹⁰¹ Interview with donor government official, Nairobi, September 2014.

battles, better use of available resources and better recognition of victims' best interests and how to meet them.

Protection Cluster and UNHCR

UNHCR and the protection cluster have a difficult task. Protection of internally displaced persons is challenging under the best of circumstances. In Somalia's fluid and volatile environment, the approach to protection must be agile and opportunistic in order to address localized situations as they materialize, particularly in unstable central and southern regions of the country.

“In such a pernicious protection environment, it is unlikely that there will be revolutionary improvements in protection,” states UNHCR's current protection strategy for Somali IDPs.¹⁰² The impact of protection efforts in Somalia is incremental at best. Year-long goals set by a protection cluster are welcomed, but a primary goal should be rapid reaction to threats and opportunities as they develop. It is a difficult balance to strike between a strategy that is reactive and proactive.

A properly balanced protection approach is key, for example, to address Somalia's related IDP issues of forced evictions and planned relocations. The protection cluster and its members must maintain an ability to react quickly to avert or humanize forcible evictions, which occur with little or no warning and have grown in number and frequency in recent months. Ultimately, however, the best antidote to forced evictions is a viable plan for permanent or semi-permanent relocation (or other durable solutions) that gives IDPs at least some rights to live on the land underneath them – a difficult solution requiring a proactively strategic approach to protection.

UNHCR sought to re-energize its protection strategy in 2014 around the goal of durable solutions. UNHCR's objective was to ensure that any step toward durable solutions for refugees and IDPs – returns home, local integration, or relocation to permanent new sites – would include proper protection monitoring, attention to property rights and threats of gender based violence and adherence to standards laid out in the Somali government's upcoming IDP policy. UNHCR's protection plan helped lead to the launch of a project to profile the country's IDPs, provide training for government officials on evictions and other protection issues, and avert threatened forced evictions of blind IDPs. The UNHCR protection strategy has merit as a forward-leaning, solutions-oriented approach.

UNHCR/Somalia erred, however, when it failed to fill the protection cluster coordinator position that remained vacant for the first nine months of 2014 and beyond. UNHCR says it expects to fill the position at the end of 2014 with a highly qualified candidate, but the long gap in leadership has damaged the protection cluster and undermined UNHCR's credibility as the cluster's lead agency. Some members of the protection cluster believe that the vacant coordinator position has handicapped the cluster in competition for CHF funds and has deprived the protection cluster of its voice at internal UNHCR meetings and at other key interagency meetings.¹⁰³ The UNHCR

¹⁰² UNHCR, *A Protection Strategy on Internal Displacement for UNHCR Somalia—2013-2015* (2013).

¹⁰³ Multiple Key Informant interviews in Nairobi and Mogadishu, September 2014.

Country Director for Somalia acknowledges that the protection cluster is “weak” and needs hands-on UNHCR leadership.¹⁰⁴ A staff member of the Danish Refugee Council has temporarily led the protection cluster in Nairobi since July.

While UNHCR’s recent leadership of the protection cluster has been a major disappointment, other aspects of the agency’s IDP protection efforts in Somalia earn praise. The agency’s protection team in Mogadishu is strong and is primarily focused on internally displaced persons. UNHCR protection officers are also posted in Somaliland and Puntland. The agency deftly capitalized on the government’s IDP relocation plan in 2013 to nudge authorities toward formulation of a national IDP policy, which the government subsequently pursued with support from the office of the UN Special Rapporteur for the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons. UNHCR continues to help manage the Protection and Return Monitoring Network, which has collected data on protection incidents since 2006.

UNHCR/Somalia assessed its own protection weaknesses in a mid-2013 exercise, and the compilation is illuminating.¹⁰⁵ The self-evaluation by UNHCR staff concluded that the agency’s protection work was hindered by weak relationships with parts of the FGS as well as superficial knowledge about IDPs’ daily lives and longer-term intentions. UNHCR staff acknowledged that protection monitoring in areas of return was inadequate. Most interestingly, the internal evaluation exercise concluded that UNHCR as an institution lacked confidence in its work with IDPs – a problem that many outsiders have long suspected exists within UNHCR far beyond Somalia.

In interviews for this study, Somali staff members of UNHCR identified another challenge that undermines UNHCR’s protection work for IDPs as opposed to refugees. Because UNHCR under the cluster system is not responsible for providing a wide range of material assistance to internally displaced persons, many IDPs tend to see no visible benefit to UNHCR’s presence. As a result, UNHCR protection officers in the field sometimes encounter difficulty when trying to earn the personal trust that is needed to elicit sensitive protection information from IDPs.

The protection cluster’s leadership vacuum in Nairobi has not deterred field protection clusters in Mogadishu and other parts of Somalia. The local protection cluster in Mogadishu meets regularly and has taken steps to shift its most important work from cluster meetings of up to 100 member organizations to streamlined Protection Advisory Group meetings limited to the 40 most operational organizations. The larger meetings were not only unwieldy but were considered potentially harmful due to sensitivities about the protection incidents being discussed without knowing the identities of everyone in the room. Many Somali NGOs reportedly possess a decent understanding of protection concepts – possibly the result of a series of two-day trainings that the protection cluster conducted for 200 local NGOs in Somalia during 2012-2013.¹⁰⁶ UNHCR continues to offer trainings for local NGO personnel on protection basics, as well as child protection, combatting gender-based violence and the concept of protection mainstreaming.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with UNHCR/Somalia Country Director, Mogadishu, September 2014.

¹⁰⁵ UNHCR, *A Protection Strategy on Internal Displacement for UNHCR Somalia—2013-2015* (2013).

¹⁰⁶ Key Informant interview, Nairobi, September 2014.

Deeper in the field beyond Mogadishu, UNHCR has helped to create smaller field protection clusters in four towns in south and central regions in recent months. The protection cluster in the Somaliland capital, Hargeisa, meets quarterly with government officials in attendance. The Somaliland protection cluster participated in a project that recently established a permanent relocation site for some 900 IDP households.

Surprisingly, neither UNHCR nor the protection cluster have an explicit strategy to address the protection challenge posed by gatekeepers at hundreds of IDP sites throughout the country.

Addressing Aid Diversion and Gatekeepers

Gatekeepers who prominently control access and assistance flows to IDP sites are merely the most visible part of a massive system of aid diversion in Somalia that has been entrenched ever since emergency programs raced to respond to conflict and drought in the early 1990s. One NGO has aptly characterized it as a voracious system-wide diversion cartel.¹⁰⁷

UN agencies have entered into \$3.6 billion of contracts and grants with some 1,800 contractors over the years.¹⁰⁸ The UN is currently investigating suspected diversions of \$6 million or more from famine response programs of a few years ago.¹⁰⁹ “There is no guarantee – even where access is possible – that aid resources actually benefit the most-vulnerable populations,” an independent assessment concluded in August 2014.¹¹⁰ Donor governments’ counter-terrorism policies in recent years focused on preventing aid diversions by Al-Shabaab. However, diversions are far more entrenched in areas of the country controlled by the government or by local clans and militia, with gatekeepers serving as their agents.

Gatekeepers typically charge displaced households fees ranging from \$2 to \$30 per month for the right to erect a shelter at an IDP site.¹¹¹ Gatekeepers also take a portion of any assistance the household might receive periodically from relief organizations. UN officials have uncovered gatekeeper diversions of up to 80 percent. Recently gatekeepers have been complicit in schemes to forcibly evict IDPs from their shelters in order to reap the proceeds from land sales and plunge the evicted families into dire conditions that might attract new assistance. “Gatekeepers have a vested interest in keeping the IDP situation going on,” a UN humanitarian worker said.¹¹²

Somali “briefcase NGOs” are also part of the diversion racket. Created for the sole purpose of attracting money with little capability or intention of implementing programs, so-called “briefcase NGOs” attend cluster meetings and file funding proposals for non-existent programs

¹⁰⁷ Human Rights Watch, *Hostages of the Gatekeepers: Abuses Against Internally Displaced in Mogadishu, Somalia* (March 2013).

¹⁰⁸ Interview with UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Mogadishu, September 2014; and interview with UN/Somalia Risk Management Unit, Nairobi, September 2014.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Mogadishu, September 2014.

¹¹⁰ Tufts University Feinstein International Center, Daniel Maxwell and Nisar Majid authors, *Another Humanitarian Crisis in Somalia? Learning from the 2011 Famine* (August 2014).

¹¹¹ Multiple Key Informant interviews in Nairobi, Mogadishu, and Washington DC, September 2014.

¹¹² Key Informant interview, Nairobi, September 2014.

in locations that international organizations cannot reach.¹¹³ At first glance, fraudulent NGOs are outwardly indistinguishable from legitimate local NGOs, which harms fundraising efforts of the latter. Some relief agencies are reluctant to investigate suspected diversions for fear of exposing their staff members to retribution, including assassinations.¹¹⁴

The current Humanitarian Coordinator said he is determined to “break this silence around diversions” with closer monitoring and investigations.¹¹⁵ Relief organizations are experimenting with a range of tactics to circumvent gatekeepers. The tactics include discrete cash transfers to vulnerable IDPs, greater use of phone hotlines so that IDPs can report their assistance and protection needs directly to NGOs, and distributions of ration cards in early morning hours when gatekeepers are absent. Relief workers said they are trying to collaborate more closely with local government authorities in Mogadishu to erode gatekeepers’ power over the IDP population. A humanitarian advocacy agency has proposed terminating assistance to camps controlled by the most abusive gatekeepers – an aggressive step that some local Somali aid workers said they would favor. Some NGOs, believing that gatekeepers are becoming less powerful because of the new government and shifting clan dynamics, are examining ways to co-opt “moderate” gatekeepers into working as legitimate camp managers in collaboration with humanitarian agencies.

The most powerfully innovative tool to combat systemic diversion of humanitarian assistance in Somalia is the UN’s Risk Management Unit (RMU). Created in 2010, the RMU investigates Somali companies and organizations to help UN agencies assess the risk of corruption before entering into a contract or grant with a local partner. The RMU maintains a large database that is regularly updated with performance information submitted by UN agencies at the conclusion of each contract or grant. The RMU in Somalia was the first of its kind in the global UN system. Unfortunately, international NGOs have been slow to share information with the RMU or request analysis from it, reportedly out of concern that negative information about local implementing partners might trigger retribution against NGO staff.¹¹⁶

Coping with Shifting IDP Populations: Evictions, Relocation and Returns

Evictions

Rising land values in Mogadishu are creating an incentive for landowners to evict displaced populations in order to sell or develop properties. Some 22,000 or more persons were evicted in 2013, followed by more than 34,000 in the first nine months of 2014.¹¹⁷ Most evictees were IDPs. Racing to eviction sites in hopes of negotiating last-second reprieves or arranging last-minute alternative accommodations can be a difficult and often thankless task for protection officers in urban environments around the world, and Mogadishu is no different. Somalia’s

¹¹³ Multiple Key Informant interviews in Nairobi and Mogadishu, September 2014.

¹¹⁴ Multiple Key Informant interviews in Nairobi and Mogadishu, September 2014.

¹¹⁵ Interview with UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Mogadishu, September 2014.

¹¹⁶ Multiple Key Informant interviews in Nairobi and Mogadishu, September 2014.

¹¹⁷ UNHCR, *UNHCR Somalia Key Messages to the Somali Federal Government* (June 2014); and IDMC website, summary reports of 2013 and 2014.

security threats place additional constraints on the mobility of protection staff trying to reach sites threatened with imminent evictions.

Humanitarian agencies have attempted to counter the wave of evictions with advocacy and trainings. UNHCR and the office of the UN Special Rapporteur for the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons have worked with Somali government officials to draft guidelines on evictions. The effort has had minimal impact on evictions thus far. Somali authorities say that they learn about many evictions after the fact. The Humanitarian Country Team published a policy discussion paper in late-2013, drafted by UNHCR, outlining possible steps to deter evictions – the HCT’s second policy paper on evictions in two years.¹¹⁸ The linchpins of the HCT’s plan, however, were implementation of the government’s IDP policy and possible resumption of organized IDP relocation activities; a year later, the government has not yet adopted an IDP policy and organized relocation efforts remain in limbo.

The Humanitarian Coordinator submitted a letter to the FGS advocating for humane eviction guidelines. OCHA has increasingly raised eviction concerns at cluster meetings and in discussions with government authorities.¹¹⁹ UNHCR convened a workshop on eviction issues for Mogadishu’s 17 district commissioners and national government staff. The agency has also pressed regional authorities in Kismayo, Garowe, Hargeisa and Bosasso in an effort to curtail forced evictions. Some NGOs privately criticize the UN’s political arm and donor governments for not speaking out more forcefully against IDP evictions.

Relocation

Plans to relocate Somalia’s protracted IDPs in an organized fashion to better sites have long been an attractive goal to improve living conditions and put displaced families on the path to self-sufficiency. Some small-scale relocation schemes have succeeded in Somalia over the years. In present-day Somalia, viable relocation programs, if properly devised, could be beneficial in multiple ways. Relocation could relieve land pressures causing evictions, free up government property for its intended use, break the grip of gatekeepers over existing IDP sites and give momentum to the UN’s effort to transition from emergency assistance that is haphazard and inefficient to a longer-term strategy that lays the groundwork for durable solutions.

Relocation plans appear to be paralyzed, however. A viable relocation strategy might not exist. Most land in and around Mogadishu reportedly is privately owned, not by the government. A UN official deployed to Somalia in 2012 to focus on relocation planning has departed.¹²⁰ The government’s plan to establish a large relocation site in Dayniile on the outskirts of Mogadishu produced long and complicated negotiations between the government and humanitarian agencies over protection and livelihood concerns about the relocation site. The plan was not implemented. Government and humanitarian staff disagree over whether the Dayniile relocation plan is still viable in 2014-2015.

¹¹⁸ Somalia Humanitarian Country Team, Discussion Paper, *Evictions, Relocation and Durable Solutions for IDPs in Mogadishu* (October 20, 2013).

¹¹⁹ Key Informant interview, Nairobi, September 2014.

¹²⁰ Key Informant interview, Nairobi, September 2014.

The two sides sorely need to come together over a joint relocation policy that is principled yet practical. Without such a joint plan, the political and economic forces pushing for wholesale eviction or relocation of Mogadishu's displaced population "are going to do it with or without us," a senior UN humanitarian official warned.¹²¹

Returns

Approximately 40,000 internally displaced persons have returned to their home areas in the past two years. It is not known, however, whether this flow is a harbinger of larger return movements in the next couple years. Limited surveys of IDPs' intentions have been contradictory and unreliable. Surveys indicating that the overwhelming majority of IDP families now in Mogadishu will never return home are contradicted by a new survey by the Ministry of Interior's Disaster Management Agency suggesting that a majority will return to homes in central and southern Somalia when conditions permit.¹²² Some surveys of IDPs' intentions have proved to be highly inaccurate, significantly overstating the number who subsequently returned.

Like so many humanitarian issues in Somalia, the matter of IDP returns is convoluted and controversial. UNHCR by its own admission has conveyed mixed signals about the viability of returns. On one hand, UNHCR is a signatory to a Tripartite Agreement with the governments of Kenya and Somalia laying the groundwork for refugee repatriations and is preparing a pilot return program for refugees to three locations in the southern half of Somalia. On the other hand, UNHCR has issued a "non-return advisory" to discourage perceptions that the country has stabilized. UNHCR states that it stands ready to support individual returns to Somaliland and Puntland – returns to those areas are virtually completed in any case – but the agency says that conditions generally are not conducive for returns to southern and central Somalia. UNHCR says that specific pockets of the south-central region might become partially conducive to returns, in which case UNHCR will support refugee repatriations to those pockets but will not promote IDP returns there.¹²³

UNHCR's stated return policy is unsettling for NGOs who believe that returns are a bad idea at this time and fear that standards for the safe return of refugees and IDPs will become "normalized downward" in the same way that humanitarian assistance and protection standards have declined in Somalia over the years. An expert on return and reintegration issues expressed "serious concern" that the UN's normal approach to return programs – which is based on an assumption that returnee areas will gradually revitalize after the refugee or IDP's return assistance package is exhausted – does not fit the Somalia context where improved conditions in rural areas have not occurred in decades.¹²⁴

Some 40 organizations participate in a return monitoring network led by UNHCR. IDP returns to-date have had mixed results in central and southern Somalia. Some returnees have fled their homes again because of security problems or poor living conditions. In surveys, nearly half of

¹²¹ Key Informant interview, Nairobi, September 2014.

¹²² Interview with Somali national government humanitarian official, Mogadishu, September 2014.

¹²³ Multiple Key Informant interviews in Nairobi and Mogadishu, September 2014.

¹²⁴ Key Informant interview, Nairobi, September 2014.

the returnees reported that security in their home areas was worse than they expected.¹²⁵ Three-quarters of returnees surveyed continued to live in temporary shelters, lacking either the resources or the confidence to construct permanent housing. A significant proportion reported that food supplies were inadequate. The study found that returnees' overall living conditions deteriorated by the tenth month of their return home.

In response to limitations experienced within the cluster system, humanitarian organizations established a Return Consortium in 2012 to encourage a collaborative and multi-sectoral approach to the return home of uprooted populations. The Return Consortium continues to operate from Nairobi, led by UNHCR. Unlike a cluster, the Consortium is able to limit its membership to selected operational organizations and does not make funding decisions that create internal conflict among members. Some protection staff, however, express concern that the Return Consortium has weak safeguards to monitor the protection of returnees.¹²⁶

Nine NGOs created a Regional Durable Solutions Initiative in 2014 to serve as an advocacy think-tank on durable solutions issues. The group aims to ensure that UN and political actors consult fully with NGOs on plans related to the return of refugees. A third body, the Solutions Alliance, is a regional consortium formed by eight organizations in 2014 to encourage greater efforts toward long-term solutions to protracted displacement. A fourth entity, the Global Solution for Somali Refugees, was created by UNHCR with international membership at the ministerial level to encourage support for the repatriation of Somali refugees.

Addressing Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection

The Humanitarian Country Team has made combatting gender-based violence (GBV) an explicit priority.¹²⁷ A 2013 visit to Somalia by the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict helped to galvanize attention to the prevalence of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation in the country. The UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia publicly vowed in May 2014 that “I will make it my personal commitment” to advocate on GBV issues to the Somali government, international donors and other actors.¹²⁸

UNHCR manages a GBV Information System that collects data about GBV incidents. UN agencies in the past year have convened a roundtable, circulated issue papers and engaged in advocacy in an effort to raise awareness about the Somali government's responsibilities to address GBV and seek accountability under domestic, regional and international legal frameworks. Special attention has been focused on the Ministry of Gender and Human Rights, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice and representatives of state security forces and law enforcement. A special roundtable on GBV issues with AMISOM was scheduled for late-2014.

¹²⁵ UNHCR et al, Return Consortium Somalia, *Towards Durable Solutions: Achievements and Challenges in Supporting Voluntary Returns of IDPs in Somalia* (2014).

¹²⁶ Key Informant interview by email, October 2014.

¹²⁷ Key Informant interview, Nairobi, September 2014.

¹²⁸ Global Protection Cluster Gender-Based Violence Working Group, *Somalia Gender-Based Violence Working Group 2014-2016 Strategy* (February 2014).

The Gender-Based Violence Working Group, a component of Somalia's protection cluster, produced an extensive strategy document in 2014 that focuses on prevention, service delivery to survivors and improved access to justice.¹²⁹ The strategy document also calls for stronger coordination among international humanitarian organizations, Somali civil society, government agencies and other arms of the UN integrated mission in Somalia. UNFPA and INTERSOS co-lead the Working Group. The Working Group's priority as of late-2014 is to negotiate a "joint framework" with the Federal Government of Somalia, which produced its own national action plan on gender-based violence three months after the Working Group produced its three-year strategy.¹³⁰

Government officials in Somaliland and Puntland co-chair meetings of the GBV Working Group in those territories. Some NGO participants are uncomfortable with the presence of government personnel and their access to confidential information. As a result, reporting on incidents in Somaliland and Puntland has diminished and Working Group meetings there have become less regular.¹³¹ Government officials in Mogadishu do not attend meetings of the GBV Working Group, and discussions are said to be more frank and informative as a result.

The scale and quality of services for GBV survivors is extremely limited. The government's willingness and ability to exert authority and hold perpetrators accountable in a barely functional legal system will be challenging. Fewer than 1 percent of GBV survivors seek legal counseling in order to press charges.¹³² This indicates a widespread lack of confidence in the legal system and the social stigma and harassment directed at girls and women who have been raped. Humanitarian officials believe that incidents of GBV increased dramatically in the past year with the influx of newly displaced persons into Mogadishu. Humanitarian organizations operate a GBV Information Management System to chart reported cases. All actors agree, however, that the true level of violations is vastly under-reported.

Child Protection Working Groups function in Mogadishu, Somaliland, Puntland and four other locations. The Working Groups generally try to adhere to relevant parts of UNICEF's global five-point child protection strategy, which focuses on children in armed conflict, landmines, justice for children, gender-based violence and harmful social practices. With UNICEF's guidance, Working Group participants were planning in September to undertake the first child protection assessment conducted in south-central Somalia since 2011. UNICEF reports that several local NGOs have developed impressive capabilities on child protection issues, the fruits of 20 years of capacity building by UNICEF.

Government officials of Somaliland and Puntland participate in the Child Protection Working Groups in those areas. Working Group members in Mogadishu are relieved that government authorities do not participate there: government entities in Mogadishu are considered to be complicit in child protection abuses and local NGOs reporting the incidents fear being identified.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Key Informant interview, Nairobi, September 2014.

¹³¹ Key Informant interview, Nairobi, September 2014.

¹³² Key Informant interview, Mogadishu, September 2014.

Humanitarian Linkages with Long-Term Development

Despite mounting rhetoric in the past year about a system-wide commitment to pursue a humanitarian strategy that accentuates durable solutions, the relief-to-development gap is as glaring in Somalia as it is in most other countries. Many relief organizations in Somalia privately acknowledge the need to improve infrastructure and services in areas of return in order to help “pull” refugees and IDPs home voluntarily. At the creation of the global cluster system in 2005, policy-makers sought to bridge the relief-development divide with creation of an early recovery cluster led by UNDP. The early recovery cluster was meant to serve as the platform for involving UNDP and other development actors in humanitarian projects seeking to phase into recovery programs and to help emergency response organizations learn to shape their short-term relief programs with an eye on facilitating development.

In Somalia, however, no evidence of this cluster structure is visible. Despite a widespread and deep desire to bring the country’s 20-plus years of protracted population displacement to a safe and dignified conclusion and to build the resilience of long-neglected communities, Somalia has no early recovery cluster, no early recovery working group and no apparent realization that the concept is operationally possible within the cluster structure. At the highest levels of the UN humanitarian system in Somalia, senior officials were unaware that UNDP in 2014 remains the officially designated lead agency for the global Working Group on Early Recovery. “I have never worked in a country where the early recovery cluster was operational. I am not sure why it isn’t operational in Somalia,” one UN humanitarian worker offered.¹³³

According to UNDP, the agency is in the process of revising how it allocates its \$60 million budget in Somalia. Currently about 85 percent of UNDP’s budget goes toward “rule of law” programs, leaving only about 15 percent for recovery initiatives, according to a UNDP official.¹³⁴ A crucial humanitarian and development challenge in need of UNDP attention is the issue of land ownership, particularly in towns and urban areas where many displaced Somali households apparently prefer to integrate permanently. Plans by humanitarian organizations to support local integration, permanent relocation projects and return programs when conditions permit are much more likely to succeed if those efforts are coordinated with UNDP and other development actors. The notion that early recovery objectives can be successfully mainstreamed into existing humanitarian programs without links to UNDP or other development organizations is an illusion.

Humanitarian leaders express optimism that the Somali government’s New Deal initiative, which emphasizes stabilization and long-term development goals, will provide a vehicle for more effective coordination between relief agencies and development experts. Humanitarian officials also point to their creation of a three-year Consolidated Appeal, which is meant in part to encourage programming with longer-term recovery objectives. They also express optimism that careful profiling of the country’s IDP population with support from the Geneva-based Joint IDP Profiling Service – a long-awaited step that began in mid-2014 – will help document exactly what long-term services IDPs believe they need in order to successfully integrate locally, settle in a different location, or return home.

¹³³ Key Informant interview, Nairobi, September 2014.

¹³⁴ Key Informant interview, Mogadishu, September 2014.

Some relief workers, recognizing the importance of closer collaboration with development organizations, have gone so far as to suggest that humanitarian organizations should cease using humanitarian jargon such as “clusters” and “protection” in favor of terms more comfortable to development colleagues, such as “working groups” and “rule of law.”¹³⁵

Funding

Somalia has received funding of more than \$4.9 billion for humanitarian operations during the past ten years.¹³⁶ Funding under the Consolidated Appeals Process grew from \$108 million in 2004 to \$714 in 2013. During the past 10 years combined, humanitarian programs in Somalia have received 65 percent of the funds requested for the country in the Consolidated Appeal and/or Strategic Response Plan.¹³⁷ Somalia is not quite the “abandoned step-child” of the humanitarian system that some claim it to be.

However, the struggle for adequate funding has intensified noticeably in recent years. Humanitarian operations in the country received only half of the funds requested in 2012 and again in 2013.¹³⁸ In 2014, only one-third of the \$933 million requested was on hand more than three-quarters into the year. As of October 2014, Somalia was the world’s ninth largest humanitarian operation in terms of absolute dollars committed. It ranked only 17th in terms of the percentage of needs being funded.¹³⁹ These figures, however, do not consistently include often generous bilateral contributions made to Somalia over the years by so-called “emerging donors” such as the governments of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and Islamic NGOs in the region.

Many attribute the shortfall to the demands of other emergencies. Somalia is hard-pressed to compete for humanitarian funding against newer emergencies that have emerged in the Syria region, Iraq, Ukraine, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, as well as the West Africa Ebola crisis. Others speculate that the \$2.4 billion pledged by donor governments in 2013 to reconstruct Somalia is siphoning funding and attention from existing relief programs. Still others speculate that donor governments believe many proposed humanitarian programs are unfeasible because of security concerns and limited presence of international humanitarian staff inside Somalia.

Regardless of the reasons, the substantial shortfall has affected programming and morale at a time when humanitarian agencies are under pressure to stretch themselves programmatically in an effort to address recent new displacement flows caused by drought and the AMISOM military offensive, assess fresh protection and assistance needs in newly accessible territory captured by AMISOM, ramp up famine-prevention efforts in southern and central areas and address protracted displacement with an eye on durable solutions.

¹³⁵ Key Informant interview, Nairobi, September 2014.

¹³⁶ Computed from historical data on UN-OCHA Financial Tracking System, <http://fts.unocha.org/pageloader.aspx?page=emerg-emergencyCountryDetails&cc=som>.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

The pooled funding mechanisms used in Somalia – the Consolidated Humanitarian Fund (CHF) and the Central Emergency Response Fund – have provided a combined \$385 million to humanitarian projects in the country during the past five years.¹⁴⁰ The Humanitarian Coordinator froze the CHF process for several months in 2014 in order to address concerns about diversions of funds.¹⁴¹ Complaints are common that the process of tapping pooled funding for projects is painfully slow and not compatible with rapid emergency responses. Some believe that the competition for pooled funds is unfair, with funding decisions often based on personal relationships and biases in favor of status-quo programming.¹⁴² Some protection cluster participants complain that the pooled funding process short-changes the protection cluster.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Interview with Humanitarian Coordinator, Mogadishu, September 2014.

¹⁴² Multiple Key Informant interviews in Nairobi and Mogadishu, September 2014.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) International humanitarian staff should return to Mogadishu as rapidly as permitted by forward-leaning security analyses, particularly the staff members of cluster lead agencies. Cluster discussions and decisions should shift from Nairobi to Mogadishu.

Mogadishu is a dangerous, difficult, sub-optimal environment for managing and implementing humanitarian programs. However, barring major new security incidents, humanitarian agencies should follow the lead of the Humanitarian Coordinator and should expand their presence in Mogadishu with staff members who are willing, able and trained to work amid the security risks that Mogadishu presents. Humanitarian work should not be a reckless suicide pact. However, timely and effective humanitarian work requires hands-on management and better monitoring than can be done from Nairobi.

2) International NGOs should collaborate more closely with the UN's Risk Management Unit.

The Risk Management Unit assesses the risks of fraud in an operating environment where fraud and massive diversion of aid have been common for more than two decades. NGOs should seek RMU's analysis of local implementing partners and should routinely provide information to the RMU about the performance of each local partner. Donor governments should strongly encourage NGOs to take this step as an accountability measure.

3) Humanitarian agencies, working together in close coordination under the Humanitarian Coordinator, should place a high priority on creation of a realistic relocation plan that protects IDPs from arbitrary evictions and exploitation while addressing legitimate desires of the Somali government to rationalize the chaotic IDP settlements of Mogadishu. Donors should be prepared to support this effort.

The recent emphasis of UN planning documents on pursuing "a durable solutions strategy" for uprooted Somalis is necessary and appropriate to break through the protracted status quo. However, a durable solutions strategy will be incomplete and will amount to little more than rhetoric without a viable plan for IDP relocation to permanent or semi-permanent sites.

4) UNHCR should, as a matter of highest priority, install a full-time dedicated coordinator for the protection cluster. The coordinator should be based in Mogadishu as early as possible.

UNHCR's failure to appoint a full-time, fully authorized coordinator crippled the protection cluster during 2014. Efforts by the Danish Refugee Council to lead the protection cluster were admirable but could not replace UNHCR's leadership absence. Given the prospects for ramped up humanitarian programming in Somalia during 2015, appointment of a qualified UNHCR protection cluster coordinator should be a priority.

5) The international system should seek a new approach – and fresh commitments – to bridge the relief-to-development gap.

In Somalia as in many other countries, the early recovery cluster created under the cluster system in 2005 has failed to provide a smooth transition from emergency relief programs

to longer-term recovery and development programs. A fresh approach involving UNDP, the World Bank and other development entities is sorely needed.

6) The international humanitarian system, including donor governments, should undertake a specially focused examination of how the cluster approach can function – or should function – in situations that pose exceptionally high security risks and limited humanitarian access, such as in present-day Somalia, Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

The global cluster system remains very much a work in progress as it enters its tenth year. However, the system increasingly encounters challenges that were less prevalent when the cluster system was created. How can the cluster system do a better job of facilitating humanitarian assistance that is consistent, predictable, timely and accountable in environments that are dangerously unpredictable, resistant to rapid action and that force reliance on remote programming and other tactics that undermine accountability to donors and beneficiaries alike? These are serious questions that need honest examination.



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