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BUILDING THE SHIP WHILE SAILING IT

THE STATE OF LOCALISATION IN SOMALIA

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This publication is an edited and shortened version of the research report.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research was commissioned by the ToGETHER consortium of four German humanitarian NGOs (Caritas Germany, Deutsche Welthungerhilfe, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and Malteser International). It is part of a series of eight country studies and one comparative analysis with other reports for Bangladesh, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Pakistan. The analysis aims at informing the programme's efforts to advance localisation in each country. Furthermore, it contributes to a wider translation into practice of the commitments that international agencies have made to support and reinforce rather than replace national and local crisis responders in their countries.

The report first explores the context, with particular attention to the role of the federal government and the legal-political space for civil society. It then maps what could be identified as important localisation-relevant initiatives and localisation conversations. Subsequently, more details are provided on the four dimensions of localisation which were investigated in particular – quality of relationship, finances, capacities, and coordination. Additionally, the cross-cutting issue of gender and localisation, humanitarian principles and risk transfer are discussed.

Three decades of severe crisis

For the past three decades, South-Central Somalia has suffered a protracted crisis. In addition to political insecurity, Somalia is also vulnerable to drought (resulting in severe and deadly famines), flooding and other calamities such as locust swarms. The most devastating drought and conflict-induced crises in the past decade have been in 2011-2012 and 2017-2018. Estimates of deaths, largely from famine, in 2011-2012 are in the order of 260,000. A contributing factor was the presence of the terrorist group Al-Shabaab, which controlled parts of the southern areas. The Humanitarian Needs Overview of 2020 sees 5.2 million people, 42 per cent of the Somali population, in need of assistance (including 3.5 million non-displaced; 1.7 million displaced by conflict, insecurity, forced evictions, droughts, and floods; 108,000 returnees; and 42,000 refugees).

Clan and lineage as primary reference for identity

State institutions are only re-emerging after a long absence, and in a more complex federal formula. Most Somalis are too young to have had any lived experience of what a state is supposed to mean, while older ones may remember the bad experiences of how Siad Barre misused the state for narrow-interest purposes. Clan and lineage have provided the primary identity and practical reference for social and political arguments. They have been both a source of division and violence, but also the primary social protection and safety net.

Unusually high level of internationalisation of aid

In the absence of state-like institutions, except for the Puntland Regional Administration, the people have had to rely on kin solidarity, international relief aid, remittances and private sector profits.

The result has been an unusual level of internationalisation, with international actors managing operations and deciding on strategies, often from a remote location because of security concerns. Thus, South-Central Somalia in particular presents a unique context in which internationalisation-localisation dynamics play out: Somali NGOs have emerged from humanitarian crisis situations, constantly responded to ongoing and new ones, and have been directed and employed by international actors for that purpose. With such a history, and for

a long time without state institutions and citizenship, it is again not surprising they have not developed stronger identities and roles also of 'civil society' actors, as there is largely no state to hold to account.

Localisation is on the discussion agenda

What is now called the 'localisation' conversation predates the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit but is taking place under that heading since 2017. Various meetings, research reports and persistent advocacy over the past four years have managed to put this policy and practice issue more strongly on the agenda. The Somalia NGO Consortium and the newly created 'Localisation Workstream' are two key spaces. Regarding financing of Somali national and local actors, the Somalia Humanitarian Fund is often the key reference. In 2019, a 'Somalia Localisation Framework', which has been drafted by a pool of consultants led by the NGO Consortium in consultation with NGOs, Government, UN and donors, was endorsed by the Humanitarian Country Team (OCHA 2020:7). But the Federal Government of Somalia is largely absent from these conversations and initiatives, and so far does not have a national plan or strategy to deal with humanitarian crises, to complement its National Development Plan.

No shared understanding of localisation

There is currently no shared understanding of 'localisation'. International actors tend to focus on finance and capacities, though some recognise the importance of quality relationships and equitable partnerships. Also, the Somalia Localisation Framework speaks about 'respect and trust'. Somali NGOs on the other hand speak more about community-based ownership, responsibilities and accountabilities, and capacities of local public authorities i.e. a more bottom-up localisation process. Somali NGOs favour governmental regulation as is envisaged in the draft NGO Bill but would also like the FGS to adopt policies in favour of stronger Somali leadership.

Overall capacity assessments reveal strengths and weaknesses

Whereas most INGOs and other international agencies concentrate on individual capacity assessment for the purpose of identifying suitable partners for their mostly short-term projects, Fernando Almansa surveyed the overall capacity situation. In his 2019 comprehensive assessment (formally published by Oxfam in 2020), he identifies general strengths and weaknesses: "In general, NGOs in Somalia have substantive capacity, particularly on humanitarian mandates, financial management, human resources management, networking and alliance building, conflict-sensitivity and rights-based approaches, resilience and disaster risk reduction. The weakest areas are analytical and strategising, knowledge management, standards compliance, financial autonomy and geographical outreach."

Relevant localisation initiatives have limited impact in the overall context

Relevant initiatives are underway, some initiated by Somali NGOs, the Nexus consortium of nine Somali NGOs being an innovative one, others by INGOs, with e.g. Oxfam's long-standing work as an eminent example of good practice. Notwithstanding, the actual influence and impact of these initiatives and efforts remains modest in the bigger picture of overall aid volumes and aid practices in Somalia.

Equitable partnerships are the rare exception

As of 2012, two-thirds of Somali NGOs described their relationship as sub-contracting or implementing partners. "Very few interviewees could refer to any principles or codes that guide their organisations when designing and working in partnership with others." (Tsitrin-

baum 2012:20). The widespread occurrence of instrumental use of Somali NGOs as short-term sub-contractors was highlighted again in 2017 (Atkins 2017). In 2019, Somali CSOs are still described as "subcontractors in risky areas and competitors in areas where they can implement programmes directly" (Almansa 2020:8). There is only operational but no strategic dialogue. The only more 'strategic topic' of conversation is 'localisation'.

Only tiny amount of overall annual aid goes directly to Somali NGOs

While it is heartening to see that about half of the annual spending of the Somalia Humanitarian Fund goes directly to Somali NGOs, this represents only a tiny fraction of the annual aid for Somalia. Critical for all Somali agencies is the access not only to quantities of finance but especially quality finance: more flexible, more longer-term and predictable funding and investment in their organisational development – exactly what UN agencies and INGOs seek and get.

Presence but no leadership functions in international coordination structures

Somali NGOs, though not State actors, are well present in the clusters, sit in Cluster Review Committees that allocate funds from the Somalia Humanitarian Fund via clusters, and now also have a presence in the Humanitarian Country Team. Presence, however, does not automatically equate meaningful participation and influence. There is little formal co-leadership and international actors retain power and authority.

Women's rights organisations need more support

There are many women self-help groups and smaller CBO-type organisations in Somalia, working primarily on a needs basis and with comparatively little networking. Though several Somali women are in leadership positions in different organisations and fora, overall there is no gender parity within Somali organisations. Somali women's rights and gender rights organisations need more focused support. In achieving gender transformation in the country's humanitarian sector, international actors, with the support of Somali men, will need to listen to Somali women and support them in the activities most appropriate in the national context.

Political realities have to be acknowledged

The risk and realities of fraud and corruption in South-Central Somalia cannot be denied. But they also affect international aid agencies. The current practice of transferring all risk onto the weakest and least well-resourced Somali actors, NGOs but also certain private sector contractors, is an obstacle to genuine partnership. Excessive risk transfer may also be an incentive for false reporting because international actors do not want to hear the truth of what it takes to operate in environments where every actor comes under various types of pressure. Collaborative risk management cannot happen unless there is a quality relationship and power asymmetries are not used to effectively stop the Somali actors from pointing out what the international actor does not want to hear.

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ACRONYMS

ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
CAFOD	Catholic Agency for Overseas Development
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DFID	Department for International Development
DKH	Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe
DRA	Dutch Relief Alliance
DRA-JR	Dutch Relief Alliance Joint Response
DFAT	Australia Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
ELNHA	Empowerment of Local and National Humanitarian Actors
EU	European Union
FGS	Federal Government of Somalia
GB	Grand Bargain
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GMI	Global Mentoring Initiative
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
ICR	Internal Coast Recovery
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IDPS	International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
LNNGO	Local or National NGO
MHADM	Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management
NEAR	Network for Empowered Aid Response
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
SC Somalia	South-Central Somalia
SHF	Somalia Humanitarian Fund
SNC	Somalia NGO Consortium
SSG	Strengthening Somali Governance (project)
SSWC	Save Somali Women and Children
ToGETHER	Towards Greater Effectiveness and Timeliness in Humanitarian Emergency Response
ToR	Terms of Reference

UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOSOM	United Nations Operation in Somalia
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit

1   THE RESEARCH STUDY

1.1   PURPOSE AND KEY QUESTIONS

This research was commissioned by the ToGETHER (Towards Greater Effectiveness and Timeliness in Humanitarian Emergency Response) consortium of four German humanitarian NGOs (Caritas Germany, Deutsche Welthungerhilfe, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, and Malteser International). In addition to Somalia, ToGETHER also runs in Bangladesh, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Pakistan. The analysis aims at informing the programme's efforts to advance localisation in each country. Furthermore, it contributes to a wider translation into practice of the commitments that international agencies have made to support and reinforce rather than replace national and local crisis responders in their countries.

The guiding questions for all countries were:

- Which understandings of localisation of humanitarian aid exist among humanitarian actors?

- Which localisation initiatives and programs took place or are taking place in the respective country? Which initiatives and programs provide good practice?

- Where are in-country actors making good progress and what are the most significant challenges in the key areas of the localisation process - namely partnerships, financing, capacity development, coordination and complementarity, and gender?

- What institutional, policy and political dynamics influence these developments?

- What are the most urgent strategic issues and challenges that need to be addressed to realise substantive, transformative change?

1.2   OPPORTUNITY AND CHALLENGES

The questions invite a broad canvas or system perspective on the state of localisation. This provides an opportunity as it takes the localisation conversation beyond the bilateral relationships of an international relief actor and its partner(s). It also considers contextual constraining and enabling factors. Most global research on localisation since the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit has tended to focus on one single aspect (e.g. funding, coordination, gender and localisation, risk management, governmental policy towards international operational presence) (Van Brabant 2020). There is, to the researchers' knowledge, no significant precedent for a contextual system analysis.

The question where in-country actors are making good progress and where there are significant challenges is generally hard to answer when there are hundreds of multilateral, bilateral, national and local governmental and non-governmental actors. Further, there can be significant contextual differences between sub-national contexts within a country. In Somalia, it is the fluency of the situation where governmental structures and a legal environment are only just emerging that make a general assessment difficult.

1.3 INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORKS AND METHODS

A FRAMEWORK

The research looks at localisation as a multi-dimensional issue. In 2017, GMI developed the Seven Dimensions framework of localisation for the Start Network, which emerged from extensive conversations with local and national actors in different countries (Patel & Van Brabant 2017). The framework has been tested and is used, sometimes with adaptations, by several other agencies, networks, or research groups.

RELATIONSHIP QUALITY	PARTICIPATION REVOLUTION	FUNDING & FINANCING	CAPACITY	COORDINATION MECHANISMS	POLICIES AND STANDARDS	VISIBILITY AND CREDIT SHARING
• respectful and equitable • reciprocal transparency and accountability	• deeper participation of at-risk & affected populations	• better quality • greater quantity	• sustainable organisations and collaborative capacities • stop undermining capacities	• national actors greater presence and influence	• national actors can contribute to and influence global and national policy and standards-development, and their application in their contexts	• roles, results and innovations by national actors are given credit and communicated about by international actors

Diagram 1. Seven Dimensions framework of localization

The guiding questions, for this and the other country assessments, focused on four of the seven dimensions: quality of relationship, finance, capacity, coordination, and one cross-cutting issue, gender and localisation.

Furthermore, this report makes use of the following assumptions on the underlying dynamics of localisation efforts:

Localisation needs to be understood in relation to internationalisation

Historically and globally, most crises have and continue to be managed with mostly local/national capacities and leadership. The rise of a global relief industry, spearheaded by UN agencies and international NGOs, is a fairly recent phenomenon. Under certain conditions (major crises that receive international media and political attention, and where national governments invite international assistance), large-scale international crisis-response capacities are mobilised. The result may be a process of 'internationalisation', where international relief actors take over most of the strategic and operational decision-making as well as financial control of relief efforts, sometimes replacing and instrumentalising national and local structures. Localisation in that light is the effort to reduce and reverse such internationalisation where it is unjustified and counterproductive.

Localisation plays out at the organisational and systemic level

Achieving localisation requires efforts both at the organisational and at the systemic level. While a lot of research into the contributions of individual organisations towards localisation has been conducted in the past few years, this study will focus on assessing localisation progress at the systemic level. As such, it aims towards achieving a better understanding of the dynamics between different actors in a given country context.

National government plays a key role in shaping the dynamics

National governments have a major influence on the dynamics of internationalisation and localisation. The national government decides what role it wishes to play in the management

of crises affected people on its territory: will it lead and if so, to what degree? It can set the overall policy framework, but it can also chair or co-chair coordination efforts, it can insist on vetting each project proposal and may or may not itself deliver relief services. National government determines the space and roles for its own civil society actors and for international relief actors. This varies between countries, can vary between different sub-national contexts, and evolves over time.

B   METHODS

This report draws on a document review and interviews with key informants. The acquired information is analysed using the Seven Dimensions framework as described above.

Document review: There is a substantive body of literature on the subject of localisation in Somalia, including older documents on partnership. Where prior research or reflections covered some of the issues under consideration here in more depth than could be achieved in this inquiry, their findings and insights are incorporated in this report.

Key informant interviews: Online interviews were held with 21 people, all close to the localisation conversations for Somalia. Eight of those are associated with Somali NGOs, seven with INGOs, four with donors, and two with the UN. All conversations lasted a minimum of one hour, most of them slightly longer.

THE CONTEXT

2.1   POLITICAL SITUATION

South-Central Somalia has suffered from violent conflict, partially driven by internal dynamics but with ongoing involvement of various regional and international actors, since 1991. Other than Puntland and Somaliland, much of the time South-Central Somalia has been without modern state institutions, governed instead by elders and religious figures. A Transitional Federal Government was established in 2004 and succeeded by the Federal Government of Somalia in 2012, which is leading a major exercise in state-building. With an average age of about 26, most Somalis from the south-central region have never had any experience of what a state does or is expected to do. Older Somalis may have more an experience of Siad Barre's predatory state that served the interests of some and waged war on others. In addition, what is being built is a federal state, a more complex political structure than the previous one.

Its strategic position at the southern entrance of the Red Sea, the link between the Asian and Mediterranean worlds via the Suez Canal, make Somalia a place of major geo-political interest. There have been and will continue to be attempts at foreign influence, which gives rival Somali groups a choice of potential foreign backers. The presence of Al-Shabaab has also turned South-Central Somalia into an arena for the fight against terrorism while, some years ago, Puntland and Galmudug state became a focus area for the international combat against piracy.

2.2   VULNERABILITIES TO CRISES WITH HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES

In addition to political insecurity, Somalia is also vulnerable to drought (resulting in severe and deadly famines), flooding and other calamities such as locust swarms. The 1992 famine alone claimed an estimated 220,000 lives. The most devastating drought and conflict-induced crises in the past decade have been in 2011-2012 and 2017-2018. Estimates of deaths, largely from famine, in 2011-2012 are in the order of 260,000. A contributing factor was the presence of the terrorist group Al-Shabaab, which controlled parts of the southern areas. The relationship between Al-Shabaab and international relief agencies was (and remains) problematic, with international actors restricting or blocking their relief responses in areas controlled by the group. At the same time, international donors were reluctant to finance relief operations for fear it would be diverted into terrorism financing. Far less people died in the 2017-2018 drought, thanks to a more timely and effective relief effort, made possible also by Al-Shabaab having been pushed back though not defeated. Still, the continued violence and insecurity and periodic devastating droughts have continued to displace large amounts of people either within Somalia or to neighbouring countries, particularly Kenya and Ethiopia.

The Humanitarian Needs Overview of 2020 sees 5.2 million people, 42 per cent of the Somali population, in need of assistance (including 3.5 million non-displaced; 1.7 million displaced by conflict, insecurity, forced evictions, droughts, and floods; 108,000 returnees; and 42,000 refugees). This represents a 24 per cent increase compared to the 2019 HNO (4.2 million people in need).

The 2011-2012 and 2017-2018 droughts are probably better understood as peak moments in a 'long drought'. Somalia's structural vulnerability to drought is aggravated not only by the periodic El Niño and its companion La Niña effect, but by global warming. After 30 years of protracted, multi-facetted crises, and now also climate change impacts, there is a

compelling case for strong emergency preparedness and significant investment in climate change adaptation and 'resilience'. Improved security and peace would also take away key drivers of crisis. South-Central Somalia invites what international aid agencies call a 'nexus' approach – better synergising their relief, development and peace efforts to create greater cumulative impact. 'Enhanced engagement between humanitarian and development actors' was one Grand Bargain commitment that is now mainstreamed in all other commitments (see also Obrecht & Knox 2015).

2.3   GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS

A Somalia Disaster Management Agency existed in 2015, with a certain degree of autonomy but under the political supervision then of the Ministry of Interior and Federalism (Almansa 2015). Currently, the key governmental institution is the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management (MHADM). A 2019 assessment of the MHADM notes its six directorates: Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Risk Management, Policy and Planning, Administration and Finances, Monitoring and Evaluation and IDPs-Resilience-Durable Solutions. The assessment finds that the MHADM has much promise but did not at the time get a regular budget from the FGS. It therefore lacks both resources and strategic direction that will help it to gain recognition and leadership. Both the FGS and international aid agencies are advised to invest into it to help it develop its potential (Almansa 2020).

The National Development Plan envisages the public sector working in multiple partnerships with others. It asserts the importance of national ownership and of the inclusion of multiple Somali stakeholders including Somali civil society (Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development 2020) and advocates for a nexus approach (relief-development-peace work) (ibid). A recommended priority is to complement this with a comprehensive National Humanitarian Policy and Strategy (ibid 2020).

As a result of the long-term absence of state institutions, services typically provided by those institutions have been paid for directly by international aid donors, sometimes with not-for-profit organisations as intermediaries. Transferring such services to public actors in the future will be a formidable challenge, given the very small tax base that state institutions have in the current situation.

2.4   NGOS AND CIVIL SOCIETY

The first NGO-type associations in Somalia appeared in the early 80s, in the wake of international aid agencies coming to help with the large numbers of refugees (mostly ethnic Somalis from eastern Ethiopia) from the 1977-78 Ogaden war that Siad Barre lost. As international agencies started to scale down and withdraw, some Somali NGOs came into being, most of them based in Mogadishu. This was a new phenomenon in Somalia and their origin in association with a relief effort is significant (Harvey 1997).

Local and national NGOs became a 'growth industry' during the period of the first UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM 1992-1995) when international actors sought to implement a massive relief operation through local organisations. A lack of credibility of these international relief actors led to a general atmosphere among Somalis that international relief aid is imposed from outside with little concern for community participation, is fickle and short-term, is likely to be abused and diverted anyway, and therefore can be treated as an

opportunity for quick profit. As a result, opportunistic enterprises mushroomed in the shape of briefcase NGOs, absorbing humanitarian funding with very limited regard for humanitarian principles. At the same time, communities also learned that they would receive more assistance if they presented themselves as helpless and vulnerable (Harvey 1997). This generated a general climate of distrust between communities, national and international actors, the legacy of which may still be around.

Today there are hundreds of community-based organisations with more local geographical reach as well as NGO-type ones with larger presence and coverage. Their range of credibility covers the spectrum from zero for dubious enterprises to high regard for fairly well-established NGO type organisations with significant relief and humanitarian experience. Operational Somali diaspora organisations should also be mentioned here.

In the absence of functioning state-like institutions, in South-Central Somalia there has not been a registration and wider regulatory framework for NGOs or CSOs for decades. Somaliland and Puntland have NGO Acts with articles that support localised aid. The Puntland NGO Act for example stipulates that any funding of less than US$250.000 should automatically go to Somali NGOs. A draft of an 'NGO Act' has been with the FGS for some years now. Various Somali and international actors contributed to its drafting, OCHA and the Somali NGO Consortium among them (Majid & Harmer 2016). The FGS was also advised to set up systems to combat fraud and diversion of aid among humanitarian actors (see Shuria, Abdinoor & Mahmoud 2018). Reportedly, the draft NGO Act was presented at last to Parliament several months ago but has still not been passed into legislation.

Different perspectives on the draft were heard (for a detailed insight see Somalia NGO Consortium & Nexus 2019). On the positive side, such Act would, for the first time, introduce state regulation and oversight of the sector. It would also clarify fiscal obligations. The current absence of policies and laws regulating registration, taxes and anti-corruption measures may enable authorities to impose taxes that are actually bribes. It also leads to a situation where each aid agency devises its own systems and practices without the coherence that a state regulatory framework provides (Majid & Harmer 2016). Furthermore, Somali NGOs who see no substantive progress on localisation have come to believe that only national government insistence on it has a chance to unblock the current situation. It could, for example, support the call for a humanitarian fund specifically for Somali organisations. According to a senior staff member of a Somali NGO: "*Localisation only thrives where there is stable government and rule of law.*"

On the other hand, the current draft of the NGO Act reportedly does not fully meet NGO expectations: There is a clause on localisation and a sentence referring to a pooled fund that can be used to invest in capacity-development. But there is concern that some in the FGS see Somali NGOs as competitors for scarce resources, and as active players in local-level politics. From a Somali NGO perspective, the FGS needs to realise that in many areas it has only limited or no presence on the ground and should work with those who do. Furthermore, from a perspective that sees localisation as a bottom-up process, rooted in the communities and aimed at increasing their resilience, the local administrations also need significant support to be able to play a meaningful and informed role in making this a reality. One Somali NGO colleague felt that "*our government does not have a vision for localisation*". Somali colleagues active on localisation therefore now seek to engage a wider group of mid-level public servants in relevant government ministries and departments for their support on this policy issue.

2.5   INTERNATIONAL RELIEF AGENCIES

With the establishment of UNOSOM (United Nations Operation in Somalia) in 1992 and during the nearly three decades of protracted crisis since, international relief agencies have been major decision-makers on humanitarian policy and action in the country. Direct implementation, at times through hundreds of national staff, as well as sub-contracting of Somali NGOs and private sector actors have been predominant modes of operation. Also, UN agencies with a primary development mandate as well as the World Bank do a lot of humanitarian relief work or directly implement their programmes. In addition, for much of the time, key decision-makers for security reasons sat exclusively in Nairobi rather than Mogadishu, practicing remote management. That has fortunately changed with more presence, engagements, and decision-making shifting to Mogadishu. However, their relationship with Somali actors has not fundamentally changed in the last 30 years.

2.6   SOMALI PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT IN CRISIS RESPONSE

The private sector in South-Central Somalia is very dynamic. Its three main sectors are telecommunications and money transfers (in 2015, remittances were valued at over US$ 1.3 billion); livestock and agriculture; and trade and transport. They act as service providers to deliver goods and services in humanitarian crises as well. Between 2006 and 2010 for example, WFP put the value of its contracts with the private sector at over US$800 million (El Traboulsi et al. 2017:19). During the 2011-2012 famine, the Somali private sector handled over US$150 million in cash programming. Several Somali companies also provide their own aid and assistance to Somali communities in crisis times. Some have charity divisions. El Traboulsi and others' 2017 report provides a more in-depth overview of the private sector, how it operates on the basis of trust and with different frameworks for relationship, the role of brokers and middlemen, and the need for an in-depth understanding to be able to distinguish between collusion and corruption, as well as the value that private sector actors can and do add. They should be better integrated so that their commercial or philanthropic support becomes more strategic rather than reactive (Shuria, Abdinoor & Mahmoud 2018).

A deeper and more strategic conversation is to be had about the role of the private sector in the provision of essential services in the medium-term future of South-Central Somalia. Somali NGOs are looking at their private sector as a possible source of funding or complementary activity that decides faster and operates without the heavy bureaucracy of the international aid system. The EU's Inclusive Local and Economic Development programme for Somalia created some connections for development-oriented actors. There is however currently no platform where the private sector and humanitarian actors can meet and learn from each other and explore complementary roles beyond transactional contracting.

2.7   A UNIQUE CONTEXT FOR LOCALISATION

South-Central Somalia presents a unique context for localisation:

- It is a country in the middle of state transformation, where roles and responsibilities of the state, civil society, and the private sector in humanitarian preparedness and response are barely defined. This vacuum is filled by the UN system and INGOs.

- Its geopolitical significance, combined with constant insecurity and threat of terrorism, has created a context in which international development and humanitarian actors are

heavily involved and at the same time heavily reliant on local interlocutors due to the constraints of remote management. Thus, international actors are at the same time dominant and absent. Especially the fear of inadvertently financing terrorism through relief makes it unlikely that international humanitarian actors will easily relinquish control.

- The private sector continues to provide many basic services such as water and health care and may be a more important component of a localisation strategy in South-Central Somalia than in other countries. A blueprint for localisation in Somalia may thus be different from that in other countries.

- Though not a central part of the prevailing humanitarian narrative about results in South-Central Somalia, remittances from family members abroad have undoubtedly made a major contribution to mitigating the impacts of humanitarian crises. In that sense, the Somali diaspora have not just been among the first responders; they have been long-term responders and the backbone of another (partial) social safety net and will likely continue to fill this role in the near future.

The result is a complexity of actors but also social identities. State institutions and public sector services are slowly emerging but are still very limited in their ability to provide services. Yet it is in relation to a state that an identity of 'citizenship' develops, as well as a 'civil society'. On the other hand, clan and lineage identities and behaviours remain very strong. Somali NGOs and the private sector institutions somehow navigate in this field of ambiguities. How to put together these different pieces of the puzzle is one of the biggest challenges facing Somalia with regard to localisation. Ultimately, only Somalis can find workable solutions for this.

3 LOCALISATION INITIATIVES AND CONVERSATION SPACES

3.1 LOCALISATION INITIATIVES

A LOCALISATION AND STATE INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH-CENTRAL SOMALIA

Many of the global conversations around localisation have focused on NGOs. But the international policy commitments under the Grand Bargain also apply to UN agencies and governments. For governments in disaster-prone areas, this means that they lead humanitarian coordination and decision-making fora that were previously dominated by international actors.

How soon the government of South-Central Somalia will be able to define its authority and ways of working in humanitarian crises is unclear, given that its role in even basic service provision and state functions is still being negotiated. Its state formation process, most recently expressed in a first edition of a '*Somalia Compact*' (2014-2016) (see Manuel et al. 2017), is being supported by international bilateral and multilateral cooperation actors. At the sub-national level, this process is replicated through the 2016 National Framework for Local Governance or 'Wadajir' framework, which has served to strengthen local governance institutions at the district level and received support from the EU, USAID and the UK (Shuria, Abdinoor & Mahmoud 2018). Similar initiatives include the USAID-funded Strengthening Somali Governance (SSG) project, which aims at building the Somali state's capacity to conduct budget analysis, develop budget reports, and advocate for more accountable and transparent governance. To summarise, efforts are underway to allow Somali institutions to lead and manage their own affairs in a responsible, effective and accountable manner, though it may still be years until this becomes a reality.

B LOCALISATION-RELATED RESEARCH

Since the agreement of the Grand Bargain following the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, localisation issues have become an important point of debate among humanitarian actors in Somalia. Workshops and meetings organised included:

- 23-24 May 2017 "*Dialogue for Action on Aid Localisation in Somalia*": The event was organised by the Rift Valley Forum on behalf of the Somalia NGO Consortium. It was facilitated by the think-tank Centre for Humanitarian Change and supported by the Humanitarian Leadership Academy and the Swiss Development Cooperation.

- September 2017: "*Improving Aid Delivery through Localisation in Somalia*": A half-day gathering in Mogadishu, co-organised by the Somalia NGO Consortium, DFID, the UN and Somalia's Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management.

In early 2018, a meeting took place between donors and Somali NGOs/CSOs. On 9 July 2018, a workshop on the Grand Bargain was organised in Mogadishu by the Somalia NGO Consortium, ICVA and NGO Voice.

Localisation also made its way into Somali publications:

- In December 2017, the NEAR (Network for Empowered Aid Response) network published a study on the allocation of core funding to Somali NGOs/CSOs named "*Local-*

isation of Aid. Realising commitments to local and national non-governmental organisations. Capacity strengthening in Somalia and Somaliland: allocation of core financing." In this report, core funding is highlighted as a fundamental requirement to develop capable and sustainable organisations.

- In September 2018, the Somalia NGO Consortium published a comprehensive research report "*Principles into Practice. Aid localisation in Somalia*", also supported by the Humanitarian Leadership Academy.

- A month later, the ODI published its Somalia case study on funding to local actors (Majid et al. 2018).

- In 2019, Save the Children Denmark (also known as Red Barnet) commissioned the Feinstein International Centre at Tufts University to conduct a structured listening exercise with local actors in Kenya, South Sudan, Somalia and Somaliland. This was published as "*Views from the Ground. Perspectives on Localisation in the Horn of Africa*" (Howe et al. 2019).

This is not to say that localisation was not recognised as an important issue before then. In fact, debates about the issue predate the WHS and include publications and initiatives such as:

- The Oxfam NOVIB's 2003 report 'Mapping Somali Civil Society'. A sometimes referred to, but no longer available study.

- Humanitarian Reform process: A 'humanitarian reform' process was initiated by the UN in 2005 to improve the effectiveness, timeliness and predictability of humanitarian response. NGOs (mostly international ones) engaged with this process. ICVA, for example, hosted a "NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project II" (Nov. 2011-April 2013). Sponsored by ECHO, Somalia was one of the focus countries. Its 2012 research report "*Aid Partnerships: A vehicle to strengthen NGOs in Somalia*" is directly relevant, as it focuses on the quality of partnerships and capacity development. Worth remembering here is that the international agencies, in 2007, as part of the Global Humanitarian Forum, had articulated the '*Principles of Partnership*' that ICVA devoted significant effort to promoting. A second report focused on "*NGO Voice in the Humanitarian Response in Somalia*" (2013). Action Contre la Faim, ACTED, ActionAid, CAFOD and the Danish Refugee Council were active supporters of this ICVA project in Somalia.

- Oxfam NOVIB 2015: In 2015, Oxfam NOVIB commissioned another comprehensive study: "*A Fresh Analysis of the Humanitarian System in Somaliland, Puntland and South-Central Somalia. Somali state agencies and local organisation's capacities to manage humanitarian action*" (Almansa 2015). Unlike most other research work, it tried to make an overall assessment from a systems perspective, underscoring the importance of collective capacities rather than those of individual organisations. In 2019, Oxfam NOVIB commissioned a follow-up comprehensive review called "*Breaking the Localisation Deadlock. Review of humanitarian capacities, power relations and localisation in the Somali humanitarian system*". It was formally published in 2020 (Almansa 2020).

In short, various localisation-relevant research pieces and studies have been produced in recent years. They overwhelmingly make the same diagnosis. All produced recommendations, many very precise and practical. Yet as we shall see, little practical change has taken place so far. This raises doubts about the influence 'policy-relevant research' can actually have. The question must be asked whether reducing internationalisation and advancing localisation is only a matter of logical reasoning and evidence-based decision-making or are there deeper

drivers of policy, practice and behaviours at work? More research of the same type then is not the answer. As one Somali interlocutor put it: *"Why are we investing in more research? Are we serious about this change, or are we wasting money?"*

C   AGENCY AND INTER-AGENCY INITIATIVES

It is not possible to cover all relevant experiences of humanitarian actors in Somalia in this study. The following are therefore only illustrative examples of those considered most relevant.

Oxfam NOVIB: Oxfam is frequently referred to by Somali actors as an eminent example of an agency taking a longer-term perspective and engaging in strategic partnerships with institutional development as a core objective. There is a recognition of its contribution to the development of Somali civil society. In addition, with its 2003, 2015 and 2019/2020 reports it has offered a systemic look at collective Somali capacities. This is in marked contrast to the narrow and fragmented approaches to individual agency capacity assessments that have been the dominant practice. Oxfam points out that this sustained work that yields tangible results was much enabled by donors providing flexible and longer-term programme funding.

DRA – Joint Somalia Response: The Dutch Relief Alliance (DRA) is a collective of 16 Dutch NGOs involved in humanitarian action that has taken localisation as a major priority. It has its own localisation working group and set itself a collective target of channelling 35% of its relief aid through local agencies by the end of 2021. Its Somalia Joint Response is a collaborative effort of 4 INGOs and 6 Somali partners. Oxfam NOVIB is the lead agency. The DRA Somalia Joint Response has supported Somali NGO membership in the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) (Van Lierde 2020). It has also provided the resources for the Somalia NGO Consortium to bring in the consultants whose work resulted in the 'Somalia Localisation Framework', and it awarded the Nexus Consortium with funding for 2021, for a pilot joint response focused on localisation.

Trócaire: Trócaire, an Irish Catholic INGO and a signatory to the Charter for Change, provides an illustration of a different approach that is in line with the localisation purpose. For 20 years at least, it has maintained a strong presence particularly in Gedo region. Working with District Health Boards and Community Education Committees has been part of its approach throughout, ensuring local ownership and Trócaire's access and acceptance. For a few years, the organisation has adopted a more intentional strategy of support for strong, effective, inclusive and accountable capacities of these actors. It has also started working with some small local NGOs such as CERID, which established an agricultural school with Trócaire's support. While the latter is a somewhat more standard NGO partnership, Trócaire provides strong accompaniment and will embed its own technical specialists, who are on the ground virtually permanently.

Trócaire is sensitive to clan and lineage dynamics and invests time and attention to understand these to make sure that everyone has fair access to services, including locally marginalised groups. Trócaire is encouraging these local partners to develop their role in relation to the emerging local public administration as a promotion of participatory and accountable governance. Financial support to local actors at the outset can be minimal. This too is a conscious posture, from the understanding that overloading organisations with too much money too quickly can be a recipe for problems and failure.

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe (DKH): Working in equitable partnership is the default mode of this German organisation, which does not implement directly. Currently it has three

such partnerships and may expand to five. The current three also are eligible for funding from the Somalia Humanitarian Fund (SHF). DKH is attentive to the issues of quality funding and actively looking into the matter of the management fee/ICR for the Somali partners. It also provides capacity development support on organisational management competencies, and from experience has learned that training, disconnected from actual practice, does not work very well. DKH puts primary emphasis on the quality of relationship, as also expressed in its organisational Collaborative Partnership Policy. Project ideas and designs can come from either side, but all key issues and decisions are discussed together as equals. DKH also supported the Nexus consortium in 2020.

Nexus Consortium

The Nexus Consortium reportedly came into being when several Somali NGOs rose to the challenge from a few international actors to come up with a creative mechanism that would enable them to attract better quality funding. For now, it consists of the nine agencies mentioned in the text box. Between them, they have complementary coverage in different parts of Somaliland, Puntland and South-Central Somalia.

> **Nexus is a paradigm-shifting platform for civil society leadership that aims to shape the future in Somalia and Somaliland and breaks the silos of humanitarian aid, development and peacebuilding interventions.**
>
> **It was founded in 2019 by nine Somali NGOs – African Development Solutions (ADESO), Centre for Peace and Democracy (CPD), Gargaar Relief and Development Organization (GREDO), Horn of Africa Voluntary Youth Committee (HAVOYOCO), KAALO, Save Somali Women and Children (SSWC), Social-Life and Agriculture Development Organisation (SADO), Taakulo Somaliland Community (TASCO), and WASDA– and supported by two INGOs – Oxfam and Save the Children International.**
>
> **Nexus is strategically investing in the institutions of civil society and government and is advancing a new, community-driven framework that creates space for local organizations, their partners in government and the private sector to lead the way in identifying, scaling up and integrating community owned and driven solutions to humanitarian, development and peacebuilding needs.** (http://nexusom.org/index.php/about/)

Box 1. About the Nexus Consortium

As the statement in the text box, taken from their website, indicates, they have a broader and longer-term vision and see themselves not just as service deliverers but also as playing other civil society roles with local communities in the centre, and address deeper drivers of humanitarian needs through connecting relief with development and peace work. Rebuilding civic-state relations and strengthening the capacity of local governance actors is also foundational to the Nexus approach, and the consortium sees itself as an ally to their partners in government rather than in competition. Bringing Somali women and women's groups and organisations more to the foreground is another objective.

Nexus received initial seed-funding from Australia's Dpt. of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the DRA and Oxfam NOVIB for the meetings that generated a comprehensive proposal, and for Nexus to set up its website and its governance, begin to do some joint programming and joint research and advocacy. A visit to the Nexus website shows not only the advocacy piece on the NGO Act (together with the Somalia NGO Consortium) but also different pieces of work on the impacts of COVID-19. In line with Oxfam NOVIB's earlier reports that took a systems-perspective (Almansa 2015 and Almansa 2019/20), Nexus has

now also published a critical perspective on the past humanitarian practices, and a vision for a Somali-led, nexus integrated, humanitarian system (Nexus 2020).

Nexus had hoped that their set-up would finally enable them to receive direct funding. Though several bilateral donors, like the Netherlands, Switzerland and Australia, are very supportive, INGO presence still was required at least in the initial formational years of the consortium. Oxfam supports as the fund management, evidence and learning lead and is involved in day-to-day programming. Nexus is also supported by Save the Children International. However, it is clearly stated that the roles of both INGOs are intended to be transitional, and that the functions should ultimately rest with the local members through a phased, graduated approach over the next three to five years. The Consortium's funding from 2021 is long-term (in line with Grand Bargain commitment 7 to more multi-year planning and funding) and not overly earmarked (in line with Grand Bargain commitment 8). Through DFAT funding, Nexus undertook a review of all members' organisational capacities and each now has a capacity development plan, in which the platform will invest both human, financial, and technical resources. The question now will be whether the international supporters will engage on this in more effective ways or in a business-as-usual manner. The Nexus members in any case are keen on more peer-learning across the global South and Somalia rather than international resource persons. One competency area recognised as meriting more investment is strategic advocacy and public speaking.

Nexus, like INGOs working more actively together or the UN learning to 'work as one', also has to work through various internal adaptations, such as finding a constructive balance between individual agency and collective interests, differences in capacities and being open to interagency peer-learning, and undoubtedly sometimes also interpersonal dynamics.

There is a risk that Nexus member organisations could become the 'donor darlings' and an elite among Somali NGOs. Reportedly, the current nine all have a solid track record but are not privileged by donors. Over time, as stated in the Nexus strategy, the number of members is envisioned to expand beyond the core nine members. For now, it was considered wiser to not expand further in the initial year of consolidation to give time to build evidence and a track record of joint programming, and to not overcomplicate the process of working more closely together and speaking with a common voice. The platform sees its goals and impact beyond the membership themselves – rather, Nexus is focused on shifting power structures, working with partners that are allies to its transformative agenda, and building an evidence base and tools to advance the operationalisation of programming that truly is locally led.

3.2 SPACES FOR LOCALISATION CONVERSATIONS

A SOMALI NGO CONSORTIUM

The Somali NGO Consortium (SNC) currently has some 75 member agencies, about a third of which are Somali NGOs. That distinguishes it from the set-up, for example, in Myanmar, Jordan or the Democratic Republic of Congo, where INGOs have a separate forum. The SNC has been a major space for the localisation conversation, more explicitly as of 2017. It co-hosted some important information and awareness raising meetings in Nairobi, Mogadishu and Hargeisa, and commissioned and published several relevant reports. Its 'Localisation and Partnership Work Stream' is currently led by Save Somali Women and Children (SSWC) and Save the Children. Membership is fluid. Harmonising capacity assessments is one of the tasks the group has worked on. Among the challenges experienced is that participants

all have other roles and responsibilities in their organisations and find it difficult to follow up on tasks allocated during the working group meetings. The SNC has therefore learned that localisation needs dedicated staff of sufficient internal organisational authority. In its next five-year strategy, it plans to include localisation as an explicit priority area and fund a dedicated staff member.

B   LOCALISATION TASK FORCE

A new 'Localisation Task Force' was created in January 2020 around the Localisation Framework. It is currently composed of UNICEF, OCHA, Save Somali Women and Children, Save the Children, and the Netherlands as donor representative, and chaired by the director of the Somalia NGO Consortium. The FGS is currently not present. Development actors may be invited in the future.

Soon after its creation, the Task Force lost some momentum because of a change of leadership at the SNC and COVID-19 demanding priority attention. By late 2020, it has picked up again and reinstated monthly meetings. It may face the same challenge as the SNC working group, with participants having many other tasks in their organisations, leaving little time and energy to do much substantive work.

Its immediate reference point is the '*Framework for Localisation in Somalia*'. This Framework was developed with the help of two international consultants working for the Somali NGO Consortium through support from the Dutch Relief Alliance's Joint Somali Response. It is a short, practical, and very readable document with a detailed list of priorities for 2020 and 2021. Its final version dates from November 2019. It was formally accepted by the HCT that same month.

The Framework for Localisation has a clear purpose statement: "*Local and national humanitarian actors are increasingly empowered to take a great role in the leadership, coordination and delivery of effective humanitarian preparedness and response in Somalia.*"

It also sets out the following key principles that need to be embraced by all actors:

- **Improved humanitarian assistance:** The overall purpose of the GB commitments is to improve the quality, efficiency and accountability of humanitarian assistance to affected populations.

- **Local ownership of the agenda:** If localisation is about empowering local actors, then local actors need to have an influential voice in how that agenda is shaped and delivered.

- **Respect and trust:** Localisation requires improved levels of trust and respect between actors, and challenging the negative perceptions and generalisations which are barriers to mutual understanding and accountability.

- **Mutual accountability:** All actors should be accountable for their actions and decisions, including to affected communities.

- **Complementarity:** Ensure a balance between the work of local and international actors, to maximise the comparative advantages of both and avoid duplication and undermining of either.

- **Quid Pro Quo:** The basis of the Grand Bargain is that each actor will play its part and make the necessary changes to achieve a stronger and more effective humanitarian system.

It is interesting to note that these key principles make no mention of power and power asymmetries. The *quid pro quo* principle of the Somalia framework is interesting as it signals that

changes are required on the side of both international and Somali actors. A potentially more problematic principle however is that of complementarity. While 'maximising the comparative advantages of both' is a fair point in theory, it can also be used to maintain the status quo. Indeed, unless the power dynamics and resource allocations change, Somali agencies will never be able to fully develop their comparative advantage to the degree international agencies have.

The priority areas in the Localisation Framework for Somalia are funding, partnership, capacity strengthening and local voices. The Framework document has a detailed action plan around the four priority areas. But no specific targets for 2020 and 2021 seem to have been detailed, and responsibilities allocated on who leads on what. This may be a challenge for its implementation. As one interviewee put it: "*If everyone is responsible, nobody is responsible*". The framework remains a truly relevant reference but does not yet serve as a specific reference for actions to effect change. As other interlocutors put it: "*It is more saying the right thing than doing the right thing*" and "*for the time being it remains a piece of paper.*"

There is a risk that localisation becomes treated as a topic for the Localisation Task Force just as the funding question could be relegated to the Somalia Humanitarian Fund, with most other international actors then disengaging. That would be a strategic error: localisation is a collective agenda that can only produce meaningful change by joint efforts at all levels. Nor is disengagement an option for the agencies that signed up to the Grand Bargain, which present a significant reform agenda for the international relief sector. "*We don't want localisation to be just another box to tick*" in the words of one interlocutor.

C   DONORS

There is a Donor Humanitarian Group that meets in Nairobi and some donors also have a presence in Mogadishu. The physical distance between Nairobi-based donors and Somalia-based organisations makes it difficult for these national and local NGOs to build relationships with donors, which has been a key ask in the localisation conversations. Direct contact is also important because otherwise UN agencies, INGOs (and private sector contractors) control the narrative both ways: the picture that donors get about local agencies comes through an intermediary, and the picture that local agencies get about the donor's wishes and requirements as well. In recent years, the situation has improved a bit, with senior Somali NGO leaders regularly coming to Nairobi and donors like USAID, the EU and the Somalia Stability Fund insisting that Somali NGOs that are part of a consortium are present at meetings.

The conversations with donor representatives for this inquiry brought up the following points:

- The personal interest and attitude of the senior donor representative(s) for a country can play a role in whether that aid administration is more actively engaged in localisation or not. In order to achieve consistency across individuals, localisation needs to be written into the donor strategy.

- Several donors are encouraging UN agencies and INGOs to respond to calls with proposals together with Somali partners. While this provides a first incentive, in practice it is not enough. More donor oversight is required over the actual quality of collaboration between the international grant recipient and its Somali partner.

- A key issue for Somali NGOs and national/local ones in other countries is quality funding: at least a flexible management fee (ICR: internal cost recovery) similar to that given to UN agencies and INGOs, ideally more medium-term investment in organisa-

tional development. This is a critical issue for effective localisation: donors whose practices or procedures currently prevent that need to review this.

- Globally, and also in South-Central Somalia, bilateral aid administrations for development programmes are doing a better job of funding national governmental and non-governmental actors directly and without undue administrative barriers. As a result, there are now some Somali NGOs that receive direct funding. How the development aid colleagues see and handle funding can provide some relevant learning for the humanitarian colleagues.

3.3   IS LOCALISATION IN SOUTH-CENTRAL SOMALIA ADVANCING?

The interviews conducted for this inquiry indicate there is currently no common understanding of the purpose of localisation and what it implies. The tendency, especially among international actors interviewed, is to focus on the 25% funding target in the Grand Bargain and on capacities. The interviews with the Somali colleagues, on the other hand, put the emphasis elsewhere. In their view, localisation is about much more than funding, even if quality financing is a critical element. For them, localisation should be a very bottom-up process about the communities, their capacities and resilience.

Both internationals and Somalis interviewed expressed mixed views on whether localisation is advancing in South-Central Somalia. On the positive side, the 'elephant in the room' can and is now being discussed; the Somalia Humanitarian Fund (SHF) allocates close to half its annual budget to Somali NGOs; there is a Localisation Framework approved by the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and a Localisation Task Force to take it forward. Other positives include Somali NGO presence in the HCT and in the Advisory Board of the SHF. Among the Somali NGO colleagues interviewed, the understanding of localisation and the purpose and spirit of the Grand Bargain were significant. All have been involved in the issue for some time. At the same time, those interviewed also expressed a shared sense of frustration of having run into a wall. Several put the relative success of the Somalia Humanitarian Fund in perspective. Its 2020 revenue is about US $ 43,776,000. This is only a small percentage however of the total aid Somalia receives annually which, in 2019, was US $ 1.9 billion, fairly equally split between humanitarian and development funding. The grants to Somali NGOs also tend to be smaller compared to those to INGOs. The following quotes are from various interviews and illustrate how Somalis understand localisation in the context of the political economy of the international relief industry.

> "The Grand Bargain is a voluntary set of commitments. Even if international agencies signed up to it, their country offices can simply ignore it. There is no enforcement, and at best only self reporting."

> "The real obstacle lies not with us, Somali NGOs. It ultimately is a competition over limited resources. Those who have the upper hand and have the connections do not want to share resources."

> "The system that is there cannot be challenged. There are too many benefits for the humanitarian industry."

> "The 'lack of capacity' argument is used to put down local organisations, as a weapon to diminish them."

3

"Risk is a card the international actors play when it is convenient; you can't have zero tolerance for risk in a country and society in turmoil. If there was no risk, there would be a lot of foreign investment and no need for aid."

"The trustworthiness issue is used as a excuse to push out local NGOs."

Views of Somali humanitarians on localisation

DIMENSIONS OF LOCALISATION

As explained in the methodology chapter, the following pages will present the results of assessing information from the literature review and interviews using the Seven Dimensions framework. In line with the programme requirements for the ToGETHER programme, this study focuses on four of these dimensions: quality of relationship ('partnership'), finance, capacity and coordination mechanisms. In addition, it analyses progress on the cross-cutting issue of gender and localisation. Specifically for the Somalia context, given its critical importance in the country, some observations on humanitarian principles and risk are added.

4.1   QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIP

This has been a topic of research and conversation in Somalia for at least the past eight years. Let us have a look back at what has been said about it before and see whether the conversation has changed.

A   MODALITIES OF COLLABORATION

A 2012 study for ICVA noted there was little common understanding of the meaning of partnership. Three main models of engagement were identified:

- *Sub-contracting:* Somali NGOs are not involved in planning and programmes; there is limited ownership by them and limited dialogue between the lead and implementing partners.

- *Implementing partnerships:* Somali NGOs have limited and usually late opportunities to participate in the project design; the collaboration may be project-based or longer; there is some capacity development, mostly for what is directly required for project implementation.

- *Strategic partnerships:* Based on a longer-term agreement, the lead partner shares intellectual and other resources; there is shared decision-making and a capacity development that goes beyond technical and compliance capacities (Tsitrinbaum 2012:19).

Five years after the Principles of Partnership were adopted (2007), two-thirds of Somali NGOs described their relationship as sub-contracting or implementing partners. "*Very few interviewees could refer to any principles or codes that guide their organisations when designing and working in partnership with others.*" (ibid:20). The widespread occurrence of instrumental use of Somali NGOs as short-term sub-contractors was highlighted again in 2017 (Atkins 2017).

In 2019, Somali CSOs are still described as "*subcontractors in risky areas and competitors in areas where they can implement programmes directly*". There is only operational but no strategic dialogue. The only more 'strategic topic' of conversation is 'localisation'. The generally poor relationships among NGOs lead to a fragmented and competitive environment where organisational interests take priority over impact on crisis-affected populations or strategic development of a civil society sector, which remains an obstacle to advancing localisation (Almansa 2020).

B   PARTNER SELECTION

In an equitable partnership, the participating agencies choose to work together because they have a shared objective and see advantage in joining forces as equals. This is different from more traditional partner assessments by international actors, who unilaterally assess whether a Somali organisation can be a suitable implementer or sub-contractor. For some, it may even be more of a risk assessment.

Eligibility to receive funds from the Somalia Humanitarian Fund can be one criterion for other international agencies in choosing partner organisations, as the SHF undertakes solid assessments.

A Transparency International study of 2016 expresses concern about the possible occurrence of forms of corruption in partner selection. Though the choice of a partner may be said to be based on a capacity assessment, there can be instances when staff of an international agency demand a bribe for a positive capacity assessment. This may occur even with Somali CSOs with a solid track record. Another problematic occurrence may be that staff of international agencies have interests in a Somali CSO (or contractor) and will therefore use their insider position to ensure contracts and funds continue to go their way (Majid & Harmer 2016).

But as the Trócaire and the Nexus examples show, there are some other approaches, too. One can choose to partner with home-grown organisations that are not necessarily NGO-like but play valuable roles in their contexts and have local credibility and legitimacy. International agencies currently supporting the Nexus consortium do it more based on a shared vision carried by the Nexus members, than because the Nexus consortium is a useful instrument to carry out their agenda.

C   DISTRUST

Distrust is a theme that has run through successive reports on localisation in Somalia (Tsitrinbaum 2012:25; Atkins 2017; No author 2018; Majid et al. 2018:14). A generalising, negative narrative creates an atmosphere of doubt or suspicion continues to exist. As one Somali interviewee put it: "*There is a stamp that has been put on your back that local organisations have no capacity, are corrupt, etc.*" Factors that influence such generalised lack of trust are:

- A general concern about fraud, corruption or diversion that was felt to be fully justified during the response to the 2011 famine, when many allegations of such tarnished Somali NGOs as a whole (Atkins 2017);

- A perception that Somali NGOs/CSOs are not impartial, but operate in line with specific community or social group connections;

- Doubts about the motivations that drive Somali NGO/CSO staff, namely that economic and possibly political interests are a bigger driver than humanitarian compassion (Tsirtinbaum 2012:25);

- Concerns about terrorist financing.

Considerations that demand a nuancing of this generalising negative perception are:

- In parts of South-Central Somalia, there are no markets with a realistic choice between a diversity of suppliers; nor are there banks or receipts to be had;

- In parts of South-Central Somalia, adequate monitoring and evaluation is highly problematic, given the security situation, and Somali NGOs/CSOs are not given the quality funding that would enable them to develop and retain more sophisticated M&E practices;

- It may be impossible for anyone to deliver assistance without bribery – internationals and nationals alike.

> "*While risk is transferred down to CBOs and LNGOs, accountability and quality requirements remain invariable, despite the hard context in which some LNGOs and most CBOs have to operate.(...) Local NGOs are accused of lacking accountability and quality in delivery, according to international standards. This does not match with the level of risk they are requested to assume.*" (Almansa 2015:39).

The internationals express a zero-tolerance but sit safely in Nairobi or bunkered in in Mogadishu. *"From Nairobi it was easy to say no, and all of the pressure was on your staff, the suppliers, contractors…"* (Majid et al. 2018:11 footnote 16);

- From the perspective of Somali actors, international aid agencies are also influenced by economic interests and political considerations.

A perceived dilemma is how to have a partnership relationship with an agency that you are also policing (Majid & Harmer 2016). While understandable, the framing of the dilemma also shows a lack of insight into how mutual accountability and disagreements are compatible with a quality relationship. Trust does not imply blind trust: trust but verify is an acceptable principle, but in a partnership it has to be shared and reciprocal.

So how can distrust be overcome and trust increased? Majid et al note that some INGOs (and diaspora organisations) have overcome the distrust through the building of medium-to long-term relationships, *"where the international partner is interested in supporting the overall organisational development of the local partner".* This requires institutional leadership, policies and principles on partnership, and frankness of dialogue, as well as interpersonal relations, internal coherence towards a partner, and institutional memory. Typically, such INGOs have strong partnership principles and do not engage in these collaborations through competitive tendering processes (Majid et al. 2018).

4.2   FINANCE: ACCESS, QUANTITY AND QUALITY

The quantity and quality of funding has been a major issue of dispute in South-Central Somalia for several years. Somali NGOs/CSOs point out the following:

- Too high a percentage of humanitarian funds allocated to help Somalis in need is spent on the international agency infrastructure in Nairobi (Majid & Harmer 2016:12-13);

- Donors and grant intermediaries who sit outside South-Central Somalia do not necessarily have a realistic notion of the real costs and reduce budget lines unilaterally. A respondent working for a UN agency suggested that *"local agencies are often 'squeezed' to minimise their costs"* (Majid et al. 2018:10 footnote 12). This tendency can be reinforced by Somali NGOs/CSOs, bidding for a contract in a competitive environment and under-pricing themselves (Majid et al. 2018: 16; Global Mentoring Initiative 2019);

- Unacceptable discrimination is said to take place whereby INGOs get a flexible management fee or ICR (Internal Cost Recovery), whereas habitually Somali ones do not. UNHCR has been cited as one example of such differentiated practice (NEAR 2018:4). Somali NGOs/CSOs appreciate that the Somalia Humanitarian Fund does not discriminate and gives all its grant recipients the same 7% (Majid et al. 2018:12). INGOs do not, as standard practice, share such fees (Majid et al. 2018:9). Donors, as mentioned, should insist that the lead partners share overheads rather than leave it at the discretion of those grant receivers. Somali NGOs should not be used as cheap labour. As a result, Somali NGOs/CSOs have no flexible money to invest in their organisational development or

> *"UN agencies and INGOs provide zero, unpredictable, limited or discretionary unrestricted funding to local NGOs, with no clear collective target, while receiving unrestricted/core funding to fund their operational costs. While the narrative is that local and national actors don't have capacity and there is risk, the ability to control and develop capacity is undermined by not paying core and overhead expenses to strengthen capacity"* (NEAR 2018:8).

retain qualified staff, e.g. during a period of cash flow shortage. The issue of core funding is a major advocacy point (NEAR 2018).

- Most funding is short-term and unpredictable, which makes strategic planning, including for organisational development, difficult and often pointless.

- Some donors (e.g. the Netherlands or Switzerland) are now providing some longer-term funding, e.g. to the Somali NGO Consortium and the Nexus Consortium, acknowledging that this is an important enabler for more strategic planning and development.

Somali NGOs/CSOs try to mitigate this constant financial fragility in different ways, e.g. through

- pre-financing e.g. by taking loans from commercial actors in Somalia;

- establishing separate business arms;

- receiving membership fees;

- getting financial support from the diaspora;

- occasionally, deferring certain payments e.g. on rent, because of cash flow constraints;

- creative accounting (Majid & Harmer 2016:18; Majid et al. 2018:9-10).

The shortage of quality funding such as unrestricted core funding has significant impacts that seem counterproductive for the collective aid effort in South-Central Somalia (see also Global Mentoring Initiative 2019).[1] Somali and international actors agree this is a key issue for the advancement of localisation (Almansa 2019:9). One Somali interlocutor put it very clearly: "*Quantity of funding without quality funding doesn't mean anything. For six months I may be handling a million dollars, but if I have received no flexible income, I may still have to lay off many staff and struggle to pay recurrent expenses after that.*"

> *"Core costs for local NGOs is a top agenda item for advocates in the Horn…" (…) "…core funding is increasingly recognised as one of the most effective ways to strengthen the organisational capacity and sustainability of small civil society organisations." (Howe 2019:19).*

Yet, although this issue has been documented now over several years: no significant change seems to have taken place. The issue remains a significant obstacle to the organisational development of Somali NGOs/CSOs that impacts on their emergency response capacity, their ability to retain qualified staff and maintain strong organisational systems, and their ability to negotiate better terms for themselves in the future. As Majid points out, keeping those local and national organisations weak might paradoxically increase risks of corruption (Majid et al. 2018). Many Somali organisations also find themselves in a capacity trap: low capacity means little access to funding and little negotiation room for quality funding, which means no ability to sustainably develop the organisational capacities, as a result of which it remains difficult to attract funding (Tsitrinbaum 2012; Atkins 2017; Almansa 2020).

Direct funding of Somali local and national actors remains limited but has seen some uptake in recent years.

- In 2017, a near famine year, direct funding of local/national actors was US$ 46.1 million, accounting for 3.5% of overall humanitarian funding that year. This contrasts with 2016

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1 A recent joint report by five Foundations operating in Switzerland concludes that funding organisational development is a smart investment to multiply impact. It improves the partners' organisational sustainability, and thereby also helps the Foundations better achieve their mission (No author 2020).

when it was zero. The majority of the 2017 direct funding went to the Somali government.

- Indirectly, local and national actors received 9.7% of overall humanitarian funding or US$ 128 million, excluding the value of cash or in-kind contributions. This came particularly from the UN agencies (Majid et al. 2018:4).

- With the overall funding increase for South-Central Somalia in 2017, different international organisations follow different practices. Some provided an increased proportion of their overall budget increase to Somali NGOs; others retained a higher proportion of their increased funding for themselves; some did not pass on any funding at all (Majid et al. 2018:6).

- Only two out of twelve local/national actors responding to the 2017 NEAR study reported receiving direct funding from a bilateral donor (Majid et al. 2018:3).

- In 2018, the Somalia Humanitarian Fund channeled 57% of its resources through local and national agencies, up from 37% in 2017 (Shuria, Abdinoor & Mahmoud 2018:22). It has therefore achieved its commitment to channel at least 25% of its funds to local and national actors in line with the Grand Bargain. The 2020 bilateral donors to the SHF are Australia, Canada, Germany, Denmark, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Switzerland and South Korea. Also in 2020, a significant proportion of its funding will go to Somali NGOs. The issue remains that the SHF, like other pooled funds around the world, receives only a small percentage of overall humanitarian funding invested in a country annually (Majid et al. 2018:12-13). By autumn of 2020, it had received only US$40,600,000 from five bilateral donors. All the Somalis interviewed for this research who are actively engaged in the localisation question made this point very explicit. In the broader picture of total relief funding per year for SC Somalia or Somalia as a whole, the good record of the SHF does not amount to such success.[2] Somali NGOs/CSOs, like others around the world, want more direct contact with back donors. Partially based on experience, they see this as an enabler to negotiate more realistic project costs compared with those set by intermediaries and receive greater recognition for their work (Ibid:10).

Despite such progress, a recent review notes that "*funding to local and national NGOs in Somalia remains low, the fact that most of the funding is received through secondary channels puts local and national organisations in a position often comparable to that of a sub-contractor responding under program goals set by the first level organisation. In addition, data on funding gaps presented in this overview shows that the funding gap experienced by national NGOs is considerably wider than for the UN organisations and for INGOs.*" (Fröjmark & Carstensen 2020:1).

Bilateral donors are known to be reluctant about direct funding. Though only very few faces legal restrictions on funding local organisations directly, most share the same practical issue: they need another entity as grant manager because they do not have the staffing capacity to handle a multitude of organisations and grants. This transfers the funding risk to the grant management intermediary. Another option encouraged by donors who prefer to hand out big grants is consortia formation, with one lead agency as the formal contract holder. This may be a viable option for Somali NGOs.

Then there are the concerns about fraud, corruption and diversion and, certainly for Somalia, terrorist financing. Corruption (directly and indirectly) is, according to the 2016 Transparency International study "*deeply entrenched in the economy and society in Somalia*" (but also occurs in the operations handled in Kenya), though so are values of fairness and integrity. Even during

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2 The Localisation Framework for Somalia signals that "the SHF is not a localisation fund" (Majid 2018:7) although the Grand Bargain sees pooled funds as an enabling mechanism to allocate more funds to local and national actors.

the 2011-2012 famine, instances of corruption occurred, some of them among Somali NGOs then funded by the SHF. The SHF subsequently tightened its procedures, which led to a positive evaluation some years later (The KonTerra Group 2019). Fraud and corruption can affect not just the awarding of contracts or the pricing of contracts, but also the identification of local partners, the recruitment of staff, the selection of aid recipients, the negotiation of conditions for access, the selection of monitoring mechanisms and the content of the monitoring reports. It can occur in all agencies, international as well as Somali, governmental, private sector or not-for-profit, but does not necessarily affect organisations as a whole: an agency may work with great integrity in certain areas and have corrupt staff in other aspects of its work. In November 2020, the Italian NGO INTERSOS decided to terminate all operations in Somalia after 30 years. The reason was systematic fraud, particularly in procurement, that the organisation finds too dangerous to investigate (Parker 2020).

One donor felt that if Somali NGOs want to be able to access larger amounts of funding, certainly directly, they may need to develop themselves a high quality 'vetting' (due diligence) process, comparable to that applied by donors to international grant-recipient agencies. And there are many good practices too worth highlighting. These good practices can be reinforced and be part of a collective framework (Majid et al. 2018). Somali NGOs could develop their own standards of integrity and accountability, in the first place towards the Somali people and public authorities.

The interviews for this inquiry show awareness of the risk for Somali NGOs of having a case of fraud or corruption (even if they discover it themselves and act effectively upon it), as they can easily get comprehensively blacklisted for all international aid actors. Blacklisting does not easily happen to international agencies which experience fraud or corruption. In the eyes of national actors, this is seen as a double standard. At the same time, fierce competition for international aid money among Somali NGOs and possibly between Somali NGOs and the emerging public institutions can stand in the way of jointly fighting corruption. High financial fragility will be a factor encouraging competition as organisational survival is constantly threatened.

4.3 CAPACITIES

If local and national organisations want to play a bigger role in emergency response, they need to have certain capacities in place – such has been the tenor of many international humanitarian actors, including donors, UN agencies, and INGOs. Capacity strengthening has even made it into the Grand Bargain agreement. However, the notion that LNNGOs lack capacity has also been contested, for example in this 2019 report, which has called capacity strengthening initiatives "*uniform and untailored, top-down, ill-matched and inefficient*" (Howe et al. 2019:16-17). So what does the capacity debate look like in Somalia?

A FIT-FOR-INTERNATIONAL SECTOR AND FIT-FOR-CONTEXT CAPACITIES

When asked what capacities they consider necessary for effective humanitarian action, NGOs/CSOs from Somalia, Somaliland, Kenya and South Sudan replied: expertise and professionalism of board members and staff; ability to retain qualified staff; sector-specific technical skills; strong procurement systems; strong human resources and management systems; strong MEAL and compliance systems; strong logistical abilities; strong communica-

tion systems; strong strategic planning; resource mobilisation and fundraising skills; physical assets to support programmes; strong risk mitigation systems; strong coordination in cluster system and with humanitarian actors, as well as government and community stakeholders; access to and strong relationships with INGOs, donors and embassies; ability to lobby and advocate local governments and relevant ministries for effective support for communities (Howe et al. 2019).

Most of these are organisational and technical capacities that mainly revolve around an organisation's ability to access and spend international funding. They do not tell us how likely it is that the organisation will deliver a high-quality and accountable humanitarian response. In order to measure the humanitarian response capacity, other aspects need to be looked at, including "*proximity, humanitarian access, local knowledge and trusting relationships with stake-holders and crisis-affected communities*" (Ibid:15).

The degree to which money and the pressure to spend grants (and deliver rapid results) are a core consideration may influence which capabilities are given what weight. International agency capacity assessments tend to focus on the first set and neglect the second set. Trócaire's approach in Gedo region is a positive example of an approach that assesses the potential for partnering from the perspective of a common purpose and complementary capabilities in a very specific context, with less pressure to spend and to deliver quick results - that may equally quickly evaporate.

B   POWER ASYMMETRY IN CAPACITY ASSESSMENTS AND STRENGTHENING ACTIVITIES

The prevailing practices regarding capacity assessments in the international relief sector are a clear indicator of power inequality (see Barbelet 2019). There are no reciprocal capacity assessments, only unilateral ones of the Somali agency by the international ones. This allows international agencies to assume that they have all the required capacities. They also get to decide which capacities are deemed relevant and which not. In practice, the capacities to meet international relief sector requirements as mentioned are given more importance than fit-for-context capacities. It is also expected that LNNGOs develop their capacities equivalent to those of international agencies, even if Somali NGOs and government institutions have not had decades of investment to develop their institutional capacities.

There are some exceptions to this prevailing practice. A few international actors operate more from an appreciative inquiry than a deficit-thinking perspective. They consider strengths and potential as well as weaknesses. They are willing to meet local actors where they are now and adapt their support accordingly.

The power dynamics are also visible in what national and local actors in other countries are increasingly referring to as the absence of a graduation. They feel doomed to remain perpetual students, as international relief agencies shift the capabilities' goal posts (and do not provide them with enough resources to rapidly catch up), so they never get to be treated as equals. Capacity development support does not lead to Somali agencies taking on roles that were previously played by international ones (see also Howe et al. 2019:16-17). These dynamics led Majid et al. to the conclusion that "*capacity building has not changed the power dynamics between international and national actors*" (No author 2018:19).

C   MULTIPLE REPEATED ASSESSMENTS

Different international organisations use different capacity assessment frameworks, which usually take Somali NGOs/CSOs time and effort to respond to. As there is no universally accepted tool in place, Somali agencies have to devote scarce time and resources into repeated similar assessments of their capacities. One donor representative called this situation "*death by assessments*".

The NGOs/CSOs receive not enough feedback. The findings of capacity assessments are not always shared back and discussed together. The experience of Somali NGOs/CSOs therefore is that they are merely "*a contracting tool rather than part of a longer-term process to develop a strong civil society in Somalia. (....) They are frustrated at the lack of vision on their potential role and the need to build capacity to attain these goals.*" (Atkins 2017:3). That led to the September 2017 demand for a standardised capacity assessment framework to be used by the UN, INGOs and donors alike. The UN Risk Management Unit in Somalia committed to engage on this (Abdulkadir 2017). Two years later, Almansa's new comprehensive assessment suggested that no progress has been made on this task (Almansa 2020). This inquiry indicates that now at least a Task Force under the SNC is working on a harmonised framework (see e.g. Mohamed 2020). It remains to be seen whether it will be able to create an assessment tool that is accepted by all and reduces the administrative burden on Somali NGOs and CSOs.

D   PROJECT DELIVERY AND INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES

Though capacity assessments look at overall organisational functioning, including management systems and governance set-up, much capacity support offered focuses on project delivery skills. That could be an indicator of how many collaborations put the Somali agency in the role of an implementing partner or a sub-contractor, rather than a strategic actor. "*You build a project-oriented capacity rather than an institutional one*", is how a Somali interviewee put it. One international agency interlocutor indicated that their agency did not even invest in strengthening key management systems of the Somali agencies they provided grants to, only project-related technical or thematic expertise.

A few interlocutors, both Somali and international, showed clear awareness of this issue. One talked about more advanced software that enables not only easier management of accounts, but also HR and procurement management. Another about the need to support Somali competences to go beyond the data collection, which is where they are currently mostly involved, to do data analysis, which largely remains the realm of international actors.

An interesting point is that of writing skills. Writing well-structured, sophisticated proposals and reports is a major competency that many international aid workers do not master. Several international relief agencies therefore hire consultant proposal writers. One international interviewee explicitly recognised that writing competency is not a direct indicator of the actual capacity: the Somali agency can very well have an excellent idea, come up with an appropriate design, implement it well and achieve results – without being able to communicate this clearly on paper. However, the aid bureaucracy has difficulty dealing with results that are not meticulously documented in written reports.

Not only in South-Central Somalia, but also in many other countries, local and national actors argue for multi-year institutional support which would allow them to become more sustainable organisations. The demand to also receive a flexible management fee or ICR is related to that objective. Earlier research found limited donor appetite for investing in genuine organisational development, which made the Somali actors wonder how genuine the capacity development narrative really is (Majid et al. 2018).

E   LACK OF ATTENTION TO COLLECTIVE CAPACITIES

Overwhelmingly, capacity thinking focuses on individual organisations rather than the Somali NGO sector and its collective capacity. Only Oxfam NOVIB has taken a systemic perspective in its successive assessments (2003, 2015 and 2019), looking at the collective sum of individual agency capacities.

The 2015 report found many areas of strength, among them a strong sense of commitment; strong personal leadership; decent manuals on procedures related to HR, finance and pro-curement; the ability to make timely decisions and move forward response actions; expertise in working in a conflict-sensitive way; awareness of Sphere standards; and for some Somali NGOs, the ability to work with local communities in hard-to-reach areas. The assessment also identifies several weaknesses: a mostly male' leadership which is not institutionalised; financial dependency and vulnerability and need for stronger accountability; competition for qualified staff; not strong on analysis designed for institutional planning; not very strong on knowledge management. "*There are no powerful strategic networks of NGOs that could impact on shaping the humanitarian agenda.*" (Almansa 2015:19). Further weaknesses named were no practice of institutional risk management; mostly oriented towards need- rather than rights-based approach; prevailing sectors are WASH and livelihoods; each organisation operated in a limited number of geographical intervention areas (Almansa 2015).

In his 2020 comprehensive assessment, and comparing with his 2015 one, Almansa finds positive evolution. His summary perspective is "*In general, NGOs in Somalia have substantive capacity, particularly on humanitarian mandates, financial management, human resources management, networking and alliance building, conflict-sensitivity and rights-based approaches, resilience and disaster risk reduction. The weakest areas are analytical and strategising, knowledge management, standards compliance, financial autonomy and geographical outreach.*" (ibid:5). Strategic direction and quality control remain key attention areas.

F   CAPACITY STRENGTHENING PRACTICES THAT OFFER LIMITED VALUE FOR MONEY

Prevailing capacity strengthening practices in the international relief sector as a whole, and in Somalia as well, offer very low value for money. Various factors contribute to this, including:

- Uncoordinated and at times repetitive supply-driven capacity-inputs, which are not cost effective;

- Training individuals does not automatically translate into institutionalised capacities, as activities for organisational learning need to follow the training activities;

- A key challenge for many national and local actors, also in Somalia, is to retain capacities, not just to acquire them. Capacity strengthening investments that ignore their financial instability make little sense. Soon they may lose again their best, and trained, people, because of cash flow problems or an inability to offer somewhat competitive salaries. The practice of staff poaching by international humanitarian actors is of particular concern;

- Somalia needs institutional capacity strengthening infrastructure, i.e. Somali resource centres that can provide organisational development support and different types of the-matic training on management practices or different technical areas. This would benefit not only the NGO sector but can equally serve the public and private sectors. In the medium term, this would be much more cost-effective than ongoing bilateral, interna-tional agency-for-its-own-partners, capacity inputs.

The Nexus consortium is taking a fresh perspective on this. It wants to see more capacity sharing and learning from each other, particularly between its current members. It also wants to maximise the use of Somali resource persons and minimise that of international consultants.

The above findings need to be balanced against the practices of some international agencies that have adopted a longer-term accompaniment approach, embedding some of their own staff as resource persons-in-proximity with local entities. Interestingly, the objective here is around strengthening Somali capacities as a significant objective in its own right.

G   LITTLE PERSPECTIVE ON OR VISION FOR A SECTOR

Some international actors spoken with for this inquiry felt that Somali NGOs have lacked a vision for their role in an evolving context with gradually emerging state structures, notably in reflecting on themselves as civil society actors and not just service deliverers. One international interviewee felt that localisation is absolutely needed in Somalia but cannot advance unless there is a stronger sense of civil society roles and identities. Indeed, some Somali interlocutors interviewed for this study gave the impression they viewed capacity strengthening as a way to deliver more and bigger projects. This suggests that their long-term treatment as subcontractors has become part of their identity.

But short-sightedness is not surprising for a sector that is grappling with the lack of longer-term strategy. As the international actors interviewed admitted, the short-term thinking of the international relief sector, even after 30 years of chronic crisis in Somalia, is a major obstacle. Again, international relief actors may be too disconnected from their development, peace-building and state transformation colleagues. Those in the EU and USAID, for example, are actively investing in a Somali civil society (e.g. Eco 2012 and no author 2016). The 2017-2020 EU strategy puts this explicitly within the framework of the National Development Plan and the New Deal.

There is, however, potential for constructive evolution. If the context is now evolving, with growing interest among some Somali NGOs and international aid agencies to see their roles evolve towards those of a civil society that bridges the gap between the state and its citizens and works rights-based instead of needs-based, then this convergence creates great opportunities. One implication may be that the Localisation Task Force needs to work closely with interlocutors of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

H   EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

While early warning systems have been developed for South-Central Somalia, the key issue remains early response. Regarding the devastating 2011-2012 famine, attention has been drawn to how responses became delayed by the slowness of international actors to mobilise funding and/or make decisions (e.g. Ali 2012). Concern over terrorism financing was certainly one factor, but the sluggishness of the international response machinery has cost lives and led to initiatives like the Start Fund.

A recent three-country study in the Horn of Africa identifies a set of generic factors that enable and hinder a timely, appropriate, quality, principled response (Howe et al. 2019).

ENABLING FACTORS	HINDERING FACTORS
a. Proximity to conflict-affected communities • Shared language and local contextual knowledge • Physical closeness • Social connectedness and trust • Long-term presence • Relationships and collaboration with local stakeholders, governmental authorities and gatekeepers • Ability to negotiate access b. Organisational capacities • Qualified staff and ability to retain them • Access to physical assets to support the organisation • Fundraising skills and relationships with potential governmental and non-governmental donors • Technical skills for operations • Systemic strengths (management, procurement, risk management, MEAL, HR) • Strong leadership and strategic planning skills c. Staff from affected communities d. Relationships across ethnic groups and/or clans and expansive geographic coverage e. Participatory needs assessments with affected communities as well as local actors f. Strong downward accountability mechanisms	• Lack of direct funding for LNNGOs • Inflexible short-term funding • Lack of direct access to and relationships with donors • Capacity strengthening ill-matched to organisational needs • Capacity strengthening focused on upward accountability to donors • Lack of graduation process as LNNGO capacity is strengthened • Direct competition with INGOs for funding • Direct competition with INGOs for implementation • Lack of dedicated staff and systems for fundraising • Lack of core funds • Pre-designed assistance and/or donor priorities that conflict with predominant needs • Inability to programme across sectors or to design holistic programmes • Lack of trust between international and local organisations • Rigid risk mitigation plans, narrow definitions of risk, or shifting the burden of risk to LNGOs • Lack of funding for advanced MEAL systems

Somali NGOs and international relief agencies can each conduct, for example, a score card exercise for these factors, and then compare their scores and have a meaningful conversation about what needs to change, where and how.

The Joint Somalia Response of the Dutch Relief Alliance (DRA), drawing also on Oxfam's learning from its three-year Empowerment of Local and National Humanitarian Actors (ELNHA) project in Bangladesh and Uganda, is one of the initiatives addressing this. It includes funding for very rapid response, as an earmarked budget line, into its broader financing for the Nexus consortium. This is one approach to combining the need for rapid response capacity with longer-term development objectives.

4.4   COORDINATION

A   SOMALI NGO CONSORTIUM

Established in 1999, this consortium brings together Somali NGOs and INGOs. This consortium has been a very active space for conversations and work on localisation, but also has working groups on other topics, e.g. gender or cash. It meets in Mogadishu. Key decision makers of international agencies, based in Nairobi, may only occasionally participate in person.

In 2017, Atkins observed that Somali NGOs had little presence and influence in decision-making bodies: "*Many of the decision-making bodies that oversee projects within Somalia have few Somali representatives. This results in many local NGOs being left out of the policy dialogue and without a unified voice to represent their communities. Furthermore, there is frustration amongst the few local representatives, who believe that many of the decisions made are pre-determined.*" (Atkins 2017:3).

Since 2020, Somali NGOs have a presence in the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), the advisory group of the Somalia Humanitarian Fund and the Localisation Task Force and are present in various clusters. Whether their presence automatically equates to meaningful participation, both in the sense of representing a collective and consulted voice and having influence on important decisions, needs to be further investigated.

B   HUMANITARIAN COUNTRY TEAM

As in many disaster-prone countries, UN agencies continue to be the centre of the HCT. Currently, there are also four INGO members and two Somali NGO members. Somali inter-locutors feel that this must change to a better NGO representation. Participating in HCT meetings is a great opportunity to learn more about how the international relief sector thinks and works. But Somali NGOs are also aware that getting a seat at the table is only the first step. The next one is being able to meaningfully participate, on behalf of a more common interest (underpinned by regular consultation with and feedback to a wide group of Somali NGOs from those individuals present in the HCT). Meaningful participation also requires enabling conditions are the ability to put issues on the agenda and be listened to by the more powerful agencies in the HCT. So far, international members, in numbers and influence, far outweigh Somali ones when it comes to decision-making.

The HCT meets monthly to mostly discuss contextual and programmatic updates. Though it endorsed the Somalia Localisation Framework in November 2019, this is not currently seen as a collective, strategic objective and is not a regular topic on the agenda. Overall, the meetings are not moments for debate and deeper joint reflection.

As in other countries, there may be a tendency to talk about localisation as if it is an NGO issue that does not concern UN agencies. This is a dangerous misconception. All major UN agencies have endorsed the Grand Bargain, thereby agreeing to help turn its commitments into practice.

C   CLUSTERS

Leadership or co-leadership of clusters is seen as one indicator of more equitable partner-ships and national/local actors' ability to exercise leadership and be part of decision-making. In 2019, the Global Protection Cluster produced a reference framework to advance local-isation in the UN coordination system (Nolan & Dozin 2019). This is not currently being used. Participating in the clusters is particularly important for Somali NGOs because it is a condition for eligibility for funding from the Somalia Humanitarian Fund and for ECHO. A recent review of the clusters for Somalia shows that "*while more than 60% of the membership in the national and sub-national clusters are made up of local and national NGOs, none of the leadership or co-leadership positions in the national cluster of Somalia is held by a local or national NGO. For the sub-national clusters 20% of these positions are held by local and national NGOs. In comparison, looking at the global average of cluster leadership for 27 operations surveyed in 2019, national and local NGOs held 8% of co-chair positions of national clusters and 8% of leadership positions of subnational clusters.*" (Fröjmark & Carstensen 2020:1).

4.5   GENDER AND LOCALISATION

The Grand Bargain document with its nine commitments was criticised for being insufficiently gender sensitive. Within months after the World Humanitarian Summit, an informal Friends of Gender of the Grand Bargain group came into being. Though gender is understood to be about socially and culturally ascribed roles and self-images of women and men, in practice gender and localisation has largely become about the role and support of women's rights organisations and women-led organisations (UN Women 2019 & Grand Bargain Workstream on Localisation 2020). Some INGOs have been very active in highlighting the role of women in humanitarian crises and the reality and greater potential of women leadership. CARE and

ActionAid are two examples.[3] Some international agencies are now also promoting what they call feminist leadership.[4]

Four general observations from global research are worth mentioning here:

- National and local women's rights and women-led organisations tend to be even more underfunded and underrepresented in coordination and decision-making spaces than male-led ones (e.g. ActionAid 2019).

- Women's organisations are deeply uncomfortable with being pushed by international actors into roles and responsibilities to prevent radicalisation and countering violent extremism.

- Women's organisations appreciate central agenda issues such as greater participation in public life, greater and better educational and economic opportunities and an end to gender-based violence (GBV). But they do not agree with the heavy international emphasis on GBV or the near-exclusive funding for case management of survivors. They advocate for more support for prevention, which requires deeper work on social and cultural factors (Van Brabant & Patel 2019).

The key observations from the interviews conducted for this inquiry are:

- Throughout decades of crisis, Somali women and children have suffered heavily, but Somali women have also taken on major roles as carers and providers. From that experience, they have meaningful contributions to make when matters are discussed and decided, even more so when these have implications for women and children.

- Some Somali NGOs have developed expertise on women and children, but approach their situation somewhat more from a needs than from a rights perspective. Somali women do play important background roles in traditional violence reduction and peace-making. But they could play a much stronger role in overall peace and reconciliation efforts were they given the space.

- At a local level, there are many self-help or CBO-type women's groups and associations. These may have minimal structures yet can be very active and influential. Some may focus on GBV, others on livelihoods for women, redress for violations of rights or a mix of activities. They may not aspire to become NGOs but can be relevant associations to partner with. Trócaire has some experience on this in the Gedo region.

- Somali women's organisations are said to be underappreciated and neglected by both Somali staff of INGOs and male leadership of Somali ones. General invitations to meet with senior INGO leadership may not be forwarded to them, and they rarely make it onto the short list of NGOs considered for new partnerships.

- There is currently no strong network of Somali NGOs focused on gender or women's rights.[5] The few working on women's rights do not have a strong presence in the Somali NGO Consortium, except for the Somali Women and Child Care Association (SWCC). But there is now a working group on gender within the Somali NGO Consortium.

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3 In 2018 and 2019, CARE, ActionAid and UNFPA also ran a 'Gender-based violence and localisation' project.
4 ActionAid is one of them. The Canadian aid administration also looks favourably on the term. Feminist leadership is intended to refer more to a particular style of leadership, that can also be exercised by men (Whaley 2019).
5 No participants from South-Central Somalia took place at an Africa workshop on 'GBV and localisation', held in Nairobi in September 2019, but some came from the NAGAAD women's network in Somaliland.

- The Localisation Framework for Somalia calls for greater inclusion of women-led and gender rights organisations. Yet Somali women interviewed for this research stress the importance of having strong and active support including from Somali men.

- Current discussion e.g. on the draft Sexual Offences Act indicates that Somalis do not necessarily understand gender in the same way as Western actors do, i.e. as focused on socially constructed identities and roles. More attention is needed on how the issue is phrased in the Somali language and framed for Somali society.

- There are some (strong and outspoken, but also soft spoken) Somali women leaders; some organisations, when advertising internship opportunities, express explicit interest in women applying. But women leadership is not currently a strong agenda priority for Somali NGOs. As one Somali woman leader put it: "*A topic can be hot in the West, that doesn't mean it is equally hot here*". One interlocutor also observed that the leadership in international organisations is not that gender balanced either. "*Don't come and tell us what to do if your own house is not in order!*"

- Somali society is culturally conservative. It will take several years to have more women in more prominent roles. The key to this is ongoing educational opportunities, followed by job opportunities. If there are no job opportunities, an educated woman may still find herself in more traditional family roles.

- The term feminist leadership had not been heard yet by our Somali interviewees. But it was seen as likely to create more obstacles. The argument was made that you do not need to be a feminist to advocate for the rights and causes of women and girls. And an example was given of a woman who had become very prominent and influential, not from an inspiration by Western notions of gender and gender transformation, but through here deep understanding of the culture and religion. As one interviewee put it: "*You need to work with the realities on the ground.*"

4.6   HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES

A global cautionary argument against localisation is that local/national actors are less able to operate in a principled manner, notably with impartiality and neutrality. In practice this mostly refers to an inability or unwillingness to provide assistance based on need only and not on social identity, and the ability to withstand pressure from political or armed forces to deliver aid to certain groups and not to others. In the context of South-Central Somalia, this conversation turns mostly on the issue of clan and lineage. This inquiry heard different generalised statements on this. On one end of the spectrum the assertion was heard that this is overstated and that if a Somali agency would work exclusively for its own identity group, this would certainly be widely known and become criticised. The other end of the spectrum opinion holds that clan and lineage are ever present, and that various Somali communities have lost trust in Somali NGOs because clan/lineage dynamics influence their actions. Both views are probably partially true.

This is not an issue that can be discussed in a context-neutral manner. Jean Pictet, one of the great reflective minds on these principles, was clear on this: "*The truth is that nothing in life is absolute. The doctrine of the Red Cross, formulated at a particular moment in history, applies to a living world in never-ending movement, to a society composed of men [sic] who have not attained perfection. Sometimes it represents an ideal model to which we may aspire, rather than an unbending and rigorous law.*" (Pictet 1979:14). The more nuanced global conversation also notes that:

- There is indeed a risk of self-chosen or pressured bias in who gets assistance from local/national agencies. This cannot, however, be assumed or generalised: local/national actors, because of their knowledge of and connectedness in their contexts, may be better able to navigate political sensitivities and interests. This is what was meant by fit-for-context capacities mentioned above;

- International relief actors can be incoherent: national and local actors are at times criticised for not being connected to communities, which is seen as a condition for their legitimacy. Yet when they are connected to communities, they can be criticised for not being impartial;

- Impartiality is associated with the ability to work across divided social groups. While indeed desirable, sometimes impartiality is achieved at a cumulative level by different local actors providing assistance in their respective social groups – a perspective that the ICRC accepts;

- Concerns about armed groups, terrorist or not, may lead international actors to limit aid to populations under their control, even if their need is greatest. Research in South-Central Somalia and other places shows that the restrictions resulting from counter-terrorism legislation can lead to a perception of aid agencies as not pursuing a principled response (Majid & Harmer 2016:10);

- Another core principle is that of independence. Local and national actors point out that they are often tied to inflexible project designs and decisions made by internationals that are not always very responsive to the evolving needs and priorities of affected populations.

- Several INGOs, heavily dependent on institutional funding, are not necessarily independent, and not always able to avoid being instruments of political or religious strategies.

Lastly, humanitarian action can be tied to political objectives, particularly in the UN. One study published in 2015 found that several humanitarian actors felt that "*UN humanitarian mandated agencies are politically aligned with the international political agenda of supporting the FGS, and there is serious questioning of their independence and impartiality in regards to delivery of humanitarian aid and protection.*" (Almansa 2015:40).

Clan and lineage identities were a key socio-political dynamic even before the collapse of the Siad Barre regime. They are a source of division, and at times of exclusion and violence, but also a major social safety and security net. In South-Central Somalia at least, believing that a Somali recruited by an international agency miraculously becomes immune to those identities is a fiction. The conversation must focus on what humanitarian principles in practice mean in that very specific context.

4.7   RISK TRANSFERRED OR SHARED

Equitable partnership implies shared benefits but also shared risk. The document review indicated a prevailing practice of risk transfer, especially onto Somali actors. This is a structural practice in the international relief sector, which is also maintained elsewhere (see e.g. Humanitarian Outcomes & Interaction 2019; Global Mentoring Initiative 2020b; Schenkenberg van Mierop et al.. 2020).

Both national and international actors have commented on the huge risk transfers from international to local and national organisations (e.g. Almansa 2019: 9), including in the private sector (e.g. El Taraboulsi et al. 2017:20-21).

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One of the recommendations of the 2016 Transparency International study is for donors and agencies to engage in more realistic dialogue on the inherent risks of operating in South-Central Somalia, and to develop shared approaches to manage risk, rather than having some agencies absorb all the risk (Majid &Harmer 2016:41).

More recent work shows that such dialogue is still not being held, and that mistrust is the key stumbling block: *"Policing attitude is only constructive if and only if the aid organisations real risk positions are correctly understood. But that is not the case. The consequence of such mistrust is the unwillingness to share risk-related information, which is a critical success factor for any collective work,*

> **"Agreements seem to be one sided where agencies are dictating and passing all the risks to companies and partner organisations. (...) Normally they want you to be understanding when they commit mistakes but are very agressive when anything goes wrong even if it is not your fault at all."**
>
> (El Taraboulsi 2017:21)

resulting in lack of risk intelligence, and ultimately relevance." (Jarlsen 2020a:5).

The UN Risk Management Unit and the Multi-Party Risk Working Group are core spaces where collaborative risk management and shared risk should not only be discussed but their practical implications worked out. As one Somali interlocutor pointed out however: *"We cannot realistically progress on risk sharing if international actors maintain an attitude of zero tolerance for risk. You cannot work in a country and society in turmoil with zero tolerance for risk. If there were no serious risks, we would have a lot of foreign direct investment and not need aid."* Risk matrices for the South-Central Somalia context also need to include strategic risks, for example the risk of discouraging the evolution of Somali NGOs to civil society actors by continuing to use them mostly as contractors; or the risk of another 25 years of expensive international humanitarian relief operations without structural change.

As we have seen, the quality of relationship, quality of financing and sustainable organisational capacities are closely interlinked. Shared risk management, which also requires investing in relationship and trust building, is an integral part of this triad.

SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS

For the past three decades, South-Central Somalia has suffered a protracted crisis in which violence, droughts and flooding have killed hundreds of thousands and displaced millions. In the absence of State-like institutions in most parts of the country, the Somali people have had to rely on kin solidarity, international relief aid, remittances, and private sector support. The result has been a high level of internationalisation, with international actors managing humanitarian strategies and operations, often from a remote location because of security concerns.

Localisation and partnerships had been discussed in Somalia long before the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. Various meetings, research reports and persistent advocacy over the past four years have managed to put this policy and practice issue more strongly on the agenda. The Somalia NGO Consortium and the newly created Localisation Task Force are two key spaces. The Somalia Humanitarian Fund is one of the few mechanisms through with LNNGOs can directly access international funding, though the extent of its grants is small in relation to overall humanitarian funding in the country. In 2019, a Somalia Localisation Framework was endorsed by the Humanitarian Country Team, but there is no significant progress on its implementation yet. The Federal Government of Somalia is largely absent from these conversations and initiatives, and, so far, does not have a national strategy or the capacity to deal with humanitarian crises. Somali NGOs favour governmental regulation as is envisaged in the draft NGO Bill but would also like the FGS to adopt policies in favour of stronger Somali leadership. However, it must be noted that localisation of humanitarian aid is only one of the many priorities of the Somali government, potentially overshadowed by the much more complex and fundamental exercise of state transformation.

Relevant initiatives are underway, some of which were initiated by Somali NGOs; the Nexus consortium of nine Somali NGOs deserves to be mentioned here. Though these initiatives have formulated important objectives, their implementation to date has mostly been limited due to a lack of multi-year core funding.

South-Central Somalia presents a unique context in which internationalisation-localisation dynamics play out: state institutions are only re-emerging after a long absence, and in a more complex federal formula than before. Most Somalis are too young to have had any lived experience of what a state is supposed to mean, while older ones may remember the bad experiences of how Siad Barre misused the state for narrow-interest purposes. Clan and lineage are the primary references of identity and often cause division and violence, though they also function as a social safety net. Many Somali NGOs have emerged as contractors in successive humanitarian crisis situations, and find themselves in a fiercely competitive market vying for contracts with international actors. It is not surprising many see themselves more strongly as service providers than as rights-based civil society actors. Similarly, the effective application of humanitarian values and principles is important and must be promoted in a realistic and fit-for-context manner. Clan and lineage dynamics cannot be wished away overnight. Rather, Somali actors should think about how these principles can be practiced and expanded in a context where clan and lineage identities and loyalties run deep. Crucially, Somali women's organisations need to be part of these deliberations, as they often find themselves particularly marginalised despite their close contact with the most vulnerable.

There are many women self-help groups and smaller CBO-type organisations. The primary perspective is needs-oriented. They are not currently as well networked as in some other

countries. Though several Somali women are in leadership positions in different organisations and fora, overall there is no gender parity within Somali organisations. Somali women's rights and gender rights organisations merit more focused support. But international actors will need to exercise restraint and not push their priorities and their desired pace of gender transformation onto Somali actors. This would again instrumentalise them in the service of international agendas and targets. The priorities, strategies and tactics towards more gender equality need to remain the choices of Somali women supported by Somali men. Listening rather than telling is the appropriate posture for international supporters.

There is currently no shared understanding of localisation in Somalia. International actors tend to focus on finance and capacities, though some recognise the importance of quality relationships and equitable partnerships. Also, the Somalia Localisation Framework speaks about respect and trust. Somali NGOs on the other hand speak more about community-based ownership, responsibilities and accountabilities, and capacities of local public authorities, i.e. a more bottom-up localisation process. What is missing is a shared vision of what success will look like in the medium and longer term. That must then be translated into specific objectives and strategies for collective action, and an allocation of roles and responsibilities. Relief agencies have to see their actions in a more encompassing perspective, of emerging state institutions and development/resilience programming.

Much remains to be done. By and large, Somali actors remain implementers of international strategies, projects and agendas; the majority of them are not currently real partners. While it is heartening to see that about half of the annual spending of the Somalia Humanitarian Fund goes to Somali NGOs, this represents only a tiny fraction of the annual aid for Somalia. Critical for all Somali agencies is the access not only to quantities of finance but especially quality finance: more flexible, longer-term and predictable funding and investment in their organisational development – exactly what UN agencies and INGOs seek and get. Such investment would allow them to stabilise their organisational finances and retain the capacities they have gained. Any capacity strengthening support that is blind to the issue of improved financial health of Somali actors will not yield sustained impact and will thus be low value-for-money. Depriving Somali actors of quality finance may simply force them into creative accounting as an unavoidable strategy of survival. Bilateral donors have an important responsibility to create a more enabling environment for Somali organisations to flourish, despite the risky environment.

The risk and realities of fraud and corruption in South-Central Somalia cannot be denied. But they also affect international aid agencies. Transferring all risk onto the weakest and least well-resourced Somali actors is not a sustainable option. It stands in contradiction with the duty of care and is an obstacle to genuine partnership between local, national and international actors. Real partnership may also mean that international actors accept more risk than before. As a number of interlocutors in this report shared, zero tolerance for risk is not an option in a risky environment like this. Excessive risk transfer may very well be an incentive to false reporting because international actors do not want to hear the truths of what it takes to operate in environments where every actor comes under various types of pressure.

Somali NGOs, though not State actors, are present in the clusters and now also have a presence in the Humanitarian Country Team. Presence, however, does not automatically equate meaningful participation and influence. There is little formal co-leadership and international actors retain power and authority. In other words, the objective of real local leadership in coordination is yet to be achieved.

MOVING FORWARD

The following recommendations outline key parameters of a purposeful collective endeavour allowing strengthened Somali actors to lead the management of crises with humanitarian consequences.

- **Develop a common understanding of localisation among national and international humanitarian actors** by paying more attention to its key demands and potential benefits. Understand how the Grand Bargain is an agenda for the reform of the economy but also the politics of the international relief sector.

- **Link this common understanding to a context-specific vision for Somalia** that looks back at the history of the past 30 years and looks forward towards the next 15-20 years. Do international relief agencies want to remain the dominant actors in managing protracted and recurrent crises with humanitarian consequences in Somalia? Will they be, financially and politically, able to continue to play that role as they have for the past three decades? Should Somalia not develop its own collective and collaborative infrastructure to lead more effectively and with responsibility and quality, on the management of such crises? How can or should this be connected to the efforts at building a responsible, capable and accountable federal state structure? Collective capacities can and will have to reside in the public and private sectors and among NGO/civil society actors. What more complementary collaboration can be encouraged and enabled in the shorter term, and what configuration of roles and responsibilities between the three may be realistic in the medium term? What role should Somali communities play in this, beyond being passive recipients of aid? Spell out a view of what success will look like, in concrete and detailed terms.

- **Create and resource a responsible body to drive localisation forward in Somalia.** The Localisation Task Force, supported by other reflection spaces such as the Localisation Working Group in the Somali NGO Consortium, can become the driver to translate the vision and the Somalia Localisation Framework into a more concrete plan with medium-term progress objectives (2 to 3 years) that is a common reference for all, and against which different agency roles and responsibilities are specified. While humanitarian action should not be overly politicised, its efforts and investments cannot be totally disconnected from the development, governance and peace ones. To function effectively, this Task Force needs to be resourced so that it can have dedicated staff to support action beyond meetings. While it may not have much formal authority, it needs to be an authoritative body. That requires backing from the donors. Other humanitarian actors, such as women's organisations, that have not had many opportunities to make their voices heard on localisation, should be actively involved in such task forces.

- **Bilateral and multilateral back donors for relief aid need to develop a strategic roadmap for localisation in Somalia.** Donors are key actors required to achieve localisation; even if they are only willing to make short-term choices, these choices inevitably also lead to a long-term strategy. Unfortunately, a long-term strategy based on short-term decisions is only a series of reactions to successive crises. Do donors envisage another 20 years of comparable international relief investment in Somalia? If not, then gradual but intentional investment in building a stronger Somali humanitarian infrastructure, as it exists in the donor countries, becomes a strategic objective. Only the donors have the influence to get all international agencies to work towards that objective, even if some

will be more willing than others. Building a Somali humanitarian crisis management infrastructure requires investing in the development of viable individual organisations that are also willing and able to work together. That gives a different meaning to capacity development and connects it to the issue of quality funding.

- **Somali organisations, be they governmental or not, need to prove they can lead humanitarian preparedness and response.** Local and national organisations have no automatic right to international aid. Whoever receives it has a deep responsibility to exercise good stewardship. Somali organisations have the opportunity to exercise leadership by clarifying their past, current and future roles in a Somalia with a public and private sector. They can and should develop their own standards of integrity and accountability to Somali stakeholders. And they can take initiative to address the excessive competition among themselves and engage international relief actors. While efforts are required from both sides, it is unlikely that Somali actors will automatically be given greater leadership and responsibility once they have reached the 'level' of their much better resourced international counterparts.

- **International humanitarian organisations (donors, UN and NGOs) need to invest in collective or collaborative risk management.** Complete risk transfer to local and national actors contradicts the duty of care and the principle of humanity that these actors have ascribed themselves to. At the same time, it needs to be understood that zero tolerance for risk is not an option in Somalia. Relationship and trust building is needed to equitably share risk between international and Somali actors. Misbehaviours and mistakes will happen; the question is how partners jointly try to reduce the probability, and when they happen, how they react. Double standards and generalising negative narratives about Somali actors have to be stopped, as they reproduce a power imbalance that in the medium to longer term does not serve the Somali people.

- **Focus on relatively stable pilot areas.** To put this into practice, several people interviewed suggested one or two socio-geographical areas that are not overly complex in terms of clan/lineage dynamics and acute physical insecurity be taken, and invest in the strengthening of collective and collaborative, cross-sectoral Somali crisis management capacities be focussed there. Such an approach can bring together different considerations: make localisation a sufficiently bottom-up process that strengthens the institutional capacities of Somali actors including local authorities, but in a collaborative and complementary spirit, and with strong involvement of local communities, who may be made to actively participate, and therefore also exercise some oversight over how funds are used and demand accountability for the effectiveness of what is being done.

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