

Aiding Somalia

For too long, Somalia has been seen as a “hard case” where aid is *seen as* ineffective, syphoned off, led by the West or politicized. It is important to improve the effectiveness and quality of aid in Somalia:

Activities:

- Connect humanitarian actors from Muslim donor countries, the West and the multilateral system.
- Develop a national forum of local NGOs that represents the diversity of Somalia, allows robust dialogue about humanitarian and development priorities, and is a sustainable catalyst to build partnerships and develop a community of effective local NGOs.
- Develop mechanisms to increase the access and safety of aid.
- Separate humanitarian action from political and military action.

Background:

Somalia has been in a protracted crisis for the past decade. In July 2011, following a prolonged drought, the UN declared famine in the region. 12 million people are affected in Somalia, immediate neighbours (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya) and other parts of the region (Uganda, Yemen). Following this, the amount of aid and of aid agencies has increased dramatically from all parts of the world. Concerns emerged that parallel systems of coordination were being created by the UN/IASC and the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and also that the voices of Somalis were not being heard.

Aid has been slowed down, restricted and its impact reduced by political agendas or constraints that have been in contradiction with humanitarian objectives.

The added-value of our approach:

- Global network of The Humanitarian Forum. THF brings together key humanitarian and development organizations from Muslim donor and recipient countries, the West and the multilateral system. We improve the effectiveness and efficiency of aid by addressing identified gaps between humanitarian communities through training, dialogue and cooperation, working internationally and in partner countries like Indonesia, Libya and Yemen.
- Central role of local NGOs in an already-established network (see below).
- Involvement of diaspora through the Somali Relief and Development Forum. SRDF is an umbrella organisation consisting of Somali Diaspora-led NGOs based in the UK. The group focuses on delivering relief and development to communities in the Horn of Africa.
- Support of other Muslim-led humanitarian INGOs through the Muslim Charities Forum (MCF). MCF is an umbrella organisation for Muslim-led international humanitarian NGOs

based in the UK. It works to support these NGOs through advocacy, training and workshops.

Activities:

1. Connect humanitarian actors from Muslim donor countries, the West and the multilateral system.

- 1a. Connect western and Islamic humanitarian actors. This has started with The Humanitarian Forum, UN OCHA and OIC stimulating collaboration and partnership by bringing together multilateral organisations, western and Islamic international NGOs and local NGOs from Kenya and Somalia together in August and September 2011. Over 120 delegates from more than 75 agencies participated in lively discussion about a longer-term vision for Somalia. We want to expand this by re-connecting these organizations, as well as by involving Turkish humanitarian organisations. Discussion will include humanitarian principles and accountability.
- 1b. Link western donors with Islamic donor countries and the OIC (Somalia and Jeddah). These donors are – or are perceived to be – acting in independent interest groups. They can be connected informally through small roundtables, working with the Somali Donor Group, the OIC, TIKA and the Turkish NGOs as well as others.
- 1c. Build the capacity of Muslim international NGOs. The number of Muslim INGOs has increased dramatically, coming mainly from Europe, North America, Asia, the Middle East and Africa. They need capacity development to comply with international humanitarian standards, carry out effective assessments, and monitor and evaluate the progress of their activities.
- 1d. Build the capacity of the OIC office in Mogadishu. The OIC has excellent links and connections with Islamic INGOs operational in Somalia, as well as with local organizations. It needs assistance developing a comprehensive database of operational organizations, mapping their areas and sectors of coverage, holding and publicising coalition meetings. The Humanitarian Forum seconded an information and communications consultant to OIC in late 2011. OIC is interested in expanding this.

2. Develop a national forum of local NGOs that represents the diversity of Somalia, allows robust dialogue about humanitarian and development priorities, and is a sustainable catalyst to build partnerships and develop a community of effective local NGOs. The Somali Humanitarian Operational Consortium (SHOC) is a coalition of Somali local NGOs working mainly in South and Central Somalia. These NGOs have a great deal of experience between them. SHOC emerged from conferences organized in September 2011 in Mogadishu to understand the potential impact of local NGOs on the ground, how they operate, what their needs are and how they can be supported and given a voice to respond effectively to relief efforts in Somalia. SHOC is the only network of national NGOs (there are some thematic groups, but these have a different function).

- 2a. Develop SHOC as an organisation with a membership that is representative of the country's population and NGO sector, and has good governance and management, and independent funding.
- 2b. Improve dialogue and cooperation within SHOC.
- 2c. Train SHOC and its members to make them more efficient and accountable (eg humanitarian principles, financial management, strategic planning, accountability). This will also increase their capacity to engage with UN etc.
- 2d. Conduct a capacity assessment of Somali NGOs.

Part of this is described in the attached concept note.

3. Develop mechanisms to increase the access and safety of aid.

- 3a. Define safe aid and develop accountability standards with international and local NGOs.
- 3b. At the same time, persuade the US Government and others of the need to maximise aid.

4. Separate humanitarian action from political and military action. International political processes are discussing the future security of Somalia in a series of international meetings on Somalia in early 2012 (including Turkish Foreign Ministers meeting; UN-OIC conference and London Meeting). Humanitarian actors feel that a comprehensive approach must put Somali needs and rights at the forefront. We will develop advocacy messages to international conferences.

Our organisations

Improving coordination between humanitarian communities is a process of building trust through a mixture of practical conversations (eg information sharing about Somalia) and policy (eg jointly held principles). This is necessary because of the explicit or hidden preconceptions that many individuals have. In our experience, it helps to have a core group of committed people/organisations (which can expand in time), who invest time (and a little resource) and have a mutually trusted facilitator.

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