Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) of the collective response to the humanitarian crisis in Somalia
Key findings and recommendations

IAHE
Somalia

Overview

In line with IASC protocols, this mandatory inter-agency humanitarian evaluation was launched by the Emergency Response Coordinator in November 2023 to provide an independent assessment of the collective response of IASC member agencies in meeting the humanitarian needs of the people during the drought in Somalia in 2022-2024. It is based on interviews with representatives from aid organizations, consultations with affected people, and a review of literature, documents and secondary data.

Findings | Humanitarian assistance helped prevent famine and saved many lives:

- An estimated 74,700 people died due to the extended drought, but it would have been tens, if not hundreds, of thousands more without the scaled-up assistance.

However, the humanitarian response also had significant unintended effects:

- Assistance influenced where people displaced to – often precarious sites in (peri)-urban locations.
- The resilience of affected people was eroded due to the drought, the shift away from livelihoods and resilience activities and the negative incentives created by how some of the aid was targeted.
- The rapid, large-scale influx of additional resources increased the risk of aid diversion.

Recommendation 1 | Strengthen awareness and understanding of how humanitarian aid influences the behavior of individuals and institutions. Seek to avoid unintended negative consequences and instead create incentives for affected people that support long-term development.

Ensure the response is underpinned by strong analyses; articulate short-term effects in strategies and plans and include longer-term visions; deliver aid in locations suitable for longer-term solutions.

Collect examples of interventions creating incentives for long-term development; strengthen awareness about incentives and behavioral effects; expand internal advance financing; advocate with donors for anticipatory action.

Findings | Security management – and the related lack of international field presence – emerged as recurrent obstacles for an improved humanitarian response in Somalia:

- Current security management makes operations expensive and undermines humanitarian principles.
- Progress on extending assistance in hard-to-reach areas was limited.
- The lack of international field presence has inhibited efforts to reduce aid diversion and to improve accountability to affected people.

Recommendation 2 | Conduct a fundamental review of humanitarian security management approaches in Somalia.

The Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) & Access Working Group should implement strategies for expanding presence in hard-to-reach areas; UN security actors should develop more differentiated and agile security management practices.

Increase support with access and negotiation capacities; ensure that the planned review of the UN's Security Management System addresses the issues identified in the evaluation; create a more flexible HR structure for UNDSS; advocate with donors to support this; integrate security expertise in future IAHEs.

Findings | Coordination and leadership have led to innovation, but coordination structures are overly complex and fall short on some basic practices:

- Coordination and leadership have led to innovation.
- However, the coordination set-up is complex and involves some duplicative structures.
- Too many meetings have low attendance and no systematic documentation and follow-up.
- Essential data about the response was hard to come by and/or lacked plausibility.

Recommendation 3 | Streamline the humanitarian coordination structure in Somalia, reducing the number of coordination forums and meetings by at least half.

Reduce the number of coordination forums by at least half; reintegrate area-based coordination mechanisms into the cluster-based structure; convene either area-based or cluster-meetings in any given location (but not both).

Provide guidance on how area-based and cluster-based coordination structures can link to each other; slim down the coordination architecture and requirements; hold OCHA and clusters accountable for delivering "coordination basics"; advocate with donors not to fund duplicative coordination.

Findings | The response lacked accountability:

- Like other IAHEs, the Somalia evaluation highlights a lack of accountability mechanisms for addressing identified recurrent shortcomings.
- A key issue is inadequate accountability to affected people. Efforts to strengthen this have focused on creating feedback mechanisms; these systems proved not very effective.
- Affected people were excluded from decisions and have shown little understanding of how these were made.

Recommendation 4 | Make the humanitarian response more accountable by ensuring systematic follow-up to recurring recommendations at country and global levels, increasing transparency and strengthening the engagement of affected people.

Increase transparency; invest in a more balanced approach between engagement, participation, information provision and feedback opportunities; improve information to affected people; streamline community feedback mechanisms; advocate with donors to support collective feedback mechanisms.

Clarify the role of global bodies in ensuring follow-up; identify recurring recommendations and report on follow-up to the emergency relief coordinator (ERC); request HCs/ humanitarian country teams (HCTs) to report on progress regarding implementation; allow for more flexibility for common/coordinated feedback mechanisms.

Findings | The response understandably prioritized life-saving sectors but had critical gaps in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH):

- Different sectors expanded their coverage at different speeds, hindering the provision of integrated assistance.
- The WASH cluster lagged behind other priority sectors throughout 2022, with impacts on affected people.

The response made some progress in reaching minorities and people in hard-to-reach areas:

- Important progress was made in strengthening the access of marginalized clans to assistance.
- Other axes of exclusion, primarily gender and disability, received less attention.
- National and local organizations played a key role in expanding reach in hard-to-reach areas.

Recommendation 5 | Continue and expand efforts to provide an integrated response to urgent needs and to reach all population groups.

Expand the Somalia Humanitarian Fund's (SHF) practice to support integrated responses and address gaps in prioritized sectors; continue the SHF's practice of supporting local organizations and increase that of other donors and agencies; improve understanding of staff clan affiliations; increase attention to gender and disability; advocate with donors for funding to reflect the HCT's priorities.

Expand and replicate the good practice of using country-based pooled funds to support integrated, localized responses and to fill strategic sectoral gaps; advocate with donors to strengthen those.

Findings | The Humanitarian Country Team's (HCT) reforms on aid diversion hold important lessons:

- The scale-up did not pay enough attention to mitigating the increased risk of aid diversion.
- The reform process played an important role in rebuilding trust and creating transparency and cooperation.
- More progress is needed on beneficiary identification, targeting, registration and data sharing.
- Significant challenges to implementing a joint approach to the reforms remain.

Recommendation 6 | Adopt the lessons from the HCT reforms on aid diversion.

Continue and replicate using a multi-stakeholder task force; define conditions for regularizing the role of gatekeepers and private landowners; expand data sharing agreements; link the humanitarian registration system to efforts to create a Unified Social Registry and a national ID system.

Ensure that future scale-ups include risk management as a core capacity to be enhanced and advocate for donor support; clarify that "no regrets" ≠ acceptance of risks; facilitate data-sharing at country level; agree on common parameters for beneficiary registration.