



Chronic Cycle Of Hunger & Displacements In Somalia:

WHERE ARE WE GOING WRONG?

Islamic Relief Worldwide Advocacy Report

Content

Foreword	03
Executive Summary	04
• Situational Overview	04
• Drivers Of Food Insecurity	04
• Gaps In The Humanitarian Response	07
• Persistent Mistakes: Barriers To Improvement In The Humanitarian Response	31
• Islamic Relief Initiatives And Best Practices	34
• Recommendations	36



Foreword

"Those who give to charity night and day, secretly and publicly, will have their reward with their Lord. They have nothing to fear, and they will not grieve." (Quran, 2:274)

This Quranic verse underscores the significance of providing assistance to those in need without seeking recognition, a core principle of Islamic charity. It complements the organisation's 40-year journey and the commitment to alleviating hunger in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG2) of zero hunger. Incorporating this verse into our message reinforces the moral imperative of addressing hunger and Islamic Relief's dedication to the noble cause. Today, as we reflect on the passing of four decades, we find ourselves compelled to ask a sobering question: "Where did we go wrong?" It is a question that weighs heavily on our collective conscience and underscores the persistent challenges that hunger continues to pose.

Hunger, as a pervasive and persistent crisis, demands our immediate attention. It is not merely a reflection of economic inequalities or regional disparities, but a moral imperative that impels us to seek sustainable solutions. In the pages that follow, we delve into the root causes, the far-reaching consequences, and the myriad faces of hunger.

In a world that boasts remarkable advancements in technology, science, and human achievement, it is profoundly disheartening that the spectre of hunger and food insecurity still haunts the lives of millions. This report, a testament to the collective efforts and unwavering commitment of dedicated individuals and organisations, provides a comprehensive and sobering analysis of the grave challenges we face. In the face of these daunting challenges, we must reflect on the passing of time and the persistence of this crisis. The denial or lack of acknowledgment of this crisis on a political level not only hinders progress but exacerbates the suffering of the most vulnerable. Trade agreements, while often designed to boost economies, can sometimes deepen inequalities. They may favour certain nations or corporations, leading to imbalanced access to vital resources like food. This unequal distribution perpetuates food insecurity, particularly among marginalised communities who lack the means to access or afford nutritious food.

This report delves into the heart of this enduring crisis, examining the root causes, the far-reaching consequences, and the countless faces of food insecurity from a Somalia context. Hunger and economic insecurity are significant catalysts for conflict, acting as destabilising forces within societies. When individuals and communities face chronic food shortages and lack economic opportunities, the resulting desperation can lead to social unrest and violence. The struggle for scarce resources often exacerbates existing tensions and inequalities, fuelling resentment and hostility among different groups. Moreover, economic hardship can undermine trust in governmental institutions and erode the social fabric of a society.

The fight against hunger is a battle that we must win, for it is in triumphing over this most fundamental injustice that we will truly build a more just and equitable world for all. As you read through this report, we implore you to reflect on the inalienable right to food and the profound implications of its denial. The statistics within are stark: millions of children go to bed hungry; families struggle to put food on the table, and communities are trapped in cycles of scarcity. Yet, amid these distressing numbers, there exists a glimmer of hope—a testament to the indomitable human spirit, innovation, and the power of collective action.

Addressing hunger and improving economic conditions are therefore critical steps not only as a humanitarian necessity but also for fostering stability and peace. Ensuring food security and economic opportunities can mitigate the risk of conflict, promoting a more harmonious and resilient society. We call upon policymakers, philanthropists, advocates, and citizens to recognise their vital roles in eradicating hunger.

Our shared commitment to this cause is not just a moral imperative; it is a responsibility to our fellow human beings and to the planet that sustains us.

Shahin Ashraf, MBE



Head of Global Advocacy

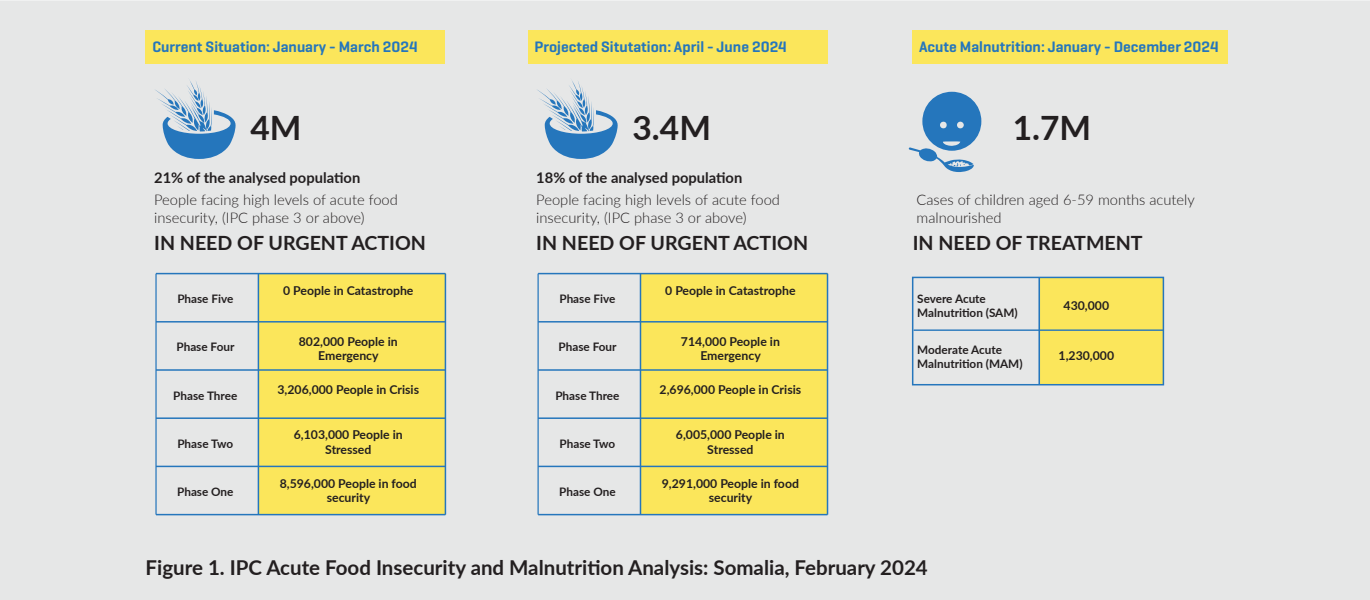
Executive Summary

01
Situational Overview

Nearly 3.5 million people are projected to experience acute food insecurity during the period of April to June of 2024 due to the compounding crises of El-Nino-related flooding, conflict, climate breakdown, and economic instability. Extreme weather events induced by climate change – such as floods and drought – have wiped away lives and livelihoods in one of the worst humanitarian crises in recent history. In addition to malnutrition, Somalis are facing the threat of increased waterborne diseases, such as cholera, and are practicing negative coping mechanisms such as selling assets and taking children out of education.

Despite the immediate threat of famine being averted and food security levels improving in comparison to the same period in 2023, the overall hunger levels in Somalia remain concerning. While Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) scales can be useful to illustrate need and standardise understandings, it should be noted that the absence of a formal declaration of famine should not distract from the very real suffering on the ground. High levels of humanitarian needs persist in the region, particularly for the 3.86 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) across the country. Continued attention and political commitment are crucial to maintain progress, alleviate suffering and prevent further escalation of the crisis.

02
Drivers of Food Insecurity



Food insecurity in Somalia is driven by a number of concurrent and prolonged crises which hinder the fulfilment of the four dimensions of food security, namely availability, access, stability, and utilisation. Understanding food insecurity necessarily requires a holistic approach to the interplay between different factors and the complex ways in which they impact food security. The most notable of these factors are listed below.

01

Climate Change and Extreme Weather-Induced Events

The effects of climate change on agriculture are already being felt across the world, with vulnerable countries at the forefront. Erratic weather, increases in temperature, and extreme climate-induced events such as droughts and floods are causing major disruption to the livelihoods of agro-pastoral communities by reducing crop productivity and damaging assets and livestock.

The combined effect of five consecutive failed rainy seasons and El Nino-induced heavy rainfall and flooding in late 2023 is severely impacting livelihoods, with farmers reporting premature crops, poor yields, animal mortality, and decreased incomes. Beyond the immediate impacts on crop production, the damage sustained on assets, infrastructure, and transport routes are negatively impacting the output, storage, and transportation of products. Moreover, extreme climate-induced events are driving displacement, which pushes farmers from their rural homes decrease in production. Although normal-to-above-normal Gu rains are projected to improve the food security situation in the period of April to June 2024, recovering from the aftermath of protracted drought and heavy flooding continues to carry significant challenges.

02

Economic Instability, Poverty and Inflation

Soaring food prices are restricting economic access to food, even where there is availability. According to World Food Programme (WFP) reports, staple food prices in drought-affected areas are now higher than they were during the 2011 and 2017 crises, with prices more than doubling from 2022 to 2023. At the same time, poverty is continuing to grow, with 54.4 per cent of the population living below the international poverty line (£2.06 per day) according to 2022 statistics from the Somalia National Bureau of Statistics.

While a number of considerations contribute to food insecurity, poverty is the underlying factor which reduces resilience to shortages and creates the conditions for extreme vulnerability to weather shocks. Because poor households dedicate a larger portion of their income to food expenditure, they are more likely to be negatively impacted by a decline in purchasing power and use negative coping mechanisms such as selling assets to make ends meet.

03

Political Instability and Conflict

Somalia has been experiencing conflict and violence since 1990. Although there have been improvements in recent years, the political situation remains fragile, and the government is limited in its operational capacity. This has a number of consequences on food production and food security. Conflict is a major driver of displacement for agro-pastoral communities. It diminishes agricultural output and decreases resiliency through loss of assets, knowledge, and socio-economic networks.

Conflict further discourages agricultural production by destroying infrastructure and undermining the capacity of government institutions to provide services. Obstruction of channels of transport and restrictions on movement imposed by armed groups interrupts food chains and lead to skyrocketing food prices for areas cut off by the restrictions. Security concerns discourage farmers from producing beyond subsistence level to reduce their risk of being targeted and hinder international investment on the agricultural sector.

04

Global Inequality

Although Somalia must be examined within its specific context, it is equally important to note that food insecurity in any one region does not exist in a vacuum and is inherently connected to the growing global food crisis. This requires a holistic outlook which recognises the intimate relationship between financial disparities created by current systems of political economy and inequitable food systems founded on colonial legacy.

The dependency of Somalia on imported products, such as grain from Ukraine, is a product of colonial dynamics of trade which limit food sovereignty and prioritise profit maximisation over the needs of local communities. This is the consequence of a food system which encourages reliance on imported grain, destroys local production through the influx of cheap surpluses, and prioritises a small number of crops for maximum yields. Financial mechanisms, multinational corporates, MDBs, ODA, and political pressure maintains the colonial model of satellite countries producing cash crops for export to the centre and importing staple foods, creating a dependency which exposes vulnerability to disruptions such as the Ukraine conflict. Furthermore, this extractive system contributes to climate change through driving harmful environmental practices such as overgrazing, deforestation, and soil erosion.



03

The Gaps In The Humanitarian Response

Somalia has been experiencing food insecurity to varying extents for over three decades, with the humanitarian response lasting nearly as long. Despite the years of experience and billions spent, very little progress has been made towards achieving food security. An assessment of where the gaps exist is urgently needed. For the purposes of this report, we have identified three primary gaps.

01

Type of Action:

Lack of Investment in Long-Term Development and Resilience Building which Addresses Root Causes

While some progress has been made over the last few years, many aid agencies and development actors in Somalia remain stuck in the emergency aid phase due to chronic underfunding of long-term development programmes and the inflexibility of funding ear-marked for emergency relief. Between 2011 and 2018, an approximate of \$6.8 billion (£5.5 million) has been spent on emergency aid in Somalia, with marginal improvements on the overall situation. Failure to invest in meaningful interventions such as development of agricultural infrastructure, water management, and climate-resilient technologies results in a cycle of suffering where funding is channelled largely into chronic emergency programmes which are unable to address root causes. This not only undermines the effectiveness of the programmes, but also place a drain on limited resources. One of the examples of this in Somalia is the reluctance to invest in fixing data gaps by building comprehensive databases in IDP camps that would allow for better needs assessment and constitute the first block in shifting from the emergency phase to rebuilding.

02

Timing of Action:

Slow Action, Poor Disaster Risk Management, and Lack of Anticipatory Action

Anticipatory and early action saves lives and resources. There has been a renewed focus in recent years regarding anticipatory action globally, with significant efforts taking place in Somalia. Despite the progress towards building anticipatory action infrastructure, this has not translated into early action. Research shows that there were three separate windows for action before the hunger status escalated into a crisis, yet they did not illicit wide-scale action despite repeated alerts. The majority of programmes in Somalia still launch after families and communities have lost their basic resilience, and anticipatory action remains limited to isolated pilot projects. The lack of infrastructure for flexible action also means that aid agencies are slow to respond even after a disaster occurs as appeal processes are lengthy and time-consuming.

03

Scale of Action:

Failure to Complement and Support Response Capacity at National and Local Levels

One of the major gaps in the humanitarian response is the failure to sufficiently localise. There are insufficient local, community-based organisations in Somalia with the capacity to meaningfully enact change and engage in partnerships with other stakeholders. International aid organisations rarely provide wide-scale capacity building, nor do they provide funding and support for community co-operatives and local research institutions. Decision-making occurs largely under the control of international actors, in the United Nations' compounds or places like Geneva, where it is far removed from the communities it impacts.

This is not to say collaboration does not exist between national and international organisations. There are cluster systems and joint projects, most notably Baxnaano (safetynet programme), which allow for a collective response on certain fronts. However, there is not yet a meaningful transfer of ownership to national and local organisations. This threatens efficiency not only because it reinforces a cycle of dependency by impeding development of self-resilience, but also because the underutilisation of the potential of local NGOs to facilitate anticipatory action presents a missed opportunity for a faster and more robust humanitarian response overall.

One example of localisation in Somalia is self-initiated national and sub-national disaster response committees, which were both efficient in delivering emergency relief during disaster events such as the 2017 drought, and enjoyed high levels of acceptance and participation from the communities which they served. Building further upon such initiatives is critical to ensuring an effective response to climate change.

04

Persistent Mistakes:

Barriers to improvement in the humanitarian response

The gaps listed above are by no means unknown – rather, they are problems which persist despite widespread recognition. **The lack of improvement and the inability of discourse to translate into action means that there are barriers which must be understood.**

01

Humanitarian System Stretched Beyond Capacity

The humanitarian architecture, established as a temporary aid mechanism, is becoming increasingly insufficient as wars and displacements become protracted. With the introduction of the Humanitarian Development Peace nexus, there is an even more pressing need to examine the boundaries of the humanitarian sector, including its role, impact, and positionality.

One of the urgent tensions which must be resolved is that of scaling up and letting go i.e., extending operations to ensure no one is left behind while simultaneously working towards localisation. This is especially important as decolonisation has been identified as a key issue facing the future of humanitarian work in a recent report assessing the impact of the sector.

The concentration of resources, expertise, and capacity within the hands of a few notable organisations in Somalia results from the failure to diversify, localise, and transfer ownership to local actors. Shifting onto a more equitable humanitarian architecture is not only critical on grounds of ethical considerations, but also to ensure that any specific international non-governmental organisation (INGO) is not overstretched.



02

Funding Constraints

The inability to implement meaningful interventions stems in large part from significant gaps in funding. As funds fail to keep up with growing needs, organisations are reporting cutting down operations or repurposing resilience-building programmes to keep up with emergency needs. This further harms the HDP nexus as scarcity of funding restricts humanitarian and development actors from investing in the nexus out of fear that there would not be any funds left for their core businesses.

Beyond volume, the model of funding is unproductive for two reasons. First, it is inflexible, reactive, and lacking financial triggers which allow for swift action. Second, it is sporadic, intermittent, siloed, and based on short-term funding cycles which do not allow for long-term investment.

03

Lack of Political Will

Systemic change requires deep and sustained commitment from donors, which has been lacking in the case of Somalia. Despite the series of advocacy messages, frequent early warning reports, and press statements, the required funding was not provided during the first 16 months of the drought period, with donors only committing funds towards end of 2022 when the drought had already caused significant damage. This lack of commitment is an active choice and a symptom of a diseased structure where humanitarian funding is determined by short media cycles, fickle donor commitments, and political agendas. The assistance and attention provided to Ukraine in comparison with Somalia is a perfect illustration of this point. More commitment and political will is needed to ensure lasting change.



"The fact is that there is enough food in the world for everyone. But tragically, much of the world's food and land resources are tied up in producing beef and other livestock-food for the well off-while millions of children and adults suffer from malnutrition and starvation."

— Walden Bello



05

Islamic Relief Initiatives and Best Practice

Islamic Relief has been working in Somalia since 2006 to serve communities in need through emergency aid programmes and development projects. We have had over a hundred projects which serve nearly 4 million people. We prioritise evidence-based, locally-driven, anticipatory programmes which aim to provide sustainable solutions. The Strengthening Last Miles through Innovative Livelihood Enterprise (SMILE) project builds resilience in Afgoye district through expanding productive capacity and enabling self-sufficiency by means of the provision of seeds, tools, agricultural training, and canal rehabilitation. It is driven by research-based evidence and promotes innovative solutions through its partnership with a local university. It prioritises local ownership and targets women and girls specifically to ensure they are able to assume positions of leadership.

Water Infrastructure Development for Livelihood Enhancement (WIDLEN II) is a project which integrates livelihood and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programmes to improve the resilience of agro-pastoral communities in the rural areas of Nugaal and Sanag regions. It supports long-term development through the construction of irrigation infrastructure and prioritises protection for vulnerable groups such as women and children.

Strengthen Agricultural Resilience in Awdal (SARIA) employs new and innovative technologies in Awdal, Marodijeh, Hargeisa, and Somaliland to promote climate smart agricultural practices and diversify income sources and capacity for communities impacted by recurrent droughts and locust infestations. It builds anticipatory and early warning mechanisms and promotes capacity building for both communities and institutions to ensure resilience and sustainability.

06

Recommendations

To the international community

Ensure sustained provision of food and non-food humanitarian assistance against the scaling down of the humanitarian response and bridge the funding gap

- Take global action to support Somalia's climate resilience by:
 - Financing and supporting adaptation and efforts in Somalia through financial assistance, technology transfer, capacity building, and knowledge sharing to empower local communities and protect their livelihoods
 - Engaging in partnerships with local communities and apply principles for locally led adaptation at all levels
 - Preventing and alleviating the most severe consequences of floods and drought by enhancing adaptive capacity
 - Making climate financing available for vulnerable nations such as Somalia
 - Honouring commitments to increase adaptation finance in addition to official development assistance
 - Ensuring additional finance supports and complements National Adaptation Plans in Somalia
 - Undertaking greater coordinated efforts to proactively address future extreme weather events
- Promote conflict-sensitive humanitarian aid and humanitarian access by:
 - Prioritising food security in conflict zones through improved infrastructure, livelihood diversification, strengthened coordination and collaboration, and sustainable resource management mechanisms
 - Demanding unrestricted humanitarian access to conflict-affected areasLeading global initiatives which prioritise humanitarian concerns over political interests such as the Black Sea Grain Initiative

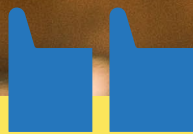
To Institutional Donors and NGOs

- Take early action to avert future crises
- Ensure better coordination in fund distribution to allocate more development aid to countries experiencing food crises
- Develop conflict-sensitive agri-food systems and livelihoods interventions which provide long-term support to protect fragile livelihoods and build resilience through:
 - Investing in sustainable farming practices
 - Investing in programmes that focus on building the resilience of farmers
 - Strengthening integrated responses to the needs of newly displaced people and communities
- Fulfil commitments to localisation
- Advance local economies through aid for trade and private investments
- Improve social safety net programmes to bridge the gap between humanitarian assistance and sustainable development by preserving livelihoods and reducing chronic poverty

To De Facto Authorities

- Uphold human rights of all individuals and protect vulnerable groups in line with international humanitarian law obligations
- Promote the systematic and meaningful participation, equal representation, and leadership of women and local civil society at all levels, including in humanitarian decision-making and coordination
- Strengthen use of early warning mechanisms and improve disaster management and risk preparedness





"We need to address the root causes of hunger and build a food-secure world."

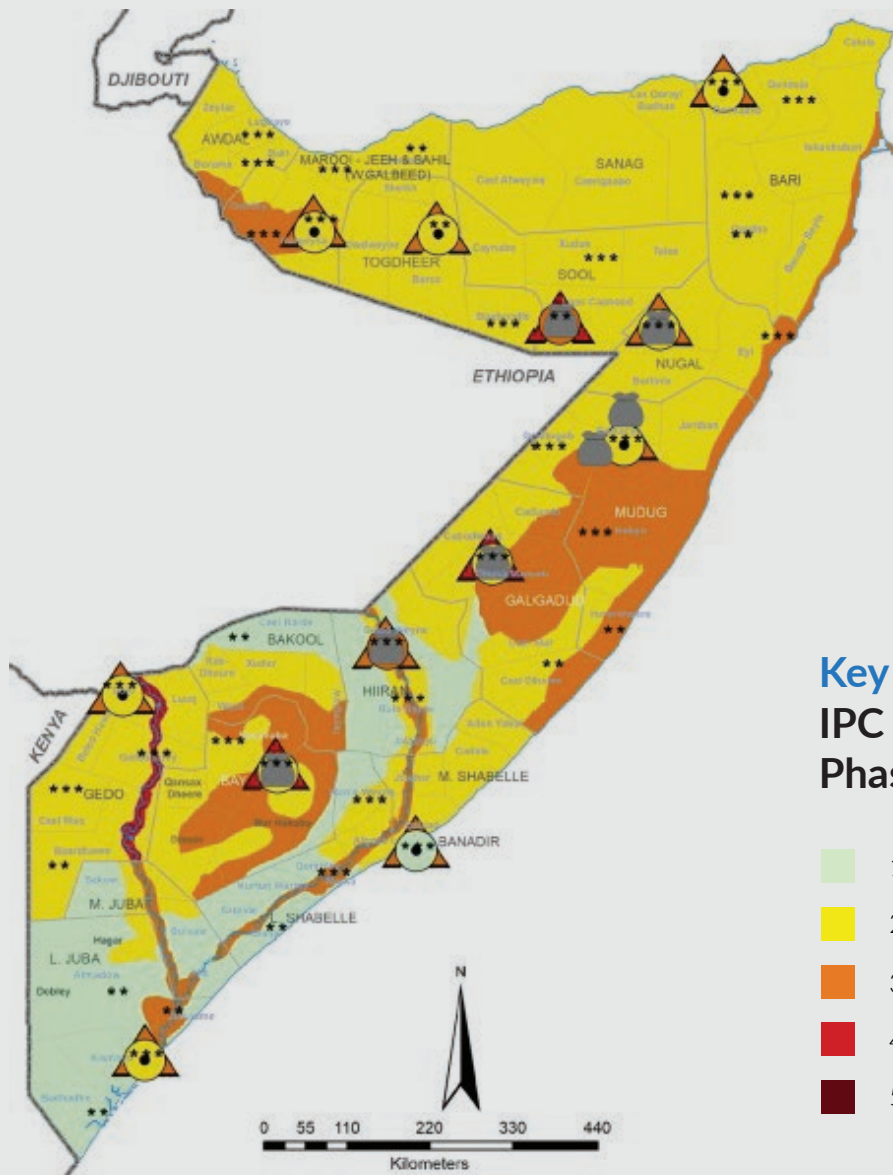
01

Situational Overview

Somalia is experiencing one of the worst humanitarian catastrophes in recent memory, with 21 per cent of the population facing acute food insecurity (IPC level 3 or higher) between January and March 2024. Compounding and protracted crises of conflict, inflation, and extreme weather events induced by climate change are severely threatening lives and livelihoods and pushing Somalis to the brink. The five consecutive failed rainy seasons, combined with stronger El Nino events, flash floods and rising temperatures, are leading to the loss of crops, livestock, and livelihoods for pastoral communities. Heavy rainfall and flooding, particularly in late 2023, have compounded existing challenges, leading to widespread destruction of infrastructure, displacement of households, and increased risks of waterborne diseases. Latest projections show that 1.7 million children are at risk of suffering from acute malnutrition between January and December 2024, with over 430,000 at risk of severe acute malnutrition (SAM), leading to stunted growth, weakened immune systems, and damage to cognitive development.



Acute food insecurity projection map and population table (April - June 2024)



Key for the map IPC acute food insecurity Phase classification

- 1- Minimal
- 2- Stressed
- 3- Crisis
- 4- Emergency
- 5- Famine



Urban settlement classification



IDPs/other settlements classification

Area receives significant humanitarian food assistance
(accounted for in Phase classification)



>25% of household meet 25-50% of caloric needs through assistance



>25% of households meet 50% of caloric needs through assistance

Evidence level

- *
 - **
 - ***
- Acceptable
Medium
High

Phase name and description	Phase 1 None/Minimal	Phase 2 Stressed	Phase 3 Crisis
	Households are able to meet essential food and non-food needs without engaging in atypical and unsustainable strategies to access food and income.	Household have minimally, adequate food consumption, but are unable to afford some essential non-food expenditures without engaging in stress coping strategies.	Household either; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have food consumption gaps that are reflected by high or above usual acute malnutrition Are marginally able to meet minimum food needs, but only by depleting essential livelihood assets or through crisis coping strategies
Priority response objectives	Action required to build resilience and for disaster risk reduction	Action required for disaster risk reduction and to protect livelihoods	Urgent action required to Protect livelihoods and reduce food consumption gaps

Phase name and description	Phase 4 Emergency	Phase 2 Catastrophe/Famine
	Household either; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have large food consumption gaps which are reflected in very high acute malnutrition and excess mortality; or Are able to mitigate large food consumption gaps, but only by employing emergency, livelihood strategies and asset liquidation. 	Households have an extreme lack of food and/or other basic needs even after full employment of coping strategies. Starvation, death, destitution and extremely critical acute malnutrition levels are evident. (For famine classification an area needs to have extreme critical levels of acute malnutrition and mortality.)
Priority response objectives	Urgent action required to Save lives and livelihoods	Urgent action required to Revert/prevent widespread death and total collapse of livelihoods

Figure 2. IPC Acute Food Insecurity and Malnutrition Analysis: Somalia, February 2024

Although famine was narrowly averted in the second half of 2023 due to the ramping up of humanitarian efforts and better rainfall, the total number of people who are critically food insecure (IPC Phase 3 or above) remains significant. Almost one in five Somalis faces high levels of food insecurity. Beyond the 3.4 million people projected to experience acute food insecurity in the coming months, 6 million people remain food stressed (IPC Phase 2) and at risk of falling into Phase 3 without meaningful interventions. Looking ahead, the lean period from March to June 2024, coupled with disease outbreaks, is expected to further exacerbate acute malnutrition.

Notably, the consequences of food insecurity extend far beyond physical hunger and malnutrition. Food insecurity is also associated with a multitude adverse health conditions and diseases such as measles, cholera and acute watery diarrhoea, with 12,902 cases of the latter reported between January and August 2023. This is particularly exacerbated by poor access to WASH facilities and infrastructure, which has been largely destroyed by the 2023 El Nino floods. Poor WASH conditions continue to contribute to the prevalence of waterborne diseases like cholera, with children under five being particularly at risk. Research also shows that food insecurity is linked to negative coping mechanisms, such as skipping meals, acquiring debt, selling assets, taking children out of education, and early marriage. Vulnerable households, such as female-headed households are at an increased risk of being impacted and are less likely to recover from the shock of disasters.

Yet, the funding at present is not up to the challenge. The UN's Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan for 2024 calls for \$1.6 billion (£1.28 billion) to assist 5.2 million vulnerable people, but as of March, only 8.2 per cent of this funding has been received. Such funding constraints and scaling down of assistance pose significant challenges, and without additional support, high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition are expected to persist through mid-2024.

The aversion of a famine, therefore, is not indicative of a greatly improved situation on the ground as hunger continues to rise. Examining hunger solely through IPC scales, and the amount of people in IPC level 3 or above, is likely to be misleading. Accordingly, it is critical to be vigilant around the utility of the IPC scales and the formal classifications of famine, as such technical or legal terms may not necessarily paint an accurate picture of the realities in a specific context. Further, the politicisation of the term “famine” means that it encompasses a multitude of considerations beyond just describing the level of hunger experienced or depth of suffering. Neglecting the situation because a famine has been averted or downplaying it due to specific terminology worsens the crisis. Neglecting or delaying action because famine has been averted at present or undermining the severity of the situation due to use of specific terminology, will only exacerbate the crisis both in the short and long term. The existence of food insecurity at any level is a significant concern that needs to be addressed with sustained political will, media attention, and funding.



Somalia is experiencing crisis of staggering proportions.

The human impact of the devastation cannot be quantified by any measure of numbers or statistics. The scale of the sheer suffering, created in large part by a climate crisis for which Somalia is not responsible, is unimaginable. Fatima*, a single mother who is the sole breadwinner for her children and her mother, tells us the devastation caused by drought and conflict:

“Before I came to the IDP camp, I was a farmer. I could harvest good yields from my farm and make a profit. But the weather became erratic in recent years – there is no rain even in the rainy season. The floods in 2018 washed away all of my belongings, including my house, and killed my livestock, then my crops failed due to the drought. I had to flee from my village and leave behind my farm because armed groups demanded money and I could not afford to pay.”

In the IDP camp, there are very few job opportunities. To provide for her household, Fatima seeks wage labour, including washing clothes and fetching firewood – but this is not enough: “My children ask for meals, but I cannot give them anything. I initially cut our meals from three to two [a day], then from two to one. Currently, my children and I eat one meal a day consisting only of soor (cornmeal). I feel suicidal when the children ask for money and I do not have it. I also have poor physical health due to the hot weather. The doctors told me I have pneumonia and asthma but I cannot afford treatment.”

Most of all, Fatima worries for her children: “I had nine children, but five of them died. One of them, not even two years old, died of malnutrition on the way to the hospital as the nearest hospital from our hometown is over 30km away. Two of them died due to cholera, and one of them due to an untreated disability. I also had a husband who worked, but he left because he said he could no longer afford to take care of us due to the drought. My children now suffer from depression and poor mental health. I am only able to send one of them to school, as school fees are expensive, but the rest remain at home.”

At the same time, Fatima experiences gender discrimination and gender-based violence as a female breadwinner. While hunger does not discriminate among genders, the situation is worse for women and girls, who are more likely to be impacted by and less likely to recover from economic shocks due to lack of land and property ownership and financial independence. Gender inequality in Somalia is among the highest globally, with high levels of gender-based violence, early and forced marriage, and maternal mortality. Literacy levels are low for both men and women, while school enrolment rates are among the lowest in the world, especially for girls.

“As a woman, when I go to the markets to try to sell the wood, the people tell me to go home as there is a stigma against divorced women. Men have more resources than women, so they control everything.”

Women also face exclusion from decision-making processes and conflict resolution mechanisms, and are much more likely to experience gender-based violence and sexual violence during times of crises.

“I walk five hours to the forest and five hours back to fetch firewood,” Fatima tells us, “I have been attacked by a man that threw a stone at me so he could assault me. I managed to escape, but I have no other option than to keep going back to the forest where it is not safe. I am also afraid for my daughter who has to walk 10km to school every day on foot, as that route is not safe either.”

“I just want to live in a peaceful place where I have shelter. I have many ideas to improve things but I do not have the space to share them and no one listens.”



*"The fight against hunger
and poverty is the best
investment we can make."*

— José Graziano da Silva

02

Drivers of Food Insecurity

There are four dimensions which need to be fulfilled to achieve food security: physical availability of food, economic and physical access to food, food utilisation, and stability.¹ For food security objectives to be realised, all four dimensions must be fulfilled simultaneously. Lack of food security is therefore caused by a combination of complex interrelated and concurrent crises which hinder the fulfilment of the four dimensions.



Food insecurity in Somalia is a man-made catastrophe that is the result of concurrent crises including prolonged conflict, global socioeconomic inequality, and climate change created by the industrialised world. These crises are inseparably interlinked as they both drive and, in turn, are driven by one another. Tackling food insecurity requires a holistic and integrated understanding of the relationship between these factors and the complex effects each have on various dimensions of food security.

Climate-change induced drought

¹Gunaratne, Mahinda Senevi, R. B. Radin Firdaus, and Shamila Indika Rathnasooriya. "Climate Change and Food Security in Sri Lanka: Towards Food Sovereignty." *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 8, no. 1 (October 12, 2021). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-021-00917-4>

As the world heads on a path to exceeding the target of 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial temperatures set out in the Paris Convention, climate change is having disastrous consequences on vulnerable communities across the world. Already posing significant threats to global agriculture, it is projected that climate change will likely cause major disruption to food supplies well before temperatures rise by the 1.5C target. Fifty-five per cent of the people surveyed for this report have reported that they believe climate change has played a direct role in driving food insecurity in their communities.

Research shows that climate variability caused by climate change has a number of effects on food insecurity² as extreme temperatures and erratic rainfall reduce crop productivity and quality and disturb livestock health and reproduction, restricting the availability of food and nutrition.³ This, in turn, leads to raised food prices and decreased purchasing power for communities affected, who can no longer afford to buy healthy, nutritious food even where it is available. Extreme weather events caused by climate change have a further damaging effect on food systems, as frequent floods, droughts, and cyclones wreak havoc on infrastructures, assets, and livelihoods.

Regionally, food insecurity in the Horn of Africa is directly correlated with increases in temperature, and related studies conclude that climate change is one of the main factors contributing to the loss of agricultural output.⁴ During 2021, Horn of Africa received less than 70 per cent of its average precipitation, critically impacting food production and availability.

In Somalia, climate change has had a number of significant impacts, including an increase in temperature, erratic weather patterns, and extreme climate-driven events such as prolonged droughts, floods, and cyclones. Over the past 13 years, Somalia has experienced three catastrophic droughts. Although the country is naturally prone to drought, research shows that the drastic increase in the frequency and intensity is linked to climate change.⁶ Alongside poor rainfall, changes in temperature contribute to decreased soil moisture, which has a sharp impact on crop yields and output, particularly as farmers rarely have access to adaptive technologies such as drilling or stilts. Women interviewed for this research paper reported that frequent droughts lead to premature crops, poor yields, and low income, while extreme weather events like floods or cyclones flush away assets and crops. Livestock is similarly affected by poor rainfall, with animal mortality rates reaching up to 90 per cent in areas of Somalia. Nearly all people surveyed for this report (97 per cent) have reported a change in the frequency of extreme climate events while 94 per cent have reported a change in the severity of climate events in recent years. When asked if climate change plays a role in driving extreme weather events, 60 per cent expressed that it plays a role to some extent, while 37 per cent replied that it did “to large or very large extent”.

During the October to December 2023 Deyr season, heavy rainfall and flooding driven by strong El Nino further contributed to destruction to cropped land, properties, and infrastructure. The floods significantly damaged infrastructure and access to basic services such as health care, WASH, and education. Crops were also severely impacted by the heavy flooding, with more than half of the early established sorghum crops destroyed in the Bay, Shabelle, Juba, and Gedo regions.⁷



²Tumushabe, Jennifer Turyatemba. "Climate Change, Food Security and Sustainable Development in Africa." *The Palgrave Handbook of African Politics, Governance and Development*, October 6, 2017, 853–68. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-349-95232-8_53.

³Publication. *Climate Change and Food Security: Risks and Responses*. Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, 2015. <https://www.fao.org/3/i5188e/i5188E.pdf>.

⁴Seife, T. K. "The Impact of Climate Change on Agriculture and Food Security in the Greater Horn of Africa." *Politikon* 48, no. 1 (December 29, 2020): 98–114. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02589346.2020.1861509>; Warsame, Abdimalik Ali, Jama Mohamed, and Abdinur Ali Mohamed. "The Relationship between Environmental Degradation, Agricultural Crops, and Livestock Production in Somalia." *Environmental Science and Pollution Research* 30, no. 3 (August 31, 2022): 7825–35. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11356-022-22595-8>.

⁵Bedasa, Yadeta, and Amsalu Bedemo. "The Effect of Climate Change on Food Insecurity in the Horn of Africa." *GeoJournal* 88, no. 2 (August 3, 2022): 1829–39. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-022-10733-1>.

⁶Haile, Gebremedhin Gebremeskel, Qihong Tang, Seyed-Mohammad Hosseini-Moghari, Xingcai Liu, T. G. Gebremicael, Guoyong Leng, Asfaw Kebede, Ximeng Xu, and Xiaobo Yun. "Projected Impacts of Climate Change on Drought Patterns over East Africa." *Earth's Future* 8, no. 7 (June 25, 2020). <https://doi.org/10.1029/2020ef001502>.

⁷IPC Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition Analysis January-June 2024. February 15, 2024.

Beyond the immediate effect on production and purchasing power, climate change is also a key driver of displacement as extreme climate-induced events, such as floods or droughts, destroy assets and livelihoods, forcing people to relocate to IDP camps in urban areas where food insecurity is widespread as the sources of livelihood are limited to wage labour or intermittent humanitarian aid. Nearly half of respondents for the report expressed that climate change has reduced their quality of life due to displacement (46 per cent) and loss of livelihood (47 per cent), while a further 30 per cent report negative impact to psychological wellbeing. Our research finds that female farmers who are displaced from their farms due to floods or droughts seek employment such as cleaning or cultivating land in exchange for as little as \$3 (£2.4) a day, but this too is not available to every person due to limited opportunities and difficulties with transportation.

The damage caused to infrastructure by climate-induced disaster events also prevents access to food as damaged roads restrict the transportation of healthy and affordable food products. Despite the numerous consequences of drought, however, it should be noted that droughts need not necessarily lead to large-scale and prolonged food insecurity if the underlying conditions, such as conflict and chronic poverty, are addressed and mitigated by timely human action.

Economic Instability, Poverty and Inflation

Soaring food prices caused by economic instability, market volatility, inflation, and restrictions on imports, is a major concern across Somalia. According to WFP reports, staple food prices in drought-affected areas are higher than they were during the 2011 and 2017 crises, with prices more than doubling over the last year. This sharp rise is particularly concerning considering that nearly 70 per cent of the population in Somalia lives below the international poverty line, with a staggering 90 per cent living in multidimensional poverty. While extreme weather events constitute a major risk, it is the underlying condition of economic instability and chronic poverty which creates extreme vulnerability for households across the country.

Impoverished households dedicate a larger portion of their total income to food expenditure, which means that they are much more likely to be significantly impacted by rising food prices and turn to negative coping mechanisms such as buying cheaper and less nutritious food, reducing the total amount of food they consume, or getting into informal debts (IDS). Our research finds that women farmers who cannot afford basic food products due to inflation cope by reducing total food intake for their households and/or purchasing low quality food with little nutritional value.

Moreover, impoverished communities are also more likely to be impacted by the decline in purchasing power or loss of assets due to extreme weather events, and less likely to recover from the damage, as they lack the tools and resources to build resilience or facilitate adaptation to climate change. Women interviewed for this research paper express, for instance, that they cannot afford to buy pesticides for their crops despite an increase in pests due to climate change, and that this has led to poor yields and little to no income. As a result, market volatility and poverty have direct impacts on all four dimensions of food security, as they reduce food availability and quality, hinder access, and create instability for households.

Political Instability and Conflict

Despite recent progress towards political stability, Somalia has experienced periods of violence and civil conflict since 1991. The current political and security environment remains extremely fragile, with conflict impeding all aspects of life.

More than half of the respondents for this report (59 per cent) state that conflict and political instability have played a direct role in driving food insecurity in their communities. Research conducted by Islamic Relief for this report found that conflict has a number of effects on food insecurity. Most notably, conflict leads to the large-scale displacement of communities and farmers, which both diminishes agricultural production and decreases resilience by breaking apart socio-economic networks, eroding communal trust, and reducing knowledge exchange among people.

This research found that conflict is a leading driver of displacement in Somalia alongside extreme weather events, with IDPs constituting nearly 20 per cent of the country's population. Seventy percent of respondents report being displaced due to conflict. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) conducted for this report show that people are leaving their homes and abandoning their agricultural assets due to threats on their lives and livelihoods posed by conflict and conflict actors. This has a significant impact on production – 69 per cent of respondents report that conflict impacts agricultural production negatively, while 63 per cent claim loss of livestock and other assets due to conflict. Security concerns also discourage agricultural production beyond the subsistence level as farmers attempt to reduce their risk of being targeted (Kimeyi et al, 2014; Ozerdem 2012).

Additionally, conflict interrupts food chains by obstructing channels of transport which affect the supply of inputs/outputs, and by placing restrictions on movement. Areas which are “sanctioned” by conflict actors experience an increase in prices as access to food is reduced, while those that would previously trade in those areas experience a sharp drop in their economic power. The loss of access to sufficient food and water in both cases further exacerbates the issue of displacement and loss of livelihoods.

The devastation to infrastructure as a result of conflict is another critical problem that both hinders access to basic services and prevents the development of the agricultural sector. Conflict actors deliberately destroy civilian infrastructure such as farms and livestock during conflict, while poor public infrastructure (such as bad and unsafe roads, high costs of transport, and lack of electricity) obstructs the flow of goods, impacts the quantity and quality of food, and impedes relief efforts (Rohwereder 2017). The political instability caused by conflict prevents the growth of government institutions and services, significantly impeding the ability of the government to respond to disasters and emergencies, as well as discouraging the foreign investment needed for economic growth.

Global Inequality in Food Systems

While this research is concerned with the context of Somalia, this crisis of food insecurity does not exist within a vacuum. Food insecurity is on the rise globally, with more than double the number of people facing high levels of food insecurity in 2023 than in 2020. Reckoning with food insecurity in any one context must necessarily entail examining the problems associated with our broader food systems and the ways in which they fail to meet needs equitably and sustainably.

The relationship between global financial disparities created by the current systems of political economy and inequitable food distribution founded on colonial legacies is critical to understanding the causes of food insecurity. It is now well-documented that the primary problem with food systems is not necessarily one of poor global agricultural output, but of unequal distribution and access. While the global food import bill hit a record high in 2023 due to rising imports by advanced economies, for instance, Least Developed Countries (LDCs) simultaneously experienced a concerning decline in food import values. This inequality stems not only from the unequal distribution of wealth globally, but also from the systems which reproduce colonial dynamics of trade. The lack of diversification of crops and the export-based system of agricultural production, a product of lack of food sovereignty, is a significant contributor to the cycles of dependency which impact food insecurity. It could be argued that, until the 1970s, Somalia was a nearly self-sufficient pastoral economy despite experiencing droughts. In the 1980s, this changed as a result of interventions by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which curtailed social programmes, deregulated the grain market, and reinforced Somalia's dependence on imported products. With the addition of drastically increased cheap food aid, which undermined local production, farmers were driven to cultivate export crops. Not only has this created an unequal balance of power which mirror colonial dynamics, it has also means that lack of production in one country has drastic impacts on another. This is most clearly the case in Somalia, as the country relies heavily on imported Ukrainian grain, which it can no longer access due to the war in Ukraine.

It is important to understand, therefore, that the current structures of food production are driven by profit maximisation, corporate gain, and colonial dynamics that prioritise profit margins over the nutritional needs of communities in less wealthy countries.

Since 2020 alone, 62 new billionaires were made in the agribusiness sector, with the collective wealth of billionaires in the industry soaring by 45 percent.

This vast economic gap between the local producers of food and those who benefit from their labour is invariably caused by an extractive and exploitative model of food production that privileges a few over the many. The dependency on imported grain, influx of cheap surpluses which destroy local production, and the prioritisation of a small number of crops for maximum yields are all harmful consequences of the current make-up of food production which contribute to food insecurity.

Moreover, not only does this exploitative system harm communities, it also harms the environment through mismanagement and plundering of natural resources. The agricultural sector is responsible for a third of all human-driven greenhouse gas emissions and is a key driver of climate change.⁸ It is also the leading cause of problems such as overgrazing, severe commodity-driven deforestation, and soil erosion, all of which have profound consequences for affected communities and for overall food security.⁹



⁸Crippa, M., E. Solazzo, D. Guizzardi, F. Monforti-Ferrario, F. N. Tubiello, and A. Leip. "Food Systems Are Responsible for a Third of Global Anthropogenic GHG Emissions." *Nature Food* 2, no. 3 (March 8, 2021): 198–209. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-021-00225-9>.

⁹Gomiero, Tiziano. "Soil Degradation, Land Scarcity and Food Security: Reviewing a Complex Challenge." *Sustainability* 8, no. 3 (March 18, 2016): 281. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su8030281>; Jie, Chen, Chen Jing-zhang, Tan Man-zhi, and Gong Zi-tong. "Soil Degradation: A Global Problem Endangering Sustainable Development." *Journal of Geographical Sciences* 12, no. 2 (April 2002): 243–52. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf02837480>.



*"It is not only for what we
do that we are held
responsible, but also for
what we do not do."*

— Molière



03

The Gaps In The Humanitarian Response

Chronic food insecurity is not a sudden development, but the gradual culmination of a number of unaddressed underlying crises. Somalia has been experiencing varying levels of food insecurity for over three decades, with the first UN humanitarian mission to Somalia taking place in 1992. Despite billions spent by the humanitarian sector over the course of the prolonged crisis, very few tangible improvements have been made. Interventions by the international community have had little positive impact on the situation or the realisation of food security in the region.

While the issues which drive food insecurity extend beyond the scope and capacity of the humanitarian sector to resolve, the failure to attain incremental improvements calls for a reconsideration and assessment of the ways in which humanitarian aid falls short of achieving its aims. In other words, we need to ask where we are going wrong and what we can do better. Already, there are ongoing sector-wide conversations on lessons learned from previous failures, the importance of assessing our work, the ways in which we are failing currently, and the need to drive forward more transformative change.

For this report, we spoke to a range of stakeholders in Somalia to identify the primary lingering problems that prevent a more effective humanitarian response. These include lack of long-term projects that incorporate resilience and development programmes as a core component, delayed action and a lack of anticipatory action mainstreaming, and failure to meaningfully complement and prioritise national and locally-led response capacity.

01

Type of Action:

Lack of investment in long-term development and resilience building which addresses root causes

The chronic underfunding of development programmes and the inflexibility of funding ear-marked for emergency relief means that the aid sector in Somalia is unable to move beyond the emergency phase to address root causes of hunger. Our research shows that, despite several large-scale resilience programmes funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), USAID, and the European Union (EU), overall progress towards development and resilience building remains weak. Beneficiaries in Somalia report receiving cash and food aid, but are much less likely to have access to livelihood programmes or resilience building, or benefit from meaningful interventions such as infrastructure and water management. Out of all respondents surveyed for this report, the most common frequency for the reception of assistance is once-off (41 per cent), followed by monthly (34 per cent), and yearly (23 per cent). The most common form of assistance received, on the other hand, is food and food vouchers (64 per cent), followed by cash (41 per cent), and shelter (25 per cent). Only 10 per cent of respondents express having received training assistance.

This failure to invest in long-term rebuilding and development results in a cycle of suffering where recurrent disasters destroy the possibility of any progress towards achieving the aims of humanitarian aid. For instance, there are a number of programmes geared towards the treatment of malnutrition, particularly in children, through medical interventions in a clinical setting. While these result in improvements in the short term, there is a large number of relapses as the problem of food insecurity persists outside of the controlled clinical setting. Where food support is given to outpatients, the patient still fails to receive adequate nutrition as the broader hunger crisis forces the patient to split the food with the rest of family/community members. This recurring cycle not only undermines the effectiveness of humanitarian programmes, but also places a drain on limited resources. Without addressing the root causes of the problem, any humanitarian effort acts only as a doorstop to delay deadly consequences but cannot facilitate meaningful improvement.

Another consequence of the failure to invest in long-term solutions is significant data gaps. In Baidoa, a city with one of the largest IDP populations in Somalia, the lack of a comprehensive database means that the number of total IDPs is unclear, the delivery of aid is more difficult as it is hard to distinguish among beneficiaries, and evidence for improvement (or lack thereof) is difficult to determine – making it impossible to facilitate a transition from the emergency relief phase to development. Furthermore, the absence of programmes geared towards development contributes to the disruption of local systems and concentration of people in overcrowded IDP camps. People who are not given the tools to adapt to climate change or the infrastructure to withstand extreme weather events like floods are forced to flee to camps such as those in Baidoa, where they depend on intermittent aid to look after themselves and their households. Out of all the respondents surveyed for this report, 91 per cent expressed that they did not receive any awareness training on climate change and 82 per cent were not aware of and did not participate in any community meetings or local groups based on climate change participation. Seventy-seven per cent were not involved in any risk mitigation activities in the past six months, despite the rapidly approaching El Nino season. When asked if they feel able to contribute to discussions on climate change and have their voice heard, 52 per cent replied in the negative, stating that it was largely due to lack of community awareness (45 per cent), lack of time (36 per cent), and lack of physical space (29 per cent). A significant majority of respondents stated that they do not feel equipped to handle the changes brought on by climate change due to lack of awareness (58 per cent), insufficient support (47 per cent), and insufficient infrastructure (44 per cent).

Moreover, this incapacity to build long-term resilience also contributes to tensions between host communities and IDPs, as limited resources stretch to accommodate the constant stream of newcomers. Half of respondents believe that the most recent drought and the subsequent response has led to conflict between communities over scarce resources, and 41 per cent believe that it has led to conflict between IDPs and host communities. Not only does this create more need amid limited resources, it also fails to afford the dignity necessary for people to be self-resilient. When asked about their hopes for the future, nearly all respondents interviewed for this paper expressed wanting to form their own livelihoods without having to depend on humanitarian aid. A development-centred approach would not only target the root causes of displacement and food insecurity but lead to a dignified response for beneficiaries.

02

Timing of Action:

Slow action and lack of disaster risk management and anticipatory action

There is now well-established evidence to support the importance of timely action, both in terms of saving lives and managing costs. Disaster management can not only protect beneficiaries from experiencing the worst impacts of shocks but cost as little as two per cent of post-disaster relief spending. Save the Children finds that early action results in a positive return on investment of £1.61 for every £1 spent, with households positively benefitting from the intervention even where the predicted crisis does not occur.

The heightened focus on early and anticipatory action by the humanitarian sphere in the past decade has been strongly influenced by the 2010 famine in Somalia, in which more than a quarter of a million lives were lost due to inaction by the international community. In the years following the disaster, the shocking cost of delaying action propelled humanitarian actors to shift their direction towards managing risks and taking anticipatory action, leading to a number of efforts and renewed commitments to put early action measures in place. This included technical shifts such as switching to cash assistance, expanding social protection systems, and emphasising livelihood support as a key strategy to manage risks of extreme weather events.

In Somalia, this also led to the formation of the Somalia Disaster Management Agency (SoDMA) to lead early action efforts and oversee the coordination of humanitarian aid actors under cluster formations headed by relevant ministries. In 2019, Somalia further launched the social protection system (locally known as Baxnaano) to provide a safety net for households dealing with chronic poverty and consecutive climate-related shocks.

Despite some progress made in this regard, however, evaluations of the humanitarian responses in the region show that early warning systems have not translated into early action during the current food insecurity crisis. According to the Centre for Humanitarian Change in Kenya and Somalia, there were “at least three windows for action to anticipate rather than respond to the crisis” which were neglected by the national government and the international aid sector, with the first Famine Early Systems Network (FEWSNET) alert issued on August 13, 2020. From mid-2020 until 2022, there were repeated alerts and confirmation of failed rain seasons, none of which elicited wide-scale action by the relevant actors until the situation had developed into a full-fledged crisis, which narrowly avoided turning into a famine.

In general, the majority of humanitarian efforts in Somalia are dedicated to emergency relief and post-disaster aid which arrive after the families have lost their assets and have been pulled in debt cycles. A shocking 80 per cent of respondents report that the support they received was not timely and arrived after the loss of their livelihoods. As a result of lack of anticipatory mechanisms, 82 per cent of respondents state not having received any official information or communication before extreme weather events and disasters, and a further 86 per cent state they do not feel they have been given the relevant support to build back their livelihoods against extreme weather events and shocks such as drought.

Despite efforts noted above, national structures of disaster management remain in their infancy and anticipatory action is constrained to isolated pilot projects which cannot address the significant challenges posed by climate shocks, chronic poverty, and conflict. Prevention and early action measures are neither clearly defined nor prioritised. Aid actors are unable to bridge the gaps between humanitarian aid, development, and various finance funds, leading to anticipatory action sitting in silos which are not mainstreamed into larger-scale projects. This not only prevents the implementation of anticipatory action, but also results in the delay of relief aid due to the lack of a flexible framework for the delivery of assistance. Key respondents interviewed for this research report that INGOs that are informed of emergency situations by government forecasting mechanisms are slow to respond as they have to go through a process of appeals and aid collection prior to delivery of aid. The lack of mainstreamed anticipatory and early action mechanisms prevents timely intervention. In other words, the humanitarian sector is failing to act at the time when it is most critical to act, failing to prevent the loss of lives and livelihoods, and creating more problems along the line.

Delayed aid ruins livelihoods for farmers in Baidoa

“Sometimes, the assistance we receive doesn't come on time, and that puts us in a tough spot. By the time it arrives, we're already in debt, and it's challenging to recover from that,” farmers from Baidoa report.

“Timeliness is a major issue. The assistance is often delayed, and it doesn't align with our farming seasons or needs. This delay can result in crop failure and more debt. We need support that's synchronised with our agricultural calendar. We need assistance that arrives when we need it the most.

“But it is not just about timing; it's also about whether the assistance is fit for purpose. We have specific challenges like poor road access, which affect how we can utilise the aid. Assistance needs to address these unique challenges to be truly effective.

“The current level of assistance is insufficient. We estimate that we only receive about 30 per cent of the support we actually need. This inadequacy leaves us struggling to meet our basic needs and build resilience. We need more substantial help to sustain our livelihoods.

“To really make a difference, we need more than just temporary relief. We need resilience-building projects that empower us to become self-sufficient and less dependent on external assistance. These projects should focus on improving road access, providing training, and enhancing our overall capacity.”

03

Scale of Action:**Failure To Complement And Support Response Capacity At National And Local Scales**

While an extensive network of INGOs in Somalia does exist, the national and local scales are often neglected or undermined. The severe underdevelopment of local organisations is a sign that the international community has not sufficiently applied the localisation agenda in Somalia. Decision-making is relegated to the management and control of international actors in Halane, the UN compound, or places like Nairobi, Geneva, and London. Capacity training for local organisations or co-operatives is minimal, with communities reporting that they are unable to trust local co-operatives as the latter lack training in safeguarding and risk management. Research institutions which work on innovative solutions around agricultural advancement and climate adaptation report a severe lack of funds and investment necessary to pilot their projects. On a national scale, there is a level of collaboration between INGOs and government institutions, most notably on the Baxnaano programme, but the current top-down structure of INGOs frequently prevents meaningful partnership and the transfer of ownership to national and local organisations. Only 1 out of 393 respondents surveyed for this report expressed receiving direct assistance from the government, although 171 are beneficiaries of the Baxnaano partnership.

This skewed concentration of power poses a threat to the efficiency of humanitarian programmes for two reasons. Firstly, it contradicts humanitarian principles around the preservation of dignity for the beneficiaries and impedes the development of self-resiliency in the long-term. Without dedicated capacity building and the transfer of skills, knowledge, and funds, local organisations remain limited to delivery partners that cannot make decisions relating to their own communities. The lack of investment in research institutions, moreover, weakens the development of imaginative and resourceful approaches to adaptation that would build resilience and self-sufficiency. As a result, this dynamic further reinforces the cycle of dependency that exists among local communities and INGOs.

Secondly, the proximity of local organisations to communities means that they are much better positioned to recognise early warning signs, take anticipatory action, reach a wider section of the community, and know the needs of the community intimately. The experience, knowledge, and capacity to initiate anticipatory responses lies at the local level, as they are the first ones to notice changes, but this knowledge is not incorporated into national and international responses. According to research by Oxfam, many local level respondents reported knowing that action should be taken late in 2020 or early 2021, well before the international actors reacted, “but were not sure how to trigger action or felt constrained to use a system which lacked the flexibility to incorporate local triggers”. Engaging with local actors is critical to contextualise the design of anticipatory action programmes and implement anticipatory action at the community level. The underutilisation of local NGOs not only undermines the capacity and efficiency of their response, but also leads to a slower and less robust humanitarian response overall.

To determine the role of local research institutions and their relationship to the aid sector in Somalia, we spoke to an academic at Zam-Zam University, a leading research institution in the capital, Mogadishu.

“Academia plays a pivotal role in bridging knowledge gaps, conducting research, and informing policy. We encourage and train farmers, work with youth, produce research reports, and collaborate on international platforms discussing climate change. We train farmers on sustainable farming methods, emphasising the use of natural fertilisers and pesticides. We’re also pioneering initiatives like drip irrigation and greenhouse consultations, researching resilient seeds and plants for the Somali climate, and experimenting with poultry farming, with over 3,000 chickens under our care. However, challenges persist, especially due to the lack of support from the local government and INGOs.”

When asked about his assessment on the role of the aid sector in Somalia, he explained: “While humanitarian agencies have provided critical support during crises, there’s an over-reliance on short-term aid rather than long-term development and resilience projects.

This approach has kept many trapped in the IDP cycle for years. Organisations need to focus on developmental projects, as these provide sustainable solutions. For instance, an area in Balad floods annually, partly due to deforestation and absence of river management. Proper WASH practices and sustainable irrigation systems could alleviate some of these pressing concerns. Unfortunately, much of the government is funded by this humanitarian aid, which hinders its ability to provide sustainable solutions for its people.”

“We need a shift from reactive to proactive measures. This includes investing in long-term solutions like education, infrastructure, and sustainable agricultural practices. Also, collaboration between local communities, the government, and international organisations is vital. Lastly, recognising and amplifying local voices will ensure interventions are culturally relevant and sustainable.”

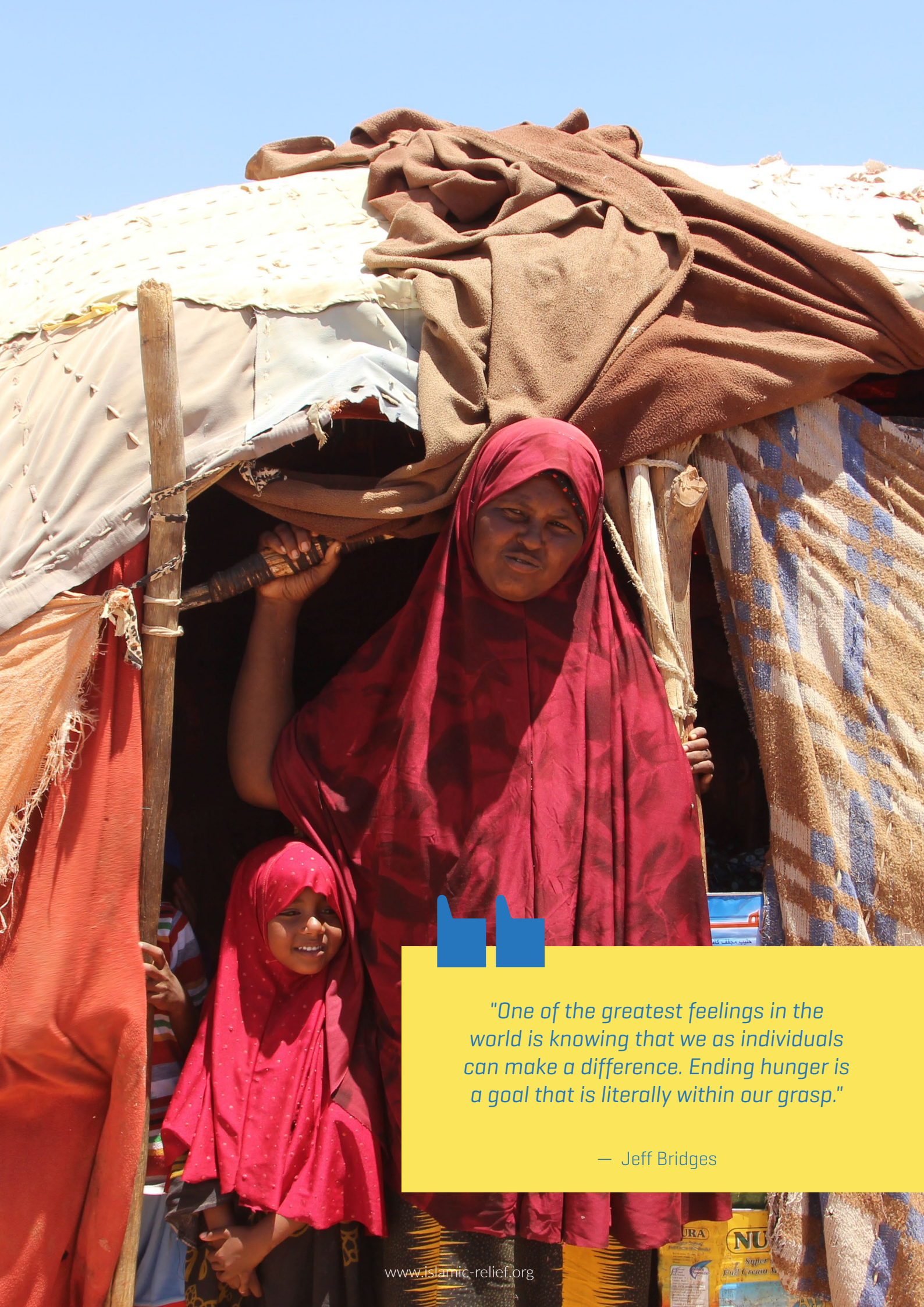
To determine the role of local research institutions and their relationship to the aid sector in Somalia, we spoke to an academic at Zam-Zam University, a leading research institution in the capital, Mogadishu.

“Academia plays a pivotal role in bridging knowledge gaps, conducting research, and informing policy. We encourage and train farmers, work with youth, produce research reports, and collaborate on international platforms discussing climate change. We train farmers on sustainable farming methods, emphasising the use of natural fertilisers and pesticides. We’re also pioneering initiatives like drip irrigation and greenhouse consultations, researching resilient seeds and plants for the Somali climate, and experimenting with poultry farming, with over 3,000 chickens under our care. However, challenges persist, especially due to the lack of support from the local government and INGOs.”

When asked about his assessment on the role of the aid sector in Somalia, he explained: “While humanitarian agencies have provided critical support during crises, there’s an over-reliance on short-term aid rather than long-term development and resilience projects. This approach has kept many trapped in the IDP cycle for years. Organisations need to focus on developmental projects, as these provide sustainable solutions. For instance, an area in Balad floods annually, partly due to deforestation and absence of river management. Proper WASH practices and sustainable irrigation systems could alleviate some of these pressing concerns. Unfortunately, much of the government is funded by this humanitarian aid, which hinders its ability to provide sustainable solutions for its people.”

“We need a shift from reactive to proactive measures. This includes investing in long-term solutions like education, infrastructure, and sustainable agricultural practices. Also, collaboration between local communities, the government, and international organisations is vital. Lastly, recognising and amplifying local voices will ensure interventions are culturally relevant and sustainable.”





"One of the greatest feelings in the world is knowing that we as individuals can make a difference. Ending hunger is a goal that is literally within our grasp."

— Jeff Bridges

04

Persistent Mistakes:**Barriers to improvement in the humanitarian response**

It must be stressed that the challenges listed in the section above are not unprecedented. On the contrary, there has been an overall increase in attention paid to anticipatory action and disaster risk management over the past two decades, and particularly in the last three years. Numerous publications have highlighted issues with short-term humanitarian solutions lacking focus on anticipatory action or local investment. Despite numerous conferences acknowledging these problems, little on-the-ground improvement has occurred. The gap between international discussions and actual change raises questions about why progress has been minimal and what's needed for tangible improvements to occur.

In our research, we have identified three major barriers to improvement. First, the humanitarian system in Somalia is occupying a role for which is not suitable or appropriate. Second, funding is not sufficient in quantity and duration, nor is it flexible or timely. Third, there is a lack of political will on the part of donors to meaningfully tackle these issues through dedicated action.

Humanitarian System Stretched Beyond Capacity

The humanitarian system, designed to be a temporary mechanism for emergency aid, is being stretched beyond its capacity as global needs skyrocket. The band-aid approach which worked in the past is no longer feasible as protracted wars and displacements are resulting in unending cycles of suffering. This has become especially apparent over the last few decades, with the humanitarian architecture becoming increasingly insufficient and overextended in the face of unprecedented levels of need. The introduction of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus at the World Humanitarian Summit of 2016 has further highlighted the need to examine the role and impact of the aid sector.

Accordingly, there must be a re-evaluation of the boundaries of the humanitarian system with regards to its ambitions, scope, and role, particularly in relation to other actors. Some of the most critical problems identified in the section above are lack of investment in development, anticipatory action, and disaster risk reduction (DRR). Questions around who is responsible for building the infrastructure for these solutions is critical to reshaping the international aid structure. Should the humanitarian sector invest more heavily into the HDP nexus, and if so, in what capacity?

Should DRR be managed by national and local actors with international actors playing only a supporting role? What does that look like in practice, particularly in states where there is conflict and/or weak governance? How can this shift in power occur when there are significant challenges around accountability and compliance for local NGOs which require heavy investment into capacity building, yet overall funding for international aid is dwindling? What is the balance between scaling up and letting go for international NGOs? Is it enough to make tweaks or is there a need for systemic change in the sector? These questions require urgent responses that are grounded within the right context and appropriate for the specific humanitarian situation.

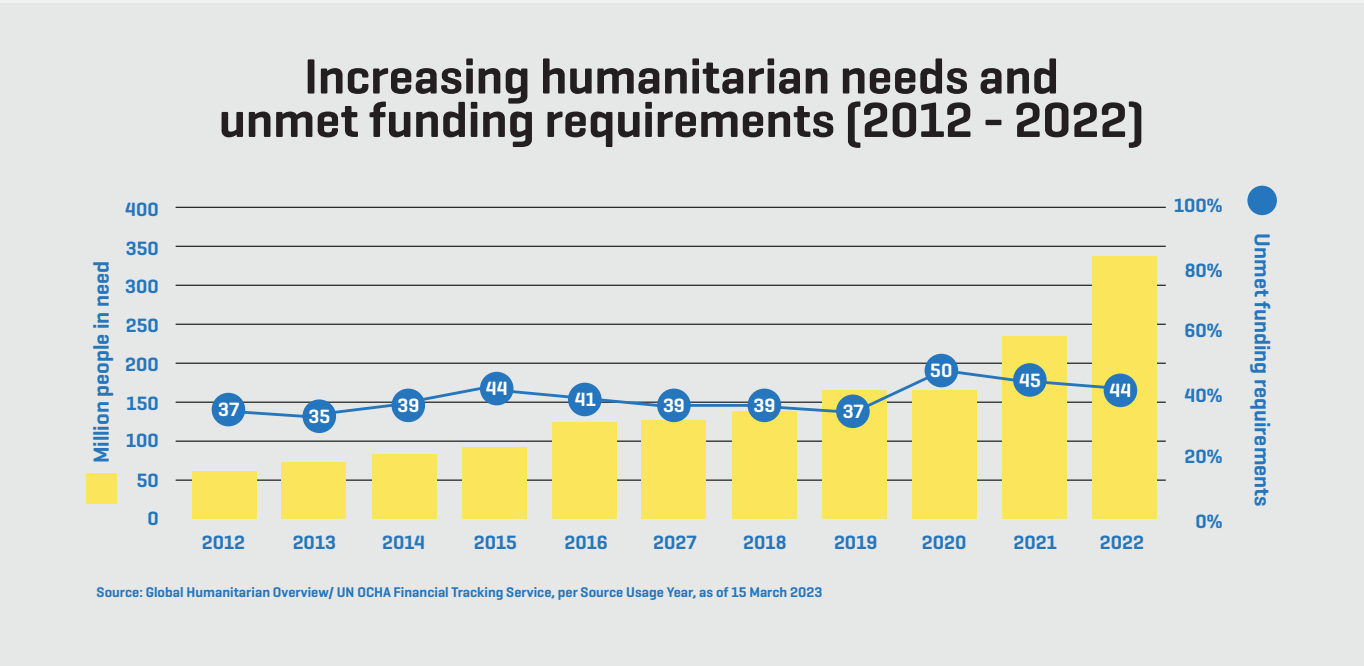
In Somalia, one of the key failings of the humanitarian sector is the concentration of resources, expertise, and capacity within the hands of few organisations which are consequently overstretched. The failure to diversify and localise is not exclusive to Somalia – in the 2022 ALNAP State of the Humanitarian System report, it was identified by wide-ranging respondents in the sector that the two primary issues for the future of humanitarian work globally were localisation and decolonisation.

The current picture on these fronts is bleak: between 2012 and 2021, direct funding to L/NNGOs has oscillated between a high of 3.3 per cent and a low of 1.2 per cent of all international humanitarian funding while almost half of humanitarian aid provided to organisations went to just three UN agencies. Although a significant portion of the UN funds is then passed onto implementing partners, there is limited evidence of the exact numbers and conditionalities attached to them, with even fewer flexible and multi-year funds available for local NGOs than international ones. Moreover, the decision-making power which is enabled by the availability of funds lays firmly in the hands of international organisations as local/national NGOs (L/NNGOs) occupy just 11 per cent of cluster co-chair positions globally. Several local respondents for the ALNAP report further say that they often feel their engagement to be “largely tokenistic” and “not sufficiently representative”.

One way to start answering the questions around the role of INGOs within the contemporary world, therefore, is to start with a reckoning of their positionality in relation to national and local actors. Admittedly, this is not easy – there are significant concerns around the absence of capacity and accountability of local actors, particularly in cases such as Somalia where governance is weak and local capacity is severely lacking. Additionally, there are administrative and pragmatic challenges which disenable localisation, including overhead costs, sporadic funding, and difficulties around management of smaller grants to L/NNGOs. Ensuring that the humanitarian system is able to ensure a shift towards equitable systems which prioritise local leadership and resilience of local actors will necessitate tackling these problems.

Funding Constraints

The biggest challenge to addressing any issues within the humanitarian sector remains the absence of adequate financing. Global needs have risen to such an extent that the gap between aid costs and available funding is five times more than it was just a decade ago. As funding fails to keep up with skyrocketing needs, organisations like Action Against Hunger are having to suspend resilience-building programmes to invest limited resources in emergency action. At least one hospital in Mogadishu has reported cutting down operations from 24 hours a day to 12 hours due to budget cuts. Lack of funding is also by far the largest barrier to realising the HDP nexus, according to a survey of aid practitioners, as both humanitarian and development actors fear that investment in the nexus could take away from already limited funds for their core responsibilities.



In addition to the volume of aid, there are two significant problems with the current model of funding. Firstly, the inflexibility of aid means that aid provision is largely reactive, rather than not preventative or anticipatory. Although there have been significant efforts towards over the past decade to shift onto an anticipatory system, these are limited to trials and pilot projects which are not translated onto the scale and proportion necessary to create systems change. Even more concerning, the reactive model also fails to respond quickly post-disaster as inflexible funding mechanisms delay action. The absence of financing triggers which allow for swift action prevents humanitarian aid from being able to act when it is most critical to do so. According to the SHS report, a study of 10 crisis responses between 2015 and 2019 finds that “only 41 per cent of total response funding had been committed after six months and, of what was committed, only 64 per cent was disbursed 18 months post-crisis.” In our survey, we also found that majority of respondents were dissatisfied with the timeliness of aid, as they felt it had arrived too late.

The second challenge with funding is that, beyond being inadequate overall, it is often sporadic, intermittent, and based on short-term funding cycles that do not allow for investment in long-term resilience building and development. Previous research shows that aid recipients overall do not feel the aid they receive supports them to be self-reliant. Likewise, our survey in Somalia shows that beneficiaries are unable to build resilience through the aid provided. On the contrary, short-term aid cycles during protracted crises “damage household resilience, undermine local capacities, and substitute for state responsibility”. Despite recognition of this issue, short-term funding remains the norm in the sector, with “more than half of Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donor member respondents reporting that they “did not think or know that their organisation was able to avoid fragmented, siloed or inappropriately short-term funding.”

Lack of Political Will

Systemic change requires deep and sustained commitment from donors to provide adequate, timely, and appropriate financial resources. Despite the significant problem, the bulk of donations come from just a few donors. Globally, largest humanitarian donors provide more than 80 per cent of all funding. The United States is by far the largest humanitarian donor in Somalia, with more than half of the total funding that went into the 2023 Somalia humanitarian response coming from the United States alone.

It must be underlined that the absence of such commitment is a choice. Lack of political will to invest in humanitarian crises, or to selectively invest in certain crises and not others, is the result of an aid sector where funding is not determined by need but by political interest. Chronically underfunded appeals go hand in hand with short media cycles, fickle donor commitments, and political agendas.

There is no better illustration of the point that neglect is voluntary than that of the response to the war in Ukraine. The UN's appeal for Ukraine is more than 80 percent funded for this year, while Somalia was only 13 percent funded by April 2023. Although the crisis in Ukraine rightfully requires attention, the focused and immediate efforts towards it have highlighted the deep inequalities which dictate who receives help and who does not. For every dollar raised per person in Ukraine, just 25 cents were raised per person in need across the world's 10 most neglected crises. In the words of the secretary general of the Norwegian Refugee Council, “there is no sensible humanitarian group who would say that they are not, at the moment, fully funded for Ukraine. And none of them would say that they have enough funding for, say, Somalia.” This inequality highlights in pre-existing problems in the humanitarian system which rely on fickle political interest to provide funding for humanitarian crises.



05

Islamic Relief Initiatives and Best Practice

Islamic Relief has been working in Somalia since 2006 to serve communities in need through emergency relief programmes and development projects aimed at building recovery and resilience. Our dedicated staff in the region prioritise evidence-based and research driven projects which target key impacted populations to support recovery and encourage self-sufficiency. At present, Islamic Relief has over a hundred projects, which include providing cash transfers, income generating activities, and food packs alongside development projects such as drilling boreholes, and the rehabilitation of barrages and water supply systems.

In line with our values, Islamic Relief prioritises the feedback, participation, and leadership of local communities and actors by ensuring that there are mechanisms in place for meaningful contributions and partnerships, particularly for women and girls and other marginalised or vulnerable groups. To ensure that disasters are prevented before they are able to occur, Islamic Relief also works on a number of anticipatory action and development programmes that aim to provide sustainable solutions to the multitude of problems on the ground. Some of these projects are highlighted below to illustrate best practices.

SMILE

Builds resilience: Strengthening Last Miles through Innovative Livelihood Enterprise (SMILE) is a project which has benefitted 3,000 households in the Afgoye district by expanding their productive capacity and enabling self-sufficiency through the provision of seeds, tools, agricultural training, and canal rehabilitation. To increase climate adaptive capacity and mitigate the negative impacts of climate change, SMILE promotes climate smart agriculture, conservation, and sustainable water resource management. Through early intervention, SMILE has been able to mobilise communities and improve community resilience through disaster preparedness and response.

Research-based: SMILE is based on rigorous assessments of need, which include crop and value chain studies to assess the farmer's agricultural production and their community marketing system, as well as research-based field practices for local seed breed improvement. The latter is created in partnership with a local university to simultaneously promote climate resiliency and local capacity building.

Prioritises local ownership: SMILE is developed in line with the key priorities of the government's National Development Plan and works closely in coordination with government and non-government actors at both national and local levels. Technical partners are used when implementing the project to ensure effective capacity building as well as encouraging buy-in from local actors. SMILE also works very closely with local communities at every stage of the programme, from planning to monitoring. Locally based project management committees are established to oversee project outputs and resources, allowing for improved relations with the community and transfer of ownership of the project to the community.

Gender-sensitive: SMILE specifically targets women and girls to improve their agricultural productivity through facilitating access to new technology and knowledge about conservation agriculture and seed management. Additionally, the project also works to encourage women and girls to assume leadership roles by providing leadership trainings, forming cooperatives, and increasing women's influence in decision-making processes.

WIDLEN II

Multi-sectoral approach: WIDLEN II is a project which targets drought-affected agro-pastoral communities in rural areas of the Nugaal and Sanag regions. By combining and integrating livelihood and WASH projects, WIDLEN II works to both enhance fodder production through the distribution of agricultural tools and seeds and the rehabilitation of WASH infrastructure such as wells and berkads to allow for better irrigation. WIDLEN II also provides training in environmental management and protection, construction of fodder storages for longer-term duration, and water management training.

Supports long-term development: WIDLEN II rehabilitated and rebuilt water resources such as berkads and wells in the village to ensure better access to water for irrigation purposes as well as general use. This was further used to encourage farmers to cultivate agricultural crops and led to increased agricultural production in the targeted areas. To ensure long-term sustainability, the project also provided capacity building trainings on water management to locally-based committees from the Salaxley, Tanaad, and Wabaal villages.

Prioritises protection for vulnerable groups: Prior to WIDLEN II, the sole water source in Qabaal village was a shallow well with an open cover that was located far from people's homes. This posed protection risks as children would fall into the well while fetching water alone in faraway locations. It also posed risks for women and girls who are primarily responsible for fetching water, and who could be subject to sexual and gender-based violence while travelling long distances. The rehabilitation and rebuilding of water resources ensured that these risks were mitigated.

Awad is a 57-year-old father of 11 children from the Midigale village in the Badhan District. He is the sole breadwinner for his children and his mother. Prior to the drought, he used to earn a living by growing and selling crops but the consecutive failed rainy seasons have destroyed his crops and livelihood. Like many farmers in the region, Awad and his family have been deeply impacted by the crisis. With the commencement of the WIDLEN II project, Awad has been able to cultivate his land again and rebuild his livelihood:

"Before Islamic Relief Somalia distributed agricultural tools and seeds, we were not able to cultivate the fodder or even prepare the land. Our household income was zero during this difficult time."

"Once we received assistance from the project, we were able to cultivate seeds [Sudangrass and alfalfa]. Within a short period of time, the seeds grew and we have already been able to harvest the fodder. We can now sell the fodder to the market and earn a living again to purchase essential food items. I feel that our life has changed finally."

SARIA

Climate-adaptive: SARIA aims to build resilience to and assist with recovery from the impacts of recurrent droughts and locust infestations by implementing climate smart agricultural practices and diversifying livelihood income sources and capacity. The project provides drought resistant seeds, strengthens the agro-forestry programme and provides crop insurance to cushion farmers against drought or pest attacks while building their capacity in new farming practices. It employs new and innovative technologies, such as solar tractors and energy saving cooking stoves, as well as training on water harvesting techniques as a way of harnessing sub-surface water for farming during droughts. Furthermore, SARIA promotes good environmental practices by encouraging natural resource management, planting trees to combat drought and protect the environment; and drawing on technical insights of the Aburin Research Centre in trialling drought resistant and improved seeds.

Builds anticipatory capacity: In line with the priorities of the Somaliland National Development Plan 2017, SARIA builds on other Islamic Relief initiatives to strengthen communities' responses to the effects of climate change. By disseminating timely information via mobile phones and training communities on the value of early warning alerts, the project builds on the capacity of the National Disaster Preparedness and Food Reserve Authority (NADFOR) to facilitate disaster preparedness.

Promotes capacity building: Capacity building is the key strategy for implementation of SARIA. The project enhances the capacity of pastoralists to improve farmers' production in Somaliland. The project has been developed, implemented, and managed through community participation, primarily through the formation of cooperatives and producers' groups. The groups are provided with capacity building training to adapt to change, including good agriculture practice trainings, and the institutional ownership of project activities. This ensures that the functional institutions will be self-sustaining after the project ends. SARIA also works with and provides capacity building activities for the relevant government ministries to strengthen their capacity. The project engages government departments on better service delivery, and resourcing of the agricultural extension services to the community.

06 Recommendations

- **Sustaining provision of food and non-food humanitarian assistance and bridging the funding gap:** Humanitarian food and cash assistance (HFA) is critical in mitigating the severity of food insecurity for the most vulnerable populations. The scaling down of HFA and growth of the funding gap threatens to undermine the recent progress made towards food security. On September 12, 2023, for instance, the WFP issued a stark global food security warning, estimating that a mere one per cent reduction in food aid could place over 400,000 people on the brink of starvation. Conversely, in Somalia, WFP has decreased its assistance recipients to 2.4 million people, marking a 49 per cent decrease from the 4.7 million supported during the peak of the famine response in late 2022[2]. Moreover, the 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, which requires \$1.6 billion to assist 5.2 million most vulnerable people in Somalia, has only received 10.2 per cent as of 15 April. Cuts in humanitarian assistance are escalating the risk of pushing already highly food-insecure individuals into a state of emergency food insecurity. Urgent action and increased funding are needed to effectively mitigate the impact of this crisis.
- **Taking global action to support climate resilience in Somalia:** Communities in Somalia are enduring some of the harshest impacts of the worldwide climate crisis, despite contributing the least to it. It is crucial that the international community steps up and demonstrates solidarity with these communities during this critical moment when there is still an opportunity to make a difference.
 - This solidarity should be reflected in donor government policies to finance and support the adaptation efforts. Such policies should prioritise not only financial assistance, but also technology transfer, capacity building, and knowledge sharing to empower local communities in their fight against the climate crisis. Additionally, holding developed countries accountable for their historical emissions is essential. They must take ambitious measures to reduce their carbon emissions. The implementation of fair and equitable climate policies will help ensure that the Horn of Africa and other vulnerable regions receive the necessary support to build resilience, protect their livelihoods, and secure a sustainable future for generations to come.
 - Engaging in partnerships with local communities and indigenous peoples. Successful adaptation needs to be driven by and connect with local priorities and the knowledge of local people, and impacts need to be dealt with where they occur. Vulnerability must be understood and acted upon at the level and scale it is experienced by affected people. The principle is that as far as possible, processes should be developed locally where local experts, informed by facts about the likelihood and effects of climate breakdown, can lead the people around them in planning for effective adaptation. This and the other principles for locally led adaptation should be applied at all scales.¹

- Immediate and medium-to-long-term measures are necessary to prevent and alleviate the most severe consequences of floods and drought, reduce vulnerability and risks, and simultaneously enhance adaptive capacity and strengthen resilience within the affected communities. Despite improved rainfall during the second half of 2023 supported by the El Nino event, the consequences of the 2020-2023 drought are likely to persist for an extended period. Due to the increasing frequency and severity of droughts, it will take considerable time for affected populations to fully recover.
- Unlocking climate financing for vulnerable nations: Climate funds tend to flow to where they are most easily absorbed: that is, to countries that have the plans, institutional capacity and financial management needed to deploy this money effectively, which is not the case in Somalia. Moreover, climate funds and multilateral development banks rules and systems have all been developed for stable contexts. Somalia serves as a prime example of, facing significant obstacles in accessing and utilising climate finance due to capacity constraints and systemic barriers. Vertical climate funds designed to assist developing countries have not adequately supported Somalia, exacerbating its dependence on multilateral agencies and NGOs in low-capacity where government lacks capacity. Addressing this conflict blind spot in climate finance is imperative to support vulnerable populations in adapting to climate change.
- Developed countries need to honour and fulfil their commitment to at least double adaptation finance by 2025 and go beyond this level which is already inadequate in the current context. Adaptation finance must be new and additional to Official Development Assistance, primarily grant-based as a matter of climate justice, and responsive to the rising indebtedness of developing countries facing multiple intersecting crises.
- Increased, equitable and accessible finance for national efforts will include the proper appreciation and support for National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) to ensure that countries' plans are properly funded.
- Communities across Somalia can greatly benefit from climate adaptation efforts, though needs vary. The common urgency is securing donor funding and improving governance for effective allocation. A greater, concerted investment is needed from both domestic and international stakeholders to proactively address future droughts. Local governments, conservancies, donors, and adaptation funds play crucial roles in restoring rangelands, improving water access, and supporting herders' income diversification.

■ Promoting conflict-sensitive humanitarian aid and humanitarian access

- Prioritising food security in conflict zones: The international community and governments need to prioritise addressing conflict-induced food insecurity as a humanitarian imperative. It has been five years since the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted Resolution 2417, entitled "Armed Conflict and Hunger". This resolution strongly condemns the use of starvation as a method of warfare and upholds international humanitarian law prohibiting such tactics. Armed conflicts stands out as a primary cause of severe food insecurity, impacting approximately 117 million individuals across 19 countries and territories³. Islamic Relief urgently calls upon the international community, governments, and relevant agencies to take immediate action to alleviate the suffering of vulnerable communities caught in conflict by improving infrastructure, promoting livelihood diversifications, strengthening coordination and collaboration, and developing and promoting sustainable resource management mechanisms.
- Demanding unrestricted humanitarian access: We urge governments and international agencies to demand unrestricted humanitarian access to conflict-affected areas. The unhindered delivery of aid to civilians in need is a fundamental human right to be upheld, irrespective of political or military considerations. Resolution 2664 (SCR 2664) addresses concerns around sanctions by creating a broad exception to the UN financial sanctions for humanitarian assistance and basic needs. However, SCR 2664's scope is limited to financial sanctions, and it does not encompass other restrictions within UN sanctions that impede humanitarian work.

- Urging the international community to take a lead in global initiatives such as the Black Sea Grain Initiative: The use of food as a political tool exacerbates global food insecurity and puts countless lives at risk. We call upon donor governments to prioritise humanitarian concerns over political interests by undertaking initiatives to support the continued flow of food supplies. The Black Sea Grain Initiative, which allows the resumption of Ukrainian grain exports from key Ukrainian ports in the Black Sea, is one such example.

To Institutional Donors and NGOs

- **Learning from the past, averting crisis through early action:** The slow response to the crisis in Somalia, despite numerous early warnings, is worrying. The tragedy of 2011 should serve as a stark reminder that waiting for a crisis to fully manifest before acting is a perilous approach. Timely action and sufficient political will is required to prevent history repeating itself. Besides sustained funding, exploring alternative funding mechanisms and long-term solutions to improve preparedness are crucial steps in averting future crises.
- **Ensuring better coordination in fund distribution to allocate more development aid to countries experiencing food crises:** The lack of coordination in fund distribution within the humanitarian and development aid sector is a cause for concern. Only one-third of development aid is currently directed toward countries facing food crises, and an even smaller fraction, just 11 per cent, is explicitly allocated to food-related initiatives. Significant challenges such as competing priorities for funding, political considerations, and balancing exercises relation to short and long-term needs prevent sufficient food allocation. However, the situation does not have to remain this way. Improved coordination mechanisms, transparent allocation processes, and impact evaluations for better resource utilisation could yield substantial positive impacts towards reallocation. The suffering and dire consequences of famine can be alleviated with appropriate planning, allocation, and timely intervention.
- **Developing conflict-sensitive agri-food systems and livelihoods interventions which provide long-term support to protect livelihoods and build resilience:** Due to the increasing frequency of extreme weather events, interventions should not be confined to immediate humanitarian aid. Agri-food systems and livelihoods should be supported to become more resilient to climate shocks through initiatives such as livelihood diversification programmes, irrigation improvement efforts, and drought-resistant farming. A renewed commitment to medium and long-term initiatives is necessary to prevent the collapse of local agri-food systems and to protect fragile livelihoods in the context of resilience-building humanitarian assistance. Conflict-sensitive approaches, such as the promotion of social cohesion between displaced and host communities and supporting conflict-sensitive practices by farmers and herders, should be integrated into the region programme strategies. Donors in collaboration with local governments must ensure access by all people in vulnerable situations to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food all year round. To achieve this, there is a need to:
 - Invest in sustainable farming practices that increase crop yields and reduce environmental degradation. This includes promoting organic farming, crop diversification, and the use of efficient irrigation systems to increase productivity in the region and make Africa's agrifood systems more efficient, more inclusive, more resilient, and more sustainable.
 - Donors can invest in programmes that focus on supporting the establishment and maintenance of seed and plant banks at national and regional levels, along with programs that build farmer resilience through training and access to resources, which will strengthen local food production and enhance food security in the long term.

- HoA hosts more than 14 million displaced people due to conflict and climate-related risks. This number includes refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons. Economic shocks, including high food prices, limit access to food and essential commodities. There must be a plan to strengthening area-based and integrated responses to newly displaced people and communities in newly accessible areas, including rural areas.
- **Fulfilling our collective commitments to localisation:** Those on the front lines of a crisis tend to be the best placed to respond quickly to growing food security needs, but the last ones to receive funding. As food insecurity disproportionately impacts the most marginalised people, fighting famine effectively can only come with the participation and leadership of community leaders from marginalised groups, including women, youth, people with disabilities, and indigenous and ethnic groups.
- **Advancing local economies through aid for trade and private investments for making a lasting impact:** Donors and NGOs should prioritise embracing local systems and sourcing from local businesses whenever possible. Conducting more transactions within the local framework can prevent the emergence of parallel systems that undermine existing economic structures in these countries. Private investments not only stimulate business creation, but also generate job opportunities, ultimately improving income levels and transforming lives.
- **Supporting social safety programmes as the vital link that bridge the gap between humanitarian assistance and sustainable development.** Early intervention, humanitarian relief efforts, and social safety net programmes, notably Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA), not only preserve lives and livelihoods but also provide a sense of dignity to those facing adversity. Furthermore, national safety net programmes have the potential to avert the acute impacts of food insecurity and, over the medium term, serve as a pathway to reducing long-term poverty by safeguarding livelihoods. When famine-like conditions loomed in 2017-2018, ECT was effectively deployed by donors. Regrettably, these valuable lessons have not been meaningfully implemented as the current drought continues to wreak havoc in the Horn of Africa.

To National Authorities

- **We call upon all parties to uphold the human rights of all individuals and protect vulnerable groups.** The dire situation in Somalia is largely due to the ongoing conflict, and lasting solutions can only be achieved through political resolution. It is imperative to engage with experts on conflict causes and involve all warring parties to address the root issues and bring about peace in Somalia. This includes full compliance with their international humanitarian law obligations, especially concerning the safety of civilians, humanitarian workers, and medical personnel. We emphasise the importance of granting humanitarian agencies and their personnel safe and unimpeded access to affected areas.
- **It is critical to promote the systematic and meaningful participation, equal representation and leadership of women and local women civil society** – particularly women-led organisations at all levels, including in humanitarian decision-making and coordination. This includes promoting Resolution 1325, which reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace-building, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction, and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for national and local authorities in the region
- **The use of early warning and risk preparedness information** needs to be strengthened and better linked to early action. Support for better climate change adaptation and increased food system sustainability should be prioritised.







Islamic Relief Worldwide
19 Rea Street South
Birmingham
B5 6LB
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 121 605 5555
Fax: +44 121 622 5003

irw@irworldwide.org
www.islamic-relief.org

Registered Charity No. 328158
Registered Company No. 02365572