Role of Gatekeepers in Somalia

Final Report

May 2024

Summary

This report is one of four deliverables submitted to the Somali Cash Consortium (SCC), as part of the assignment, 'the Role of Gatekeepers in CVA programming in Somalia'. In brief, the assignment was focused on deepening the understanding of 'gatekeepers' in Somalia, identifying and documenting good practice (if any) of engaging with gatekeepers and proposing alternatives to addressing power imbalances to mitigate the negative impact of gatekeepers on CVA programming in general. Field research was carried out in Mogadishu, Baidoa, Belet Hawa, Dinsor and Wajid, in December 2023 and early January 2024, with over 60 interviews being undertaken, 6 roundtable sessions held, in Mogadishu and Nairobi, in February 2024, to discuss the preliminary findings and implications, and 2 further final presentations, in Mogadishu and Nairobi, in late March 2024.

The study makes four main contributions towards the study aims. Firstly, we highlight the importance of an underlying political economy of aid information in Somalia. This is not widely appreciated in humanitarian circles, although there is increasing evidence of the problem. It profoundly affects the ability to understand issues such as gatekeeping as well as to monitor the relative success of aid programmes.

Secondly, we identify and articulate a business model around IDPs, and distinguish it from what we consider is a 'typical' model or process of gatekeeping based, most commonly, on clan biases. This business model has become structured and organised since the humanitarian response to the 2011 famine and is focused on the major IDP contexts of Mogadishu and Baidoa, although it may be developing in other areas. The typical model on the other hand is a general condition of working across Somalia and has existed since the collapse of the state in 1991.

Thirdly, the roundtables held in Mogadishu and Nairobi as part of the research methodology, were well received and documented in a separate 'Roundtable Reflections' memo. These were disseminated within 3 weeks of the roundtables themselves. They reflect the experiential aim of the study.

Fourthly, the study findings and implications (with a number of action points) were presented and discussed again in late March 2024, to the Somalia government, donors and implementing agencies, at meetings organised by SCC.
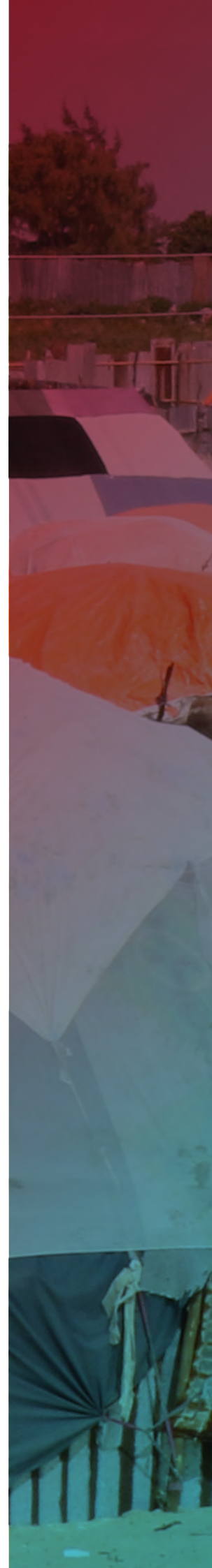
The overall study was limited by the absence of current examples of good practice in engaging with gatekeepers (concerning the business model). This reflects the current state of play in the humanitarian sector, where the gatekeeper issue in Somalia is relatively well-known, with a range of studies conducted over the last ten years, but where significant engagement by humanitarian (or other) actors to mitigate its negative impact and improve accountability has not taken place. Previous studies do provide relevant guidance, for operational and programme staff, on engaging with gatekeeping in relation to both models and are referred to in this report and in the Learning Brief/RoadMap.

Contents

Introduction

This report is one of four deliverables submitted to the Somali Cash Consortium (SCC), as part of the assignment, 'the Role of Gatekeepers in CVA programming in Somalia' (see ToR in Annex I). In short, the ToR was focused on the possibilities of engaging with gatekeepers' (IDP camp managers) in the Somalia context, in order to attempt to identify and document positive practices and propose alternatives to addressing power imbalances to mitigate the negative impact of gatekeepers and CVA programming in general.

The SCC is comprised of a collection of agencies and initiatives, led by Concern Worldwide (Concern). It aims to provide cash transfers to vulnerable households affected by conflict, displacement, and natural disasters in Somalia and implements both short-term humanitarian assistance and long-term social safety net programmes. The SCC works closely with local partners and community-based organizations.

The SCC also works in close collaboration with BRCiS Consortium which aims to build resilient communities in Somalia. BRCiS has eight members and is led by The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). It manages a portfolio of contracts implemented in all Federal Member States of Somalia and funded by various donors, including FCDO, the World Bank, USAID, QFFD and more.

This study was one of three supported by DG ECHO, including:
a) Targeting minority and marginalized groups in CVA programming,
b) Role of gatekeepers in CVA programming in Somalia,
c) Hard to Reach areas CVA programming and 4) shock responsive cash-based assistance (CVA and social transfers) (nexus programming).

The other three deliverables prepared as part of this assignment are:
- Roundtable Reflections
- Learning Brief / RoadMap
- Infographic one-pager

Methodology

The study was based on three sets of exercises, including a) a review of the relevant literature, b) fieldwork and c) a series of roundtables in Mogadishu and Nairobi. There is a small but important literature pertaining to the issue of gatekeeping in Somalia. This is discussed in the following section.

Fieldwork was focused on 5 locations in southern Somalia, Mogadishu, Baidoa, Belet Hawa, Wajid and Dinsor. The initial list of locations – listed in the ToR – was reduced to these five as part of the proposal submitted by e4c. During the fieldwork, a decision was made to conduct research in Wajid and Dinsor by telephone (from Baidoa) given the limited transport options to these locations and the potential disruption to the fieldwork should transport be disrupted.

Guhad Adan carried out all of the fieldwork. He speaks Maxatiir (standard Somali) and Maay (the second

language of Somalia, and the first language amongst many Digil and Mirifle) and is either familiar with the field locations (from multiple visits) or has good personal and professional networks to them.
Field research was primarily composed of one-to-one in-person interviews with a small number of focus groups discussions (FGDs) also conducted. A wide range of interviewees were consulted in order to triangulate findings and hear different perspectives. In total, Guhad conducted 59 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and 5 FGDs as part of the fieldwork in Somalia. An additional 5 interviews were conducted by Nisar online and in-person (see Annex II for list of interview types and locations).

As part of the methodology 6 roundtable discussions were held, with the following groups:
- INGO Field Managers/Coordinators (Mogadishu)
- INGO Programme Managers (Mogadishu)
- INGO Country Directors of Consortia member NGOs (or other senior staff) (Mogadishu)
- Local/Somali NGOs (Mogadishu)
- UN agencies (Mogadishu)
- Donors (Nairobi)

In addition, discussions were held with the Centre for Humanitarian Change (CHC) and with SCC/BRCiS, where the findings were presented.

Methodological constraints
One of the difficulties of working in Somalia, concerning different forms of information gathering (research, studies, assessments, monitoring and evaluation) is an underlying political economy of aid information, in other words, where data and information is manipulated or controlled, through a variety of means and for different purposes; this includes interview fatigue and instrumentalist attitudes towards research by respondents ('beneficiaries).[2] Fear is also mentioned as a constraint to 'beneficiaries' giving feedback.[3] A recent discussion paper on corruption and diversion in humanitarian aid in Somalia identified that 'At each link [in the contracting chain], pretty much everyone is incentivised to report positive information and to not report or deny negative information'.[4]
These issues affect also studies such as this one and considerable effort has to be put into developing rapport and gaining the trust of participants in order to understand the realities of gatekeeping in Somalia. One humanitarian aid worker reported to this study that 'if we see problems, we can't report', as they were worried about security concerns. Another example comes from an IDP woman in a focus group discussion who, after a long discussion, stated that we are now 'forced to say what we've been hiding for a long time'.
Issues around the political economy of aid information were highlighted in the Roundtable Reflections memo and the Learning Brief.

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[2] Hagmann, T., Musa, A., and Wasuge, M. (2021), Who owns data in Somalia: ending the country's privatised knowledge economy, Governance Brief 12, Somali Public Agenda (see:
https://somalipublicagenda.org/who-owns-data-in-somalia-ending-the-countrys-privatised-knowledge-economy/)
[3] Cash Barometer (2023), Overcoming Power Imbalance (see:
https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-cash-barometer-overcoming-power-imbalances-community-recommendations-breaking-cycle-july-2023
[4] CHC (2023), *Corruption and Aid Diversion in Somalia*: Discussion Paper, Centre for Humanitarian Change (CHC).

Literature review summary

Origins and evolution

The subject of gatekeepers in Somalia can be traced back to at least 2003; ten years before the establishment of the current government; in a study focused on the protection and livelihoods of IDPs in Kismayo, the authors identify 'aid gatekeepers' as a potential obstacle in the research process as well as in influencing the distribution of aid, reporting that one interviewee suggested 'gatekeepers took as much as 75% of the aid delivered to the camps'. However, even at this time, the authors indicated that gatekeepers could offer some degree of protection to camp residents, especially those from weak or minority clans; the authors referred to a Somali proverb, 'Ama buur ahaw ama mid kutiir sanaw' ('Either be a mountain or lean on one'), in other words, weak clans seek protection from strong ones.[5]

Ten years later, following the humanitarian response to the 2011/12 famine, a detailed Human Rights Watch report, focused on Mogadishu, compiled over a 12-month period, outlined a range of human rights abuses including 'rape, beatings, ethnic discrimination, restricted access to food and shelter, restrictions on movement, and reprisals when they dared to protest their mistreatment'.[6] This horrendous picture was, it must be stressed, captured at the birth of the government system, when numerous militias were active and security conditions extremely unstable. At this time militias were often linked or controlled by IDP camp managers or gatekeepers. In 2013, Bryld et al. it was estimated that there were roughly 130-140 gatekeepers in Mogadishu, with each gatekeeper potentially managing one or more settlement.[7]

A small number of periodic studies and analyses have taken place since 2013 and as the governance environment itself has evolved in Somalia. Over time, and as aid resources have continued to flow to urban areas, the gatekeeping phenomenon, as it applies to the management and control of IDPs and IDP camps – the IDP business model described below – has become more structured and organised as a business enterprise.[8] Virtually all documentation on IDP-related gatekeepers has focused on Mogadishu. The most relevant work to this assignment is that conducted by TANA, who have piloted and documented accountability programmes focused on engaging with gatekeepers.[9]

As a business enterprise in the humanitarian sector, the characteristics of camp managers/owners are described as operating on a spectrum between exploitation and abuse at one extreme, to those with more humanitarian motives or sympathies at the other extreme.[10] In other words, camp managers/owners are not all the same and some may be easier to work with than others. These differing perspectives were also expressed in relation to the 2023 humanitarian response.[11] IDPs themselves do report on the positive

[5] Narbeth, S. and McLean, C. (2003), Livelihoods and Protection, Displacement and Vulnerable Communities in Kismayo, southern Somalia, HPN Network Paper, 44.

[6] HRW (2013), *Hostages of the Gatekeepers*, Human Rights Watch.

[7] Bryld, E., Kamau, C., and Sinigallia, D. (2013), *Gatekeepers in Mogadishu*. For the Somalia Cash Consortium.

[8] Bryld, E., Kamau, C., Knudsen Moller, S., Mohamoud, M.A. (2017), *Engaging the Gatekeepers: using informal governance resources in Mogadishu.* TANA/AAAP; Jaspars, S., Adan, G. and Majid, N. (2019). Food and Power in Somalia: Business as Usual? LSE.

[9] Bryld et al. (2013), (2017) op. cit.

[10] Ibid.

[11] See the following blogposts:

aspects of camp managers/owners, as they are seen as important interlocuters with aid organisations and of providing security and/or other services. As TANA reported, 'IDPs both fear and respect gatekeepers.' In practice, the distinctions between exploitation and non-exploitation are difficult to disentangle.

As reported by TANA in 2013, 'While the FGS, NGOs, and the international community are fully aware of the gatekeepers' existence, very few steps have been taken to interact with them. In the humanitarian community around Mogadishu, gatekeepers have become the elephant in the room. Other development actors see and are forced to interact with them to provide aid for IDPs – but few, if any, admit that they do so.' An exchange with the lead author for that study suggested that this position remains the same over ten years later, in 2023, and of course informed the rationale for this study.

Different types of gatekeeping

While the focus of gatekeeping is on the IDP context, in part due to the volume of support that is targeted at IDPs in Somalia, the term 'gatekeeper' means different things to different people. In the context of humanitarian crises in Somalia it is most closely associated with an individual who is considered the manager or owner of an IDP camp. It is however important to recognise that such individuals act within a chain or network of actors that may all be considered gatekeepers involved in the management and/or control of aid resources.[13]

However, the idea of a gatekeeper is not restricted to IDP camp settings and brings attention to other forms of aid manipulation and control, such as in other programming contexts and which can be any individual or a combination of actors working together, that control or influence the distribution of aid resources. In some cases, a powerful District Commissioner might be the primary gatekeeper, in other cases the implementing NGO or contracting UN agency may be the primary gatekeeper (through specific staff). Local elders may also be important in these dynamics. Often it is a combination of these actors who work in a collusive relationship that comprise the gatekeeping chain. The behaviour of these gatekeepers may change over time as local authorities, agency staff and other actors change.[14]

Location and identity matters

The vast majority of IDPs throughout Somalia come from two main population groups, the Digil and Mirifle and the Somali Bantu. These population groups are found in the inter-riverine and riverine areas of southern Somalia. They are considered second and third-class citizens respectively, and the most vulnerable to famine.[15] Within the Digil and Mirifle there are further levels of clan-based social hierarchies

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https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/opinion/2023/09/28/aid-theft-somalia-extortion-not-what-you-think?utm_source=The+New+Humanitarian&utm_campaign=8e8581a3df-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_ENGLISH_AFRICA&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d842d98289-8e8581a3df-29263381;
https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/opinion/2023/10/26/powerful-networks-impose-taxes-aid-somalia-its-time-end

[12]Email exchange between Nisar Majid and Erik Bryld, 10 January 2024.

[13]Bryld et al. (2017) op cit.

[14]See: Transparency International (2016), Collective Resolution to Enhance Accountability and Transparency in Emergencies: Somalia Case Study; SAVE (2016), Somalia Background Brief, Securing Access in Volatile Environments (SAVE); CHC 2017 op. cit.

[15]Maxwell, D. and Majid, N. (2017), Famine in Somalia: Competing Imperatives, Collective Failures, 2011-12. London: Hurst.

with implications for vulnerability and access to resources.[16] In Mogadishu, the displaced population are living in a large urban centre with a long history of violence, where the Hawiye clan are dominant and where powerful individuals from this clan will be important in gatekeeping practices.

The second largest displacement hub in Somalia is Baidoa. While gatekeeping and related exploitative practices are prevalent in Baidoa, and while still very serious they are thought to be not as severe as in Mogadishu, as the vast majority of the host and displaced population are from the same Digil and Mirifle clan. Clan-based hierarchies exist within the Digil and Mirifle and will play out in relation to the control of aid resources, but there is more recourse and accountability given the common identity patterns. Location and identity therefore matter, in terms of majority-minority power dynamics, wherever IDPs are found in the country.

Aid, displacement and urbanisation

Aid in general and CVA programming in particular is embedded in a long-established political economy of urban rent-seeking in Somalia.[17] The business of IDPs is a therefore a particular manifestation of the organisation of territory and population under conditions of counter-insurgency and international humanitarianism. In other words, the decade plus situation in Somalia which sees the Government and allied security forces enabling humanitarian (and development) action in urban (and some rural) areas, while Al Shabaab controls or influences large swathes of territory and population, contributes to or intensifies forms of urban rent-seeking, in which the IDP business is located.

Governance - Hybrid Political Orders

Research focused on accountability and gatekeeping in Somalia emphasises the existence of multiple and overlapping informal and formal governance systems. In other words, in Somalia, the state is not the ultimate source of power but is one among several sources of power. IDP camp managers, business actors and aid agencies themselves act in between the State and its citizens. This context is described as one of hybrid political orders. In such contexts, 'practitioners must think laterally about where and how power can be realistically restrained and for whose benefit'.[18] With a focus on Somalia, and drawing on three case studies, the authors of an ODI report emphasise the importance of 'understanding power relations in terms of networks of dispersed relations rather than between those with power and those without'.

TANA Consulting, working on an accountability project with gatekeepers in IDP settings, suggest that engaging with informal power structures can result in positive change, but it is 'not an easy or fast exercise', and that such work requires understanding the local political economy, having realistic expectations and adopting a pragmatic approach. Finally, gatekeepers can be viewed as legitimate services providers, as part of the private sector, in the absence of public service provision.

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[16] The Digil and Mirifle are now one of the main clan families in the 4.5 political formula but this does not change their historical marginalised position.

[17] Bakonyi, J. and Chonka, P. (2023), Precarious Urbanism: Displacement, Belonging and the Reconstruction of Somali Cities, Bristol: Bristol University Press.

[18] McCullough, A. and Saed, M. (2017), Gatekeepers, Elders and Accountability in Somalia, ODI and IAAAD

Political Economy of Aid Information

Many forms of research and information gathering in Somalia, particularly concerning the aid sector, have become incorporated into or affected by a deeply entrenched political economy of aid information. An important and recent study on this subject identified the different forms that this takes.[19] The authors point out that there is a significant 'Interview fatigue and instrumentalist attitudes towards research by respondents.' This is supported by other sources, such as independent accountability mechanisms which have pointed out that 'Fear (among many barriers) keeps people from giving feedback'.[20]

The manipulation of data and information is manifest at all levels in the data/information collection and reporting chain, by so-called 'beneficiaries' themselves, as well as within the incentive structure of the aid system; a recent discussion paper points out that 'At each link [in the contracting chain], pretty much everyone is incentivised to report positive information and to not report or deny negative information'.[21]

The field research for this study came across the same issues, with a member of a focus group discussion (FGD) with IDPs, commenting that, after a long discussion and reluctance to speak openly, 'we have been forced to say what we've been hiding for a long time'.

This political economy of aid information is therefore distorting our understanding of Somalia as well as the effectiveness and performance of aid programmes; from assessments to post-distribution monitoring, and other types of information gathering processes. These issues were recognised in the roundtables, with TPMs (Third Party Monitoring agencies) being questioned by some, as a weak link in the flow of accurate information.[22] Reviewing and rethinking assessment and monitoring tools and approaches by the humanitarian community is a logical follow-up on this topic.

Accountability and Learning - looking forward

The following section draws upon reports related to the two gatekeeping types identified in the study, the IDP Business Model and the Typical (clan-based) Model.

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[19] Somali Public Agenda (2022): https://somalipublicagenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/SPA_Governance_Briefs_12_2021_ENGLISH-1.pdf

[20] Cash Barometer (2023), Overcoming Power Imbalance (https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-cash-barometer-overcoming-power-imbalances-community-recommendations-breaking-cycle-july-2023). The 'other barriers' referred to were not elaborated on in the report but we assume they include some of the factors mentioned in this note.

[21] Centre for Humanitarian Change (CHC) (2023), 'Corruption and Aid Diversion in International Aid in Somalia, Discussion Paper'.

[22] This has been raised elsewhere: Transparency International, 2016, 'Collective Commitment to Enhance Accountability and Transparency in Emergencies, southern Somalia report (https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/somalia), and CHC 2023, op.cit.

IDP Business Model

The IDP business model identified in this study (see findings section) relates to the studies focused on gatekeepers and IDP camps in Mogadishu, in the available literature.[23] In terms of programmatic learning and guidance, TANA provide the main source of guidance.

Summary of TANA Accountability Project[24]

The aim of Tana's work was to 'influence the gatekeepers gradually through small interventions that, over time, will improve IDP protection.' This was based on three interventions:

- Providing selected gatekeepers with training and mechanisms for effective camp management, protection and service delivery to IDPs.
- Enhancing the transparency of the gatekeepers' IDP taxation (rent), service delivery and protection levels in different camps, with the aim of promoting the most attractive camps to IDPs and aid agencies.
- Testing a more formalised recognition process of gatekeepers with the local authorities and possibly international humanitarian agencies, involving the formalised certification of informal camp managers.

These activities were based on the assumption that gatekeepers were motivated to participate in the project.

Secondary assumptions made were that:

- IDPs have the ability (and willingness) to move between settlements in Mogadishu to seek the best opportunities (this turned out not to be a valid assumption).
- Local governments can see the benefits of participating in the exercise to increase oversight of the settlements in their jurisdiction.
- Aid agencies and in particular NGOs can see the benefits of participating in the exercise to work with settlement managers who promote protection, improving their ability to deliver in accordance with humanitarian principles.

A number of key learnings were identified, including:

- A thorough political economy analysis that identified appropriate entry points, including informal power structures.
- A project design that recognises and works with existing power structures, rather than introducing external formalised systems, to motivate (slow) change.
- An adaptive approach that allows for a re-think of the theory of change based on a change in context and new evidence emerging.
- Formal and informal authorities seeing a role for themselves and the benefits of their participation.

TANA's work provides an important reference for engaging further in this sector, although it should be noted that its focus was on accountability, rather than CVA programming.

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[23] HRW (2013), op. cit.; Bryld et al. (2020); Jaspars et al. (2019), op. cit; Bakonyi and Chonka (2023), op. cit.
[24] Bryld et al. (2020).

Typical (clan-based) Gatekeeping

Under the second gatekeeping model identified through this study there are a number of studies that contain useful guidance, and that are organised here under a number of core themes: [25]

i) Staff and organisational issues

Staff profiles and organisational culture are extremely important in relation to programme quality:

- 'standing up' to powerful actors is a starting point to many good practices, from negotiating access (on favourable terms) to pushing for quality programming. This requires staff who have personal courage, the right skills (particularly negotiation skills), the right networks, and an organisational culture that supports them.
- Remote management practices can create a relational gap in terms of trust and transparency between field, middle and senior management, that requires assessment and addressing.
- Organisations can develop an over-reliance on certain individuals, who become internal gatekeepers, controlling which information passes up to senior management. Senior staff can benefit from being able to visit project sites and talk directly to local populations, authorities and field staff.
- Most Somali NGOs are identified with a particular clan or sub-clan and tend to work in the areas where this clan or sub-clan is dominant. This can create tensions and actual or perceptions of bias in resource allocations.
- Some organisations have conducted internal reviews of the identities of their staff and/or partners and how they are perceived in the local context. Another stressed the importance of conducting background checks and verifying information on CVs during recruitment.
- A supportive / enabling environment where trust and capacity can be developed is important, but where controls are also firm, and where trust cannot easily be abused.
- In operating from Nairobi, a trend amongst many international agencies has been to employ Kenyans for their Somali programmes, who qualify as national staff. While there are many extremely skilled and able Kenyan staff, this can create additional cultural and communication barriers within an agency. In relation, not all Somali staff have an appropriate contextual knowledge, if drawn from the diaspora or other contexts. A commitment to engage in and

ii) Partnerships and risk management

Shared responsibility and risk-taking within organisations as well as between organisations (in partnership) is a major issue. Staff from international organisations – UN and INGOs – can feel 'abandoned' by one's own organisation if things go wrong, and implementing often feel risks are passed down to them.

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[25] SAVE. Somalia Background Brief. Enabling access and quality aid in insecure environments (Component 2); Transparency International, southern Somalia case study.

[26] SAVE (2016), op. cit; Majid, N., Abdirahman, K., Poole, L., Willits-King, B. (2018), *Funding to Local Humanitarian Actors, ODI/HPG.*

Engagement with stakeholders (6 roundtables)

As indicated above and as part of the methodology, a series of roundtable events were organised in Mogadishu and in Nairobi, in order to present the preliminary findings from the study and discuss implications and potential solutions.

The roundtables were well received and a 'Roundtable Reflections' memo was produced and circulated in mid-February. A response to one of the roundtables, for example, was that 'it was a really good and enlightening discussion, and really gave food for thought'.[27]
See Annex III for the memo of the roundtables.
See Annex IVa and IVb for the list of participants of each of the roundtables in Mogadishu.
See Annex V for the presentation made at the roundtables.

Summary of Field Visit Findings

As indicated above (section 3.2), the term 'gatekeeper' means different things to different people, and one of the overall findings in this study was to distinguish two broad types of gatekeepers and gatekeeper contexts, as explained in the following.

Two models of gatekeeping were identified during the study, one described as a business model focused on IDP camps in major urban centres (Mogadishu and Baidoa) and the other a model that describes the typical pressures associated with implementing CVA (and other) programmes in Somalia. The exact mechanics of these two models will vary from location to location and over time, depending on local power dynamics and as individual and institutional actors and behaviour change. These models can also run alongside each other; both may be applicable to Mogadishu and Baidoa for example.

IDP Business Model (Mogadishu and Baidoa)

In the business model, an IDP camp manager or owner (IDPs call them the camp 'owner'), is the primary gatekeeper. He or she (there are many women camp owners) makes a number of upfront investments and arrangements in order to set up a camp, as part of a business enterprise. This typically includes obtaining the land, usually on a rental basis, from the landowner (or claimant), with an agreement often made for 5 years through the use of a notary, and a fee for the camp to be registered. The camp owner may also work with other brokers to encourage and organise for people to come from rural areas to their camp, make links to humanitarian agencies and even pay for the cost of transport. Once the IDPs arrive in a new camp the gatekeeper registers the camp with the local authorities. These actors including the CCCM will at most visit the camp to verify if it meets the minimum standards to be a camp.

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[27] Feedback from the Danish Embassy.
These figures are consistent with other studies which suggest a 20-50% range as the 'cut' of the beneficiary entitlement.

These upfront investments by the camp owner (made in different combinations of cash and credit) are undertaken in order to generate an income as a return on investment, once aid (particularly cash or vouchers) is brought to the camp. This return is made through a pre-agreed social arrangement with camp populations (IDPs), the most common breakdown of which is: 50% of a cash/voucher entitlement for the 'beneficiary' with the remaining 50% claimed by the camp owner and reallocated on the following basis: 10% rent; 10% security; 10% local authority/NGO/UN; 20% camp owner.[28] A camp owner might invest anything between US $1,000 and US $5,000 initially in setting up a camp.

This business model is based both on the large amounts of aid coming into major aid hubs as well as due to the shortage of available land; a key enabling factor is the privatised access to land.
Displaced populations have mixed views of these agreements. For many of them, a 'cut' taken by camp owners is reasonable as they – the camp owner – provides some assistance when they first arrive and is perceived to be key to bringing aid to the camp and its residents. However, there are also levels of coercion and exploitation that take place, where camp residents know or are told that, if they report problems, they will be evicted from the camp and will lose their benefits. In this light, one IDP respondent was advised 'don't punish yourself and don't punish others' (by reporting problems). In a similar light, interviewee said "Gaal maali Galnyédhiga leyé," a Maay expression that means whoever has done good things for you should be appreciated and rewarded for their deeds. However, many IDPs are also not happy with the gatekeepers and see it as extortion.

Many people in Baidoa and Mogadishu call the gatekeeping arrangements modern slavery because IDPs are restricted to move between IDP camps and have little say in what decisions are made concerning resource distribution.

IDP camp managers/owners, when asked about their role as gatekeepers, have their own interpretations of who are gatekeepers, responding that, 'We provide services the government and international community failed to provide to the IDPs' and when informed in discussions that some people complain about them as 'bad', some respond that 'We are the lowest in the gatekeeping chain, why do we matter more than others?'

Same model, different contexts - Baidoa and Mogadishu

As described above, it is important to acknowledge that while Baidoa and Mogadishu exhibit similar patterns concerning the IDP business model, there are different social and political dynamics in the two towns, given that IDPs in Mogadishu are a different identity group to those that dominate the town, while in Baidoa they are from the same broad clan family (see Section 3.3).

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[28] These figures are consistent with other studies which suggest a 20-50% range as the 'cut' of the beneficiary entitlement. According to this study, a 50% cut (to the camp owner who then pays others) is the dominant model in large aid hubs such as Mogadishu and Baidoa.
[29] Discussion with gatekeepers.

The process of displacement and camp formation

When rural populations are considering leaving their villages or have decided to do so, they will often call close or distant kin/relatives in order to inform them they are coming and so that these relatives may support them when they arrive, including in gaining access to humanitarian assistance. This information or call will activate pre-existing camp owners, ex-camp owners or aspiring camp owners to find a vacant plot of land and negotiate with the landowner to use that land for establishing an IDP camp, and thereby establish the basis for an IDP camp-business.

Rural populations may decide to leave for urban towns for a wide variety of reasons, including increasing hardship due to worsening economic and drought-related conditions, conflict, lack of support in their areas and expectations of gaining assistance in urban areas, amongst other reasons. It was also raised by informants to this study that rural populations can also be encouraged/incentivised to move to urban areas as part of the business model. For example, some camp owners described how they would need a minimum number of people to establish a camp. Urbanisation is proceeding rapidly in Somalia, a function of many factors, including the concentration of investment and resources (national and international) in major urban centres, conflict and repeated droughts.[30]

Rental arrangements and social agreements

Some landowners provide their land for free but this is the minority case as camp managers/owners face a risk that the land can be reclaimed at any point and the business element would therefore be lost. The more common model is a rental agreement between camp owner and landowner, formalised through a notary. Once this agreement has been made the land/camp has to be registered with the respective local authority.
The rental charge is 10-15% of the IDP CVA entitlement, depending on the proximity of the land/camp to major roads, towns and secure zones.
IDPs are informed of the conditions (social agreement) for the camp and if they agree they will settle there. If not they will look for other places. These conditions include:

- They must accept whatever the gatekeeper tells them, if they don't, they will be forcibly removed.
- They must not expose the internal issues of the camps (including the amounts of money they give back to the gatekeeper). If they do, they will be forcibly removed.
- When humanitarian staff come, they must always show how desperate they are, so that aid continues to come.
- The land was rented because of them, and they should respect the agreement

Some gatekeepers, depending on their local connections and the amount of aid coming to their camps, expand their coverage and increase the number of camps they own or manage. They may also employ another layer of mini-gatekeepers underneath them. In Mogadishu, these mini-gatekeepers, appointed by the main one, cannot make the mistake of seeing him/herself as independent and not complying with the terms of principle gatekeepers.

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[30] Bakonyi and Chonka (2023), op. cit.

To create IDP camps camp managers/owners report the following:

a. We first rent land, pay some advances to the landowners, do bush clearing, and construct a few latrines.

b. We reach out to and engage brokers to persuade IDPs from other camps or villages to come to our camp.

c. We give a name to the camp and register it with the local authorities. We pay money to the local authorities for registration.

d. To convince the newly arrived IDPs we incur some costs to buy them food for the first seven days and provide other materials such as plastic sheets to cover their IDP huts.

e. We do intensive advocacy by talking to the local authorities and local and international NGOs to bring aid to the camp. If there is no aid coming to camp, we will not be able to recover the money we invested let alone profit. Therefore, we must do aggressive advocacy for NGOs to come and assist in whatever it takes

Typical clan-based model (Belet Hawa, Dinsor and Wajid)

Belet Hawa, Dinsor, and Wajid were the locations in which research was conducted for this study (in addition to Mogadishu and Baidoa). These locations were identified with the usual or clan-based gatekeeper model which is generally applicable anywhere in Somalia. This model is distinct from the IDP business model in that:

- there is not the equivalent business aspect (articulated as an investment and a return on investment),
- there is no primary business actor i.e. the camp manager or owner - -in these locations, there are no major IDP camps or land constraints and therefore the business model has not been established.[31]

Gatekeeping, according to this model, is based on the competition for resources between clans or sub-clans that exists in most or all areas in Somalia. The gatekeeper/s may be the local authority, the local elders or the implementing agency itself (or some combination of this group), who attempt to direct resources towards their own identity groups. This model may involve competition between similarly powerful local clans, or it may be part of marginalisation / exclusion processes with dominant clan interests limiting access and assistance to marginalised or minority groups.

These dynamics have been part and parcel of operating in Somalia for the last thirty years. All agencies and resources are subject to these pressures, and all resources are affected, from contracts (for car hire, office space and accommodation) to staff recruitment, as well as cash and voucher distribution modalities. These

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[31] Dolow, Gedo, although not part of the study, maybe involve some elements of model A, given its history as a major hub. This was not explored in this study.

practices and pressures also exist outside of the aid system as part of norms in society. The challenge for aid agencies is to understand and navigate these pressures and not be captured by specific interest groups, and to be informed about what trade-offs are acceptable.

Box 2. Marginalisation and Exclusion

A Humanitarian Support Hub identified three distinct types of barriers which led to exclusion or marginalization:

- **Geographical Barriers** – Security and Access constraints mostly related to Al Shabab presence and perceived risks of operating in these areas.
- **Power and Identity Barriers** – Households from specific clans and sub-clans do not have the power to negotiate a share of resources because they are either;
    a. Minority clan in area e.g. Baidoa IDP Camps,
    b. Bantu groups e.g. Kismayo IDP Camps,
    c. Somali lower 'caste' clans,:
- **Humanitarian System Barriers** – Equitable distribution of aid is blocked by powerful influencers in key positions (Gatekeepers and in NGOs and government). Power is derived from a combination of clan, corruption and politics.

CHC, 2017 [32]

Brief Profiles of Belet Hawa, Dinsor and Wajid

Field research was conducted in three locations – Belet Hawa, Dinsor and Wajid. The following section provides brief profiles of these locations.

Belet Hawa
Belet Hawa does not host many IDP communities mainly because it's not a large humanitarian resource hub and is a typical hard-to-reach area in Somalia. An important factor in Belet Hawa is that internally displaced people (IDPs) are mostly from the dominant clan (within the Marehan) and are often absorbed into the town. For example, there were over 400 households displaced from conflicts in El-Ade and Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) bombings and all of them joined the communities in the city and not IDP camps. This changes displacement and gatekeeping dynamics.

The two major IDP camps in Belet Hawa are many years old, Camp Jiroon and Camp Ajuraan, located in Bula-Amin village outside of Belet Hawa. The two camps are treated as part of the village and share everything with the village. Most of the humanitarian assistance goes to villages, many of which have been newly created to attract aid. The community leaders in Belet Hawa town blame the local authority and NGOs for the increased number of villages (created to attract aid) while Belet Hawa town rarely receives aid.

The communities in Belet Hawa believe that humanitarian gatekeepers include the local authorities, NGOs, and village leaders. The local authority, for example, claims that the humanitarian actors are not honest with them and are another group of gatekeeping while accepting that themselves - the local authority -also is part of the gatekeeping.

Box 3. An example of gatekeeping and corruption from Belet Hawa

A member of the local authority in Belet Hawa explained a likely scenario for aid distribution/manipulation as part of the process of gatekeeping. He suggested that, if the project has a target caseload of 1,000 households, the NGO would take 200 (cards) to solve their issues and challenges, including clan pressures and/or even Al Shabaab pressures, which they can't report directly. He pointed out that the local authority also has challenges and pressures, with limited resources, and so rely on CVA support. They will therefore request another cut of 200, which will be distributed to the security teams and other people in need of aid who may only come to the local authority because they have access or connections. If the NGO rejects these demands, the local authority will try to push them, but if they insist, will let the NGO proceed with its project without any cut or benefit for the local authority. The village and camp leaders may also claim a cut, which could be between 100 and 200. The local authority member said that most of these 'cuts' are redistributed, even though they might not be to the intended beneficiaries. In this situation, only 400–500 cards may reach their target recipients.

[32]

In Belet Hawa, while not all intended beneficiaries are registered for CVA (see Box 3), those that do, do not incur any post-distribution diversions or payments, such as take place in the IDP business model.

There is no shortage of land in the Belet Hawa area, although the land is all Marehan-owned land, and is not available for non-local or non-Marehan clans, unless through an agreement.

Summary characteristics of gatekeeping in Belet Hawa

- Based on clan-based model involving normal clan competition for resources. There are two long-standing IDP camps, Jiroon and Ajuran.
- There is plenty of land for local communities but not for non-local or non-Marehan clans.
- The camp leaders of the above-mentioned camps are part of the IDPs themselves. They don't have a lot of power to do what they want but closely work with the villages.
- There are committees in these camps that are also part of the IPDs. The IDP community blames these committees for corruption (the study team could not verify this).
- Because of its proximity to Dolow, where there the IDP business model has been developing, this may also develop in Belet Hawa.
- Community leaders reported that there are many clan-based newly created villages to attract aid; NGOs and local authorities also tend to favour newly created villages to 1) easily divert resources and 2) divert resources for their sub-clans.

- Humanitarian assistance especially CVA will likely go through several 'cuts' or 'taxation' (by NGO, Local Authority, Village Relief Committee, and camp leaders) before reaching the target beneficiaries.
- Belet Hawa DC does not like the creation of IDP settlements in his district and that is why he allowed the creation of villages. He said to the study team "I don't want to attract many non-Marehan IDPs who will settle in Belet Hawa and eventually become more than the locals". That is why I refused to allow "bush baris" he added.
- Once IDPs get their cards there is no percentage cut or taxation (but the number of cards distributed to IDPs may be significantly below that designated).

Dinsor (reached by phone)

Dinsor town is a typical hard-to-reach area. It has been under Al Shabaab siege for many years. There is relatively little humanitarian assistance and therefore few IDP settlements compared to other areas. Rural populations that do come to Dinsor settle in IDP camps on the basis of their clan identity and where these camps have the same names as the villages from which they came.The dominant clan in Dinsor is Dabare, followed by Gelidle, while Ajuran and Awramale are the 2 minority clans. There are also some other minority IDP clans such as Tunni and their camp is called (shan gamaas) meaning Tunni sub-clans. Clan elders have a lot of influence in Dinsor. They push for their clan share through their local councils in the local authority. In Dinsor there are not many IDP settlements of the DC clan, but his elders always push for their share.

NGOs working on CVA have different approaches, meaning that that some follow good practices while others do not. This creates difficulties for those trying to follow good practices.
The camp leaders are always proposed by the clan elders and approved and appointed by the local authority. The camp leaders are always part of the IDPs, and their economic status is not different from the other IDPs. A small token or inclusion in every CVA will likely motivate the camp managers or gatekeepers in such rural districts.

While clans compete for humanitarian resources and push for their share including staff, car hire, and other benefits, CVA benefits remain the most important things they compete for.
NGOs may be pushed to accept the clan quotas but when registering beneficiaries, they will only register beneficiaries as per their criteria. In Dinsor, land for IDP settlement is not an issue, the 4 clans live in the 4 main directions of the city, and their IDPs settle on those sides of the town.

Wajid (reached by phone)

Wajid town has very similar characteristics to Dinsor, also being a typical hard-to-reach area. It has been under AS siege for many years. There is relatively little humanitarian assistance and therefore few IDP settlements compared to other areas. Rural populations that do come to Wajid settle in IDP camps on the basis of their clan identity and where these camps have

the same names as the villages from which they came. The dominant clan is Jiroon, while other clans such as Leysan, Hathame, Harin and Garowale have a significant presence. IDP settlements are clan-based but dominated by Jiroon.

Clan elders have a lot of influence, especially in Wajid but the local authority is the most powerful. The clan elders push for their clan shares through their local councils in the LA.

NGOs working on CVA have different approaches and some NGOs complain of others complicating their lives. However, recently NGOs pushed for direct interaction and registration which was not popular for 6 months but has now been accepted.

The camp leaders are proposed by clan elders and approved and appointed by the local authority. The camp leaders are always part of the IDPs, and their economic status is not different from the other IDPs. A small token or inclusion in every CVA will likely motivate the camp managers or gatekeepers in such rural districts.

While clans compete for humanitarian resources and push for their share including staff, car hire, and other benefits, CVA benefits remain the most important things they compete for.

NGOs may be pushed to accept the clan quotas but when registering beneficiaries, they will only register beneficiaries as per their criteria.

In Wajid, land for IDP settlement is not an issue, the 4 clans live in the 4 main directions of the city, and their IDPs settle on those sides of the town.

Conclusion

The study makes four main contributions towards the study aims. Firstly, we highlight the importance of an underlying political economy of aid information in Somalia. This is not widely appreciated in humanitarian circles, although there is increasing evidence of the problem. It profoundly affects the ability to understand issues such as gatekeeping as well as to monitor the relative success of aid programmes.

Secondly, we identify and articulate a business model around IDPs, and distinguish it from what we consider is a 'typical' model or process of gatekeeping based, most commonly, on clan biases. This business model has become structured and organised since the humanitarian response to the 2011 famine and is focused on the major IDP contexts of Mogadishu and Baidoa, although it may be developing in other areas. The typical model on the other hand is a general condition of working across Somalia and has existed since the collapse of the state in 1991.

Thirdly, the roundtables held in Mogadishu and Nairobi as part of the research methodology, were well received and documented in a separate 'Roundtable Reflections' memo. These were disseminated within 3 weeks of the roundtables themselves. They reflect the experiential aim of the study.

Fourthly, the study findings and implications (with a number of action points) were presented and discussed again in late March 2024, to the Somalia government, donors and implementing agencies, at meetings organised by SCC.

The overall study was limited by the absence of current examples of good practice in engaging with gatekeepers (concerning the business model). This reflects the current state of play in the humanitarian sector, where the gatekeeper issue in Somalia is relatively well-known, with a range of studies conducted over the last ten years, but where significant engagement by humanitarian (or other) actors to mitigate its negative impact and improve accountability has not taken place. Previous studies do provide relevant guidance, for operational and programme staff, on engaging with gatekeeping in relation to both models and are referred to in this report and in the Learning Brief/RoadMap.

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Annexes (included as separate attachments)

Annex I – ToR

Annex II – List of Interviews and FGDs

Annex III – 'Roundtable Reflections' Memo

Annex IV – List of Participants in Roundtables

Annex V – Powerpoint Presentation made at Roundtables

Annex VI – Powerpoint Presentations made at March dissemination events (Mogadishu and Nairobi)

Annex VII – Learning Brief / RoadMap

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