

Concept Note

Humanitarian Common Feedback Project for Accountability to Affected People and Communication with Communities in Somalia for Prevention of Famine



Photo credit: FAO Somalia

Background:

Somalia has been hit by several consecutive seasons of poor rainfall which has led to a severe drought, resulting in acute shortage of water, near total crop failure, rising livestock deaths, epidemic outbreaks and reduced rural employment opportunities. Poor households, including those displaced, face rapidly diminishing food access as staple food prices continue to rise sharply and livestock prices decrease significantly.

The number of people in need of assistance in Somalia has increased from 5 million in September 2016 to over 6.2 million in February 2017, more than half of the country's population. As was the case during the 1991 and 2011-12 famines, Bay and Bakool are particularly hard hit, with 42 and 47 per cent of the population in Crisis or Emergency levels, accounting for more than 500,000 of the 2.9 million in crisis and emergency. Hereof, the vast majority, 84 per cent (421,000) are in rural areas and will potentially start moving towards urban areas as the situation deteriorates.

Rationale – The Common Feedback Project (CFP):

Engagement with and accountability to affected people is critical during this crisis. Affected people need to be kept informed about available humanitarian-linked services and assistance. Gender dynamics are key to understand as the diversity of affected communities and gender equality needs to be factored in when engaging and addressing needs of the community. Without access to reliable timely, accurate information, survivors are unable to make the choices necessary to develop their own survival strategies to recover and rebuild from the impacts of the drought.

It is essential that communication is a two way process. By asking and listening to people's needs, opinions, suggestions and complaints, the humanitarian community can adapt its response to their specific circumstances and concerns. Although challenging in an emergency response, two-way consultation between relief workers and affected communities is critical and helps feed into the response strategy ultimately tailoring response to priority needs on the ground.

This intervention, the Common Feedback Project (CFP), will be based in the Drought Operations Coordination Center (DOCC) in Mogadishu and structured as an inter-agency/inter-cluster common service built on existing feedback mechanisms/structures and partnerships including those with government, local/international organizations, mobile telecommunications providers and existing media. These need to be coordinated; information collated and analysed to inform the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) on how and when best to respond to the needs of the people. This would be done through a CFP which has been piloted and tested in Nepal, the Philippines and Yemen.

The CFP in Somalia will focus initially on southern and central Somalia and will support humanitarian organizations and clusters with three key objectives and outcomes:

Objectives and outcomes:

1. Provide accessible, timely, life-saving and actionable information

This will be achieved by:

- Supporting humanitarian actors to communicate with affected people, and affected people to communicate amongst themselves and with aid providers, according to communities' preferred communication channels;
- Ensuring communities receive life-saving, useful and actionable information, including information about the overall response, in a coherent and coordinated way and through appropriate languages and channels, face-to-face communication, focus group discussions, SMSs and others;

Outcome: *Communities have the information and communications capacity they need to make informed decisions.*

2. **Collect, aggregate, analyse and refer feedback and/or complaints via multiple channels** (these include but not limited to Radio Ergo's Freedom Fone, World Vision, UNICEF's Rapid pro, ADESO, FAOSO Hotline, DRC and other organizations);

3. **Support responders to act on feedback received**

This will be achieved by:

- Ensuring communities have access to feedback and complaints mechanisms, built on existing structures and partnerships including those with government, local/international organizations, and where possible, local private sector and other media organizations;
- Ensuring that feedback and complaints collected by organizations, clusters and different channels, is aggregated and analysed in order to provide a consolidated and representative picture of community concerns, identify trends and inform overall strategic and operational decision making processes and potential 'course correction'.

Outcome: Humanitarian responses are informed by the views of affected populations, and humanitarian responders act upon feedback.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The two main components of the CFP include: sharing information with affected communities; and to collect and collate feedback from communities using existing feedback mechanisms to inform better response.

- **Radio Ergo:** It is the main preferred source of information in Somalia. The Radio is invariably the most effective way to reach people in Somalia, a channel of communication that is ideally suited to the country's oral culture. Radio Ergo will therefore be used to disseminate relevant messaging and information to affected communities. Its already existing Freedom Fone – a feedback tool will also be used to receive response from communities on the shared messages. The quality of Radio Ergo's programming stems from long experience and deep local understanding of the issues since 2011. Other channels for communication will also be used to disseminate information.
- **REACH:** It facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the humanitarian community's decision making and planning capacity. The role for REACH in the CFP will be to collate feedback information and present it in a digestible manner for the HCT/Cluster to make informed decisions on the response. REACH will also support actors better aggregate and categorise data into usable formats.
- **OCHA:** The role of OCHA is to coordinate/manage the overall CFP project as well as outputs from Radio Ergo and REACH; to ensure that all partners are on board, understand their roles and responsibilities in the project and report to the HCT/Cluster.

Added value:

While individual organizations and clusters will continue to have the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that they engage with the communities they serve, a common service model will ensure a collective approach to support response planning. **It will reduce duplication by establishing a turn-key service every organization could adopt and/or feed into.** Each organization and/or cluster will therefore be better placed to meet their own commitments to the people they serve.

The model will provide clear and concise analysis for a collective understanding and response to humanitarian needs expressed by affected people. It will minimize confusion, distrust and possibly enable humanitarian access in some cases, by providing coherent and useful information to communities. It will enable the humanitarian community to work together so that feedback is systematically transmitted to the inter-cluster coordination and the HCT to inform adjustments to a collective humanitarian response. The common service is a cost effective value added tool for the HCT, and the cluster and inter-cluster coordination fora when activated.