



Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – Somalia

WORKSHOP REPORT

Common Humanitarian Fund – Pooled Funding and Humanitarian Reform in Somalia

5th February, 2009

1. INTRODUCTION

In cognisance of the fluid situation in Somalia and the need to improve the efficacy of humanitarian response in the country, UN OCHA Somalia hosted a workshop to introduce the concept of Common Humanitarian Funds (CHF) to the humanitarian community. Resource persons provided presentations on specific topics on the CHF, and shared experiences, lessons learnt and best practices on the CHF. In addition, they fielded questions and participated in discussions on issues raised. The experts were drawn from UNDP's Multi Donor Trust Fund, the donor community (DFID), UN OCHA's Funding Coordination Section, and the Fund Management Units in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Participants comprised UN agencies, members of the NGO Consortium and the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC).

In his opening remarks the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) for Somalia noted that the humanitarian community in Somalia was facing considerable gaps in funding both sectorally and geographically. Funding in some areas and sectors is entirely dependent on donor interests. The HC also mentioned the current challenge we are facing in finding funds for common services that benefit the entire humanitarian community such as air services and evacuation and emergency medical support. The current Humanitarian Response Fund (HRF) is stretched beyond its current capacity to deliver rapid and effective response in a volatile environment. Since its inception in 2004, its portfolio has grown from USD 2 million to over USD 20 million. Originally envisaged as a fund to disburse funds quickly in a rapid onset emergency, the recent review of the HRF found that it is currently serving a dual purpose i.e. meeting its original Terms of Reference in addition to filling funding gaps in clusters or areas where the humanitarian agencies are working. Given practise with the HRF in Somalia, current needs for a flexible funding and the deficits faced in key clusters, it is essential to revisit funding mechanisms in Somalia and determine whether a pooled fund system would improve the humanitarian communities ability to respond.

In forming opinions, participants were urged to look beyond their own agency interests and focus on whether or not such a fund could best assist the humanitarian community in meeting the needs of the people of Somalia. Given the fluidity of the situation in Somalia, it is incumbent upon the international community to constantly look for ways to improve its ability to respond to the crisis effectively in a strategic and flexible manner.

The Head of Office UN OCHA Somalia informed that a series of bilateral discussions on whether or not a Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) should be introduced in Somalia, had taken place over the last three months. This workshop's objective was to address concerns that had been shared during the consultation process, particularly on the functioning of the CHF and its procedures for fund allocation and disbursement. The workshop will therefore cover the issues raised through introducing lessons learnt and best practices from other countries where the CHF is operational.

2. SESSION I

Please note that full versions of all presentations are available on the UN OCHA Somalia website <http://ochaonline/somalia>

2.1 GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES: HUMANITARIAN REFORM AND FINANCING

Presentations in this section provided background information on the evolution of humanitarian financing and donor perspectives on common humanitarian funds.

A growth in demand for humanitarian relief globally is likely and will result in an increase in the diversity and range of humanitarian actors. In an already competitive funding environment where there is uneven distribution of resources relative to needs, the case has been made for coherent action in humanitarian response. Humanitarian reform was introduced to foster a coordinated response to humanitarian needs. It has three main pillars namely the cluster approach, leadership (HC strengthening) and financing (CERF/CHF/ERF) with partnerships as cross cutting. Despite a shift in humanitarian financing towards multi donor 'pooled funding', diversity of funding remains vital. The success of a humanitarian fund requires strong clusters.

Emergency Response Funds (ERF) are funded by donors to provide small, rapid and flexible responses to unforeseen needs outside the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP). Conversely, the CHF is funded to provide early, strategic and predictable funding to critical humanitarian needs as identified in the CAP; and maintains an emergency reserve to respond to unplanned emergencies. Whereas the ERF is small, reactive, meets different needs and has a somewhat simpler allocation procedure, the CHF provides the opportunity for more strategic responses and is able to fill gaps both sectorally and geographically. Further advantage is that the CHF offers the possibility for small donors without in country presence to support humanitarian action.

Somalia meets the preconditions for the introduction of a CHF namely; OCHA and a Management Agent capacity in the country, strong coordination arrangements, a CAP type document and a critical mass of resources.

Donor perspectives on origins, challenges and priorities

There is a symbiotic relationship between humanitarian reform and the CHF. Donors are in favour of the best use of funds, particularly to redress neglected countries and regions, and to promote reform and accountability. It is not donors' intention to fund UN agencies to the detriment of NGOs and to raise transaction costs. Large donors such as USAID and ECHO do not provide funds to the CHF. It was emphasised that pooled funds should be context specific and require a critical mass of donor support in order to be effective.

The linkages between good humanitarian donorship (GHD), the framework that guides official humanitarian aid, and CHFs were expounded. The confluence between GHD principles and CHFs include

- Predictable and timely funding.
- Support to the central role of the UN in leadership and coordination.
- Continued funding for ongoing crises notwithstanding new crises.
- Flexible funding for changing needs.
- Support to the CAP process as the primary instrument for strategic planning.

As long as there is confidence in a country's performance, donors without in country presence are likely to channel their funds through a common pooled fund.

Donor challenges include

- Broadening the donor base.
- Balancing funds provided to a pooled fund with their bilateral portfolio.
- Timing of donor commitments. It is incumbent on donors to time their commitments to the beginning of the calendar year and not to their fiscal year.
- Accountability to taxpayers.

Donor priorities include

- Enhancing NGO access.
- Increasing capacity for fund management – OCHA Funding Coordination Section.
- Strengthen capacity of HCs, including through relationship with OCHA.
- Improve speed of allocations particularly to NGOs.
- Improve reporting and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) while reducing burden on agencies.

Question/Answer/Clarifications

- Ethiopia, Colombia and Zimbabwe were provided as examples in response to a query on whether there were countries where the CHF was requested but found to be inappropriate. Neither Ethiopia nor Colombia had CAPs, a precondition for CHF. Furthermore, all three countries lacked the institutional setup and critical donor mass to support a CHF.
- In response to the predictability of CHF funding, it was reiterated that donors should commit funding by the start of the calendar year. It was revealed that for the very first time, the CHF in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) received all their commitments by January 2009. The Sudan CHF on the other hand, largely receives funds from donors at the end of the year and carries them over to the next one.
- The decision on whether or not CHF will be used to support recovery initiatives rests with the HC and Advisory Board. In DRC the CAP included recovery activities, whereas in Somalia these were excluded, hence the CHF would not fund them.

2.2 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE HRF IN SOMALIA

Since its inception in 2004 the HRF has expanded both in the number and size of projects that it funds. By the end of 2008 its portfolio stood at USD 20 million with five million dollars reserved for rapid onset emergencies. An average of USD 271,219 was disbursed per project. Although international NGOs are the largest recipients of funding, most projects are implemented by local partners. National NGOs receive about 10% of the funds. The HRF funding base has shrunk to about 4 donors in 2008 – UK, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.

Conclusions drawn from the HRF review showed that the HRF has begun to operate as a strategic gap filler and an increase has been noted in fund allocations to common services. Recommendations made in the HRF review included;

- Simplification of the project proposal and reporting format.
- Project implementation period should remain at 6 months with an allowance for one, and on an exceptional basis, two no cost extensions.
- No agency should have more than 3 projects running concurrently.
- The dual function of the fund (emergency response and strategic gap filler) to be maintained
- OCHA to negotiate increase in security & transport costs with HQ, however, project inputs to be maintained at 70-80%.
- Maintenance of current approval procedures.
- Strengthening the cluster and HC roles.

Challenges the HRF faces include:

- It's purely reactive in nature - HRF does not invite proposals for projects to fill identified gaps
- The dual purpose of the fund provides room for funding projects that are not rapid onset emergency in nature. In addition, projects are not strategic and most often not included in the

CAP and have therefore not been subject to pre-screening or prior discussion within the Cluster. Proposals for such projects are lengthy and take time to review.

- The unpredictability of HRF funding and the narrow donor base negate strategic planning.
- Insufficient M&E – Inaccessibility to project sites has led to the fund's reliance on NGOs for M&E. The fund's secretariat also lacks the capacity to carry out M&E.
- Lengthy decision making and fund allocation procedures.
- Size of projects insufficient for strategic gap filling.

It was mentioned that while some of the challenges experienced, notably M&E, emanate from the unfavourable security situation in Somalia, other setbacks such as lack of strategic resource planning could be addressed if the Fund was bigger.

Question/Answer/Clarifications

- It was noted that currently, cluster capacity in Somalia is uneven. Their capacity to take on the coordination required with a CHF and the requisite M&E was questioned. These twin issues require further exploration before the decision for a CHF in Somalia is made. It was pointed out that as was the case in Sudan, the CHF was likely to strengthen clusters and improve coordination. Some participants stated that while they recognize this fact; the CHF should not be used as a tool to strengthen clusters.
- Clarification was sought on how a CHF in Somalia would fund CAP projects, respond to emergencies, and fund early recovery programmes. The 2009 CAP for Somalia excludes recovery activities and therefore if a CHF is agreed for Somalia, this particular problem would not arise. It is envisaged that the CHF for Somalia would include an 'emergency window' – probably an HRF or ERF. The HRF/ERF would operate within a reserved percentage of CHF (circa 10%). NGOs who do not participate in the CAP could still receive bilateral funding through the HRF/ERF. The CHF should not be viewed as the sole funding instrument for the CAP. In Sudan the CHF constituted only 15% of funding received through the CAP.
- The challenge with the current HRF is that the current size of 'the pot' is USD 20 million with the maximum amount of funds available for a single project being USD 500,000. The majority of the projects are funded up to USD 250,000. The HRF is currently operating as if it were a CHF. It receives lengthy proposals and the time lag from receipt to final allocation is long.

2.3 CHF MINIMUM MODEL

Though the CHF model adopted by countries is contextual, it retains five basic elements. These include:

- Management structure
- The allocation model/process
- Financial Management
- Reporting and monitoring framework
- Information management

The presentation outlined their components and functions. The management structure is headed by the HC with support from an advisory group, technical review group and cluster leads. Fund management support comprises both programmatic and financial functions. The CHF allocation process is developed in country with the CAP and humanitarian coordination structures forming the basis of allocation procedures. Its standard allocation model enables strategic and timely allocation of resources to prioritised humanitarian activities within the CAP. In addition, an emergency reserve within the CHF, typically 10% of committed funds, enables quick response to unforeseen emergency needs within or outside the CAP. It also responds to

critical funding needs of key activities within the CAP. The Somalia HRF functions in a similar manner. The following practical examples were used to illustrate how the CHF has assisted in strategic gap filling in Sudan;

- It is used to channel funds to underserved or underfunded areas (e.g. South Sudan, Abyei, South Kordofan and Blue Nile)
- Funded emergency response to flooding in 2007.
- As a gap filler for common services such as UNHAS and security and in the procurement of common items in the non food items (NFIs) pipeline.
- Has attracted higher participation in joint coordination/planning as evidenced by a rise in CAP partners from 110 in 2006 to 165 in 2009. It should, however, be noted that participation in the CAP does not guarantee automatic funding.

CHF monitoring and reporting is conducted at three levels; at the project level by agencies to the MA; at sector level through cluster leads; and by the HC with the support of a M&E unit.

Fund Management of Common Humanitarian Funds

The fund management structure and the roles of its components - the Administrative Agent (AA) and Managing Agent (MA) were presented. Additional advantages of the CHF were highlighted.

Fund management support to the CHF has two distinct components; the AA and MA. Where the UNDG Pass-through Fund Management model is used, the AA acts as the Fund Administrator and interfaces between donors and UN organisations. The MA is the organisation that channels funding to NGOs. Amongst other functions, the AA disburses funds to participating UN organisations as instructed by the HC, within three to five business days. The AA and MA have no role in either resource allocation or programme/project selection. Their functions are purely technical.

Additional advantages of the CHF include;

- One single channel to receive contributions and provide reports to donors/stakeholders.
- Predictability of funding.
- Facilitates contributions from donors not present in the country or increased contributions from existing donors.
- Standardization practices and procedures, including reporting.
- Lessons learned from existing pooled funds/CHFs allow improvements.
- Decentralized operations granted by fund management structures.

Question/Answer/Clarifications

- The HRF in Somalia has been largely successful due to the role played by OCHA. NGOs advocated for the separation of the HRF from the CHF should the latter be adopted in Somalia. This is because the HRF offers national NGOs opportunities for funding. It was clarified that contrary to popular belief, the amount of funding received by NGOs from the CHF is increasing. An analysis of CHF allocations indicated that NGOs had received a significant portion of CHF allocations by the end of 2008, specifically-70% in the Central African Republic (CAR), 50% (direct + indirect) in Sudan and 46% in the DRC.
- Concern was expressed about having UNDP as MA given perceptions about its programmatic initiatives in Somalia. It was clarified that, in the event of a Somali CHF, who ever plays the MA role shall not have a programmatic interest rather be an operational financial service in support of NGOs. Moreover, it was outside the scope of this workshop to discuss who would take up the MA function.

- Clarification was sought on whether local NGOs would have access to CHF funds and whether there was a funding ceiling. NGOs normally seek funding for specific projects unlike UN agencies that seek funding to cover broadly defined programme budgets. Since project funding allows less flexibility and require 100% financing in order to be viable, it was recommended that the application/ handling process for a Somalia CHF should be flexible and accessible enough to offer various grant sizes. In response it was clarified that local NGOs can apply for CHF funding through their clusters and that not all projects in the CAP will attract funding from the CHF. The CAP document is shared with donors who may choose to start bilateral discussions with NGOs to fund projects serving their geographical and sectoral interests. There is no ceiling for funding projects in the DRC.
- Several issues were raised about setting up a CHF in Somalia. Somalia is a complex set up comprising several regions and the prevailing insecurity has led to most operations being remotely controlled. Moreover, clusters are generally weak, and while the CHF is not necessarily a panacea for poor cluster coordination, it may encourage greater participation. In view of this, it was proposed that a phased approach should be adopted for the establishment of a CHF in Somalia should a decision be made to have one.
- It was mentioned that OCHA had recently received funding to strengthen clusters through recruitment of cluster focal points.
- The potential effect of CHF on transaction costs was also raised, particularly regarding funds transfer through a pooled fund vis-à-vis through direct funding. There is an ongoing study on transaction costs in Sudan and DRC.
- Distinctions and similarities in the allocation process between the HRF and CHF were clarified.
- Given that M & E is a major weakness in the HRF, how would a CHF address this? The need for the development and testing of effective M & E mechanisms before the implementation of a CHF in Somalia was highlighted. It was noted that M & E remains a challenge in Sudan and DRC though there has been a marked improvement in the latter particularly for NGOs. It was proposed that

2.4 EMERGING ISSUES FROM SESSION I

- Concerns about the weakness of clusters in Somalia given that a successful CHF hinges on strong clusters.
- Plurality of funding mechanisms – need to balance with bilateral funding.
- Maintaining the HRF as it is or as an expanded structure.
- CHF is context specific and requires critical mass of donor support.
- Pooled funds offer opportunity for smaller donors to contribute.
- Further discussions required on how to effectively conduct M & E in Somalia, particularly how to ensure targets are being met at cluster and HC level. Within the CAP, agencies are expected to monitor their own projects;
- Concern about which agency will play Managing Agent role in Somalia.
- Access to funds by national NGOs.
- Possibility of phased approach for setting up CHF.
- Ceiling on allocations? Particularly if projects which are part of a wider program are not fully funded by the CHF.
- Capacity of NGOs to spend funds due to access problems in Somalia. An increase in requests for HRF 'no cost extensions' has been received over the last three months
- Effects of CHF on transaction costs, and speed of disbursements.
- NGO participation in decision making.

It was stated that some of the queries would be addressed in the second session by lessons learnt from Sudan and the DRC.

SESSION II

2.5 LESSONS LEARNT/BEST PRACTICES IN SUDAN AND THE DRC

A 2007 evaluation of the Common/Pooled Humanitarian Funds in Sudan and the DRC documented key issues regarding the CHF in Sudan and the DRC. These are outlined along with best practices below. The full evaluation report can be found on the UN OCHA Somalia website <http://ochaonline/somalia>.

Lessons learnt/best practices from the CHF experience in Sudan;

- The importance of striking the right balance between inclusiveness and efficiency in the CHF allocation process.
- Include NGO community in all levels of CHF management.
- Ensure cluster leads are supported and empowered to take a lead role in the CHF process (capacity, cluster steering groups, co-leads, ToRs, training).
- In a regional process maintain centralized final decision making structure.
- Ensure a transparent process where all decisions are well documented.
- Effective communication and dissemination of information to all partners is critical.
- Ensure that adequate CHF support staff and appropriate systems, tools and resources are in place from the start.
- Ensure close working relationship between CHF programmatic and financial management (OCHA) and AA, MA.
- Management Agent investment in fund management operation services in country close to the NGO financing structures and HC. This includes fully decentralized treasury operations and contract management.
- Added value of having a Management Agent as a non programming actor of CHF, to mitigate against any conflicts of interest that may arise during the allocation decision making process.
- Manage partners' expectations by clearly communicating CHF purpose, strategy and vision to all stakeholders.
- Fund Management support to NGOs-invest in NGO training to increase their capacity to access resources from pool funds. This may ensure better performance of national NGO participation into CHF.
- Invest in the development of a policy paper that provides clear strategic guidance.
- Ensure clear ToRs are developed and agreed for all key CHF actors.

Lessons learnt/best practices from the DRC:

Strategic use of funds based on common planning, needs assessment and field driven process has been positive. The cluster coordination, CHF and the CAP/Humanitarian Appeal Process (HAP) are closely linked and coordination has ensured the development of a common strategy for implementation and M&E. The funding of strategic seeds and tools stock in Eastern Congo by the pooled fund and managed by the cluster has been made possible by such linkages.

- There has been improved coordination and flexibility in the use of funds and in coverage of priority needs and funding gaps. The integrated watsan, nutrition and health project in response to acute malnutrition in Kahemba provided an example of a rapid, multisectoral response.
- There is no ceiling on funding allocations, selected projects are fully funded.

- Simplified project proposal format. NGOs and UN agencies submit a three page project sheet at provincial level.
- Decentralised cluster approach, with 10 regional clusters and one at the national level.
- Timeliness.
- Participatory and transparent process vs. efficiency and timeliness.
- Ensure checks and balances in the decision making process. The allocation and prioritisation processes are as participatory as possible. Participation has been enhanced by having strong clusters.
- Improved NGO role in the decision making process.
- Ensure quality standards of prioritized projects.

Question/Answer/Clarifications

- The NGO Consortium circulated a discussion paper outlining issues it would like taken into account before a decision is made to set up the CHF. A full version of the paper is available on the UN OCHA Somalia website <http://ochaonline/somalia>.
- In response to a query on the duration of disbursements it was clarified that DRC has a 12 month disbursement period that was not restricted to the calendar year, while Sudan's is one year with allowance for no cost extensions and has a proven fast disbursement track record.
- It was clarified that the technical review teams were not paid to review proposals.

2.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS AND THE WAY FORWARD FOR SOMALIA

The HC underscored the importance of having a funding mechanism that was more effective and responsive to the specific needs of Somalia. The CHF should not be viewed as the sole funding instrument but as a complementary way of attracting donors to the operation. The experiences shared by DRC and Sudan highlighted the contextual nature of CHFs. Several issues would have to be taken into consideration prior to the establishment of the fund for Somalia. The design and development of a CHF framework would entail an examination of the situation in Somalia, and should factor in the Somalia experience with the HRF. In addition, the process should ensure engagement, ownership and efficiency, notably in the management and financial structures. It should also be examined whether or not a phased approach should be adopted.

The HC stated that the issues raised in the workshop would form the basis of a technical paper. This paper should inform as to whether these issues could be addressed in a CHF for Somalia. Based on this technical paper the HC would finalise his consultations within the humanitarian community before making a final recommendation to the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) within a month's time. The recommendation will be guided by the common interest of the humanitarian operations in Somalia and the need to find the most effective way of delivering aid to the people of Somalia.

Action:

- OCHA to provide a summary of the workshop.
- OCHA to produce a technical paper for the HC addressing issues raised in the workshop and where possible options on the way forward.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Workshop Agenda

Annex 2: List of Participants

ANNEX I: Workshop Agenda

Common Humanitarian Fund – pooled funding and humanitarian reform in Somalia

Times	Session	Facilitator	Expected outcome
Thursday 5 February 2009			
0830 - 0900	Coffee		
0900 - 0915	Welcome and Introduction	Mark Bowden, Humanitarian Coordinator	Welcome and introduction of the participants, opening statement by the Humanitarian Coordinator
0915 - 0930	Objectives of the workshop and the agenda	Kiki Gbeho, Head of OCHA	Clarity about the objectives of the workshop
0930 - 1000	Global perspective: humanitarian reform and financing Q & A	Sanjana Quazi, Funding Coordination Unit, OCHA NY Shaun Hughes, DFID	Understanding of the CHF concept as part of the humanitarian reform, evolution of humanitarian financing, summary of global trends, CHF and pooled funding in other countries. <i>Notetaker: Patricia</i>
1000 - 1020	Somalia Context: experience with pooled funding Q & A	Ivana Unluova, HRF Somalia	Overview of the Somalia HRF and CERF, access to the funds, successes and challenges. <i>Notetaker: Afifa</i>
1020 - 1030	Coffee break		
1030 - 1200	CHF minimum model Q & A	Michael Jensen, Head of Funding Coordination Unit, Sana Zemri, Multi Donor Trust Fund, NY	Structure and functioning of CHF explained: Adm agent, Advisory board N board, Technical committees <i>Notetaker: Patricia</i>
1200 - 1300	Lunch		
1300 – 1430	Sudan and DRC case studies and lessons learnt: Programme and Financial Management/ prioritisation process Q & A	Enrico Gaveglia, UNDP Sudan, Andrea de Domenico, OCHA NY , Pierre Vauthier, FAO Cluster Lead DRC	Lessons learnt from Sudan and DRC, with focus on project prioritisation process and funds allocation procedures, management and administration of the fund, M&E, etc. from the UN, Cluster lead and NGO perspective. <i>Notetaker: Patricia</i>
1430 -1440	Coffee break		
1440 – 1515	Summary of key issues emerging	Kiki Gbeho	Clarity on key issues that require further clarification, consultations; application of lessons learnt in Somalia context
1515 – 1530	Somalia context: way forward	Mark Bowden	Follow up actions; funding options for Somalia

ANNEX 2: Participant Details CHF Workshop 5th February, 2009

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