



Inclusion, Accountability,  
and Protection:

# **Analysis of Community Discussions on the 2019 Flood Response in Hiiraan**

May 2020



A report by **Somali Public Agenda**  
with support from **Radio Ergo**

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**Somali Public Agenda** is a non-profit public policy and administration research organization based in Mogadishu, Somalia. Its aim is to advance understanding and improvement of public administration and public services in Somalia through evidence-based research and analysis.

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**Radio Ergo** is a humanitarian news and information project run by International Media Support (IMS), airing daily broadcasts on shortwave and through local FM partner radios. Radio Ergo also runs an audience feedback platform to receive calls free of charge from listeners across the country.

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## 1.0 Executive Summary

In October and November 2019, about 240,000 people were displaced in Beledweyne after heavy flooding in the town as a result of the Deyr rainfall. A massive humanitarian relief response from different Somali groups and international agencies followed. Numerous committees were formed to oversee and distribute cash and food predominantly raised locally. However, many people complained about exclusion and biases in the aid distributions, including that some distributors identified and gave the relief items only to beneficiaries from their clan lineages.

To understand what went wrong with the 2019 humanitarian response and what lessons can be learned from it, four interactive radio discussions (1.5 hours each) were conducted on the main local radio station in Beledweyne in April this year. The initiative was prompted by Radio Ergo, a project run by International Media Support, that broadcasts humanitarian programming on shortwave and collaborates with local radio partners. 14 speakers representing different groups of the society, including the local administration, the business community, civil society, women, IDPs, and people with disabilities, participated as invited guests in the four programmes aired by Radio Hiiraanweyn, with listeners from Beledweyne, Buulaburte, Jalalaqsi, and Jowhar. 42 citizens also called the programmes during phone-in sessions and talked about their views on the topics discussed.

The findings of the radio discussions reveal that there were a number of things that went wrong in the 2019 flood response. First, there was no reliable data on the number of people displaced by the flooding, and the locations from and to which they were displaced. This led to the irregular distribution of emergency relief. Second, some local committees and individuals responsible for the distribution of the majority of the emergency relief that people received used clan criteria for the selection of beneficiaries, which excluded important segments of the society such as the IDPs, people with disabilities, and women. Third, there was disorganization among the multiple actors who were distributing aid. As a result, some families and individuals received food and cash several times while others did not receive any relief. Fourth, there was a lack of awareness among both local people and volunteer responders of the physical risks presented by the flooded terrain. As a result, some people died in the water. Finally, there were no institutions or mechanisms formed before the flooding to handle the response. This led to disorganized multiple actors distributing aid based on the criteria they set themselves or directed by the groups that sent the assistance.

There were government level committees established by the different tiers of government. However, these committees did not distribute much relief due to low levels of trust in governmental authorities. The people who donated funds and goods preferred to work through the business community as a more trusted group. Therefore, the most notable group that distributed cash and food to the majority of the flood-displaced people was the 25-member Beledweyne floods rescue committee, set up by business conglomerates. The role of the local authorities was mainly to maintain peace and security, especially in the aid distribution scenes. The finding also shows that the role of humanitarian agencies was negligible in the flood response in terms of the amount of relief distributed as compared to the support of Somalis across the country and in the diaspora.

The various groups distributing aid were not inclusive. Some segments of the society were left out from representation among the distributing actors. Some actors also used clan criteria for their distribution, excluding IDPs, women, and people with disabilities and other groups. Most of the food and cash were also distributed in Ceel Jaalle – an area of higher ground, 12 kilometres northeast of the town, and home already to many existing IDPs – which was not easy for women, disabled and elderly people to reach to collect some humanitarian assistance.

This study suggests that there is an urgent need to learn lessons from the 2019 emergency relief response in Beledweyne and to put in place accountability measures for future interventions. Further flood disasters are highly likely to occur. Moreover, there is a need to establish one inclusive committee or centre responsible for the management of humanitarian response. Credible and trusted people within the community such as the business actors and religious scholars could be asked to take a leading role in such a committee or centre. Furthermore, the study suggests the need for a collective effort to work on prevention measures and investment in the infrastructure, such as rehabilitating the channels that could divert the river flooding into the city and future mass displacement.

## 2.0 Background

In October 2019, the Shabelle River flooded over into Hirshabelle districts especially Beledweyne, the capital city of Hiiraan region. The floods were the result of the Deyr rainfall in Somalia and Ethiopia highlands, which are the source of Somalia's two main rivers – Shabelle and Jubba. A significant number of people affected by the floods fled to Ceel Jaalle area on the outskirts of the town, close to the airport and the base of Djibouti contingent of the peacekeeping force AMISOM. For security reasons, the AMISOM compound served as a humanitarian distributing centre because of the presence of AMISOM forces securing the area.

Following the floods in October 2019, huge numbers of people were displaced in Hiiraan region, particularly Beledweyne. The UN estimated that around 240,000 people were displaced between October and November 2019. A major emergency response was triggered, both by the UN humanitarian agencies, NGOs, and also by Somali private businesses and local well-wishers who collected donations from all over the country and the diaspora.

Many federal, state, and community level committees were formed to coordinate the flood response in Beledweyne. The Prime Minister of the Federal Government of Somalia Hassan Ali Khayre formed an inter-ministerial committee; the Hirshabelle President formed a 13-member state-level

committee comprising of ministers and the regional governors of Hiiraan and Middle Shabelle to mobilize emergency relief to the victims of the floods in Beledweyne. There were also committees formed by business actors in Beledweyne as well as by individual volunteers.

However, as the relief efforts got underway, many complaints were received (including hundreds of calls to Radio Ergo) from the affected communities saying the aid was not given out fairly, some of it was stolen, and the aid distributions were often chaotic and violent. The callers who complained said the aid was given out on a clan basis, favoring the strong groups and excluding the weak and the marginalized.

With the possibility of further flooding at the onset of the Gu' rainy season in April and May and the likelihood of further displacement and hardship, Radio Ergo supported radio Hiiraanweyn FM to hold public deliberations on the radio to discuss with the community to better understand what went wrong, what needs to be addressed, and how.

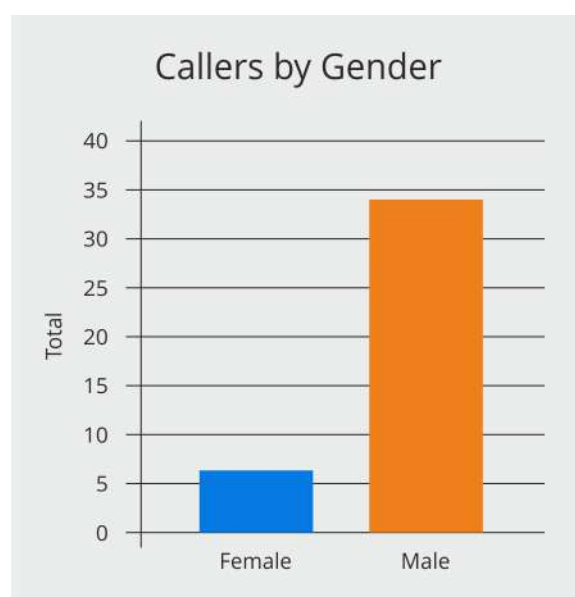
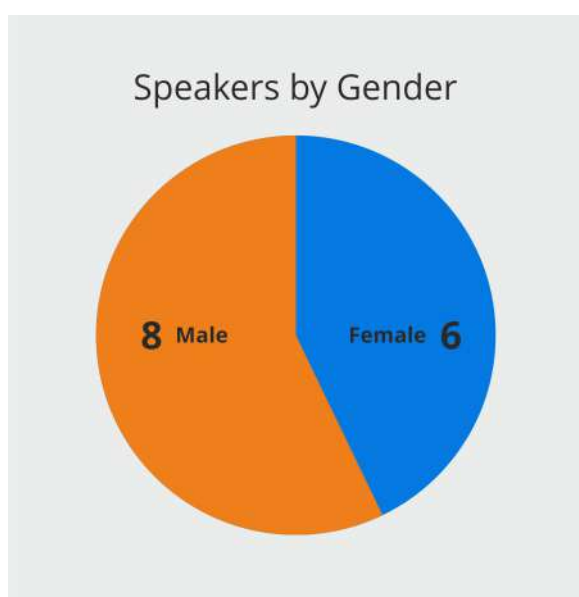
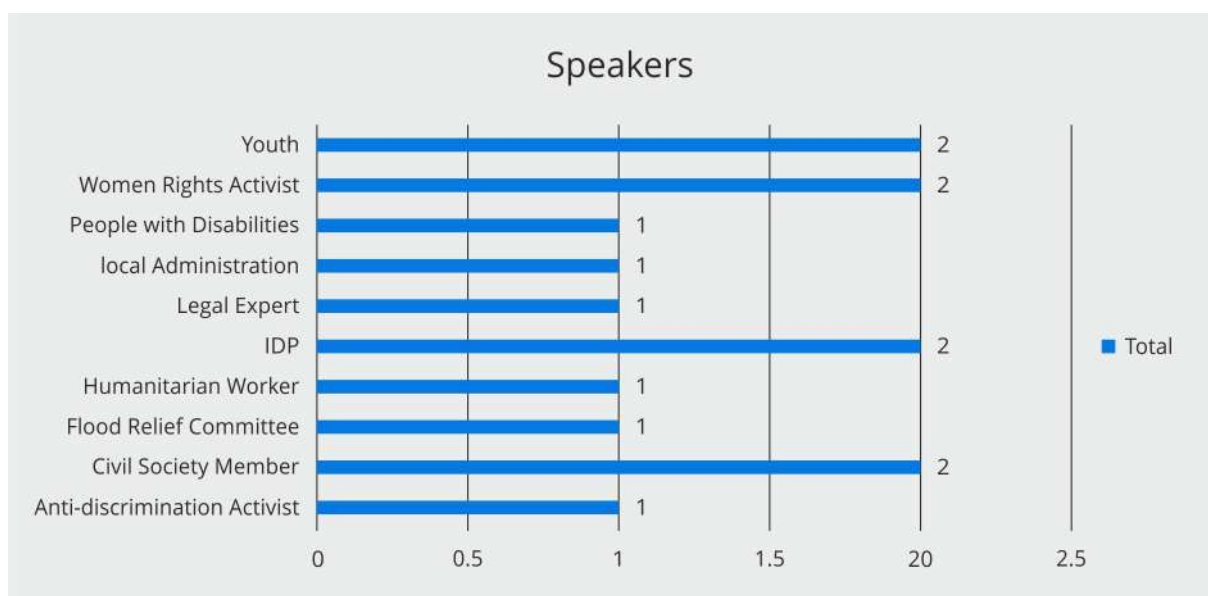
### 3.0 Research Methods

The majority of the Somali people rely on radios as their primary sources of information. Radio discussions and callers' feedback provide rich information about local perceptions and views on issues that are important to citizens. In this context, Hiiraanweyn FM, with the support of Radio Ergo, a project focusing on humanitarian issues and run by International Media Support, organized and broadcast a series of four studio discussions (1.5 hours each) in April 2020 with key guests and speakers, and phone in sessions for listeners.

The series of four programmes, as agreed between Radio Ergo and Hiiraanweyn FM, was structured to address the following topics and issues: what went wrong in the flood response last year and why did these things occur, giving an opportunity

to various groups of people to talk about their experiences of the response, including IDPs, local communities, disabled, women, youth, and others; what role the authorities and business community played in the relief response; and what ideas citizens have to strengthen inclusion of all communities and prevent marginalization and exclusion.

The programmes hosted 14 speakers (eight male and six female) representing different groups including representatives from Hiiraan regional administration, IDPs, people with disabilities, women rights activists, youth organizations, the Beledweyne floods rescue committee, humanitarian workers, civil society actors, legal experts, and anti-discrimination activists.



The programmes also provided an open platform for citizens to voice their ideas and to discuss with leaders how to bring solutions and ensure a better response to emergencies in the future. People in Beledweyne, Bulaburte, Jalalaqsi, and Jowhar were able to tune into the programmes. At the end of each programme, citizens were given the opportunity to suggest their views and ask questions to the programme guests. 42 citizens (34 male and 8 female) in Beledweyne neighborhoods and surrounding villages called the programmes, commented on the discussion, and suggested their views on what went wrong in the past and what needs to be done in future emergency responses. The programmes encouraged community dialogue on accountable and inclusive emergency response involving local leaders, informal leaders, other stakeholders, and the citizens.

Radio Ergo documented the radio discussions and phone-in sessions on Radio Hiiraanweyn during the four programmes in April, to share what was raised and discussed around the

problems and solutions with a wider audience. Somali Public Agenda, a Somali think tank based in Mogadishu, transcribed the discussions from the recorded audio files and analyzed the main points of the thematic deliberations, the views shared by callers, and the conclusions or suggestions for future solutions raised by stakeholders and the community to improve future emergency responses. This report is an outcome of these discussions and processes.

One limitation of the methodology employed was that the discussions only included one speaker from the international humanitarian agencies, which was inadequate to explore the full picture of the role of the international community in the 2019 Beledweyne floods emergency response. This led to findings that discuss more the role of Somali stakeholders and less about the role of international actors.

## 4.0 Key Findings

### 4.1 What Went Wrong

Speakers in the first programme were asked what went wrong with the Beledweyne relief efforts. First, there was no reliable data or profiling of people affected by the flooding. An intellectual said: *“There was no detailed data on the number of people displaced by the floods, where they were displaced from and where they were displaced to.”* This was illustrated by callers’ accounts of some people receiving aid up to 10 times because there were no statistics or data available on the effects of the flooding on the displacement patterns of different segments of the community. Others suggested that this disproportionate distribution of aid could be overcome in future if cash only is distributed through phone numbers. A woman activist said: *“You don’t know the people. And there are many different people who distribute aid. There is no indication that one has already received the money. This problem will continue if people are not distributed money to their numbers.”*

Second, in some cases, the distribution was based on clans. This led to a situation where dominant clans received most of the aid at the expense of the internally displaced persons, people with disabilities, women, and elderly and marginalized clans. The committees distributing aid were many, and some decided to distribute relief aid based on clans. A disabled person who participated in the programme said: *“Our main barrier was to reach where the humanitarian aid was distributed. Some people were able to get relief through their clan relatives. We were not consulted. The aid was hijacked. I did not think this bad behaviour would ever be discussed like this!”*

The internally displaced persons in particular were the victims of the distribution of emergency relief based on clans. Many IDPs did not receive food and cash registration tokens, which were mostly distributed late at night. An IDP said: *“We are IDPs from different clans. We settled in a location, and all aid was distributed based on clans. We have seen people having food and cash registration tokens. We were not given such tokens. We did not receive any humanitarian aid”*. However, not all IDPs were deprived of the aid. A female IDP who was a guest in one of the programmes said: *“I was given food, and I was using it for five months. Thanks to all those who supported us.”*

Both representatives from the IDPs and people with disabilities expressed the limitation of distribution of relief based on clans. They suggested the need for special consideration for IDPs and disabled persons. A female caller whose child is disabled echoed that the disabled were not considered because of their clan. She said: *“We live in the middle of Buundaweyn*

*village. One of my children is disabled. We were not given aid because of our clan. I have received nothing. I am not an IDP, but we were displaced by the floods.”* A disabled speaker added: *“How assistance was distributed was clan-based. I think that is painful. I would suggest that agencies make a survey and distribute ID cards for the disabled persons and send money to their mobiles instead of asking them to come to Janta Kuwindishe or Ceel Jaalle. They should give special care to people with disabilities. They should also be given access to education.”* Some callers concurred with the points raised by the disabled and IDP panelists. A female caller stated that the powerful clans and wealthy individuals received the majority of the relief aid.

Third, there was no overall team or committee in place and prepared to play the role of distributing the humanitarian assistance raised from various local Somali sources. The distributions were conducted by many individuals and committees, who mobilized themselves immediately after the flooding. As a result, someone may have received relief aid 10 times while someone else received none. People’s circumstances were different: some were unable to reach the places where the aid was distributed such as those who had been displaced to distant places, or those unable to leave their houses due to disability or some other reason. Without a coordinated and organized distribution, the aid distribution was understandably not fair.

There were no accountability mechanisms for the local aid distributing actors. Mismanagement of the emergency humanitarian aid resulted from the fact that there were multiple relief distributing stakeholders, a lack of reliable data on the flood-affected people, and no accountability mechanisms or structures.

Some members of the audience suggested that religious leaders and the business community as trusted actors should have been asked to distribute the aid. They believed that the clan elders, who were leading the distribution and who based the assistance on clans, failed to distribute the relief aid fairly.

Fourth, there was not sufficient awareness about the risks of the terrain under the flood conditions among those who were fleeing their homes and going to places like Ceel Jaalle. Some people who were escaping the heavy flooding in the town died in the flood waters because they did not know where the water currents were dangerously strong, nor the places where electricity cables posed risks of electrocution. Local responders were also unaware of the risks of wading through the water without knowing its depth and driving vehicles into the water, as they had not received adequate, if any,



briefings. According to an intellectual who spoke during the programmes: *“Even most of the team working on the boats did not have the equipment for swimming. Most of them did not know how to swim.”*

Fifth, the people in Beledweyne were not prepared to respond to such a large-scale humanitarian emergency. For example, there was no rescue team. One caller said: *“We were not prepared for it. Many people died because they did not know how to swim. We need to prepare a team that rescues people such as the ICRC team.”* Another factor that indicates that people were not prepared for the flood emergency response is that there was no centre or committee established before the flooding to prevent and respond to the flooding in Beledweyne. One panelist said: *“The aid distributing agencies are not organized. If they are asked to distribute money, they don’t know how to do it. In Puntland, there was drought in 2017. Their committee already had money in reserve. For us, we appoint a committee when the problem starts.”*

#### 4.2 The Role of Government Authorities

The 2019 humanitarian intervention was the most significant emergency support received by the people in Beledweyne in recent history. Hirshabelle State and the Beledweyne

municipality under it decided to step in to ensure security at locations where aid was being distributed. The aid distributors included local government members (at village level), as well as local groups such as the business and individual volunteers. However, the municipal authorities were rarely asked to get involved in distributing aid. This was because many people who raised the support did not trust the municipality to manage the aid and preferred to entrust it to the business community.

There was no proper mapping of the displaced areas and how people in the town could be reached. Therefore, the decisions about where to distribute aid, and who would be given the food and cash registration tokens, were made solely by the distributing actors. For instance, the leadership of Hiiraan youth organization decided to reach out to the surrounding villages. A member of the youth group on one of the panels said: *“We reached surrounding villages, such as Guryocaddo, Mareer Gagaab, Gasle, Bur Qaniinyo, Tuulo Hiiraan, Farah Caafi, and Hoolmooge. We also distributed relief in all the four Beledweyne villages.”* Several callers from the outskirts of the city acknowledged and thanked the youth panelist specifically for reaching out to them.



**Photo:** Studio discussion at Radio Hiirwanweyn with official from Hirshabelle regional authority

There was no coordination and collaboration among the multiple actors. Different people distributed aid in the same area. So, some families could have received assistance five times and more. People were confused about how many times they were asked for their details. There were many groups distributing aid as they saw fit. A women's activist explaining the lack of coordination said: *"Do we know how much money and food was received? Does the local government know this? Who knows how much assistance we received and how it was distributed? Some actors such as the Federal Member States brought food. They then distributed to areas where aid had already been distributed previously."*

One of the recurring criticisms of the emergency relief distribution was that it was based on clans. However, the authorities as well as some of the volunteers who distributed the relief denied that the numerous complaints from local people about flaws in the distribution approach were true. The chairman of Hiiraan Youth Organization, a group that volunteered to distribute aid, was a guest speaker. He said: *"I saw people complaining. We saw people who were complaining because of their clan. We visited their houses, and we have seen them having food in their homes. They wanted more aid, so that is why they were complaining."*

Moreover, the Somalis who generously donated money and goods to support the flood-affected people came from many different backgrounds and also had different objectives. They contacted people they trusted to distribute food or cash on their behalf, often with some specific guidance as to whom they wished to help. For example, one would ask to support orphans, while another would ask to support people with disabilities. Distributing aid along these lines meant that other groups not singled out as beneficiaries felt the system was unfair. A female panelist said: *"The people sending the money had their criteria such as to support the disabled, or orphans, or clan x."*

Another criticism is that the aid distributed was not based on any assessment of the affected peoples' needs, which led in many cases to flood displaced persons being given what they did not want. For instance, a panelist stated that in some cases people needed water, but received mosquito nets.

One governance mechanism that authorities could implement to ensure better results when there is another emergency is to improve coordination of the response. It was suggested that there is a need to centralize the aid distribution. One community member suggested the local government should set up a humanitarian response mechanism: *"There could be a humanitarian response centre with staff responsible for the distribution."* A supervisory committee was also suggested to work with the humanitarian response centre. One panelist contended that centralizing the aid delivery helps citizens know where they can present their complaint: *"Having one committee distributing aid will allow those complaining to*

*go to a centre where they can get information. If things go wrong, people go back to the committee or centre."* Another issue discussed was the need to plan for the prevention of future flood disasters. An official with Hiiraan regional administration said: *"We plan to self-determine our future. We need to plan for the investment in canals and infrastructure. We need to prevent such flooding."*

#### **4.3 The Role of Somali Businesses and other Well-wishers**

The business actors in Beledweyne played an important role in the flood emergency response in 2019. The Hormuud and Dahabshiil business conglomerates along with the Somali Chambers of Commerce formed the Beledweyne floods rescue committee responsible for the distribution of assistance donated by these business entities. Haji Osman Dhagahow, the head of Dahabshiil branch in Hiiraan region, was the chair of this committee. Explaining the amount of money received by the committee, as a guest speaker in the third Hiiraanweyn FM discussion programme, Dhagahow said: *"The first money that we received from Hormuud, Dahabshiil and Somalia Chambers of Commerce was \$500,000. We distributed it to about 10,000 families. We again managed and distributed \$200,000 from Somaliland."*

The committee also managed money from religious groups. For example, Dhagahow stated that they received \$303,000 from Sheikh Umal, a prominent Somali religious scholar based in Nairobi, who collected money from the Somalis in Kenya. He said the committee transferred \$120,000 to Jowhar; \$50,000 to Jalalaqsi; and distributed \$133,000 in Beledweyne, giving each beneficiary \$50. The business committee also supervised the aid distributions conducted by the local committees from Puntland and Galmudug. Dhagahow stated that the committee representing Galmudug collected money and relief items from Dhusomareb and Guri'el in Galmudug, as well as from Mataban in Hirshabelle. The business actors were widely perceived to be the most trusted group among the many different actors distributing relief aid in Beledweyne and hence managed most of the cash and food distributions. Interestingly, neither the radio presenters nor callers questioned the figures, or challenged the accounting practices put forward by the business committee representative.

One challenge that the business committee faced was a fragile security situation. This induced them to distribute most of the cash in the AMISOM camp on the outskirts of the town. At times, however, security forces were accused of being part of the problem. A female member of a youth organization said: *"Security forces were present in every area that aid was distributed. The soldiers were the first to loot the aid."*

Another challenge that the business committee faced, according to the business committee chairman, was the confusion over whether people had received any aid or



**Photo:** Business committee chairman Haji Osman Dhagadow during studio discussion

not. The committee acknowledged that they had no method in place to confirm that someone had received aid. When asked verbally if they had received aid, people often said no. The business committee chairman, Dhagahow, said: *“When you call and ask a person if he/she received aid, they would most likely say no because they expect that you are going to distribute some aid.”* The business committee did not view it possible to conduct a proper survey to register people, due to the emergency of the situation and lack of institutional infrastructure for such an exercise. The business leader Dhagahow said: *“IDPs alone are about 300,000. How can you register these people who are dying of hunger? The approach we used by dividing aid among the four villages was a good option. We could list 1,000 persons, but we cannot register as many as 300,000 persons.”*

The discussions also revealed that most of those who were invited as guests and the callers rarely mentioned humanitarian aid from international aid agencies. Some stated that they thanked the Somali people for their generosity and that the support from the international aid agencies was minimal compared to that of Somalis.

The Somali business community was mindful, at the time of the response, of the need to implement measures for the prevention of future flooding. People and government in

Somaliland raised a total of \$600,000 and sent delegates to give instructions to the business committee to distribute \$200,000 from this fund. The rest of the money has been kept by the Beledweyne floods rescue committee for flood prevention works, as confirmed by chairman Haji Dhagahow: *“We have the remaining \$400,000 in an account to complement the investment in building channels for flood prevention. We also have \$130,000 we [the business community] collected earlier. Now we have a total of \$530,000 for prevention.”*

Despite the contributions from the business groups, including the Somaliland contribution, it was stated that the Federal Government of Somalia did not disburse its pledge of half a million dollars for the Beledweyne flood response. The Beledweyne flood rescue committee chairman illustrated: *“The federal government pledged \$500,000. That money did not reach our committee. Djibouti also pledged \$600,000; it did not reach us. All these must be questioned.”*

In early May 2020, the Somali media revealed that China also donated \$1.5 million for Beledweyne floods prevention, but the Federal Government had not transferred this money at that time to either the local authorities or the business committee to finance the rehabilitation of canals to divert the floodwaters. Further media reporting generated a local outcry over the missing money that could have prevented the Gu’

rains from causing another bout of flooding in Beledweyne. On 10 May 2020, the federal government finally handed over \$1,142,000 (the \$500,000 federal government pledge, the \$600,000 Djibouti donation, and \$42,000 collected by the national flood response committee) to the Hirshabelle President. The federal government did not explain why it had kept the money in its accounts for so long.

During the radio discussions, Dhagahow mentioned that engineers estimated that rehabilitating the channels to help prevent flooding required an investment of about \$7 million. The business actors alone could not raise that amount. In fact, the \$530,000 retained by the Beledweyne floods rescue committee is currently (May 2020) being used to finance some preliminary man-made channels to divert the flooding with rented tractors and mobilization of youth in Beledweyne through a self-help scheme. The federal government has also sent engineers and civil servants as well as sandbags to help the community with the efforts to prevent another flooding disaster in Beledweyne.

#### 4.4 Strengthening Inclusion of All Communities

Some of the discussants acknowledged that discrimination against some segments of the society was routine and ingrained in Beledweyne, especially with regard to people engaged in certain crafts like metalworking as a livelihood. A legal expert said: *“The metal craftsmen are discriminated against. They are an important part of the community in terms of production. In other parts of the world, they are highly respected. But there are many discriminated persons. I have met with these people. You will feel that they died mentally and have accepted that they are second class citizens.”*

Some exclusion cases were documented during the flood response efforts in Beledweyne. A female who works with an organization that advocates against discrimination stated that they documented six cases of clan discrimination: *“We documented six cases that relate to discrimination. Three were in Beledweyne, two in Ceel Jaalle and one in a neighbouring village. All the discrimination happened during the emergency aid distribution.”* She added that some of these people failed to access drinking water, and that they had no stakeholders from their clans who were among the aid distributors.

The composition of most of the local relief committees was not seen to have been inclusive and representative, given the make-up of the society. Some committee members were distributing aid to their friends and family members. Lack of representation in the local municipality meant that some important segments of the society were excluded from the membership of the committees. Those who did not have a voice were left out. A humanitarian worker, who is a member of the Protection Cluster, explained: *“In some cases, some communities were left out because they have no representation in the administration. Some others were not reached because*

*they did not speak out, or because their areas were not reachable.”*

Lack of proper coordination was also seen as another cause of exclusion. A woman activist elucidated that the exclusion from the aid distribution was not necessarily based on clan discrimination, as needy people from large clans too may not have received aid because of the disorganization and lack of coordination. Echoing the disorder, a woman speaker said: *“No one knows the amount of aid we received in 2019. It was not documented. There is no data available that can inform future interventions.”*

Another factor that may have contributed to lack of inclusive process was that most of the food and cash registration tokens were issued late in the night because stakeholders feared that people would have time to copy the cards if they were given out a day before the distribution. The result would then be a subjective selection of aid beneficiaries, which left out some vulnerable community members, as the card distributors would knock on the doors of the families they knew in person.

Most of the humanitarian aid was distributed in Ceel Jaalle on the outskirts of Beledweyne. The main reason for choosing this location was that it was considered to be secure and the Djibouti contingent of AMISOM was present there to provide security to prevent looting. However, the distribution of aid in Ceel Jaalle could have excluded some important segments of the society, especially women and disabled persons. The place is distant from the town, meaning the elderly, disabled and women could not easily get there. In one incident it was reported that a mother with a small child went there and stood in the hot sun queuing for aid for hours. She later found that her child had died. Disabled people were not able to get to Ceel Jaalle to collect food because of the distance.

On the other hand, some suggested in the radio programmes that the reported cases of exclusion were exaggerated or sometimes not true. A woman activist, a guest in the studio, said: *“There was someone to whom I gave aid three times, and he was claiming that he was given nothing and was discriminated. Therefore, many of the people who claim exclusion are not telling the truth.”*

One of the solutions proposed for creating an inclusive aid distribution was establishing a credible and inclusive committee to distribute aid with a monitoring mechanism to ensure accountability. Another approach that could bring a fair distribution of aid suggested by callers was to distribute aid based on households and mark the houses showing where relief had been given. A coordination and accountability mechanism that would ensure fair distribution of aid was also suggested as a solution for an inclusive process.

## 5.0 Audience Priorities

One member of the audience suggested that the meagre funds available for flood prevention measures should be invested in removing the sand and waste from the Shabelle riverbed to stop it from overflowing. He also appealed to people in Beledweyne to contribute money for this cause.

Many other callers also emphasized the need for prevention measures. One said: *“It is a shame for Beledweyne people that they ask for aid from the world every six months. We should prioritize prevention.”*

Another suggested the need to establish one committee for the distribution of aid and to try to stop being dependent on aid.

A caller recommended that mosquito nets should be distributed to every household in Beledweyne. The same approach could be replicated for the distribution of food and cash.

Two of the callers had concerns about the current COVID-19 pandemic. One asked the local authority to stop *khat* (the popular stimulant chewing leaves) entering from Ethiopia. Another asked the Beledweyne flood rescue committee to consider diverting the money reserved for flood prevention to purchase hospital ventilators to treat seriously ill COVID-19 patients.

## 6.0 Conclusion

In October 2019, Beledweyne experienced widespread flooding that caused the displacement of about 240,000 people between October and November. This was followed by a massive emergency relief by multiple actors including different levels of Somalia government, Somali businesses, and local well-wishers. Aid was also distributed by international agencies and NGOs although this was largely not captured by the discussions. During the relief efforts, many complained about a flawed distribution in which aid was channeled to certain clans at the expense of others. Discussions on what went wrong, and how authorities, local leaders, and the business community and other aid organizations could respond more effectively in a fair and inclusive process, were held in Beledweyne in April 2020, coinciding with the onset of the next seasonal *Gu*’ rainfall.

The findings of the discussions facilitated on the local radio indicate:

- That sufficient credible data to understand who the vulnerable groups were and how the flooding impacted different segments of the society were completely lacking.
- Some aid was distributed along clan lines.
- There were multiple distributors of cash and food without coordination among them.

- There were no accountability mechanisms showing what aid (cash or non-cash items) had been collected and where it went.
- There was insufficient local knowledge and awareness among distributors of aid, and people were not prepared to respond to such a large-scale humanitarian emergency.
- Federal, state, and local level committees were established, but the findings indicate that the Beledweyne floods rescue committee established by the business community was the most trusted committee that distributed most of the humanitarian aid.
- The government authorities played a minimal role in the actual distribution of aid. The local authority’s main role was securing the aid distribution centres, and people supporting the flood-affected people had less trust in the administration.
- The distribution was not inclusive and many were excluded due to the confluence of many factors such as lack of inclusive committees, lack of coordination, distribution of most of the food and cash tokens at night, and the distribution of most of the aid in Ceel Jaalle, where many women, elderly and disabled people were not able to reach.

## 7.0 Policy Recommendations

1. It is important to set up accountability measures to govern local humanitarian aid distributions. A proper assessment of the mistakes that happened in 2019 could help authorities in Hiiraan and other stakeholders come up with relevant and workable accountability measures. To do justice to the generosity of the Somalis, the trusted local distributors such as the business community could enhance accountability by documenting receipts and records of how they distributed aid and could share with those who sent the cash or non-cash assistance and/or with the public. Accountability measures would also show publicly how the pledges made by different levels of government were disbursed and used. People in Beledweyne had no idea what happened to the \$500,000 pledged by the federal government, and similarly the \$600,000 pledged by Djibouti, although this was later released by the federal government.
2. A centre for humanitarian response could be established to collect and manage all locally raised support. This would simplify accountability as there would be only one body managing the national response. A lesson may be learned from Puntland. After the recent flooding in Qardho district, the Qardho Emergency Relief Committee appointed by the Puntland president immediately instructed commercial banks against opening bank accounts for any other committee wanting to manage emergency relief funds for the flood-affected people. The committee asked all those collecting support for Qardho to hand over their support, cash or in-kind, to them. This is a model that could be replicated in Beledweyne in the near future. There may be useful collaboration to be developed between such a centre or mechanism and the coordination mechanisms already established by the international humanitarian community. This could involve sharing of best practices in inclusion, accountability, and protection as well as on-the-ground coordination in the event of a disaster.
3. Aid distribution needs to be inclusive of all segments of the society in such a flood response, as the residents affected come from all segments. The practice of inclusion should be institutionalized at all levels of the humanitarian sector, local and international, so that inclusive and representative bodies can lead to an inclusive aid distribution. Minority clans, women and people with disabilities are usually excluded in the appointment of committees charged with the selection of beneficiaries and the distribution of aid. Whilst political offices in Somalia are shared based on clans, enabling minority clans to get some representation, this approach has not been applied to humanitarian agencies and local non-political civil service positions, which are usually dominated by major clans. This is one of the reasons leading to exclusion of some segments of the society. In the case of flood response in Beledweyne, any aid distributing committee or entity should ensure that there are representatives from IDPs, people with disabilities, women, and marginalized clans.
4. All stakeholders should focus on prevention. The amount of money currently available for investment in the canals that could prevent flooding in Beledweyne is very limited. The cost required was estimated at \$7 million. Clearing the sand and waste from the riverbed and man-made channels to divert floodwater could be a short-term prevention measure. But in the longer term, there is a need to finance the infrastructure such as dam construction to prevent repetitive bouts of destructive and distressing flooding in Beledweyne. The Beledweyne flood rescue committee reserved some \$530,000 (\$400,000 of which came from Somaliland) for future infrastructure investment. This money is currently being used for crucial preliminary flood prevention efforts actively ongoing in Beledweyne at the time of writing this report. However, the amount of money required is beyond the capacity of the business actors. Beledweyne community, local administration, Hirshabelle State, the Federal Government, and the international community could all collectively contribute to this common cause. In the long term such prevention would limit the necessity for massive humanitarian emergency response.

