

Listening to affected populations: deploying the Common Social Accountability Platform to understand humanitarian priorities for the Somalia HNO 2020

Executive Summary

In August 2019 Africa's Voices Foundation conducted a two-week nationwide radio consultation to explore humanitarian priorities suggested by Somali citizens, in order to bring citizen voices into the design of the Humanitarian Needs Overview. A total of 8,251 people sent in their views from across the country. Of these, 84% reported that participating in the radio dialogue had made them feel they had more of a voice in humanitarian decision-making processes.

Key Findings

- Community-led action was the most commonly suggested solution to the humanitarian situation in Somalia, which is indicative of **aspirations of autonomy and empowerment amongst citizens**.
- There has been a significant shift in citizen priorities between 2018 and 2019, **with greater emphasis placed on broad solutions** such as community organisation, improved government capacity and the need for peace and security, **over the provision of humanitarian services such as healthcare and education**.
- Greater access to information, including both awareness creation amongst citizens, and improved information collection amongst aid actors, emerged as a key theme, highlighting the need for **greater two-way communication between aid agencies and citizens in order to improve accountability and transparency**.
- Heavy emphasis on job creation **highlights unemployment as a key issue**.
- Conceptions of self-reliance often centred around investments in agro-pastoral activities with some **citizens highlighting the link between aid dependency and the decline in agro-pastoral livelihoods**.

INTRODUCTION

In August-September 2019, Africa's Voices Foundation (AVF), in partnership with REACH and OCHA, delivered an innovative accountability to affected populations (AAP) intervention in Somalia in parallel with the Joint Multi Cluster Needs Assessment (JMCNA). The project deployed AVF's Common Social Accountability Platform (CSAP) to disseminate findings from the JMCNA to communities, to spark a wider national public dialogue on priorities for the humanitarian response in Somalia, and to gather feedback from affected populations to inform the 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview.

CSAP is based on AVF's interactive radio methodology - radio debate shows, shaped by audience feedback sent in by SMS - and is designed to be a large-scale, independent and system-level platform for engagement with affected communities that also provides credible insight on their perspectives, needs and experiences. CSAP enables citizen views to impact and shape humanitarian decision-making to better meet citizens' needs and priorities. This way, it builds citizens trust in and accountability of decision-makers. The platform functions cross-sectorally, in line with new ways of working, and collaboratively - seeking to impact an ecosystem of decision-makers.

The 2019 citizen consultation, involving 2 interactive radio shows broadcast across a national network of 26 FM radio stations, built on a similar consultation conducted by AVF in 2018, in tandem with REACH. In 2018, 8,955 citizens participated (and over 100,000 are estimated to have

listened to the shows). The 2019 intervention was designed to allow for direct comparisons of community priorities between the 2018 and 2019 consultations.

OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

In a two-week rapid consultation in August 2019, AVF heard from 8,251 people who engaged directly with the programme by sending in an SMS. We estimate that the listening audience each week was again well over 100,000. The consultation process included people in every region in Somalia, including a few from areas that are inaccessible to the JMCNA. The approach was particularly inclusive of women (41% of participants), youth (87% of participants were under 35) and IDPs (47% of participants¹). The demographic breakdown is broadly consistent with the previous consultation, with the exception that IDP participation increased from 35% of participants in 2018, suggesting that the radio consultation is an increasingly effective way of engaging with this vulnerable group.

Two radio episodes were broadcast over a two-week period. The shows were tailored to reflect the different context in Somaliland and Somalia and were broadcast through a network of 26 FM radio stations. Episode 1 of the series contained an overview of the JMCNA findings, the perspectives of audiences on solutions to the current humanitarian situation and interviews with OCHA and government representatives on the value and implications of findings. Episode 2 focused on citizen perspectives on the role that aid agencies should play in building self-reliance in Somalia and featured interviews with representatives from the NGO community and the government.

CITIZEN PERSPECTIVES ON HUMANITARIAN NEEDS AND SOLUTIONS

In Episode 1 AVF analysed the perspectives of 5,309 audience members who sent in their views by SMS, for a qualitative understanding of their perspectives on the humanitarian crisis, as well as insight on how these perspectives varied by demographic group and geography. Radio show content included an overview of JMCNA 2019 findings and interviews with representatives from OCHA and the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management (MoHADM) on the Somalia show, and OCHA and the National Preparedness and Food Reserve Authority (NADFOR) in Somaliland. Guests responded directly to comments from citizens during the radio show and transcripts from the show indicate that this method effectively places the voice of affected communities in direct dialogue with these key actors in the humanitarian response.

Many citizens perceive good governance and peace and security as the solution to humanitarian crisis

As in 2018, citizens perceive humanitarian crisis in their communities as the product of broader governance issues; good governance² was the second most frequent theme, highlighted by 17% of listeners, followed by 12% who mentioned peace and security. The below two quotes are examples messages from citizens.

¹ This is considerably higher than the current estimated IDP population, which is approximately 21% of the total Somali population (UNFPA 2014 and REACH Detailed Site Assessment 2019).

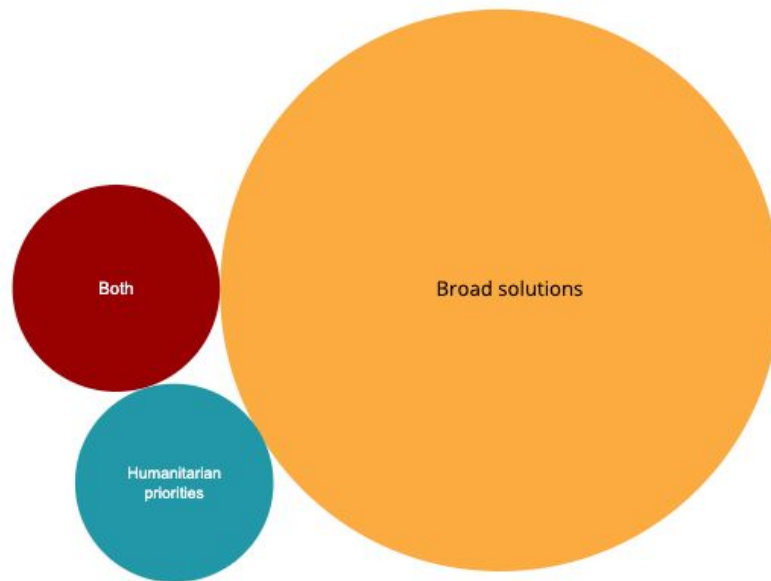
² Sub-themes under "good governance" included improved justice and the rule of law, the eradication of corruption, accountable and transparent leadership and functional and effective government.

"I believe if we have a united government that works in a just manner for the people, people's needs will reduce greatly because if we get peace, security and stability, everything will be fine." Male, 39 years, Garowe.

"What can be done is to get a good and stable government in place which can work on moving the country forward." Female, 19 years, in IDP camp.

Reflecting a similar trend in 2018, men were more likely to frame solutions to the humanitarian crisis in this way³ in contrast to women, who were more likely to raise more immediate household needs, such as health and hygiene. The explicit linking of the humanitarian situation to peace and governance issues highlights the perception that improvements to the humanitarian situation are intrinsically linked to broader structural factors.

Figure 1: Overall frequency of 2019 themes summarised⁴



There is a strong demand amongst citizens for greater community organisation as a mechanism to address humanitarian needs

Community organisation was the most frequently mentioned theme as a solution to the humanitarian crisis, with 19% of participants sending in SMS messages referencing this topic. As illustrated below, comments ranged between a call for greater cohesion, to more tangible demands for the establishment of organising committees populated by affected populations themselves, reinforcing this as an appropriate participatory modality for implementing aid.

"Firstly, to establish unity and have a united people that support one another and who put forward the community's complaints. Also, there should be a people-conscious government that can be reached out to on everything including the drought, air strikes that target civilians and so on" Female, 25 years, Barawe.

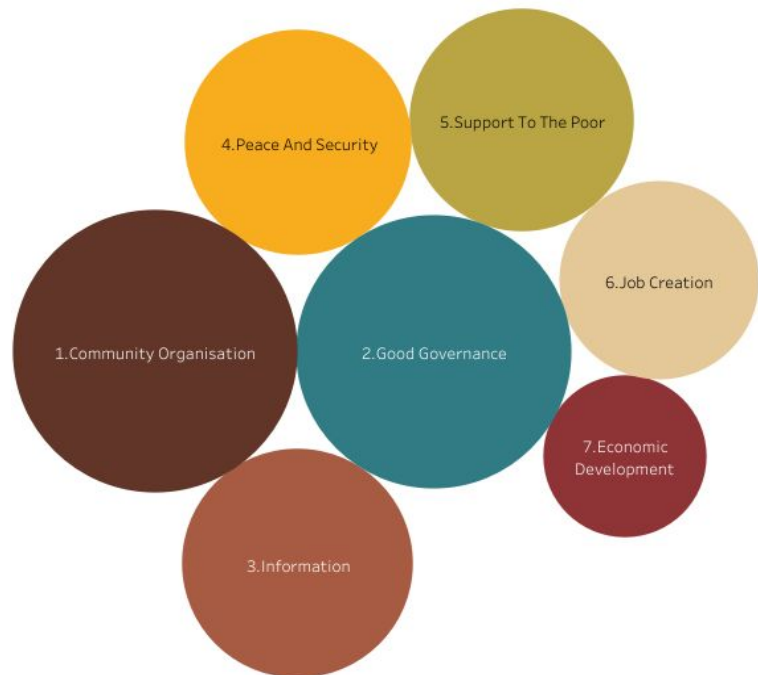
³ Men were more likely to mention good governance than women at 18% to 15%, significant at $p < 0.05$.

⁴ Themes that were mentioned more often are depicted as larger bubbles.

“In my opinion, the solution is to have a community that loves humanity and consults with their fellows. When they meet, they should discuss issues that are of importance, like what they have achieved and the plans for the future.” Female, Dharkenley.

The strong emphasis on community organisation is indicative of aspirations of autonomy and empowerment amongst citizens and an implicit desire to avoid or reduce dependency on aid. IDPs were less likely to mention community organisation as a solution than other demographic groups, and it was a less commonly mentioned theme by participants in Somaliland⁵.

Figure 2: Frequency of themes relating to **broad solutions**⁶, mentioned by a total of 80% listeners.



Need for more information highlighted, both in terms of awareness creation and data collection

The third most commonly mentioned theme was greater access to information, mentioned by a total of 12% of participants. Participants indicated that both citizens and decision-makers (government and aid agencies) require greater access to information and awareness of key issues. Particular themes to emerge included the demand for more needs assessments and/or census data in order to identify the specific needs of the most vulnerable population groups, as well as improving citizens access to information about their rights and available support.

“Raise awareness to the people about violation of human rights”. Male, in IDP camp, 24 years, Yaqshid.

“The best way to overcome this situation is by first finding out information from the community on where the actual problems lie”. Female, Kismayo.

This two-way demand for greater information is indicative of two trends; firstly that there is a perception that current efforts by the government and aid community are not always reaching the most needy, and may therefore require better targeting. Secondly, that there is a desire for greater rights-based public awareness campaigns that inform citizens about key issues. The perceived lack of two-way communication again highlights the need for greater accountability and transparency amongst aid agencies, to ensure that aid activities both reflect the real needs

⁵ Only 10% of participants in Somaliland mentioned community organisation in comparison to an average of 19%. Significant at $p < 0.0127$.

⁶ Infographic does not include full list of broad solutions, only those mentioned by at least 5% of participants. Themes mentioned by less than 5% of participants included; cooperation between people and government, NGO accountability, support to IDPs, farming support, end clannism, protection of rights, and drought resilience.

of communities, and are providing accurate, reliable information about available aid services to Somali citizens.

IDPs were more likely to identify the need for activities to support resilience to drought and provision of food aid than other demographic groups

In a likely reflection of their specific needs, IDP participants were more likely⁷ to reference resilience building activities and basic food and nutrition services as solutions to the humanitarian situation than other demographic groups. Preferring longer term resilience-building alongside immediate life-saving humanitarian assistance (food and nutrition services) is indicative of the desire for sustainable actions that allow IDPs to lift themselves out of poverty, and suggests that IDPs do not view their situation as requiring *either* immediate humanitarian needs *or* long term developmental interventions, but rather a mixture of both.

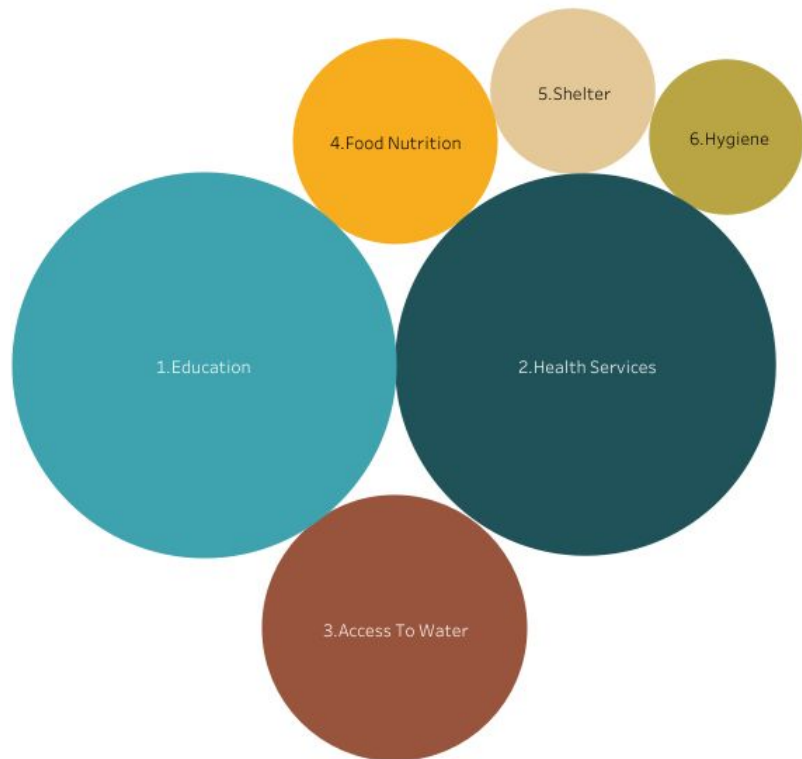


Figure 2: Frequency of themes for humanitarian services, mentioned by a total of 10% listeners⁸

Listeners mentioned a range of humanitarian priorities, with greater emphasis placed on education and health services than issues such as food, WASH and shelter

Only 10% of citizens suggested humanitarian interventions as a solution to the current situation in their communities. Within this, education and health services were most frequently highlighted, followed by access to clean water, food and nutrition, shelter and hygiene services (see Figure 2).

Citizens in Somaliland emphasised notably different solutions to other parts of the country

Whilst community organisation and good governance were the top two themes across all Federal Member States, education and health were most frequently mentioned in Somaliland, suggesting that such services may be of higher priority than other broad solutions. This is likely indicative of the unique developmental context of Somaliland, in contrast to other parts of the country that are characterised by insecurity and a lack of strong government institutions.

⁷ IDPs were more likely to mention basic food and nutrition than non-displaced households (4% vs 2.5%). Significant at $p < 0.0431$.

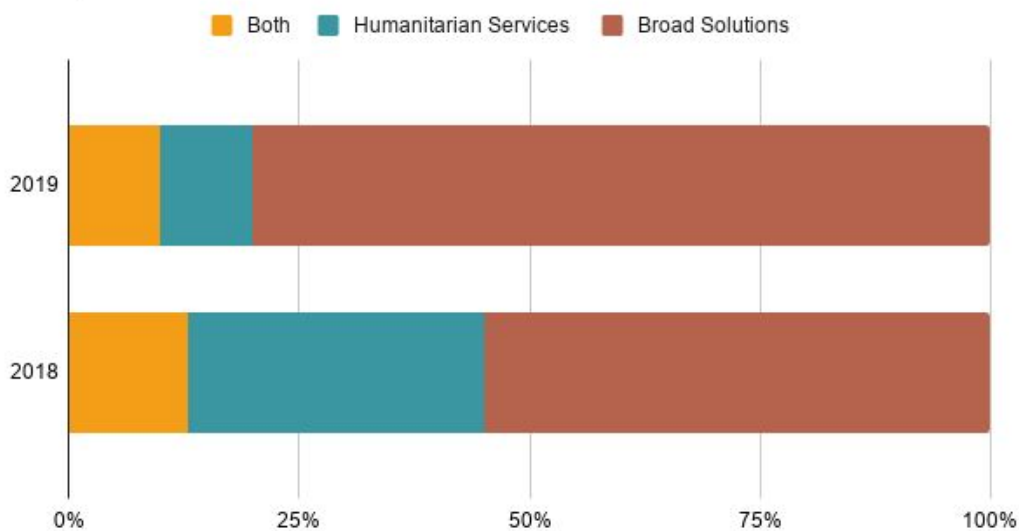
⁸ Please note that the following themes were mentioned by less than 5% of participants; food and nutrition (2.8%), shelter (1.8%) and hygiene (1.6%).

CHANGING TRENDS OVER TIME: COMPARING CITIZEN VOICES IN 2018 AND 2019

Although the range of themes mentioned remains comparable there has been a significant shift in emphasis on priorities over the last year

Listeners identified similar themes in both years of radio consultation, emphasising a mixture of basic humanitarian priorities and broad solutions. This suggests that there hasn't been a significant change in community perception of the parameters of the humanitarian crisis and their subsequent proposed solutions. However, whilst in 2019 listeners highlighted similar themes to those in 2018, there has been a notable shift in emphasis, with themes around community organisation and governance becoming much more frequently mentioned than humanitarian services - see Figure 3.

Figure 3: Comparison of themes between 2018 and 2019 radio consultation



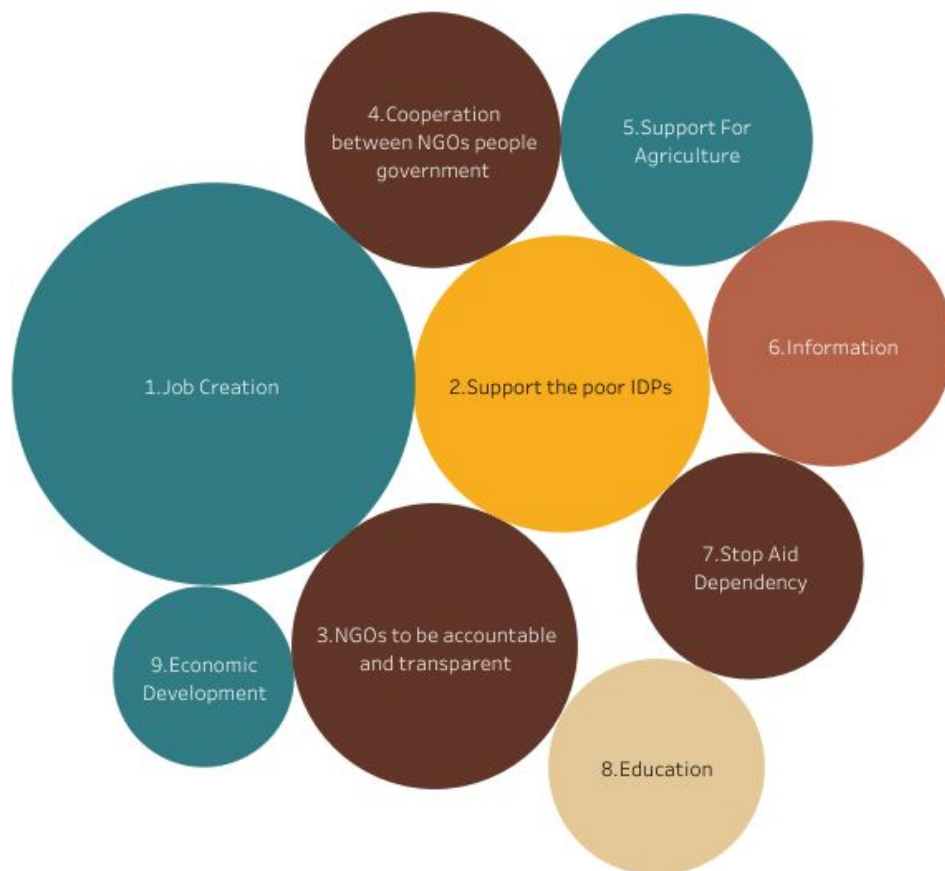
Citizens in 2019 place greater emphasis on community organisation, governance, peace and security, compared with citizens in 2018, whilst emphasis on humanitarian services, such as water and food, has declined

A comparison of citizen voice between 2018 and 2019 indicated that there has been a significant increase in the proportion of listeners identifying broad solutions (good governance, community organisation, peace and security etc). A total of 80% of listeners sent messages on broad solutions in 2019, as opposed to 55% in 2018. In contrast, far fewer people mentioned humanitarian services, such as clean water, food and nutrition and shelter, in 2019 (10% of listeners) in comparison to 2018 (32%). This may indicate a significant shift in citizen perceptions on the solutions to the current humanitarian situation in Somalia over the past year, with people increasingly preferencing community-led initiatives alongside external support.

CITIZEN SUGGESTIONS ON AID AND SELF-RELIANCE

In Episode 2 AVF analysed the perspectives of 4,687 audience members who sent in their suggestions on ways in which aid agencies can support citizens to become more self-reliant. The radio shows featured an overview of the AAP findings from the JMCNA and a recent perception study by Ground Truth Solutions.⁹ Interviews with representatives from the BRCIS Consortium and the Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development featured on the Somalia show, and interviews with members from local Somaliland NGO TASCOS on the Somaliland show. As with Episode 1, transcripts from the show indicate that this method effectively places the voice of affected communities in direct dialogue with these actors.

Figure 4: Frequency of themes for Episode 2¹⁰



⁹ Ground Truth Solutions. 2019. Strengthening Accountability to Affected Populations in Somalia.

¹⁰ Infographic only includes themes mentioned by 5% or more of participants. Themes mentioned by less than 5% of participants included; health services, food and nutrition, peace and security, access to water, government stability, shelter, and return and resettlement of IDPs.

Heavy emphasis placed on job creation highlights unemployment as a key issue

Provision of job creation by aid agencies was the most commonly mentioned theme across all states, mentioned by just under one-third of participants. This theme was also significantly more mentioned by participants aged between 19-35 than other age groups¹¹, which may be reflective of priorities caused by the high youth unemployment rates in Somalia.¹²

"The aid agencies can help people in setting up small businesses so that they can sustain themselves." Female, 29 years, Guriceel.

Citizens highlighted the need for skills training and business investment to create employment opportunities, as well as support to agro-pastoral livelihood activities.

"Self-reliance" is most commonly understood in relation to agro-pastoral livelihoods, with some citizens highlighting the link between aid dependency and agricultural decline

Understandings of self-reliance and resilience were commonly framed around agriculture and livestock activities, with 11% of citizens mentioning the need for support for agriculture through the provision of equipment, training and investment projects to support citizens to become more self-reliant.

"The aid agencies can help the Somali citizens become self-sufficient as follows: if they create employment and funding programs based on their livelihoods, such as agriculture, livestock, farming, fishery, and various skills in cities such as operating small businesses." Male, 47 years, Baidoa.

"The aid agencies should give people equipment to produce something from their lands." Male, 16 years, Belet Weyne.

Alongside suggestions on investment in agro-pastoral livelihoods, comments on the decline in agricultural and livestock-based economic activities were also frequently linked to aid dependency.

"The aid agencies should stop giving wheat to citizens because they have chosen it over their own farming activities and rather give the citizens training on how to maintain and cultivate their farms better." Female, 18 years, Galkacyo.

"I would like to tell the aid agencies to stop what they are giving to the displaced people because the people of Somalia have livestock and farms which they can earn their livelihoods from." Male, 17 years, Baidoa.

However, whilst these comments often referenced displaced households, support for agriculture was significantly less mentioned by IDPs than other demographic groups overall¹³, suggesting a possible tension between host community perceptions of IDP livelihoods, and the livelihoods

¹¹ Youth aged between 19-35 were more likely (32%) to mention job creation than participants aged between 36 and 54 (30%) and those aged 54+ (20%). Significant at $p < 0.0002$.

¹² In 2018, the World Bank estimated that just under one-quarter (24%) of the Somali labour force aged between 15-24 were unemployed. The rate is likely higher if those aged between 25-35 are also taken into consideration. (Source: World Bank. 2018. World Development Indicators: Somalia)

¹³ IDPs were less likely to mention the need for agricultural support than non-displaced participants (11% vs 13%). Significant at $p < 0.0164$.

that IDPs identify themselves.

Accountability, transparency and anti-corruption measures highlighted as suggestions for improving aid delivery

Improvements to the accountability and transparency of aid agencies was the second most commonly mentioned theme in the discussion and was particularly highlighted by participants in Hirshabelle and Jubaland, and more commonly mentioned by men than women¹⁴. Within this, citizens drew attention to the need for anti-corruption mechanisms, bypassing gatekeepers, and improved targeting of assistance – suggesting that there is a perception that aid efforts do not always reach the most vulnerable.

"The aid agencies should distinguish between people who seriously need help and the ones who are just greedy for more like the rich people." 18 years, Dhusamareeb.

"First the aid agencies should distribute the aid directly to the people because the middlemen they use are not honest if they cannot do this, they should find honest people like mosque leaders/imams or Muslim scholars." Male, 26 years, Afgoye.

Participants also placed strong emphasis on greater cooperation between aid organisations and citizens, the third most common theme to emerge in Episode 2. This could be indicative of the desire for greater communication and visibility between aid actors and communities. Similarly, greater access to information was another commonly mentioned theme - arising in both episodes one and two - again highlighting the potential need for greater two-way communication between aid agencies and communities.

For more information on this project please contact the Programme Manager Anna Tomson at anna.t@africasvoices.org.

¹⁴ Men were more likely to mention accountability and transparency of NGOs than women (16% vs 11%). Significant at $p < 0.00323$.