

Implementation Plan for the Somalia HCT Centrality of Protection Strategy

DEMAC RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Background and Context

The Diaspora Emergency Action and Coordination (DEMAC) project, funded by ECHO, is implemented by [Danish Refugee Council](#), [AFFORD UK](#), & [the Berghof Foundation](#) to improve diaspora emergency response capacity and coordination with the institutional humanitarian system. The DEMAC project has been working closely with four specific diaspora communities in Europe: the Syrian, the Somali, the Nigerian, and the Sierra Leonean Diasporas.

The DEMAC consortium through its combined knowledge, networks and expertise, works towards a more inclusive humanitarian system by facilitating coordination and building technical and operational capacity to nurture linkages between diasporas and the formal humanitarian system to increase effectiveness of humanitarian action. Acting as a platform for promoting dialogue, networking and knowledge exchange, DEMAC has established the strength of diaspora humanitarianism and has highlighted opportunities for greater collaboration at both local and international level.

DEMAC offers a space to link diaspora organizations with the traditional humanitarian system for the benefit of affected communities. Since 2015, DEMAC has been organizing various thematic humanitarian workshops, consultation meetings, community workshops, trainings, conferences, and facilitated the participation of diaspora representatives at the World Humanitarian Summit and in the localization of aid discussion.

DEMAC has also been providing insight into current modalities of diaspora humanitarian initiatives by undertaking evaluation of diaspora initiatives' capacities and interventions, their networks and linkages with the formal humanitarian sector, local partners and affected communities. The research report "[Diaspora Humanitarianism - Transnational Ways of Working](#)" is outlining features of formalized collective interventions by Sierra Leonean, Somali and Syrian diaspora-based relief organisations and initiatives to the humanitarian crises in their countries of origin/heritage and neighbouring countries. The research report [Diaspora Drought Response - Somaliland and Puntland](#) is providing findings on the Somali diaspora response to the regional drought/crisis that affected Somaliland and Puntland in early 2016.

Key learning from DEMAC research ¹shows that:

- ❖ Diasporas work bottom-up responding to local needs;
- ❖ They minimize the cost of permanent structures and staff to focus on maximizing aid;

¹ Selected DEMAC publications - available on www.demac.org

- "DRC Diaspora Programme, DEMAC & GIZ' Recommendations on behalf of diasporas to the Global Compact on Refugees' Programme of Action", 2017
- "[Diaspora Humanitarianism: Findings of the Diaspora Emergency Action and Coordination Project](#)", 2016
- [Checklist and Guide: "Engaging Diasporas for Emergency Action and Coordination"](#), 2016
- [Conference report "A Missing Link? Diaspora's Place In An Enhanced International Humanitarian System"](#), 2016
- "[Diaspora Drought Response - Somaliland and Puntland](#)", 2016
- "[Diaspora Humanitarianism - Transnational Ways of Working](#)", 2016
- [World Humanitarian Summit Recommendations](#)" by Somali, Sierra Leonean and Syrian diaspora-based humanitarian organizations, 2015
- [WHS Joint Diaspora Commitments Statement](#), 2016
- "Adding value, creating opportunities? Diasporas in humanitarian settings " upcoming in April 2018

- ❖ They have access to first-hand information from and direct links to affected populations with a high level of trust;
- ❖ They use their transnational position to respond to the growing demands for remote management and cross-border response in countries where international actors have a limited presence;
- ❖ They are willing to share information through media and social media, online platforms and mapping applications;
- ❖ They send skilled volunteers with local knowledge to their countries of origin;
- ❖ They are open to collaboration, learning and improving their capacity.

2. The Somali Diaspora Humanitarians

“Somalis constitute one of the largest groups in diaspora worldwide spread throughout Europe, the Middle East, and North America.”² The United Nations estimates that up to 1 million Somalis live abroad while the World Bank estimates that remittances account for up to 35 percent of Somalia’s Gross Domestic Product.³ Remittances play a strong socio-cultural role within the Somali diaspora. Diaspora members have described being pressured by their community to help support family and kin back in Somalia. “Sending money home can also be an obligation in order to pay back family debt and to be respected in the diaspora network as it is looked down upon not to support relatives in Somalia.”⁴

Somali diasporas are responding to humanitarian needs during emergency situations by sending remittances to families in times of crisis, drought and flooding to provide emergency food and shelter; supplying hospitals with materials and personnel; fundraising for disaster relief; engaging in fishing/canal irrigation, particularly for people who have been displaced as a result of war/ conflict; and engaging in WASH projects.

Somali Diaspora actors are variously organised by locality (town/city), country (between towns and cities) or networked across towns, cities and countries (e.g. via telephone, WhatsApp), or a combination of these within one network. These forms of organisation vary according to the country of residence and the geographic dispersal of Somali diaspora populations. In the UK, for example, Somali populations are concentrated in specific towns and cities and usually within certain areas of those towns and cities. This enables proximity and locality to play a major role in fundraising. In some countries, populations are more dispersed or relatively small in any one locality so organisation takes place between different locations. In general, there is very little sense of coordination across the Somali diaspora. At the most coordination takes place within geographic locality and/or clan-based network, or within the attendees of a mosque.

The motivations and dynamics around fundraising are thought to vary significantly across these actors; an underlying social and religious obligation to help people in distress is important, particularly where the severity of the situation and the needs of people are clear. However, other contextual factors, such as political dynamics within an area or within a social group/clan, the strength of leadership within a social group/clan, and relations and competition between different social groups/clans, amongst other factors can all influence the relative effectiveness of fundraising.

Somali Diaspora engage in lobbying and campaigning in the countries of residence, aiming to raise public awareness to alleviate the humanitarian suffering in Somalia. They particularly make use of new technology and social media as advocacy and mobilizing tools, as well as instruments to measure the impact of their

² Una Marquard Busk & Linnea Lue Kessing, "Masters Thesis: Actors between Places: Voices from 'the Somali Diaspora' in Denmark Identified as Agents of Development" (Roskilde University, June 2014).

³ Ferro.

⁴ Kessing.

relief activities in the field. Diaspora networks, mechanisms like Facebook, WhatsApp and Viber are used to share information with the local communities, IDPs, refugees and migrants⁵.

Diaspora Modes of Humanitarian Intervention

- ❖ Fundraising
- ❖ Sending cash payment/transfers
- ❖ Mobilising community support
- ❖ Skills and knowledge transfer
- ❖ Implementing specific projects
- ❖ Media outreach (domestic and international)
- ❖ Technical intervention in the field
- ❖ Sending relief supplies
- ❖ Lobbying home and heritage country governments

Recent initiative to improve coordination with the Somali diaspora humanitarians

The Office of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia has designated in 2017 a dedicated **Diaspora Focal Point** to build partnerships and connect with diaspora organisations to enhance humanitarian coordination among all relevant stakeholders, including government and cluster/sector coordination structures, and across regions in Somalia. DEMAC is working closely with the Diaspora Focal Point and provides support when needed.

Diaspora Focal Point:

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3. DEMAC recommendations for the Somalia HCT Centrality of Protection Strategy

Suggested actions for the first COP strategic priority: *“Strengthening system wide data collection, analysis informing response, and establishing a repository on protection risks/threats, that adhere to global safety and ethical standards”*

(i). Protection Capacity building

To equip diaspora humanitarians with the necessary knowledge, skills and resources towards dissemination of protection information to prevent differential forms of exclusion, including those based on societal discrimination, power structures, vulnerability, age, and gender.

- Tailored-made training and webinars for the diaspora humanitarians on discrimination, protection risks/threats, human rights.

⁵ http://www.regionalmms.org/images/DiscussionPapers/Split_Loyalties.pdf

(ii). Supporting Community-based programming

To develop innovative approaches to a protection-enhancing collaboration with diasporas, utilizing their informal information channels towards dissemination of protection information for the affected populations, and supporting their local partners in protection programming.

- Supporting diaspora to share sensitisation campaigns, rights & access to services awareness, risk awareness.
- Tailored-made training and webinars for the diaspora humanitarians and their local partners on protection programming, humanitarian principles and do-no-harm approach.

Suggested actions for the second COP strategic priority: *“Strengthened HCT protection influenced advocacy (including for protection funding), and enhanced communication on protection, tailored to the socio-cultural context of Somalia”*

(i). Information and referral Pathways

The diaspora credibility, trust, knowledge and capacity enable them to amplify voices of the beneficiaries and communities. Given their reliance on community feedback and consultation, they may at times also be privy to information related to protection concerns, risks, threats and violations. There is a need to share guidance with the diaspora actors about referral pathways and principles to report protection risks, threats and violations to the relevant entity.

- Tailored-made training and webinars for the diaspora humanitarians and their local partners on referral systems for protection services and case management, and protection information & referral pathways.

(ii). Voice amplification, advocacy and Lobbying opportunities

To share and convey urgent protection issues and messages with the Somali diaspora that can advocate and share the information in the public realm in Western countries and Somalia in order to mobilise, persuade, and denunciate, so that the duty-bearers feel compelled to take actionⁱ.

- HTC to share with the diaspora common position, including advocacy messages, in particular on the issue of evictions from IDP settlements and collective centers, and promotion of land tenure security for IDPs at the onset of an emergency.

ⁱ Example: *#bring back our girls* campaign had strong input and support from the Nigerian diaspora community and was sustained until government acted more decisively towards rescuing the 279 school girls that were kidnapped from their school in Chibok by the Boko Haram terrorists in the north east of Nigeria.