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Humanitarian action in the new security environment: policy and operational implications in Somalia and Somaliland

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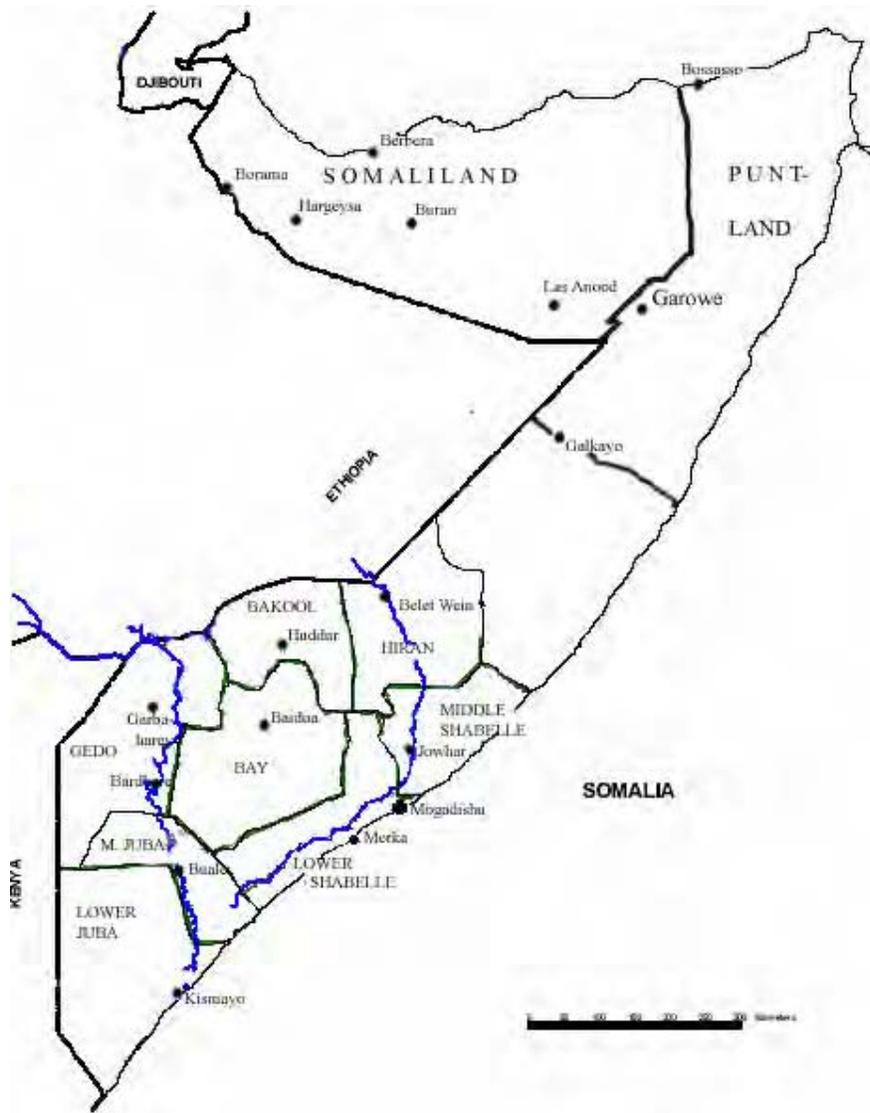
Contents

List of abbreviations	ii
Map of Somalia	iii
Executive summary	iv
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 Methodology	1
2. Background to the security environment in Somalia	4
2.1 The current security environment for humanitarian action	6
2.2 Humanitarian actors' view of the general security context	18
3. Collecting security data, and what the statistics tell us	21
3.1 Incident data reports and databases	21
3.2 Security reporting and information sharing	22
3.3 Constraints to security data collection	22
3.4 Trends in the security environment.....	23
3.5 Security information and coordination.....	28
4. Applied security policies and their implications.....	30
4.1 UN's applied risk management and security strategies	30
4.2 NGO security preparedness and support	35
4.3 Security coordination mechanisms.....	41
5. Operational tactics for obtaining access.....	44
5.1 Acceptance, protection and deterrence strategies.....	44
5.2 Perceptions of UN security strategies	45
6. The security roles of local humanitarian actors	48
6.1 The food aid security approach in Somalia	49
6.2 Towards a community and acceptance-based security strategy	50
7. Conclusions.....	53
Annex 1: List of references	54
Annex 2: Interviewees	56
Annex 3: Methodological operationalisation of research objectives	58

List of abbreviations

ACF	Action Contre la Faim
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AMREF	African Medical and Research Foundation
AFSCO	Area Field Security Coordination Officer
CARE	Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe
CCIC	Consultative Council of Islamic Courts
CEFA	European Agrarian Information Consortium
COSV	Committee for the Coordination of Volunteering Organisations
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Office
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FSAU	Food Security Analysis Unit
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GHC	Gedo Health Consortium
GTZ	German Technical Co-operation
HI	Handicap International
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
MOSS	Minimum Operating Security Standards
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
MoU	Memory of Understanding
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
S/M	Staff Member
SNF	Somali National Front
SL	Somaliland (Republic of...)
SLPF	Somaliland Police Force
SMT	Security Management Team
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SPAS	Security Preparedness and Support
SPU	Special Protection Unit
SRCS	Somali Red Crescent Society
TFG	Transitional Federal Government
TFI	Transitional Federal Institutions
TFP	Transitional Federal Parliament
UIC	Union of Islamic Courts
UMCOR	United Methodist Committee on Relief
UNCAS	United Nations Common Air Services in Somalia
UNCU	United Nations Coordination Unit
UNDOS	United Nations Development Office for Somalia
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for the Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNSECOORD	Office of the UN Security Coordinator
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

Map of Somalia



Executive summary

The objective of this case study is to assess to what extent the humanitarian community in Somalia has faced an increase or decrease in insecurity during the last decade (1997 to 2006), and in either case: a) what were the reasons and circumstances; b) what were the policy responses; c) and what was the relationship between the real or perceived security environment and the applied security response systems/approaches.

The report identifies changes in, and perceptions of, security and threat levels, and maps the individual security practices of key humanitarian actors and their collective security arrangements, in order to draw conclusions as to how the security environment has impacted on humanitarian delivery, including shifts towards localisation of response.

Aid operations in Somalia have primarily been cross-border and based in Kenya since around 1995. The main and overriding threat to these and locally based operations remains economically motivated, and related to local clan balances – and specifically related to contractual disputes. The major change in the Somali security context in this period was related to the direct targeted killings of aid workers in Somaliland in 2003/4. The general perception is that these attacks indicate the existence of a potential threat from extreme Islamic cells, but that this threat is very limited, and may come in small waves. New technology designed to carry out targeted attacks has been found in Somalia, and indicates a potential change in tactics, as such technology did not exist before.

However, in general, the security policies of humanitarian organisations, especially the UN, are not sufficiently attuned to an environment where the main threats are related to contractual issues that are economically motivated and concern local clan balances. It seems that the general policies of international agencies, their funding concerns, the policies of donor governments and insurance policies have been more important in determining security policies for Somalia than have actual programme needs in terms of reaching beneficiaries. This is reflected in the security system of the international agencies, in particular the UN, which (for insurance reasons) puts more emphasis on personnel safety (protection and deterrence strategies) than improving access or humanitarian space through acceptance strategies.

Similarly, the security arrangements set up since the killings in Somaliland were not an accurate response to targeted terrorist attacks. Rather, the attacks prompted the implementation of programmes already in the pipeline, which in reality was a reaction following the Baghdad bombings in 2003, and hence not to the specific security context in Somalia either.

Finally, applied security policies do not seem to be well linked to the incremental improvements in local security arrangements that have emerged since UNOSOM left Somalia in 1995. Community-based acceptance strategies would enable such linkages to locally improved security arrangements. However, such a change in security strategies would require an ability and willingness within international agencies to build mutual respect and better understanding of communities, which can only happen if decision-making agency staff (usually expatriate staff) have greater presence on the ground. This is especially the case since local authorities often do not accept national staff members, but want to interact directly with leading expatriate staff. In general, the aid community could do more to engage in widening the space for humanitarian action in Somalia.

1. Introduction

The objective of this case study is to assess to what extent the humanitarian community in Somalia has faced an increase or decrease in insecurity during the last decade (1997 to 2006), and in either case: a) what were the reasons and circumstances; b) what were the policy responses; and c), what was the relationship between the real or perceived security environment and the applied security response systems/approaches.

The ToR of the study outlines three main components of analysis:

Measuring the insecurity of aid workers

Trends in the operational security environment should be analysed on the basis of a statistical survey of incidents of violence against aid workers from 1997–2006 in order to measure changes in the frequency, tactics and targets of violence against humanitarian workers.

The implications for changing security policies on humanitarian action

A mapping of the security policy responses of the UN, IOs and NGOs in hazardous situations, and their implications for humanitarian operations in terms of access, effectiveness and new partnership arrangements.

The role of local aid organisations in humanitarian assistance operations

An assessment of the current and potential role of local actors in humanitarian response in light of policy and operational changes in the international humanitarian community.

Hence, the main aim of this report is to identify the changes in, as well as the perceptions of, the security environment and threat levels in Somalia; map the individual security practices of key humanitarian actors and their collective security arrangements; and draw conclusions as to how the security environment and security policies have impacted on humanitarian delivery and access, including eventual shifts towards the localisation of responses.

1.1 Methodology

The consultant carried out interviews with senior staff and security-related staff in UN humanitarian agencies, OCHA, UNDSS, the EC Somalia Unit and international NGOs at Nairobi HQs, and with staff involved in humanitarian delivery inside Somalia. Annex 3 contains an overview of the methodological approach.

Incident data reports were acquired from the UNDSS and the NGO Security SPAS programme of the Somali NGO Consortium. However, there were no detailed reports prior to 2002, as there was no structured organisation for incident data before that. In the UNDSS database, there is a gap from January 2003 to April 2003. Major incidents for Somalia from 1997 to 2002 were covered thanks to Jeff Ohanga, a staff member of the NGO SPAS programme who has single-handedly collected and organised this data, and data collected by Christian Webersik, a PhD intern with OCHA in 2002. Incident data was also collected by the New York-based research team headed by Abby Stoddard and Adele Harmer.

Questionnaires were sent to international agencies involved in humanitarian action in Somalia, and were followed up, either through direct meetings or by phone/email. The response rate was, however, not very high, and due to the limited time available, and considering that the number of agencies present is about 160, the consultant prioritised the most important agencies. Priority was given to those agencies that had been involved in incidents, plus the major operating agencies in Somalia. A sample of the rest was chosen, in order to assess whether their security approaches were different, and what impact their approaches had on the operational security of the agency.

Field-level interviews were conducted with UN and non-UN humanitarian agencies, OCHA, UNDSS field staff, NGO Security SPAS staff and local Somali security authorities. In Somaliland and Puntland, there are governmental institutions, including police forces and paramilitary forces, and Special Protection Units (SPUs) are used to protect humanitarian and development aid agencies within their territories. In South-Central Somalia, security may depend on arrangements with a variety of local/regional/clan or other kinds of authorities and their militias.

Reviews of security protocols and other background materials used by humanitarian actors in Somalia were carried out in Nairobi, but the way security policies were implemented in the field was to some extent observed during the field visits.

The research encountered a number of constraints, including lack of institutional memory within UN and international NGO agencies. The lack of institutional memory is in itself an interesting observation, which partly is due to the relatively high staff turnover, which has a negative effect on operations and security. The UNDSS did not grant full access to their internal security management strategy. The study also suffers from the absence of ICRC policies due to the relevant staff being on leave during the research period. Finally, the field visits were limited, partly due to complicated and time-consuming logistics (Mogadishu was, due to the fighting between the Islamic Courts and the warlords, out of reach for security reasons), and partly due to security considerations following the Danish cartoon issue (the

consultant is Danish). Riots took place in Puntland about the time of the intended field work, and so Puntland was not visited.

The report will, in section 2, address the general security environment in Somalia, including background analysis to the conflict, outlining the main features of insecurity and the various emerging security arrangements around Somalia, which, even if incremental, nevertheless are important to an understanding of possible options and the effects of the security policies of the international humanitarian agencies. Trends in the operational security environment, based on a statistical analysis of security incidents involving humanitarian agencies since 1997, and is found in section 3. Section 4 identifies the security policies and approaches of humanitarian agencies, and analyses their implications on the basis of interviews of primarily field staff. Section 5 discusses gaps and weaknesses in applied security strategies on the basis of the findings of the preceding sections and views from the field, leading to a discussion of the possible application of acceptance-based security strategies which, to a wider extent, involve local actors, in section 6. Finally, section 7 summarises and concludes the study.

2. Background to the security environment in Somalia

This section seeks to identify and analyse the features of the operating security environment in Somalia, and underlying and ongoing causes of insecurity. However, in order to understand the current security environment for humanitarian action in Somalia, it is necessary to examine the general historical and political background to the conflict and complex political emergency, in which foreign aid has played a major role.

Somalia has a complex relationship with humanitarian aid dating back to the first big refugee movements following the Ogaden war between Somalia and Ethiopia (1977–1978), involving exploitation and manipulation of incoming aid resources (Maren, 1997).¹ The civil war (1988–1992) was marked by horrific levels of armed conflict and insecurity, a dramatic increase in the availability of cheap small arms, lawlessness, violence,² huge population displacements and refugee flows, as well as a massive famine in most of rural southern Somalia, which killed an estimated 250,000 Somalis. Food aid became part of the war economy, a commodity over which militias fought, and which was diverted by new warlords to fund their wars.

The most important catalyst of insecurity was the complete and protracted collapse of the state, and with it all of its associated security structures, including the judiciary, the police and the national army. Two generally different trajectories emerged after this period. There was the establishment of the administration of Somaliland and Puntland in Northern Somalia, and the continued centrifugal conflicts in South-Central Somalia. Even there, efforts to manage and reduce insecurity emerged, first as deals with local militias to provide protection in return for food and other assets, and later increasingly a revival of customary practices such as clan-based deterrence strategies (the threat of revenge attacks).³ These attempts were scattered, but did show that Somalis tried to build security arrangements on their own. In the North, as well as most places where a minimal level of security has functioned in the South, these arrangements involve combinations of traditional authorities, business interests, religious

¹ The Somali state has been reliant on foreign aid since independence, and the state itself became the focus for political competition aid access. With the civil war, development aid ceased and only short-term humanitarian aid remained.

² One of the outcomes of the civil war was the emergence of largely illiterate freelance militias (or youth gangs unconstrained by clan elders) known as *mooryans*, who became predatory looters, and for whom banditry and extortion became the only livelihood.

³ The most important source of individual protection in Somalia is the threat of retaliation by entire sub-clans in response to an assault on a clan member. While individuals from powerful clans enjoy this protection, those from weak clans and low caste groups can be preyed upon with impunity unless they seek protection from a stronger clan. Retaliatory actions can lead to cycles of revenge killings, and hence cause instability.

leaders and civil leaders applying traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. Security in the Somali context is not necessarily contingent upon the reestablishment of 'modern' formal state structures.⁴

The mandate of the United Nations Operation for Somalia (UNOSOM II) was more expansive than its predecessor UNITAF, and included support for national reconciliation, rebuilding of the central government and revival of the economy.⁵ However, UNOSOM II did not succeed. Instead, the stateless political economy in Somalia and UNOSOM II in combination produced a new class of businesspeople (the warlords) enriched by war-related criminal activities such as weapons sales, drug production, land conquest and the diversion of food aid and exploitation of aid resources (Gundel 2002, 2003). Some of these warlords developed an interest in perpetuating insecurity, lawlessness and violence because they found that they could profit from insecurity, and would prevent the implementation of peace agreements. By maintaining a chronic state of insecurity, they were able to build their power with their clan constituencies, which came to depend on them for physical protection.

This type of protection racket was also relevant for aid operations, as chronic insecurity propelled humanitarian agencies to enter into security arrangements with local authorities/warlords. With the withdrawal of UNOSOM II in 1995, international interest in Somalia declined, and international agency headquarter offices moved to Nairobi, Kenya. The number of international expatriates and offices present in Somalia was significantly reduced (Bradbury, 1998).

The UN and the leading states of the international community never really understood the specific Somali phenomenon of state collapse (von Hippel, 2002). The post-UNOSOM approach largely left Somalis to find 'Somali solutions to Somali problems'. The withdrawal of the UN and international NGOs to Kenya meant that operations in Somalia mainly became cross-border, where aid primarily was managed by 'remote control'.

South-Central Somalia did not return to civil war, but to a stateless state of affairs with some military conquests and reconquests by armed clan factions, continued armed confrontations, fierce political rivalry and intense competition for scarce resources. This political confusion in South-Central Somalia was characterised by widespread insecurity, recurring famine and a mosaic of polities mixing warlord

⁴ Historically, most rural Somali communities were largely 'stateless' pastoral or agro-pastoral societies organised by lineage or clan. They did not rely on or need state structures as sources of security and rule of law. To them the modern state was either seen as weak and marginally present, or as predatory and oppressive. Hence, these communities retained their customary laws to manage and resolve their inter-clan disputes.

⁵ The first UNOSOM mission was operating prior to UNITAF, but wasn't able to contain the rival parties to the conflict. See for instance Mohamed Sahnoun, *Somalia: Missed Opportunities*, Washington DC: USIP, 1994.

rule, self-imposed governors, district and regional authorities and a widespread return to traditional clan-based governance.

In sharp contrast to South-Central Somalia, the collapse of the central government in Northern Somalia did not precipitate the kind of warfare and plunder that devastated the South. Somaliland (SL) in the north-west declared independence from the South in May 1991, strongly motivated by the desire to improve security. In SL, inter-clan clashes did occur, including two serious wars in 1994 and 1996. But the dependency of the Isaaq clan-based rebel group, the Somali National Movement (SNM), on traditional clan elders, greater political cohesion amongst the clans and support from businesspeople to establish peace, the civil war did not devolve into anarchy. Instead, SL gradually developed a modest capacity to govern, and a national assembly of traditional clan elders (called Guurti) helped in pacifying and controlling the young gunmen.

In Northeastern Puntland, chronic inter-clan tensions were also contained by traditional elders. The peace achieved in both SL and Puntland was sustained thanks to their traditional leaders. In both places, peace-building was achieved without external involvement by the international community. Due to not being internationally recognised, SL could not enter bilateral or multilateral development aid agreements, and so did not have access to development aid. It also meant that aid to SL is regulated by the security concerns and policies of the UN and the SACB, against the interest of the government of SL.

The latest and longest-running peace and reconciliation conference on Somalia commenced in Kenya in 2002. It was undertaken by the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD).⁶ It resulted in a transitional charter and the formation of a Transitional Federal Parliament (TFP) in August 2004. The expectation was that an effective Transitional Federal Government (TFG) would improve the security situation dramatically.⁷ This would provide the UN and international NGOs with better opportunities to operate with a minimum of security risk. However, this has yet to materialise.

2.1 The current security environment for humanitarian action

Following the defeat of the 'Alliance' of warlords by the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) in Mogadishu in June 2006, a new political faultline emerged in South-Central Somalia, where the UIC maintains control of Mogadishu and most of the southern coastline regions, including Lower Shabelle and perhaps Lower

⁶ Somaliland opted out of this peace process. Puntland takes part on condition that it becomes an autonomous administration in a future federal state.

⁷ The TFG may eventually develop into a functional central government, but as of June 2006 South-Central Somalia remains a de facto zone of state collapse.

Juba, as well as into the hinterland regions of Hiran, Galgaduud and Southern Mudug, while the TFG is in control of Baidoa and environs only. This has on the one hand produced an opportunity because the UIC potentially can create a secure space for both the TFG and international aid operations in Mogadishu and South-Central Somalia. On the other hand, the often overriding dynamics of clan politics and the alleged connections of leaders of UIC to international terrorism, as well as the agendas of the TFG President, regional powers such as Ethiopia and US anti-terror policies, may run counter to this. Hence, the general security environment throughout South-Central Somalia is likely to remain fragile and prone to conflict for a long time to come. Thus, the main threats remain related to absence of the rule of law, depending on the strengths of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and Sharia Courts, and to a much lesser extent the threat from extreme Islamic groups. Related to the former, the main security issues include contractual problems and inter-clan conflicts related to the sharing of resources such as water and grazing land. Humanitarian aid resources come under the category of resources that, by the Somalis, are perceived to be shared. Furthermore, incidental or individual conflicts easily get embroiled in a wider clan conflict, when staff hired by agencies are involved in one way or another. With few exceptions, armed conflicts are more local in nature, being between sub-clans in a fragmented political environment.

The localisation of clan warfare means that armed clashes tend to be quick and less lethal, partly because clan members increasingly are tired of inter-clan squabbles, partly because clan elders are in a better position to intervene, and some clans have successfully consolidated their occupation and control over territory. In addition, local polities comprised of combinations of Sharia courts, district councils and traditional authorities have sprung up in towns and neighbourhoods across much of southern Somalia, providing varying levels of law and order. This is largely thanks to the intervention by traditional elders in conflict mediation, which provided a modest level of law and order, and recently the spread of Islamic Sharia courts.

Access for international humanitarian agencies has to some extent reflected the fluctuations of emerging and failing local security arrangements. Over the last decade, however, only a few locations have generally been assessed by the UN to be more or less permanently accessible for international staff, including Beletweyne, in Hiran Region, Jowhar in Middle Shabelle and Wajid in Bakool. There is therefore extensive use of national staff and sub-contracting to local NGOs, CBOs and private companies for ground operations in the field.

While there are considerable differences in the security environment for humanitarian action in the various regions of Somalia, the following general features stand out:

- Resource-based insecurity. (Sharing of natural resources, and aid – contract related resources.)

- Clan-based dynamics and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms.
- Protection rackets and warlord fiefdoms (not in Somaliland and Puntland, and after the UIC, less so in South Central Somalia).
- Local and regional administrations.
- Sharia courts (radical Islam exists, but since 2004 no direct terrorist act has taken place).
- Programme-sensitive cultural risks.

In addition to these features, a few general points should be noted. First, in Somalia there are generally two levels of conflict: national-level conflicts (or ‘political’ conflicts as Somalis term them), and local security dynamics. The former is most often about the establishment of a national state and dominance over that state and, in the case of Somaliland and Puntland, also about the disputed territory between these two administrations (Sool and Sanaag regions). The latter are dominated by traditional resource conflicts and other feuds between clans in the localities, as well as domination and conquest of certain clans and clan territories by others clans and local businessmen/warlords, who attempt to dominate trade and/or set up local fiefdoms, and finally about the establishment and control of local security arrangements.

Second, security threats in Somalia can be conceived of as a dynamic triangle of clan interests, economic/resource interests and religious (Islamic) interests. Finally, efficient security policies should not only be based on a (negative) threat analysis, but also on a (positive) security opportunity analysis. For these two reasons, the description of salient security aspects will include positive attempts by Somalis themselves to create durable security arrangements, upon which humanitarian security policies could build.

Another complicating factor in the persistence of violence in Somalia is the ongoing involvement of external actors in support of local Somali clients. Regional states have intermittently engaged in proxy wars in Somalia, and have the potential to both create and worsen tensions and violence inside Somalia in pursuit of their own goals. These states have also shown a capacity to support peace-building efforts. It is alleged that some regional powers fuelled the situation by supplying arms and ammunition into the country, violating the longstanding UN arms embargo imposed in 1994. These allegations have focused on Ethiopia, Yemen and a ‘third country’ believed to be the US, via its new base in Djibouti set up in connection with its global war against terrorism.⁸

⁸ The UN Arms Monitoring Group Report from 2005 is a case in point.

2.1.2 Resource-based insecurity

Resource conflicts are not new to Somali society. In the pastoral and agro-pastoral areas of Somalia, the principal source of daily insecurity remains the struggle for livelihoods in an environment of periodic drought. Clans compete over access to water, pasture and livestock, and armed conflicts over these arise occasionally. Often, such conflicts start with a killing in a heated squabble over a scarce resource. This may prompt a revenge killing cycle, which if not contained by traditional elders will lead to a clan war.

The migration of clans for better pasture and water has a long history, with periodic waves of migration and conquest mainly from north to south, and has at times produced severe insecurity and armed clashes both between Somali clans and between Somali and non-Somali inhabitants. Many of the conflicts following the 1988–1992 civil wars followed this historical pattern. This is one of the underlying conflict drivers in the most insecure and conflict-prone areas stretching from the Lower Shabelle to Kismayo to parts of the Kenya–Somali border.

Today, resource conflicts are not only about pasture and water. They also involve control over valuable agricultural land and economic and political assets, such as markets, ports, airstrips and key access roads, where income can be collected from roadblocks. Where new polities have emerged, access to resources associated with these local administrative units has led to clan clashes over control of such ‘locations’, and in some cases even to localised ethnic cleansing, such as in and around Kismayo. These resources are especially valuable to political and economic elites, who instigate violence, armed conflict and ethnic or clan tensions to advance their claims on these resources. Even traditional resource conflicts are far more deadly than in the past, thanks to small-arms proliferation.

Other crimes producing insecurity have worsened in parts of Somalia, such as kidnapping for ransom, which has been endemic in Mogadishu. Kidnappers usually target individuals whose wealth, family connections or employer promise to yield a large ransom (international and national staff of aid agencies are attractive targets for this reason), but poorer Somalis are also abducted because they are not well-protected, even if the ransom is modest.

Aid is another potential source of conflict. Often, operational insecurity has primarily been based on misunderstandings between local authorities and humanitarian agencies about the allocation and distribution of aid resources. For instance, in 2005, disputes over landing fees and DSA for workshop participants in addition to an escalation of tension between Jowhar and Mogadishu caused several temporary relocations of UN staff as well as the suspension of activities, all of which were eventually resolved. Hence, there is often a high level of mistrust between the aid community and local

authorities, with each accusing the other of misrepresenting the level and nature of vulnerability in the regions, and of withholding information. Against this backdrop, equity in the provision of assistance to opposing clans is extremely important, but not always possible. Clans who do not benefit from aid due to access difficulties have been known to retaliate against aid workers.

Land disputes remain the main source of conflict, and most often follow clan lines. Such conflicts can easily become violent because small arms are still around. Land disputes rarely involve international agencies unless the disputes concerned include land where international agencies are renting compounds, or if the disputes involve members of communities that are being targeted as beneficiaries by humanitarian agencies. In 2005, there were only three cases of harassment,⁹ and the most serious risk was the lack of traffic safety.

2.1.3 Clan and traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms

The clan is the primary social base for individual Somalis, and therefore also the most important base for protection and insurance. The clan is therefore, historically, the most important political constituency, political dividing factor and faultline in conflicts in Somali society. At the same time, traditional elders' conflict-resolution function has, since the state collapsed, proved most effective in reconciling clans and resolving conflicts, perhaps because their application of Somali customary laws and practices is well adapted and integrated with the logic of the segmentary clan system.

Clan elders negotiate and manage customary laws (*xee*), which serve as oral and memorised codes governing relations between clans; and blood payment (*diya*) groups, which are collectively responsible for crimes committed by their members. The risk of paying *diya* (traditionally 100 camels) in case of killings functions as a deterrent mechanism to prevent killings.

The role of the elders is to intervene in conflicts, create ceasefires, represent their clan lineages in negotiations with other clans, and resolve internal disputes within clans. They also serve as third-party mediators when called upon by other clans in conflict with each other. Since the state collapsed, they have also served as interlocutors between the clan and external actors, especially international aid agencies. The role of elders in establishing local security arrangements is vital, and they play a crucial role in the establishment of operational security in Somalia because they are key actors for any security strategy in Somalia, evidenced by the fact that, whenever an international agency experiences a security problem, it is the clan elders who most often ultimately resolve the issue.

⁹ Two from Swiss Group, one from the Danish Refugee Council.

2.1.4 Hybrid state-formations in Northern Somalia

Traditional conflict mechanisms and traditional elders were instrumental in the creation of peace, stability and what we can call hybrid state formations (merging traditional and modern forms of governance) in Northern Somalia. Hence, SL enjoys a relatively high level of political stability despite terrorist attacks in 2003/2004. Since declaring its sovereignty in 1991 (unrecognised internationally), SL has succeeded in maintaining what appears to be a durable internal peace, with all the symbolic attributes of a state, including an executive president, a bicameral parliament, municipal councils and a constitution, which was approved by more than 90% of the population in a referendum in 2001. Although the allocation of power, patronage and resources within the Somaliland state is the subject of dispute, the SL state has not been a source of violent clan or factional competition since 1996, a major achievement given the stakes involved. SL carried through its democratisation process in 2005, and held parliamentary elections in September 2005, which were regarded by international observers as fair (Hansen, 2006; Abokor, 2006).

The administration has provided a secure environment for their citizens and for the international community to operate in.¹⁰ Rates of armed crime are relatively low, streets are safe and – with the exception of a growing number of fatalities linked to disputes over property ownership in the overheated Hargeisa real estate market – murders are uncommon. SL's achievements in building a safe and secure environment largely free of crime, and a political system which is at present one of the most democratic and constitutional in Africa, is very much the result of SL's innovative integration of traditional and modern sources of law and authority. The political structure in SL is based on a unique homegrown hybrid between a Western-type democracy and the traditional Somali 'pastoral democracy',¹¹ incorporating non-state social institutions such as elders into political institutions such as the Upper House of elders (Guurti). This system has ensured that all clans feel represented, because seats in the Guurti are allocated proportionally by clan. This has increased the legitimacy of the state by incorporating the most respected source of authority in society: the conflict-management role of the traditional elders (Bradbury, 2001). In terms of public order, policing and the prosecution of criminals, SL possesses a relatively well-trained and responsible police force and a moderately effective prison system, while its judiciary has been the weak link. The significant force behind SL's high level of security remains the robust application of customary law and blood compensation, administered by clan elders.¹²

¹⁰ For a long period, aid agencies were able to have their own vehicles in Somaliland, and from 1997 to 2003, when the foreign aid workers were murdered, they travelled without armed guards.

¹¹ See John Drysdale, *Stoics Without Pillows*, London: Haan, 2000, and I. M. Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy*, Oxford: James Currey 1999 (first published 1961) for more on the hybrid Somali democracy.

¹² In cases of crimes such as killings, elders will encourage investigate work and negotiate with the kin of the accused for his or her handover. The police are requested to assist with arresting suspects and to take them to custody. Thereafter, the crime

Until the killings of aid workers in late 2003 and early 2004, SL was considered very safe, and agencies travelled freely around the country. These killings came as a shock to the aid community, and prompted important changes in security policies, including tightening security procedures stipulated in the Minimum Operating Security Standards for Somalia (MOSS), not only for SL but for all of Somalia. In SL, the government advised foreigners not to travel outside Hargeisa after 8pm, and UNDSS imposed a curfew in Hargeisa and on travel to the coastal port of Berbera on Fridays (the weekly day off). In addition, the UNDP ROLS programme with the government set up a new security force, the Special Protection Unit (SPU), to protect the UN agencies and INGOs. Since 2004, there have been no targeted attacks on aid agencies in SL, and SL is again perceived as being relatively stable. In terms of humanitarian access, UN OCHA describes SL as having a high level of peace and security across largely homogenous clan lines, which ensures relative unhindered humanitarian access. The exception is the contested regions of Sool and Sanaag, where access agreements can fall by the wayside when they do not suit regional and/or localised aims (OCHA, 2005a).

Despite these improvements in the security environment, UNDSS categorises Hargeisa as security Phase 3, albeit the curfew in Hargeisa has been eased (to 9pm), and the rest of SL is Phase 4. This reflects what many staff (UN and INGO) perceive as a slow UN reaction to improvements in security in the field, which ultimately affects access in terms of swift responses to humanitarian emergencies. Another perception is that reluctance to decrease security phases by the UNDSS can be related to UN insurance concerns.

Perhaps with the exception of the disputed areas of Eastern Sool and Sanaag, there is no objective security reason to maintain this level of security in SL other than the potential 'ghost' threat of extreme Islamic terror attacks (see below). This seems to be a real, but limited, threat in SL, to which the SPU is the primary response. It also seems that the threat felt most directly by the INGOs working in SL stems from the very SPU guards who are supposed to protect them (see section 4.2.7).

In Northeastern Somalia, the regional administration, Puntland State of Somalia (PSS), was established in 1998. PSS is ethnically unique as it is comprised almost entirely of members of the Harti clans (Majerteen, Dolbahante and Warsangeli) with Majerteen dominance, and its self-declared borders are drawn on the basis of Harti territorial claims. The impetus to create a regional state was the result of civic efforts to improve security and the rule of law, despite the area already enjoying a relatively high

is the subject of inter-clan negotiations and is usually resolved according to the customary practices of blood compensation. Customary law exists as a complement to, not a contradiction with, formal police and judicial systems; it resolves more than 80% of all cases.

degree of security and stability.¹³ PSS has developed a range of security forces, including an army, a police force and a rapid response force, as well as a court and prison system to deal with crime.

Traditional clan elders were instrumental in founding the PSS, and together with customary laws they stand for local security and the rule of law, and they play a crucial role as gatekeepers between the state and society. The Puntland authorities rarely pursue and arrest a suspect directly. Clan elders are contacted and they negotiate terms of surrender. The clan elders also represent their constituencies in the selection of leadership in Puntland. When Puntland President Abdullahi Yusuf's term expired in 2001, an assembly of clan elders selected Jama Ali Jama as his successor because Abdullahi Yusuf did not follow the Constitution of the PSS. Abdullahi Yusuf challenged this decision by force, leading to an armed stand-off from 2001 to 2002.¹⁴

There has since been a tenuous peace between the PSS administration and opposition groups. Puntland is more fragile than SL, and has lately experienced an increase in instability, which is related to the ongoing tensions between the TFG and PSS, of which Puntland is part.¹⁵ Furthermore, security is today punctuated by incidental outbreaks of banditry, armed gang activities and youth delinquency. In addition, tensions may also arise from the mobilisation of armed forces by both Somaliland and Puntland administrations over the disputed regions of Sool and Sanaag.

2.1.5 Protection rackets and warlord fiefdoms in South-Central Somalia

Somali communities have long experience in adapting customary sources of law, security and conflict management in political settings created by a weak or predatory state, while 'modern' states never succeeded in entirely replacing the traditional authorities and their customary laws. A comprehensive image of the security environment must therefore also include the evolution of local security arrangements set up by Somalis themselves, which in some places combine informal systems of security with formal authority structures of the state. The main security actors in South-Central Somalia

¹³ As elsewhere in Somalia, Puntland is also the site of endless and exhausting efforts by elders and civic leaders to contain inter-clan disputes, and political conflicts between militia- and political leaders. However, the traditional ad.hoc and reactive approach was increasingly insufficient to cope with the growing challenges of governance, including property disputes and regulation of the rapidly expanding commerce and economic development in the main cities (WSP 2001).

¹⁴ In the past, periodic conflicts involved disputes within the SSDF over its leadership, and a war between the SSDF commanded by Abdullahi Yusuf and the Al-Ittihad. Abdullahi Yusuf was the first President of Puntland, and is now the President of the TFG.

¹⁵ One problem is that the security forces regularly go unpaid (especially since President Yusuf assumed power in the TFG in 2004, diverting Puntland funds in the process) and have taken to extortion at roadblocks and armed gang behaviour. Far from improving security, they are currently the greatest source of insecurity in Puntland.

include traditional elders, clan militias, Islamic Courts and Warlords. Traditional elders play a major role in mediating and resolving conflicts these regions.

Common in South-Central Somalia are various kinds of security arrangements based on protection rackets and warlord fiefdoms. These can provide some degree of security to households and communities and, in some instances, appear to be capable of transitioning from the predatory expropriation of resources from local victims to taxation of resources in return for services to a local community which may or may not perceive themselves as victims. There are at least three types:

- Protection rackets, involving militiamen who in earlier years terrorised and raided villagers, but which, with the intervention of elders, have developed arrangements whereby they offer to protect villagers against external threats in return for a portion of their harvest, or in exchange for some sort of taxation, for instance from a locally erected ‘official’ checkpoint.¹⁶
- Internally displaced persons (IDPs) (in Mogadishu, Kismayo and elsewhere) who come under the control of predatory ‘camp managers’ (nicknamed ‘black cats’ in Somali), who appropriate a portion of the aid they receive or the wages they earn in return for the provision of a minimal level of security within the camp (Narbeth, 2003).
- Local and regional administrations formed when clan militia or local strongmen occupy or control a neighbourhood, town or region through force. These ‘warlord fiefdoms’ are under the ultimate command of a warlord.

The fiefdoms of Barre Hirale, the Jubba Valley Alliance (JVA) in Kismayo, Lower Juba, and of Sheikh Indha’adde in Lower Shabelle are the most overt examples of clan militia occupations being reconfigured into administrations. JVA are generally seen as occupiers of Kismayo as they do not originate here and have pushed out the original resident clans. While Kismayo has a functioning seaport and airport, neither is used consistently for humanitarian purposes due to perceived insecurity. As the JVA or any other authority is not in control of the hinterland, each and every clan has its own self-proclaimed district commissioner (DC), who do not necessarily relate well to each other. As a result, the humanitarian community has no overall authority with which to engage, and must negotiate access with a patchwork of different DCs and elders. Furthermore, access to vulnerable populations is routinely denied by freelance militias who seek to control and at times divert aid coming into the region, in order to extort money from civilians or aid workers, who occasionally may be kidnapped for ransom. Nevertheless, a number of INGOs do maintain presence in the Juba regions, where much of the grievances are directed towards the UN rather than the INGOs. For instance, during the abduction of a

¹⁶ A common view is that, while such arrangements are not ideal, they are far better than a situation where people plunder, rape and conquer with impunity.

UNICEF employee in February 2006, several INGO expatriates were working unhindered in Afmadow. Similarly, Lower Shabelle is controlled by a regional administration, under the self-appointed leadership of Indha'adde, who was formally endorsed by the previous transitional government at the beginning of 2004. Indha'adde is now allied with the UIC.

What is significant about these fiefdoms is not that they disguise the fact that they are appointing themselves as governors, but that they need to provide a minimal level of security and other services in exchange for popular support. However, this may not be sustainable in the long term due to their status as occupiers, who base their rule on fear rather than positive legitimacy.

2.1.6 Local and regional administrations

Local administrations based on 'formal' sources of governance replicate to some degree the structures and functions of conventional state-based administrative units. Some have developed modest administrations providing public security and other governance functions. Luuq (Gedo region) and Belet Weyne (Hiran region) both have formal municipalities which have played active and constructive roles in local governance and in security by providing a police force, prisons and courts. But their most important contribution to local security is indirect, by serving as a fixed venue for political and clan representatives' conflict-resolution efforts. This kind of local administration often establishes systems for the allocation (usually by clan) of whatever new resources come into the community, including resources from international aid agencies such as rental contracts, procurement and employment. For example, the local security arrangement in Hiran is based on a local formal authority and a council of traditional elders, who together provide a relatively secure operational environment. They formed a committee of clan elders, to which INGOs and UN agencies are obliged to submit a list of rentals, contracts and jobs. These resources are then subject of negotiations and are eventually allocated along clan lines. This local initiative was a measure to prevent insecurity arising from local disputes over aid resources, and as such proved to be a highly effective conflict prevention mechanism. It is a model/example for how an acceptance strategy can be based on pro-active engagements with existing local arrangements established by the traditional elders.

2.1.7 Mogadishu, Union of Islamic Courts, and the question of terrorism

Mogadishu is the centre of Somalia's security crises. Although Mogadishu is Somalia's capital city, the *Hawiye* clan has composed the majority of its residents since the state collapsed in 1991. Mogadishu was until recently partially controlled by more than a dozen factional leaders (warlords) who divided the city. But their control was not based on legitimate authority, and the operating environment remained insecure, resulting in extremely restricted access, hence the UNDSS Phase V (evacuation)

classification. Aid workers, particularly national staff, have been kidnapped for ransom, and otherwise targeted for harassment. As mentioned, the warlords became increasingly marginalised from 1999 onwards, as a new class of businessmen, dissatisfied with the poor security conditions created by their own clan militias, refused to pay protection money to warlord-clan militia leaders. Instead, they bought gunmen and took them from the warlords, formed their own security forces or passed them on to the new local Sharia courts. Only the warlords who had developed their own independent sources of revenue survived this challenge. The result was the spread of Islamic Sharia Courts, which did invoke more law and order. Being originally Sufi-based, only a few of the Courts were initially seen to be related to radical Islamic groups related to wahabbi interpretations of the Koran and Sharia

In February 2006, a war between a new alliance of the remaining anti-Islamic court warlords and the Islamic Courts in Mogadishu emerged. The Alliance for Peace and Fight against Terrorism (APFT) claimed to fight for peace and anti-terrorism, prompting a reaction from the Islamic Courts which in response formed the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC). While never confirmed by the US government, the APFT apparently received funding from the US. Hence, the fighting took the form of a proxy war between the US-led war against global terrorism, and elements in support of Al-Qaeda. However, the actual conflict is more complicated. The UIC commanded popular support because the Islamic Courts provided security, law and order and welfare through their Islamic charity work. By June 2006, the UIC had defeated the APFT, and most of the warlords have fled Mogadishu. Their domains have been taken over by the UIC, and/or new warlords allied with the UIC. Roadblocks have largely been dismantled or taken over by UIC Islamic Court militias. It will be interesting to observe if the UIC in the long run will be able to contain the common security threats in Mogadishu, which include killings, banditry acts, car-jackings and kidnappings.

With the recent success of the UIC in Mogadishu in defeating the APFT, the question of radical Islamism and terrorism linked to the Sharia Courts has resurfaced, mainly because the armed avant-garde of the UIC are seen to adhere to a radical wahabbist interpretation of Islam, and impose puritan restrictions on life in Mogadishu, such as banning music and football on TV. What is indisputable is that the UIC victory has changed both the political and the security environment, especially in South-Central Somalia. Hence, this section will briefly discuss these linkages and their implications for the humanitarian operational security environment.¹⁷

The role of Sharia courts in the provision of public security in Somalia, especially in Mogadishu and southern Somalia, has been significant, and plays a vital role in local security systems, as well as in the operational security for humanitarian action. The Sharia court system has, however, changed

¹⁷ For comprehensive discussions of radical Islamic activity and terrorism in Somalia, refer to ICG 2005a and 2005b, Le Sage 2004, Menkhaus 2004, Marchal 2004 and Abdullahi 2006

considerably over the past five years. Sharia courts were established in the mid-1990s by traditional clan elders, local new/emerging businessmen and religious leaders in a bid to improve basic law and order. Hence, the Sharia courts were instruments for law and order, under the control of clan elders and the businessmen who were their paymasters, and were administered by local sheikhs who were often committed to the traditional moderate Sufi Islam practiced in Somalia. Initially, they followed the custom of letting relatives of a victim choose between a customary solution or Sharia punishment. The courts were all initially based on specific sub-clans, and were urban phenomena as disputes and crime among pastoral and farming communities still use customary practices.

While the Sharia courts were ‘illiberal’, in the sense that they occasionally violated international human rights norms, they were not formed with the objective of establishing a radical Islamic state in Somalia. When they did try to impose severe Islamic punishments (*xudud*), such as amputations, they were often strongly opposed by the public and clan elders because they were in contradiction with *xeer* (ICG, 2005a). In fact, when radical Islamists tried to use the courts as political platforms, they were constrained by the founding businessmen and traditional elders. Nevertheless, because the Courts enjoy wide popular support due to their ability to provide the highest level of public security since the civil war, they also provide a platform that can be exploited by radical Islamist groups. The weakness of the first Sharia courts was their lack of law-enforcement capacity. This was exploited by former members of the now-defunct radical Islamic movement Al-Ittihad.¹⁸ Hence, former Al-Ittihad militants were able to gain influence by providing the courts with military expertise to enforce the implementation of Sharia law thanks to their provision of trained and disciplined militias. This ‘trade-off’ gave radical Islamic elements an opportunity to build an influential political platform within the Courts. Nevertheless, a report from the International Crisis Group (ICG) states that:

the behaviour of Somali Islamist groups is characterized by competition and discord hardly less severe than that which plagues the political factions. They are neither uniformly anti-Western, nor hostile to Somalia’s neighbours, and only a tiny minority has been associated with terrorist violence (ICG 2005a).

US support to the APFT group of warlords in Mogadishu to intercept individuals on the US list of wanted international terrorists has prompted the unification of the courts into the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC). Popular support for the UIC has played into the hands of the hardline Islamists. While there is physical evidence of both terrorist technology and radical Islamic elements in Somalia, making terrorism a real potential threat, the extent and presence of this threat is limited and has so far (with the few exceptions of SL and attacks in the Jubas and along the border to Kenya prior to 2005) not been

¹⁸ See the ICG Report on ‘Somalia’s Islamists’ for a detailed account of Al-Ittihad (ICG 2005a).

directed against international humanitarian agencies *per se*. The way some attacks are performed, including attacks related to contractual disputes, is evidence of the application of new technologies and means, involving the use of devices designed for targeted attacks, that were previously unknown in Somalia. These include the discovery of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which are being used elsewhere by radical militant Islamists. IEDs can be used in traditional contractual conflicts, but their entry into Somalia does not necessarily indicate a change in the general picture of operational security or an increase in terrorist threats.

What is clear at the time of writing is that the UIC is now the *de facto* power in Mogadishu, and its allies are in control of the coast from Ras Kamboni in Southern Lower Juba to Merka and Lower Shabelle. Furthermore, Islamic Courts are now in control of the main road from Mogadishu via Jowhar to Beledweyne and into Northwestern Galgaduud. This establishes a new fault-line in Somali politics, with the high risk of a confrontation between the TFG based in Baidoa and the UIC.

2.2 Humanitarian actors' view of the general security context

The security environment in Somalia can be contrasted with the general perceptions of the security environment as stated by UNOCHA, UNDSS and the UN as well as NGO staff on the ground in Somalia. By doing this we can achieve an idea of the extent to which the perceptions of humanitarian agencies reflect the security environment in Somalia. In a recent document, OCHA describes the general environment as follows:¹⁹

there have been moves to divert, block and attempt to control, directly or indirectly, the delivery of humanitarian assistance and protection in order to strengthen the power bases of faction leaders, usually along clan lines. As a result, the provision of assistance and protection can be as much a source of conflict, rather than a source of relief. In many cases humanitarian delivery is interrupted because of various reasons including the intention to 1) Prevent aid from reaching opposing or minority clans 2) Prevent the rehabilitation of, and access to, natural resources, such as water and land, which are required for survival 3) Influence agencies to hire staff and provide contracts for goods and services that favour faction leaders own kin or allies or in order to make financial gains ... as a result ... access to those with newly compounded vulnerabilities ... is limited and/or controlled by gatekeepers and faction leaders.

¹⁹ Document from OCHA-Somalia on Humanitarian Access in Somalia, December 2005.

OCHA's description reflects the primary security problem in Somalia, which is related to resource conflicts, in which aid can be categorised as another resource over which clans compete. That is the primary security challenge for humanitarian provision in their view.

Generally, security planning for the United Nations worldwide is based on a series of country-specific plans, which are based on a five-phase system which responds to an escalating threat (UNCT, 2005). UNDSS applies the phases to Somalia in the following way: Phase one and two are the lowest levels, and have so far not been used in Somalia. Phase 3 – relocation – is applied to Hargeisa town in Somaliland and Mandera and Gebiley, including the roads from Hargeisa to these locations. A measure of the perceived threat to UN staff in Somalia is that it is Security Phase 4 (emergency operations only) throughout, or Phase 5 (Mogadishu), evacuation, which is the highest level applied in Somalia, except for areas with Phase 3 in Somaliland. UN work in the country may only take place with strict regard to security procedures. The Security Handbook for UN staff in Somalia describes the general security conditions and the general UN approach to security management as follows: (UNCT, 2005):

Somalia is a dangerous place for UN Agency staff, operations and facilities – there is only a marginally effective law and order structure, and inter-clan conflict erodes the security situation. However, the concept of prudent risk has been collectively incorporated by the members of the UNCT, and by close monitoring of field operations and strict application of security measures, risk factors have been reduced to an acceptable level. Some areas are relatively tranquil, others very difficult. Somalia continues to be a non-family/dependant country. Conditions vary greatly in Somalia. The most common security crisis scenarios in Somalia have been individual or Area level situations. These have not generally affected conditions elsewhere in the country. Hence, individual or Area evacuation has been the most probable in extremis security contingency; however, countrywide evacuation is a possible scenario.

The Handbook then provides a list (not ranked) of potential types of attacks, which does not include the types of attacks that might be related to extreme terrorism.

Based on interviews with UN Security staff and NGO staff in the field in Somalia, this general threat picture can be elaborated with the following perceived threat categories (Parakrama Siriwardana (AFSCO, NW) and other interviews in Nairobi and Somalia):

- **Threats from extreme Islamic militias.** This is perceived (by the UNDSS) as the most dangerous threat in Somalia, and in SL because of the attacks in 2003/2004. Attacks include assassinations, bombings and ambushes.
- **Programme-related threats, particularly ‘contractual’ issues** (taxation, car rentals, per diem pay, hiring of local staff, local salaries, sub-contracting of private service providers). In Somalia, the unemployment rate is very high; there is therefore strong competition for jobs. This competition often becomes a clan-related issue; hence, aid programmes will often face clan tensions. Generally, unlike the rest of Somalia, such issues do not turn violent in SL.
- **Programme-sensitive (cultural) risks.** Somalis do not necessarily accept cultural change very easily. A lot of awareness building is therefore necessary to prevent misconceptions about what culturally-sensitive programmes are about. For instance, a common misperception in connection with immunisation programmes is that the programme is intended to spread contamination among the Somalis.
- **Clan-related issues.** National staff play an important role here, both in terms of mitigating and preventing conflicts and in terms of being the cause that involves an agency into a clan conflict. When a crime is committed, especially in connection with killings, it becomes a clan issue, and therefore enters the traditional jurisprudence of Somalis, which often involves revenge killings. Usually, elders resolve such issues according to their customary law; in SL, the police sometimes intervene. However, this is only a risk to international agencies if their staff have been involved, or if the crime is the result of a contractual issue with the agency.

According to all agencies, the most common (but not registered) security risk in Somalia in general is related to traffic accidents. Programme- and clan-related risks are perceived as subordinate to Islamic terrorist threats, in contrast with OCHA’s perception. This prioritisation has important implications for how and why physical security strategies gain priority over acceptance-based strategies.

3. Collecting security data, and what the statistics tell us

Security data collection and analysis can be an important and useful tool for security management. This section seeks to identify what security reporting and information systems are in place within the ‘humanitarian system’ in Somalia, discusses constraints in data collection for the purposes of operational security analysis and analyses what the existing statistical data on security incidents in Somalia from 1997 to 2005 tell us about trends in security incidents over this period.

3.1 Incident data reports and databases

Incident data reports were acquired from UNDSS and the NGO Security SPAS programme of the Somali NGO Consortium. However, there were no detailed reports prior to 2002, as there was no structured organisation of incident data before then. It seems that material from this period has disappeared as staff have left agencies.²⁰ Furthermore, the UNDSS database contains a gap from January 2003 to April 2003, which is about the time when UNDSS systematically began to build an incidents database. Major incidents for Somalia from 1997 to 2002 are covered thanks to the work of a staff member of the NGO SPAS programme.²¹

Minor incidents, such as flight cancellations due to skirmishes at airfields, threats against international and national staff members and precautionary evacuations, have been found in the UNDSS database from January 2004, but are not included in the major incidents statistics database from the NGO SPAS programme, or in the incidents database used for this study. These incidents are nevertheless important in the Somali context because they indicate the potential dangers to staff. In particular, mass evacuations of expatriate staff should be registered systematically, because such data are serious indicators of security. Furthermore, evacuation data can also indicate why, and for how long, expatriate staff spend time in Nairobi rather than on the ground in Somalia.

A relevant question for future data registration is whether ‘minor’ events and evacuations should be included in the total number of incidents, which could all have been major incidents, in order to achieve a better background picture of the real potential danger to humanitarian action in a given context, and which is not reflected by the number of major incidents in itself. In Somalia, the vast majority of minor incidents concern contractual issues and clan-related disputes, which in some cases

²⁰ For instance, both WFP and MSF only have incident information for the last two years, when systematic reporting began. For WFP, UNDSS enters all UN-relevant security incidents into its database.

²¹ The sources for the statistical incidents analysis are: Major Security Incidents Somalia March 1995–June 2004, data compiled by the NGO SPAS programme; Quarterly Incidents Reports, UNSECOORD 2002, UNSECOORD Somalia, Nairobi; Security Incidents for Somalia October 2003–January 2006; and a report compiled from the UNDSS Somalia database directly.

involve revenge killings, but nevertheless are dangerous if staff are in the wrong place at the wrong time.

3.2 Security reporting and information sharing

Most agencies operating in Somalia have a main office in Nairobi, and one or more field offices. Security incidents are therefore usually first reported to the field security officer, or the head of the field office, who then forwards the report to the HQ/regional office. Most of these INGO HQ/regional offices take part in the NGO Consortium, and pass the report on to the NGO SPAS office in Nairobi, which then shares the information with the UNDSS office in Nairobi. The reports are then entered into the weekly security report produced by the NGO SPAS office, and circulated by email to NGOs. Security alerts are also circulated by email. Security reports are sent to agencies' global headquarters.

Email is the most common means of communication, along with phoned-in reports. The system is not functioning very well because many agencies filter security information before sharing it in order to protect the agency's interests. Furthermore, email feedback to and from the NGO SPAS officers is often not effective, mainly because there may be crucial delays in the opening of email by the INGOs, and emails are often not sent out immediately. Security reporting and information-sharing can therefore be incomplete and hence unreliable.

3.3 Constraints to security data collection

On the basis of available statistical data, it may be difficult to make a reliable analysis of changes in the security environment in Somalia. However, by complementing existing data with interviews and discussions with UNDSS, NGO security staff, OCHA, UN local staff, INGOs and independent research institutions in the field, it has been possible to develop a relatively representative image of the changing security environment in Somalia from 1997 to 2006.

In order to achieve an accurate sense of the scope and magnitude of serious security incidents involving humanitarian agencies in Somalia, as well as to measure relative changes over time, the number of incidents should be compared with other baseline data, such as the overall level of international and national staff in the field and the overall level of aid resources being brought into Somalia, and set against data such as the number of days an agency is in the field, the number of staff in the field and the number of travelling days in the field. The latter three types of data are not collected systematically. But, as the NGO SPAS programme and the UNDSS increasingly track the number of staff in the field in order to maintain evacuation preparedness, it may be possible to establish such baselines in the future.

The former two sets of baseline data are also not good. The available data on the overall level of aid to Somalia does not go very far back, and reliable figures on staffing for Somalia are even more difficult to obtain. The NGO Consortium only began to collect staffing data in 2003, and data from NGOs is neither reliable nor comparable (NGO, 2003). Only from 2004 is a relatively clear picture of staff data provided, in terms of expatriate versus national local staff (NGO, 2004). Still, this data is not aggregated, nor does it clearly indicate how many staff are located in Nairobi as against in the field in Somalia. Another complicating factor is that some agencies may (rightly) count Somali diaspora staff with international passports as expatriates. Furthermore, data on local NGOs in Somalia is very difficult to obtain because – again – statistical data is not collected systematically or at all, and institutional memory does not exist.

The baseline data on the level of aid to Somalia should ideally be collected and provided by the Somalia Aid Coordination Body (SACB). This was, however, not done systematically until 2000, when more systematic aggregation of overall aid to Somalia was published in donor reports (SACB, 2001; 2002; 2003; 2004). Before that, the SACB produced rudimentary donor reports (these could not be found).

Table 1: Level of aid to Somalia 1996/7 to 2006

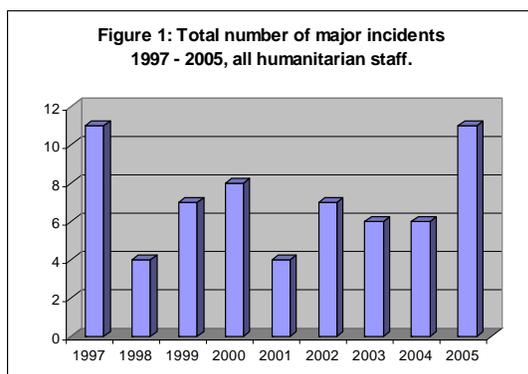
Year	Aid in US\$m	Source
1996/97	138	OCHA
1998	56	CAP 1998
1999	47	CAP 1999
2000	115.4	SACB 2001
2001	112	SACB 2002
2002	174.4	SACB 2003
2003	271.6	SACB 2004
2006	174	CAP 2006

Note: CAP is the Consolidated Appeal Process, and represents the figure appealed for, but not the pledged or realised figures. The CAP is not the most reliable source for how much aid actually has been given because of its focus, which is on raising funding for the coming year.

3.4 Trends in the security environment

Based on the total number of major incidents from 1997 to 2006 given in the UNDSS and NGO SPAS databases, as shown in Figure 1, and interviews with local field staff, it does not seem that the security environment has changed fundamentally over the period, nor does it seem to have worsened

considerably. The annual number of serious incidents is between four and eight. 1997 and 2005 are the exceptions to this, with 11 incidents.

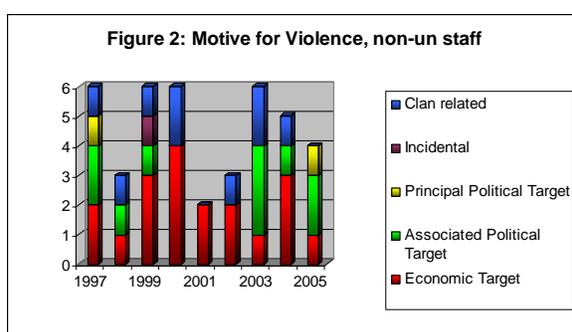


1997 was an exceptional year due to the El Niño flood response in Southern Somalia, which brought much more aid directly into some zones that are usually perceived as inaccessible. Greater exposure produced more incidents, and the pressure related to the emergency increased the number of incidents related to grievances over agencies' actions. The 2005 peak is partly explained by accidents, such as one in which

WHO national staff drove off-road and ran into a landmine in Somaliland, which could have happened in any of the previous years. In addition there may be a small increase in security incidents related to programmes in areas such as female genital mutilation, HIV/AIDS and polio. The increase in assassinations may be a reflection of increased tensions due to developments related to the internal row over the location of the TFG. Finally, the 2005 peak may be due to a general increase in tension related to the severe drought that occurred late that year. However, the increase is not significant enough to indicate a trend.

3.4.1 No changes in the motives for violence

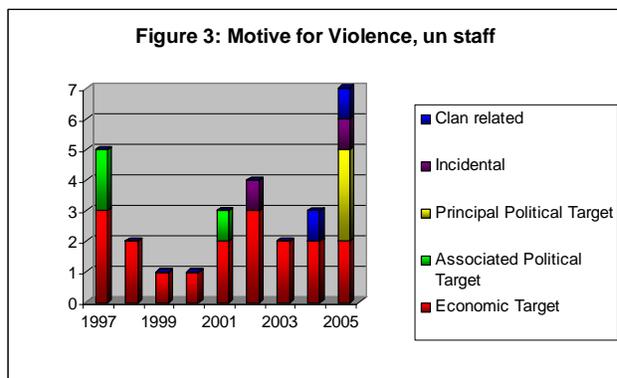
According to all the agencies surveyed, INGOs and UN alike, the primary motivation for violence against aid workers is economic – grievance or opportunity-seeking. While activities may be directed against humanitarian activities themselves, such as blocking aid resources to a particular community, or restricted aid access due to perceptions that the given community has not received its fair share of aid, these seldom lead to serious incidents. Such incidents mainly occur in connection with food distributions or water trucking in drought responses. Nevertheless, such activities occasionally lead to the temporary suspension of programmes and evacuations of international staff.



The status of national staff in Somalia is important in terms of their clan relationship to the perpetrators, i.e. whether they are in conflict. Hence, there is a need for a specific category for national staff that indicates whether an incident is related to a clan dispute. This study includes this category as a possible motive for violence, as

shown in Figures 2 and 3.

Some motives for violence in 1997 were related to the then still-active Islamic faction Al-Ittihad, which targeted international agencies directly because of what they represented. These attacks are included under the category ‘associated political target’ in Figures 2 and 3. It should be noted that these attacks



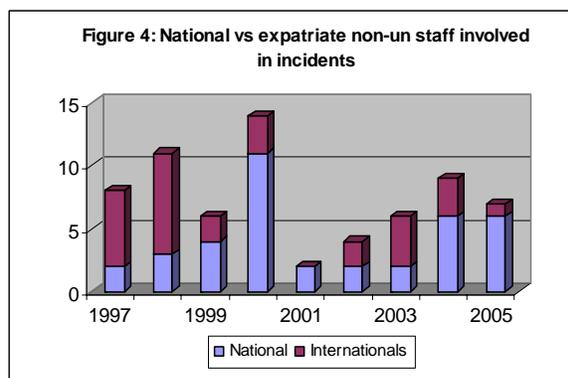
could not be described as terrorist, and that Al-Ittihad ceased to exist in Gedo after Ethiopian forces destroyed it in 1998.

The only recent incidents that could be described as being direct, associated political targeting of international aid staff were the killings of expatriate INGO aid workers in Somaliland in 2003 and 2004. These killings resulted from a combination of their association with the West, their association with programmes perceived as being against Islamic or Somali values, and/or because they were seen as related to activities that supported the independence of Somaliland by virtue of operating there.²² Since 2004, there have been no similar incidents. Whether this can be attributed to the security policies followed by the UN and INGOs will be addressed in section 4 below.

The main overall threat remains the combination of contractual and clan-related issues (economic targeting and clan-related indicators). In other words, over time economic, resource-based issues, especially contractual issues, are the most important motive for violence against humanitarian staff and operations in Somalia.

3.4.2 Relation between incidents, level of aid and staff

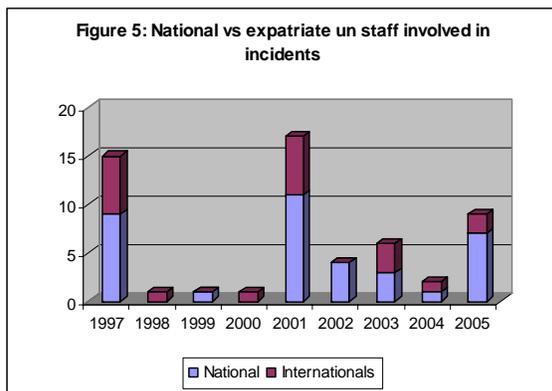
A quick assessment of the correlation between the number of incidents and the existing data on staff and the level of aid to Somalia does not indicate any clear relationship between the number of serious incidents and either the number of expatriate/national aid workers in Somalia or the level of aid. An



aggregate of staffing information from 2004 shows that there were approximately 226 expatriates either based in the field or working regularly in the field in Somalia, and about 2,203 local national staff. This gives a 1 to 10 ratio of international to national staff. This figure can only be used as an indicator, but nonetheless shows that the risk for expatriate staff involved in humanitarian action in

²² There are shared interests between groups that are against an independent secular republic of Somaliland, and those that favour of a united Islamic Somali republic.

Somalia is much higher than for local Somali staff.



Figures 4 and 5 show that non-UN staff have been subject to major incidents more frequently than UN staff. According to field perspectives this is due to the UN's security policy, which is far more restrictive than NGOs' when it comes to travel in the field and in terms of how quickly, and for how long, UNDSS deems an area closed to international and even national staff. Hence, the UN's restrictive security policy reduces exposure, but at the price of

restricting access.

Figures 4 and 5 also indicate a relative increase in the number of national staff who are victims, as compared to international staff, which could be an indicator that national staff are being increasingly used to achieve access to insecure areas. This raises another question in terms of what categories of staff members are included and registered in incident reports, and hence appear in the statistics, e.g. should local guards working for an agency count as national staff, or should they not be counted at all? According to responses from international agencies there is no tendency towards decreases or increases in staffing (national and international) or sub-contracting as responses to security concerns. There may be a small decrease in the level of programming in response to serious incidents, and several expatriates were withdrawn in connection with the killings in SL in 2003/4. But the available figures do not indicate any clear trend.

3.4.3 Forms of attacks

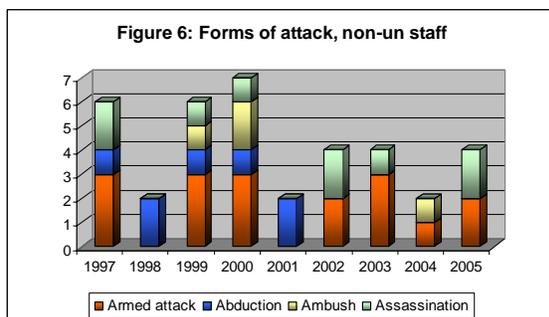


Figure 6 shows that, for non-UN staff, the number of armed attacks and assassinations remains stable at between zero and three incidents per year. There is no clear trend, though it does seem that there have been no major abductions involving NGOs since 2001.

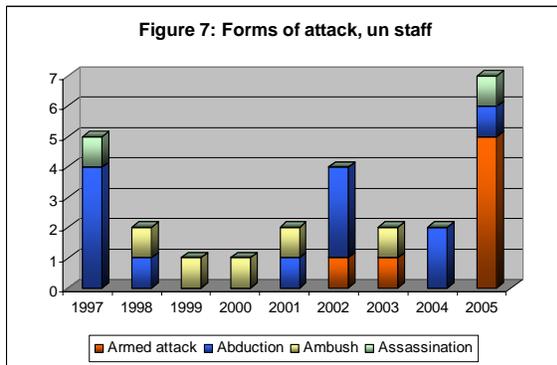
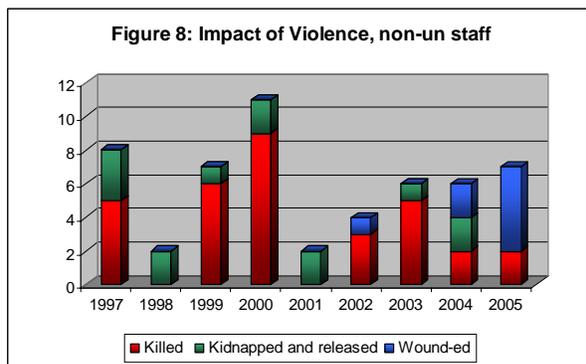


Figure 7 shows that abductions have to some extent been replaced by armed attacks against UN staff. The overall picture is that armed attacks and abductions, primarily related to economic gain or contractual issues, are the dominant form of violence facing humanitarian staff. According to interviews with aid staff, abductions are often related to contractual disputes, and these can date back several years. Some kind of ransom is usually paid, but the amounts are typically small. Traditional elders almost always play a crucial role in negotiating the release of kidnapped staff.

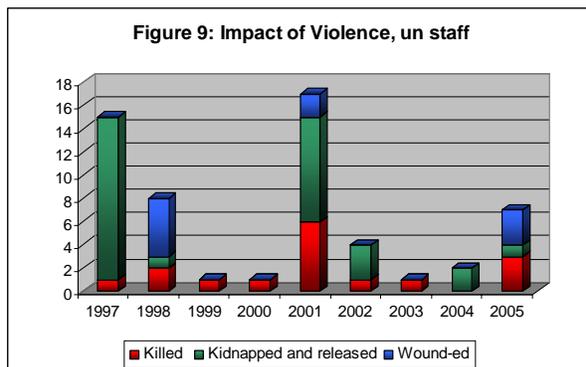
3.4.4 Impact of violence

Most recorded incidents of violence result in either killings or kidnappings, as shown in Figures 8 and 9. Abductees are usually released. Most major incidents involve killings. The balance seems to have shifted slightly away from killings to wounding. Except for the years 1997 and 2001, the UN records a



low level of incidents compared to NGOs. But this can be attributed to incidents related to the flood response on the one hand and a major kidnapping incident in 2001, which was followed by an increase in restrictions on expatriate staff travel in Southern Somalia and Mogadishu.

By including national staff in the statistics of major incidents we challenge the official US position that no international UN staff have been killed since 1997. In fact, as shown in Figure 9, at least 16 UN-related staff have been killed since 1997. Three were drivers, and six were staff related to a WFP sub-contracted convoy. If we subtract the latter nine, we still have a figure of seven national UN



staff members killed over the period 1997–2006. One perception among UN staff is that it is more luck than security compliance that no international staff have been killed. Furthermore, when international staff are prevented from travelling to the field, they are of course not exposed to violence.

3.5 Security information and coordination

To better understand the magnitude and number of incidents, it would make sense to set the number of incidents against the total number of security incidents in the Somali context, including everything that is not specifically related to humanitarian action. With the new UNDSS and NGO databases, and provided that the security information reporting from staff on the ground and UNDSS and NGO SPAS intelligence reporting is consistent, reliable and sufficiently inclusive, this should be possible in future. However, this is not possible in the present analysis due to a lack of data. Illustrative data is available. For the year 2004, there were at least 120 security events in Somalia, involving either skirmishes between clans and Mogadishu-based factions/warlords, revenge killings, roadblocks, attacks on food convoys run by private Somali contractors, kidnappings and assassinations and terror attacks. Such incidents mostly did not target or involve aid agencies. When agencies were involved, this was more by accident, due to agencies being in the wrong place at the wrong time, or by being involved in clan disputes via local staff. Nevertheless, it is crucial to include this kind of information in the security information databases in order to achieve a proper sense of the wider security environment in Somalia. The following are some examples of incidents from the UNDSS database.

- Monday 26 April 2004: a WFP/IMC food distribution at the MCH in Isdohorte village, Bakol region, was stopped after two gunmen threatened staff. The gunmen were insisting that their children, who were no longer eligible for a food ration, should continue to receive the food.
- Monday 31 May 2004: four gunmen disrupted a FSAU/WVI workshop in Wajid. They entered the premises and told the organisers to stop their activities. The workshop resumed later the same day following the intervention of the district administration. The gunmen acted in the belief that an employment opportunity existed, and later apologised.
- Friday 30 September 2005: WFP reported that two of their locally contracted trucks transporting relief food items to Bandabeyla were looted. The villagers claimed their unlawful action was necessitated by being left out of food distributions by the agency, even though they were not affected. UN security advised restrictions on missions to the village until the issue was resolved. The food was returned a month later after negotiations with elders.

Hence, the UN database includes incidents which do not involve UN or INGO staff directly, but which do have an impact on access in terms of closing down an airfield or forcing the evacuation of international staff. However, these data are not registered in the major incident statistics. Nevertheless, such incidents have an important impact on humanitarian access because, despite not being targeted directly at humanitarian aid operations, they are still perceived to involve a high risk for operations, and hence restricted access. Written threats are also excluded, which in a number of cases have led to the discontinuation of aid operations and even the evacuation of expatriate staff. In order to provide a better picture of security on the ground, it could be relevant to include precautionary evacuations in the

security database, because these are responses to situations that could produce casualties if staff stayed in the field. Incidents involving local NGOs are generally not mentioned.

4. Applied security policies and their implications

The major change in terms of security policies for Somalia came after the war against terrorism was launched following 9/11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and was notably implemented after the bombing of the UN HQ in Baghdad 2003. In Somalia, this had a significant impact because the new global security policies of the UN were applied directly, and were not adapted to the Somali context.

4.1 UN's applied risk management and security strategies

The SRA was introduced in Somalia in June 2004. The SRA follows a certain format (UNDSS interview, February 2006). Problem assessments are related to what agencies need. In other words, the system is request-based. The possible threats to operations in a given area are identified, and the risks of operations related to the possible threats are assessed. A more detailed analysis of the SRA is not possible, due to lack of access to the SRA and the risk management strategy (SRM).

4.1.1 Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS)

The MOSS was first implemented after the incidents in 2003/4 in SL, but had already been formulated as a global response to the Baghdad bombing. MOSS is first and foremost a global set of ground rules, partly dictated by the UN's insurance company Lloyds, which then are partly adapted to the local context. Hence, the MOSS is primarily a physical protection strategy, designed to protect staff lives and agency assets by reducing staff exposure and applying mitigating action factors, such as regulations on the use of vehicles, armed guards, emergency kits, communication equipment and travel restrictions and rules. There is also a MORSS, which is concerned with ensuring security standards in residential and office compounds.

4.1.2 UN security structure and responsibilities

The head of security for the UN Somalia system is the Designated Official (DO) for security management, usually the UNDP Resident Representative. He/she is accountable to the Secretary-General through UNDSS for ensuring the safety and security of UN personnel. The DO is supported by the Security Management Team (SMT), which consists of the DO, the Chief Security Advisor (CSA), the Deputy Chief Security Advisor (DCSA) and the agency heads, and a security structure based in Nairobi. Monthly UNCT meetings also discuss security issues. All of these are based at the Nairobi HQ (UNDP and UNDSS). An Area Security Coordinator (ASC) is responsible for the security management arrangements of the UN system in their area of operations.

The main security staff member on the ground in Somalia is the Area Field Security Coordination Officer (AFSCO), who is the senior UN security official in the given area. The AFSCO reports incidents through the CSA. In case of disagreement, uncertainty or emergency, decisions will be communicated to the DO after the event, and he/she will review the controversy at the appropriate time. The Area Field Security Coordination Assistant (AFSCA) is a national staff member.

4.1.3 Operational procedures of the MOSS

This section is extracted from the UN Security Handbook for Somalia, which stipulates the field security ground rules for UN staff in Somalia. Operational procedures are meant to be precautionary measures to ensure the security of UN international staff, national staff, facilities, equipment, supplies and funds. The handbook describes the MOSS as concerned with taking measures in advance in order to be adequately prepared for an emergency. In addition, emergency procedures are to be standardised, understood and rehearsed so that protective action taken in a crisis, including relocation or evacuation, is as effective and as risk-free as possible. The MOSS applies to all UN staff assigned to or visiting Somalia, and is supplemented by area-specific instructions included in each Area Security Plan issued by the AFSCO. The operational procedures focus on travel in the field. The basic rules include:

- International staff must obtain security clearance from the DO before travelling to Somalia.
- Staff must contact the AFSCO for a security briefing on arrival.
- Travel within an area in Somalia requires security clearance 48 hours before departure from the AFSCO.
- Staff must carry long-range communication equipment (VHF or satphones).
- Cars must be MOSS-compliant.

UNDSS provides security briefings for local staff in Nairobi and in the field. Staff is required to pass a CD-Rom course on field security. However, UNDSS' security briefings are not sufficient, and there is a need for more specific training i.e. on identifying landmines, how to handle carjackings and dealing with security in connection with issues such as food distributions and contractual disagreements.

4.1.4 Perceived efficacy of the MOSS and SRA

The overall objective of the SRA and MOSS should be to ensure staff safety, in order to gain safe and secure access to beneficiaries of aid programmes. However, a number of issues have been raised by field staff as well as UNDSS security officers, and these reveal that the application of the SRA and MOSS to Somalia does not sufficiently meet this overall objective.

4.1.5 SRA/MOSS is not sufficiently adapted to contractual security risks

While the SRA/MOSS is seen to have improved the ability of UNDSS to assess risks, the SRA for Somalia is also being criticised for not sufficiently adapting rules to the situation/context, which in Somalia is primarily concerned with contractual issues. Security regulations cannot themselves solve contractual risk issues, because this involves finances, management, leadership, regulations and policies. Hence, the SRA must be addressed in much broader terms than physical security. It must involve the departments of finance and administration, as well as human resources. Contractual risks could efficiently be addressed by involving local communities in operations in a transparent and proactive manner, in other words acceptance strategies related to contractual issues would probably improve staff protection considerably.

4.1.6 A 'bunker mentality' and time-consuming procedures to reopen closed areas

Another problem with the current approach is the tendency towards a 'bunker mentality' which focuses on physical protection, where staff tend to seek protection in well-protected fortresses. In this regard, FSAU field staff pointed out that the MOSS and UNDSS SRA is a very inflexible instrument, especially if an incident or certain security-related circumstances leads to closing down access to a given area. It takes UNDSS a very long time to have the area reopened. This is partly due to the 'request' principle in the operations of the UNDSS Risk Assessment procedures. Hence, it is perceived that the MOSS hampers UN operational flexibility, and may result in keeping an area closed for a long period. This also hampers possible alternative, broader approaches to security, such as acceptance strategies, because if the UN cannot access an area, it cannot apply an acceptance strategy because this requires a longer-term presence so that staff and locals can build mutual trust and confidence. It may not be sufficient to leave this to national staff, because the local authorities may not accept them but want to interact directly with leading expatriate staff.

4.1.7 Lack of staff compliance

According to field security staff, international staff are not seen as very MOSS-compliant. They seem to approach security rules in a very casual manner. This is more the case in Somaliland and Puntland than in South-Central Somalia. The reasons, as indicated, may be a combination of:

- 1) A rigid application of the MOSS to Somalia without sufficient adaptation to the unique security environment; this may create problems with compliance, because the rules may be perceived as unnecessarily bureaucratic and difficult to deal with. It is perceived as a problem that rules seem to be applied, not because the security environment requires it, but because it is required by the insurance company, which will not be liable if the rules are broken, or because the rules

are related to the agency's financial policies, which then may be a reason to withdraw or limit access.

- 2) MOSS is not developed on the basis of programme needs. The MOSS was implemented from a global perspective, following the Baghdad bombings. The tightening of rules, which is perceived to make the UN slow and less flexible due to auditing procedures and more paperwork, is seen as having been developed to please insurance companies rather than serving the needs of aid programmes. Hence, field staff tend to see the MOSS as a measure introduced because of the war on terror and the wider issue of auditing and administrative control systems in the UN, rather than measures designed to ensure programme access and staff security. The SRA tool has so far not led to more programme-driven security procedures, as the security assessment is passive and not proactive. Furthermore, field staff indicated that there is a lack of security personnel taking part in the OCHA Sectoral Drought Response Working Group meetings (See section 6.2 below).
- 3) An anti-authoritarian culture may develop among staff on the ground. Staff culture tends to be anti-authoritarian, and people want to be disturbed as little as possible in their working and private life. This is especially the case in Hargeisa and Somaliland, where staff do not experience any real daily threat and therefore find radio-checks, curfews and the use of security guards excessive. When rules in the context of SL are not seen to reflect the situation on ground, staff will gradually begin to lose their respect for them. This is a problem because, even in Somaliland, an incident may happen in a split second, and the use of communications in particular will be of vital importance. The security measures in the field in South-Central Somalia are generally perceived as appropriate, but they are bureaucratic and time-consuming and prevent *ad hoc* action and travel. Hence, when security rules are seen to unnecessarily limit access, this will cause frustration. Furthermore, the MOSS is an expense, which will compound the lack of respect if staff feel that it takes away resources from their programmes without contributing to their security.
- 4) Insufficient practical training is another issue. Training is generally based on a two-hour session at Nairobi headquarters and a CD-Rom course. Given that the MOSS is not sufficiently adapted to the threat picture in Somalia, training in the MOSS does not sufficiently address how staff are to deal with the specific security risks they face. Furthermore, the applied training is in itself not MOSS-compliant because staff are not sufficiently trained in how to use all the equipment and security gadgets they are supposed to use in the field. For instance, proper training in the use of radio and other communications equipment – and in some medical kits – requires

practical work. Training should include contractual risk assessments, because contractual security risks come from the 'inside' of the agency – including locally hired staff.

4.1.8 Vehicle and guarding arrangements are not MOSS-compliant

Another problem not faced, and again a reflection of the MOSS not being based on the specific security context in Somalia, is the practice in Somalia of hiring vehicles and guards locally. This usually comes in 'packages' of one car with two guards. A car never comes without guards, mainly because the vehicle owner wants to protect his car. This means that the priority of security staff is the vehicle, not the staff. It is therefore not enough to rely only on the security provided by car owners. Furthermore, these cars are not always MOSS-compliant, and staff may not be concerned to ensure that they are.

4.1.9 Contractual issues

Although issues related to contracts are the main security risk when operating in Somalia, there is no clear mechanism for how to deal with contractual risk issues, and this type of risk management is largely missing from the MOSS. One problem is that there is no equality in salary levels; salaries differ from agency to agency. Contractual issues must be transparent. This is up to individual agencies, all of which have differentiated financial rules and regulations, which means that they are unable to act coherently. This has its root in the various auditing policies of donors; hence, security policies must involve them as well. Furthermore, appropriate security policies for Somalia must involve adaptation of the stiff procedural processes of the UN administrative systems and heavy bureaucracy, to enable ground staff to respond flexibly to contractual security risks.

4.1.10 Limited airfield access

The new security regulations also led to a review of all the airfields in Somalia, which saw many of them being closed – not because security had deteriorated, but because new standards were introduced. Airfield security in Somalia is the responsibility of UNDSS. Since road travel is very limited, partly due to security and partly due to very bad infrastructure, airfield access is very important for aid access. The closure of airfields therefore affected all INGOs, and effectively decreased access to large parts of Central and Southern Somalia. Some INGOs, for example, had to close operations in some locations due to the lack of air access. Reopening an airstrip takes a very long time once because MOSS regulations make it difficult and expensive.

4.2 NGO security preparedness and support

INGOs' security approaches vary. Some agencies lack experience and knowledge of working in the Somali context, some do not have their own developed security policies which are adapted to Somalia, and some have very comprehensive security policies adapted to Somalia, or even to their specific area of operation. Agencies without adapted security policies refer to their agencies' global security policies and the advice from the NGO SPAS security advisor. Many NGOs do not have institutionalised security policies.

4.2.1 Wide security approaches

Some INGO agencies, such as the Gedo Health Consortium (GHC) in Gedo, and to a lesser extent agencies such as the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and Save the Children (SC/UK), approach security in a broader community-based sense, which views security in terms of achieving trust and acceptance from the communities that they work with.

For instance, DRC does not have an explicit security policy for Somalia, and emphasises that its security approach is based on community dialogue. The use of the SPU is seen as compulsory, and not something it (DRC) asks for. Given that contractual issues are the main security risk, SC/UK, which has a comprehensive security policy for Somalia that emphasises staff policies, treats national staff as genuine members of the team (and part of all decision-making) and places them at the core of its security approach. Programmes depend on community cooperation. In turn, SC/UK expects a high level of professionalism and accountability from staff. DRC and SC/UK in Beledweyne, Hiran, have a very comprehensive and constructive cooperative relationship with the local committee set up by traditional elders to regulate and prevent contractual and other potential conflicts related to the operations of the two agencies.

The GHC in Gedo has gone further by leaving the security of its operations entirely in the hands of local communities. GHC depends entirely on acceptance by the community. Hence it is the District Health Boards (DHB), which represent the community elders, who advise GHC on security matters, and inform GHC staff in advance if a security crisis is emerging. They also intervene and resolve issues if a conflict involves GHC. Hence GHC need not, and does not, travel with escorts. It has only one armed guard in its compounds. Given that Gedo is one of Somalia's most difficult and inaccessible regions, the number of security incidents is relatively low.

4.2.2 Comprehensive but minimal contact security approaches

Some NGOs have comprehensive policies and emphasise compliance with their security rules. For instance, MSF minimises its relations with the local authorities because it does not want to become

embroiled with local politicians and local agendas. MSF does however strive to balance local community/clan interests. It does this by making its long-term strategies and objectives known to the communities within which it operates.

4.2.3 Many agencies still do not have a country-specific security policy

Most NGOs did not have a country-specific security policy until the NGO SPAS project was set up. The NGO SPAS initiative prompted several agencies to formulate a security plan, often with the advice of the NGO security officer. Several agencies who have country-specific plans mention that their plans need improvement, and that the NGO SPAS security officer is useful for that purpose. Some agencies update these plans quarterly, others do so every half-year and others do so annually. Much more emphasis could be placed on improving security plans. Many agencies do not involve their staff on the ground sufficiently in the development and updating of their security plans. Most agencies have security officers in-house. Large agencies may have a dedicated security officer, and even field security focal points. Smaller agencies usually combine the security role with logistics.

4.2.4 Risk assessment not institutionalised

NGOs' risk assessment practices are overall not very institutionalised, and several agencies struggle to achieve some level of institutionalisation. Ultimately, it is individuals who take the important decisions on security. It is also generally expected that staff are aware of security rules and guidelines, and are responsible for their own security. MSF staff, for instance, have to sign a document stating that they are aware of MSF's security policy. Institutionalisation has improved with the NGO SPAS project, which has organised and formalised security information-sharing and provides security advice and alerts. NGO SPAS is also responsible for organising evacuations and assists in handling security incidents. For most agencies, it is the head of the agency and the HQ who make the final decision on security issues.

4.2.5 The NGO SPAS Programme

International NGOs vary significantly in terms of having security policies adapted to Somalia and in terms of complying with security procedures. Some do not have an explicit security policy; others have very comprehensive policies. Many, especially in SL, have a very casual and *ad hoc* system for reporting security incidents. There is no general understanding or clarity as to how 'procedures' or 'guidelines' should be interpreted. However, after years of discussion, and prompted by the killings of aid staff in Somaliland in 2003/4, the EC pushed for an NGO security project that it could fund. NGO SPAS was created in June 2004.

NGO SPAS aims to reduce the risks to NGO personnel, assets and programmes operating in Somalia through specialised, coordinated and focused security preparedness and support services. Verifiable

success criteria for the project include reduced security costs and security incidents, and hence increased NGO operational efficiency, via:

- establishing an appropriate security information system;
- providing training and technical advice for support field staff;
- raising security awareness among operating agencies and their staff;
- introducing and maintaining operational security systems between NGOs, the UN and local authorities; and
- establishing a security escort system in collaboration with local authorities.

NGO SPAS is now serving about 160 members of the NGO Consortium. Because NGOs do not want a compliance issue to interfere with their mandates or independence, the project has not been able to set up any rules, but instead has produced a set of guiding principles for operations, which are agreed to in principle by a majority of the NGOs, but agencies are not committed to them.

The NGO SPAS Security office provides advice, not regulations or rules. It offers training, including in first aid and risk management, advises on policies and security access and collects and disseminates security information. NGOs have their own policies, the advisor then reviews their policies, but they maintain their independence. The standard advice is usually related to ground travel, where it is recommended to always travel with two vehicles, in daylight, and with the appropriate communications equipment. The office also collects security information, compiles a weekly security report and sends security alerts daily if there is an emergency.

The NGO SPAS Security Advisor also represents NGOs within the UNDSS, UNDP ROLS programme, SMT, SACB Meetings and the OCHA Access Working Group (see coordination mechanisms, below).

Some NGOs use the NGO SPAS Security officer in Nairobi for security briefings prior to first travel to Somalia, and in Somaliland they use the local NGO SPAS security officer. But several NGOs suggested that it would be helpful if the NGO SPAS provided regular security briefings and training to their staff. Several NGOs also find that it is unclear what services are actually provided by the NGO SPAS project. In Somaliland, a local NGO SPAS security officer was installed in order to collect security information and intelligence for the weekly security update for the NGO Consortium specifically, and day-to-day *ad hoc* news alerts, as well as to administer the SL-based NGOs' needs for Special Protection Unit (SPU) guards (see section below on the SPU).

4.2.6 *The SPU in Somaliland*

The killings in SL in 2003 and 2004 prompted the UN and the government of Somaliland to establish the Special Protection Unit (SPU), which is part of the Somaliland Police. The SPU was already in the pipeline of the UNDP ROLS programme when the incidents in SL took place, but they prompted the swift implementation of the programme.²³ SPUs provide escorts and guards for the protection of the international agencies working in SL. The system is interesting as it is the only formally recognised ‘Somali-managed’ security system for aid agencies, and only exists due to the established governmental authorities in SL.

The SPU comprises four groups (SPLF/UN, 2005): 1) a static group to guard the residential and office compounds of all the international agencies in SL; 2) a quick-response group; 3) a protection group to escort international personnel travelling outside of Hargeisa; 4) a mobile group for after-dark patrols in high-risk areas of Hargeisa; 5) a group to respond to community needs in times of emergency/disaster. The SPU comprises some 300 security staff. In July, another group of some 100 guards was established for all regions except Sool, due to the border dispute with Puntland (NGO SPAS officer in Hargeisa).

4.2.7 *Operational procedures of SPU*

INGO expatriate staff travelling to the field have to prepare an Escort Authorisation Form to be forwarded to the NGO SPAS Security Officer, who then prepares an Escort Request Form, which is forwarded to the SPU, which provides the required security guards. For travel to the field at short notice there is an *ad hoc* standby group of ten security guards.

The SPU is funded by the EC via UNDP, which forwards the money to the Minister of Interior. This has proven to be a problematic arrangement because the funds flow from the Ministry of Interior to the Police Commissioner, then to the commanders and then to the individual SPU guards. This is a long way to travel, and due to bad governance it may take up to two months for the SPU guards to receive payment. Money is sometimes embezzled en route, raising security issues for INGOs. To avoid incidents with SPU guards, and to ensure loyalty, some INGOs pay advances to the SPU guards (SC/UK & COOPI). Others hire their own guards outside the SPU system (DDG & HALO TRUST), which is not consonant with agreed principles. This should be avoided. A Police Commissioner has been dismissed due to irregularities related to payments of SPU guards.

²³ The SL government said that it was compulsory that it played a role in setting up a force in SL. UNDP ROLS was in the process of setting up the SPU in SL, as a service for the UN and INGOs there. Funds were from the EC, but the force was paid via UNDP and the SL Ministry of Interior.

4.2.8 Security issues involving the SPU

In Somaliland, the main security problem experienced by expatriates involves security staff of the SPU itself. During the autumn of 2005, there were several issues of harassment of INGO staff, especially female staff of Somali origin, who were harassed when they wanted to join their expatriate colleagues for social events after working hours. The SPU could not handle this culturally sensitive issue, and therefore stopped Somali women and men from entering expatriate compounds, sometimes at gunpoint. This gave currency to the perception of the SPU acting as a 'morality police' hindering social interaction between expatriate staff and local Somalis.

This has repercussions not only for the social life and freedom of expatriate staff, but also, and more importantly, for access, because limitations in interaction with local Somalis and colleagues can have a crucial negative impact on the ability of agencies to engage positively and constructively with communities and gain their confidence and respect, which in the end can contribute to compromising the security of expatriate staff working in SL. The NGO SPAS security officer in Hargeisa now hopes that this problem has been resolved with the signing of the SOP for the SPU (SLPF/UN 2005).²⁴

Another problem is that the SPU guards are not necessarily well trained or professional, and are often not very well educated. There is therefore a need to train the SPU not only in their procedures, but in sensitisation to the behaviour of foreigners as well as International Humanitarian Law and human rights.

Contrary to the general INGO view on the SPU, the UNDP in SL finds that the SPU has not been a constraint on operations. Rather, it gives staff some confidence. UNDP finds that the problems with the SPU are mainly due to INGOs not following procedures, and agencies have some responsibility for the difficulties they have had with the SPU.²⁵ The UNDSS/AFSCO finds that the SPU has met its objectives, to some extent. It is, however, necessary to work on the payment system and salary structure, which requires governance capacity-building of the SL police force and Ministry of Interior. Today, there is a cost-sharing of 50/50 between SL and the UNDP (EC). This causes some dissatisfaction, because the administrative system is not functioning well, and this has an effect on agency operations. However, national staff can travel up-country without security staff/SPU, and are happy doing so.

Given the high level of UNDP ROLS involvement in the establishment of the SPU, the fact that it is primarily funded by the EC and other donors from the international community – without a thought-through exit strategy – raises the question whether the SPU arrangement is only another way of sub-

²⁴ However, the Somali version of the SOP has yet to be signed (as of June 2006).

²⁵ The other UN agencies, however, share the general INGO view on the SPU.

contracting security provision to a local organisation, not much different from hiring vehicles with security in South-Central Somalia or private security firms in Kenya. In fact, one may wonder why the UN places SL in a higher security category than Nairobi, which seems to be a more dangerous place than Hargeisa. The answer is that there may indeed not be any difference, in principle. In fact, given that there is a governmental authority in SL, protection of international aid agencies should in principle be left to the government of SL. UNDP ROLS and the international community can rightly be involved in building the security capacity of SL security and police forces, but they should stay away from involvement in salary payments etc., because such involvement contributes to the creation of an insecurity-based livelihood strategy that runs counter to the security of operations.

4.2.9 Perceived efficacy of NGO security ground rules

The main implications of the applied security rules on programmes, as perceived by agency staff, is that they complicate operations by increasing time-consuming bureaucracy and paperwork (planning, reporting, organisation, monitoring, documentation, training), and therefore compel longer-term planning of travel and logistics, which makes *ad hoc* movements more difficult and increases administrative costs.

4.2.10 More interaction with communities would improve security

It is generally perceived that more and better interaction with neighbours and the communities with which agencies work will have a positive impact on the security environment in SL particularly, and in Somalia more generally. In SL, the SPU is a hindrance to this free interaction, making it difficult to apply acceptance strategies.

4.2.11 Non-compliance issues

Some NGOs find that there is a need for security agreements and joint forms of accountability. There needs to be a way of keeping non-compliant NGOs accountable for actions which can jeopardise the security of others. A case in point is the regulation of numbers of staff in the field, which is very important in case of evacuation. In such cases, there is a need to know exactly how many and where staff are. Evacuation preparedness, limited by funding, may obviously dictate a limit to the number of staff in the field in a given area. This obviously also causes limitations to access, which NGOs dislike.

The evacuation preparedness system could be improved, but requires coordination and the involvement of other agencies, especially ECHO and UNCAS (responsible for airfield security). CARE has suggested that, if an EC-funded NGO does not provide the necessary information on field staff to the NGO SPAS, EC should stop its funding. This view is, however, not shared by most of the INGOs, or by

the EC. There is also a need to achieve compliance around SPU payment agreements: if you pay more than others, you may expose other people to insecurity. This is especially important in a context where the main security problem for agencies concerns contractual issues.

4.2.12 More security awareness – but contractual security is not addressed

The NGO SPAS project has generally achieved more security awareness and better-trained staff, and the security advisor has contributed to better security assessments and national security policies. This in turn seems to have contributed to better staff safety. However, the NGO SPAS, like the UNDSS MOSS, has not yet been able to systematically address the most important security problem in Somalia, namely issues related to contracts. One reason for this is that improved inter-agency coordination, such as through some form of Joint Policy of Operations (JPO), requires community- and clan-sensitive staffing and contracting policies, which are currently left to individual organisations.

4.3 Security coordination mechanisms

The following section describes the security coordination mechanisms set up for operations in Somalia.

4.3.1 Security Management Team (SMT)

For the UN system, the main security mechanism is the Security Management Team (SMT). This is the main decision-making body. The UN system does not cooperate outside the UN, except for the security issues that may be taken up in fora such as the SACB Steering Committee meetings. For the UN agencies and INGOs, South-Central Somalia is not an easy context for coordination because agencies are dispersed. Hence, coordination is often allocated to Nairobi; the lack of road access in South-Central Somalia often makes it easier for agencies to meet in Nairobi.

4.3.2 The Access Working Group

The Access Working Group was established by OCHA as a ‘wake-up call’ to the drought beginning in July 2005. It is one of seven sectoral coordination working groups established by OCHA and the Humanitarian Response Group (HRG) to address the drought crisis in Somalia. The Access Working Group is headed by OCHA and the NGO SPAS Security Advisor.

Field coordination is not yet clearly established. For instance, the Water and Sanitation working group meeting held in the field in February in Wajid, Bakool region, was not attended by local security staff, which would have strengthened the focus on security issues related to the drought response.

At a higher level, there is also an Inter Agency Standing Committee for Somalia (IASC), composed of the main UN agencies and INGOs present in the drought areas in Southern-Central Somalia. There is also coordination between OCHA and the Ministerial Disaster Committee set up by the TFG, but this is not yet fully institutionalised.

4.3.3 NGO Consortium

The NGO Security Advisor provides a security briefing to the NGO Consortium at monthly meetings, and to the Executive Committee and Consultative Forum meetings of SACB. Apart from that, there is no operational coordination on security for Somalia between NGOs. It is not organised, but some *ad hoc* coordination occurs in the field. Security briefings take place at the monthly NGO Consortium Meetings, but interest, at least as measured by attendance from INGOs, is very low.

It is mainly the big INGO operators, such as CARE, and the main UN sub-contracted INGOs that take part in the Access Working Group. Generally, local Somali NGOs do not take part in SACB and NGO coordination meetings in Nairobi. One reason for this is the restrictive Kenyan visa policy, which makes it difficult for Somali passport holders to enter Kenya. Another reason may be that local NGOs do not receive funds to take part in these meetings.

Most NGOs assess security by themselves, on a case-by-case basis. There is no coordination, and as agencies are very spread out, what coordination there is is very localised. The INGO interest in centralised coordination is also hampered by the fact that conflict and security risks in Somalia are usually localised, which means that it does not make much immediate sense to spend time on coordination with other agencies that are not operational in the same area.

4.3.4 UN–NGO Memorandums of Understanding

Only ICRC, CARE and WFP have an inter-agency MoU, which includes a division of labour in terms of which regions the respective agencies operate in, in order to avoid competition and conflict over food coming from the agencies. Any cooperation and coordination is highly valued, but cooperation is often marred by the institutionalised interests of the agencies – which are not compatible with the interests of other agencies. Furthermore, the UN finds it difficult to accommodate the modes of operation and culture of the NGOs, making inter-agency coordination very difficult.

The formal security ground rules for Somalia are first of all outlined for UN staff in the Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS), and the MORSS outlining the Residential Security Standards.

For the NGO sector, each agency has its own security rules, which often refer to the given agency's global security standards (if any). In addition, the NGO SPAS programme was set up in late 2004 to support and advise NGOs to develop security ground rules for Somalia. Hence, the NGO SPAS does not provide a set of rules, but only functions in an advisory role to NGOs. The NGO SPAS does, however, maintain field staffing lists as part of the evacuation preparedness mechanism.

Finally, the UNDP has deployed the SPU security guards in Somaliland, to protect agencies there. Most NGOs have agreed (with some reluctance) to make use of the SPU, and have created an NGO SPAS Security Officer post in Hargeisa, whose main role is to administer, facilitate and liaise between NGOs and the SPU.

Many agencies thought that the main response to security incidents in SL in 2003/4 was the application of the new MOSS, the SPU in SL and the NGO SPAS. However, in all three cases the planning and development of the three programmes was already underway as measures pushed forward by donors and the UN, mainly as a response to the bombing of the UN HQ in Baghdad.

5. Operational tactics for obtaining access

Until the beginning of 2006, there was no common and comprehensive strategy to expand humanitarian space in Somalia. Rather, it seems that the tactics applied tend to lead to a decrease in humanitarian access. It is difficult to point to any single reason for this, but perceptions at field level suggest several possible factors:

- Very low level of donor interest in Somalia.
- Complexity of the Somali security environment.
- Inter-agency competition in Nairobi, making coordination difficult.
- Reluctance of Nairobi-based staff to spend more time in the field, or to leave Nairobi (despite the fact that security there is often worse than in Somalia).

The recent drought crisis has forced OCHA to search for new approaches to gain access, especially in Southern Somalia (Bay, Bakool, Gedo and the Jubas), which is the worst-hit drought area in Somalia.

5.1 Acceptance, protection and deterrence strategies

In January 2006, the Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the new Prime Minister of the TFG, in which the TFG commits itself to cooperate with the UN to enhance access and to assist in the dissemination of the MoU's principles at the local level. UN agencies have also produced a statement for local authorities and communities to adhere to basic humanitarian principles. The TFG has also created a Drought Technical Committee, which among other things will look into access issues. The idea is then to turn to the elders, traditional leaders and communities to secure guarantees for safe and secure access, with the condition that, if access is not secure, there will be no aid. This approach, which seems to be based on new elements of achieving acceptance-based strategy to security and access in Southern-Central Somalia, is not without problems. First, it is based on an MoU with the TFG, which in principle is positive, since the new administration needs support. However, in the short term it will at best cause no harm, as the TFG does not have any institutions on the ground.

However, this strategy may not achieve its aim for several reasons, of which the most important is that the MoU is not formulated through negotiations with either the TFG or the community leaders in question, but by OCHA and UN, and therefore appears to have been dictated to Somalis. Hence it reflects a deterrence strategy rather than an acceptance-based one. Somalis have a long record of not being impressed by deterrence strategies.

During the post-UNOSOM period, neither SACB nor the UN has been able to implement deterrence strategies for sustained periods. These arrangements are always eventually broken, partly due to a lack of engagement in maintaining them with local communities, which again can be explained by the general post-UNOSOM approach of leaving Somali problems to Somalis.²⁶ In this connection, it is interesting to note that those INGOs that have managed to apply acceptance-based security strategies maintain a relatively high level of secure movement, especially compared to the UN.

The other problem is that many local and traditional authorities as well as security arrangements in South-Central Somalia do not have sufficient power or leverage to provide the kind of security guarantees which the UN/OCHA and SACB are demanding. In other words, these 'authorities', including traditional structures, will only be able to do the job if they are sufficiently and continuously supported and engaged. Hence, it is not enough just to send a mission for negotiations, sign a MoU and then leave the community to itself, believing everything is in good order. More engagement with local authorities is necessary, which may require that restrictions on travel in South-Central Somalia need to be lifted for a period, despite the risks that this may involve.

Finally, there are no monitoring or follow-up mechanisms for entering into an MoU. The UN has used a recent kidnapping incident to show the efficiency of the MoU entered into with the TFG. UNICEF/OCHA attempted to visit Lower Juba in February 2006 to consult partners on the ground and identify quick-impact drought interventions. The mission was ambushed in Afmadow by armed militia and an expatriate staff member from UNICEF was abducted. Direct negotiations with the TFG and local authorities immediately started to seek the staff member's quick and safe release, which after intense consultations occurred 30 hours later. However, the TFG came under strong pressure to secure the individual's release, and according to an anonymous source the TFG paid the kidnappers a ransom.

5.2 Perceptions of UN security strategies

The key is to do programme assessments (not currently being done) which include security, and to do this in such a way that security is not reduced solely to physical protection, but involves 'soft' security issues as well.

An alternative perspective on access in Somalia is based on the principle that 'in Somalia you can do business everywhere' (WFP security officer). There is always a way to operate, but doing so requires an understanding of the context. For instance, if there has been an evacuation, operations are often suspended in that area for years, which means that all access or contractual issues need to be renegotiated.

²⁶ In this connection, a common grievance is that the SACB never lived up to its 'peace-dividend' approach by rewarding Somaliland with more aid.

tiated. The abduction in Afmadow involving UNICEF illustrates the point that old unresolved issues from the past remain current for years.²⁷ There is therefore a need for greater efficiency and long-term engagement in negotiating new terms of return to closed areas, and greater efforts and resources need to be put into maintaining continuous good community relations to ensure safe access.

5.2.1 Need for coordination in the field

There is also a need for inter-agency security and coordination mechanisms in the field. For example, with the drought, and with Wajid as the only access point, aid must be well coordinated. Otherwise, contractual problems will easily spill over, and may feed/ignite inter-clan conflicts as well as lead to the targeting of aid operations and assets.

5.2.2 Need for community-based acceptance strategies

UNICEF national staff emphasise that the best security protection is based on careful, respectful and regular negotiations and dialogue with local communities, authorities and military powers/warlords. Because of the MOSS and SRA, which restrict UN and INGOs' staff presence in the field, community involvement may be the only, and the best, way to gain access. But community involvement has to be deep. A district water committee may not represent its community as it claims, because it may be a 'gatekeeper' acting on behalf of a dominant local warlord (UNICEF staff in Wajid). To avoid being misled by local actors, it may be useful to engage directly with the right clan-lineage elders and their councils (Gundel, 2006).

One method is to agree an MoU with the community for securing operations and to avoid further complications. However, MoU agreements are only efficient if the given communities and their authorities have the capacity and leverage to fulfil the promises made. Furthermore, MoUs can only function in places with a central, effective and relatively legitimate administration. Hence, OCHA needs to acknowledge that the MoU will not help in places where there is no effective administration.

An interesting example is Luuq district in Gedo region, where the DC, police, authorities and elders were relatively weak versus the freelance militias which were causing insecurity and setting up checkpoints. GHC could still operate, and remained very well respected due to its long-term engagement and its arrangements with the local community elders in setting up the Gedo Health Boards, whose main role is to help with security. This arrangement has since May been enhanced by a new local agreement between traditional clan elders and the militias, which has effectively sent them out of town and disbanded their roadblocks, and outlawed carrying arms in Luuq without authorisation

²⁷ Note again that expatriate INGO staff were present in Afmadow throughout this kidnapping crisis, showing that the UN was specifically targeted.

(interview in Luuq, June 2006). This type of local agreement should be immediately followed up by international aid agencies, notably OCHA, given positive backing and aid. Hence, there should be greater focus on and engagement in peace and reconciliation at the community level. The OCHA approach is restricted to consultations only at district level. The culture of violence prevalent in Southern and Central Somalia is another issue that needs to be addressed (Amina, UNICEF).

6. The security roles of local humanitarian actors

Given the limitations of access in Somalia, especially in South-Central Somalia, it is interesting to assess the current and potential roles of local actors in humanitarian response, and the extent to which these limitations are used in light of policy and operational changes within the international humanitarian community.

The UN keeps fewer statistics than INGOs due to its more restrictive travel policy in the field. This makes it more difficult for the UN to gain community confidence and trust, as well as to deal more efficiently with contractual incidents. INGOs, local staff and LNGOs can work more freely and know their security environment, but there are other problems. One is that local NGOs, and sometimes also local national staff, lack the skills to implement programmes; likewise, there is a lack of capable and reliable LNGO/CBO partners.

International agencies, INGOs and the UN deny that they sub-contract or enter into partnerships with local entities as a response to security changes. However, it seems clear that, after UNOSOM withdrew, and with it all the INGOs, new ways of establishing ground presence were sought – in effect, since then aid has been delivered by ‘remote control’ and as a ‘cross-border’ operation. Despite statements from the agencies, this general move can only be regarded as dictated by a perception that Somalia is inaccessible for security reasons. The following options were used by international agencies:

- The UN became increasingly dependent on local Somali staff for access.
- UN agencies sought out international and local NGOs and sometimes private contractors to implement projects.
- International NGOs sought local NGOs as implementing partners.
- Security was addressed by hiring local guards and vehicles, often from private contractors related to clans in the area of operation (sometimes contractors were directly from the local warlord).
- WFP, ICRC and CARE engaged large private Somali businessmen in Mogadishu for their food and seed transportation capacity in Somalia.

The latter point is treated separately below in the section on food aid security. In no case has an external private security firm or similar been contracted in Somalia. There are limitations to sub-contracting. The most important is that there is a lack of qualified implementing partners; indeed, many Somali NGOs are nominal only, and a cover for a simple business opportunity. Furthermore, sub-contracting places more importance on, and requires more resources for monitoring of operations by

local partners. Increasingly, and mainly promoted by the INGOs, CBOs have come into the picture as implementing partners, which is seen as a potential way of dealing with monitoring, as community beneficiaries should also have an interest in proper accountability.

In South-Central Somalia, local national staff take care of the security issues, negotiations with elders and most field operations. International staff are primarily doing administrative paperwork and providing technical advice.

As indicated by the statistics presented in Figure 4, nationals are more subject to serious incidents than internationals. On the other hand, they know the security environment better than expatriates. There is no doubt that security risk assessment relies heavily on local Somali security and other staff. In many cases, Somali national staff have paid a high price for being associated with international agencies, especially the UN. More could be done to train local national staff, not only in security techniques, but also in supporting their role in negotiating access and in programme-related conflict resolution.

The security expertise employed by local NGOs engaged in humanitarian assistance is primarily based on their intimate knowledge of their environment. They are good at assessing the risks and handling the risks involved in contractual matters. Furthermore, they know their own families, their clans and elders, their traditional conflict-resolution practices, jurisprudence and customary law, which enables them to engage these vital structures to ensure security and safe access for humanitarian operations.

Most important for security is access to reliable information about security incidents and political and military developments. For that purpose, local staff are also most important, because of their intimacy with the social and political context. Preventive security is achieved via the maintenance of good contacts, networking with businesspeople, friends and close colleagues. In Somalia, the social fabric is such that extreme Islamic militants cannot go to a small place like Wajid because they would immediately be known. They are therefore also primarily confined to the major urban areas, especially Mogadishu (local UNDSS staff).

6.1 The food aid security approach in Somalia

The use of local staff and sub-contracting, especially of food aid, to private local Somali contractors is a major way of addressing security issues in Somalia. This practice is used entirely within the food transportation sector in Somalia, and was introduced in 1997 by WFP (see Gundel, 2002).

In order to avoid security incidents involving WFP directly, and to prevent food from being stolen, WFP engaged private Somali transporters. The principle is that private transporters deposit a bond in a WFP bank account equalling the value of the transported food. When the food is fully and satisfactorily delivered at the agreed distribution point, the bond is released, together with payment of the contract. While on the road it is entirely up to the contractor how the food reaches the distribution point.

The advantage for WFP is that it does not get directly involved in incidents, and does not lose food, at least in terms of value. The food is better protected because the transporters, being Somali, are protected not just by their technicals,²⁸ but also by being members of the Somali clan system and the traditional jurisprudence related to this. This means that, unlike WFP, which as an external agency is foreign and hence not considered to have any legal protection in stateless Somalia, private contractors maintain a legal status, and potential looters know the risks that an attack carries due to the deterrence involved in traditional Somali jurisprudence.

The problem is that the risk burden is transferred to private contractors, and the risk of attacks is reduced, but still present. Private contractors have been subject to attacks. But the weakness is now the distribution points, where there will be increased tensions. Monitoring at delivery/distribution points is therefore often delegated to LNGOs and INGOs, which is cheaper, according to the head of WFP Somalia.

Another problem with this system is that it has effectively contributed to the establishment of at least four businessmen/warlords in Mogadishu. Each of these contractors is in possession of between 50 and 70 technicals and 100 militiamen (anonymous source). The WFP security officer suggests that it would be interesting to see what would happen if contracts were given to women, and transport was carried out entirely by women, because in Somali culture it is generally perceived as unthinkable to shoot/attack women.

6.2 Towards a community and acceptance-based security strategy

Applied security policies do not seem to be well linked to the incremental improvements in local security arrangements that have emerged since the mid-1990s (see Section 2, on emerging political complexes). Links to these emergent local security arrangements and local polities could be achieved by applying community-based acceptance strategies. Hence, in terms of managing security better at field level, it would be a good idea to enhance existing capacities within communities, rather than taking the approach that there are no capacities. Women have significant capacity in water

²⁸ A Somali armed vehicle, usually a 4-wheel-drive with mounted with an anti-aircraft gun.

management, for instance. Furthermore, the assessment from local UNDSS staff is that communities today are more powerful than warlords in the past.

Security on the ground is best achieved with intensive and continuous dialogue and dissemination, i.e. dialogue with elders to achieve goals. An example of this approach may be the village stockpile initiative, based on practices implemented by the Danish Demining Group (DDG), where traditional elders are involved in negotiating a balanced release of explosives.

Communication/Dialogue/Transparency are key elements in any good security policy. In Somalia, a point of departure should be 'We don't have money, we come with aid for the needy'. This message should be disseminated and spread via proper engagement with militias and community leaders, especially traditional elders.

Adaptation to cultural practices on the ground may also be necessary, which may imply that it does not make sense to keep to all the rules in all cases (i.e. Western 'liberal' values such as enforcing gender balance), and which sometimes can be counterproductive to efforts at gaining access.

A wider acceptance-based approach can also involve in-depth and careful power analysis on the ground, as the SC/UK practiced in September 2005 following a number of security issues in Hiran. The analysis, which involved insights from local staff, pointed out that the ultimate power was the traditional elders, and therefore an MoU with them was drafted. This MoU, while being based on acceptance, also includes deterrence elements such as the threat of withdrawal if security was not provided. The important thing is not that there cannot be deterrence elements in acceptance security strategies. There can, but they should be understood and agreed on through careful and respectful negotiations with community authorities and traditional elders.

Ideally, the MOSS and Security Risk Management should be developed on the basis of programme needs assessments of what the security risks and needs are in relation to the programme. On that basis, the MOSS can be developed and adapted, with a focus on a wider security approach, which can be based on community dialogue and communication. This could lead to a new mode of operation in Somalia. Training should focus on how to deal with communities and the ability to deal with contractual issues.

Good community relations are crucial for field security in Somalia. Social mobilisation can involve traditional elders, and MoUs can be entered into as a kind of contract where the community authorities commit themselves to ensuring the security of expatriates and operations. To achieve secure access in South-Central Somalia, it is necessary to maintain careful negotiations and the very careful and

balanced application and allocation of resources to communities, which in general is a delaying factor, because activities must wait until a balanced effort can be applied.

Communication is very important, because most conflicts related to aid are based on misperceptions or 'jealousy' between the communities/clans. The solution may be to improve programme communication to elders, and establish dialogue with them on how to achieve a balanced response between the clans. Hence, better information and communication strategies with and to communities, authorities and powers in areas of operation on operational issues, including the proper dissemination of contractual issues, transparency of operations and better explanations of what the aid procedures are, and what the objectives of aid are, can do much to help prevent tensions related to aid operations, and especially security issues related to contractual problems. This could be done by distributing free radios (with dynamos so that they do not need batteries) and making daily radio broadcasts informing communities about that day's aid activities. Furthermore, close engagement with community leaders on contractual issues is crucial. Traditional elders can be very useful in this regard. Clan-balancing of contracts is necessary, at least until governmental authority has become more institutionalised. This can best be done through stable arrangements with clan elders.

Relocation of more UNCT meetings and UN staff to Somalia itself may be a prerequisite to increasing agencies' understanding of the environment they are operating in, and may improve agencies' ability to navigate the environment. In other words, more consistent presence on the ground may help security in the long run.

In SL, it would be a good idea to link police training and programmes, including SPU, to take in secondary school leavers for a minimum of one year's police training, in order to achieve a better educated police force, and one which includes women.

A livelihoods and protection study by OCHA provides one example of the thought given to how agencies might navigate the security terrain in southern Somalia (see Narbeth, July 2003). This strategy involves engaging local authorities and communities in an intense and phased approach, where the first phase is to establish a set of ground rules, negotiated with the authorities in question. This requires a coordinated effort from international humanitarian agencies, and an open approach to the local authorities. Once this is achieved, further humanitarian access can be established in steps.

7. Conclusions

The main security risk facing international aid operations remains contractual, economic and clan-based. The most appropriate long-term security approach would be an increased emphasis on acceptance strategies, involving a deep engagement with community elders whom, with the right encouragement and support, can create much of the humanitarian space that is lacking in South-Central Somalia today.

Foreign aid workers have rarely been targets of clan-based conflict and could, to some extent, depend on clan-based protection. However, it is also clear that it is more difficult for even local customary deterrence strategies to protect aid workers against ideological or politically driven threats, such as extreme threats from radical Islamists. But, even in the latter case, Somali communities need aid, and elders maintain a certain leverage over their communities. But to engage these forces, the first requirement would be to break the 'travel deadlock' to enable more long-term interaction with community leaders.

It seems that the general policies of international agencies, their funding concerns, the policies of donor governments and insurance policies have been more important in determining security policies for Somalia than the actual programme needs of beneficiaries. This is reflected in the security system of international agencies, in particular the UN, which (for insurance reasons) puts more emphasis on personnel safety (protection strategies) than improving access or humanitarian space through acceptance strategies.

In addition, security policies have been poorly adapted to the incremental improvements in local security arrangements that have emerged since the mid-1990s, and which, with creative acceptance strategies targeting community leaders and traditional elders, could have improved operational security while at the same being immediately supportive of local peace and reconciliation achievements. Such strategies require, however, more international and expatriate presence on the ground than is allowed by current security policies, particularly those of the UN. If an acceptance strategy is to succeed, it requires mutual respect and understanding between the agency and local actors. This can only be built if agency staff are deployed on the ground, and travel more extensively among local populations than is currently the case.

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Annex 2: Interviewees

OCHA	Phillippe Lazzarini, Head of Office Wafaa Saeed, Head of Suboffice, Wajid Abdulaziz M. Ahmed, HA Officer, Mogadishu Reena Ghelani, Protection Officer Ali Doy, Officer, Nairobi Yussuf Abdi Salah, HA Officer, Wajid
UNDP	Sidi Zahabi, ROLS Programme Manager Safia Jama, Hargeisa Liaison Officer
UNDP HC (Acting)	Chr. Balslev-Olesen, Head of UNICEF
WFP	Zlatan Milisic, Head of Office Ibrahim Conteh, Head of South Central program, Wajid Mohamed Ali, Wajid Nadir Benguernane, Security Officer
UNICEF	Chr. Balslev-Olesen, Head of Office Robert McCarthy, Head of Emergency Unit Danielle Keulen, Watisan Officer, Wajid Amina Ibrahim Abukor Sheikh Madobe, Wajid Mahimbo Mdoe, Hoed of Hargeisa Office Abdulkadir A. Dalib, Liaison Officer Operations, Wajid
FAO/FSAU	Addo Aden, Baidoa Abdulaziz Aden, Wajid Simon Narbeth, Nairobi
UNDSS	Joe Gordon, Head Arve Skog, Deputy Parakrama Siriwardana, Hargeisa Salah Omer, Nairobi Isaak Subuk, Wajid Patrick Udeh, Wajid
CARE	Lex Kassenberg, Head of Somalia Office
NGO SPAS	Jeff Ohanga, Security Officer Yusuf Abdi Hassan, Security Assistant, Hargeisa Barry Steyn, Program Manager

Mercy Corps	Zoe Daniels, Country Rep.
Gedo Health Consortium	Rosemary Heenan, Director
World Vision	Graham Davison
Handicap International	Ulrike Last, Hargeisa
Save the Children/ UK	Zabebew Zellek, Hargeisa Office El-Khidir Daloum, Head of Regional Office, Nairobi
Concern Worldwide	Reiseal NiCheilleachair Abdirashid Kahaji, Mogadishu
DRC	Gunnar Kraft, Head of Hargeisa Office M. Hatibu, Head of Beletweyne Office Hugh Fenton, Head of Nairobi Office
DDG	Nick Bateman, Nairobi Office
ACF	Xavier Duboc, Head of Nairobi Office Romain Lasjuilliaras, Head of Wajid Base
MSF/E/NL/B/CH	Josep Prior Tió, General Coordinator, Nairobi Office
ADRA	Edwin Mbagati, Head of Xuddur Office Abdikadir Diad, Admin/Logistics, Xuddur
CISP	Ombretta Mazzaroni, Health Officer
Novib	Sara Reggio, Program Manager, Nairobi Office
Horn Relief	Degan Ali, Deputy Director
SADO	Abdirizak Gerio
Academy for Peace and Development	Mohammed Gani, Hargeisa
Centre for Research and Development	Hassan, Mogadishu
EC Somalia	Isabel Candela
Other actors	District Commissioner of Wajid Chairman of Health Board in Luuq And a number of Somali aid workers who wished to remain anonymous

Annex 3: Methodological operationalisation of research objectives

Objectives/Questions	In Nairobi	In Somalia
1) Cross-check incident data reports, determine what security reporting and information sharing systems exist, and formal security ground rules.	Acquire incident data reports and security reporting systems. Examine and discuss them with UNDSS, INGO Security staff, OCHA, and individuals. Determine common reporting/security information-sharing systems are in place.	Discuss implications for humanitarian access of security incidents and applied responses with agency and local staff, and independent research institutions. Determine use, and perceived efficacy of applied security reporting/information systems.
2) Analyze the risk management and security strategies in use by the different members of the humanitarian community in that setting, including coordinated efforts in security planning, assessments, and protective measures.	Identify the risk management, security strategies, and coordination mechanisms. Determine their perceived efficacy from HQ perspective. How have they changed over time?	Determine the degree of adherence to, and perceived efficacy of security strategies, in terms of keeping staff safe, and enabling aid programming, from field perspective.
3) Map the operational tactics for service delivery across the humanitarian community with an eye to answering the following questions:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What changes have been adopted recently (e.g. increased use of or emphasis on either deterrence or protection strategies)? 	OCHA, UNDSS, HR, NGO Security, WFP, UNICEF, ICRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How have new strategies adopted by some members of the community affected others? Specifically, how have UN security protocols affected non-UN partners or other operators? 	OCHA, UNDSS, HR, NGO Security, WFP, UNICEF, ICRC	Field Offices, NGO SPAS in Hargeisa, and Garowe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have international actors increased or decreased staff (local/international) in response to security changes? Acquire baseline of international staff 	OCHA, UNDSS, HR, NGO Security, WFP, UNICEF, ICRC, NGO Consortium	Somali views in the field

and local staff operating on the ground, from 1997 to date.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have international actors increased or decreased their subcontracting or partnering to local entities response to security changes? • Has the burden of risk been shifted to locals? Are local partners/subcontractors given the support they need? 	OCHA, UNDSS, HR, NGO Security, WFP, UNICEF, ICRC, NGO Consortium	Somali views in the field.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have humanitarian actors in general increased or decreased the level of programming, or redirected assistance, based on security concerns? Acquire baselines for the size of the relief effort from 1997 to date. 	OCHA, UNDSS, HR, NGO Security, WFP, UNICEF, ICRC, NGO Consortium	Somali views in the field
What are the security strategies, arrangements, and resources of the local NGOs and commercial entities engaged in humanitarian assistance?	OCHA, UNDSS, HR, NGO Security, WFP, UNICEF, ICRC, NGO Consortium a.o.	Field Offices, Somali views in the field
4) Analyze the role local aid actors currently play in service delivery strategies, and whether and how this has changed. Quantify aid effort.	OCHA, WFP, UNICEF, Key INGOs	WFP, UNICEF Field Offices, Somali NGOs, and Somali Researchers
5) Assess field level perceptions of the security environment and the risk to humanitarian workers.		Field Offices of UN and INGOs, Somali NGO's

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