



UNITED NATIONS
SOMALIA



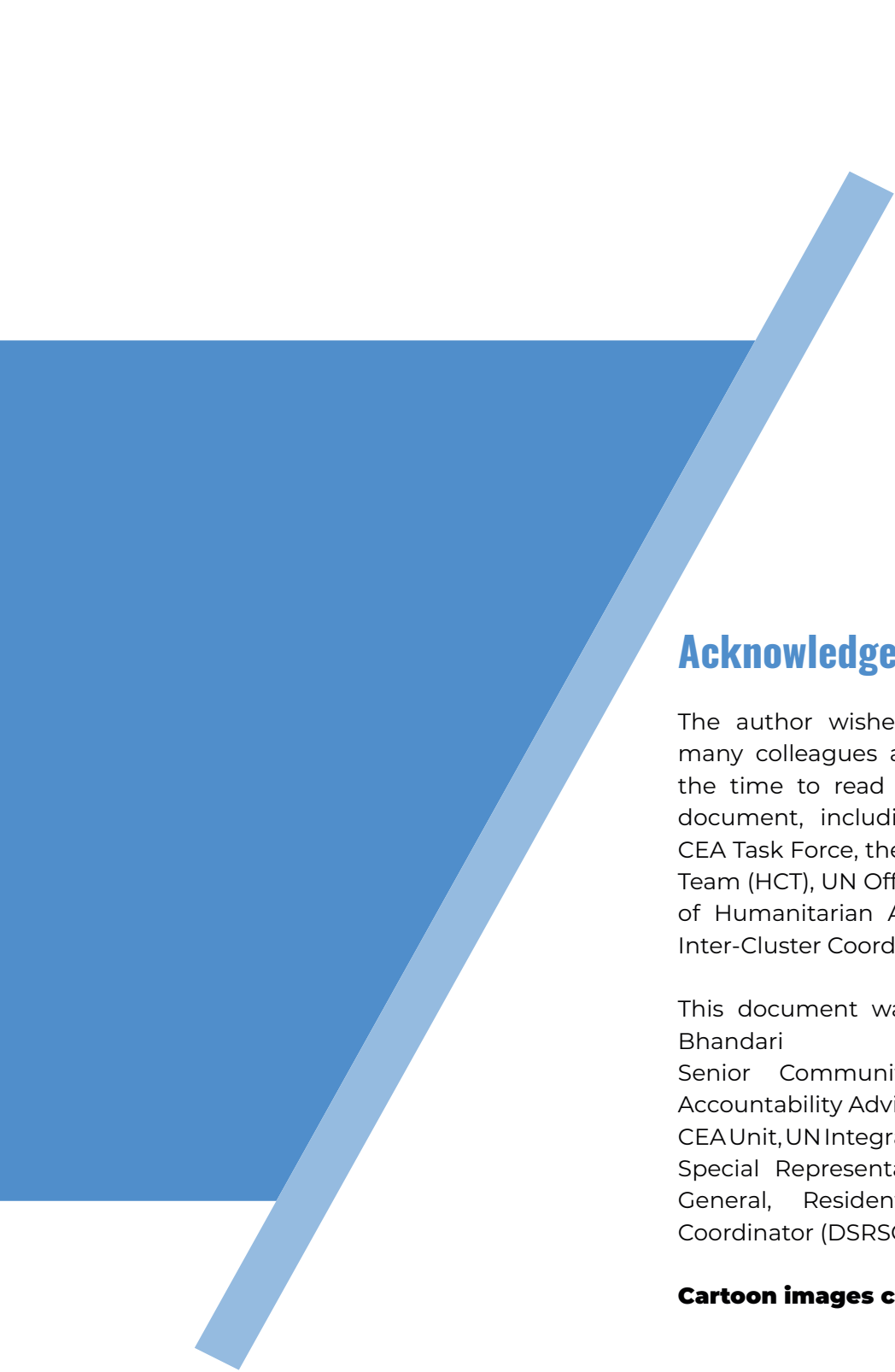
Creating a Participation Revolution by Design



Photo Credit: UNICEF

Somalia National Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) Strategy and Action Plan

May 2022 - 2024



Acknowledgements

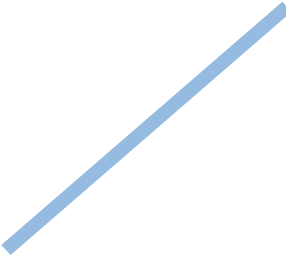
The author wishes to acknowledge the many colleagues and partners who took the time to read and contribute to this document, including the newly formed CEA Task Force, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG).

This document was authored by Meena Bhandari

Senior Community Engagement and Accountability Advisor

CEA Unit, UN Integrated Office of the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (DSRSG/RC/HC)

Cartoon images courtesy of Rikka Tupaz



Abstract

Communities are innately able and have the right to be engaged as active participants in interventions, and they have the voice to ask and have answered any questions related to the response. This includes questions on basic quality criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, targeting, transparency and timeliness.

In practice, this community voice is however not systematically inclusive, not systematically listened to and not systematically responded to. The upward nature of the aid system, the results and data-focused nature of operations have all contributed to this ironic dehumanization of the humanitarian sector; the pendulum has swung too far towards data and results. There is a clear need to bring the 'human' back into humanitarian, and indeed into development and policy and peacekeeping, to ensure quality results are aimed for, delivered and measured in partnership with communities themselves.

CEA – or Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) as this area of work is more often known – is all too often relegated to a tick box exercise at the end of proposals, and therefore fails with a 'systems only' approach to gathering feedback or perceptions for decision makers. CEA cannot have meaning as a standalone information, data gathering and upward reporting system without a wider commitment and supporting a culture to do things differently with communities meaningfully placed in the centre of design and reflected in budgets. This document outlines how CEA can be operationalized and put into practice what has all too often become an overly technical area of work.

CEA, as defined in this paper, involves a deliberate vision for a Participation Revolution to shift power from aid providers towards communities and local groups. It includes the active involvement of inclusive diverse communities in designing interventions, targeting criteria, mapping vulnerable, marginalized and minority groups, and ensuring practical solutions to resolve the localized politicization of aid – all of which have been identified as critical blockages to aid delivery in Somalia. CEA is seen not as a system to be implemented, but as a cultural change that is needed that puts inclusive and diverse vulnerable communities, including women and youth, at the start of the design process and continues through the life cycle of operations. The effectiveness of every aid dollar spent is dependent on this disruption of the current system, and in turn lives are dependent on this.

Table of Contents

1- Introduction	06
2- CEA Vision and Strategy Overview	08
- Vision	08
- National CEA Strategy Overview	08
3- Strategy Justification	10
- Moving Towards a Culture of CEA (more than just another system)	10
- <i>Creating a Culture of CEA: Leadership</i>	10
- <i>Way of Working and Capacity</i>	11
- <i>Funding</i>	11
- <i>A Vision for Localization</i>	11
- <i>Conscious Programming – Recognizing Levels of Participation</i>	12
Somalia CEA Rapid Survey of Frontline Workers	13
4- Somalia CEA Strategy: Creating a Participation Revolution by Design	14
5- Implementation and Coordination	17
6- Somalia National CEA Action Plan	19
Annex I. The Challenging Past of AAP	25
Annex II. Background: Common AAP Pilot in Somalia (2020)	28
Annex III. Abbreviations	30



Photo Credit: IOM

Introduction



CEA relates to aid actors' abilities to engage with people as active participants throughout the lifecycle of operations, including in programme design and key decision-making processes. It relates to aid actors' willingness and ability to be held accountable by communities for the progress, quality and adaptation of interventions with changing contexts and the needs of the most vulnerable people central to the priorities identified. CEA incorporates AAP and inclusion and is a global commitment.¹

CEA should be integral to how programmes are planned and designed. CEA should be a way of working and delivering programmes in partnership with national and local organizations, networks and groups. People – with the deliberate inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups, minority clans, women, youth, elderly and persons with disabilities – should be at the heart of CEA and at the heart of good design, budgeting and implementation. CEA, and indeed protection, gender and inclusion, should not be tick boxes to complete at the end of proposals. Proposals should be designed and operations delivered with the most vulnerable and most marginalized people at the start.

This Somalia CEA Strategy is clear that the more people (both those benefitting from a response and the wider community) are engaged as active participants and treated like citizens and agents of change with innate human rights, the better the quality of interventions – and consequently the greater effectiveness of every aid dollar spent.

This strategy paper outlines how a Participation Revolution, as outlined in the Grand Bargain², needs to be formulated as a strategic vision for the country's response and should steer the operational way of working. This Participation Revolution by Design should guide how

projects are shaped, planned and budgeted for with a deliberate strategic approach to create a culture of CEA in Somalia.

CEA is therefore more than a common or individual organization-level Complaints and Feedback Mechanism (CFM). CEA – with a vision for a Participation Revolution – is about shifting power from aid providers towards communities and local groups. It includes the active involvement of diverse communities in designing targeting criteria, mapping vulnerable, marginalized and minority groups, and ensuring practical solutions to resolve the localized politicization of aid – all of which have been identified as critical blockages to aid delivery.

This engagement requires, as a minimum, effective information flows, including dialogue and discussion, with the most marginalized and vulnerable population groups, including women and youth. This information flow needs to reach beyond the current modus operandi of speaking primarily to gatekeepers and community leaders. Indeed, this CEA Strategy document outlines how there is a spectrum of engagement and participation, and minimum standards required that can support operationalizing CEA in practice and disrupting the current modalities to ensure a changed direction in practice.

CEA is symbiotic with quality interventions; as aid actors, prioritization should be first given to how communities themselves measure the quality of interventions – before then offering this analysis to managers and donors. However, the reverse is largely the case; all too often programmes are designed for donors, managers and others, without the engagement and active participation of diverse and inclusive communities.

¹For an analysis of the choice of the terminology used by Somalia country response, please see Annex I.

²For more of the Grand Bargain please see: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain>.

This CEA Strategy is nationally designed and driven. However, CEA should be explicitly defined as local and indeed as hyper-local, with a vision and practice where communities lead the ownership and key decision making of operations. And where accountability, learning and adapting to communities' measures of quality and best practice is the norm locally. CEA, working in tandem with Protection, Gender, Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), Youth and Durable Solutions experts, should ensure that at a local and practical level people can freely, without fear of retribution, ask questions, engage and collaborate to address concerns related to aid operations. Indeed, this strategy paper outlines the development of a Strategy Design Team that will build stronger synergies amongst advisors in Somalia and offer strategic guidance to design inclusive community-centred programmes.

The disconnect between proposals and strategies and field-level realities with great variations in programme quality, poor targeting of the most vulnerable, the politicization of aid together with the lack of flexible programming that ensures geographical diversification, have been all highlighted as key areas of concern in Somalia. Better inclusive and active engagement with a broad representation of communities is critical to support assessments, and to define targeting criteria to identify the most vulnerable communities – not just in current areas of operation, but also in hard-to-reach and insecure locations.

CEA is inherently linked to the Localization Agenda and the Centrality of Protection (CoP) in Somalia, and connects to the SDG 5 and global commitments on Gender Equality, the Somalia PSEA Action Plan and related tools. It should furthermore build on synergies with global policy frameworks such as the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, and the commitments outlined in the UN resolutions on Women, Peace and Security and the strategies for

their operationalization in Somalia, including through the UN Somalia Youth Strategy.

The CoP strategy addresses three priority areas³ that affect all aspects of the response and relies heavily on robust CEA strategies and approaches that should be built into the design of operations, in order to reduce the most critical protection risks faced by communities. CEA informs the CoP action plan 2022-23. Minority clans are documented as particularly at risk of being excluded from information flows.⁴ This exclusion from information impacts on the quality of operations, including ensuring that the most vulnerable women, men and children are free to engage in the aid operation.

The CEA Strategy is also connected to the HCT-endorsed Access Strategy and Action Plan 2022-23, which highlights multiple humanitarian access challenges, including insecurity and military hostilities, bureaucratic and administrative constraints, infrastructure and environmental challenges. Engaging with communities and local actors in these hard-to-reach settings is in many cases difficult, if not impossible, without the support of leadership structures or negotiations with armed actors. Engagement and effective information flows are all the more critical in these areas to ensure that the most vulnerable and marginalized people have access to basic services and lifesaving assistance in rural and hard-to-reach areas. Mapping local power structures with communities, and building up information flows to these communities through additional channels of communication such as radio, can potentially support this reach.

While accountability has been discussed in humanitarian circles, it is much needed and as connected to the design of development, policy and peacekeeping interventions. This CEA Strategy paper outlines a two-year plan to be endorsed and actioned across the humanitarian-development-peace triple nexus via the HCT and the UN Country Team (UNCT).⁵

³ The three priority areas in the CoP are: (a) reducing structural barriers of exclusion and discrimination due to minority clan affiliation, gender and/or disability, (b) increasing safety at Internally Displaced Person (IDP) sites for both displaced and host communities, and (c) reducing the risk of indiscriminate attacks on civilians and their assets.

⁴ See: <https://www.google.com/url?q=https://minorityrights.org/publications/swiss-mfa-review/&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1652701880841997&usq=AOvaw3S9eDheXMx9W/WXEn8x4jFG>

⁵ For more on the Triple Nexus see: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/triple-nexus-questions-and-answers-integrating-humanitarian-development-and-peace>.

CEA Vision and Strategy Overview

Vision

This CEA strategy paper is initially focused on a two-year Action Plan (see Chapter 6). However, it aims that by 2026 ⁶ (i.e. in four years' time), a longer-term vision for CEA in Somalia will have delivered greater collective relevance, quality (including better targeting, timeliness, efficiency etc.) and effectiveness of operations through supporting the active participation and strengthened ownership by the Somali population.

By 2026 this CEA vision will see:

- Significant steps made towards a participation revolution in Somalia, where the country's response is more effectively locally owned and managed – with effective planning / programme design, discussion, monitoring and action led by inclusive communities.
 - A change in the culture and mindset for CEA that is well understood, operationalized and established at field, organizational and ICCG, HCT, UNCT and donor levels as the new modus operandi across the triple nexus.
 - Functioning, sustainable and effective culture of CEA that supports and sustains a wider culture of strategic programme design with community inclusion, protection (including PSEA), disability inclusion, and gender equity and youth at its heart.
 - Better empowered organizations, local groups and local networks who understand how to operationalize CEA and do so effectively, as measured by communities themselves in the first instance.
 - A national common CEA system leveraging the power of radio and multiple channels of communication (such as cultural traditions including poetry, drama, and traditional song and dance) to reach the most marginalized groups, will be owned and operated locally, with national analysis and technical support.
- Information flows to the most vulnerable and marginalized people first, and power shifts towards key groups of people who will lead this change.
- Measurable change with greater ownership and power shifts that move away from donors, UN agencies and international NGOs, towards national NGOs, local networks, consortiums, civil society and local authorities, as appropriate, supporting the Localization Agenda. This process will be undertaken with support of protection experts, and consideration of a 'do no harm approach', within a safe operating environment.

National CEA Strategy Overview

- The focus for Somalia is on collaborative approaches to operationalize CEA – bringing a participation revolution to the centre of programme design; this move away from CEA / AAP as an 'add on' into proposals is a critical step which will be supported by a Strategy Design Team, field level Real Time Training (RTT), and an operational locally owned CFM that will be scaled up nationally using a franchise approach.
- A Participation Revolution by Design requires an approach that recognizes this vision at its heart and works to realize it with deliberate effort. This design approach places marginalized and vulnerable populations, including women and youth, at the centre of planning, decision making and monitoring. CEA is central to the process from the beginning (before funding has arrived) to underpin decision making about programming. This vision will be realized with four key priority areas that build on the wealth of UN agencies, NGOs, local consortiums and networks, together with expertise, experience and resources in the country.

⁶2026 marks 10 years after the Grand Bargain commitment was signed by donors and aid actors committing them to a Participation Revolution.

Participation Revolution by Design

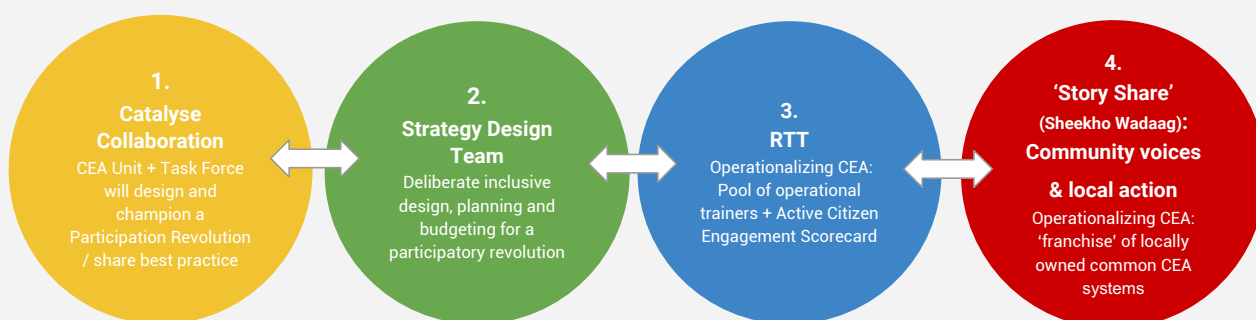
Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) in Somalia is:

Strategic

Operational

Local and Inclusive

Triple Nexus



Somalia CEA Action Plan: 4 priority areas

Figure 1: Somalia's Participation Revolution by Design – CEA Action Plan priorities / M. Bhandari 2022

Strategy Justification

Moving Towards a Culture of CEA (more than just another system)

There is a need to reframe AAP for the Somali context and beyond, so that the language used about this area of work encourages meaningful strategies that can be implemented in practice. The language of AAP also needs to be better connected to the global Grand Bargain commitment for a Participation Revolution. Somalia is a good candidate for innovative approaches to build a culture for community engagement and accountability to citizens, and to refine and institutionalize best practice. The term CEA is therefore preferred, over AAP, as it is more indicative of the need for community ownership and inclusivity in the approaches needed.⁷

In 2021 new plans for CEA were developed by the UN's Integrated Office of the DSRSG/RC/HC that proposed the creation of a culture of change and effectiveness both on the ground as well as with senior management, with a more holistic definition and approach than had been undertaken in Somalia previously. The emphasis was not on data for 'upward' decision making, but on delivering knowledge on the 'how' to deliver meaningful, minimum standards for CEA on the ground that could be measured and improved with dedicated resources, skills and adoption of globally recognized minimum standards. Operationalizing CEA was the key aim of the initial plans and remains the central tenet of this strategy.

Moreover, the aim of the new plan ensures CEA becomes the new *modus operandi* for agencies and partners. The approach was driven by the recognition that people who are described as 'disaster-affected

populations' should in fact be engaged as active citizens with the power to make decisions about their own lives and not as passive recipients of aid. This approach connects to the Localization Agenda and the CoP strategy, both already endorsed by HCT. This new proposal was presented to the donor community with the support of the DSRSG/RC/HC. However, while there was much enthusiasm, no supportive funding emerged in 2021.⁸

Creating a Culture of CEA: Leadership

Systems need to be supported by senior decision makers. This leadership includes being open about data, information and learning. With the aid sector, and organizations individually, being highly risk-averse and reputation conscious, this openness about learning, mistakes, errors and worse often remains taboo. This reputational risk comes from the upward accountability nature of the aid system where acknowledging errors comes with the high risk of inaccessibility of future donor funds. This cautious culture, which has intensified over the years with increased media scrutiny of the sector, has gradually eroded space for doing things differently. The systems have been created for management and for donors – rather than for communities – and the lack of effective inclusion throughout all stages of the programme cycle can lead to poor quality, poor targeting and ultimately, in a precarious context like Somalia, it can cost lives and livelihoods. It comes at the expense of the effectiveness, quality and impact of response efforts. Given the nature of the upward system, placing communities at the centre of planning, decision making and re-design is fraught with difficulties – the biggest challenge likely being one of genuinely finding localized, alternative, diverse and inclusive perspectives. This shift needs strong leadership to support strengthened programme quality with communities at the heart of design.

⁷ For further explanation regarding the terminology of AAP and CEA, please see Annexes I and II at the end of this document.

⁸ By January 2022 NORCAP supported a Senior CEA Advisor for 6 months to design this strategy and create a sustainable common CEA service that would work to deliver a culture of change across operations. The IASC has also offered support for a national staff member to be recruited to the CEA Unit in the UN Integrated Office.

Way of Working and Capacity

This change in the way of approaching interventions also requires a change in the way of working. It requires a change in the voices included in framing problems and solutions, and how they are responded to. This also requires inclusion, new language and a change in the mindsets of those who hold the power in the process. It requires both managers and frontline workers alike to share the same new visions for a new way of partnering with communities to deliver change. This change in approach also requires a change in the mindsets, skills and capacity of organizations, teams and community mobilizers so they are all engaged in this new approach.

All these critical areas can be highly disjointed in the thick of fast paced humanitarian operations – and yet they also persist in development and peace keeping operations. These ‘soft’ but vitally critical and powerful skills can be lost in action with both international staff flown in with very little understanding of local contexts and complexities, with generic technical solutions, and local managerial and community level gatekeepers who maintain the status quo and their own power and authority to do things as they see fit. The need to support the process of a new way of doing things has to filter through the system and beyond, and therefore mindsets, planning, skills and resources to shift power ‘downwards’ is emphasized in this strategic direction.

Funding

A culture of openness needs to be nurtured and funded in order for meaningful progress on CEA to be made. This requires engagement from donors, agencies, and national and international NGO implementing partners all working together towards a common aim of a participation revolution.

Delivering this culture also requires smart planning to include local groups and networks, funds, resources and skills to get it right for communities and to improve the effectiveness of every aid dollar spent. CEA should be seen as a ‘back to basics’ programming approach where communities are fully aware and involved; this also requires time, resourcing and skills – areas where the current modus operandi of operations falls short. CEA is all too often relegated to a tick box exercise and therefore fails

with a ‘systems only’ approach to gathering data for decision makers. CEA cannot have meaning as a standalone information, data gathering and upward reporting system without a wider commitment and supporting culture to do things differently.

A Vision for Localization

A culture of CEA requires a vision for a different kind of aid operation; an exit strategy built on the strength of risk-vetted and skilled local organizations, networks and communities that needs to be integrated into operations. Localization is reported to be strong in Somalia with, for example, the Somalia Humanitarian Fund (SHF) giving more than 60 per cent of its pooled funding to local NGOs – one of the highest rates globally.

The COVID-19 response further demonstrated Somalia’s strength in local operators as international actors stepped back and local actors delivered the response on the ground. This is not withstanding the concerns about aid capture and risk management. A culture encapsulates the commitment to deliver community-centred programming and to flatten out the top-down delivery. A CEA service would advocate the importance of a culture of CEA and work with leadership and across clusters and implementing partners to deliver this.

There is a need to ensure there is a robust system of reporting poor quality responses; a system that can deliver both change and consequences to those who fail in basic minimum standards of delivery. Data gathering for decision making needs to relate directly to issues both communities and frontline workers need to report and be linked to a rapid turnaround so corrective action can be taken. This system needs to be supported by a wider change in culture where people are respected as agents of change.

Conscious Programming – Recognizing Levels of Participation ⁹

The below illustrates that there is a spectrum of engagement – from zero, through to tick box AAP / CEA, and towards meaningful participation where information and decision-making power is shared on a more equal footing. When engaging with communities, it is critical to identify who aid actors want to reach with information and aid (elderly, minorities, women, persons with disabilities, as well as traditional leaders).

A diverse representation of communities should be involved in a political economy mapping; critical questions need to be asked such as ‘who holds influence and power over the target populations’,

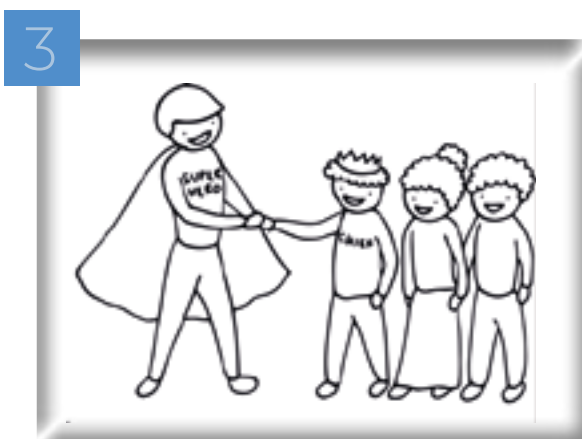
‘where and from who do target populations receive trusted information’, ‘who can support building links and information flows to target populations’, etc. This needs to be conducted in a way that recognizes and respects local hierarchies and traditional power structures and with a ‘do no harm’ approach working with protection and PSEA actors.



Aid provider engaging with people as passive recipients of aid



Engaging with traditional leader or local gatekeeper



Overactive organization at the centre of design



Moving towards engaging with people as active citizens and partners

⁹ The culture of participation varies from one country and indeed from one community to the next. It is important from an accountability perspective that we recognize that these cultural norms may mean that communities are not by nature actively engaged or want to participate in aid operations. It is important for aid actors to ask this question (in the design phase and throughout the programme cycle) and for communities to be able to define the boundaries of this engagement.

Somalia CEA Rapid Survey of Frontline Workers

A rapid survey of programme managers and frontline workers was conducted by the UN Integrated Office of the DSRSG/RC/HC between February and March 2022 to better understand the blockages for better CEA¹⁰. The survey was circulated through the OCHA-coordinated ICCG and via Cluster leads and lead agencies. Of 138 respondents (60 per cent of whom represented national and local NGOs and community-based organizations) most said CEA was an organisational priority (88 per cent). Eighty-two per cent agreed that CEA was meaningful in their current field operations.

The most identified challenges noted were staff capacity to undertake CEA (62 respondents), practical knowledge of CEA (52 respondents) and access to

communities (52 respondents). In addition, the time to listen (39) and CEA not being properly resourced in proposals and budgets (35) were highlighted as challenges.

Most respondents said there was a need to have more training on CEA (93) and strengthened staff practical knowledge of CEA solutions (90), supported by dedicated AAP focal points (87). A significant number also agreed that dedicated CEA budget lines to regularly reach and engage people were needed (68 respondents), and better designed programmes (70 respondents). Most respondents (52) felt that donors needed clearer guidance on operationalizing CEA. These findings have supported the development of this strategy paper.

¹⁰ The frontline worker survey questions and findings can be found at https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPageV2.aspx?subpage=design&FormId=2zWeD09UYE-9zF6kFubccKdcYPJasU9NshxejGHY8GRURVILR1VSRVcOS0dVMUhzUzFWMUtJV1pDMC4u&Token=4a01f02427be4338bddd9ee5e24ea574_.

Somalia CEA Strategy: Creating a Participation Revolution by Design

Led by the Integrated Office of the DSRSG/RC/HC, the newly established CEA unit has led the design of this strategy document. The CEA unit is supporting the understanding, learning and coordination of CEA efforts (with the newly re-established CEA Task Force). Together the CEA Unit and CEA Task Force will strengthen practice, build partnerships, and provide systematic and quality support to agencies and partners in their work to adopt community-led strategies and implementation of plans.

This national CEA Strategy is an opportunity to transform how agencies, clusters and partners coordinate, implement, monitor and resource collaborative approaches together to save and protect lives of the most vulnerable people; this strategy is also an opportunity to transform the delivery of a country programme. A vision for a participation revolution by design is central to the strategy. Revolutions need collaboration, strategic design, practical skills and resources – supported by the political will for change.

Aim: To change the culture of interventions, across the programme cycle from ‘field to (re)-design’ to be locally and community driven to achieve quality results through a participation revolution. Driving quality and effectiveness of interventions will be achieved by ensuring that inclusive, diverse communities and active citizens are fully engaged and participating in decisions and planning about their own lives.

A longer-term vision for CEA in Somalia will have delivered greater collective relevance, quality (including better targeting, timeliness, efficiency etc.) and effectiveness of operations, through supporting the active participation and strengthened ownership of aid operations by the Somali population.

To create a fearless culture of CEA in Somalia

Ten principles to guide our four priority areas are outlined below:

1. Guided by a vision for engaged local ownership and a participation revolution
2. Collective minimum standards in participation, engagement and accountability
3. Framed by active citizens who drive quality/effectiveness
4. Community-centred processes from field to (re)-design
5. Inclusion of local organizations and frontline workers in design
6. Planning, skills and funding for a participation revolution in the proposal and budgeting
7. Operational focus: answers the ‘how to deliver CEA’
8. Why are we collecting data? Always answer the ‘so what’ question
9. Inclusive, diverse and multi-stakeholder – working in partnership across functions
10. Measurable operational change with a pool of trainers leading the Active Citizen Engagement Scorecard (ACES).

As outlined in Chapter 2, there are four priority areas proposed:

1. Catalyse Collaboration: CEA Task Force with the CEA Unit is embedded in the country system. The CEA Task Force sits within the OCHA-coordinated Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) structure, under the charge of the HCT, and supports the UN Integrated Office of the DSRSG/RC/HC led CEA Unit. A regular Task Force meeting will be held for the period of this strategy paper and beyond. The TOR for the Task Force can be found at . <https://docs.google.com/document/d/14Hlu9fqODmsgEWmu8gqhDb1mdQlNVEDEa8gakBnXQJl/edit?usp=sharing&usp=sharing>.
2. **A Strategy Design Team:** All revolutions require an active operational direction, deliberate planning, expertise and funding; without these elements to actively drive to realize the vision for a participation revolution, the Grand Bargain will become another defunct initiative to reform the aid system.

A Strategic Design Team is proposed across the triple nexus which ensures CEA is established as a **way of working** alongside other advisors and experts to actively build CEA into **strategic planning and into the operational budgets of all new projects and programmes**.

Within the UN Integrated Office, UNSOM and OCHA /ICCG, there are many advisors and technical experts – Protection, Gender, Youth, PSEA, Durable Solutions, Access, Disability, Human Rights, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), etc. – who are all key practitioners in ensuring this approach is achieved with stronger deliberate strategic design approaches linked to field realities. Ensuring these experts, together with local networks – based on contextual realities – are driving the strategic focus areas for funding , designing the approaches to be used and leading the budgetary decision making accordingly, is critical to ensure change is operationalized.

Operationalizing CEA strategically requires:

- **Advocacy** and use of minimum standards in inclusion, participation and measurable indicators;
 - **Working** with donors (starting with the SHF) to re-write guidance, strategic response planning and proposal requirements so that CEA is central to design, not a separate add-on or tick box request.
 - **Connecting** CEA to existing M&E plans and budgets – creating discussion, monitoring and action systems that are consistent with inclusion of community voices throughout the project cycle.
 - **Including** programme managers, frontline workers and local partners in the proposal writing and budgeting stages.
3. **RTT:** strengthening operational skills and capacity to deliver CEA with on-the-ground dedicated training and tools, such as the ACES. ACES offers standards and measures for change in participation, engagement and accountability framed around the nine Core Humanitarian Standard commitments and indicators. The ACES aims to empower organizations to improve their levels of engagement and inclusion with communities. This will involve capacity building of actors and an emphasis on the 'how to' deliver CEA.

ACES will be tested and adapted for the Somali context; it is being tested first with the Cash Working Group and Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster implementing partners. The training will be undertaken in partnership with REACH and Ground Truth Solutions. Third party actors MESH, who provide training and technical support to the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office partners will also use and test the ACES scorecard in a first phase.

¹¹Strategic focus areas are currently driven by the donor / donor agency and not by actors and stakeholders on the ground. For a Participation Revolution to occur in practice this needs to be turned around with processes locally owned.

The plan is to have a pool of real-time trainers from third-party monitors who can support field-level choices, decision making, resource allocation and advocacy for implementing partners. This pool will be managed and supported through a Training of Trainers (TOT), with both a dedicated online training plan for frontline workers in ACES and dedicated support as needed. This collaborative approach to a pool of TOTs and RTT will also ensure sustainability.

4. Community Voice and Local Action – ‘Story Sharing’ (Sheeko Wadaag): The Integrated Office is leading the creation of a common CEA platform building on current common systems led by the CCCM Cluster in IDP sites. Radio engagement is being added as a key feature to IOM’s current hotline and the CCCM Cluster’s existing face-to-face CFMs (help desks, community meetings) to ensure widespread access to free-flowing information about the response.

This strengthened reach aims to disrupt the current system of gatekeepers who exclude people from accessing information about the response and therefore excludes them from the vision of empowered participation¹². The common system is beginning as a pilot working with the CCCM Cluster, IOM Durable Solutions Consortium and FAO. There is an open invitation for other actors to come on board and considerable interest.

The ‘Story Sharing’ (Sheeko Wadaag) model will use citizen journalists to drive professionally produced radio content in a weekly 20-minute radio programme.¹³ Radio content will be broadcast but also narrow cast with content shared on social media and distributed on USB sticks / SD cards at various listening points both inside and eventually outside CCCM Cluster-managed sites. Content from this programme, together with consolidation of information from other CFM platforms, will be generated into a weekly easy to read community owned ‘headlines document’.

Accountability will therefore be managed locally through OCHA / ICCG or appropriate area-based coordination platforms. The pilot for ‘Story Sharing’ (Sheeko Wadaag) begins in Baidoa but will be rapidly scaled up using a ‘franchise’ model in other locations, allowing for local adaptation of the system as needed. This pilot will be supported by the other strategic areas, with an initial focus on operationalizing CEA through RTT with the ACES scorecard.

The use of independent State-wide commercial and community radio stations is key as the use of independent media changes in and of itself the nature of engagement by aid operators with the communities. It is hoped that trust in the aid system’s impartiality, fairness and accuracy in reaching the most vulnerable, including women and youth, will be generated through this rebalancing of community voices in formal coordination fora.

¹² The abuse of power by gatekeepers was highlighted in the PSEA Somalia Risk Assessment (2021) that identified various risks of sexual exploitation and abuse linked to gatekeepers.

¹³ This will be increased to twice weekly if resources allow.

Implementation and Coordination

The CEA unit: The CEA unit consists of one international position based in the UN Integrated Office and one national position (to be recruited) who will together lead the delivery of the CEA Strategy with the support of the CEA Task Force members. Support will be strategic with senior managers, but with a dedicated focus on the operational priorities outlined in this document.

The CEA unit and Task Force will support the priorities, offering a collective, coordinated service to empower organizations, clusters and consortiums to have dedicated planning and resourcing, improved practical knowledge and stronger operational skills to deliver a participation revolution from the ground up.

The CEA unit aims to bridge the disconnect between an operational understanding, resourcing and practice of AAP and the ambitions set out in the Grand Bargain commitments to instil a participatory revolution. AAP is directly linked to the Localization Agenda and the CoP strategy, the latter being a strategic objective of the Somalia Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). Half of the clusters already have a localization framework in place and the HRP explicitly asks clusters to report on localization initiatives. In Somalia, it is also connected to displacement, (IDPs, host communities and refugees) in line with durable solutions and social cohesion initiatives.

The unit will champion links with other units and experts including Protection, PSEA and Inclusion focal points (working group when it becomes active), Inclusion partners, M&E and the Risk Management Unit in the Integrated Office of the DSRSG/RC/HC.

A CEA unit, supported by an action focused Task Force, will deliver on the strategic agenda outlined. Advocating for minimum standards in engagement, measuring the level of engagement and supporting donors, programme designers and implementers collectively and holistically (from design to field and back to re-design) will enable strategies for a revolution by design to build and support a wider culture for change.

The Task Force: The 2020 CEA Working Group, affiliated to the ICCG, did not maintain momentum after the first round of the WFP / OCHA pilot. It is proposed therefore that a new CEA Task Force (replacing the CEA Working Group), be re-established with a new TOR and new membership that will cut across the triple nexus.

This Task Force will deliver on the HCT-endorsed Action Plan at Chapter 6, and support with delivery of the other three priority areas outlined. As well as being a community of practice, Task Force members will be given key responsibilities to deliver the country's Action Plan and commitments.

The HCT and UNCT will be held to account on the delivery of these key priority areas once this strategy document has been endorsed.



Somalia National CEA Action Plan



Objective 1 Catalyse collaboration to champion a participation revolution

Working with stakeholders (both in the aid sector and beyond) to build and advocate for localized common approaches, systems and minimum standards, by establishing a sustainable CEA Task Force and network that delivers this strategy action plan.

Rationale

With a wealth of expertise in Somalia with individual agency and national and international NGO expertise, but with limited resources and minimum standards, there is a critical need to collaborate and pool together best practices, innovations and 'back to basics' programming approaches.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible	Support
1a	Finalize the draft CEA Task Force terms of reference (TOR).	May 2022 (Completed)	CEA Unit / TF	
1b	Establish a sustainable CEA Task Force led by the UN in partnership with a local consortium or network.	May 2022 (Completed)	CEA Unit / TF	Somali NGO Consortium
1c	Establish sub-national CEA Task Forces building on the national platform – (linked to the Action Plan objectives below including localized coordination of 'Story Sharing' (Sheeko Wadaag)' as this is scaled up.	August 2022	CEA TF	CEA TF
1d	Finalize this CEA Strategy and Action Plan and have it endorsed in the first instance by HCT.	Early June 2022 (Completed)	CEA Unit	CEA TF
1e	Lead the CEA Action Plan Workshop to endorse the CEA Strategy and Action Plan with the HCT (proposed for early June 2022) and then UNCT.	Early June 2022 (Completed)	CEA Unit / TF	
1f	Seek UNCT endorsement of this Action Plan.	August 2022	CEA Unit	CEA TF
1g	Develop an M&E plan for this CEA Strategy and Action Plan.	August 2022	CEA Unit / Task Force	CHS Alliance
1h	Provide regular technical expertise and analysis to the country operations across the triple nexus by planning and supporting strategies that shift power and resources locally – and working with the Strategy Design team (outlined in objective 2).	Ongoing		
1i	To advocate for the collection of disaggregated data together with analysis, use and action of all data as it is presented in various coordination fora, (including, but not limited to, information about community contexts, perceptions and behaviours).	Ongoing	CEA Unit	

1j	To advocate for the country's response as a whole to amplify timely, accurate, trustworthy and actionable information from the community and local network.	Ongoing		
1k	Support the finalization of a draft TOR for a national consultant (supported by IASC funds) to support the delivery of the strategy and Action plan, and support recruitment.	April 2022	CEA Unit	OCHA / IO

Objective 2 Strategy Design Team

Deliberate design, planning and budgeting to ensure a participation revolution is operationalized in all new projects and proposals

Rationale

A Strategic Design Team or unit is proposed that works across the triple nexus to ensure CEA is established as a way of working alongside other advisors and experts, with the aim of actively building CEA into the strategic planning and into the operational budgets of all new projects and programmes – moving away from AAP as CFMs and add-ons into proposals.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible	Support
2a	Develop an inter-agency senior level strategic team to work collaboratively on all major projects and proposals with a system to actively input across areas of expertise (this should include protection, gender, PSEA, youth, human rights, durable solutions, localization experts etc.).	Ongoing	Protection and Gender Advisors with CEA Unit	
2b	Develop and agree a series of simple minimum standards and operational, measurable indicators to realize a participation revolution (The Quality Manifesto) that links with other areas of expertise (including PSEA).	June 2022 (Completed)	Strategy Design Team	CEA Task Force
2c	Ensure the inclusion of minimum standards and operational, measurable indicators in inclusion, participation and accountability in all SHF/HRP new organisational level proposals, and ensuring organisations more broadly are better aware of these minimum standards.	December 2022	Strategy Design Team	CEA Task Force
2d	Work with the donor group (beginning with the SHF) to re-write guidance and proposal requirements / criteria so that CEA is central to design – and no longer a separate siloed add-on.	November 2022	Strategy Design Team	

2e	Ensure CEA plans are better connected to existing and new M&E plans and budgets – creating inclusive discussion, participatory monitoring and collective action systems that are consistent with inclusion of community voices and ownership throughout the project cycle.	Ongoing	Strategy Design Team	CEA Task Force
2f	Ensure programme managers, frontline workers, local partners are involved and consulted in the proposal writing and budgeting stages.	Ongoing	Strategy Design Team	
2g	Produce a general guidance note / toolkit for donors and managers to create a participation revolution by design – to support proposal writing and inclusive budgeting for CEA.	September 2022	Strategy Design Team	
2h	Produce an (online) training module for donors and proposal writers to understand how CEA should be seen as a way of working and a starting point to developing proposals.	October 2022	Strategy Design Team	
2i	Develop protocols for common communications and information flows to and from communities in preparedness for emergencies and during emergencies.	September 2022	Strategy Design Team	
2j	Develop guidance and protocols for ICCG and other key coordination fora for the analysis, use and action of data and information about community contexts, perceptions and behaviours.	September 2022	Strategy Design Team	

Objective 3 RTT

Operationalize CEA: Support the operational capacity building of partners in CEA through the development of RTT Plans – including establishing a pool of operationally-focused CEA trainers (from third party actors, clusters / consortiums and implementing partners) and begin the rollout of the ACES, and other tools, to support practical support in using ACES in the field. Strengthen capacity and locally driven solutions to empower frontline organisations, networks and communities to lead response, linked to the CoP strategy and the Localization Agenda.

Rationale

There have been numerous agency level trainings and other forms of support for AAP and CEA. However, one of the most significant obstacles to quality programming and a participation revolution has been cited as the lack of operational know-how and staff capacity to deliver CEA on the ground. The ACES scorecard uses the Core Humanitarian Standard and indicators adapting them for frontline workers and managers to support the operationalizing of CEA in the field. Training will be conducted in the field with implementing partners using the ACES scorecard.

	Action	Timeline	Responsible	Support
3a	Develop an online version of the ACES scorecard – KoBo / ODK as appropriate to help monitor progress across those using it.	June 2022 (Completed)	RTT Working Group / CEA Unit	REACH
3b	Create and nurture a pool of trainers from a range of stakeholders across the triple nexus.	June 2022 - ongoing	CEA Unit	REACH/GTS/ MESH/ Loop
3c	Develop an orientation / ToT with third party actors to lead the rollout of the ACES scorecard, in coordination with the Strategy Design team / CEA TF.	June 2022 (Completed)	CEA Unit	
3d	Engage a range of different stakeholders to run the ACES scorecard contributing to improved understanding on CEA at field level (Cash Working Group, CCCM Cluster and MESH have already agreed to use it with their implementing partners).	July 2022	CEA Unit	Loop
3e	Produce monitoring templates for the TOTs / ACES training.	August 2022	RTT Working Group	Loop
3f	Produce a report on the use of the scorecard over time – demonstrating progression in the field with the knowledge, attitude and practice of CEA.	September 2022	RTT Working Group	
3g	Develop an orientation for conducting a community political economy power-mapping – working with the Strategy Design team, ensuring it has relevance in rural and hard to reach areas as well as to IDP sites. (This orientation will support actors to think about how information about humanitarian services and access to service providers is delivered effectively to people outside of leadership structures (it includes analysis of where, how and from whom people receive trusted information from). This mapping should inform plans to enable effective reach of vulnerable, marginalized and minority groups).	July 2022 (included in ACES module)	CEA Unit	
3h	Deliver tailored training to develop capacity of aid actors to conduct localized political-economy power mappings, so that excluded and marginalized groups are identified, have better access to information about an aid operation, and are subsequently more engaged in decision making about humanitarian aid through better inclusion – ensuring a ‘do no harm’ approach.	June 2022 (included in ACES module)	CEA Unit	

	Support aid actors to undertake a rapid assessment of the media landscape (or to consolidate existing analysis) including in inaccessible and hard-to-reach areas. This should include analysis of mobile phone, internet and radio access and should be used to develop plans to ensure effective localized information provision and two-way engagement with communities about the aid response.	September 2022	CEA Unit	
	Consolidate and review other CEA operational best practice tools from across Somalia, the region and globally.	Ongoing	CEA Unit	RTT Working Group

Objective 4 'Story Sharing' (Sheeko Wadaag) Community voices & local accountability and action

Operationalizing and localizing CEA: building a pilot for a common CFM which will be scaled up using a 'franchise' model of locally owned common CEA systems

Rationale

There is a need to simplify and strengthen the quality of the plethora of CFMs in Somalia; combining, expertise, resources and skills

	Action	Timeline	Responsible	Support
4a	Design a collaborative common CFM, (building on the existing CFMs of the CCCM Cluster) with the addition of radio to bypass the gatekeepers and ensure stronger information flow to marginalized and minority populations.	May 2022 (design completed)	CEA Unit	CCCM, IOM, FAO (others welcome), The third-party accountability platform Loop indicated interest.
4b	Develop partnerships for the common CFM pilot, seek resources and scale up across the triple nexus.	April /May 2022 Completed for pilot)	CEA Unit	
4c	Work with partners to create a brand identity for 'Story Sharing' (Sheeko Wadaag) that will then be used across current CFMs and for the radio programme.	June 2022 Completed	CEA Unit	
4d	Advocate for accountability to be strengthened and actioned locally – not upwards.	Ongoing	CEA Unit	
4e	Create a locally managed system of accountability (create a 'local headlines' template for actors to use) – led by ICCG / OCHA / area coordination platforms to hold actors to account.	June 2022 (drafted)	CEA Unit	

4f	Design a budget and workplan for the pilot common CFM – ‘Story Sharing’ (Sheeko Wadaag).	May 2022 (completed draft / ongoing)	CEA Unit	‘Story Sharing’ (Sheeko Wadaag) partners
4g	Create a weekly template to gather key headlines to be used by coordination bodies on the ground (e.g., CCCM Cluster / IOM / FAO and partners will fill the template every week – while OCHA as a coordinating body will ensure accountability is put into practice.	May 2022 (Drafted)	CEA Unit	Independent platform Loop indicated Independent platform Loop indicated
4h	Build a monitoring plan / learning process for the pilot before it is scaled up to other locations.	June 2022 (Drafted)	CEA Unit	
4i	Design a radio script template.	May 2022 (completed)	CEA Unit	
4j	Recruit and orientate citizen journalists to work alongside professional radio reporters to ensure key issues are raised, included and heard in the programme.	July 2022 Completed	CEA Unit	
4k	Develop editorial guidelines for the radio programme to ensure the programme is led by community questions and is not used as an aid agency messaging service.	July 2022 Completed	CEA Unit	
4l	Continue advocacy to seek longer term funding for the system within UN agencies, national and international NGOs and local consortiums etc.	Ongoing	CEA Unit	
4m	Scale up radio programme to four other locations in two years.	July 2023	CEA Unit	
	NOTE – there is a workplan and budget already developed which outlines more granular activities for this objective in the first location of Baidoa with the CCCM Cluster / IOM and FAO so far actively committed and involved.			

Annex I. The Challenging Past of AAP

Despite progress globally, AAP remains somewhat of a misunderstood technical area. As an area of expertise, it has appeared in multiple guises – in recent years Communications with Communities, CEA, and with the COVID-19 pandemic, many are familiar with the public health emergency pillar Risk Communications and Community Engagement which also has overlaps in approach. Indeed, participatory monitoring and community-based programming can also be seen as coming from the same school of thought and rooting back further still there is a clear link to Participatory Rural Appraisal.

Underpinning the theory of these approaches is that communities are innately able and have the right to be engaged as active participants in interventions, and have the voice to ask and have answered any questions related to the response. This includes questions on basic quality criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, sustainability, partnerships, localization and coordination, targeting, transparency and timeliness.

In practice, this community voice is however not systematically inclusive, not systematically listened to, and not systematically responded to. The upward nature of the aid system, the results and data focused nature of operations have all contributed to this ironic dehumanization of the humanitarian sector where the pendulum has swung too far towards data and results; there is a clear need to bring the 'human' back into humanitarian and to ensure quality results are measured by communities themselves. There is indeed a need not to assume that because development actors have more time to deliver than humanitarian actors, that people are engaged with in accordance with their rights as citizens or rights as refugees in those interventions either.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) defines AAP as *“the active commitment by humanitarian actors to use power responsibly to take account of, give account to, and be held to account by the people they seek to assist.”*^{14&15} This definition risks being interpreted as maintaining the status quo – it keeps the power to design and power to decide how aid is to be spent with the aid provider; the onus is on aid actors' *responsible use of their power*, rather than on any *shift in power to communities or local actors*. Without an active process of shifting power, engagement is less likely to be prioritized and less likely to occur in practice. A participation revolution will not occur without this shift in power from donors, agencies and partners to local networks and communities.

Furthermore, the term “affected people” in the IASC definition risks reducing people in an emergency to ‘passive recipients’ of aid. The top-down delivery mechanisms used in practice tends to reinforce this limited or reduced power. This definition may help explain why the focus of AAP has largely in recent years been in the growth of CFMs – its description of ‘a process’ of giving and being held to account lends itself to a reduction of the idea of AAP to a process and function, and not a way of working or a wider culture of operations. The official term AAP and its definition is finally not conducive to the language of a Participation Revolution as committed to in the Grand Bargain; any revolution involves shifts and changes in the nature of power, and indeed the ownership of power itself.

¹⁴ For more information on AAP in the IASC see: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain-official-website/moving-localization-agenda-forward-recommendations-charter-change>

¹⁵ It should be noted that the IASC themselves recently updated their commitments on AAP in April 2022: stating “An accountable humanitarian system, where decision-making power is in the hands of those affected by crisis, is central to humanitarian action.” And “We must commit to empower affected people, including women, girls and young people, to continuously and effectively shape humanitarian decision-making.”

All people, seen in this case as citizens¹⁶, need to be able to ask the basic questions of aid providers of 'who', 'what' 'why' and 'how' and 'when' aid is being delivered. All people (including both those on recipient target lists and those who are not included) need to have timely, accurate and effective information about the aid process. This ensures that they can claim their rights and entitlements or ask questions to the right people about why they are not included. People need to be actively involved, engaged and own the aid response so that they can make the best decisions for their own lives.

Aid agencies and their partners have a duty to answer these questions, and a duty to engage with and handover decision-making power to the communities they work with. Using a rights-based approach throughout the project management cycle (participatory design, participatory monitoring, engagement and response through to re-design) starts to level and readjust the field of operations in the favour of stronger community participation with a vision for ownership.

AAP is becoming increasingly synonymous with data, and the need for more data to better understand community perceptions needs. However, there is a serious risk that, as with M&E some 15 years ago, AAP is also becoming increasingly hung up and indeed blocked by this search for more data about community perceptions – *without ever meaningfully answering the 'so what' question. "We know what communities think and feel about the aid system and responses – so what are we going to do differently as a result of all this data and information?"* Minimum Standards in data collection, together with protocols for analysis, recommendation and actions are not defined or delivered in operations.

A coordinated and collective approach (not necessarily a common system)¹⁷ to AAP and common minimum standards for community engagement and participation was a commitment made by signatories to the Grand Bargain that promised a participation revolution. This was not a commitment to be taken lightly given a top-down aid delivery system. However, it is the very nature of this wider system that has limited the success of a meaningful participation revolution on the ground. At its worst, power holders often do not have the political will to relinquish decision making power to instigate this participation revolution. At its best, there has been limited dedicated and deliberate planning, resources, skills and indeed an understanding of how this participation revolution can be effectively operationalized, delivered and measured. AAP also suffers from differing interpretations and different commitments to resources dedicated towards achieving its goals. Further, the confused picture limits the skills to both implement it against minimum standards and measure progress of change.

Broadly speaking, donors have tended to request AAP as an add-on in proposals, and aid actors have focused on CFMs. All too often they are operating within the confines of a rigid top-down aid system to do things differently enough to strengthen quality overall for communities. Moreover, there is limited time given to develop localized creative ideas on delivering better ownership because the turnaround time for donor proposals is painfully short. The AAP community has also been guilty of advising and telling actors to 'do AAP' without offering any operationalized strategy or approach.

¹⁶ It is recognized that the word 'citizen' can be seen as political and not accurate with refugees fleeing for safety into a country. The term is used here to denote a person with rights and move away from framing those as affected by disaster as passive in an aid response and in their own decision making.

¹⁷ A collective approach to AAP is one of the four mandatory accountability commitments in the IASC terms of reference for HCTs since 2017.

Advice comes far too late in the cycle, once proposals have been written and operations are underway. Perhaps worse, the focus on advice is to create the more tangible design and delivery of CFMs. This has been to the detriment of the cause of programme quality and all the efforts made over the last nearly 15 years to better engage with communities.

Many humanitarian operations globally have trialled collective or common AAP systems and there is a general consensus that they can offer many benefits, not least in offering dedicated technical support. Well-coordinated AAP approaches and systems can maximize limited resources – thus avoiding duplication of efforts, ensuring minimum standards, gap filling in a country response, and maximizing the use of various data and information collection efforts to ensure a strategic response based on community needs.

Few collective systems have achieved sustainable and measurable success and there are many gaps and pitfalls, not least a lack of understanding about the importance of community driven programmes, and how to deliver these. This lack of a shared understanding about AAP, coupled with a lack of political will that is supported by both funding and engagement with local organisations and networks, highlights the limitations and failures of both common and collective AAP systems to date.

This Somalia CEA Strategy outlines ways to disrupt the existing systems by offering operational solutions, skills and strategies for both donors and programme designs to bring CEA to the heart of design – with the aim of shifting power towards inclusive communities themselves.

Annex II. Background: Common AAP Pilot in Somalia (2020)

There has been a proliferation of agencies and implementing partners in Somalia that have developed and resourced CFMs, and there are many best practices and examples of engagement and two-way communications with communities. However, overall, the quality of these CFMs is largely unknown with each agency managing their own systems and owning and protecting the data they produce. Meanwhile, the quality of programming and the effectiveness of aid in reaching the most vulnerable people remains a challenge and a real concern.

In Somalia, there have been a number of attempts to establish common AAP systems that can ensure actors are held to account on their obligations to deliver a quality response. The last was the common information management process piloted by WFP as AAP champion, together with OCHA. This followed the OCHA Peer to Peer Mission in Somalia in 2018 that highlighted the fragmented nature of AAP in the overall country response. The Community Engagement Working Group, established in 2019, was tasked with a 4Ws (who, what, where, when) review of AAP initiatives underway, and to create a budgeted workplan for a way forward. The Working Group met during the pilot phase for the information management data gathering initiative, but fell away once round one of data gathering was completed. Building a 'system' for AAP and focusing efforts on management of information about AAP was not enough to build meaningful, sustainable change.

The Joint Multi Cluster Needs Assessment (2021), highlighted that only 16 per cent of households know how to make a suggestion or complaint about the aid they receive – down from 57 per cent awareness from 2020. It is important to note that there are no measures available of accountability to those who believe they should have been targeted for aid, but who were excluded from the process due to community affiliations, gatekeepers or poor assessments. Indeed, there is no compulsion to provide a CFM to 'non-recipients' of aid, sending the whole process potentially into a debacle on the ground in terms of inclusion of those people most in need of support. Moreover, there are no minimum standard requirements or measures of the quality and effectiveness of individual CFM systems.

Of course, awareness of CFMs is only one aspect to consider in a discussion on AAP; the quality, use and response to complaints and referrals is critical to ensure. Beyond CFMs there is the need for community engagement – the same HRP also highlighted that 60 per cent of cash and voucher recipients felt that there was no consultation and only 25 per cent felt their opinions were considered.

The UN-led common AAP system in Somalia was aimed to establish an independent system of holding agencies and implementing partners¹⁸ to account with the aim of strengthening the quality of interventions on the ground. With many agencies, national and international NGOs and their implementing partners having their own feedback mechanisms, there was a push to consolidate, analyse and deliver data which was already being gathered for senior management oversight and use.

¹⁸ For more on common AAP systems see:

https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/Implementing_collective_accountability_to_affected_populations_ways_forward_in_mQ1h0AP.pdf and The Role of Collective Platforms, Services and Tools to support Communication and Community Engagement in Humanitarian Action (2017) and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) project on collective services.

The common AAP pilot was not delivered beyond an initial round of data gathering due to a lack of dedicated resources required to turn around data and analyse issues. With the lack of dedicated resourcing in the AAP pilot, there was considerable lag in time till the consolidated data was produced and the data was in effect out of date, and moreover far removed from where the concerns were originally highlighted to make meaningful impact. There was no built-in engagement or participation by the communities for issues to be raised and no feedback loop demonstrated in the common system. There was also the assumption that the responsibility for accountability needs to be held by the HCT, and the assumption that the HCT needs to act on the behalf of communities raising intractable issues or pressurizing poor performing aid actors to do better. Neither assumption is justified in practice; accountability needs to be local in the first instance with local actors and coordination bodies holding aid providers to account.

This initial pilot, together with advocacy for a proposed dedicated 'AAP unit', was handed to the UN's Integrated Office of the DSRSG/RC/HC in January 2021. Those involved felt that one independent agency should be responsible for leading AAP efforts in the future to ensure sustainability, to provide dedicated technical support and to facilitate coordination efforts.

If AAP is to deliver meaning at both a decision making and at an operational level, it was recognized that there was a need for something more robust than a collective information management system that delivered information to decision makers.

Abbreviations

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
ACES	Active Citizen Engagement Scorecard
CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
CEA	Community Engagement and Accountability
CFM	Complaints and Feedback Mechanism
CoP	Centrality of Protection
DSRSG/RC/HC	Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
ICCG	Inter-Cluster Coordination Group
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
PSEA	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
RTT	Real Time Training
SHF	Somalia Humanitarian Fund
TOT	Training of Trainers
UNCT	UN Country Team



Photo Credit: UNICEF



UNITED NATIONS
SOMALIA

