

Support to Aid Management and Coordination in Somalia

Project Board Meeting (online)

Minutes

17th June 2020, 2.30-4pm

Participants:

Mr. Ahmed Nur, Permanent Secretary, OPM, FGS
Mr. Muhumed Hussein, ACU Director, OPM, FGS
Ms. Hodhan Nur, SDRF Officer, ACU, OPM, FGS
Mr. Mohamed Ali Mohamed, Finance & Admin Officer, ACU, OPM, FGS
Mr. Mohamed Gele, Hear ICT Unit, MOPIED, FGS
Mr. Thomas Oertle, Regional Director of Intl. Cooperation, Horn of Africa, Switzerland
Ms. Nimo Jirdeh, Governance and Policy Specialist, Switzerland
Ms. Christina Christou, Policy Coordinator, DFID
Mr. Joshua Vetter, Programme Officer, USAID
Ms. Sarah Cramer, Coordination Specialist, UN IO/WB
Mr. Albert Soer, Portfolio Manager, UNDP
Ms. Merita Jorgo, Head, Risk Management Unit, UN IO
Mr. Pau Blanquer, Aid Coordination Specialist, UNDP/UN IO

PS initial remarks:

The Permanent Secretary thanked the donors for the support to the Somali coordination mechanism and the provision of the necessary resources. He explained that, while the aid architecture discussion took longer than expected, it is good that we now have a consensus on an effective aid coordination structure that the government feels will be beneficial in terms of improved multi-stakeholder collaboration, efficient aid management and oversight. The PS announced that a SDRF Steering Committee meeting will be organized soon to address this issue.

With regards to the "Support to Aid Management & Coordination in Somalia" project, the PS remarked that activities for 2020 have been re-programmed to adjust to current circumstances determined by the impossibility of working as usual due to measures taken to prevent the expansion of the Covid-19 pandemic. He indicated that the project board meeting was an opportunity to discuss about the proposed adjusted action plan of activities for 2020. The plan includes the support being provided by ACU/OPM to the FGS Covid-19 response, particularly through coordination and logistics management, the reactivation of the Somali aid architecture and the retroactive payment of salaries of ACU FMS Focal Points with new funding provided by the Government of Italy. It includes also an updated project M&E framework.

POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

Mr. Pau Blanquer gave an update on the project's financial figures, informing about funds received and committed against the budget, as well as on expenditures. While there is a funding gap of around 26% of the project budget, given the current circumstances, Mr. Blanquer proposed to focus efforts on spending the committed funds to implement activities proposed in the adjusted proposed 2020 action plan. He thanked project donors for their continued support, informed that only the second tranche from Switzerland and the third tranche from UK are to be disbursed, and explained that the current balance of USD 648,834.74 is expected to be reduced quickly once the proposed adjusted action plan is endorsed, and subsequently the project document is amended. Detailed numbers can be seen in the attachment.

Mr. Mohamed Gele explained latest developments on aid information management, highlighting the online launch of the Aid Information Management System (AIMS) in April and the subsequent trainings organized for donor and implementing partners AIMS focal points, particularly on data entry. He announced upcoming trainings on use of the AIMS for FGS, FMS and NGO Consortium representatives, as well as for the ICT Unit in MOPIED on AIMS management. It is to be noted that the 2020 Aid Flow Analysis has been approved by the government.

Mr. Mohamed Ali introduced the components of the proposed adjusted plan 2020, namely the provision of support to the FGS response to the Covid-19 crisis, the operationalization of the Aid Architecture, and the retroactive payment of salaries of ACU FMS focal points for facilitating FMS engagement in the aid architecture in 2019 with funds provided by Italy. Mr. Ali highlighted the fact that ACU is fully engaged in implementing the FGS response to the Covid-19 crisis, particularly through the facilitation of the activity of the different coordination bodies established and the provision of logistic support for various operations. He also explained the proposed activities of the budget aimed at directly responding to the pandemic, which include the transfer of medical equipment and assets to FMS, the provision of lunches to medical doctors working in hospitals and the printing and dissemination of Covid-19 awareness materials.

Ms. Hannan Abdi provided an update on activities done by the Aid Coordination Unit from January to May 2020. She explained that ACU staff have been fully engaged in exercising coordination and logistic roles in response to the pandemic and have strengthened day to day operations by identifying and supporting critical functions and actions that must continue during the widespread outbreak of the virus, for example:

- setting up of the Covid-19 National Coordination Committee and associated sub-committees
- coordinating with FMS through information sharing, training of health practitioners and delivery of medical equipment
- establishing a quarantine centre in Mogadishu
- setting up of a Health Coordination Centre at Martini Hospital in Mogadishu, with facilities improved, including a call centre, and providing support to the activity of medical doctors

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- decision of halting of international and domestic flight
- implementing awareness campaigns on Covid-19
- developing the Socio-economic Impact and Required Response Plan for Covid-19
- ensuring regular engagement and coordination with the international community to provide a harmonized and effective response to the crisis.

Mr. Muhumed Hussein touched base on the final part of the presentation focusing on the reactivation of the aid architecture and the support offered by Italy to retroactively pay for work done by FMS and BRA Focal Points after during 2019 after March. He pointed out that now that the government has agreed on the aid architecture we need to focus on implementation and announced the upcoming organization of an SDRF SC meeting on 24 June. He explained that the Integrated Coordination Team is being set up and that Sector Working Groups will start their meetings very soon. He added that discussions will be framed on how pillars are going to work, and that the objective is to ensure aid coordination is as much effective as possible, and to move towards a more strategic, forward looking SDRF. He indicated that different resources, including consultancies, will be used to develop Standard Operating Procedures.

Mr. Hussein explained that discussions on MAF monitoring resumed in May, and that the FGS sticks to the agreement of the Somali Partnership Forum held on 1-2 October of using the MAF as the main tool to measure achievement of strategic commitments by both the government and the international community. Meetings to monitor progress of implementation are being organized and the Sector Working Groups will regularly include MAF in their agendas. He announced that the government expects to organize a Somali Partnership Forum before the end of the year, and confirmed commitment to shifting towards online meetings, also with FMS, as it is already happening.

In addition, he reminded that, as explained earlier in the meeting by Mr. Mohamed Gele, an historic launch of the AIMS was done in April and encouraged all partners to update their project data in the system, and partners and working groups to use the data for better planning and harmonization. He outlined that the project plans to continue organizing trainings on AIMS and on use of country systems and risk management (with the UN Integrated Office Risk Management Unit).

Finally, Mr. Muhumed Hussein explained the commitment of the Government of Italy to pay a lumpsum of EUR 181,750 through the aid coordination project using the UN MPTF funding window to pay for FMS Focal Points' activity in 2019 after March facilitating engagement of their respective FMS and BRA in the Somali aid architecture.

Questions & Answers

Mr. Joshua Vetter (USAID) congratulated the project for a transparent presentation with contribution from different ACU staff, and pointed out that USAID was happy to read the letter from the DPM addressed to the SDG Co-Chairs proposing a way forward on the reactivation of the aid architecture and also of the fact that the SDRF SC meetings will be resumed on 24 June. He expressed appreciation for the flexibility shown and support to the proposed shift to respond to the current Covid-19 crisis. Mr. Vetter indicated that he was

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surprised to read about the salary support to be provided by Italy to FMS Focal Points. He pointed out that the objective is to move towards a sustainable aid coordination function integrated into government's payroll, also at the FMS level. He added that USAID would like to have more clarity on which consultancies can be supported by the project in the coming months and stressed that he would prioritize the operationalization of the aid architecture.

Ms. Christina Christou (DFID) congratulated the project for a clear presentation and expressed appreciation for the development of an adjusted plan for 2020. She highlighted the importance of reinforcing virtual communication and collaboration and indicated that, given the circumstances, we have an opportunity now to move in that direction. She outlined the need to focus on next steps. With regards to the proposed budget for the adjusted 2020 action plan, she asked for a clarification on the reason why the proposed updated budget for 2020 is higher than the previous one, when there has been very limited activity due to Covid-19 in the last months. She also explained that DFID would also like to know if new money is being budgeted for logistical support to Covid-19 response. Ms. Christou pointed out that DFID is committed to supporting a more sustainable aid coordination function and would like to see by the end of the project a more integrated and sustainable ACU/OPM. Otherwise DFID may not be in a position to continue supporting aid coordination.

In response to Mr. Vetter's request for information about potential consultancies, **Mr. Pau Blanquer** explained different expected deliverables (as stated in slide 8 of the attached presentation) that would be developed in the next months by consultants/technical assistance. These include:

- Development of a plan for improved virtual communication/collaboration amongst bodies of the aid architecture
- Development of, awareness raising and training on Standard Operations Procedures, which could include:
 - o Functioning of the Integrated Coordination Team
 - o Operationalization of SDRF Pillar Working Groups
 - o Strengthening the participation of Federal Member States in the aid architecture
 - o Preparation of SDRF Steering Committee meetings
 - o Preparation of Somali Partnership Forums
 - o Management of thematic or cross-cutting issues
 - o Coordination within the aid architecture of the humanitarian-development and security-development nexuses
- Refinement of the SDRF Operations Manual, adjusted to the content of the new aid architecture
- Development of a leaflet for awareness raising and advocacy on the refined aid architecture
- Development of a Capacity development plan for the Integrated Coordination Team
- Development of a project document for a sustainable aid management & coordination function in Somalia

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In response to Ms. Christina Christou's question, **Mr. Pau Blanquer** explained that the reason of the increase of the adjusted budget is the inclusion of additional funds committed by Italy to pay for the activity of FMS Focal Points in 2019 after March. He also indicated that the money spared because of the non-organization of SDRF physical meetings in the first months of 2020 has been allocated to Covid-19 response activities and payment of salaries of ACU core staff.

Mr. Muhumed Hussein pointed out that progress is being made in the integration of ACU into OPM and that there is greater responsibility and coordination with roadmap leads. He remarked that ACU is not going back on those gains. On the Italian funding to FMS Focal Points he explained that this comes from 2019, and that Italy responded positively and has channeled their contribution through the project, to pay for activity implemented in 2019.

Ms. Christina Christou (UK) requested how does support provided to the FGS Covid-19 response aligns with the project's objectives and results framework. **Mr. Pau Blanquer and**

Mr. Muhumed Hussein responded that the Covid-19 outbreak has been an emergency that has obliged to re-programme activities and change our ways of working, not only in this but in most of the projects implemented in Somalia and in other countries. They argued that, given the potential negative impact of the pandemic many projects have re-oriented activities and funds to activities that support the prevention of the expansion of the disease or strengthen the country's preparedness to cope with the effects of the virus. In the case of this project ACU activity has been reoriented in the first months of the year to support coordination (including with FMS) and logistics management functions in response to the crisis. This is very much in line with the objective of the project of strengthening the capacity of Somali institutions to coordinate efforts of multiple stakeholders to address developmental challenges, in this case in a critical period. In addition, ACU is facilitating coordination with and delivery to Federal Member States, which is another objective of the project. ACU expertise in coordination and logistical management is then being used by the whole government in response to the crisis. This is improving government cohesion and collaboration between FGS and FMS.

Mr. Joshua Vetter (USAID) thanked Muhumed for the transparency in explaining the Italian support to paying FMS Focal Points' salaries. He remarked that it is now time to move forward with the operationalization of the aid architecture and pointed out that we have an opportunity to improve FMS engagement through a better use of online communication tools.

Ms. Nimo Jirdeh (Switzerland) outlined that Switzerland is supportive of a strong communications platform to operationalize the aid architecture and suggested to receive a plan with proposed consultancies.

Mr. Pau Blanquer reminded that an updated project M&E framework which considers current situation determined by the Covid-19 crisis had been circulated for review and endorsement. **Mr. Muhumed Hussein** proposed the end of the day on 18th June as deadline for comments and that if there are no objections by that time the proposed framework will be endorsed.



Mr. Muhumed Hussein thanked participants to the board meeting for the productive discussion, remarked the need to closely work together and outlined that the write up of the meeting would be shared soon, as well as a proposal of consultancies.

CLOSING REMARKS BY THE PERMANENT SECRETARY:

The Permanent Secretary thanked the Project Board for a fruitful meeting. He indicated that we need to benefit from the technology and that in terms of crisis coordination bringing everybody on board is important. He highlighted the importance of exploring what is workable in the context of Somalia.

With regards to sustainability, the PS stressed that the FGS wants to integrate as much staff as possible in its systems and payroll. However, he pointed out that Covid-19 is impacting strongly on the capacity of the government to obtain revenue, as economic activity has been reduced drastically, and anticipated that this will translate in an important deficit in the budget system and will limit the capacity of the government to operate. He argued that then the government will need direct support.

The PS indicated that the government is organizing a big number of meetings, mostly online, including with FGS bodies and FMS, and this will be increased in the next weeks/months (elections, SDRF re-activation, ...). He added that bringing people together to reach agreements is critical, and that coordination is not easy but is necessary.

Finally, the PS confirmed the government's support to the establishment of a strong online platform, thanked again the donors for their continued collaboration and requested them to maintain their support.

NEXT STEPS:

- Having not received objections to the approval of the proposed adjusted action plan for 2020, the "Support to Aid Management & Coordination in Somalia" project document will be amended considering the adjusted 2020 action plan (attached)
- Project board members have until end of Thursday 18 June to provide comments to the proposed adjusted M&E already shared. If there are no objections, the proposed adjustments in the M&E framework will be incorporated in the amendment of the project document
- ACU/UNDP will share on Monday 22 June a proposed plan of consultancies



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