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Food and power in Somalia: business as usual? A scoping study on the political economy of food following shifts in food assistance and in governance

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Monograph:

Jaspars, Susanne, Adan, Guhad M. and Majid, Nisar (2019) Food and power in Somalia: business as usual? A scoping study on the political economy of food following shifts in food assistance and in governance. . Conflict Research Programme, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK.

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Conflict Research Programme

Food and Power in Somalia: Business as Usual?

A scoping study on the political economy of food following shifts in food assistance and in governance

Susanne Jaspars, Guhad M. Adan, Nisar Majid



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the many people that have helped us in producing this report. First of all, the government officials, aid workers, businesspeople, and people in displaced camps who agreed to be interviewed and who helped us in finding other knowledgeable people to be interviewed. Thanks in particular to my old colleagues from the Refugee Health Unit for assisting with some of the fieldwork: Hussein Mursal and Abdi Shire. Alex de Waal, Mark Duffield, Tobias Hagmann, Hussein Mursal, and Aditya Sarkar all gave valuable feedback and advice on a draft version of the report. Their enthusiasm and excitement about the report made writing the final version so much easier.

About the CRP

The Conflict Research Programme is a four-year research programme managed by the Conflict and Civil Society Research Unit at the LSE and funded by the UK Department for International Development. Our goal is to understand and analyse the nature of contemporary conflict and to identify international interventions that ‘work’ in the sense of reducing violence or contributing more broadly to the security of individuals and communities who experience conflict.

About the Authors

Susanne Jaspars first worked in Somalia in 1987–8, for MSF-Holland, and has visited on a regular basis since – for operational work and research (in 1992–3, 2000, 2008, and now in 2019). Her research mainly concerns the social and political dynamics of food security and livelihoods in situations of conflict, famine, and humanitarian crises, spanning a period of thirty years. She recently completed a PhD at Bristol University on the history and politics of food aid in Sudan, now published as a book (*Food Aid in*

Sudan. A History of Politics, Power and Profit. Zed Books). Susanne has also published a range of policy reports and academic articles. She is currently a Research Associate at LSE’s Conflict and Civil Society Research Unit and at the Food Studies Centre of the School for Oriental and African Studies (SOAS).

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Nisar Majid began working in Somalia in the late 1990s and since then has worked across the Somali territories of the Horn of Africa as well as within the Somalia diaspora. His early working life was focused on early warning, food security, and livelihood analysis, and for his PhD he explored aspects of Somali transnationalism. In 2017 he co-authored the book *Somalia Famine: Competing Imperatives, Collective Failures, 2011–12* (Hurst and Co) and has published a number of policy reports and research studies over the last ten years. He joined the LSE Conflict Research Programme, managing the Somalia programme, in mid-2018.

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Executive Summary

Food and power in Somali have been intimately linked for decades. Ranging from land grabs and the manipulation of food aid to looting and diversion of aid – and entangled in the geopolitics of the so-called War on Terror – food has played a role in Somalia's political economy. The political economy of food has been examined for the 1990s, but less so for the famines of the 2000s. This study examines how the political economy of food has changed in the past 10 to 15 years, with shifts in governance and in aid. Changes in governance include the establishment of Al-Shabaab (following the rise and fall of the Islamic Courts Union) as Somalia's principal Islamic extremist group, which controlled most of south-central Somalia from 2006. From 2012, Somalia has had an internationally recognised federal government, following previous attempts at installing governments in 2000 and 2004. Changes in aid include the shift from food aid to cash transfers and a focus on nutrition during periods when people suffered famine and humanitarian crisis in 2008, 2011, and 2017.

The study combines the concept of political economy with that of the political market place (a political system characterized by the dominance of transactional politics over institutions, in which political office, loyalty, and services are tradable commodities) (De Waal, 2015) and with regimes of aid practices (sets of linked practices, including the techniques, science, organisations, authorities, and businesses involved) and their effects (Jaspars, 2018). The research team interviewed long-term aid workers, businessmen and women, government officials, and displaced people in May and June 2019 in Nairobi, Mogadishu, and Baidoa.

Key findings are that while power gained through controlling food aid or assistance has been dispersed, much remains concentrated within a limited political and business elite. From the mid-1990s to 2010, food aid was one of Somalia's biggest businesses because of the scope for collusion between transporters, the World Food Programme (WFP), and implementing partners to win contracts and divert food. The shift from food aid to cash transfers – in particular in the last decade – has led to the involvement of many new and smaller traders, but they remain dependent on a limited number of large businesses for supply. Much of the new power is with local authorities and Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) staff. The earlier food aid contractors remain among the wealthiest and most politically influential people in Somalia, involved in anything from fuel supply to construction to trade. Money-transfer companies are among the most powerful in Somalia, in part because of their involvement in aid-related cash transfers, and – like other large businesses – are involved in anything that is profitable. This includes real estate, construction, food imports, commercial cash-crop production, and more. These large businesses require a cheap, flexible, and exploitable labour force, which can be found among the displaced.

A shift to cash-crop production in rural areas has further concentrated power within the same trading or money-transfer companies. It has also further increased the vulnerability of already marginalised populations, many of whom have been forced to sell their land and are displaced. Most of the productive areas in southern Somalia are under Al-Shabaab control, including the rural areas of Bay and Bakool and along the Juba and Shebelle rivers, which is also where many of the most marginalised

populations live. While Al-Shabaab originally supported these groups in disputes over land, they have not protected them from – and may even have created – the increasingly harsh and coercive living conditions in the areas they control. From 2012, the government captured towns and effectively created a series of city states in south-central Somalia, where aid and the displaced are now concentrated. As such, Al-Shabaab may indirectly re-enforce the business-aid connection by forcing displacement and the need for aid.

These changes in food and power have also led to changes in the intersection between the commodification of aid and the commodification of politics. The large food-aid contractors of the 1990s and early 2000s used their wealth to buy political status and influence. With cash transfers, the marketplace for buying political loyalty has become more dispersed, with district authorities gaining in power through aid distribution. For money-transfer agencies, the key strategy is to ensure political compliance and protection so that their business can continue to expand. Al-Shabaab enters the political marketplace indirectly by enabling commercial cash crop production and the continuation of aid and by taxing food imports, internal transport, and trade. The importance of populations in Al-Shabaab-held areas for money-transfer organisations, means Al-Shabaab can influence government ability to regulate indirectly through these organisations. Government is by far the weaker partner in any negotiations involving business with the international community.

Few of these changes in power and vulnerability are reflected by regimes of food aid practices, whether in food security, nutrition, assessment targeting, or distribution. Current cash and nutrition practices focus on individual

responsibility and behaviour rather than the structural causes of malnutrition and food insecurity. Somalia's political and funding environment requires that aid organisations and the government perform both frontstage and backstage functions in the humanitarian theatre (Desportes et al., 2019). Frontstage, aid is improving because of new practices and aims: cash transfers, quantitative indicators, digital systems, third party monitoring, and an overall aim of resilience. Also frontstage, government is developing policies along the same lines. Backstage, politics and power are prominent and aid diversion and the marginalisation and exploitation of particular population groups continue. For members of the government, aligning with donor priorities attracts the resources necessary for maintaining a political budget and therefore the loyalty of their clan.

Aid organisations, business, and government – and possibly Al-Shabaab – all benefit from the status quo of continued aid flows into government-held urban areas. However, it also requires maintaining a large displaced population and, by extension, the continued marginalisation and exploitation of certain population groups. The displaced have become not only a way of maintaining aid but also a business opportunity and a political tool. Gatekeepers or entrepreneurs set up displaced camps as a way of attracting aid and increasing the value of land. Politically, the concentration of aid in government-held towns facilitates counter-insurgency operations as it maintains the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) or Somali National Army (SNA) presence there. This does not address the causes of malnutrition and food insecurity.

The political and economic effects of aid raise wider issues for humanitarian actors. How have issues of aid diversion, and exclusion or

marginalisation, continued for so long? Is there a degree of acceptance of a permanent state of crisis or precarity among the displaced? How complicit are international aid actors in the creation of cheap and exploitable labour for business and a new plantation economy? These are large questions to be addressed, and are part of global trends in the growth of precarity, the digitisation of welfare, and making poverty and conflict less visible (Duffield, 2019b). More immediate actions are limited until the political causes of Somalia's ongoing crisis and instability are addressed. The report gives recommendations for exploring whether business actions are illegal or immoral and raises the importance of civic values of solidarity and protection. It also highlights the need for aid practices to be explicit about the impact of politics and conflict and for donors to encourage this.

List of Acronyms

AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
AU	African Union
DC	District Commissioner
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IPC	Integrated Phase Classification
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
FEWSNET	Famine Early Warnings Systems Network
FSNAU	Food Security and Nutrition Assessment Unit
GNP	Gross National Product
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UN OCHA	United Nations Office for Humanitarian Affairs
UNOSOM	United Nations Operation in Somalia
SATG	Somali Agriculture Technical Group
SFG	Federal Government of Somalia
SNA	Somali National Army
TFG	Transitional Federal Government
TNG	Transitional National Government
UIC	Union of Islamic Courts
USAID	US agency for International Development
WFP	US agency for International Development

1. Introduction

Food is central to power in Somalia. It has played a key role in how Somalia is governed and in who suffers and who benefits from famine and relief. Food has influenced power relations through land grabs and the manipulation of food aid as part of a system of political patronage in the 1970s and 1980s, and through looting, displacement and diversion of aid by warlords in the 1990s. In the 2000s, Al-Shabaab banned US food aid and large-scale diversion of humanitarian relief has continued to be reported in government areas. Production, trade, and food assistance have historically been controlled by a few powerful individuals or businesses, with benefits often allocated according to clan affiliation. Other groups have been marginalized, discriminated against, and exploited, in particular the agro-pastoral populations in the Bay and Bakool regions and the riverine farmers along the Juba and Shebelle rivers. These groups have shown persistently high levels of acute malnutrition and suffered the most severe famines, including in 1992 and 2011.

The wider political economy of food, and in particular food assistance, has been much examined for the 1990s, but less so for the food crises and famines of the 2000s. At the same time, the 2000s coincide with changes in aid practices and governance for Somalia. Changes in aid practices include new forms of food assistance such as cash transfers (vouchers, cash distributions, and mobile transfers) and specialised nutrition products, also considered to be food-based resilience approaches. Changes in governance include the rise of the Union of Islamic Courts in 2005. The group Al-Shabaab, initially a militia under the Courts' control, became the principal Islamic extremist group after the defeat of the Courts in December 2006, controlling most

of south-central Somalia thereafter. Aid delivery to these areas dropped dramatically after the US designated the group a terrorist organisation in 2008. Al-Shabaab itself banned US food aid from February 2010, which escalated in response to the 2011 famine. In 2019, when fieldwork for this study was undertaken, rural areas were still largely controlled by Al-Shabaab but towns were (nominally) held by the Somali government. The other key change in governance was the establishment of Somalia's internationally recognised federal government (the Federal Government of Somalia or FGS), following previous attempts in 2000 and 2004, which came into effect in 2012.

This report argues that even while food assistance practices and governance have changed in the past fifteen years, much of Somalia's recent political economy of food is a story of continuities. Food and power remain in the hands of an oligopoly of businessmen, who are able to influence national and local politics and whose enterprises depend on the exploitation of others. Cash transfers involve more traders and retailers at the local level than food aid delivery did previously but they still depend on a few large traders to supply food. Mobile cash transfers as aid have contributed to the growth of a limited number of telecoms and money-transfer companies. Both former food-aid transporters and money-transfer agents are involved in a range of other business ventures and in various forms of political patronage and influence. Marginalisation of certain groups remains and their displacement has increased. This is both because exploitative conditions for riverine farmers (in particular in relation to the commercial production of cash crops) have increased their sale of land and because aid is largely distributed in large urban areas. Once displaced, they become a business

opportunity and a source of aid for landowners and “entrepreneurs”.

Following a short section on concepts, objectives, and methods, the report reviews the history of food and power in Somalia, as this sets the stage for the current political and economic processes that determine why some people have access to food and others don't. The third section examines the diffusion of power following a shift in logistics, including the investment in new ventures by big food-aid contractors, the large number of new smaller actors, and the new power of the money-transfer companies. Section 4 analyses changes in production and trade, including the link between displacement, sale of land, and shift to cash-crop production, much of which is also driven by food aid or cash transfer companies. This is followed by an analysis of changes in food assistance practices more broadly and how they have made politics and political economy invisible. Section 6 discusses the limited role of the Federal Government of Somalia but the increased power of local authorities because of the concentration of aid in government-held towns. Finally, the last section examines the role of the displaced within Somalia's political economy, as even the displaced have become a business opportunity.

Overview of concepts, objectives, and methods

The study explores the key changes in the political economy of food since the mid-2000s, focusing on production, trade, and food assistance. In addition to changes in aid practices and in governance, this period includes three instances of severe crisis or famine – 2008, 2011 and 2017 – and large humanitarian operations in response. The focus is on South West State, Jubaland, and Benadir as these are the areas where famines and food insecurity have been most severe and where humanitarian operations have been most

contentious in the past. These areas are also most affected by Al-Shabaab's presence.

The study combines the concepts of political economy, the political marketplace, and regimes of aid practices. Building on the work of Duffield (1994) and Keen (1994), the political economy of famine and relief can be seen as the maintenance of power by asset-stripping of politically weak populations. This can be done by force, through manipulation of markets, or by state appropriation. Aid is part of, or feeds into, this. Keen's work on the benefits of famine furthermore shows how the exploitation or exclusion of particular groups (to the point of famine) has important benefits for some. Collinson (2003) defined political economy as vulnerability. He analysed power as a political and economic process in terms – for instance, of neglect, exclusion, or exploitation – in which a variety of groups and actors play a part. Within such a framework, group identity or political position may expose people to violence. This interpretation of political economy is complemented with the concept of the political marketplace. The political marketplace is a system of governance where transactions or deals to buy political loyalty dominate institutions, laws, and regulations. In other words a system of governance in which political loyalty is bought or sold (De Waal, 2015). While we use political economy to examine how the interaction of political and economic processes leads to power and vulnerability in terms of control over resources, the political marketplace examines how food – whether as production or aid – has become a means of buying political loyalty, political power, or political compliance. In other words, this study also examines the intersection between the commodification of food assistance and the commodification of politics.

Food aid is more than a gift or a commodity, it is also a technology of governance and a regime of practices. Food aid is a technology of governance because it has the power to change behaviour or power relations or manage populations (Jaspars, 2018: 11). Food aid as a way of governing ranges from the disciplinary measures of food for work to the promotion of resilience (whether by reducing food aid or linking it to behaviour change) or through monitoring, surveillance, and the development of norms – ie, the level of risk considered acceptable (also termed biopolitics; see Foucault, 2007). This study analyses the effect of food aid using the concept of “regimes of practices”. Originally developed by Foucault (*ibid.*), the concept was elaborated by Schaffer (1984), as a means of analysing policy through examining the knowledge it takes for granted and how selected problems emerge from existing theories, institutions, apparatuses. In analysing regimes of food aid practices¹ in this study, we examine food aid and nutrition practices (eg, objectives, assessment, targeting), the science that informs these practices and the knowledge it creates, the objects of practice (eg, Internally Displaced Persons (IDP), vulnerable groups), the donors and international organisations involved, as well as the government, aid organisations, and businesses at the national and local levels. We analyse the actual power effects of this combination of practices and the actors involved and how this has changed over time. A review of the literature on food (including food aid) and power is provided in Section 2.

Table 1: Interview sample

Place	Aid worker	Trader/transporter	Money-transfer agent	Government official	IDP representative
Nairobi	31	2	2	0	0
Mogadishu	6	6		6	5
Baidoa	2	4	1	3	3

¹ For more information on regimes of food aid practices, see Jaspars, 2018.

Using these three concepts, we arrived at the main objectives of the scoping study:

1. To examine how the political economy of food in Somalia has changed in the past 10 to 15 years, with a particular focus on changes in food assistance and in governance.
2. To explore whether and how the political marketplace applies to food; ie, how is food or are food practices used to buy political loyalty or suppress opposition, and how has this changed over time.
3. To analyse changes in regimes of food assistance practices and their political and economic effects (with particular emphasis on the change from food aid to cash and resilience practices, and on the famine or crisis years of 2008, 2011, and 2017).

Detailed research questions are shown in Annex 1.

The study mainly used qualitative methods consisting of semi-structured interviews with a range of key informants, including long-term aid workers, businesspeople (traders, transporters, importer/exporters, money-transfer agents), government officials, and IDP representatives. In all cases, we purposively selected informants with long-term experience so they could talk knowledgeably about change. The research was approved by the Ministry of Planning. A total of 71 interviews took place in Nairobi, Baidoa, and Mogadishu as shown in Table 1.

The interviews were done in two stages. The first was from 28 April to 5 May 2019, with long-term aid workers in Nairobi. Many of these had been involved in aid since the 1990s, and some even earlier. The findings of these interviews were used to refine the questions and checklists for the second stage of fieldwork, which included interviews with aid workers, government officials, traders and transporters, and IDPs. Fieldwork in Somalia took place from 21 June to 4 July 2019. Half of those interviewed in the first stage of fieldwork were Somali, as were all those interviewed in the second stage. Doing any research in or on Somalia presents challenges, due to issues of access, security, and trust. It is only possible to set up interviews using established relationships of trust, especially to ensure information is reliable. The first stage of purposive sampling was therefore the selection of key informants that each of us knew from previous engagement in Somalia, and they in turn suggested others. IDP representatives were purposively selected from Hanano 2 and Dowty Malabley in Baidoa and from Saidka IDP Camp, Jidka Sodonka and Jama'ada Lafoole in Mogadishu. In Somalia, Susanne Jaspars had to ask key informants to visit her in a secure hotel, but Guhad Adan was able to travel to meet key informants where they lived or worked.

In addition to interviews, a literature review was undertaken of both key published and grey literature concerning the politics and governance of production, trade, and food aid before and during the conflict. More than 100 documents were reviewed.

2. Background – history of food and power in Somalia

While the focus of this study is the past 10 to 15 years, the key areas for exploration are influenced by earlier trends. From a brief review of literature (see below), it is possible to identify three broad periods in the political economy of food, in particular when considering trends in vulnerability and power in production, trade, and aid. The first period is during Siad Barre's government, when wealth and power were already concentrated in a minority elite and depended in part on the marginalisation of particular groups (ie, the riverine groups and the Rahanweyn in Bay and Bakool). The second period is the first decade of the conflict (from 1989 to 1999)² when clan-based militias fought for control over resources, including large-scale looting and theft, displacement and famine among those who had earlier been marginalised. In contrast, business and trade blossomed in livestock, charcoal, electronic goods, money transfer. During the third period, from 2000, various forms of Western- and Ethiopian-backed governments were introduced, with a coincident rise of Islamist movements, leading to a resumption of conflict, large-scale displacements, and famine or humanitarian crises in 2008, 2011, and 2017. Throughout these three periods, aid – in particular food aid – fed into and re-enforced these power relations. It supported governments, warlords, and businesses, but the nature of how it did this changed over time. This section first briefly describes the political economy of food for each of the earlier periods, followed by a description of key aspects of the period from 2005, to form the basis of the remainder of this report.

² Although Siad Barre's government was not overthrown until 1991, there was already widespread violent land grabbing in 1988 and armed insurrection by the Somali National Movement (SNM) in northern Somalia in the 1980s and from 1989 in the

south, with the Somalia Patriotic Movement (SPM) and Somalia Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) active in the area from mid-1990.

Before the conflict – Siad Barre’s regime

Somalia’s economy during Siad Barre’s regime has been described as a rentier economy (Samatar, 2008) or rentier kleptocracy (De Waal, 2015) in which the state buys political loyalties or grants favoured rent-seekers with opportunities, including aid, civil society positions, or state assets. Legitimate enterprise was frustrated with much of trade and business becoming part of an informal economy (Mubarak, 1997). Political power was concentrated within a clique of leaders associated with three Daarod clans, nicknamed MOD for Marehan (President Siad Barre’s own clan, the most powerful), Ogaden, and Dulbahante, which benefited most from a political system based on patronage. During the early socialist years of the 1970s, this group benefited from state farms and price controls and did so again with the capitalisation of agriculture (and structural adjustment) in the 1980s, when the liberalisation of land tenure facilitated land grabs by the well-connected (Samatar, 2008).

Key components of the economy were livestock, farming (subsistence and cash crops), remittances, and aid. Cash crops consisted mainly of banana for export along the Juba and Shebelle rivers. From the late 1970s labour and land in this production system were highly commodified and dependent on cheap and exploitable labour, mostly from the clans that inhabited the fertile land along and between the rivers and that were not well-represented politically. Land grabs started with the Italian colonisers, and they were followed by politicians, civil servants, and merchants who could register the land. In terms of trade, only the largest merchants profited from livestock and cash-crop exports as only a few businesses were granted export licenses (Ahmad, 2012). Much of

Somalia, however, consisted of a rural production system that operated independently of government, together with an urban sector dependent on remittances. Migration to the Middle East grew throughout the 1970s and 1980s as a result of the oil boom and economic opportunities (Lindley, 2009).

Aid was (and remains) a key component of Somalia’s economy, accounting for as much as 57 per cent of Somalia’s Gross National Product (GNP) in 1987 (Menkhaus, 2014: 156). Food aid to Somalia has increased dramatically since the 1970s, in response to drought in 1974, and in much larger quantities following the influx of refugees following the Ogaden war with Ethiopia (of 1978). Prior to this, food aid was used to resettle nomads and programme food aid was sold on the market³ (Thomson, 1983: 212). This aid sustained Siad Barre’s government, which used it (or the associated aid contracts) to reward Barre’s supporters. Reportedly, 85 per cent of aid for refugees was diverted (Askin, 1987, referenced in De Waal, 1997). While this was arguably one of the worst instances of food diversion in history, within the context of the Cold War, Somalia was too valuable an ally from which to suspend aid. The Somali government played its weak hand well, threatening Western aid donors that should they withhold assistance, it was in danger of collapse (Lefebvre, 1992).

The 1990s – conflict, warlords, and increase in business opportunities

The 1970s and 1980s set the scene for what was to follow. Control of production, trade, and aid by powerful individuals or business, in part through the looting and exploitation of marginal groups,

³ This was food aid provided through US Public Law 480 Title 1. Programme food aid is direct government-to-government aid,

provided on concessional credit terms; it is a loan rather than a grant.

was taken to extremes after the fall of Siad Barre in 1991 and the start of Somalia's long civil war.

As opposition to his rule grew, Siad Barre was ousted by a coalition of rebels led by the United Somali Congress (USC) and the country descended into civil war. Between 1991 and 1993, conflict raged in the riverine and inter-riverine areas of Middle and Lower Shebelle, Lower Juba, and Bay regions. A war economy of large-scale and violent looting and resource capture developed, resulting in one of Somalia's most severe famines in 1992. The riverine and inter-riverine populations were most vulnerable as they were largely unarmed (see Box 1). Many were displaced or forced off their lands. New "landowners" from within the Daarod,

and later Hawiye, clan families, from Mogadishu, presented themselves as liberators in Lower Shebelle. Along the Juba river, both Marehan and Ogaden (dominant groups) claimed Rahanweyn, Gabaweyn, or Bantu land (De Waal, 2007). This created a new group of small holders and day labourers who were much more vulnerable to food insecurity, as well as ongoing conflict between "landowners" and "liberators" (African Rights, 1993). Some of the highest rates of malnutrition were recorded in 1992, but rates remained high throughout the 1990s among these same vulnerable groups (Jaspars, 2000).

Box 1: Marginalisation and minorities in Somalia

Clan identity and dynamics in Somalia are complex and contested. Somali social hierarchy contains a number of groups, with the four noble or pastoralist clans at the top: Dir, Darod, Hawiye. Others have historically been marginalised politically and economically. They include the agro-pastoral Rahanweyn (also called Digil and Mirifle), and the originally indigenous Cushitic farming people such as the Shebelle and Gabaweyn, and the Bantu. The Bantu consist of a number of groups: some are descendants of original inhabitants of the area and others are descendants of slaves brought into the country in the nineteenth century (De Waal, 1997). The latter are not part of the clan system at all. Other marginalized groups include the minority Benadiri, Midgaan, Bajuni, Eyle, Tumul, Yibir, Galgaala, characterized by the stigma of their occupational status and grievances of "ritual uncleanness" (Narbeth and McLean, 2003). For example, the Eyle were traditionally hunters, the Tumul blacksmiths, etc. There are also adopted clan members (*sheegat*) who have been incorporated into another group but may retain a different social and political status (Menkhaus, 2010). In the current 4.5 federal government system,⁴ the Gabaweyn are part of the Rahanweyn (now a main clan) while other minority groups including the Somali Bantu are part of others (the 0.5).

Marginalised groups form a relatively large proportion of the population, particularly in southern Somalia, and have traditionally inhabited some of Somalia's most fertile land. The minority Shebelle, Gabaweyn, and Bantu have been systematically dispossessed from their land along the Juba and Shebelle rivers, a process that started in the 1980s. The Rahanweyn have been politically marginalised but are not a minority. Within the Rahanweyn, however, there are power imbalances, with some wealthy and economically diverse sub-clans and lineages and other much poorer ones. The Rahanweyn and Bantu (and other minorities) are often subject to discrimination and exploitation by more powerful groups when they have been displaced into other clan-based areas. The vulnerability of the riverine and inter-riverine populations to famine in 1991 and in 2011 was a direct consequence of their political marginalization (De Waal, 1997).

⁴ The Somali political system is based on the "4.5" formula, which is constituted by the four biggest clans (Daarod, Dir –

including Isaaq-, Hawiye and Rahanweyn) with the 0.5 allocated to minority groups.

Business boomed as the absence of a state opened up new opportunities. Exports of livestock, bananas, and charcoal grew as did the import of consumer goods (Hagmann, 2016). According to Samatar (2008), the stateless economy was an extreme version of neoliberal informality, characterised by the complete absence of public authority and security. He divides the economy into four parts: (1) warlord controlled (including former state assets: airports, seaports, plantations, and farmland), (2) business-lord controlled (import/export),⁵ (3) telecoms and money transfer, (4) small professional and retail enterprises, farming, and pastoralism. Hagmann and Stepputat (2016: 17) called the early 1990s an “economy of plunder”, consisting of violent asset-stripping and associated with the rise of protection rackets. With the arrival of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) peace-keeping operation in 1992, and WFP, aid contracts became Somalia’s biggest business with the first two groups – warlords and business lords – playing a key role. Some of Somalia’s largest businesses today made their initial capital at this time (Ahmad, 2012; Hagmann, 2016). This was confirmed by the food-aid transporters we interviewed; they became involved in the early 1990s, because food aid was the most lucrative and reliable business (key informants 28 and 34, 2019). Warlords made money through diversion and protection rackets. Over time, this economy evolved with the business class gradually becoming more dominant than the

warlords, and developing extensive but oligopolistic trade networks as accumulation took place (Hagmann and Stepputat, 2016). As this report will show, the oligopolistic features of the economy still apply today except food aid has been replaced by cash transfers and Al-Shabaab or private security companies provide protection.

With food aid being the main resource, its manipulation became extreme. The International Committee of the Red Cross and Crescent (ICRC) were the first to distribute food, and established thousands of soup kitchens because so much food was diverted from dry distributions (Jaspars, 2000). However, even with soup kitchens, elders registered “ghost kitchens” and “ghost villages” to attract more food (De Waal, 1997: 170). With the arrival of UNOSOM, faction leaders used funding from international sources to legitimate claims to power (Hammond and Vaughan-Lee, 2012). By the late 1990s, large-scale conflict subsided, as did aid – but its manipulation continued. Diversion to clan elders and exclusion of the most vulnerable remained issues, but the role of gatekeepers⁶ in taxing IDPs became a particular concern (see for example Narbeth and McLean, 2003). A private business class became the dominant political force, as trade continued to grow within the hands of a few businesspeople (Hagmann, 2006: 32). At the same time, financial systems evolved, with traditional *hawala* (money transfer system) being incorporated into larger enterprises and

⁵ Samatar (2008) explains that warlords control the revenue from these state assets and use some to pay their militias. Business lords act in a parallel manner and import or export whatever they can sell. The latter operate inside and outside of the country and control most of the armed militias, which gives them an advantage over smaller entrepreneurs.

⁶ According to the UN Monitoring Group (UN Security Council, 2012: 310), gatekeepers are individuals and

organisations who position themselves to harness humanitarian assistance flows for their own personal or political advantage. They exercise control over the location of IDP camps; the delivery, distribution and management of assistance; and even physical access to IDP camps and feeding centres.

because of new technologies (email, etc) (Lindley, 2009). The main companies at this time were Dahabshiil, Amal, and Al-Bakarat. The business class, with its financial muscle, became the main source of political patronage in the country, which included – initially – support for warlords.

Changes in governance and food assistance since 2005

From 2000, Somalia has had some form of internationally recognized government, although a sense that a central government might endure was not gained until the establishment of the Federal Government of Somalia in 2012. In 2000, a Transitional National Government (TNG), dominated by Hawiye clan elements, soon met with resistance. Warlords, backed by Ethiopia, fought the TNG and allied militias, causing large-scale displacement (Jaspars and Maxwell, 2008). From 2004, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) took over, with Ethiopia's backing, leading to a Hawiye-based Islamist movement in Mogadishu and the bringing together of clan-based Islamist courts by the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC). A joint Ethiopian/US offensive soon followed (December 2006), taking over the capital and other key towns within 4 or 5 weeks and resulting again in large-scale displacement. The situation of displaced people in the Afgoye corridor (close to Mogadishu) was considered the world's worst humanitarian crisis in 2008 (Maxwell and Majid, 2016). Ethiopian forces occupied much of southern Somalia at this time and were supported by US airstrikes. The Ethiopian forces handed over to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in early 2007, which consisted almost entirely of troops

from East African states with political interests in Somalia and ready to mount combat missions under an African Union (AU) banner. However, Ethiopia retained military control of its buffer zone in south-central Somalia and subsequently enrolled its force as a contingent of AMISOM. The Ethiopian occupation was associated with the rise of Al-Shabaab, an Islamist movement that initially attracted much support – particularly from the traditionally marginalised clans (Majid and McDowell, 2012). Al-Shabaab soon covered much of southern Somalia, including much of Mogadishu, Bay and Bakool regions, and much of Middle and Lower Juba. It was designated a terrorist organisation by the US from 2008, and Al-Shabaab banned US food aid to the areas under its control from February 2010, including during the 2011 famine. This effectively halted the food aid operations of CARE and WFP, which had provided relief to much of southern Somalia. Mogadishu was retaken by AMISOM forces in 2011, and towns in Bay, Bakool, Lower and Middle Juba in 2014 and 2015.

While cash-transfer programmes had been implemented on a small scale from 2003 (see Majid et al., 2007), and were considered successful, the ban on food aid along with limited access for Western NGOs to Al-Shabaab areas led to a massive (and necessary) scaling up of cash operations in response to the famine in 2011. Cash-based programmes have continued – and evolved further since this time and were again scaled up in response to the 2017 crisis (and warnings of a potential famine) (Maxwell and Majid, 2016; Daniels and Anderson, 2018). This is further explored in Section 3. It started with cash transfers using *hawala* such as Dahabshiil, whether as part of cash for work or direct grants. By 2019, the two

dominant means of cash transfer were WFP's food vouchers (using an electronic card or SCOPE system that used a large network of retailers in towns in south-central Somalia, now South West and Jubaland regions), and mobile transfers (mainly using Hormuud telecoms company) (see Box 2 on the evolution of cash transfer programmes). The actual form of aid, and the entire regime of practices and the political economy around it, changed. As the following sections will show, new traders and transporters supply smaller amounts of food to WFP retailers, previous food aid contractor entered into new business, and "mobile money" led to the rise of telecoms companies. In addition to the logistics of aid (procurement and transport), assessment and distribution methodologies changed, as did interactions

with government, all underpinned by an ideology of resilience (see Section 4). The extent and patterns of displacement changed between 2011 and 2017 because by 2017, towns were held by government. As will be seen in the following sections, Al-Shabaab's actions changed and so did aid modalities and the way aid could be manipulated. Patterns of production and trade changed simultaneously. Some as a result of changing patterns of displacement, others because of new investment or aid opportunities. The next two sections of this report explore the wider political and economic effects of the shift from food aid to cash transfers and of changes in production.

Box 2: Evolution of cash transfers as humanitarian assistance in Somalia

Aid organisations in Somalia have been at the forefront of pioneering cash-based humanitarian (and resilience) interventions in highly volatile context. The first cash programmes took place in the mid-2000s and were closely followed and documented. Somalia's trade-based economy and well-established *hawala* money-transfer system were credited with enabling successful interventions and challenging the dominance of food aid programmes (Ali et al., 2005). These early programmes were based on partnerships between aid actors and *hawala* companies, where the *hawala* was responsible for carrying physical cash to distribution points and the NGO responsible for selection of beneficiaries.

The 2011 famine response saw a huge scaling up of cash-based programmes in a time of extreme humanitarian crisis and political uncertainty. This involved a scale-up of the Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) programmes and a consortium of NGOs working under the umbrella of UNICEF. To transfer the cash, they used a number of *hawala* money-transfer companies, including Dahabshiil, Amal, and other smaller players.

Over the last 10 years, Hormuud telecom led the development of mobile money mechanisms. Many aid actors have moved from the previous system of working with *hawala* to utilising this system, often providing sim cards or telephones to beneficiaries to enable such transfers. The other key player in the past decade is WFP, which rolled out its SCOPE system in Somalia, working with Amal bank. This is an electronic voucher system using biometric identification. Vendors are selected and trained by WFP staff. These developments represent a shift to digital platforms in line with the evolving telecommunications and financial infrastructure in the country.

3. From food aid to cash – a shift in logistics and diffusion in power

Food aid changed a lot. From direct WFP food aid to indirectly delivering it through local business community ... along [with] cash transfer through mobile money transfer or WFP SCOPE card. This transformation is positive or negative depending on who is explaining (Governor of Baidoa, 2019).

Food aid has long been a source of power in Somalia, whether by the wealth gained through diversion or taxation or the authority gained from distributing resources (either to buy off enemies or to reward supporters). This section takes the analysis further by examining the political and economic effects of changing logistics (transport, trade, money-transfer companies) with the shift from food aid to cash transfers and how this in turn influenced the political marketplace. Aid organisations have continued to face difficulties in reaching the most vulnerable populations. Food aid had a massive impact on the power of transport contractors, however, in that they were able to amass huge wealth and obtain political status and influence. As this section will show, the shift to cash transfers led to the involvement of more actors and more-dispersed political and economic benefits. It increased the ability of local authorities to buy or maintain political support. The switch to mobile money changed things again and contributed to the massive expansion of Hormuud, now able to invest in any profitable enterprise. Instead of buying political status or loyalty, however, it appears Hormuud buys political compliance to maintain an ever increasing and unregulated business empire. This section discusses each of these issues in turn. Overall, the section illustrates how the intersection between the

commodification of food assistance and the commodification of politics changed over time.

Did food assistance programmes meet their objectives?

While it is beyond the scope of this study to review all evaluations and studies of food aid and cash transfer programmes since 2005, it is clear from key documents that humanitarian aims have rarely if ever been met. A 2008 study on food aid targeting reported large-scale diversion of food aid from IDP camps in the Afgoye corridor, in the midst of a humanitarian crisis (Jaspars and Maxwell, 2008). In 2010, the UN Monitoring Group exposed a massive scandal of WFP collusion with Somali businessmen to divert food (see more below). During the 2011 famine, the hardest hit areas could not be reached by international organisations (they were in Al-Shabaab-held areas) and so received little aid. In interviews with people from these areas, they said they sold land, lost livestock, their children died, and they migrated in large numbers to Mogadishu (and other towns) as well as to Kenya and Ethiopia in search of aid or work (Hedlund et al., 2012: 27). The 2012 WFP evaluation (covering the 2006 to 2011 period) concluded that there was little understanding of the contribution of food assistance to food and nutrition insecurity in Somalia (Nicholson et al., 2012).

Cash transfers have generally been reported on positively as providing choice for beneficiaries, improving access to food and dietary diversity, re-opening credit lines with local traders, and thus supporting markets and trading systems in Somalia (see for example Ali et al., 2005; Majid et al., 2007). In addition, the potential for diversion initially appeared to be less because, unlike food aid, cash is less visible. Before 2011,

cash programmes worked well because they were small new pilot projects with a huge interest in ensuring their success, which included significant investment in monitoring and evaluation. An advantage in Somalia was the strength of the market-based economy and the reliability of the *hawalas* (ibid.; ibid.). In 2011, given the absence of the main food aid organisations and the humanitarian catastrophe, cash transfers were really the only option for response and could be rapidly scaled up. An evaluation of the 2011 cash operation, however, highlighted ongoing diversion by gatekeepers, elders, NGOs, and cash-transfer agents (Hedlund et al., 2012). Also, because the bulk of cash transfers in 2011 was provided in accessible (government-held) areas, it drew people away from rural areas to displacement camps in Afgoye and Mogadishu, where a proportion was diverted by camp owners or landlords from different (often more powerful) clans (ibid.). Even when aid could be provided in rural areas, there are indications that it may have consolidated the occupation of land by stronger clans, as “landowners” were paid, and so facilitated the oppression of riverine populations (ibid.: 34). An FAO evaluation found that Bantu marginalised groups had been excluded from their cash-for-work programme (Buchanan-Smith, 2013), thus re-enforcing their marginalisation generally. Maxwell and Majid (2016: 130–8) furthermore note that meta evaluations revealed ongoing failures of targeting, taxation of implementing partners, beneficiaries, traders and money-transfer agents by local authorities and gatekeepers, and attempts by militia and authorities to influence targeting. A study on corruption in

humanitarian aid pointed out that the aid chain (UN, to international to local NGOs) was often part of networks of collusion and aid diversion (Harmer and Majid, 2016). This was despite the introduction of third-party monitoring, use of call centres, and greater monitoring and evaluation systems to mitigate these risks (ibid). Coverage of rural areas remained a challenge in 2017⁷ (Daniels and Anderson, 2018). WFP’s 2018 evaluation found that beneficiaries preferred cash-based transfers to food aid and that WFP’s operation had been credited with making an important contribution towards preventing famine in 2017. However, it also found that access to rural areas remained problematic – by late 2017, WFP was unable to reach 600,000 people considered extremely food insecure⁸ – and the evaluation team questioned that vulnerable households had been effectively targeted, or rather suggested that marginalized groups might have been excluded (Maunder et al., 2018). It appears therefore, while the modalities have changed, issues of access and manipulation remain. The remainder of this section delves deeper into the politics and economic effects of changes from food aid and cash operations, in particular of changes in the associated logistics.

Big contracts and big politics – building capital through food aid transport

Following a period of relative stability and limited food aid, from late 2006 food aid became one of Somalia’s biggest businesses again. Volumes of food aid dramatically increased following the Ethiopian ground offensive against the UIC, backed by US

⁷ The evaluation does not mention where access to rural areas was limited, but presumably this is in Al-Shabaab held areas in southern Somalia.

⁸ Again, the report implies that this is in Al-Shabaab areas but does not state so specifically.

airpower. WFP's operation changed from 1.47 million beneficiaries to 3.20 million – nearly a quarter of the population of Somalia. More than 300,000 metric tonnes of food aid were distributed in 2009 (Nicholson et al., 2012). With such large volumes of food aid having to be distributed quickly, WFP had no choice but to work with big contractors. Only a few contractors were powerful enough to move the food, to provide a financial bond, and to deal with the militias. Three companies received the bulk of the transport contracts, worth \$200 million. It turned them into oligarchs (key informant 3, 2019). The companies were owned by Mogadishu-based contractors Abukar Omar Adaani, Abdulqadir Mohamed Nur “Enow” (both Abgal/Hawiye), and Mohamed Deylaaf (Habr Gidr/Hawiye). These names are important because in 2010, the UN monitoring group implicated them in the scandal of collusion between contractors, implementing partners, and WFP staff to divert food aid (UN Security Council, 2010). They had been WFP's main contractors for 12 years, and they remain among the wealthiest businessmen in Somalia today. The monitoring group estimated a diversion of 30 per cent of food aid for the implementing partner and local WFP personnel, 10 per cent for the ground transporter, and 5 to 10 per cent for the armed group in control of the area (ibid.). Some of this was foretold in a targeting study in 2008, which noted a link between businessmen or traders, implementing partners, local authorities, and militia (Jaspars and Maxwell, 2008). With food aid contractors responsible for protecting food convoys, “WFP contractors have maintained some of the largest private militia in southern Somalia” (UN Security Council, 2010: 61). Food aid was also supplied cross-border from Kenya into Somalia. The two Kenya-based

transporters we interviewed confirmed that the main reason they had worked for WFP or CARE was because it was the biggest business at the time (key informants 28 and 34, 2019). It was not only the volume of business but also the regularity and the reliability of getting paid that made transporting food aid attractive. Both were involved in other business at the same time, including commercial food transport, real estate, and cash facilitation. The latter facilitates cash transfers for international organisations in the absence of banks. The Kenya-based transporters also have much bigger businesses today than before they started transporting food aid.

Food-aid contractors have also been engaged politically, at the highest levels. Several interviewees suggested that to be in politics in Somalia you first had to be in business, and to be in business you had to be in aid. WFP's three Mogadishu-based contractors (see above) were involved in a range of political and economic activities. They controlled two of southern Somalia's most strategic and lucrative ports: El Ma'aan to the north of Mogadishu, in which Enow and Adaani are partners, and Marka to the south of Mogadishu, which Deylaaf operated for over a decade. “In both a literal and figurative sense, these three individuals have long been “gatekeepers’ of WFP food aid to Somalia” (UN Security Council, 2010: 62). Control over the ports, moreover, means some form of control over the population that is supplied by them. Adaani and Enow had previously been implicated in the arms trade and financing of armed groups, including the Union of Islamic Courts Union (UIC). They had a key influence on the evolution of both the Somali government and Al-Shabaab. Adaani and Enow established a force

of 2,000 people to protect the port and its operations, which later formed the core of the UIC force that took Mogadishu in June 2006. When Ethiopian forces in turn took Mogadishu in December that year, Adaani supported the opposition, including Al-Shabaab. In 2009, following Adaani's demands for political payback from President Sharif, the Islamist groups launched attacks on government forces (remember Adaani was still a WFP contractor at this time) (UN Security Council, 2010; key informant 3, 2019). Adaani also worked together with Hassan Sheikh when both were WFP contractors, with the latter becoming Somalia's President in 2012 (key informant 3, 2019). Although Adaani's actions provide the most direct example of food aid's role in Somali politics, the others were engaged more indirectly. For example, it is widely known that Enow's wife obtained a seat in the parliament for her brother, but more broadly most informants suggested that political connections are essential to maintain a business. It also means that WFP was highly compromised as a humanitarian actor.

Three things happened between 2008 and 2010 that changed the food aid business. First, the US government designated Al-Shabaab a terrorist organisation (in 2008) and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) cut food to southern Somalia soon after. Second, CARE and other food-aid organisations left areas controlled by the group (in 2008). WFP left in 2010, "citing inability to meet humanitarian, security, and donor obligations" but likely also because of the report by the UN Monitoring Group. Third, Al-Shabaab banned

food aid in 2010, first restricting aid agencies from working in their areas and then banning them (Maxwell and Fitzpatrick, 2012) (also see Section 4 on Al-Shabaab's strategies). The result was that food aid volumes dramatically declined and so did the potential profits to be gained from transporting it. As one long-term aid worker explained: "The big transporters are not interested in food aid now. The quantity has reduced and the risk has increased" (key informant 35, 2019). Kenya-based transporters felt that if they continued to transport WFP food aid, they would become Al-Shabaab targets. One of the transporters interviewed no longer travelled to Somalia at all.

Having been involved in food aid transport when it was highly profitable, however, gave contractors the capital to invest in other business. A new class of "tenderpreneurs" has emerged, who bid for security, port, or fuel-supply contracts that are now worth more than aid. Aid workers, businesspeople, and government officials all suggested that Adaani, Enow, and Deylaaf are still the key players in some of Somalia's largest business contracts, whether with aid organisations, AMISOM, or the government (key informants 3, 6, 34, 37, 41, 44, 53, 59, 2019). One new business is construction (including real estate and infrastructure, for example, protection barriers for aid organisations or hotels, or building roads under government contracts).⁹ When Kismayo was controlled by Al-Shabaab, Adaani was one of the key businessmen involved in the export of charcoal and import of sugar (UN Security Council, 2011). Deylaaf, and a number of other former WFP or CARE contractors, are involved

⁹ Adaani received a government contract to build roads in Mogadishu, without due process according to the UN Monitoring Group (UN Security Council, 2017).

in petroleum storage¹⁰ and supply, including in the green (safe) zone at Mogadishu International Airport (MIA) and the seaport, where they are also involved in customs clearance. Hassan Sheikh, Somalia's President from 2012 to 2017, was also a shareholder (Hoffman et al., 2017), thus highlighting the ongoing political patronage of these influential businessmen and the importance of networks developed in the food-aid operation. They continue with road and air transport contracts, for example for AMISOM (key informants 34 and 37, 2019). Many of the hotels, restaurants, and conference centres in the airport green zone are also said to be owned by former food-aid contractors (key informants 37 and 44, 2019), including Adaani. Not only did these former WFP contractors have the capital, but the bids are discussed within the airport zone – making it difficult for anyone outside to compete (key informant 37, 2019).¹¹ One of the Kenya-based transporters continues to transport aid (but not for WFP) and has diversified into fishing and cash crops (eg, dried lemon and sesame – see Section 4). Enow has continued to work as a UN contractor; evidence from the UN Monitoring Group being considered insufficient to dismiss him and because he was not designated for targeted sanctions by the Security Council (UN Security Council, 2013: 368).

By providing fuel to the UN and AMISOM and providing security, transport, and accommodation for aid organisations, the former food aid contractors continue to benefit from an ongoing humanitarian operation and

have an interest in maintaining it. So does the government. “Even the government is funded by these people, as sometimes the government runs out of money” (key informant 44, 2019). Others have suggested that government officials benefit financially from the contracts issued (but also that the new President is trying to stop this) and that this is a necessary business protection strategy.

It is telling that petroleum is the sector in which many former food-aid contractors are getting involved. A number of informants suggested that oil will soon be the new big business and form the basis of the next battle for resources in Somalia (key informants 6, 30, 31, 2019). They suggested that – encouraged by donors – aid agencies work in areas with oil reserves (so their country will be considered more favourably with concessions) and that the Somali National Army (SNA) is encouraged to take control of areas with suspected oil reserves. Similarly, that the government is already offering concessions and selling seismic data in return for bonuses. It makes sense that if oil will be the new big business in Somalia that the country's most powerful businessmen will want to get involved.

A diffusion of power with changes in food assistance?

As larger contractors shifted away from food aid (from 2011) and moved into other more profitable business, new – smaller – contractors moved into food assistance. As this section will show, it brought in more people, authorities, and organisations as well as new

¹⁰ With a capacity of up to 100,000 MT in Mogadishu, according to one source.

¹¹ Think of all the logistics that the airport and the green zone involves. Shiploads of goods from South Africa arrive every month. Aid organisation representatives can pay up

to \$200 per night for accommodation inside the green zone.

actors and practices. But similar patterns of collusion and diversion continued – just at a lower level. To some extent the power dynamics also shifted from the national to the state level, hugely influencing the power of the district commissioners (DCs) and local organisations working in a particular area. At the same time, the new assistance and trading arrangements continue to enforce the power of the larger food-importing and trading companies, create a new oligopoly of communications and money-transfer companies, and maintain one for food importers. This section focusses on the diffusion of power, and the following sections on the consolidation of power within the telecoms and money-transfers companies (Section 3) and on large food traders (Section 4).

From 2011, food assistance consisted of some ongoing food distribution, usually in the form of food for work or food for assets, cash transfers, and vouchers. Consequently, transport requirements are fewer. In Gedo for example, food aid transport is now done by two or three small local transporters rather than the large companies of before (although all belong to the dominant Marehan clan) (key informant 4, 2019). Cash transfers started in Somalia on a small scale in 2003 and 2004 (Ali et al., 2005). FAO started cash-for-work for key irrigation infrastructure in lower Shebelle, with the aim of rehabilitating canals and also meeting food needs. The number of beneficiaries was increased from 10 thousand to 90 thousand, as a first response to the emergency in 2010 (key informant 7, 2019). A small number of other organisations distributed cash in 2006 and more in 2011. Initially, cash transfers were mostly distributed through *hawala* such as

Dahabshiil, but by 2012 mobile money had become the dominant way of transferring cash (see Box 2 on the evolution of cash transfers). Hormuud became the dominant telecoms company to provide this service for aid agencies, based on its mobile money-transfer system for the general public (see the next subsection). By 2019, mobile money and WFP electronic vouchers were the two largest means of providing cash transfers.

A new system of food vouchers led to many retailers becoming involved in food assistance. By 2019, over 900 retailers had agreements with WFP to redeem food vouchers, a massive change from the limited number of big contractors before. Some of the retailers involved in the voucher programme had shops beforehand or had been involved in the purchase and sale of diverted food aid. This particularly applied to women petty traders in food aid, who had now become retailers in Mogadishu. Not all shops wanted to work as WFP retailers for fear of reprisals from Al-Shabaab. A change in the food supply or transport system also had to be established. As for the retailers, some of the transporters involved used to transport food aid sold by those who diverted it. According to one transporter, “My business has evolved because I started as one who follows food aid – buy and sell – but I am now a wholesaler connected to food suppliers in Mogadishu, supply food to many retailers in Bay region and villages” (key informant 50, 2019). Two others said they had also bought and sold food aid before (key informants 54 and 56, 2019). This is one of the key differences with cash transfers: even if there is some diversion and collusion (see below), it does stay in the area where people need it, whereas food aid used to be shipped

out and sold immediately (key informant 50, 2019).

Retailers in turn have to make agreements with larger traders or importers to ensure they can meet the demand. The cash transfers rely on a new private-sector food-supply system. Most small retailers reported that this chain was small and that they often made arrangements directly with a number of larger traders and food importers. These traders or transporters then make the arrangements to cross between government and Al-Shabaab-held areas. This is discussed further in Section 4 on trade generally. One long-term aid worker in Gedo reported that much food supply to the region is now from Mogadishu rather than Kenya, with small companies transporting the food to Dollo on the Somalia-Kenya border. These small companies are, however, linked to large ones in Mogadishu that import food and that have agents in El Wak and Dollo. He suggested the creation of this new “line” was a direct result of cash transfers (key informant 4, 2019). These new food supply arrangements in response to cash transfers, and who controls it, need further exploration but it appears that ultimately access to food is still controlled by large businesses. Although the supply of food is left to the private sector, in some instances aid organisations will intervene, for example when they expect the demand to be high. This was done during the 2011 famine by senior officials from within the UN, who convened food importers in Dubai to prepare them for a major cash intervention. Both WFP and FAO representatives said they would prepare food traders in advance in this case. WFP also provides infrastructural support so that markets can function effectively. This may include post-harvest storage, transport

infrastructure (eg, roads and ports), port procedures and customs, retail capacity and competence, and cold storage. The main aim is to deliver food as quickly as possible at the best price and ensure customer satisfaction (key informant 17, 2019). Although business has always dominated food and power in Somalia, the shift to cash and vouchers has taken this even further.

Despite the positive aspects – of more retailers and transporters involved in food assistance, and thus ostensibly a wider distribution of resources – a number of informants reported that retailers are often owned by WFP staff (and purposely created to benefit from this system) (key informants 51, 52, and 53, 2019) or that you need to have connections with them or the local authorities to get the contracts to redeem vouchers. One retailer in Baidoa reported withdrawing from the programme because the beneficiaries were encouraged to go to shops owned by WFP staff:

Yes, I am one of WFP-selected food vendors to redeem vouchers. There are a lot of challenges in that and I terminated their contract. Because WFP partners' staff are the retailers; they have redemption shops created just for the vouchers, they go to the IDP camps and villages and order people to go to their shops, which means we do not get to redeem any vouchers. ... there is no way to change because the same people you could complain have interest in the issue (key informant 51, 2019).

Another said she had to use all her connections to get the contract:

Getting WFP vendor-ship was difficult but I used all possible connections to be included. No, it's not just application. This business is decided by WFP

and partner NGOs' staff and local authority and you have to be able to penetrate through to get in (key informant 54, 2019).

The need to have connections to get WFP contracts to redeem vouchers has also been identified in other studies (see for example El-Taraboulsi-McCarthy et al., 2017: 20).

Key informants also reported that retailers can overcharge the beneficiaries. First, they may form a local cartel and agree on inflated prices for voucher recipients. For example, they add \$2–3 to every 50 kilogrammes or so (key informant 25, 2019). Second, the retailers may give credit to the beneficiaries to buy food (as a means of making sure people will redeem their vouchers with them), “but the price of food goes up by the time the voucher comes, which means that as soon as the cash come in, the money goes to the businessmen – with interest, and the beneficiary accumulates debt” (key informant 4, 2019).

Collusion between government, contractors, and NGOs also continues to be reported in the UN Monitoring Group for Somalia and Eritrea's annual reports, as is diversion at all stages of the distribution cycle, including for cash transfers (eg, registration of fake beneficiaries, ghost camps, taxation) (see also Majid and Harmer, 2016). In addition, with the concentration of aid in urban areas from 2011 onwards, the local authorities and in particular the district commissioner have gained an enormous amount of power (key informants 51 to 55, 2019). These issues are discussed further in Sections 5 and 6.

The rise of the money-transfer business: Hormuud, Amal, and others

If something happened to Hormuud, the whole country would collapse (key informant 38, long-term aid worker, 2019).

Cash transfers as a form of aid provided by international organisations have contributed to the massive growth of a limited number of telecoms companies and banks in Somalia, in particular Hormuud. From the time that Somalis started migrating to the Middle East, in the 1970s and 1980s, money-transfer systems have been important. At first, people used the “franco valuta” service, which involved giving funds to traders from the same clan, who pay migrants' families with proceeds from sales. Large-scale displacement in the 1980s and 1990s increased demands for money transfer, which then changed into *hawala*, or the transfer of debt. The customer contacts an agent who instructs another agent to pay. Debt is settled later (Lindley, 2009). *Hawala* agents were incorporated into larger enterprises specialising in money transfer, often run by livestock and goods traders. New technologies were rapidly incorporated, and agents were later transformed into remittance companies. Some may have built up capital through food-aid brokering (ibid.). Lindley (2009) writes that by 2008, two main companies had emerged: Dahabshiil and Amal. Al-Barakat had been a major company before, but it fell when its accounts were blocked by US anti-terror legislation.¹² She also suggests that the concentration of resources within a few businesses illustrates the effect of market forces in the absence of a state. The managers

¹² Three telecommunication companies built on *al-Barakaat's* previous telecommunication facilities and infrastructure: *Hormuud* in south-central Somalia, *Golis* in

Puntland and *Telesom* in Somaliland (Hagmann and Stepputat, 2016: 10).

of money transmitting agencies were “well-shod entrepreneurs”, many from pre-war business dynasties (ibid.: 528). By 2000, companies started offering the services of small banks (eg, Dahabshiil – savings for large investments, such as a house or business, or loans).

A further transformation took place with the advent of “mobile money” transfers, which led to the expansion and domination of Hormuud. Hormuud has become the main telecoms company in south-central Somalia (with Golis in Puntland and Telesom in Somaliland). The company was established in 2002, and it started mobile money in 2012, which soon became the main way for aid organisations to provide cash transfers. According to one informant, 90 per cent of aid-cash transfers are done through Hormuud (key informant 19, 2019). Another speculated, “in 2016 and 2017, the aid target was \$1.5 billion. Suppose the humanitarian community raised \$1 billion. Sixty to 70 per cent is cash transfer – and this is dominated by one company.” This is likely to be an exaggeration but highlights the large amounts of aid funds being provided as cash transfers.

While some claimed that the impact of cash transfers on Hormuud is minor compared to remittances, a representative from the company itself says it has grown enormously since the start of cash transfers as one of the main aid modalities in Somalia (key informant 12, 2019). According to a Hormuud representative, when the company was established in 2002, it consisted of 20 to 30 people; but it now has 12,000 shareholders. The number of aid organisations it works with has also expanded. It first handled cash transfers for Concern in 2012 and now does so for 48

other organisations, the biggest being FAO. ICRC and FAO alone may be transferring \$1 million and \$2.5 million per month respectively (ibid.). The company not only charges aid organisations a fee (said to be as “little” as 1 per cent), for new beneficiaries, aid organisations also have to buy phones and SIM cards (key informant 27, 2019). However, in terms of power, what is also important is the amount of cash held by the company. It essentially performs some of the functions of Somalia’s central bank and can invest in almost every profitable enterprise (see below). While WFP uses Amal to pay its retailers, and some organisations still used Dahabshiil, in 2019, Hormuud was by far the most powerful telecoms and cash-transfer agency, with some informants arguing that it has become the most powerful actor in Somalia. In addition to money transfer within Somalia, Hormuud owns “TAJ money”, for international mobile money transfers, and Salama bank, the largest commercial bank across Somalia.

Hormuud has made a range of large investments with the cash that it holds. Numerous informants provided information on what they are investing in (key informants 1, 4, 12, 15, 16, 24, 27, and 37, 2019). This ranges from honey production, food imports (including sugar, flour, and rice), to Benadir electricity and water supply, real estate (in Kenya and Somalia), agricultural land along the Shebelle river, and urban land in Mogadishu. Milk production, food processing, and milling were also mentioned. This means Hormuud controls much of Somalia’s food production and trade, as well as its telecommunications. With the purchase of agricultural land, it is involved in the production and export of cash crops, including lemon (see below). The control of food imports

appears to be significant. According to one informant, 80 per cent of sugar imported to Gedo was done by Hormuud (key informant 4, 2019), and another said that it is the only sugar importer into Somalia (key informant 27, 2019). Like with the telecoms industry, it could flex its financial muscle to create a monopoly. According to one food importer, “All food importers lost a lot of money in 2017 and 2018 because of Hormuud pressure to reduce prices so that other importers left the market and it could dominate” (key informant 57, 2019). This needs further investigation. Other ventures include fishing, taxis, and the hotel business. Investment in fishing fleets followed a request by a Chinese company, because Hormuud has the capital to buy new ships. The taxis entail an Uber-like ride taxi app and the importation of hundreds of cars. Real estate includes hotels as well as urban housing. In summary, Hormuud has entered all markets where a profit is to be made, in any sector. Furthermore, it cross-sells services: in Mogadishu, competitors allege that Hormuud bundles electricity and telecoms services (Hagmann et al., 2018: 37). Although Hormuud is by far the largest investor out of the cash transfer businesses, Dahabshiil also invests in real estate and agriculture, including cash crops in lower Shebelle, such as banana and lemon (key informants 37 and 45, 2019). A representative from Amal said they did not invest in such business in Somalia but invested in real estate in Kenya.

Other telecoms or money-transfer companies find it hard to compete. The UN and USAID are still using Dahabshiil (key informant 24, 2019), and WFP uses Amal bank to pay its retailers but their business empire is dwarfed by Hormuud. Some interviewees believed that Amal and Dahabshiil will come up again, as at the

moment these two still dominate transfers from abroad. Amal is one of the biggest micro-finance providers in Somalia, including for NGO programmes but has only just started with cash transfers. Its link with WFP, however, to pay retailers that redeem vouchers, has already meant its business has doubled. About 15 other UN agencies also use Amal bank. This could be in part because Amal has a relationship with Standard Chartered bank, giving it an advantage in terms of regulatory and risk cover (Goodman and Majid, 2018). At the time of the fieldwork for this study, it was working to establish mobile money, and hoped that by allowing others to use the platform for a fee (which Hormuud does not), it will be able to compete with Hormuud (key informant 33, 2019). Dahabshiil has also grown in the past 10 years, and was the biggest actor for aid cash transfers and remittance facilitator from 2011 to 2015 (key informant 60, 2019). In 2017, it introduced E-Dahab (for mobile money transfer) but to date has not become a serious competitor for Hormuud.

The companies also claim they are at risk of attack, in particular from Al-Shabaab. According to the Hormuud representative, the main obstacles to their operation are “insecurity, resource sharing, demands for taxation, and the lack of a justice system” (key informant 12, 2019). In 2018, Hormuud was targeted by Al-Shabaab in Mogadishu but it did not give in to demands for money, and after three months they stopped. One way that Hormuud tries to minimise security risks is to be involved in social activities. For example, through its foundation it has established a school for the blind (El Nur), Hormuud University, an NGO that responds to floods and disasters, and a fire brigade for Mogadishu. It

also uses private security services in Mogadishu, and has its own militia. Amal similarly reported it has become a target for Al-Shabaab, because it works for the government and for the UN. Its manager in Mogadishu was shot at its Bakara office in early 2019 (key informant 33, 2019). At the same time, it is questionable how much of this risk is actually coming from Al-Shabaab as these companies are also paying taxes to them. It could be that this narrative has been created by the telecoms and money-transfer industry to stop the government from imposing regulation.

Collecting money, as sometimes with WFP cash transfers, does pose a risk for beneficiaries. As one long-term aid worker commented: "If collecting money from Amal, people have to queue. This poses security issues. People can collect their money over a seven-day period, but still people go in one group – for transportation and for security reasons. So many people drawing money also attracts attention" (key informant 37, 2019). From the beneficiary perspective, therefore, mobile money is safer; thus Amal feels threatened business wise and is working on a mobile money-transfer platform.

The telecoms industry is vital to the functioning of Al-Shabaab and vice versa. Almost all regions, districts, and villages in Somalia are covered by mobile networks, and an overwhelmingly high number of the population – including poor, destitute, and displaced people – have basic phones. This made mobile money transfer to and within rural areas possible (key informant 47, 2019), including those held by Al-Shabaab. In fact, maintaining these networks is key to Al-Shabaab's functioning and the telecoms business in Al-

Shabaab-held areas is arguably more important than in those held by the government. According to one group of long-term aid workers, when the federal government wanted to register SIM cards, Al-Shabaab could lean on Hormuud to bribe government officials not to implement this (key informant 10, 2019). The telecommunications bill was passed in 2017 after many government attempts and what some suspected was resistance by Hormuud. Hormuud is able to exert influence as many politicians are shareholders, and of the seven people on the government telecoms committee, five are associated with Hormuud. While some informants suggested that the telecoms and money-transfer companies do not want regulation, the telecoms companies themselves claim that a secure environment would be better for their business. In case of disputes, however, they currently go to Al-Shabaab courts rather than the government. It could be argued, therefore, that in the end Al-Shabaab holds a veto over key government decisions on telecoms regulation.

To conclude, despite the changes from food aid to cash transfers, the power attained through food assistance remains concentrated within a few businesses and individuals. Large companies gained wealth and power through transport contracts and diversion. With the shift to vouchers, large traders (including import) supply local retailers, and now a limited number of companies manage cash transfers for aid organisations (dominated by Hormuud). With this, the intersection with the political market place has changed from the political patronage and aspirations of large contractors to a more dispersed marketplace for buying political loyalty, and one large money-transfer operator that is able to buy off government officials to

continue to expand its business. Traders and money-transfer companies are also increasingly involved in cash-crop production. This is discussed further in the following section.

4. Shifts in production and trade; maintaining vulnerability and power

In the villages we come from, we Somali Bantu or Jareer are being wiped out because whenever there is drought or floods, Abgaal take advantage and buy all our land and literally we will have no place (IDP representative in Mogadishu, 2019).

Control over land and production in Bay and Bakool and along the Shebelle and Juba rivers has long been contested in Somalia, with many of the original inhabitants facing discrimination, exploitation, and dispossession by government, warlords, or militias. This section explores how this political economy has evolved. The majority of informants reported that the production of food crops like maize and sorghum had decreased and that cash crops like sesame and dried lemon had increased over the past 10 to 15 years. This shift is due to a number of factors: first, displacement of large numbers of farmers; second, Al-Shabaab taxation policies; third, the lower market value of food crops – which by some has been linked to food assistance; fourth, changing consumption patterns (and therefore a dependence on imported food); and fifth, the possibility of quick profit from sesame or lemon with minimum labour and other inputs. A number of informants, including government officials, IDP representatives, and aid workers, also mentioned repeated drought and floods. These factors are intimately linked to who has

power over production and what they do with it, and this section discusses each of these factors in turn. The section also illustrates how the power and political patronage of Hormuud and of large traders is further boosted by investment in cash crop production, but that this increases the vulnerability of marginalized and minority farming and agro-pastoral groups, who are displaced from their land. In addition, it shows how Al-Shabaab enters the political marketplace by effectively facilitating displacement. It re-enforces the food assistance-business connection. Business in turn, sustains Al-Shabaab through taxes on imports, trade, and production.

Displacement, food assistance, and reduction in food crops

The starting point in analysing production has to be the extent of displacement from rural areas under Al-Shabaab's control. Its policies were blamed for displacement by our interviewees. Long-term aid workers usually referred to this in quite general ways, for example a tax on production, with a couple of informants specifying one bag of produce out of every ten produced (eg, key informants 14 and 37, 2019), or one bag for *zakat* tax and one for *jihad* (key informant 25, 2019). An IDP representative mentioned taxes on everything: planting, weeding, and harvesting (key informant 65, 2019). All reported that the taxation was high. At the same time, some argued that farmers support Al-Shabaab because it provides stability and security (compared to government and militias), which is needed to complete a full agricultural cycle (key informant 18, 2019). At first, Al-Shabaab promoted production, in that its representatives encouraged planting on time, rehabilitated

irrigation canals, and continued to allow FAO's production support while they banned organisations providing food aid (key informants 2 and 7, 2019). Minority or marginalised clans initially supported Al-Shabaab because of its policy of land restitution, in particular when land has been taken by force. Al-Shabaab was able to take much territory quickly by advocating for equal distribution of resources among all clans (key informant 7, 2019). In land disputes, minority clans can claim their rights in Al-Shabaab courts. Moreover, almost everyone, including businesspeople, considers the Al-Shabaab court system more effective than that of the government (eg, key informants 7, 12, and 47, 2019). In contrast to the government, Al-Shabaab has full control over its areas and has a well-structured command system (key informant 30, 2019). These contrasting perspectives (high taxation and displacement versus support for production) appear to cover different time periods. Since the loss of urban areas (and thus its administration in these places) in 2014, Al-Shabaab has gone from supporting production to a survival policy of increasing taxes (key informant 25, 2019), where local commanders increasingly determine the strategy in their area, including how much tax is charged (key informant 4, 2019). Alternatively, Al-Shabaab's strategies may vary by area and in consistency. The UN Monitoring Group reported an increase in taxation of the harvest and humanitarian assistance (and an ongoing ban on the formal humanitarian sector) and an increase in checkpoint fees in 2016 (UN Security Council, 2017). Traders, however, still find Al-Shabaab's taxation easier to deal with than the government's. As long as you have paid your tax once, you will not be asked to pay the same

tax again, which they say is not true of government. One trader also commented that "of late they have accepted us to work with the government and NGOs so long as we pay them their taxes" (key informant 50, 2019). The rise of the Islamic courts, and of Al-Shabaab, has been linked to the rise of big business and its need for security, which the UIC and later Al-Shabaab were in a better position to provide than any other authority (including various incarnations of the Somali government) (see for example Ahmad, 2015). The alternative was to pay huge amounts to the militias for security.

The link between food assistance and production is complex. Since 2010, Al-Shabaab has progressively banned Western – and particularly US – aid, and the organisations that provide it. As Al-Shabaab controls much of the productive land in Somalia, including the fertile areas of Bay and Bakool and along the Juba and Shebelle rivers, those who are in theory able to produce food are not receiving much food assistance. Some have argued, however, that food aid itself undermined production even before Al-Shabaab banned WFP and others. According to Ahmad (2012), WFP broke farmers' livelihoods by delivering consistently at harvest time. Crop prices reduced and people stopped farming. This in turn strengthened the business-warlord alliance with an interest in maintaining aid. This is a strong assertion although both aid workers and government officials interviewed echoed this concern (key informants 20, 27, 41, and 42, 2019). The negative effect of food aid on production was also a consideration in Al-Shabaab's banning of food aid (Harper, 2019: 195). The more common concern ascribed to Al-Shabaab (including by some of our interviewees) is the suspicion that aid organisations are spies or

agents of the West or that they are in Somalia simply for their own economic benefit (Jackson, 2014).

Considering the ongoing manipulation of food aid in Somalia, it is not surprising that Al-Shabaab banned it. The marginalised clans that form the support base for Al-Shabaab have persistently been excluded from food distribution or exploited and abused to attract food aid, and those who benefited have consistently been the more powerful clans now dominating government and big business.¹³ On the other hand, with the existing disputes over land and the absence of a political settlement, it is difficult for aid agencies to invest in land or rural infrastructure. Even providing inputs or tractors can be problematic as this assists landowners over labourers (key informant 2, 2019). The banning of food aid to rural areas, and the famine this helped create, has meant many farmers left their land (or were forced to leave – see below). This ultimately must have reduced food production even further and concentrated displaced populations and food distribution in towns, which also changes consumption patterns. It also continues to benefit government-aid organisations and business cartels (see Section 7 for more discussion on this) and facilitates land grabs for the production of cash crops (see below).

Drought, floods, lack of agricultural services, and maintenance of canals are secondary reasons for decreased production and/or displacement. Lack of equipment and services means that farmers are unable to clear the bush in riverine areas, and canals silt up (key informant 14, 2019). Canals along the Shebelle

river have not functioned for many years because of inter-clan conflict, with one tactic being to obstruct canals (key informant 7, 2019). From 2008 to 2010, Al-Shabaab organised some rehabilitation, but this ceased when it lost its administrative centres. The history of land-grabs has also left many original land owners working as labourers on small plots of land, thus making them more vulnerable to drought or floods.

Finally, it must be reported that even though official estimates confirm the reduction in food crops (see World Bank and FAO, 2018), these figures are disputed, with some arguing they could be underestimates. Access to the areas that produce food crops is limited, and it is difficult to get reliable estimates of production. While an increasing number of farmers have been displaced, some remain and some return on a regular basis (depending on proximity to original farms), including family members of those who are displaced (key informants 66, 68, and 71, 2019). The large numbers of displaced people, however, tends to confirm that production has been negatively affected. In addition, if land has been sold, there is no way of going back. Land grabbing through forced sales, rather than through violence, appears to be a common trend with the increase in cash crop production. This is discussed below.

Increase in cash crops, sale of land, and consolidation of land for commercial farming

The main cash crops produced in Somalia today are sesame, lemon, and banana, with large profits to be made when demand is high.

¹³ Support by minority groups for Al-Shabaab is also complex. On the one hand, many joined possibly because they saw a chance for revenge or for greater equality. On the

other hand, forced recruitment has been reported, and even in Al-Shabaab, marginalised groups are the foot soldiers and the more powerful clans are in charge (see eg, Harper, 2019).

Making large profits involves acquiring and consolidating land and having exploitable labour. While banana has historically been the most lucrative cash crop, lemon and sesame production has increased in the past 10 to 15 years. Sesame and lemon production increased because it requires less water, labour, and infrastructure than food crops or banana. Sesame production was also promoted by Al-Shabaab (Majid and McDowell, 2012). A shift from food crops to sesame was noted during the famine of 2011 as a quick way of making a profit, but it ultimately left some people more vulnerable as they no longer had food stores. They invested their money in cattle, which died quickly in the drought conditions (Maxwell and Majid, 2016). Banana production along the riverine areas has been problematic during the conflict because the crop is perishable and requires reliable transport and storage infrastructure. Investment in banana may be increasing again, however (eg, in Afgoy or Jowhar), with slightly greater stability in the Shebelle region (key informant 45, 2019). The increase in banana production is also linked to the increase in domestic demand. This subsection first discusses changes in production and then how an increase in commercial production is linked with land sales and displacement.

Sesame production has fluctuated over the past 10 to 15 years, with businesses investing and promoting production whenever global demand has been high. Informants have told us that production increased enormously from around 2006 to 2010, went down in 2015 to 2017, but seems to have peaked again from 2018 onwards. As with food crops, getting reliable estimates of production is difficult, so they vary widely. Data in a World Bank and FAO

report (2018: 27) show little change in production since 2005 from FAO data and highly fluctuating figures using Food Security and Nutrition Assessment Unit (FSNAU) data. This is contradicted by export data. The same report states that recorded exports of sesame seeds fell back to about \$34 million in 2015 after reaching a peak of \$40 million a year, although they also note that major Somali exporters believe that these figures grossly underestimate actual export revenues. A report from the Somali Agriculture Technical Group (SATG) estimates \$300 million a year in 2014 (SATG, 2016). A similar estimate was made in 2018, when the country's sesame export was on the rise again and Somalia became the world's eighth largest producer (Somali Enterprise, 2019). The rise is due to increased demand from the Middle East, India, and China. Sesame is grown in rain-fed areas and along the rivers, usually in the *der* season, or short rains later in the year. When people talk about sesame replacing food crops (which are usually grown in the *gu* or long rainy season), they may mean in terms of volume, ie, fewer food crops are grown and sesame is now grown for export (key informant 45, 2019). Small farmers grow sesame but production for export is usually supported by large businesses that consolidate land and that then use share-cropping arrangements. Diaspora are also involved, with more investment along the Shebelle river because areas of contention around land are well-defined and because transport to Mogadishu is easier. Along the Juba river, many more clans have been involved in land take-overs (ibid.). Only the larger farmers can pay Al-Shabaab's taxes to export it out of their area (key informant 25, 2019).

Growing lemon or banana crops is also a larger-scale commercial activity along the two big rivers. Lemon production almost doubled between 2012 and 2014, due to an increase in demand in Dubai, Iran, and the Emirates. Fresh lemon is sold to local traders, and dried lemon to exporters (SATG, c2016). Several big traders or businessmen have encouraged the planting of lemon in Gedo, Shebelle, and Hiran (key informants 4 and 16, 2019) and provide credit, inputs and information.¹⁴ According to one long-term aid worker, businessmen pay farmers \$2,000 to \$3,000 in subsidies for growing lemon (key informant 4, 2019). Both militarily dominant clans and big companies are buying land for cash-crop production (key informant 61, 2019). In some cases, “landowners” pay militias as gatekeepers to take care of their farms (key informant 37, 2019). Exploitation has been a key aspect of banana production (see earlier section) and is feared to be a feature of lemon production too. Few buyers control the market, which means farmers get low prices for their products (SATG, c2016).

Increased investment in the production of cash crops is associated with the sale of land by politically weaker or poor farmers. The majority of displaced representatives interviewed reported that they sold their land to the powerful clans in their area before leaving. In Bardera, Gedo, for example, several villages were reportedly bought by Marehan (the dominant clan in the area) during the droughts of 2011 and 2017 (key informant 48, 2019). IDPs in Mogadishu reported selling their land to powerful Hawiye (eg, Abgaal) with business, political, and aid connections, and aid workers

reported a similar trend (key informants 19, 49, 67, 69, 71, and 72, 2019). This applies particularly to already marginalised Bantu clans, some of whom reported the deliberate creation of their desperate conditions, which forced them to sell their land (see the quote at the start of this section). This is a continuation from earlier trends where they had to sell land to pay for protection (key informant 16, 2019), or violent land-grabbing in the early stages of the conflict, or as part of Siad Barre’s regime in the 1980s. A similar trend may be occurring along the Juba Valley, as the majority of people in the Kismayo feeding centres are Bantu (key informant 1, 2019). This appears to contradict Al-Shabaab’s policies of solving disputes over land and supporting marginalised groups in regaining land taken by force. Al-Shabaab is not protecting marginalised or minority clans from having to sell land because of an inability to make ends meet, whether as a result of taxes, lack of support, or gradual dispossession. In addition, the land may be sold to companies paying taxes to Al-Shabaab and thus contributing to the survival of Al-Shabaab itself. This issue needs further exploration.

In Bay and Bakool, a similar trend can be seen, but with land bought by better off people from the same clan (key informants 47 and 65, 2019). In Bay region, powerful clans include the bigger Rahanweyn clans. According to one IDP representative in Baidoa, “Over 60 per cent of the IDPs were either pastoralist ... or farmers who sold their land. Better off people in the village buy it, and thus acquire bigger land-holdings.” Others confirmed that most IDPs in Baidoa had sold their land (eg, key informants 19, 47, and 66, 2019). According to one long-

¹⁴ Local traders, in contrast, have moved out. Bu’aale, for example, had 30 traders before the area came under Al-

Shabaab control, but now only have one or two. They all moved to Kismayo (key informant 16).

term aid worker,

There has been a change in land-grabbing from the 1990s. Before, one clan mobilised against another. Now ... if there are two minority settlements, powerful clans build three villages around it. Then they cut off their access to resources ... taking advantage of the peak of drought ... (key informant 19, 2019).

As a result of these land sales, some farms are now as large as 100,000 acres, run by business groupings, sometimes with links to the diaspora (key informant 19, 2019). As mentioned in Section 3, Hormuud is one of the big companies investing in land. According to one informant, it now owns 5,000 to 10,000 hectares of commercial land in Shebelle, and as such it is the biggest investor. Dahabshiil is also involved (key informant 37, 2019). It, and others, are consolidating land from different “owners”. As they see this as a future investment, they may even buy above the market value, for potentially profitable land. At the same time as the big companies are investing, some mid-size companies are also emerging, particularly in sesame. This appears to be the crop of choice for new diaspora companies (key informant 45, 2019).

Trading in food – export of cash crops and food imports as big business

With most agricultural land in the south controlled by Al-Shabaab, and a shift from food to cash crops, trading patterns have also changed. Cash crops like lemon, sesame, and banana have to be transported out of Al-Shabaab areas, and consumption needs are mostly met by imported food. As expected, much of this is controlled by Al-Shabaab and large businesses.

Traders informed us that goods move easily between government and Al-Shabaab areas, as long as the necessary taxes and checkpoint fees are paid. The export of cash crops from an Al-Shabaab area is often linked to the sale of food imports through the same chain of village retailers, traders or transporters, and import/export businesses. For example, as one transporter from Baidoa explains,

The main exports were lemon and sesame. ... this season we bought a lot of sesame and exporting it. [The way it works is that] we supply imported food to our clients in the villages and they supply sesame with an agreed price on both commodities. We see our business growing and we are working hard to make sure that we grow and become the biggest, best and efficient food supplier in Bay and Bakool regions (key informant 52, 2019).

Other traders interviewed reported a similar chain, which of course also met the need of retailers redeeming vouchers (see above). Sometimes those bringing in aid (eg, the remaining in-kind aid to Gedo) also bring back cash crops such as lemon from the Juba Valley to Kenya (key informant 28, 2019). According to one wholesaler in Baidoa, all food importers and exporters are from non-Rahanweyn clans: “we literally work for others while we are the market because our people are poor” (key informant 53, 2019). A long-term aid worker suggested that those involved in import/export businesses were mostly Hawiye (key informant 5, 2019). On the other hand, Rahanweyn are now more likely to be smaller traders or distributors and retailers.

The export of lemon and sesame has been a relatively new phenomenon in the past 10 to 15 years, with lemon exports more tightly

controlled than sesame. Lemon is controlled by a small group of buyers, or exporters, based in Dubai and Mogadishu. With only one main market, in Dubai, they can fix the price (key informant 45, 2019). Several big traders (encouraged by Dubai businessmen) have come to the riverine areas and encouraged the planting of lemon trees. These same buyers sometimes bring rice and sugar from Mogadishu to sell or as part of the payment (key informant 4, 2019). Farmers have little choice in terms of who they sell to. One informant suggested that “compared to livestock, lemon is the biggest business [Somalia is also a big exporter of livestock]. Big ships [with lemon] leave the port monthly” (key informant 41, 2019). This likely reflects only trade centred around Mogadishu; the major livestock exports from Somalia are through Berbera and Bosasso in the north and Garissa in Kenya.

Sesame exports appear to be controlled by a few companies that export to the Middle East, the Gulf, China, India, and others (key informants 11, 16, 39, 44, and 45, 2019), although we received varying estimates as to the number of companies involved. There appear to be more players than in lemon. However, farmers still have no choice but to sell to the big companies, who can set the price and pay the taxes. The other issue is a lack of reliable information on the supply chain. As one informant explained: “When you reach demand, there is no smooth decline. [The system] goes into oversupply. ... the farmer cannot understand market capacity because there are too many middlemen, and they give incentives to keep producing” (key informant 11, 2019). As a result the market regularly collapses. There is also a domestic market, and more Somali

companies are investing in processing, to sell oil rather than the seeds.

Food imports have risen by a factor of 18 since the 1980s, reaching almost \$1.5 billion in 2015, up from an annual average of about \$82 million. According to a World Bank and FAO report (2018), the reasons for the increase include domestic demand for food (mostly for cereals, sugar, and other processed foods) and the collapse of domestic staple crop production. Both of the former food aid contractors have been involved in food imports, and so have the money-transfer agents, for example Hormuud for sugar. The importance of food imports to the country makes control over them, including over the ports themselves, an important way of controlling the population. As one long-term aid worker commented, “the biggest change with federal government has been the re-organisation of Somali administrative areas around economic infrastructure such as ports, main road, airports” (key informant 31, 2019). The administrative regions are organised around four ports and other infrastructure, even if some of this has to be newly built in response to the political-administrative geography of the federal member states. Previously, the two ports of south-central Somalia were Mogadishu and Kismayo. Under the current dispensation, the boundaries of South West State have been drawn so as to include Merca, and a new port at Hobyo is being discussed for Galmudug, and Hirshabelle will need a different port (perhaps El Ma’an).

Al-Shabaab has control over both food imports and transport. Because traders and transporters see Al-Shabaab as less corrupt, and as providing better security, some will prefer a longer route via Al-Shabaab areas

rather than a shorter one through government areas (key informant 31, 2019). Al-Shabaab can also ban certain foods or suppliers (key informants 50 and 52, 2019). Most recently, since April 2019, Al-Shabaab has been taxing commodities brought in containers into Mogadishu port. According to one importer, “The shipping companies were summoned by Al-Shabaab. They went to the government and the government told them to deal with Al-Shabaab and solve the issue. The shipping companies and Al-Shabaab agreed that they will share the shipping waybill and information on the number of containers and owners with Al-Shabaab, who will call owners to pay the tax. A 40-foot container is US\$160 and 20-foot container is US\$100 (key informant 53, 2019). Other importers confirmed this. Ultimately therefore, the most powerful groups in food production and import appear to be Al-Shabaab and business lords.

The political economy of food, in terms of control over land and production, has evolved with the increase in cash crop production. Despite much productive land being under Al-Shabaab control, commercial cash crop production, trade, and food imports, are still controlled by a limited number of businesses – with often the same business involved in all three. The concentration of production, money transfer, and aid resources to a few actors, has arguably worsened the exploitation of marginalised and minority groups, many of whom have been displaced. This in turn maintains the aid-business connection. Maintaining big business also relies heavily on a post-revolutionary Al-Shabaab (for whom money and power is stronger than ideology), both in terms of facilitating displacement and in controlling or facilitating food movement and

trade. As such it also enters the political marketplace, because it influences the ability of business to buy political influence, and because it taxes investment in production, trade, and food imports. Maintaining the status quo – in terms of food production, trade, and power – benefits both business and Al-Shabaab. Whether and how this is seen and analysed by contemporary aid practices is considered in the next section.

5. Regimes of aid practices: neoliberalisation and making politics invisible

[With cash it is] in many ways much easier to feel you know what is going on, but you really do not ... (key informant 1, long-term international aid worker).

No one is asking why we are doing the same thing over and over again for ages. No one wants to ask questions (key informant 20, long-term Somali aid worker).

Food aid is more than a gift or a commodity. It is also a regime of practices or an assembly of policies, practices, organisations, and authorities and their underlying science and ideology. Such a regime can also be seen as a way of governing from a distance (see Foucault, 2007), in that it attempts to guide people’s actions or behaviour or to manage populations. It also has political and economic effects that were perhaps not intended by some of the organisations involved. Section 3 covered one aspect of this, the effects of the logistical apparatus associated with food aid and cash transfers. This section examines the changes in practices such as assessment, targeting, and monitoring and how this regime works within

Somalia's environment of conflict, Al-Shabaab and militia attacks, and limited access.

Food assistance in Somalia has experienced problems of manipulation and diversion of aid and other resources for the past 30 years or so, and these are well-known among donors and aid workers. In the 1990s, the politics of control over food was evident for all to see and was well covered in the literature, not only in Somalia but also elsewhere (see for example Macrae and Zwi, 1994; African Rights, 1997). This section argues that with changes in practices and ideologies, these issues appear to have become less visible. In *Food Aid in Sudan*, Jaspars (2018) divides food aid practices into three regimes: a state-support regime, a livelihoods regime, and a resilience regime. The same aid regimes can be applied to Somalia. During the state-support regime, food aid practices explicitly supported the state, whether through direct bilateral aid or project aid (including aid for refugees), and in the livelihoods regime food aid largely bypassed the state and was provided direct to populations by NGOs or the UN. In Somalia this modality of bypassing the state continues up to today, but from 2012, the food aid regime took on a resilience ideology similar to that in Sudan a few years earlier (Maxwell and Majid, 2016: 169). The resilience regime of food aid or food assistance practices is characterised by a shift towards market-based, privatised, and individualised responses, with the latter focussed on treatment and behaviour change (Jaspars, 2018). In both Somalia and Sudan, remote management is another key aspect of the resilience regime, which has made it possible to maintain one reality of progress and efficiency with new technology and another of inequality, exploitation, and diversion of aid. In this section, we also make

use of the concepts of frontstage and backstage in the humanitarian theatre as proposed by Desportes et al. (2019). The idea is that in the performance of humanitarian actors, there is a stark contrast between their frontstage performance, where response is exemplary or at least improving based on new practices, coordination, and decision-making. Backstage, however, is where the ongoing effects of politics and power relations on humanitarian response is acknowledged and discussed.

From food aid to cash and nutrition

Informants from international and national organisations said that post-2011, a key shift had occurred in Somalia from food aid to cash and nutrition. Nutrition interventions involve both the distribution of specialised food products and nutrition education. Cash, specialised nutrition products, and behaviour change feature prominently in Somalia's resilience regime and are key aspects of the frontstage performance. In WFP's strategic plan, for example, these interventions are expected to contribute to increasing food access for food and nutrition insecure populations and to their ability to withstand shocks, as well as treat and prevent malnutrition (WFP, 2018). Nutrition education (or "messaging" in the WFP strategy) is expected to contribute towards resilience. Cash transfers are also expected to improve resilience through strengthening the banking system, fostering local markets and food systems. The linked biometric registration is to form the basis of a future government-led social safety net (ibid.: 10). "Social and behaviour change communication" (SBCC) forms a key part of both nutrition and cash

programming and includes education on child feeding, household food choices, water, sanitation and hygiene practices, and health-seeking behaviour. Some of WFP's cash transfer programmes are conditional on participating in SSBC, productive activities, vocational training, clinic attendance, or going to school. The funds requested for improving services, infrastructure, and government institutions – as part of promoting resilience – is minimal compared to those allocated for cash (or vouchers) and nutrition. Other organisations also see cash transfers as a means to achieving resilience, whether through cash-for-work to repair agricultural infrastructure (eg, FAO) or cash grants, which affect borrowing and access to credit (Somalia cash consortium) (FAO, 2018; Somalia Cash Consortium, 2013). Other resilience strategies include the provision of agricultural inputs, infrastructure, and services.

As such the frontstage practices of the resilience regime create a simplistic picture of the causes of malnutrition and food insecurity, placing principal responsibility for nutritional failures on individuals and families, in contrast to the complex structural political and economic causes discussed in previous sections. This picture is re-enforced by the way assessment, targeting, and monitoring is currently done. The assumption that malnutrition and food insecurity is simply a function of individual choice and capacity is seriously flawed and dangerous as it has the potential to feed into the ongoing discrimination of historically marginalised groups. This report argues that such a simplistic analysis needs to be challenged with an analysis of power, distribution, and class as part of a political economy analysis of cash

transfers (see for example Johnston, 2015). This is discussed further below. This hyper-neoliberalisation of international aid practices (ie, focusing on individual responsibility and market-based approaches) directly and indirectly supports the domination of business in the control of resources in Somalia. The role of business is evident in every aspect of the current aid regime. In the previous sections, we have shown the role of business in the logistics and infrastructure of aid. Much of assessment and monitoring is also privatised in Somalia, not only because of NGOs' involvement but that of private companies. At the same time, these aid practices hide the ongoing process of concentrating power in a limited number of businesses and the exclusion of the most vulnerable. As the manipulation of aid and its impact on the Somali political economy has been demonstrated numerous times, it takes some effort to hide it. Limited access, remote management, and new cash and nutrition practices have made it possible. The remainder of this section discusses first the changes in assessment, targeting, distribution, and monitoring and then how these practices have made key aspects of food and power in Somalia invisible.

Changes in assessment, targeting, and monitoring

Changes in access and attempts to address the problems of the past, as well as ideology, have created new practices that form part of the frontstage performance. Access for humanitarian organisations to populations in south-central Somalia changed dramatically from 2007 and 2008 with the rise of Al-Shabaab (Hammond and Vaughan-Lee, 2012). This occurred not only because of Al-Shabaab's ban

on Western aid but also because of their attacks on aid workers and increased conflict between Al-Shabaab and government and allied forces. As long-term international aid workers explained: “It is much more difficult to understand the situation now, compared to before. It seems that the ignorance of the international community is increasing. [Aid workers] are behind concrete blocks” (key informant 11, 2019). “You cannot have good understanding of the context and people without somehow being there” (key informant 1, 2019).

While FAO in general could continue to access Al-Shabaab held areas, its assessment unit, the Food Security and Nutrition Assessment Unit (FSNAU) could not because Al-Shabaab suspected them of spying. FSNAU in turn dominates food security and nutrition assessments in Somalia. FSNAU made a number of changes in response to restricted access to rural areas but not until 2015. From 2012 to 2015, much of rural Somalia was essentially excluded from assessments. After this, two main approaches were used. First, asking key informants to come into urban areas and, second, phone interviews with informants in Al-Shabaab controlled areas. In addition, in 2016, new quantitative indicators – the food consumption score, household hunger score, and coping strategies index – were added to FSNAU’s assessments (key informants 16 and 38, 2019). WFP, although also relying on FSNAU for estimating needs, has itself gone further with remote assessments (although only in government-held areas), some of which are done through a mobile phone checklist, in particular in what it calls “hotspots” to follow up on FSNAU’s information. As one informant explained, “Before we used ‘paper questions’,

now we work with mobile phone users. ... The questions are simplified, just have yes or no answers or multiple choice. The data immediately go to Nairobi – into SPSS [a computer programme for statistical analysis]. We also do rapid assessments using call centres. We can call fifty households and find out immediately what is happening in the area” (key informant 25, 2019). There certainly appeared to be a perception among those we interviewed that current methods are better than those used earlier. Other WFP information collection includes market monitoring, early warning (eg, prices, markets, displacement, livelihoods), and ad hoc food security and market assessments (key informant 32, 2019). Examples of this are a detailed analysis of food and nutrition insecurity (WFP, 2015) and a context analysis (WFP, 2019). WFP also commissioned a nutrition causal analysis in southern Somalia. These are discussed further below.

In terms of targeting and distribution, the Somalia food security cluster developed new community-based targeting guidelines in 2018, to overcome the problems that occurred in 2012 (Somalia Food Security Cluster, 2018). At that time, many of the most vulnerable were excluded from distribution, and diversion by gatekeepers, elders, and NGOs was a major issue (Hedlund et al., 2012). The new guidelines provide detailed guidance on how to identify and target the most vulnerable and how to mitigate potentially negative effects such as violence and stigmatization against vulnerable groups. However, what they do not do is highlight the need to examine power relations and the process by which some people become vulnerable (and others gain power). Furthermore, agency staff are often part of

these dynamics (Haver and Majid, 2016; Majid and Harmer, 2016; El-Taraboulsi-McCarthy et al., 2017). They also do not refer to earlier targeting studies in Somalia, for example those done or supported by WFP in 1999 and in 2008 (WFP, 1999; Jaspars and Maxwell, 2008; Narbeth, 2002). As Keen (1994) has pointed out, an analysis of power relations is essential in understanding whether targeting the vulnerable is possible. In most cases, politically weaker groups fail to access sufficient relief because they lack political muscle within their society (ibid.). It is therefore important to understand who does have the political muscle, how they control resources, and why, before attempting to target aid at the most vulnerable. In Somalia, past targeting studies have repeatedly pointed out the futility of targeting on the basis of socio-economic criteria – as in most cases it is either shared widely among everyone within a particular community or subclan or the most powerful receive more. WFP's latest evaluation questions again the assumption that community-based targeting is an effective mechanism for targeting the most vulnerable (Maunder et al., 2018) as does a recent report on social protection (Goodman and Majid, 2018). The question is then why does the aid community persist in its attempts to target the most vulnerable despite repeated evidence that this is difficult or impossible to do in Somalia? In our interviews, traders, transporters, aid workers, and IDP representatives all said that INGOs, local authorities, and camp owners determine who gets aid, and that vulnerable communities (minority and marginalised clans) are (still) excluded or have to hand over part of their aid, even though a change has been made from food aid to vouchers or direct cash transfers. Backstage, marginalisation, and exclusion continues. In addition, in Baidoa and

Mogadishu, this means that backstage both the district commissioners (DCs) and INGOs have become more powerful, as previously WFP worked directly with elders and local committees. This may provide part of the answer (see also Section 6 on the role of government).

Furthermore, a number of informants suggested that the main diversion happens at a higher level:

Diversion happens at a much higher level; ie, with geographical targeting. A lot of questions would be asked [of FSNAU] if there was a census. For example, famine in 2011 was first identified in central region – but the only real place where famine occurs on a regular basis is South West. IPC 4 is always in central and Puntland. But in SW, you have the marginalised, conflict affected and agro-pastoral populations. These are more vulnerable (key informant 36, 2019).

Big diversion is at the higher level. Selection of villages, and of people. This has reduced with new modalities [but diversion happens in different ways] (key informant 4, 2019).

WFP's latest evaluation also raises a number of issues about the FSNAU assessments, including about not adapting its livelihood sampling frames, lack of reliable population data, and the reliability of its nutrition data (Maunder et al., 2018).

Food security assessments, whether by WFP or FSNAU, or analysis by the Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) do not capture some of the social and political dynamics of food insecurity and malnutrition. A recent food security and nutrition trend analysis concludes that populations in central regions are more food insecure, more often, than those in Bay and

Bakool (WFP, 2015). Given the ongoing control of resources by powerful individuals or businesses, and their dependence on exploiting minority groups, including in Bay and Bakool, it would seem extraordinary that populations living in these areas would not be among the most food insecure. Furthermore, the populations in the central regions are among the best connected in Somalia through their social networks to urban areas and the diaspora and did not suffer famine in 2011 (Maxwell and Majid, 2016). The IPC, like the FSNAU data on which it is based, frequently identifies food insecurity in the central regions, however (See Box 3 on the IPC, its objectives, and its flaws). What is equally worrying is that a nutrition causal analysis, which focusses on causes at the household or individual level, concludes that poor feeding and hygiene

practices are key causes of malnutrition (SNS Consortium, 2015). This in itself can be expected to feed into the discrimination of Rahanweyn, Gabaweyn, and Bantu, who suffer the highest rates of acute malnutrition, and which allows their exploitation to continue. A more recent WFP integrated context analysis concludes that some areas in which these populations live do experience chronic food insecurity due to non-climatic factors, but also that other parts of Somalia experience protracted and/or seasonal food insecurity due to natural shocks (WFP, 2019).

Box 3: Integrated Phase Classification in Somalia

The IPC (Integrated Phase Classification) system was developed within the FSNAU, in Somalia, in 2004, and has since expanded as an analytical process and dissemination mechanism. The use of the IPC has expanded beyond Somalia and is now recognised globally as the largest provider of current-status information about food security and related crises. In Somalia, the FSNAU and the IPC represent a form of knowledge management that influences decisions on the appeal and allocation of international resources.

The value of the IPC is in its set of protocols that provide a structure and platform to integrate multiple data sources, methods, and analyses to generate consensus-based situation analyses. As such it can be used flexibly to bring together different data types and analysts around the same table (FAO, 2012). However, as such it is also limited by the availability and quality of data and of the (human) analysts involved, and in turn by the methodological biases and power dynamics inherent to the particular context, including the political economy of the aid industry itself. In the case of Somalia for example, the 2011 famine was well predicted by the FSNAU (and the Famine Early Warnings Systems Network – FEWSNET) but a major factor in the unfolding of the disaster was the political dynamics at the time, namely the restrictions of Al-Shabaab and the counter-terrorism legislation of the US; as Dan Maxwell highlights, “What is clear is that it was *politics* – more than drought, prices, or even armed conflict – that effectively prevented early action in Somalia in 2011” (Maxwell, forthcoming).

Furthermore, new research findings, generated from the 2011 famine, identified that the “social connectedness” of families – their ability to reach relatives removed from the immediate disaster context, such as in towns and cities and in the diaspora – was a critical factor in their ability to survive the extreme conditions at the time. These connections also reflect the business and political links between rural and urban areas that are a factor in relative vulnerability. It is unclear whether such research has been factored into the IPC analyses in recent years (Maxwell and Majid, 2016).

In addition to asking questions about the reliability and impartiality of the information on which geographical targeting is based, informants talked about two other ways that cash transfers were still subject to diversion. First, additional SIM cards or vouchers are registered for local authorities (eg, the DC) to “pay” for representation (the addition of 100 extra cards or vouchers was often mentioned) and, second, IDPs continue to pay a tax to camp land owners or gatekeepers, the amount mentioned most frequently was 30 per cent of the money they received.

WFP ATM cards or food vouchers are redeemed by selected food vendors and/or banks. There is no problem to redeem but we have to pay our masters the camp owners, if they know we have said this that is the end me (key informant 67, 2019).

If you get your voucher or ATM you can redeem it easily but you have to pay the camp owner his part which is 30 per cent of whatever you get. This was agreed when you settle in the camp ... If you don't pay the camp owners you don't get any benefit, if they don't like you they never include you in the beneficiary list (key informant 68, 2019).¹⁵

In theory, this kind of diversion is caught by third party monitoring, a key change in aid programming initiated in 2016 and 2017. This includes the use of call centres to follow up mobile cash transfers, or with separate NGOs to monitor receipt of aid on the ground. As one international informant explained, “With mobile cash transfers, you have more of a paper trail in terms of what is happening with the money. Food, once it leaves the warehouse, you just get

a waybill signed by someone. With money, telecoms gives you the number, and you can follow up. You can call and verify the data, name, phone number, etc. That is what we did. One hundred per cent verification. For every beneficiary list we would lose 25 per cent, because phone number did not work, or the name was not on the list” (key informant 1, 2019). On the other hand, Somali informants commented that monitoring NGOs might take bribes to give the distributing NGO a good report and also complained about collusion between monitors and auditors (key informant 24, 2019) and observed that both the implementing NGO and the monitoring NGO had to belong to the majority clan of the area to be able to function – implying a risk of collusion (key informant 4, 2019).

Another new element of monitoring is risk management units within big organisations. This might entail, for example, checking the background of contractors or who they have worked with in the past, and checking them against UN sanction or terrorist lists. However, political affiliations more broadly are not necessarily analysed (key informant 23, 2019) and powerful businessmen operate under a number of different company names. Others may check links between staff and contractors or links between staff and local authorities. However, even if such evidence of corruption or collusion is found, it is rare that big organisations would suspend their operations on the basis of this (key informant 41, 2019).

¹⁵ Majid and Harmer (2016) provides examples of taxation in the range of 10–20 per cent.

Making politics invisible

These new practices on the frontstage make the political economy of food in Somalia invisible in a number of ways. First of all, as much programming is done remotely, and decision-making does not actually rest with those who are present, getting a good understanding of the dynamics of food security in Somalia is difficult. Relying overwhelmingly on quantitative methods and simple yes/no questions on mobile phone checklists rather than the in-depth knowledge of long-term Somali aid workers or food security specialists makes this even harder. As Duffield has noted (2019a), in humanitarianism we have seen a shift from knowledge gained from being present to remoteness and electronic data, leading to very different understandings of the world. Knowledge allows for causal reasoning, theorizing, and critique whereas data is more concerned with empiricism, statistical analysis, alerts, and dimensions of human behaviour (Duffield, 2019a). A focus on individual behaviour places responsibility for malnutrition and food insecurity on crisis-affected populations themselves, thus hiding its structural causes (see also Jaspars, 2018). In Somalia, there are a number of other elements, such as not assessing dynamics of cash-crop production or including clan politics in food security or context analysis that make politics invisible. Furthermore, the language of promoting business and client satisfaction associated with vouchers and cash transfers is fundamentally different from that of aid agencies and beneficiaries. It changes the sense of human obligation to that of an impersonal transaction (Scott-Smith, 2016). International organisations' admiration for business and innovation may also have

contributed to making an understanding of the role of business in concentrating power, political patronage, and the exploitation of labour, invisible. Finally, given that issues of food and power, which include corruption and collusion in aid, have such a long history in Somalia, it is possible that international organisations and their donors actually no longer want to know. These issues are discussed below.

In Somalia, food security assessments focus on staple crops and on the poor. This means that the shift to cash crops, exploitative labour relations, and land grabs are not captured at all. "In FSNAU, the focus is on food crops. Cash crops are only considered in terms of labour – mainly sesame. For lemon and banana it is not really the poor that farm these crops [so they are not monitored]" (key informant 38, 2019). Another informant speculated that assessing only food crops, when they had long ago been replaced by cash crops, was also a way of keeping food aid coming: "Gedo consisted of riverine livelihoods and agro-pastoral groups. The baseline concentrated on staple crops but when food aid was pushed on small farmers, they shifted to lemon and sesame ... when assessments were done, it showed there was no farming [so justifying food aid]. Now they are no longer covering Dollo, perhaps because no improvement?" (key informant 26, 2019).

Even though since the 2011 famine there is a renewed awareness of issues of marginalisation and exclusion, organisations find dealing with the power dynamics difficult. Aid organisations recognise that incorporating clan issues into their analysis is essential for gaining an understanding of why some people are able to access food and others not, but have

find this difficult to put in practice. A key issue is how to do this in a way that is acceptable to all concerned and that does not pose a risk. As a result, food security and nutrition analysis contain little or no information about conflict or issues of political marginalisation and exploitation of certain clans. Somali staff do know the political causes of food insecurity but are not encouraged to share this knowledge, or it is not reported officially as part of assessments. Staff are also part of the power dynamics. This results in food security assessments that contradict what should be known on the basis of a political and economic analysis. Populations that would be expected to be most food insecure are not necessarily so according to the analysis conducted by FSNAU and others. As the highest levels of acute malnutrition are found in Bay and Bakool regions (and in the riverine populations), this means that organisations have started looking for other causes of malnutrition. The recent nutrition causal analysis, in fact, concludes that feeding and hygiene behaviours are key causes of malnutrition, although climate, insecurity and seasonal factors also play a role (SNS Consortium, 2015). Given the well-known history of political marginalisation and exploitation of particular clans such as the Rahanweyn, Gabaweyn, and Bantu groups, and the occurrence of the most severe famines among these groups, it seems extraordinary that this explanation of malnutrition causation is accepted among aid organisations. These population groups have now been made responsible for their own malnutrition. And if their own actions are responsible for their malnutrition, are they by extension also responsible for causing famine among themselves? The findings of the nutrition analysis can be found back in the WFP strategic

plan. The strategic plan highlights women's workload, girl marriage and early motherhood, restrictions on mobility, lack of reproductive health services, and discriminatory socio-cultural beliefs about childcare and health-seeking practices as key causes of malnutrition (WFP, 2018). Although lack of mobility and discrimination can be linked to conflict and exploitation, here it is linked to childcare and feeding practices, thus actually feeding into the discrimination and exploitation of certain ethnic groups.

Behavioural factors as causes of malnutrition can also be found back in the linking of nutrition interventions and cash transfers with behaviour change communication. Johnston (2015) is one of the few researchers that has done a critical analysis of cash transfers, which are conditional on behaviour change (in her case for those at risk of HIV). She first of all points out that there is little evidence that such interventions are in fact successful in bringing about behaviour change. However, more importantly, she points out the flawed assumptions on which these interventions are based: that recipients of behaviour change communication have a choice in what they do. Simple messages aimed at behaviour change fail to consider the wider structural factors that put people at risk, and depoliticises the structural drivers of – in her case – HIV risk in southern Africa. The role of inequality in access to resources, including employment and health care, and in gender relations, is ignored: "... the oversimplified premise of these projects edits out politically difficult questions of power, distribution and class" (ibid.: 410). The same can be said of the causes of malnutrition and food insecurity causation in Somalia. By focussing on individual actions and choice (in

both cash transfer and nutrition strategies), the political and economic processes that lead to inequalities in the distribution of land, production, and aid, and the exploitation and exclusion this involves, is edited out. Furthermore, accepting that some people are malnourished because of their own actions itself feeds into the ongoing discrimination of these groups, as exemplified by one of our interviewees:

Some people are at a low level. They are different in terms of their civilisation. For example, the Bantu have had low level traditions for a long time. They are not armed. Cultural things keep them low. Those factors still affect minority groups. No power, no arms, low culture. They do not have the same system of support within the community. In Bay and Bakool, the farming systems are bad, they have collapsed completely. Pastoralists can move and have better kinship support. So the problem is mostly cultural. [We] can give support through aid, but this does not form the base of the economy. The Bantu communities, the way they live, marry, or spend money, this would be very difficult for pastoral communities. They take more wives, instead of building and saving. In Bay and Bakool, they have one administration but a large number of people and their socio-economic status is low. It's just a different civilisation – they also have fewer diaspora. It is their own culture that is keeping them malnourished (key informant 30, 2019).

While the vast majority of organisations would not endorse this statement, it is implicit in today's food security and nutrition strategies. In addition, if malnutrition and food insecurity is largely a result of people's own actions, international organisations are no longer responsible for feeding into unequal power

relations through the way they distribute aid. It may actually suit both donors and international organisations for the ongoing political manipulation of aid and other resources to become gradually invisible. It keeps the aid operation going without having to be accountable (and this also benefits others – see Section 7).

Many long-term international aid workers commented that they did not really know what is going on in Somalia and that, when providing aid, the priority is not always on trying to understand the context, as illustrated in the following quotes:

As external actors we have no clue what is really going on. ... We don't know whether or not we are reaching the most vulnerable. We are not honest about what we are doing. Everything is brilliant when you write a proposal – holistic, complimentary, then after one year: find fraud, etc. Then when you submit a report, everything is brilliant. It is difficult to have a grown-up discussion with anyone about this. People do not want to know. For donors, it complicates their life, colleagues do not want to know, etc. (key informant 1, 2019).

Humanitarian assistance is no longer about assisting the most marginalised. The focus is on meeting quantitative objectives, for example the number of people assisted. What to do? How? [Aid organisations] are either not interested or not willing to take the risk of knowing who your partners are, and the risk this poses to the Somalis. Also less attention is given to the interlocutors who represent the marginalised (key informant 13, 2019).

We are not trying to get equal distribution to each clan. Just want to deliver food as quickly as

possible at the best price. Get quality food, at the right cost, on time. Trying to get aid to actual locations (key informant 17, 2019).

Long-term Somali aid workers commented mostly that it appeared donors were just not interested in what is really happening in Somalia, but appear to be following their own agenda, as these quotes show:

The donors do not ask: who are we supporting? Is anyone left out? [Dominant groups] make use of the loopholes in the international community. It is also difficult for international organisations to monitor (key informant 15, 2019).

Within the aid system, there is no accountability. No continuation among international staff. People on the ground benefit. No one is asking why are we doing the same thing over and over again for ages. No one wants to ask questions (key informant 20, 2019).

[Aid organisations] are part of the problem because they only want to have an easy job, they don't want to challenge authorities and major clans. Most of the staff are part of the marginalization process and collude with local authorities (key informant 49, 2019).

These quotes perfectly reflect the frontstage and backstage performances in Somalia's humanitarian theatre. Frontstage, there are new cash transfer and nutrition practices, and people can become resilient by changing their behaviour and by promoting business and market-based approaches. New remote and quantitative methods are quicker, cheaper, and more efficient, and new guidelines on identifying the vulnerable can make sure they are targeted with aid. These new practices, however, along with the focus on behaviour change and individual responsibility, is making

politics and power invisible. The politics is only seen backstage, where everyone knows power is concentrated within a few powerful businesses and that marginalisation continues. The diversion and manipulation of aid and its use in boosting power and political patronage also continues. Many aid actors are part of both the front and backstages, but there is no incentive for interaction between the two. Both international and Somali informants suggested there is little honesty in aid programming. This is backed up by findings of the UN Monitoring Group in 2013, that found a culture of denial and secrecy that prevents the humanitarian community from sharing bad experiences, a lack of follow up on implementation and quality, inadequate termination clauses, and a narrative that has nothing to do with reality. They attributed this partly to inconsistent donor responses to diversion (UN Security Council, 2013). It could also be that most organisations, and the companies they work with, benefit in different ways from not being held accountable and thus maintaining the status quo. Not knowing, or blaming crisis-affected populations, facilitates this. For aid workers it is better focus on the frontstage, keep aid resources coming in, and claim ignorance of backstage discussions. There is no incentive for interaction between the two.

Focussing on maintaining the front stage, however, means that the political and economic processes that lead to inequalities in the distribution of land, production, and aid, and the exploitation this involves, are made invisible and continue. So can the use of food assistance to boost political power and patronage. The food insecurity and malnutrition that these processes produce will persist. The frontstage keeps the aid operation going but does not

address the causes of malnutrition and food insecurity.

6. Role of government?

They come with ready-made food and then ask us what we want to eat (government official talking about NGOs, key informant 62, 2019).

Somalia's federal government is a minor player in the political economy of food in Somalia, compared to business and aid actors. It controls only a small part of the revenue stream and is the weaker party in any negotiation, compared to the business sector (De Waal, 2019). The donor and aid communities also have more power than the federal government does. Government officers are beginning to question and resist their power but at the same time need the resources they offer to attract and maintain their political budget. Al-Shabaab continues to pose a key challenge to the government, as it holds much of southern Somalia. One informant commented that 85 per cent of Somalia is out of bounds for the government (key informant 36, 2019). This keeps donor resources to maintain the FGS, and to expand the area it controls, coming in. This section first discusses the limited power of federal government ministries at the central and state levels, how they attempt to change this and what they are doing, and then contrasts this with the power of the district commissioners through their effective control of aid locally. The analogy of the frontstage and backstage again works well here. Frontstage, federal government ministries work together with the UN and other aid organisations to develop policy. Backstage, adopting what are essentially donors policies can be seen as a form of extraversion (a means of using their dependency to attract external resources),

which is at the same time also resented, and the use of external funds to maintain systems of political patronage continues.

Limited role of federal and member state ministries in regulation

Government officials at the federal level have limited power to regulate or to control revenue. One way of attracting resources, is to align themselves with international policies and strategies such as resilience, scaling up nutrition, etc (frontstage). At the same time, they face pressure (backstage) to attract resources for themselves and their clan. Maintaining the existing regime of practices is one way of keeping the aid flow coming in. This includes the policies, the information systems, and the various organisations and authorities that are involved. This subsection discusses each in turn.

Many government policies are closely aligned with or even the same as those of their major donors. The national development plan, for example, with resilience as its focus, reveals similarities to the priorities of the international community (Federal Government of Somalia, 2017a). The national development plan aims to produce resilient communities and the Drought Impact and Needs Assessment (a joint donor, UN, and government exercise) refers to the capacity of government, households, and communities to deal with and recover from natural shocks and conflicts (Federal Government of Somalia, 2017b). Child feeding and hygiene practices as a cause of persistent acute malnutrition, rather than the marginalisation of certain groups, can also be found back in the national development plan (ibid.: 109). Other priority areas in the National Development Plan include security, the rule of

law, governance, infrastructure, clean water, energy. It emphasises agriculture, livestock, and fishing and building on the strengths of the private sector. It seems Somalia's national policies are decided based on the priorities of outsiders. For example, the government has a resilience working group consisting of government, donors and UN agencies. Most recently, a new Somali social protection policy was produced with extensive input from WFP and UNICEF.

Not surprisingly, government ministries are closely aligned to specific UN organisations. According to one government advisor, UN organisations have become Somalia's service delivery organisations – which the government now has to reclaim. This same interviewee suggested that FAO functions as the Ministry of Agriculture, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as the Ministry of Planning, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) as the Ministry of Health, and perhaps WFP as the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs. "The UN Humanitarian Coordinator [rather than the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs] decides where all the resources go" (key informant 40, 2019). "The ultimate goal needs to be to rebuild institutions, so that aid would not go on forever. The Somali government needs to think about why they are doing the same thing over and over again, and also about the real motivations for Western governments' actions in Somalia" (ibid.).

This ongoing power of aid organisations, and the need to align policy to those of Western donors and aid agencies, is leading to some resentment. A number of government officers

suggested that NGOs' main concern was to maintain their own "business" but government seemed powerless to do anything about it. As one government advisor commented: "Aid has become a business. They need the IPC¹⁶ emergency classification so that NGOs can continue to get funding. The humanitarian appeal at the moment is for 1.7 billion, but the government is saying: what are you talking about? The figures are exaggerated. We cannot continue business as usual. ... International agencies are just manipulating the data" (key informant 39, 2019). The failure of UN organisations to recognise the efforts of the Somali government in responding to the 2017 "drought" is another source of resentment:

Somalia has recurrent droughts. In 2011, we lost 250,000 people. Everyone was saying that should be the last time. In 2017, it hit a number of regions but the number of deaths were low. Mainly because of the quality of the response from the Somali community themselves. ... We started at an early stage to develop a plan. Set up a national committee. We started fundraising nationally and internationally. We raised \$4 million. ... I was not happy with how this initiative of local and national authorities was ignored by the international community. Why was it not in the OCHA [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs] report? They always assume that assistance comes from outside. That is the kind of dilemma we are in. We face recurrent drought so we need to be prepared. People come [from outside] and do things according to their own preferences – there is a lot of mistrust. But outsiders should not do it alone – do it in partnership. Keep the money if you want, but we must work together. It should be participatory. This is the only way to build institutions (key informant 22, 2019).

¹⁶ Integrated Phase Classification, which is linked to FSNAU data and classifies areas into food secure, borderline, crisis, emergency, or famine.

Many government officers in federal ministries either have a background in aid themselves or left Somalia during the conflict, got educated (eg, in the UK or US), and since 2012 have come back to work as part of the new federal government. Although neither the group with a history in aid organisations nor the group that has recently returned has much power, the former can use their knowledge of the system to attract aid and attempt to facilitate or coordinate aid organisations. The latter have to start from scratch and have faced problems as soon as they attempt to address some of the persistent problems of manipulation or diversion of aid.

Officers in the Ministries of Humanitarian Affairs and Planning in South West region commented that the government had little capacity to develop or implement policy on aid, but at the same time, that it is important to bring about change and prevent repeated relief operations. Some had a background in aid organisations, so through developing good relationships could develop a common strategy for the region (key informant 42, 2019). However, much of this is based on the goodwill of the NGOs, who can in most instances still insist on doing things their way. The quote at the start of this section is indicative of this – government officers are expected to participate but do not have much choice in what actually happens (key informants 61 and 62, 2019). One commented that many organisations' resilience programmes were in fact just the same as short-term humanitarian response, and highlighted the need for longer-term development programmes. This same official in the Ministry of Planning said: "We only oversee, the power is with NGO staff and local authorities" (key informant 61, 2019). And a

district commissioner said that: "NGOs and UN agencies have power because they will only come to us and tell us, 'We want to do ABC and work in XY locations.' If we push, they will tell us we are coordinating with other actors we can only work here" (key informant 62, 2019). Or a governor: "NGOs are also hiding behind the insecurity" (key informant 63, 2019). NGOs informed us that in some places, like Baidoa, there appear to be policies on aid or agriculture, but no capacity to implement, but in other places there is nothing: "in Bardera we have never seen anybody talking of policy in terms of aid delivery, production, and trade" (key informant 48, 2019). At the same time, government officers recognise that for agriculture, it is mostly Al-Shabaab policies that currently apply (key informant 61, 2019). In addition, as mentioned in earlier sections, government has little influence over food imports and exports as this too is controlled by business and by Al-Shabaab. This state of affairs is made worse by the fact that after 30 years of war and no government, most people have no idea how government actually works (ibid.). It can also be argued that the confusing and rapidly changing policy environment is to the advantage of those who are benefiting from the status quo.

The preceding paragraphs about attempts to formulate government policy, and the weakness of ministries compared to the aid community (showing the need for capacity building) can be seen as the government actors' frontstage performance. Backstage, however, these actions and resentments can also be seen as wanting to reclaim authority and power and – most importantly – control over resources. The need to control resources to amass personal wealth as quickly as possible,

as well as the need for a political budget to maintain the support of relatives and the clan, remains important as long as no stable government or regulated economy exists. This appropriation of resources is part of a process of extraversion, which is the way in which groups or individuals employ their dependent relationship with the external world to appropriate resources and authority (Hagmann, 2016: 10–11). We can see this in the actions of Somali elites, including the tactics of government officers described above. As Hagmann (2016: 25) argues, this is not just a financial or material process but also involves adopting the rhetoric and discourse of international actors. Adopting the discourse of resilience or of scaling up nutrition, or needing to build up the capacity of Somali institutions, may thus be as much about attracting resources as about agreement on the way forward. The same applies to the alignment of UN organisations to particular ministries. As Hagmann (2016: 55) and one of our key informants argued, as long as the 4.5 formula of clan representation is part of Somalia's system of power sharing and state-building, clan will also be appropriated by elites as a way of attracting resources and increasing their bargaining power. In such circumstances it will be difficult for any government officer to put policy implementation above the need to maintain clan loyalty and support. The latter requires a political budget which involves extraversion by various means.¹⁷

Long-term aid workers, traders, and transporters seemed to confirm this ongoing backstage priority of government officers for

political patronage and budgets. For example, one long-term aid worker suggested that the government exaggerated the extent of drought to increase the aid coming in (key informant 38, 2019). Another that the government will accept any form of aid but is not able to provide security for farmers or aid workers (key informant 46, 2019). While federal government advisors and officials talked about their goals of Somali institutions that had the capacity to develop and implement policy, others talked about corruption and numerous demands for taxes, fees, and bribes. As one businessman commented: "At federal level and within each region, they just say, 'Give me the money.' But you get no services in return. The figures and amounts have changed but you have to give the money. With decentralisation, there is parallel taxation at different levels. ... There is no justice system. Nowhere to take grievance or court system. If you have a problem in Mogadishu – for example someone says they are going to build in front of your door – you have to go to Al-Shabaab. If you go to government, you will just end up paying a lot of money." The UN Monitoring Group reports government diversion of aid, sometimes in collusion with aid organisations or gatekeepers of IDP camps, at every level every year.

Transport and trading businesses had complaints about government and militia taxes at checkpoints: "From Mogadishu to Baidoa there are very many road blocks most of them by the government. A 30-tonne truck from Bakara market to Baidoa market will cost US\$ 4,300" (key informant 50, 2019). Others reported the same problem and that

¹⁷ Hagmann (2016) describes these as coercion, trickery, flight, intermediation, appropriation, and rejection, and covers each in detail in *Stabilisation, Extraversion, and*

Political Settlements in Somalia, (Rift Valley Institute, London and Nairobi).

government taxation is difficult to deal with because it is disorganised and uncoordinated (eg, key informants 51, 52, and 53, 2019). Again, they felt they received little in return in terms of security or an improved business environment. There is no quality or price control by the government. Or, as one businessman commented: “What kind of government are you talking about, they know nothing, the majority of them are young men and women who have never seen what Somalia used to produce” (key informant 59, 2019).

Only a few businesspeople or aid workers were positive about the efforts of the current government to provide a secure environment for business. For example, one said: “They are after politicians who have active contracts. For example, Sky-link Arabia (SKA) is an international company that manages the seaport and is protected by politicians, who receive money through this contract. The government wants to cut this. But people with money have to involve themselves in politics to protect their business. If you have a contract, you have to be connected” (key informant 37, 2019). Another commented on how the government is trying to regulate banks and to create an environment in which the rule of law works (key informant 33, 2019) but at the same time that following government rules can pose risks from Al-Shabaab (key informant 60, 2019). One of the Nairobi-based transporters also reported receiving a lot of support in expanding into fishing and providing support for private sector (key informant 28, 2019).¹⁸

Key role of the District Commissioner

While federal and member state ministries may have little control officially over aid (but unofficially divert and take bribes) there is no doubt that local authorities, in particular the district commissioners, have a key role in how aid is allocated, and they can boost their political authority by doing so. This varies by location: in some the DC is all powerful (eg, North Gedo), in some he is influential (Baidoa), and in others the NGOs are far more powerful (Belet Weyn). As mentioned in Section 5, the power of selecting beneficiaries and the retailers redeeming food vouchers now lies mainly with the DCs, NGOs, and camp owners (in the case of beneficiaries), as demonstrated by the quotes below:

Access to aid is through the local authority and NGOs. The main changes include NGOs work closely with local authorities which was not there in 2006 when we arrived here (key informant 65, 2019).

Local authority, NGO staff, and gatekeepers control aid, most of the time they all collude, even myself I have pay kickbacks. How do you think I got the vendor contract and put shops in the IDP camps? (key informant 54, 2019).

The DC in Baidoa himself said, “Whenever there is new registration of beneficiaries by any NGO we get pressure from friends, relatives, and clan members for inclusion. If we don’t, they turn against you. This is a problem” (key informant 62, 2019). And an official from the Ministry of Planning noted that he was unable to address the problem: “I have no doubt those involved in targeting at different levels will target their

¹⁸ Note that the opinion of businesspeople of government policy and support is likely to be influenced by clan. That is,

those interviewed from the Marehan clan might be treated more favourably by the current President.

friends and clans to buy their political loyalties and remain in office. We get these complaints a lot but I am sorry we can do very little about that. We only oversee, the power is with NGO staff and local authorities” (key informant 61, 2019).

That power, or political loyalty, is gained from selecting aid beneficiaries from one’s own clan and through taxation or diversion of aid is nothing new. As with food aid, clan affiliation influences selection for cash transfers, and local administration may charge an administrative fee for every voucher (key informant 25, 2019) or allocate vouchers or SIM cards to themselves for the same purpose. However, the focus of food assistance in a few key towns has led some DCs to become very powerful. As before, controlling aid means gaining power. “If someone is looking for political power, he will first go to the UN offices. In terms of aid contracts, Baidoa is an important labour market because of the large concentration of IDPs. These aid contracts are controlled by the most powerful clans, working within few organisations and local authorities, with of course the DC at its head” (key informant 51, 2019). Another good example of the power of the DC can be found in Dollo (Gedo), which again presents a concentration of large amounts of aid within a much smaller area. Limited access to Al-Shabaab areas means all UN organisations and NGOs are concentrated in the small government-held area around Dollo – about 40 square kilometres. It has made the DC into one of the most powerful people in Somalia (key informants 4 and 26, 2019). Abdirashid, the DC in Dollo, has been accused of manipulating humanitarian operations through contracting cartels and the imposition of inappropriate

bureaucratic impediments to control and extract financial benefit from humanitarian operations (UN Security Council, 2016).

To conclude, government ministers and senior officials in the FGS are in a weak position compared to business and are mainly concerned with their own individual political fortunes. By extension, they are concerned with the functioning of their ministries insofar as those serve as a means of patronage and political leverage – and occasionally as an instrument of social policy. At the local level, the concentration of aid in urban areas has hugely increased the power of the DC and his ability to maintain the political loyalty of his clan and to buy the loyalty of his enemies. With aid being mostly distributed in government areas, it could be argued that international aid is a tool to prop up the government in areas newly captured from Al-Shabaab. It could also be seen as part of the donor stabilisation agenda, which aims to strengthen the FGS (Hagmann, 2016). Some informants commented that if aid and international organisations move out of the towns, Al-Shabaab would move in immediately (key informants 26 and 29, 2019). This raises a number of questions around the international geopolitics of aid and the maintenance of crisis and IDP concentrations in Somalia. These issues are discussed further in the next section.

7. Marginalisation and displacement. Who benefits?

IDPs are used as a human commodity. I think they were forcibly displaced, then taken advantage of in towns, then [formed to create] a cheap labour force (key informant 44, 2019).

The previous sections have shown that the marginalization of certain groups or clans

continues and that most of the displaced in Baidoa, Mogadishu, and Kismayo consist of marginalized or minority clans (ie, Bantu and different Rahanweyn clans). Furthermore, concentrations of IDPs in towns have increased in recent years. Their exploitation in displacement varies, from having to pay part of the aid they receive to gatekeepers or landowners, to being expelled when the land they live on becomes too valuable. Clearly, some people are benefiting and maintaining their power from continued displacement, ranging from camp gatekeepers or landowners, to local authorities, aid agencies and businesses. Aid agencies and businesses benefit from provide food (aid), and businesses also from providing services for the humanitarian community (security, meeting venues) and from cheap labour to produce cash crops (often involving the same businessmen contracted to provide aid). Displaced populations and aid assists the government as they strengthen its hold on towns in south-central Somalia, as aid and international organizations are concentrated there. As such, food assistance can also be seen as part of a counter-insurgency measure in that it removes the Al-Shabaab support base from the rural areas it controls, and Al-Shabaab can be seen as necessary for the aid apparatus to remain. It appears therefore, that the displaced have become a key part of the political economy of food in Somalia. This section discusses each of these issues in turn.

Persistent marginalisation and protracted displacement

Aid workers, IDPs and their representatives, and businesspeople all talked about the persistent marginalization of particular groups. They

mentioned both long-term structural marginalization of people in Bay and Bakool and along the rivers, and their more immediate vulnerability. Populations like the Rahanweyn and Bantu are more vulnerable to drought and other hazards because they have fewer connections within the diaspora, they have been subjected to several land seizures, and for those who were not yet landless the shift to cash crops made them more vulnerable, turned them into more exploitable labour, and ultimately resulted in forced displacement. “They have no space, no resources, and no policies to represent them. This leads to displacement, where they are either excluded from assistance or exploited” (key informant 20, 2019). There are few businesspeople from minority clans and they are rarely represented in local administration. “Their voice doesn’t make any difference, they are used for attracting aid and excluded it when it comes” (key informant 49, 2019). Their exclusion from aid was a common theme in our interviews, including with businesspeople, who might say, “Many people are just in the camps and not receiving anything, they are excluded by gatekeepers, NGOs staff, and local authority officials” (key informant 54, 2019). This was repeated by all IDPs interviewed for this study, as demonstrated by the following quote:

Our clans are a minority in Baidoa and while other IDP camps get aid we rarely get aid. We only get some NFIs [non-food items] but no food aid or cash. We depend on daily labour in Baidoa city ... we don’t have representation in the local authorities and our voice is not heard. Yes we always go to the offices and shout but they don’t care ... Aid beneficiaries in Baidoa are few majority clans ... Those who are represented in the local authority and NGO staff. ... The aid system in

Baidoa is corrupt, if you are not in the circle of local authority and gatekeepers, then you get nothing or less (key informant 66, 2019).

Others said that minorities have little say and if they complain they are chased away (key informant 67, 2019). Abuse of IDPs who complained has also been reported by Human Rights Watch (Human Rights Watch, 2013). In Mogadishu, displaced people often talked about being at the mercy of landowners or gatekeepers and having to accept their conditions, meaning they have to pay a percentage of the aid they receive to stay in the camp. As discussed in previous sections, the exclusion of certain clans from food distribution has been common since the 1990s (see for example Jaspars, 2000). The phenomenon of gatekeepers appears to have been considered as something new in the 2011 famine (Bryld et al., 2013).

It is telling that ongoing marginalization is not acknowledged in the National Development Plan or by some of the government officers we interviewed; for example a government advisor in Mogadishu commented: “People being marginalised was a conflict issue. I have not seen anything on this now” (key informant 40, 2019). Or from district authorities in Baidoa: “I am the only leader who always looks for the marginalized communities when there are beneficiary registrations and force NGOs to make sure they register them, so that claim [that some clans are persistently marginalised] is not right” (key informant 62, 2019). And: “Marginalized communities are part of the communities in the region and they are served and benefiting from aid even more than others

because of affirmative action policies. I don't think there are people or communities which are deliberately excluded from aid but it is possible that people who don't meet the NGO selection criteria complain (key informant 63, 2019). Similar claims were made by regional authorities in Benadir (key informant 64, 2019). In addition, in the opinion of one former government official, “the government representatives for middle and lower Shebelle and for lower Juba cannot actually go there, and you never see them with IDPs from those areas. They are part of the problem – they are collaborating with the people that are profiteering”.

Most of the displaced are from minority or historically marginalised groups (Rahanweyn clans and Bantu mostly) (see for example Human Rights Watch, 2013). This was the case in 2011, and again in 2017, when the number of IDPs increased dramatically. The number of displaced more than doubled in 2017 – from 1 million to 2 million – and by January 2018 the total was 2.6 million (UN OCHA, 2018). According to OCHA (2018), the reasons are conflict, drought, lack of livelihood opportunities, and evictions (see below). From the previous sections, other reasons include issues such as loss of land or Al-Shabaab taxations, but many informants also claimed that food assistance was one of the reasons for migration, and the creation of IDP camps for business purposes was another. The modalities of cash transfers may be partly why they contribute to displacement,¹⁹ as well as the fact that WFP – one of the main organisations provided cash transfers (including vouchers) – is not able to work in Al-Shabaab areas. Aid

¹⁹ Although one informant said the pull factor was less with cash than with food aid.

workers and businesspeople widely considered aid a pull factor (eg, key informants 24, 41, 46, 50, and 52, 2019).

People are migrating to towns, because of aid and because of Al-Shabaab. ... 1 million IDPs arrived in Mogadishu. Who attracts them? Humanitarian organisations, who then have to distribute food aid because there are no jobs. Who is benefiting? NGOs? Instead of distributing food aid, [they] need to come up with something different. Resettlement? Big brokers benefit the most (key informant 41, 2019).

One aid worker suggested that the WFP's SCOPE system could hinder people's ability to return home. For example, in Baidoa, because the food vouchers can only be redeemed at food shops in Baidoa town, which needs a thumb print so IDPs stay in town. This again affected the appropriation of land by others (key informant 19, 2019). This impact of aid modalities themselves in keeping people in towns needs further exploration. Many IDPs, as we have already seen, sold their land before coming to Mogadishu or Baidoa, which means they are unable to go back. This trend is confirmed by a recent study by the EU Trust Fund's Research and Evidence Facility (REF) (2018) which found that half the displaced in urban areas (including Mogadishu, Kismayo, and Baidoa) intended to stay.

Who benefits from concentrations of IDPs and aid in government areas?

It is not just aid organisations that benefit from maintaining large concentrations of IDPs in towns for a long time. Several layers of people, businesses, and governments authorities all benefit. This sub-section discusses the evolving role of gatekeepers and how IDPs have become

a business opportunity for landowners and "entrepreneurs" (or gatekeepers). There are economic benefits to be gained from attracting IDPs to town as this attracts aid and increases the value of land on which IDPs are settled. Business also benefits from cheap labour and local government from acting as an intermediary.

All IDPs interviewed in Mogadishu reported having to pay part of the aid they received to gatekeepers. They said they handed over 30 per cent of the aid they received – and that if they did not pay, they would not be allowed to stay in the camp. This corresponds to the figures reported by other researchers (see for example Mumin, 2018). Those we spoke to did not report looting of aid – presumably because this is more difficult with cash. The gatekeepers are therefore the most obvious people who benefit. Landowners often rent land to entrepreneurs who initiate camp settlements, and these middlemen are usually referred to by aid workers as "gatekeepers". Among aid workers, opinions about gatekeepers vary: some see them as abusers and exploiters of IDPs because they use IDPs as a source of income, whereas others see them as charging legitimate rent for their (or someone else's) land, or for spending time meeting with NGOs and UN organisations to attract aid. One aid worker, for example, suggested that the "issue of gatekeepers is small compared to other issues," saying they are community volunteers. "Someone has a piece of land and receives IDPs. The land needs to be protected, as there is no police, no government. Health, education, other services need to be provided" (key informant 37, 2019). Many aid organisations see gatekeepers as the necessary interface between IDPs and the aid community –

because IDP numbers are large, government is absent for long periods, and aid organisations are not able to access camp settlements directly – with expectations that they can be reformed through training (see also McCullough and Saed, 2017). According to Bakonyi et al. (2019), IDPs were mostly positive about camp leaders (or gatekeepers) because of their efforts to provide services.

Even if gatekeepers are “just charging rent”, however, clearly having an IDP camp is considered a business, which may also involve actively attracting IDPs to Mogadishu. This may be partly why gatekeepers and IDPs increased between 2011 and 2017:

I have interviewed people who have been driven to Mogadishu and outskirts with promise of food, money, health care. This is same everywhere. Gatekeepers are the workers of the powerful [politicians and business people]. If you try to do anything you will be blocked by local administration. I got into a serious situation myself with local government by interviewing gatekeepers (key informant 44, 2019).

I saw a huge increase in gatekeepers from 2011 to 2017 [in Mogadishu]. They were picking people up in buses. It became an industry – a link with informal settlements. It needs to be seen as part of urban economy. We need improvements in governance, in security, and PPP [public-private partnerships] for services (key informant 36, 2019).

Gatekeeper-ship itself can be bought or sold (Human Rights Watch, 2013). The money to be made from IDPs also makes gatekeepers reluctant to let people go back to their areas of origin (key informant 20, 2019), thus contributing to protracted displacement.

Gatekeepers and owners of the land on which IDPs live also benefit from the increase in value of the land, particularly in Mogadishu, as it acquires access to new services such as water and health care (Bakonyi et al., 2019; key informant 37). One informant commented that if a piece of land was \$100,000 before, now it is worth perhaps \$2 million (key informant 20, 2019). The price of land has escalated dramatically from 2012 onwards, with diaspora and business investment as well as a greater presence of the international community in Mogadishu (Rift Valley Institute and Heritage Institute for Policy Studies, 2017). IDPs are therefore frequently evicted. UN OCHA reported 729,000 evictions between 2015 and 2018 (UN OCHA, 2018). In most cases, this means moving farther out to, the periphery of the city, obviously with fewer facilities and services to start over with (UN Protection Cluster, 2016). For the more recently displaced, exploitation appears to be higher, indicating that the notion of IDPs as a business opportunity is increasing (Mumin, 2018), with aid workers having little scope for resisting, given the number of interests involved:

When they are evicted, someone will make money. A long-term solution requires access to land or ownership. When people are evicted, their shelter is destroyed, and they have to start over. This means aid people come, and new services. I have tried advocacy with the Benadir government to come up with an IDP policy which includes giving land. But the government is not willing. They are under pressure from the business people (key informant 37, 2019).

Businesses also benefit – whether because they supply aid, food, or other services, or because of the cheap labour that IDPs offer.

The Gabaweyn in Dollo and Luuq, for example, work mainly as labourers on farms or as porters in town (key informant 4, 2019). Also, “without them [the IDPs], there would be no business. The more displacement, the more business” (key informant 37, 2019). Even businesspeople themselves admitted this: “increased IDPs into the main cities is good business for us, but it is not good for the country” (key informant 55, 2019). And of course, if business benefits, government benefits. The previous sections (and the quote above) highlights the close connections between local authorities, aid agencies, and businesses (eg, retailers) in the control of aid. Gatekeepers connected to NGOs and the local authorities are able to attract more aid for their client and are able to attract more IDPs. Section 6 showed how this has made the district commissioners particularly powerful. Without such a concentration of IDPs and aid organisations in urban areas, it is questionable whether DCs would have become quite as powerful as they are now. These ways of turning IDPs into a business, and the links between gatekeepers and local authorities, were reported for people displaced in the 2011 famine (Human Rights Watch, 2013) and appear to have increased with the increased numbers of IDPs from 2017 onwards. As a former senior TFG official told Human Rights Watch, “The IDPs don’t get humanitarian assistance directly, but through district commissioners, militias and gatekeepers: this is the biggest business in Mogadishu” (Human Rights Watch, 2013: 22).

At a higher level, aid to IDPs helps maintain the government’s hold on urban areas in south-central Somalia. One informant questioned whether the government would be able to hold onto towns surrounded by Al-Shabaab without

it. By extension, this means that for Western governments, aid to government-held towns can also be seen as part of a counter-terrorism measure. It maintains an AMISOM and SNA presence in towns which would otherwise not be possible. At the same time, Al-Shabaab’s presence in rural areas is keeping the whole aid-business-political power apparatus going. The business angle can also be taken to a higher level. Without large numbers of aid organisations, who are there because of the ongoing large numbers of displaced, there would be no need for the extended green zone at Mogadishu airport or services to meet the needs of aid organisations. This includes security arrangements, accommodation, restaurants, meeting facilities, and fuel for their vehicles, much of which is of course provided by businessmen who made their money working as WFP contractors (and who have close links with both former and current Somali Presidents).

For many actors in Somalia (national and international), there is a need to maintain the aid flow in government areas, for political and economic purposes, and this also means it is necessary to maintain large groups of vulnerable people in towns. This in turn needs Al-Shabaab in rural areas. Government, militia, and businesspeople (including gatekeepers, food retailers, traders, and transporters, and to some extent money-transfer companies) all have an interest in maintaining the status quo. While the status quo may not be the result of the deliberate intentions of a combined government-Al-Shabaab-business-Western government strategy, maintaining it appears to conveniently be in all of their political and economic interests. It is clearly not in the interest of the displaced or marginalised.

Similar conclusions have been reached by other researchers. Menkhaus (2014) for example, suggests that powerful vested interests from the business community could explain the protracted state failure. It is in their interest to have no regulation or state taxation. Gatekeepers, corrupt government officials, and even aid organisations also benefit from an accountability-free zone (Menkhaus, 2014). Harper (2019) finds that the private security and peace-keeping industry needs Al-Shabaab for its continued existence. This study adds to their analysis by arguing that governments, businessmen, and aid organisations benefit from the continuing large numbers of displaced in urban areas. The displaced have become a key part of the political economy of food in Somalia. Large concentrations of displaced in urban areas helps maintain the power of businesses, aid organisations, and government intermediaries. They are dependent on a steady pool of poor, vulnerable, or exploitable populations.

8. Conclusions

Somalia has gone from being a political arena dominated by unregulated market forces in the absence of a state to being a nominal state in some areas but one where business and clan interests remain far more powerful. Food assistance, production, and trade continue to play key roles in who has power and who does not. Extreme inequality remains, and existing governance and food assistance systems feed into this. New regimes of aid practices not only appear to accept that large numbers of people will remain in a situation of permanent crisis or precarity, but hide the politics and conflict that cause it.

The political economy of food in Somalia in the past 15 years presents both change and continuity with earlier years. Food assistance and governance systems have changed; these include the change from food aid to cash transfers, the rise of Al-Shabaab, and the establishment of the Federal Government of Somalia. This has led to changes in practices and an increase in the number of actors involved – including business and government authorities – as well as both a diffusion of and a shift in power. With the shift to cash transfers and vouchers, more and new smaller traders have become involved and benefited from food-aid logistics. At the same time, however, control over food resources remains within the hands of a business and political elite (mostly from Somalia's dominant clans), and groups like the Rahanweyn and minorities continue to be marginalised and are increasingly displaced. Small traders and retailers remain dependent on a few large food traders and importers for their supply. Former food-aid contractors continue to exert power over trade and transport because of their control of fuel supply (petroleum). They are also involved in food imports and continue to benefit from aid because of the security and accommodation they provide to the international community.

Telecoms companies, in particular Hormuud, have become some of the most powerful actors in Somalia, in part supported by the aid community's shift to cash transfers. Hormuud may well be the most powerful player in Somalia, not only because it controls money transfers but also because it invests in every profitable sector, from food imports to cash crop production to construction. Al-Shabaab indirectly feeds into the power of big business, by prohibiting food aid (and other humanitarian

assistance) in areas it controls and imposing a number of taxes on production and transport, thus forcing displacement to urban areas (controlled by the government). Food aid and cash transfers both continue to provide political and economic benefits through diversion, taxation, and manipulation of aid.

The increase in cash crop production has further concentrated power and increased the vulnerability of marginalised and minority groups. Big companies, including money-transfer organisations and companies or individuals previously involved in food aid, are also investing in commercial cash crop production, in particular lemon and banana. This process has involved the sale of land and the displacement of already marginalised groups. Under the current circumstances, businesses in Somalia essentially engage in whatever is most profitable rather than specialising in particular commodities. So, for example, a large contractor may work in food-aid transport when this is most profitable but switch to construction or petroleum when this becomes where most profit is to be made. Or a telecoms company may purchase land or invest in sesame production when the demand is there. This changes as soon as the business environment or global or local demand changes. For this it needs a flexible and exploitable reserve of labour – which is supplied by the ever-larger number of displaced populations. Even the displaced themselves have become a business opportunity, as they can be used to attract (and divert) aid and to improve the value of land. Government's inability to enforce regulations – whether on aid, labour relations, or land rights – further enables the ongoing exploitation of labour (in particular historically marginalised or minority

groups) and the forced acquisition of land with impunity.

Food aid and cash transfers have also been and remain part of the political marketplace. The intersection between the commodification of food aid and the commodification of politics has changed over time. Large companies or businessmen initially gained wealth and power through transport contracts and diversion and used this to buy political status and influence. The change to cash transfers brought about a more dispersed marketplace for buying political loyalty, which in particular boosted the power of local authorities (such as district commissioners). The rise of the money-transfer agencies, in particular Hormuud, indicates a modification of the political marketplace: rather than buying political power or influence, the aim appears to be buying political compliance (or protection) so that their business empires can continue to grow. The power and political patronage of trading and money-transfer companies is further boosted by investing in cash crop production (and a range of other profitable ventures). Al-Shabaab enters the political marketplace indirectly because by effectively facilitating displacement, it reinforces the food assistance-business connection. Business, in turn, sustains Al-Shabaab through taxes on imports, trade, and production.

The federal government is no doubt the weaker partner in any negotiations involving the international community or with business. Government ministries involved in food or humanitarian assistance work closely with Western donors and international organisations (including the UN) to formulate policy. The close alignment with donors' priorities can also

be seen as attempts to attract and appropriate resources to establish and maintain a political budget (an example of extraversion discussed by Hagmann, 2016). As long as the Somali political system is centred around clan identity, politicians and ministers will need to have resources to buy the political loyalties, including of their clan, to ensure their survival. Bribes and informal taxation are part of establishing this political budget. While federal government ministries are weak and need to constantly appropriate resources, Al-Shabaab is undoubtedly a political and economic rival to the government. It controls much of Somalia's most productive areas (and arguably agricultural policies), food movement out of these areas, and more importantly, it is able to tax food imports to Mogadishu – highlighting the control it has at this level (ie, it is presumably able to stop imports too).

Regimes of food-aid practices are also about assessments, targeting, monitoring, and the technologies, institutions, and science involved. An analysis of changes in these regimes' practices shows that rather than highlighting issues of food and power (including the ongoing manipulation of food assistance), current aid practices not only fail to address issues of collusion and diversion but – more importantly – they make the structural causes of food insecurity and malnutrition invisible. By focussing on nutrition and behaviour change, and individual actions to improve food security and resilience, the focus has shifted towards individual responsibility instead. In the current aid regime, malnutrition is attributed to a large extent to poor feeding and hygiene behaviours. This exacerbates the discrimination of marginalised and minority groups in which the highest levels of malnutrition and mortality are

found. Furthermore, with a shift in language – from aid organisations and beneficiaries to business and client satisfaction – principles and ethics and meeting the needs of vulnerable populations no longer comes across as important (see also Scott-Smith, 2016).

Aid workers and government officials seem to constantly be working with two realities at the same time. One is the official reality where aid is distributed efficiently using new technologies (cash transfers, new quantitative indicators, electronic or digital systems) and where people can be made resilient. The other reality is one where politics and power are prominent, where the distribution of resources is determined by kin and other alliances, and the most vulnerable are marginalised or excluded. This is similar to the politics of aid in Ethiopia described as frontstage and backstage in the humanitarian literature by Desportes et al., (2019). Whereas Desportes et al. (2019) suggest that the backstage reveals the decision-making monopoly of the state and the role of conflict dynamics in humanitarian response, in Somalia it reveals the power of business, the collusion to divert aid, and the ongoing marginalisation of particular ethnic groups. As in Ethiopia, there appears to be limited room for manoeuvre for backstage knowledge to influence the frontstage performance. Aid organisations display a degree of self-censorship to maintain their frontstage performance and to keep their reputation and funding going. Government ministries in Somalia also operate front and backstage, with frontstage being working together with international actors to formulate policy and backstage the need to attract external funds to maintain systems of political patronage. In Somalia, powerful incentives keep the front and backstage separate as this keeps

the aid operation going. At the same time, however, this means that inequalities in the distribution of land, production, and aid and the use of food assistance to gain political and economic power continues. The causes of malnutrition and food insecurity are not addressed.

Aid organisations, government, Al-Shabaab, and business all benefit from maintaining the status quo (and thus the frontstage performance) but this state of affairs leads to an international operation in Somalia which is no longer about humanitarian assistance. This status quo involves maintaining large numbers of displaced populations in urban areas, whose land can be used for commercial cash crop production, who can be used to attract aid and increase the value of land, or who become a flexible and exploitable labour force. Keeping aid going also maintains business, whether food trade or money transfer. Furthermore, the concentration of aid in urban areas also benefits government as it not only boosts the power of local authorities but can also be seen as a form of counter-insurgency as it attracts people out of Al-Shabaab areas and re-enforces the government's hold on towns. On the other hand, some of the economic benefits depend on sustaining Al-Shabaab's presence in rural areas.

The aid communities' seeming acceptance of permanent displacement and precarity (except for trying to make the displaced more resilient) can also be seen to reflect a global trend. The condition of the displaced seems to be emblematic of the techno-barbaric future that Duffield (2019a) writes about in post-humanitarianism. A future in which life is maintained only in its most basic sense through

new technologies that help people survive and adapt to permanent crisis, including through information to alter behaviour, but in which people have no need for infrastructure or public services and no hope of an increase in material well-being or social mobility. Bakonyi et al. (2019) already write about this in relation to Somalia: "Urban camps in Somalia are globally governed formations of precarity. They may be located on the edge of the world, but they remain part of it and are shaped by its socio-political logics and the multiple agencies that contribute to their emergence." Duffield (2019b) later adds to his analysis by highlighting the similarity between the digitisation of welfare in the West and of humanitarian assistance in the global South and argues that this practice leads to making poverty and conflict and crisis disappear respectively. The poor and marginalised in Somalia are not alone in the problems they face but are part of the global rise in precarity.

So, what to do about food, power, and aid in Somalia? Both the political system and the humanitarian system are broken, and the two have been intimately linked. The chances are that, as long as the situation remains unstable and until the political system becomes more inclusive, anyone who can will attempt to make a quick profit or appropriate funds or assets as a source of political patronage for their kin and allies. Until these political issues can be addressed, which includes talking to Al-Shabaab, there are a limited number of actions for the immediate and medium term.

The first immediate or medium-term action is a need to determine whether the actions of business in Somalia are actually illegal and, if not, whether they are illegitimate or immoral.

The kinds of actions to be considered would be not only the manipulation or diversion of aid, but also coercion to purchase productive land, or the exploitation of displaced populations as a business opportunity. If no laws prohibit this in Somalia, the next step would be to consider international human rights or humanitarian law, although at the same time, we already know that humanitarian principles have been regularly violated in Somalia. The best option, in the short term, may be to consider whether practices are considered immoral or illegitimate in Somali traditional law or culture. How are civic values such as solidarity, inclusion, protection, and resisting threats part of Somali society, and what are the examples of cross-clan mutuality? Rather than focussing on resilience, and NGO ideas of civil society, the need is to look at how Somali civil society and traditional or customary law promote such values. On the basis of this, it may also be possible to promote cross-clan social work by big business.

Second, donors need to provide incentives for aid organisations and the government to be open about what happens and what is known backstage in the humanitarian theatre. Rather than rewarding aid organisations and the government for adopting the rhetoric of resilience, scaling up nutrition, or other aid buzzwords, they should be rewarded for analysing and reporting the actual problems facing populations in Somalia, such as how power is maintained, the ongoing diversion of aid, and the wider political and economic effects of their interventions. The frontstage of technical innovation, efficiency, and progress needs to be modified with backstage reality. Aid practices need be explicit about the impact of

politics and conflict, rather than making it invisible.

Third, changes are necessary in information and monitoring systems to allow for the political dimension to come through. At a minimum, an understanding of the process of how some people become food insecure and malnourished requires an understanding of production beyond estimates of yields and wages for casual labour. It requires understanding how commercial crop production works and the labour relations that this involves. It also means acknowledging the importance of social networks and political connections in nutrition and food security. Without these elements, information systems will likely be exploited and abused just like all other aspects of the aid programme.

Finally, humanitarian organisations need to take a long and hard look at what they are actually doing in Somalia. The extraordinary thing about Somalia is that everyone (including aid actors) has known about the diversion and manipulation of aid – including the collusion between government authorities, militia, aid organisations, and business to divert aid – for at least 20 or 30 years. After 30 years, lessons learnt about social and political marginalisation have been re-learned but there is still no operational capability to incorporate them. At the same time, targeting the most vulnerable is clearly not possible without an understanding of power. There are bigger questions, however: How is using the language of business – and remote management – affecting their relationship with crisis-affected populations? How can the solution to a crisis caused by violence and unregulated free market (both economic and political), and which creates

large numbers of malnourished and displaced populations, be to promote business and private sector intervention in every aspect of aid? And also: Is it really acceptable to work with gatekeepers or other intermediaries who benefit from the displaced? What are resilience interventions actually doing, other than encouraging adaptation to a life of permanent precarity and crisis? And, as Duffield (2019b) suggests, does this make aid organisations and government complicit in the return of slavery as part of the development of a business and plantation economy?

This report has highlighted a number of areas of grave concern. Most aid is not meeting humanitarian aims. Both traditional and new humanitarian approaches are inadequate for analysing and addressing Somalia's protracted crisis. Putting this right is going to take time and will be difficult, requiring discussion, debate, and reflection between all actors concerned. There are also be areas which need further research, for example the relationship between Al-Shabaab and business in cash-crop production (and its exploitative effects), the extent of land sales and therefore the permanence of displacement, the role of the displaced in Somalia's political economy, and the control of the food supply between Al-Shabaab, business, and government. Despite the severe challenges this report raises, we hope it can assist in finding a way forward to meeting the needs and aspirations of Somalia's most vulnerable and marginalised groups.

Annex 1: Research questions

1. How has production and trade (food) changed with changes in conflict/governance?
 - Who is involved, and what is their role? How has it changed?
 - What are the policies or strategies of those controlling particular territories/population groups? (Federal government, state governments, Al-Shabaab, others?).
 - Who controls or has power within this system? How? Who is marginalised?
 - How does it link to food aid/cash transfers?
 - What is the role of the displaced/marginalised populations?

2. Why and how have particular population groups consistently been marginalised? Who benefits? Who benefits from conflict/famine/continued instability? How?

3. To what extent is food (all aspects, including assessments, contracts for transport, creation of NGOs, import licenses, land), used to buy political loyalty or maintain power in other ways? How has this changed?

4. How have food assistance regimes of practices changed over time, and what are the power effects? (considering in particular 2008, 2011, 2017).
 - What have been the key changes in the past 10-15 years in food assistance, and its relation with other forms of governance (government, warlords, Al-Shabaab, business)?
 - What are the continuities (why has aid consistently been subject to political and economic manipulation)?
 - What are the concepts, policies, techniques, organisations, authorities involved in food aid/cash transfers/resilience projects? How have they changed over time? Why? (international and local politics).
 - What new actors and infrastructure do cash transfers/resilience projects introduce, and what are the effects?
 - What are the interactions between different food/cash/resilience practices and other forms of governance (government, Al-Shabaab, NGOs/UN, business)? Consider this for each of the practices. For example,
 - Humanitarian access – remains a problem in 2017
 - Issuing of contracts (business-government-NGO links)
 - Manipulation of assessments (ghost villages, camps, bens)
 - Transport? How is this organised? (Checkpoints, taxes etc)
 - Targeting
 - Distribution – taxes, diversion, attack, theft (issue of gatekeepers)
 - What other effects do cash and resilience practices have, in terms of the knowledge they produce and the techniques they use (eg, remote management)?

Annex 2: Interviews

Key informant 1 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By SJ on 29 March 2019. Skype.

Key informant 2 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By SJ on 11 April 2019. Skype.

Key informant 3 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker (Jarat Chopra)*. By SJ and NM on 29 April 2019. Nairobi.

Key informant 4 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By SJ on 29 April 2019. Nairobi.

Key informant 5 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By SJ on 29 April 2019. Nairobi.

Key informant 6 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker (Joakim Gundel)*. By SJ on 29 April 2019. Nairobi.

Key informant 7 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By SJ and NM on 30 April 2019. Nairobi.

Key informants 10 (2019). *Group discussion with long-term aid workers*. By SJ and NM on 1 May 2019. Nairobi.

Key informant 11 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker (Luca Alinovi)*. By SJ and NM on 1 May 2019. Nairobi.

Key informant 12 (2019). *Interview with money-transfer agent (Hormuud)*. By SJ and NM on 2 May 2019. Nairobi.

Key informant 13 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By SJ and NM on 2 May 2019. Nairobi.

Key informant 14 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By SJ and NM on 2 May 2019. Nairobi.

Key informant 15 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By SJ and NM on 2 May 2019. Nairobi.

Key informant 16 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By SJ and NM on 3 May 2019. Nairobi.

Key informant 17 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By SJ and NM on 3 May 2019. Nairobi.

Key informant 19 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By SJ on 4 May 2019. Nairobi.

- Key informant 20 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By SJ and NM on 5 May 2019. Nairobi.
- Key informant 22 (2019). *Interview with former government official*. By SJ on 5 May 2019. WhatsApp.
- Key informant 23 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By SJ and NM on 9 May 2019. Skype.
- Key informant 24 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By SJ and NM on 9 May 2019. Skype.
- Key informant 25 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By SJ on 18 June 2019. Nairobi.
- Key informant 26 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By SJ on 19 June 2019. Nairobi.
- Key informant 27 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By SJ on 19 June 2019. Nairobi.
- Key informant 28 (2019). *Interview with transporter (Somkan Trading)*. By SJ on 20 June 2019.
- Key informant 30 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By SJ on 20 June 2019. Nairobi.
- Key informant 31 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker (Matt Bryden)*. By on 20 June 2019. Nairobi.
- Key informant 32 (2019). *Interview with aid worker (VAM briefing)*. By SJ on 21 June 2019.
- Key informant 33 (2019). *Interview with money-transfer agent. Amal*. By SJ on 22 June 2019.
- Key informant 34 (2019). *Interview with transporter. Jubaland*. By SJ on 23 June 2019. Nairobi.
- Key informant 35 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By SJ on 24 June 2019. Nairobi.
- Key informant 36 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By SJ on 24 June 2019. Nairobi.
- Key informant 37 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By SJ on 26 June 2019. Mogadishu.
- Key informant 38 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By SJ on 26 June 2019. Mogadishu.
- Key informant 39 (2019). *Interview with government official (MoA)*. By SJ on 26 June 2019. Mogadishu.
- Key informant 40 (2019). *Interview with government advisor*. By SJ on 27 June 2019. Mogadishu.

Key informant 41 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By SJ on 27 June 2019. Mogadishu.

Key informant 42 (2019). *Interview with government official*. By SJ on 27 June 2019. Mogadishu.

Key informant 44 (2019). *Interview with former government official*. By SJ on 8 July 2019. Skype.

Key informant 45 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By SJ on 10 July 2019. Skype.

Key informant 46 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By GA on 23 June 2019. Baidoa.

Key informant 47 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By GA on 25 June 2019. Baidoa.

Key informant 48 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By GA on 29 June 2019. Mogadishu.

Key informant 49 (2019). *Interview with long-term aid worker*. By GA on 3 July 2019. Mogadishu.

Key informant 50 (2019). *Interview with wholesaler (WFP retailer)*. By GA on 24 June 2019. Baidoa.

Key informant 51 (2019). *Interview with wholesaler (WFP retailer)*. By GA on 24 June 2019. Baidoa.

Key informant 52 (2019). *Interview with wholesaler and food supplier*. By GA on 25 June 2019. Baidoa.

Key informant 53 (2019). *Interview with food trader*. By GA on 25 June 2019. Baidoa.

Key informant 54 (2019). *Interview with food trader*. By GA on 30 June 2019. Mogadishu.

Key informant 56 (2019). *Interview with food businesswoman (WFP retailer)*. By GA on 1 July 2019. Mogadishu.

Key informant 59 (2019). *Interview with old businessman and politician*. By GA on 24 June 2019. Baidoa.

Key informant 60 (2019). *Interview with money-transfer agent (Dahabshiiil)*. By GA on 23 June 2019. Baidoa.

Key informant 61 (2019). *Interview with government official (Ministry of Planning)*. By GA on 23 June 2019. Baidoa.

Key informant 62 (2019). *Interview with government official (district commissioner)*. By GA on 23 June 2019. Baidoa.

Key informant 63 (2019). *Interview with government official (governor)*. By GA on 26 June 2019. Baidoa.

Key informant 65 (2019). *Interview with IDP representative (gatekeeper?)*. By GA on 22 June 2019. Baidoa.

Key informant 66 (2019). *Interview with IDP representative (woman camp leader)*. By GA on 23 June 2019. Baidoa.

Key informant 67 (2019). *Interview with IDP head of household (woman)*. By GA on 29 June 2019. Mogadishu.

key informant 68 (2019). *Interview with IDP head of household (woman)*. By GA on 29 June 2019. Mogadishu.

Key informant 69 (2019). *Interview with IDP representative (woman)*. By GA on 29 June 2019. Mogadishu.

Key informant 71 (2019). *Interview with IDP head of household (man)*. By GA on 2 July 2019. Mogadishu.

Key informant 72 (2019). *Interview with IDP head of household (man)*. By GA on 2 July 2019. Mogadishu.

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Residents from Gobweyn village in the
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food stuffs and medicine, which they
collected from AMISOM, on April 12,
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