



DIASPORA HUMANITARIANISM: TRANSNATIONAL WAYS OF WORKING



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Cover photos

- 1: Preparation of hot meals for vulnerable communities during the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone © Lunchboxgift project – LTHT
- 2: Construction of a water tank in Somalia © Ogaden Concern Association Denmark
- 3: Medical help in Syria © Hand in Hand for Syria



Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Acronyms | 4 |
| Executive Summary | 5 |
| Introduction | 9 |
| Objectives | 9 |
| Report Structure | 10 |
| Definitions | 10 |
| Methods | 11 |
| Limitations of the Study | 12 |
| Humanitarian Contexts of Three Crisis-Affected Case Study Countries | 13 |
| Sierra Leone | 13 |
| Somalia | 14 |
| Syria | 15 |
| Part I: Diasporas and Humanitarian Relief | 16 |
| Diaspora Humanitarianism in Scholarship and Policy | 16 |
| Humanitarianism and Development: Two Sides of the Same Coin? | 19 |
| Diasporas as Humanitarian Aid and Advocacy Agents | 20 |
| Differences between Diasporas and Conventional Humanitarian Actors | 22 |
| Part II: Diaspora Modes of Humanitarian Response | 25 |
| Sierra Leoneans, Somalis and Syrians as Humanitarian Aid Providers | 25 |
| Challenges to Diaspora Humanitarian Intervention | 28 |
| Part III: Diaspora Humanitarian Principles and Motivations | 31 |
| Diaspora Motivations for Humanitarian Relief | 31 |
| Diasporas as Advocacy Agents | 35 |
| Diasporas and the Core Humanitarian Principles | 36 |
| Part IV: Diaspora Humanitarian Cooperation and Collaboration | 37 |
| Cooperation and Collaboration with State Actors in Homeland and Host Countries | 37 |
| Cooperation and Coordination with Conventional Humanitarian Actors | 39 |
| Simultaneous Engagement with Conventional and Non-Conventional Humanitarian Actors | 40 |
| Part V: Perceptions | 42 |
| How Diasporas and Conventional Humanitarian Actors Perceive One Another | 42 |
| Local Actor Perceptions of Diasporas and Conventional Humanitarian Actors | 42 |
| Mistrust and Misinformation Fuel Perceptions | 43 |
| Part VI: Recommendations | 44 |
| Funding and money transfer facilitation | 44 |
| Capacity building | 45 |
| Coordination | 45 |
| Annex | 46 |
| References | 49 |
| Notes | 54 |

Acronyms

| | |
|------------|---|
| ACAPS | Assessment Capacities Project |
| AFFORD | African Foundation for Development |
| ALNAP | Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance |
| AMISOM | African Union Mission in Somalia |
| DANIDA | Danish International Development Agency |
| DEMAC | Diaspora Emergency Action and Coordination |
| DFID | Department for International Development |
| DIIS | Danish Institute for International Studies |
| DRC | Danish Refugee Council |
| DSV | German–Syrian Association for the Promotion of Freedom and Human Rights |
| ECHO | European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department |
| EVD | Ebola Virus Disease |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organisation |
| GIZ | German Society for International Cooperation |
| HLG | Humanitarian Liaison Group |
| HRP | Humanitarian Response Plan |
| ICRC | International Committee of the Red Cross |
| IDPs | Internally Displaced Persons |
| IFRC | International Federation of the Red Cross |
| INGOs | International Non-governmental Organisations |
| IOM | International Organisation for Migration |
| IRC | International Rescue Committee |
| MSF | Médecins Sans Frontières |
| NAPPC | National Association for Peace and Positive Change |
| NERC | National Ebola Response Centre |
| NGO | Nongovernmental organisation |
| OFROSOM | Organisation for the Rehabilitation of Somalia |
| OCADK | Ogaden Concern Association Denmark |
| QUEST-MIDA | Qualified Expatriate Somali Technical Support – Migration for Development in Africa (IOM Program) |
| RRPs | Regional Refugee Response Plans |
| SARC | Syrian Arab Red Crescent |
| SHARPs | Syrian Humanitarian Assistance Response Plans |
| SLUKDERT | Sierra Leone UK Diaspora Ebola Response Task Force |
| SLWT | Sierra Leone War Trust |
| SNA | Syrian NGO Alliance |
| SRN | Syrian Relief Network |
| SMEs | Small and Medium Enterprises |
| TASCO | Taakulo Somaliland Community |
| TOKTEN | Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals (UNDP Program) |
| TOSHPA | Association of Sierra Leonean Healthcare Professionals Abroad |
| TRQN | Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals (IOM Program) |
| SSPDO | Southern Somalia Peace and Development Organisation |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNICEF | United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund |
| UNOCHA | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |
| UOSSM | Union of Medical and Relief Organisations |
| WASH | Water, Sanitation and Hygiene |
| WFP | World Food Programme |
| WHO | World Health Organisation |
| WHS | World Humanitarian Summit |

Executive Summary

Humanitarian action is implemented today by an extensive variability of actors with different norms and principles who converge and diverge on what it means to serve humanity and how to implement aid in practice. Hitherto, formalized relief efforts of diaspora organisations and more informal practices of diaspora communities and networks has remained outside the focus of academic scholarship as well as humanitarian policy makers and run in parallel to the international humanitarian system. Against the background of numerous protracted humanitarian crises, there is a current growing interest by key stakeholders of the humanitarian system in relief efforts of diaspora communities in the northern hemisphere, based on an increasing recognition of their enhanced access, cultural and language skills, local knowledge, trust and networks with affected communities in volatile and insecure environments. This acknowledgement opens up potential spaces for engagement, cross-fertilization and better coordination between diaspora and 'conventional' relief and aid providers in an extended humanitarian system.

The overwhelming majority of diaspora contributions are made on an individual basis, through remittances and other contributions. This DEMAC research report outlines the basic features of formalized collective interventions by Sierra Leonean, Somali and Syrian diaspora-based relief organisations and initiatives based in the UK, Denmark and Germany, respectively, by elucidating their responses to the humanitarian crises in their countries of origin/heritage and neighbouring countries. As a baseline study which serves to inform DEMAC's upcoming project activities, it hereby identifies the instruments and explains the ways through which diaspora humanitarians currently operate to provide relief to affected people in need. Informative yet largely explorative in nature, the report elicits potential areas of increased and more effective cooperation and coordination between 'conventional' and diaspora humanitarian actors.

Motivations for Humanitarian Engagement

The driving motivations for diaspora humanitarian engagement are manifold and rarely limited to a single partial, at times political motivation. Contrary to common assumptions, the distribution of diaspora-based humanitarian aid is not only linked to kinship ties. Diaspora emergency assistance in fact often transcends familial ties and personal bonds. Protracted crises galvanize diasporas to provide emergency relief to vulnerable populations regardless of their tribal, family, local or other affiliations. The potentially most 'vulnerable' are targeted as beneficiaries, regardless of clan, religion, region of origin, ethnicity, gender, age, etc.

Motivations also differ between different diasporas and the related contexts in the country of origin. The Somali diaspora in Denmark, for example, feels most compelled to engage in humanitarian action due to familial ties, whereas Sierra Leoneans' in the UK and Syrians in Germany primarily feel committed to their country of origin/heritage and its neighbouring countries. Other motivations of diaspora humanitarian action includes a sense of duty, the commitment to a region, hometown, clan, religious sect, or national group and the plan to return to the country of origin/heritage among Sierra-Leonean, Syrian and Somali diaspora.

Diaspora Modes of Humanitarian Response

Although the three humanitarian contexts under consideration are unique, the Sierra Leonean, Somali and Syrian diaspora organisations' countries demonstrate similarities in their response modes and mechanisms. All three diasporas target local civil society organisations and family members in their intervention efforts, focus on education, medical support and nutrition & food security, send relief supplies as well as cash payments, and engage in fundraising and advocacy. They also share common ordeals. As a case in point, financial resource allocation is considered the single most important challenge in advancing the humanitarian goals of diaspora organisations. The DEMAC report's data set may serve as basis for devising a 'typology of diaspora humanitarian response' and a subsequent analysis of how to best facilitate and engage with the different responses.

Monetary Transfers, In-Kind Support and Technical Assistance

Beyond remittances sent in their private capacity, diaspora organisations regularly transfer money to households, communities, hometowns, and regions in their countries of origin during extreme emergency situations, thereby facilitating access to essential goods and services. The Syrian diaspora, for example, provided significant financial support to stave off threats to livelihoods in the early stages of the current crisis. Additional cash payments for daily subsistence, healthcare, nutrition & food security, WASH, education and skills development in the on-going or latest humanitarian crises are sent by all three diasporas under consideration.

Diaspora organisations, initiatives and networks send material support and relief supplies to the affected communities in their countries of origin by air, ground and water. Sent items include clothing, food items, medical supplies and equipment, non-food items as well as educational and learning resources. However, this line of intervention is considered by more experienced diaspora organisations as problematic due to the excessive transportation costs, lack of coordination with conventional actors, and at times complicated customs procedures. The actual volume of in-kind, material relief support by diasporas is impossible to trace as it is largely conducted in an informal manner - but is significant: when interviewed, most Syrian, Sierra Leonean and Somali diaspora organisations under review stated to have sent relief supplies to their countries of origin and neighbouring countries up to at least five times within the last 24 months.

Diaspora organisations also provide technical assistance to both under-resourced and under-capacitated local organisations as well as international NGOs. Perceiving themselves as 'bridges' and 'links' between INGOs and conflict-affected populations, they can provide assistance to conventional humanitarian actors in need of contextual expertise and knowledge during emergency crises. Diaspora organisations are more often reaching out often to conventional relief organisations and donors than the other way around.

Diasporas as Advocacy Agents

All three diaspora communities under review engage in lobbying and campaigning in the countries of residence, aiming to raise public awareness to alleviate the humanitarian suffering in their countries of origin/heritage. They particularly make use of new technology and social media as advocacy and mobilizing tools, as well as instruments to measure the impact of their relief activities in the field. Yet the results of their efforts must be considered as rather mixed, mainly due to limited financial resources and impediments from counter-terrorism legislation, at least for Syrian and Somali diaspora. All diaspora organisations clearly stressed the need for additional resources and training in advocacy and fundraising.

Humanitarianism and Development: Two Sides of the Same Coin?

Transnational diaspora humanitarianism resists the compartmentalization into neatly packaged forms of support to crisis-affected populations. Rather, diaspora humanitarianism sits on a continuum, ranging from early crisis response to 'post-crisis' stabilisation. Diaspora organisations can be considered as multi-mandate organisations that couple relief and recovery with political, economic and social reform, linking relief, rehabilitation and development and thereby challenging the typical notions associated with humanitarian aid. In addition to providing emergency assistance in the eleven sectors of the humanitarian cluster system, diasporas from Sierra Leone, Somalia and Syria also engage in long-term strengthening of livelihoods, including economic development, infrastructure rehabilitation, peace, security and reconciliation, and public service, institution and capacity building.

Diasporas and Core Humanitarian Principles

Somali, Sierra Leonean and Syrian diaspora relief providers strongly affirm their familiarity with the core humanitarian principles, yet struggle to designate the principles' impact on their own relief intervention. Most diaspora organisations emphasize the importance of the principles of neutrality and impartiality and acknowledge challenges in complying with them, especially when operating in conflict-related, highly volatile and insecure contexts such as Syria and Somalia. However, interviewees have also rendered into question the neutrality of conventional, 'western dominated' relief providers in said contexts. In addition, beyond those core principles, additional principles emerging out of Islamic values and equity of aid distribution are stressed as important for diaspora relief activities and efforts. Just as (remittance) cash payments have been pioneered by diasporas and are now widely accepted in humanitarianism, diasporas present new opportunities to review and expand humanitarianism by pushing boundaries and challenging normative assumptions that have otherwise operated in isolation of such new actors.

Diaspora-'Conventional' Cooperation and Collaboration

The diaspora humanitarians' strategic engagement with political authorities in their country of residence, as well as country of origin/heritage, differs to some considerable extent. The Sierra Leonean diaspora in the UK has engaged/coordinated with the Sierra Leonean government to a wider degree than their counterparts from Somalia and Syria for obvious political reasons. During the Ebola crisis, Sierra Leonean diaspora organisations engaged in advocacy and successfully lobbied the UK government to assist in emergency relief and in petitioning the World Health Organisation to involve diaspora organisations in their public health interventions. The Syrian and Somali conflicts, on the other hand, aggravated the efforts of the two diaspora communities to successfully liaise with and influence the German and the Danish Governments, respectively, to integrate diaspora organisations in their humanitarian responses to both countries. High eligibility criteria for receiving public funding but also fragmentation, disunity and a subsequent lack of clarity of whom to support might have been the reason.

Beyond the political/governmental level, diaspora and 'conventional' humanitarian actors successfully engaged in many different cooperation and coordination arrangements. Somali, Sierra Leonean and Syrian diaspora organisations managed to liaise and collaborate with humanitarian and non-humanitarian international NGOs and UN agencies. Syrian diaspora organisations, in particular, have successfully acquired international project funding. Organisations as the Union for Medical Care and Relief Organisations (UOSSM) and Hand in Hand for Syria that were established by Syrian diaspora successfully linked organisational branches outside the country with local organisational structures. These organisations are leading the humanitarian response in many areas of Syria today and are able to access hard to reach areas throughout the country. The limited access in areas outside government control contributed to an increase of cooperation between international NGOs, Syrian diaspora and local organisations. These strategic partnerships are mutually beneficial, allowing for reciprocal learning and information sharing mechanisms, but often are also challenging due to the transfer of risk in this highly insecure environment. Coordination should focus on how conventional humanitarian mechanisms can support diaspora humanitarians as well as benefit from their comparative advantage rather than attempting to place the round holes of diaspora interventions into the square pegs of conventional humanitarian efforts.

How Diasporas and Conventional Humanitarian Actors Perceive One Another

Mutual perceptions between diaspora and conventional humanitarian actors are often based on assumptions, mistrust and stereotypes rather than factual knowledge of one another. This hinders genuine cooperation and collaboration. Diasporas assert that conventional international actors are sometimes politically driven, do not possess sufficient cultural competences and contextual knowledge to accurately assess local needs and situations, and only insufficiently coordinate with local authorities. They also accuse the conventional system of excessive use of funds for administrative purposes and high expatriate salaries, thereby diverting substantial sums away from the intended beneficiaries. On the other hand, conventional actors purport that diaspora humanitarianism lacks neutrality and impartiality and is also driven by political motives and agendas rather than humanitarian needs assessments. Conventional actors argue that diaspora initiatives target selected few instead of the many, particularly in humanitarian crises amidst political/military conflicts. Also, remittance funding streams are considered not sufficiently put to use for the common wealth but are seen as contributing to increased fault lines of income disparities. Taking into consideration the recipient point of view, interviews with local partner organisations conducted for this study have shown that they in fact do perceive both diaspora and conventional actors alike as insufficiently equipped with knowledge about real needs of affected communities, often perpetuated by insufficient coordination with local actors.

Challenges to Diaspora Humanitarian Intervention

Beyond the unanimously acknowledged constraint of insufficient funding for scalable, effective and sustainable collective humanitarian interventions by diasporas, there are issues around transparency, accountability, coherence, coordination and clear reporting channels. Also, research findings reveal examples of a disconnect between the needs of affected communities and diaspora's advocacy and relief responses, exposing an apparent disconnect between local, community- and diaspora-led humanitarian interventions. Diaspora relief, if not sufficiently resourced and coordinated, can also be too ad-hoc, sporadic and fractured to be sustainable.

The fragmented nature and lack of unity among diaspora organisations reinforces the widespread perception of competition and distrust and limits their leverage in shaping policy and aid practices. It also aggravates community mobilization and effective leadership, adding to the difficulties with bureaucratic funding requirements and relative lack of second and third generation engagement with relief activities and diminishing effectiveness. Voluntary action over extended period of time is difficult to sustain in view of funding fatigue due to persistence of crises. Some diasporas identified complicated grant application procedures, sizeable overhead costs in aid and bureaucratic multilateral agency procedures as major deterrents to supporting diaspora-led efforts.

An agenda for enhancing diaspora effectiveness and improving coordination with the conventional actors would need to build on mitigating the challenges identified above, whilst at the same time, harnessing the positive contributions of diaspora humanitarian actors.

Introduction

This research report is part of the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO)-funded project entitled 'Diaspora Emergency Action and Coordination' (DEMAC), led by three partner organisations, namely, the African Foundation for Development (AFFORD), the Berghof Foundation, and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). The research component of the project explores the modalities of humanitarian intervention by diasporas from Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Syria and their areas of collaboration/coordination with conventional humanitarian actors.

Objectives

This report outlines the basic features of formalised interventions by Sierra Leonean, Somali and Syrian diaspora organisations based in the UK, Denmark and Germany, respectively, by comparing their responses to three different sets of humanitarian crises. As a baseline study, it identifies the ways in which diaspora humanitarian organisations currently operate and how they might cooperate with conventional humanitarian actors in future relief interventions. It also adopts 'institutional multiplicity' as an overarching conceptual framework for humanitarianism, in which "a wide array of actors with different norms and principles" converge and diverge on "what it means to serve humanity and how to implement humanity in practice" (Sezgin, O'Neill and Dijkzeul: 2016, 339). It is argued that clearly identifying variability in humanitarian action amongst local, transnational and international actors will enable opportunities for better coordination and collaboration.

The central research question that governs this study is:

To what extent have Sierra Leonean, Somali and Syrian diaspora organisations based in the UK/Denmark/Germany been involved in humanitarian interventions in Sierra Leone/Somalia/Syria and/or neighbouring countries?

Photo: Construction of a water tank in Somalia © Ogaden Concern Association Denmark



Report Structure

The report has nine constituent parts, beginning with an executive summary that captures the key findings of the research as well as lists recommendations for future engagement. The introduction briefly describes the DEMAC project; research study, questions and limitations; the rationale for selecting the case studies; as well as the methodologies employed. It ends with an exploration of the three case studies' humanitarian contexts. **Part I** reviews the academic and policy literature on diasporas as humanitarian actors and explains how the DEMAC study fills major gaps in these two strands of literature. This section also highlights assumed challenges for engagement with diaspora communities and includes brief discussions of the transnational humanitarian interventions of Sierra Leonean, Somali and Syrian diaspora organisations based in the UK, Denmark, and Germany, respectively, where field-based interviews were conducted.

Part II considers concrete examples of humanitarian modes and mechanisms employed by the three diaspora groups and their strengths, weaknesses and impediments. **Part III** illustrates the humanitarian principles and motivations of Sierra Leoneans, Somalis and Syrians consulted for this study thereby analysing whether or not and how the core humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence influence their work. **Part IV** provides concrete examples of how diaspora humanitarian organisations have collaborated and/or coordinated with local, state and traditional humanitarian actors as well as the opportunities and challenges these interfaces present.

In **Part V**, diaspora self-perceptions and perceptions of other actors are juxtaposed with how diasporas are perceived by local, state, and conventional actors and what these views mean for humanitarian coordination. **Part VI** lists and analyses recommendations that encompass views of diaspora organisations, conventional actors and local partners and integrate foreseen challenges. It also outlines potential for future engagement between diaspora and conventional actors.

Definitions

Although there is no widely accepted classification of 'humanitarian action', the Good Humanitarian Donorship definition is employed in this research report where humanitarianism is generally considered to be "aid and action designed to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain and protect human dignity during and in the aftermath of man-made crises and natural disasters, as well as prevent and strengthen preparedness of such situations" (2013: np).

Humanitarian action involves both assistance and physical protection, and it is governed by the aspirational four core humanitarian principles developed by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in 1986 and subsequently adopted by conventional actors namely: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence (United Nations General Assembly: 1991).

Throughout the report diasporas are defined as dispersed collectivities residing outside their country of origin who "maintain regular or occasional contacts with what they regard as their homeland and with individuals and groups of the same background residing in other host countries" (Sheffer: 2003, 9-10). Furthermore, diasporas are a hybrid mix of both identity expression and political practice, hence there is a need to pluralise 'diaspora' (Safran: 1991; Sheffer: 2003; Brubaker: 2005; Pailey: 2014). 'Near' and 'far' diasporas are distinguished herein, where 'near' diasporas characterise migrants residing within the geographic regions of their countries of origin and 'far' diasporas signify migrants residing further afield (Van Hear: 2009).

The three 'far diaspora' sites for this study were selected based on their respective type of crisis, representing protracted and current man-made crises as well as natural disaster, and based on the DEMAC partner organisations' long-standing engagements with Sierra Leonean diaspora organisations in the UK (AFFORD), Somali diaspora organisations in Denmark (DRC) and Syrian diaspora organisations in Germany (Berghof Foundation). Although estimates of Sierra Leoneans abroad remain inconclusive, according to the UK Office for National Statistics, approximately 24,000 Sierra Leoneans by birth lived in England and Wales in 2014 (UK Office for National Statistics: 2014). Estimates of

Somalis abroad range from 1 to 1.5 million worldwide, with the largest concentrations in the UK, US, Canada, and Kenya (Hammond et al.: 2011). According to official statistics, approximately 20,000 Somalis resided in Denmark in 2014 (Danstrøm, Kleist and Sørensen: 2015). Although the population of Syrians abroad has swelled in the past four years, an estimated 1.6 million Syrians lived outside their country of origin/heritage as of 2013, with the largest concentrations in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey largely due to the conflict beginning in 2011 (MPC: 2013). According to governmental statistics, approximately 32,878 Syrians were registered in Germany in 2011 (German Federal Statistical Office: 2012); these were joined by 412,157 fellow Syrians which arrived from 2012 until end of February 2016 as refugees in Germany.ii (Federal office of Administration, Germany² 2016).

The term “transnational” throughout this research report refers to activities by diasporas, humanitarian and otherwise, that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement. Diaspora organisations are hereby understood as part of social networks that engage in humanitarian relief activities across national boundaries without states’ mediation (Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton: 1992). The spectre of types of formalized diaspora organisations in terms of mandates, objectives, organisational structures, membership and degree of professionalism is wide, comprising transnational unions associating numerous organisations from several countries, professional associations, ethnic/clan associations, hometown, small family-based initiatives run by a few volunteers and more informal networks. The Somali, Sierra Leonean and Somali organisations examined in this research encompass formally registered associations of organisations, diaspora-established organisations with local branches inside the countries of intervention, organisations implementing activities from Denmark, UK or Germany as well as less formalized networks and initiatives supporting local partners. Conventional or traditional humanitarian actors generically refer to UN aid agencies such as the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) or the World Food Programme (WFP); inter-agency networks; the International Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement; well-established international non-governmental humanitarian relief organisations such as Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Care, World Vision International

or Save the Children; and OECD-DAC member states and their donor agencies that allocate, coordinate and implement relief assistance through the framework of the international humanitarian aid structure.

Methods

A mixed methods approach was adopted for this report to ensure proper triangulation of sources, including micro- and macro-level forms of evaluation: desk-based literature review, 92 cross-referencing surveys, 73 mapping exercises of diaspora organisations, local organisations and conventional actors, and 108 semi-structured interviews with diaspora organisations, local organisations, conventional actors, and government representatives (rf. to the Annex for detailed table). The desk-based literature review explores how academic scholarship and policy writing have assessed the modalities of humanitarian emergency interventions by diasporas more generally and how diaspora engagement proved to have contributed significantly to humanitarian operations, parallel to or coordinated with conventional actors.

A total of 92 anonymous, cross-referencing surveys identified major diaspora humanitarian actors primarily from the three crisis-affected countries under consideration, capturing their motivations for emergency response interventions, principles of engagement, influencing factors, and self-perceptions. Survey respondents were mostly male members of at least one diaspora network/organisation who engaged in humanitarian relief as individuals and as part of diaspora networks. Survey questions were uploaded on a web platform and shared with key diaspora organisations and individuals identified by the project team in each of the three ‘far diaspora’ countries.

Composite Profile of Diaspora Survey Respondents

| Sierra Leone | Somalia | Syria |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 19 surveyed | 7 surveyed | 66 surveyed |
| 26-55 years old | 26-35 years old | 26-55 years old |
| 20 years or more outside Sierra Leone | 20 years or more outside Somalia | Up to 20 years or more outside Syria |
| Mostly first generation | Mostly second generation | Mostly first generation |

More narrowly focused than the surveys, 73 mapping exercises were conducted to identify and categorise various types of Sierra Leonean, Somali and Syrian diaspora organisations in the UK, Denmark and Germany, respectively, as well as their modes of engagement and areas of intervention. Similar mappings were conducted of local partners of diaspora humanitarian interventions and key conventional humanitarian actors operating in Sierra Leone, Somalia, Syria and neighbouring countries.

Composite Profile of Mapped Diaspora Organisations

| Sierra Leone (SL) | Somalia | Syria |
|---|---|--|
| Formally registered in UK/US | Formally registered in Denmark | Formally registered in Germany |
| Development or professional association | Development, professional and/or regional association | Professional, hometown, humanitarian association |
| Up to at least 15 years in existence | Up to 12 years in existence | From 3-6 years in existence |
| Up to 60 active members | Up to 60 active members | From 1-10 active members |
| Humanitarian interventions funded through fundraising events, personal savings, crowd funding | Humanitarian interventions funded through personal savings, external grants, fundraising events | Humanitarian interventions funded through fundraising events, personal savings and external grants |
| Involved in education, nutrition & food security, health, WASH and logistics primarily | Involved in health, nutrition & food security, WASH, education and emergency shelter primarily | Involved in health, education, nutrition & food security primarily |
| Target cities, towns, villages in SL | Target cities, towns, villages in Somalia & neighbouring countries | Target cities, towns, villages in Syria and neighbouring countries |
| Target specific groups and non-specific affected populations | Target specific groups, families and clans | Target specific groups, non-specific affected populations and families |

A total of 111 semi-structured interviews were conducted across the three case studies with 51 diaspora actors, 35 local partner organisations, and 20 conventional humanitarian actors. In addition, five national government representatives were interviewed in Sierra Leone given the state’s explicit engagement with diasporas.³

Profile of Diaspora Interviewees

| Sierra Leone (SL) | Somalia | Syria |
|--|--|--|
| 11 TOTAL | 22 TOTAL | 18 TOTAL |
| Average age=45 (Youngest=32/Oldest=62) | Average age=49 (Youngest=27/Oldest=70) | Average age=44 (Youngest=22/Oldest=67) |
| Mostly women (8/11) | Mostly men (15/22) | Mostly men (14/17) |
| Based in UK primarily | Based in Denmark only | Based in Germany primarily |

Limitations of the Study

This study does not claim to be representative of Sierra Leonean, Somali and Syrian diaspora populations and their emergency and relief actions. Largely exploratory, the report provides the basis for more empirical analysis of formalised diaspora humanitarian interventions in the three case studies as well as in other contexts. As a result, there are several limitations of the study. First, qualitative interviews were conducted mostly in urban settings due to time and access constraints. Due to the high security risk inside Syria, interviews with local partners of diaspora-based aid were conducted in southern Turkey and Lebanon.

Furthermore, the diaspora organisations and their local partner organisations interviewed for this study operate all areas outside of Syrian government control. For the Somalia case study, qualitative interviews were predominantly conducted in Hargeisa, representing the semi-autonomous region of Somaliland.⁴ The lack of access to Somalia and Syria prevented proper impact assessment of diaspora humanitarian aid among beneficiary communities. Future systematic examinations of diaspora humanitarianism should aim to measure the impact of diaspora-based relief action in order to understand the change brought about by their action. Increased transparency, self-auditing and proper documentation by diaspora organisations could certainly facilitate such an endeavour. Secondly, fewer conventional humanitarian actors were interviewed than anticipated, and in the case of Somalia, there were fewer than ten completed surveys. A gendered analysis of the respondent profiles suggests that diaspora organisational structures may tend to be male-dominated thus skewed against female points of view.

Humanitarian Contexts of Three Crisis-Affected Case Study Countries

Sierra Leone

When Ministry of Health and Sanitation officials in Sierra Leone detected the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in May 2014, it threatened to destabilise the country's fragile peace and wreak havoc on its double-digit economic growth rates.⁵ It was suspected that Ebola had travelled across the porous Guinea-Sierra Leone border, and, given Sierra Leone's already weak public health infrastructure, President Ernest Bai Koroma declared a state of emergency in July 2014, closing schools and markets indefinitely and deploying 750 troops in the eastern part of the country—the epicentre of the virus—to limit movement and prevent transmission (ACAPS: 2015a). During the height of the outbreak in late 2014, government instituted 'house-to-house' tracing to detect probable cases, effectively placing more than one million people under quarantine (ACAPS:2015a) while inadvertently threatening their livelihoods.

In October 2014, the National Ebola Response Centre (NERC) was established to manage the government's response, coordinating interventions with donors, international organisations, local civil society and Sierra Leoneans abroad (ACAPS:2015a). Nonetheless, limited access to healthcare led to unprecedented deaths from



Photo: Donation of waterproof jackets to the Sierra Leonean scooter drivers during the Ebola outbreak to prevent infection © Sierra Leone War Trust

non-Ebola related ailments such as malaria (Walker et al.:2015), typhoid, cholera, pregnancy, cardiac arrest and malnutrition. Transmission rates from the virus finally began to decline in January 2015, with sporadic flare-ups in February, June, and September (ACAPS: 2015a). Although Sierra Leone was declared 'Ebola-free' by the WHO on November 7, 2015, a new case was detected on January 20, 2016, sliding the country back into high surveillance (WHO:2016).

Humanitarian actors involved in Sierra Leone's Ebola response have included NERC, WHO, MSF, the Centres for Disease Control, DFID, FAO as well as diasporas, among others. (WHO: 2014; Purvis: 2014). Sierra Leoneans abroad had provided humanitarian and emergency relief to crisis-affected persons since the advent of that country's civil war in 1991, so there were already established networks, information channels, and feedback mechanisms developed when the country was struck with Ebola in 2014. Adopting a multi-media approach to raising awareness and funding for effective service delivery, Sierra Leoneans procured and shipped medical relief aid to Sierra Leone; trained healthcare professionals on the ground; disseminated public health and other life-saving messages; lobbied country of origin and country of settlement governments; sent remittances before, during and after the adoption of quarantine measures; fundraised; and partnered with international, transnational, local and national organisations such as NERC to mount a strong anti-Ebola response.



Photo: Water distribution in Somaliland during the drought in Somalia in 2016 © Rajo organisation

Somalia

Since the collapse of the central government in 1991, Somalia has experienced more than two decades of protracted humanitarian crises, including conflict instigated by competing armed factions, rival clans and militias, famine, drought, and flooding. While semi-autonomous regions like Somaliland remain relatively stable and governable, south-central Somalia has become a bastion for insurgent groups like Al-Shabaab. Recurring political instability and natural disasters pose particular challenges to livelihoods based on subsistence farming and pastoralism across the country (UNOCHA: 2014a), where acute malnutrition is high among children, under-five mortality is among the top five in the world, 2.8 million adults lack access to WASH services, and 1.1 million people remain displaced in overcrowded informal settlements (UNOCHA: 2015a). While women and girls must contend with entrenched gender-based inequalities and sexual violence, boys and young men are at risk of protection violations and forced recruitment by armed groups (UNOCHA: 2015a).

Resembling the conditions that led to Somalia's 2011 famine, which killed a quarter of million people, the humanitarian situation significantly deteriorated in 2014 after nearly two years of stabilisation, primarily due to "drought, soaring food prices, conflicts, access constraints and underfunding." (UNOCHA: 2015b, PP). The Federal Government of Somalia responded by initiating a development framework called the New Deal Pact to build state structures for service delivery beginning in 2015 (UNOCHA: 2015b). A complementary 2015 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) was developed by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) to strengthen safety nets across eight humanitarian clusters to respond to the needs of the country's most vulnerable 2.8 million people out of a total 7.5 million (UNOCHA: 2015c).⁶

A number of institutions, humanitarian and otherwise, have been operating in Somalia at varying levels, providing services in health, protection, WASH, nutrition and emergency shelter, including, but not limited to: the Federal Government of Somalia Ministries and Disaster Management Agency, local Somali NGOs, Islamic Relief, Somali Red Crescent, ECHO, ICRC, WFP, FAO, UNHCR, DRC, UN Habitat, UNICEF, Oxfam, WHO and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) (ACAPS (2015b; Almansa: 2015). Somali diasporas have also filled humanitarian needs during emergency situations by sending remittances to families in times of crisis, drought and flooding to provide emergency food and shelter; supplying hospitals with materials and personnel; fundraising for disaster relief; engaging in fishing/canal irrigation, particularly for people who have been displaced as a result of war/conflict; and engaging in WASH projects (Kleist: 2009).

Syria

The humanitarian crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic is now described as the “largest displacement crisis” in the world (UNOCHA: 2015d). Popular local protests in March 2011 to resist government repression spiralled out of control with hundreds of splinter, internationally-financed armed groups later vying to oust President Bashar al-Assad from power (UNOCHA: 2015d). The crisis has left more than a quarter million dead, over one million injured, and 1.2 million internally displaced in 2015 alone (UNOCHA: 2015e). Human rights abuses are widespread in the absence of the respect of international law and international humanitarian law, with the vast majority of civilians under siege by insecurity (UNOCHA: 2015e). Women and girls are at particular risk of sexual and gender-based violence (UNOCHA: 2015e).

It is estimated that 13.5 out of 18.2 million people in Syria are currently in dire need of humanitarian assistance, including at least 5.6 million children (UNOCHA: 2014b; UNOCHA: 2015e). Approximately 10.7 million people have been displaced internally and internationally (UNOCHA: 2015e), with 9.8 million experiencing acute food insecurity and 11.6 million lacking access to WASH services (UNOCHA: 2015e). Indiscriminate attacks on civilians, wanton destruction of essential infrastructure (including hospitals, schools, homes, electricity grids, and water plants), disruption of service delivery in health and education, and deliberate blockades on humanitarian access routes are the order of the day (UNOCHA: 2015e).

In 2012, the humanitarian system began to engage in earnest in Syria although control by the Syrian government and non-state armed actors over intervention efforts have significantly compromised relief (Slim and Trombetta: 2014). Working alongside the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), UNHCR and UNOCHA initiated the establishment of Regional Refugee Response Plans (RRPs) and Syrian Humanitarian Assistance Response Plans (SHARPs), respectively (Slim and Trombetta: 2014). The SARC and local relief organisations serve as the “backbone” of emergency assistance (ACAPS: 2013), with UN agencies and international non-governmental organisations engaged in humanitarian relief work. Other actors include opposition groups and Syrians abroad, who have provided humanitarian relief since March 2011, when the insurgency against President Assad first began. Although collective mobilisation efforts were limited,

if not almost non-existent before 2011, Syrian diaspora communities began to dispatch food aid to affected communities inside Syria and refugees in the neighbouring countries since mid-2011. Since then, they have disseminated medical supplies, equipment and drugs as well as provided cash for hospital maintenance and salaries for doctors who render care to the sick, organised aid deliveries of tent materials, clothing and fuel; and educated/provided scholarships and school materials for Syrian children and youth in emergency situations. Numerous humanitarian organisations established by Syrians in the diasporas are today at the forefront of the humanitarian response, providing medical care and relief inside hard-to-reach areas and across lines in almost every Syrian province (Svoboda and Pantuliano: 2015).



Photo: Kids for Kids project in Lebanon and Germany © The Free Association of Syrian Expats

Part I

Diasporas and Humanitarian Relief

Diaspora Humanitarianism in Scholarship and Policy

In an era of growing humanitarian needs, fostered by the multiplication of crisis that request wider and multi-dimensional assistance to an increasing number of people, humanitarianism has entered a profound phase of reform (Global Humanitarian Assistance: 2015). While current resources and structures seem no longer able to address the scale and complexity of present requests each year (World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat: 2015) and despite constantly increasing funding contributions, an ever larger proportion of life-saving humanitarian needs remain unmet (OCHA: 2015); this particularly applies to crisis-prone countries. Despite the international focus on fragile states articulated by the New Deal in 2011 (OECD: 2011), the proportion of Official Development Assistance to such countries appears to have fluctuated by only a few percentage points each year, meaning that donors' attention toward fragile and conflict-affected states has not translated into substantial increases in financing (Global Humanitarian Assistance: 2015).

The necessity to diversify the humanitarian system to meet growing and increasingly complex needs has brought a focus on the action of non-traditional humanitarian actors, and their role, not only as donors, but also as direct responders to crisis. The first-ever World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), called by UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon and scheduled to take place in Istanbul in May 2016, represents one of the most prominent examples of this increased interest. Looking for innovative solutions to redefine how the global community prepares and responds to humanitarian crisis, the Summit has placed at the heart of its consultation process an inclusiveness imperative (World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat: 2015, 2). Stressing the need to forge new partnerships and produce collective outcomes, the consultations have searched for the participation of a broader and more diverse group of humanitarian actors, among them, six DEMAC diaspora representatives engaged in emergency response, who were invited to participate to the WHS Global Consultation in Geneva on 13-16 October 2015.

Interestingly, the recognition of diasporas as humanitarian actors is only just beginning to enter humanitarian relief and policy discussions (ALNAP: 2015, UNOCHA: 2013). Rather than as relief providers, diasporas have hitherto been featuring in academic scholarship and aid community debates primarily as development agents (IOM: 2015). Programs such as the QUEST-MIDA, TRQN and TOKTEN, sponsored by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) have, for instance, tried to connect migrant professionals to the technical development of their homeland through temporary or permanent return schemes (Carling and Erdal: 2014). Similarly, remittances sent by expatriated individuals back to their countries of origin have received massive interest from scholars and policy makers (Kapur: 2003), and especially for their potential impact on the economic growth of national, regional and household structures (Rua: 2010). Platforms such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development have dedicated ample space to the study of diaspora's contributions in this sense, producing handbooks for practitioners and sponsoring global conferences to share experiences and good practices in engaging diaspora in development initiatives (GFMD: 2011; GFMD: 2013).

The focus so far on diasporas' links with development operations should not mean that their participation to humanitarian relief is a new phenomenon. There are multiple reasons behind the late acknowledgment of their emergency and post-crisis role, including the scepticism and parochialism of conventional actors, the poor connection of the diaspora to the humanitarian community (IOM: 2015), as well as in the difficulty to calculate diasporas' resource mobilisation, whose value - in terms of financial assistance, services and in-kind support - is not accounted for in humanitarian funding reports (Global Humanitarian Assistance: 2015, 42). For such reasons, some scholars have pointed out that diasporas could have been connected to the delivery of emergency relief long before their interventions were considered humanitarian in orientation. For instance, research suggests that beyond their support to development processes, remittances have significantly impacted conflict and post-conflict contexts (Fagen and Bump: 2006), and tended to increase during and after humanitarian crisis (Savage and Harvey: 2007; Mohopatra et al.: 2012). Recently, remittances have been acknowledged to account for the largest financial flows to long-term, fragile states (Global Humanitarian Assistance: 2015, 107), and therefore to play a fundamental role in enabling survival in acute disaster and in conditions of protracted instability. Aside from remittances, literature shows that members of diaspora have hitherto been contributing to the humanitarian relief of their homelands in a number of ways; either through individual or collective action,

contributions have tried to tackle humanitarian needs in such contexts both indirectly, urging governmental and nongovernmental actors to undertake activities (Østergaard-Nielsen: 2003), or directly, through the sending of money, experts, goods or the implementation of projects in the country of origin (Horst et al.: 2010). Research in this field shows that diaspora's community projects and humanitarian relief are typically organised by associations, focusing on a specific hometown, country or region (Kleist: 2015). As primarily operating outside mainstream aid intervention efforts, a review of diaspora humanitarian organisations is difficult to produce. Case studies from specific contexts point to the existence of a wide variety of structures, which can range from small, voluntary-based associations, to larger and more structured organisations (King and Grullon: 2013, Frankenhaeuser and Noack: 2015). While some might have been born right after crisis outset in the country of origin, with the primary aim to provide humanitarian support - as the Libyan Diaspora Civil Society Organisations or the Sierra Leonean diaspora's interventions following the Ebola crisis (Sadeghi: 2011; Purvis: 2014)- others might have originated from professional bodies, charities or other communities pre-existent to crisis outbreak. The latter ones shifted their action to emergency relief, as in the case of the Syrian British Medical Society that provided medical training and relief in war-torn Syria (Svoboda and Pantuliano: 2015, 9).

Photo: Children in Syria © Hand in Hand for Syria



The international humanitarian community has only recently started to seriously explore the humanitarian initiatives undertaken by diaspora, despite a markedly increased interest in finding collaboration opportunities. Research shows that these have been generally limited in their extent, focusing on small-scale financial support or short-term, capacity building events to support diaspora organisations' technical development (Horst et al.: 2010). Some scholars have pointed out that the missing link to a more pragmatic inclusion of diaspora in humanitarian operations could be the scepticism of traditional humanitarians, who often consider diaspora organisations not relevant for their agency's mandate (Sezgin and Dijkzeul: 2016, 221) or lack the professionalism of traditional aid agencies (Kleist: 2014). While not all projects supported through diaspora associations appear to work equally, or equally well (Østergaard-Nielsen: 2006), there are several documented cases where diaspora

engagements proved to contribute significantly to humanitarian operations. A MSF doctor working in Syria expressed: "We must recognise that Syrian diaspora groups, like the Union of Syrian Doctors (UOSSM), have certainly contributed much more to increasing access to medical services than all of the MSF sections combined" (Weissman: 2013, n.p.).

With the increased interest in working with diaspora, it appears fundamental to reflect on the "added value" of such partnerships, and to explore concrete opportunities for better facilitation and synergy with conventional humanitarian programs.

Photo: UK and USA Sierra Leonean diaspora cooperation to airlift US\$85,000 medical supplies for emergency Ebola response effort © Sierra Leone UK Diaspora Ebola Response Taskforce



Humanitarianism and Development: Two Sides of the Same Coin?

The Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA) report 2015 shows that two-third of international humanitarian assistance is directed to long-term recipients, where crises are protracted or disasters recur year after year. In these figures, poverty and vulnerability to crisis are intrinsically linked and linger on the lack of structural solutions to crisis. One of the recent directions taken by the humanitarian community in this sense has been a redefined focus on the root causes behind recurrent crises, referring to the common humanitarian-development agenda as “Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development” (LRRD). This concept originated in the 1980s when both academics and practitioners voiced concern about the so-called “grey zone” between humanitarian assistance and development cooperation programs (Nielson: 2002). To respond to the financial and operational gap between relief and development operations, resilience, resilient livelihoods, sustainability and stabilisation have started featuring humanitarian programs, in an attempt to address the underlying fragilities of protracted emergencies (Ramet: 2012).

Diaspora organisations engaged in aid and relief generally tend towards a greater inclusion of humanitarianism and development, similar to multi-mandate organisations that couple relief with political, economic and social reform. In their work, humanitarianism is not compartmentalised and separated from other forms of support to local populations; rather, it sits on a continuum, mingling pre-crisis aid, crisis response and ‘post-crisis’ stabilisation, by, for instance, providing sustained technical and financial support to healthcare projects and the restoration of public services (Horst et al.: 2010; IOM: 2015). In addition to providing short-term emergency assistance, the three diasporas studied in this report all engage in long-term systems building and livelihoods strengthening. These often include a wide range of development projects, such as social entrepreneurship, infrastructure rehabilitation, educational projects, reconciliation projects, capacity building and advocacy.

Scholars have suggested that diaspora tend to have a more sustainable interest in the development of their country because of a personal and emotional commitment towards the homeland (Sinatti et al.: 2010), caused by a direct experience of conflict and underdevelopment, or by seeing the impact of

these factors on loved ones (Brinkerhoff: 2006). This unmatched level of dedication could translate into sustained engagement during a crisis and in efforts to couple humanitarian responses with broader political transitions and development processes (Horst et al.: 2010, 12). Additionally, while for conventional actors the continuation of projects is subject to availability of funding, diaspora projects may be continued after external funding runs out, as supported by diaspora’s private contributions (Vertovec: 2002). In this regard, it has been suggested that remittances already play an important role in “the reconstruction and development of societies recovering from the distress of war or economic collapse.” (Sørensen, van Hear and Engberg-Pedersen: 2002).

Another critical aspect that characterises the increased sustainability of diaspora’s interventions is transference of skills and know-how to locals (Aikins and Russell: 2013) which benefit recipients and the homeland in the long-term. This seems to be facilitated by the diasporas’ advantage with regard to cultural and language competencies (IOM: 2015), but also by their already existing networks within the country of origin, which may include local and regional authorities, civil society actors and beneficiaries of projects (Horst et al.: 2010). Ties with people and communities in the areas of implementation could represent valuable assets for implemented projects and their sustainability, and stimulate further collaboration opportunities, such as peace building, investments and trade initiatives, that can positively impact the post-conflict phase (Mohamoud: 2005).

Nevertheless, diasporas’ success on both humanitarian and development grounds is far from being guaranteed. Critics have argued that diaspora organisation could be highly unstable, due to the typical voluntary affiliation of their associations, the non-static nature of their members and the uncertain commitment of future generations (Horst et al.: 2010, 13). Also, concerns have been raised on the fact that diaspora might conduct non-professional relief operations, disconnected from communities on the ground and inherently ad-hoc, sporadic and fractured in nature (Horst et al.: 2016). While the impact of diaspora in aid interventions is context-specific (Smith and Stares (eds): 2007) and escapes easy generalisations, these points have to be taken into account in analysing the sustainability of diaspora’s operations in humanitarian and development aid.

Diasporas as Humanitarian Aid and Advocacy Agents

In the last ten years, diaspora communities from Somalia, Syria, Libya, Haiti, and Pakistan - just to quote some - have been significant sources of donations, volunteers and information for humanitarian emergencies in their countries of origin (Migration Information Source: 2010; Hammond. et al.: 2012; Añonuevo and Añonuevo: 2008). While it has been widely assumed that diasporas send relief based on kinship ties, empirical evidence indicates that formalised emergency assistance of diaspora organisations transcends these networks. For instance, whereas Somali transnational humanitarian relief in the 1990s was based largely on personal bonds, the protracted nature of the crisis in Somalia has galvanised diasporas to provide emergency relief to vulnerable populations regardless of clan and other affiliations (Horst et al (2016). Similarly, after the onset of the crisis in Syria, diaspora associations have filled the gaps left by the limited international presence, providing assistance to population in distress and playing a vital role in responding to needs that would otherwise only be met inadequately or not at all (Svoboda and Pantuliano: 2015).

In their individual and collective capacities, diasporas have been documented to send direct cash transfers to households, communities, hometowns, countries of origin, and regions of interest during extreme emergency situations, thereby facilitating access to essential goods and services (Danstrøm, Kleist and Sørensen :2015). For instance, Syrians abroad have provided significant financial support to stave off extreme poverty and threats to livelihoods in the midst of economic decline and widespread insecurity (Slim and Trombetta: 2014). According to World Bank estimates, remittances to Syria increased from US\$750 million in 2007 to over US\$2 billion in 2012 (Slim and Trombetta: 2014). Similarly, though the global financial crisis was expected to have a huge effect on remittance sending, research on sub-Saharan African countries shows that this has only marginally affected remittances from diasporas of those states (Ratha, Mohapatra and Silwal: 2010). Among them, the Somali diaspora is estimated to direct up to 2 USD billion per year in remittances to Somalia, 10% of which (ca. 200 million) go directly for humanitarian relief (King and Grullon: 2013). In other crisis-affected areas such as Darfur, Pakistan and Indonesia (Savage and Harvey:

2007), remittances sent by diaspora have been found to play an important role in enabling people to survive during disaster and recover from them, representing the only source of income in places where access to livelihood opportunities and basic public services have been destroyed.

Diaspora's assistance can be channelled through a number of ways such as the use of websites, SMS and on-line donation platforms (IOM: 2015). Lately, crowd funding platforms have been set up specifically to capture diaspora financial assistance to home countries, to support development projects or collect money after a disaster (AlliedCrowds: 2015). Beside money transfers, diasporas have been able to mobilise in-kind materials needed after the onset of a crisis, and channel them to the country in need. In the aftermath of the fall of Gaddafi's regime, Libyan diaspora associations such as the "World Medical Camp for Libya" (WMCL), were able to send a convoy of medical supplies by road, via Egypt, that successfully delivered aid directly to hospitals in Benghazi and other towns in Eastern Libya (El-Huni: 2011; Adetunji and Gabbatt: 2011). To support the crisis-response in Ebola-torn regions in their country of origin, Sierra Leoneans living in London managed to send a large volume of medical provisions to their homeland, raising £45,000 to cover the shipping costs (Gosier and Mansaray: 2015).

Service provision is not the only important role played by diaspora organisations in crisis-affected countries. The transfer of skills and know-how from diaspora members is important in areas where much of the educated population has left (Cheran: 2003), and the temporary or permanent return of skilled diaspora during the post-crisis period can critically support the recovery of various sectors, such as health facilities or disaster management agencies. Through the Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals Program of IOM Netherlands, for instance, Dr. Zhifn Sarraj was able provide health-care services to the displaced population in the Iraq's Kurdistan region, as well as train local health workers and support western doctors in how to interact with refugees and Middle Eastern patients (IOM: 2016a). Similarly, through the Migration for Development in Africa Program of IOM Somalia, 225 individuals from the Somali diaspora in Europe were sent to aid vital Somali institutions crippled by the decade-long crisis of the country (IOM: 2016b).

Diasporas also tend to respond swifter at the onset of humanitarian crises, often arriving before reinforcements from national and international actors during unexpected emergency situations such as Ebola. For example, while Sierra Leonean diasporas provided direct, unrestricted assistance in cash, material resources (food, drugs and medical supplies, and clothes), lobbying for immediate public health interventions and technical assistance,^{vii} international actors were very sluggish in their initial response partly due to slow dispersals of funding from donors and bureaucratic 'command and control' procedures within multilateral organisations (Grépin: 2015).

Finally, diasporas can be essential lobbyists and campaigners during emergency situations in their countries of origin. From one side, through social media and international media campaigning, diasporas manage to collect and share information on crises, and mobilise community efforts (Georgiou: 2005). Furthermore, diaspora groups can develop partnerships with other human rights organisations, media, and academics in the country of settlement. For example, the diaspora association Afghan Human Rights Network (AHRN) in the UK leads the Campaign for Human Rights in Afghanistan to improve human right standards and strengthen civil society organisations in the homeland. In Sweden, the International Commission on Eritrean Refugees, created by Eritrean diaspora, conducts research on human rights abuses in Eritrea and on Eritrean refugees, asylum seekers and victims of trafficking, advocating for their rights and facilitating networking among them (Papadopoulou et al.: 2014).

Differences between Diasporas and Conventional Humanitarian Actors

Much has been written on the differences between conventional humanitarian actors and their diaspora counterparts, in terms of structure and intervention, as well as on the relative strengths and weaknesses that characterise their action (See Svoboda and Pantuliano: 2015; Sezgin and Dijkzeul: 2016). While such a reflection can be prolific for an analysis of their present and future engagements, as well as for the identification of potential cross-fertilisations, it is important to note that, more often than not, the value added of diaspora engagement is context-specific and not necessarily the same for all actors involved (Horst et al.: 2010). Studies among Syrian diaspora organisations, for example, have shown that for small and medium-sized civil society organisations, benefits and challenges emerging from their humanitarian intervention, and from the cooperation with conventional aid actors, are different from those of larger NGOs (Svoboda and Pantuliano: 2015; Saggiomo and Spagna: 2016).⁸

Nevertheless, a set of core qualitative inputs have been identified as typical of diaspora groups in humanitarian operations. Besides the already mentioned sustained financial contributions and their increased capacity to “linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD)”, diaspora organisations are deemed to be culturally closer to beneficiaries – because of language, origin, family ties - and therefore more easily granted access to hard-to-reach areas (IOM : 2015 ; Papadopoulou et al. ; 2014). This is particularly true for areas considered ‘no-go’ zones for conventional actors, due to the high insecurity involved. Recent documentary evidence has shown that Syrians abroad have been able to provide humanitarian assistance to affected populations outside government control, in the same way that Somali diaspora relief has reached areas inaccessible to international actors (Weissman: 2013).

While these developments have allowed humanitarian assistance to be delivered to a greater number of previously besieged beneficiaries, concerns could be raised on the nature of such actions and, particularly, on the implications they carry for the humanitarian principles. The fact that diaspora might have political or kinship ties with belligerent parties, therefore not engaging “neutrally” in the provision of aid, has been widely addressed by the literature (Pirkkalainen and Abdile: 2009). Some authors have suggested that, compared to the local population, diaspora might even be more prone to take extreme stances on a conflict, due to the fact that, while being emotionally close to it, they do not face its consequences personally (Collier: 2000; Demmers: 2002). Others have showed that diaspora could concretely provide support to warring parties, either directly - with supplies, money or weapons - or indirectly, through remittances used for military purposes (Duffield: 2002; Kaldor: 2001). At the same time, other studies have focused on the more positive impact that diaspora can have to counteract conflict situations, for example through the financial or in-kind support to peace-building initiatives (Smith and Stares (eds.):2007) or by returning to support conciliation attempts (Zunzer: 2004).

Context-specific studies dedicated to this issue suggest that the engagement of diaspora may affect political developments in the country of origin in both positive and negative ways (Horst: 2008; Lyons: 2007; Orjuela: 2008). The fact that a diaspora might be “politicised” in engaging with their country of origin has been challenged by recent research on diaspora. According to a report from the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO), the intervention of diaspora groups is based on their engagement with realities on the ground, where clan-, kinship- or religion-based affiliations do matter, and it would be counter-productive to demand that they do not (Horst et al.: 2010, 21). Also, the assumption that western aid and development actors do engage neutrally in countries of operation has largely been contested (Erdal and Horst: 2010), which makes the expectation of neutrality from diaspora problematic. On another note, the idea that diaspora might tend to be peace-wreckers rather than peace-makers due to more conservative stances and the sending of remittances and other forms of support to warring parties has not been supported by the literature at large.

DIASPORA ORGANISATIONS RELATIONSHIPS



LEGEND

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| Mutual and direct contact | Direct contact | Some contact |
| Some contact, limited cooperation | Direct/limited contact | Limited contact |

Indeed, two studies reviewing empirical and analytical findings from a large number of case-studies of diaspora engaging in conflict areas (Smith and Stares (eds.):2007; Zunzer: 2004) have pointed to a common conceptual conclusion - that the role played by diaspora in conflicts varies. Different groups or individuals within the same diaspora might have different approaches, interests, and objectives within the same conflict, or in different periods, meaning the same diaspora can have both positive and negative impacts on it (Smith and Stares (eds.): 2007, 11). Generally, the researchers found no predetermined pattern of diasporic involvement in conflicts, but pointed to the value of opportunities for diaspora groups available in the "host" country and the international environment. Several case studies showed that targeted policies for diasporas' intervention could make the difference to whether, and to what extent, their role will be positive or negative in a conflict, by enabling or contrasting their political opportunities. The assumption is that diaspora can be supported to make better use of their capacities to engage in conflict transformation in their home countries, for their positive potentials to outweigh their chance to become peace spoilers (Zunzer: 2004, 3). While the issue of diaspora partiality in conflict settings needs to be analytically addressed in each specific context, negative biases should not overshadow the range of constructive ways diaspora organisations themselves address this issue (Danstrøm, Kleist and Sørensen: 2015, 7) or the positive collaboration opportunities they might have with the traditional aid system.

Compared to conventional international humanitarian actors, diaspora's work also suffers from a less effective funding system, particularly at the macro-institutional level (Horst et al.: 2010). Beside very specific programs, such as the return schemes of IOM and UNDP, or the diaspora-related initiatives sponsored by certain of actors (such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development, the European and African Unions, and DFID), it is often difficult for diaspora groups to access relevant funding opportunities, even when their participation is encouraged (Sinatti et al.: 2010, 32). Often, project proposals from diaspora organisations have to compete with those of conventional NGOs and are evaluated on the same criteria, with no separate consideration for the capacity and other challenges facing diaspora actors (Horst et al.: 2010). This can be detrimental for some diaspora associations, as

only few of them are large and structured enough to be able to successfully meet donors' demands and access their funding streams (Horst et al.: 2010). Also, the lack of familiarity with the humanitarian system's "jargon" has been found to hamper diaspora's participation to mainstream funding mechanisms (Saggiomo and Spagna: 2016, 4). Apart from increasing the gap between traditional humanitarian actors and diaspora that operate in emergency contexts, these challenges limit the capacity of the latter to deliver efficiently in humanitarian situations.

Finally, and as previously pointed out, the features of diaspora organisations highly differ, ranging from volunteer initiatives to larger professional structures, and so do their features and needs vis-à-vis conventional humanitarian actors. Whereas small and medium-sized organisations might need capacity building opportunities to improve their action - i.e. through secondment agreements, training on humanitarian response mechanisms and the jargon used by aid actors and donors - larger and more structured organisation might benefit from being better included in coordination forums, or in the planning and implementation of emergency response projects. With the increased interest in diaspora engagement, it is important to reflect on such differences, as well as on the "added value" of diaspora's inclusion and the challenges that might hamper it, to effectively explore opportunities for better partnership. Global processes taking place in 2016 - including the Financing for Development process and the World Humanitarian Summit - offer important opportunities to address conventional humanitarian actors' synergy with the diaspora world and to shape global strategies in this area.

Part II

Diaspora Modes of Humanitarian Response

The findings below from the DEMAC mapping support many of the points and issues raised in the literature review, locating and contextualising them within the Sierra Leonean, Somali and Syrian diaspora experience. As well as providing a deeper and more detailed qualitative understanding of the myriad drivers, motivations and challenges of diaspora humanitarian interventions. The findings extend and also provide an important insight into the importance of perceptions as a factor shaping diaspora coordination with important stake holders.










Sierra Leoneans, Somalis and Syrians as Humanitarian Aid Providers

The info graphic below compares and contrasts modes of humanitarian intervention by Sierra Leoneans, Somalis and Syrians, particularly highlighting the location of their interventions efforts, the selection of target beneficiaries, sectors of engagement, funding mechanisms, relief transmission channels, M&E frameworks, and impediments to humanitarian action. Generated through surveys, mapping and semi-structured interviews study, the data herein illustrates that although the three humanitarian contexts under consideration are unique in their own right, Sierra Leoneans, Somalis and Syrians demonstrate uncanny similarities in their response modes and mechanisms. All three diasporas target local civil society organisations and family members in their intervention efforts, focus on education and nutrition & food security, send cash payments through wire transfers as well as relief supplies, and engage in fundraising. They also share common ordeals. As a case in point, financial resource allocation/availability came up as the single most important challenge in advancing the humanitarian goals of diaspora organisations. As such, the data may serve the basis for devising a 'typology of diaspora humanitarian response.'

Photo: Preparation of hot meals for vulnerable communities during the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone © The Lunchboxgift project – LTHT



COMPOSITE PROFILE OF DIASPORA MODES OF HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION

| DIASPORA/INTERVENTION | SIERRA LEONE (SL) |
|---|---|
| Type of humanitarian crisis | Health/natural disaster crises |
|  Location of Humanitarian Intervention | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cities in SL • Villages in SL • Towns in SL |
|  Target Beneficiaries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local civil society • Non-specific affected populations • Friends • Immediate/extended family • Religious institutions |
|  Humanitarian Sectors of Intervention | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Nutrition & food security • Health • WASH • Logistics |
|  Methods of Assessing Needs, Areas of Intervention | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affected community contact • Local partner contact • Immediate/extended family contact • Other diaspora orgs. contact |
|  Modes of Humanitarian Intervention | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sending cash payments/transfers • Fundraising • Sending relief supplies • Skills and knowledge transfer • Media outreach (domestic and international) • Mobilising community support • Implementing specific projects |
|  Humanitarian Funding Mechanisms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundraising events • Personal savings • Crowd funding • External grants |
|  Relief Transmission Channels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wire cash transfer • Bank transfer • Hand delivery |
|  M&E of Humanitarian Action | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification from a 3rd/4th party • Feedback from local partners • Photo documentation |
|  Impediments to Humanitarian Action | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of funding • Lack of infrastructure in SL/neighbouring countries • Lack of coordination of humanitarian efforts • Lack of support from host/homeland governments |

SOMALIA

Man-made/conflict-related crisis

- Cities in Somalia
- Villages in Somalia
- Neighbouring countries

- Immediate family
- Extended family
- Local civil society

- Nutrition & food security
- Education
- WASH
- Health
- Emergency shelter
- Protection
- Refugee/IDP camp management and coordination

- Local partner contact
- Affected community contact
- Immediate/extended family contact
- Local (government) officials contact
- Local media coverage

- Sending cash payments/transfers
- Fundraising
- Mobilising community support
- Skills and knowledge transfer
- Implementing specific projects
- Media outreach (domestic and international)
- Technical intervention in the field
- Sending relief supplies

- Fundraising events
- Personal savings
- External grants
- Zakat

- Hawala
- Bank transfer
- Wire cash transfer

- Feedback from local partners
- Field visits & reports
- Photo documentation

- Lack of funding
- Lack of infrastructure in Somalia/
neighbouring countries
- Lack of coordination of humanitarian efforts
- Lack of support from international organisations

SYRIA

Man-made/conflict-related crisis

- Cities in Syria
- Neighbouring countries
- Towns in Syria

- Local civil society
- Non-specific affected populations
- Immediate family
- Friends

- Education
- Nutrition & food security
- Health
- Protection
- WASH
- Emergency shelter

- Local partner contact
- Affected community contact
- Review of existing assessment data
- International NGOs contact
- Immediate or extended family contact
- Other diaspora orgs. contact

- Sending relief supplies
- Sending cash payments/transfers
- Media outreach
- Mobilising community support
- Fundraising
- Skills and knowledge transfer
- Political campaigning
- Technical intervention in the field

- Fundraising events
- Personal savings
- External grants
- Crowd funding

- Bank transfer
- Hawala
- Wire cash transfer
- Hand delivery

- Photo documentation
- Feedback from local partners
- Field visits & reports

- Lack of funding
- Lack of coordination of humanitarian efforts
- Lack of infrastructure in Syria/neighbouring countries
- Lack of support from host government
- Lack of support from international organisations

The three case studies outlined throughout this report illustrate the importance of documenting concrete humanitarian interventions by transnational actors to understand the myriad ways diasporas provide emergency assistance. Despite the largely praise-worthy catalogue of diaspora interventions by Syrians, Somalis and Sierra Leoneans detailed thus far, there are both strengths and weaknesses of their relief efforts. These are explored in the following graphic.



Challenges to Diaspora Humanitarian Intervention

Diasporas from Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Syria acknowledged unanimously that funding remains a binding constraint for effective humanitarian relief interventions. Other challenges persist across all three examined cases, such as the lack of organisational and management skills, solidarity, and trust amongst diasporas, while some weaknesses are unique to specific diasporas.⁹ Some Sierra Leoneans interviewed in the UK acknowledged the limited power of diasporas in shaping policy and practice in Sierra Leone and abroad because of their fragmentation. As one diaspora member remarked, Sierra Leoneans abroad generally work in silos and therefore have problems with mobilisation, structure and leadership because everyone “wants to be the chief or chairman”¹⁰. This might lead to less coordinated, at times competitive behaviour, - or the perception hereof -, and is echoed by Syrians interviewed in Germany. Often in conjunction with resilient patriarchal structures and socioeconomic status in the countries of origin, this disposition aggravates information-sharing, cooperation, and coordination among diaspora organisations, particular at crisis onset. If “loyalty is (usually) seen as more important than competence”,¹¹ it sometimes prevents professionalization and knowledge-sharing, impedes alliance-building among diaspora humanitarians themselves, raises transaction costs, and aggravates accessing donors and other humanitarian stakeholders, particularly in cases of man-made conflicts. However, diasporas have “their feet in two camps” and are sometimes perceived by those they interact with as more credible and therefore better equipped to serve the needs of crisis-affected people¹². Thus, the focus of international organisations and donor states on communicating primarily with country of origin governments and local actors while ignoring diasporas might lead to severe gaps in responses to complex emergencies and natural disasters.

Photo: Preparation of hot meals for vulnerable communities during the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone © The Lunchboxgift project – LTHT

DIASPORAS STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

STRENGTHS



Direct contact with affected communities



Rapid response



Language and cultural competencies



More flexible access to most affected communities



Accountability and transparency resulting from social mechanisms



Innovative use of new technologies and social media



Effective networking/collaboration with local partners



Flexibility in aid delivery (covert methods/channels to deliver aid/supplies; mobile transfers)



Bridge between development and humanitarian aid



Motivated by duty, civic responsibility and altruism and less risk-averse

WEAKNESSES



Information channels at times unreliable and inconsistent



Lower levels of technical humanitarian aid expertise



Fragmented approach to relief



Limited effective coordination with conventional actors and lack of understanding of whom of the conventional actors to work with



Development activities and humanitarian relief activities difficult to sustain over time due to voluntary structures



Incalculable interventions



Often lack of resources and institutional capacity to implement large-scale relief



Lower levels of education and language competencies in host country (for some diasporas only)



Limited second and third generation engagement in humanitarian relief



Perceived as biased and politically motivated

Interviewed Somali diaspora organisations reported constraints that cause severe delays in implementing humanitarian assistance projects, such as bureaucratic funding requirements by donors, including reporting, the lack of advocacy/lobbying, fundraising and project management/grant application skills amongst diasporas; the low levels of education amongst Somalis in Denmark; the lack of personal and financial independence amongst most diasporas; the lack of banks in-country; and the dearth of Somali women at the forefront of community organisations and emergency relief.¹³

Syrian diaspora humanitarians noted that relief supplies have been distributed slowly and haphazardly, leaving many affected regions and populations inside Syria at risk. While it was asserted that Syrian diaspora humanitarian relief can be more effective than that of conventional humanitarian actors, there is recognition that said aid is limited as voluntary structures are rarely sustainable. Safe and sustained humanitarian access in Syria remains a significant challenge for all humanitarian actors, conventional, local or diaspora, due to widespread insecurity, bureaucratic procedures, the closure of many key border points and access routes. Training in organisational development, community fundraising, and grant writing were highlighted as highly needed capacities by Syrian interlocutors.¹⁴ They also complained about logistical difficulties and high costs of transporting goods by land via Turkey to Syria, with what were felt to be often changing regulations and restrictions as well as heightened levels of insecurity throughout Syria.¹⁵ Some diasporas identified complicated grant application procedures, sizeable overhead costs in aid budgets, and bureaucratic multilateral agency procedures as major deterrents to supporting diaspora-led efforts.¹⁶

Beyond that, some Sierra Leonean local organisations consulted for this study argued that while diasporas were effective at channelling information through social and international mainstream media about the humanitarian needs of affected populations during the Ebola outbreak, much of the information they received was skewed and partial. This apparent disconnect between the actual needs on the ground and diaspora responses exposes the lack of synergy between local, community-led and diaspora-led humanitarian interventions. Other local partners argued that diaspora humanitarian relief can be at times ad-hoc, sporadic and fractured, where Sierra Leoneans abroad might emerge for specific crisis intervention (i.e., Ebola), yet disappear when other humanitarian needs persist (i.e., flooding). Implementing local partner organisations in Lebanon and Turkey alike emphasized the limited volume of aid and the lack of sustainability and incalculability of relief supplied by Syrian humanitarian diaspora organisations. Furthermore, the aid items provided did not necessarily address the needs of the affected populations. Numerous local interlocutors argued for the need of an increased exchange or even a formalized coordination mechanism between local aid implementers and diaspora organisations that would enable them to conduct reliable assessments of local needs and inform diaspora accordingly.

Part III

Diaspora Humanitarian Principles and Motivations

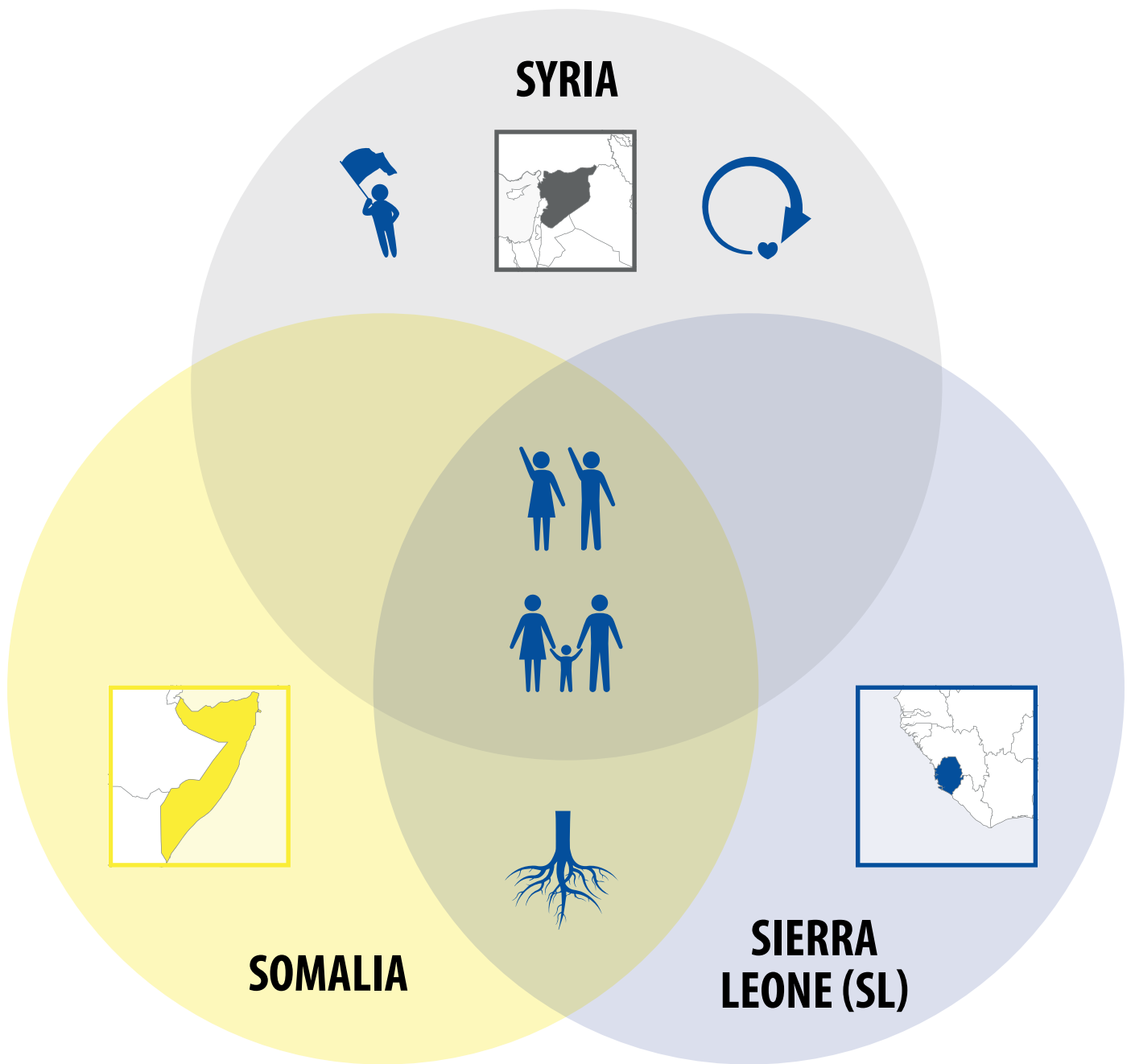
Diaspora Motivations for Humanitarian Relief

Diaspora humanitarians can be motivated to engage in humanitarian relief by a plethora of reasons. According to cross-referencing survey results, Somalis felt most compelled to engage in humanitarian action because of their family connections, whereas Sierra Leoneans and Syrians first and foremost felt a commitment to their country of origin or heritage as well as neighbouring countries. Other motivations, such as duty, commitment to the locality or region of origin, sectarian or ethnic identification, sense of national belonging, political motivations, and plans to return to the country of origin/heritage featured prominently in responses.

Photo: Aid delivered in Aleppo © Hand in Hand for Syria



MOTIVATIONS AND PRINCIPLES OF DIASPORA ORGANISATIONS




Commitment to the country and/or neighbouring countries



Political motivations



Plans to return to country of origin/heritage



Duty



Family connection



Commitment to region, hometown, clan, sect, national group

While it has been widely assumed that diasporas provide relief based on kinship ties, empirical evidence gathered for this study indicates that their emergency assistance transcends these networks. For instance, whereas Somali transnational humanitarian relief in the 1990s was based largely on personal bonds, the protracted nature of the crisis in Somalia has galvanised diasporas to provide emergency relief to vulnerable populations regardless of clan and other affiliations.¹⁷ As one Somali living in Denmark argued, “[c]risis knows no race, ethnicity, tribe, political affiliation or clan and Islam dictates that helping people is important because Allah will reward you in the afterlife.” Accordingly, women, children and the elderly were cited as main target beneficiaries by interviewees for this study, though many diaspora organisations asserted that they targeted the most ‘vulnerable’ in emergency situations, regardless of clan, religion, region of origin, ethnicity, gender, age, etc.

The uprising and the following escalating military conflict in Syria has been the driving source of motivation for the Syrian diaspora in Germany to engage in relief activities and consequently to establish formalized associations and charities.¹⁸ Earlier to 2011, Syrian diaspora activism was almost exclusively cultural and folkloric (Qayyum: 2011; Ragab: 2013). The anti-government protests in Syria in the spring of 2011 also “broke the wall of fear” among Syrians or Germans of Syrian origin living in Germany who began to organise public demonstrations and vigils for their affected communities inside Syria. The majority of the formally established organisations emphasized humanitarianism and provision of relief and solidarity with affected communities in Syria as driving motifs for action (Renner: 2015). Others explained though (initially) driven by an aspiration for political transition in their home country, that the focus of their diaspora engagement on humanitarian assistance now results from the degradation from a civil uprising into an internationalized civil war resulting in a humanitarian crisis (Sezgin: 2016).¹⁹ While the majority of the interviewed Syrian organisations’ engagement was motivated by solidarity rather than humanity or neutrality in the unfolding humanitarian crisis, the majority of organisations appear to strive for impartiality and focus their engagement on the implementation of humanitarian activities away from politics. It remains advisable for international organisations seeking partnerships with diaspora organisations to inquire

about their motivations and examine their organisational development, but also engage in constructive discussions on humanitarian principles and to find pragmatic ways to work together to provide effective assistance. Criticising Syrian diaspora for lacking neutrality and impartiality is simplistic and unhelpful, particular in the Syrian context where the international organisations are themselves not immune from the same criticism (Svoboda and Pantuliano: 2015, 16).

Barada Help for Syria provides relief regardless of religious, cultural and ethnic origin

Barada Help for Syria (Barada Syrienhilfe) is a registered humanitarian and medical NGO, established by Syrian diaspora in Germany in 2012. It provides relief and medical aid to affected communities inside Syria through its wide-ranging local networks. People in need regardless of their religious, cultural and ethnic origin are provided support, hereby operationalizing its motto of “Christians and Muslims – Hand in Hand for Syria.” 22 volunteers, Christians and Muslims, doctors and students, engineers and self-employed, run the operations from an office in Hof in southern Germany. Barada Help for Syria works across a range of sectors, including food security, sanitation, water and hygiene, education, and healthcare, in addition to psychosocial support for Syrian refugees in Turkey. Barada Help for Syria has cooperated in different activities with Syrian diaspora organisations from Germany as well as the German NGO Green Helmets. Through its educational projects, Barada Help for Syria seeks to build bridges of interreligious understanding and hereby to contribute to a resolution of the Syrian conflict, a commitment it was awarded for in 2015.

<http://www.barada-syrienhilfe.de/>

Sierra Leonean, Somali and Syrian survey respondents specified that they would send additional cash payments in humanitarian situations which were often used for daily subsistence, healthcare, nutrition & food security, WASH, education and skills development. For example, during a flood in Kismayo in 1999, the Somali Network sent US\$10,000-US\$20,000 collected from Somali organisations around the globe to beneficiaries for food, shelter, and daily subsistence.²⁰ Similarly, DAN-TA QOYS-KA (Care for the Family) raised US\$ 50,000 to construct a bridge in Bari, whose inhabitants were hit by tsunamis, while also replenishing livestock lost during the natural disaster. And in 2012, the Organisation for the Rehabilitation of Somalia (OFROSOM) sent DKK 20,000 to internally displaced persons for food and shelter during a severe drought in the central region of Somalia. For Somali diasporas, remittances are primarily channelled through the traditional hawala system, where monetary transfers reach the remotest areas in the country within minutes (Hammond et al.: 2011).²¹

Evidence also supported diaspora in-kind, material support through physical shipments by air, ground and water transport. For instance, the Sierra Leone UK Diaspora Ebola Response Task Force (SLUKDERT) raised between £20,000-£50,000 in cash and in-kind assistance for Ebola relief, sending medications, clothes and gloves to health centres across Sierra Leone.²² Power Women 232, an online global network with members in UK, US and Sierra Leone, disseminated 1000 care packages targeting health workers such as nurses and ambulance workers and burial teams.²³ The Sierra Leone Mu Women Cultural Organisation sent a shipment of 10 large bags of clothing, shoes, crates of toys (to orphanages), and toiletries, as well as distributed 30 bags of rice to residents of Freetown (with two bags given to community mosques).²⁴ And during the month of Ramadan, the Action League for a Free Syria (Aktionsbündnis Freies Syrien e.V.) provided food baskets to approximately 300 families in Damascus, Aleppo and Homs, financed by donations generated from the Syrian diaspora in Germany.²⁵ Similarly, the Free German-Syrian Association (Freie Deutsch-Syrische Gesellschaft e.V.) donated education supplies to Jordan-based Syrian schoolchildren and sent two containers of medical equipment to a hospital in Syria in cooperation with other aid organisations.²⁶ Most Syrian, Sierra Leonean and Somali diaspora humanitarians surveyed specified that they had sent

relief supplies up to at least five times within the last 24 months, including clothing, medical supplies, food items and learning resources.

The interviewed diasporas also provided technical assistance to both under-resourced and under-capacitated local partners and established international humanitarian organisations with larger budgets. Sierra Leonean diaspora provided assistance during the Ebola crisis by nurses and doctors volunteering their services to assist in hospitals and provide training. Two members of the UK Sierra Leone diaspora who had initiatives to support the response went further by contributing their professional expertise to help coordinate the national Ebola response this came in the form of communications and project management. Several Syrian diaspora-based medical organisations trained local health staff and medical doctors in southern Turkey and inside Syria to curb in the needs for medical personal inside Syria, such as Lien, the German-Syrian Doctors for Humanitarian Aid, Hand in Hand for Syria, UOSSM etc. DESMO, a Denmark-based Somali diaspora organisation founded in 2013 provides healthcare support in Somaliland and the Sanaag regions by providing trainings for nurses and midwives, and by hiring doctors who serve in hospitals and health centres. They also raised money among Somali diaspora in Denmark and the US to support Yemeni refugees in Sanaag in June 2015. The Southern Somalia Peace and Development Organisation (SSPDO) targets minority groups in Mogadishu (artisans) by providing them with livelihoods opportunities and trains IDPs in tailoring, tie and dye, mobile repairing, and carpentry.

OFROSOM Rescues Drought-Affected People and Refugees

The Organisation for the Rehabilitation of Somalia (OFROSOM) is a registered aid and development organisation registered in Denmark. Founded in 2004 by Somali diaspora, it implements social development and humanitarian projects in the state of Galmudug and regions of central Somalia. OFROSOM's office is in Copenhagen. With a membership of 71 volunteers, OFROSOM has implemented development and humanitarian projects in partnership with local organisations and supported by international organisations as the Danish Refugee Council, Initiatives of Change, and Civil Society in Development (CISU), an association of more than 280 Danish CSOs. OFROSOM works across a range of sectors, including health, nutrition & food security and emergency shelter. During the severe drought in the Somalia's central region in 2012, OFROSOM provided shelter and food to IDPs in the region and was supported by the Jubilæumsfonden in Denmark. In 2015, OFROSOM supported 10,000 Somali and Yemeni refugees fleeing the conflict in Yemen by providing them with food, shelter and WASH services in refugee camps. OFROSOM funds its activities through donations from Somalis in Denmark and Somali entrepreneurs.

<http://ofrosom.org/>

Syrian diasporas often described themselves as 'bridges' and 'mediators'/'links',²⁷ particularly between international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and conflict-affected Syrians in Syria and neighbouring countries. As one Syrian diaspora respondent based in Germany and Syria asserted, whereas some INGOs were relatively new to the Syrian conflict, diasporas provide guidance and mentoring about the most effective rules of engagement. Given the complexity of the conflict(s) and based on its trans-local understanding and their transnational networks, Syrian humanitarian organisations acted as mediators whereby conventional humanitarian actors faced several difficulties in providing relief (Renner: 2015). Interna-

tional humanitarian actors rely on diasporas for their contextual knowledge during emergency situations. For example, the Irish humanitarian NGO GOAL hired a Sierra Leonean diaspora returnee and psychosocial expert who spoke the local language fluently thereby communicating with communities who had been directly impacted by Ebola.²⁸ Similarly, members of The Association of Sierra Leonean Healthcare Professionals Abroad (TOSHPA) used Sierra Leonean languages to communicate public health messages during the height of the outbreak thereby making the information culturally relevant and accessible.²⁹

Diasporas as Advocacy Agents

Among the diasporas studied in this report, many engaged as lobbyists and campaigners during the emergency situations in their countries of origin. A Syrian local partner organisation stated that despite limited financial capacities and restrictions based on counter-terrorism legislation (particularly in the US and Gulf countries), Syrian diasporas have been somewhat effective at public awareness campaigns influencing non-Syrians to provide aid, though they could use additional training in advocacy and fundraising.³⁰ Diaspora respondents from all three constituencies argued that they would make extensive use of social media to advocate for humanitarian relief interventions as well as to monitor the impact of their work in the field.

The Sierra Leonean, Somali and Syrian diasporas reaffirmed previous literature that said that they intervened at the onset and throughout humanitarian crises, that they used safest channels and resources, worked directly with local people, and monitored project implementation in order to measure impact. They emphasized the minimal bureaucracy involved to provide relief through diaspora channels and their knowhow of engaging relevant actors on the ground, such as elders, relatives, and local organisations, enables them to intimately understand needs of affected populations. Whereas some of these claims were corroborated by local partner organisations interviewed for this study, other assertions remain contested. For instance, diasporas may not always have access to the safest channels for delivering emergency relief and therefore take greater risks than conventional actors, particularly in humanitarian crises triggered by military conflicts. As a case in point, while official

humanitarian assistance is highly regulated in Syria, particularly in those areas under government control, Syrian diasporas have employed covert methods to channel aid and supplies to vulnerable populations into the country, in particular into hard-to-reach and semi-besieged areas.³¹

Meanwhile, Denmark-based Somalis asserted that they are able to reach crisis-affected people when communication and physical access channels are blocked. For instance, the Somaliland Mother's Organisation in Denmark uses 'bush telegrams' (women) to send messages to different communities in Somalia during times of heavy fighting because women are rarely targeted directly during armed insurgency.³² Because telecommunications systems in Somalia function well, diasporas receive distress calls, especially from hard-to-reach places, and filter the material instantaneously, particularly through social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram), as well as through Somali local media which employs technology effectively.³³ Social media and international media campaigning played a prominent role in humanitarian advocacy for all three diaspora actors examined.

Diasporas and the Core Humanitarian Principles

The interviewed Sierra Leonean diaspora respondents identified the four humanitarian principles of independence, neutrality, humanity and impartiality as underpinning their humanitarian efforts in Sierra Leone and elsewhere, although one respondent acknowledged that funding constraints might compel diasporas to compromise their independence in order to secure support.³⁴ Similarly, most of the Somali diaspora interviewees stated familiarity with one or more of the four humanitarian principles, yet some respondents declared that the principles have not significantly influenced their relief interventions. One Somali interviewee believes the core ideals are fanciful rhetoric, arguing that there seems to be massive waste and excess in the international system.³⁵

Although Syrian diaspora interviewees endorse the humanitarian principles, in their practical work strict adherence to the said principles can be challenging. As other types of Syrian actors responding to the Syria crisis, conventional actors perceive them of

lacking in neutrality, impartiality and independence and amalgamated with the political opposition (Svoboda and Pantuliano: 2015, 15). Most interviewees emphasized that they strive for impartiality and would want to provide aid to all Syrians in need, but the conflict constellation would not allow providing relief aid in areas under government control. On the contrary, others argued that Syrian diaspora humanitarians would not provide aid to allegedly pro-government communities in need of humanitarian assistance or support schools teaching a secular curriculum.³⁶ Hitherto, the large majority of the relief work by interviewed Syrian diaspora humanitarians is apparently by the solidarity rather than the principle of impartiality, potentially due to social relations to affected communities in Syria, similarly to faith-based humanitarian organisations such as Christian Aid. Accusations of Syrian diaspora humanitarians lacking neutrality, independence and impartiality appears unbalanced given that the conventional international humanitarian system have themselves struggled with issues of neutrality in its response to the Syria crisis.³⁷ Consequently, several interviewees accused conventional international humanitarian organisations and UN agencies operating through the Syrian government of similar violations of the principles of neutrality and impartiality.³⁸ Mutual accusations and criticism are misleading and unhelpful as it hampers a constructive engagement between conventional and diaspora humanitarian actors on ways to provide more effectively assistance to affected communities

(Svoboda and Pantuliano: 2015, 15-16).

Part IV

Diaspora Humanitarian Cooperation and Collaboration

The diaspora organisations engaged for this study have coordinated with governments and state actors, conventional humanitarian actors, and local actors at different levels and to altering extents. The political contexts of humanitarian crises determine to a substantial degree how diasporas engage with governments and political authorities in their homelands. The Somali and Syrian diaspora organisations interviewed for this report, for example, are less likely to engage with country-of-origin/heritage state authorities implicated in said crises. Yet, diasporas who intervene in less politically-volatile emergency situations as in Sierra Leone may be more inclined to coordinate with authorities in their countries of origin/heritage.

Cooperation and Collaboration with State Actors in Homeland and Host Countries

In their advocacy campaigns, Sierra Leonean diaspora organisations were more engaged with their country-of-origin/heritage government than counterparts from Somalia and Syria. For example, having already established networks with the SL Ministry of Health and Sanitation, the Association of Sierra Leonean Healthcare Professionals Abroad (TOSHPA) worked with the High Commission in London as well as with non-Sierra Leonean actors in the UK such as Public Health England, UK-Med, the Department for International Development (DFID) and Kings Partnership in their relief and response efforts.³⁹ Similarly, SLUKDERT and other organisations lobbied the UK government to assist in emergency relief, and petitioned the WHO to involve diasporas in their public health interventions.

SLUKDERT - Successful cooperation in the diaspora

The Sierra Leonean UK Diaspora Ebola Response Taskforce (SLUKDERT) was established by SL diaspora in London in November 2014 to harness diaspora skills and resources of UK-based SL diaspora responding to the Ebola crisis in their country of origin. By serving as an interface between key stakeholders addressing the Ebola crisis and the SL diaspora in the UK, it helped to coordinate efforts undertaken by diaspora organisations and individuals, facilitated dialogue and encouraged the sharing of best practices among the many diaspora organisations. Five different working groups on education, equipment and supplies, communications, lobbying and advocacy, finance and fundraising, and human resources fostered links between organisations active in the same sector. Through the organisation of meetings and conferences, fundraising events and road shows, SLUKDERT mobilized diaspora healthcare and other professionals to assist with the response. It also mapped interventions of diaspora organisations to better coordinate with local groups in Sierra Leone. As a result of successful advocacy and media appearances, SLUKDERT was invited by the UK government to liaise and coordinate with international organisations about their intended health interventions in SL and introduced to UN agencies and NGOs to receive pledges of assistance. When the situation in Sierra Leone improved at the end of 2014, the taskforce committed itself to continue facilitating dialogue between organisations, link fundraising efforts and to collaborating with other Diaspora organisations as many initiatives indicated a willingness to play a part in assisting in the post-Ebola situation.

<https://www.facebook.com/sierraleoneukebola/>

In slight contrast to their Sierra Leonean counterparts in the UK, Denmark-based Somali diaspora organisations have different levels of influence and strategic engagement with state actors in their country of residence. The Somaliland Mothers Organisation, for example, holds regular meetings with the Mayor of Copenhagen, consults with Members of Parliament and is actively seeking an audience with the former Prime Minister of Denmark. Similarly, DAN-TA QOYS-KA (Care for the Family) convinced a local government official in Aarhus, Denmark's second largest city, to donate relief supplies.⁴⁰ Other Somali diaspora organisations, like Somali Families Feeding and Quaran, have exhibited no explicit direct engagement with Danish government officials. Explaining the lack of engagement with non-Somali stakeholders, a Quaran member argued that Somalis abroad lack familiarity with donors and how they operate as well as knowledge about possible collaborators and how to apply for funding.⁴¹

Admittedly, there are challenges to liaising with non-diaspora actors. For example, even though the Somali Network has tried to influence/liase with the Danish government through the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in several scheduled meetings, they have been unsuccessful.⁴² Relatedly, an SSPDO member shared insightfully that while Somali diasporas use digital media in English to advocate for state and international organisations to respond to humanitarian situations quickly, very few Somalis engage with non-Somalis because of their low levels of education and literacy, and their lack of language proficiency in Danish.⁴³ Another respondent echoed these sentiments, arguing that Somalis fail to secure grants because development jargon is difficult to navigate and there is limited funding for many applicants.⁴⁴ According to one respondent, the Danish government could also be turned off by disunity amongst Somalis and does not know who to support since there are so many diaspora groups.⁴⁵

The Syrian diaspora organisations engaged with German branches of government (Federal Foreign Office, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development), MPs, political parties, federal state's governments and local authorities to varying extents, but out of necessity also with political authorities of Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan to be able to exercise their interventions on their national territories or into Syria. High expectations by the Syrian organisations to receive financial support by the Foreign Office and the Economic Cooperation and Development for their relief activities were rarely met as they were ineligible for project funding due to legal formalities and funding requirements. The German-Syrian Association for the Promotion of Freedom and Human Rights (DSV) is apparently the only Syrian diaspora organisation which received (indirect) financial support by the Foreign Office for supporting an intensive care health infrastructure in the Aleppo province and by Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development for a rehabilitation and prosthetic centre in Amman. The Syrian diaspora's expectations for governmental support, however, may have been nurtured by a biased perception of Germany's Syria policy, insufficiently separating political mobilization and humanitarian aid. In turn, others complained that the ministerial staff did not respond to them as humanitarians, but were mainly interested in their assessment of political developments on the ground.

DSV runs trauma therapy training facility in southern Turkey

The German–Syrian Association for the Promotion of Freedom and Human Rights (*Deutsch–Syrischer Verein zur Förderung der Freiheiten und Menschenrechte, DSV*) is a registered humanitarian and development NGO, established by first and second generation Syrian diaspora in Weiterstadt, Germany in 2011. DSV operates from an office in Darmstadt with two fulltime staff and 65 voluntaries, a third of whom are medical doctors and physiotherapists. The major focus of the DSV's relief activities lies in providing healthcare inside Syria and the neighboring countries. It has trucked medical aid convoys and ambulances loaded with medical supplies into contested areas in northern Syria and refugee camps in Turkey, supported rehabilitation facilities in Jordan and Turkey, established five infirmaries in Syria, and ensured the work of an intensive care station in Aleppo governorate. In 2014, DSV established a trauma psychology and therapy training centre for psychologists, educators and social workers in Gaziantep to improve psychological care for Syrian refugees in Turkey. DSV cooperated in several projects with Islamic Relief Germany and GIZ and received financial support from the German Federal Foreign Office. Since the mass arrival of Syrian refugees in Germany from July and August 2015 on, DSV organised volunteers providing assistance to Syrian refugees in the city of Darmstadt. At the end of 2015, DSV was awarded by the Federal State of Hesse for its exemplary commitment of its active members, the outstanding civic engagement and its support work as focal point for the integration of Syrian refugees in Hesse.

<http://ds-verein.org/>

Some Syrian interviewees suggested that the majority of organised Syrian diaspora in Germany are unable to deliver the correct messages, formulate needs of affected communities inside Syria or emphasize the role that diaspora could play in responding to the crisis when engaging with government officials or ministerial staff due to their limited previous advocacy experiences. Several Syrian organisations also sought the Foreign Office's support to facilitate Turkey's transit restrictions on food items, medicine and relief, as well as to alleviate restrictions on financial transactions into Syria's neighbouring countries resulting from over-compliance to counterterrorism legislation by international private banks. For fundraising events, however, Syrian organisations receive substantial support from local politicians. Yet the majority of Syrian diaspora self-critically evaluates their efforts to influence German politician decision-makers to better address the needs of crisis-affected communities in Syria as not very successful. Some diaspora interlocutors considered it as a missed opportunity that the Syrian diaspora rarely actively sought to liaise with German humanitarian and civil society organisations with more advocacy capabilities to advance their demands.

Cooperation and Coordination with Conventional Humanitarian Actors

Despite challenges of coordination between diasporas and conventional humanitarian actors, there are some examples of good practice that deserve attention. For example, the French public development aid agency Expertise France touted the Union of Medical and Relief Organisations (UOSSM) as a model collaborator because of its access to regions in Syria that remain largely inaccessible to international actors.⁴⁶ The partnership with UOSSM has created a reciprocal learning and information sharing mechanism where UOSSM visits hospitals and medical structures and exchanges on opportunities and challenges with Expertise France and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF).⁴⁷ Given the complex security situation in most parts of the country, most international organisations since 2013 have relied on Syrian local and diaspora relief organisations to implement projects and deliver relief.

When international organisations were still able to access areas in northern Syria, they neglected to work with local structures and partners, but often delivered humanitarian goods and left Syria.⁴⁸ As the security situation deteriorated, the incentives for international organisations to cooperate with local and diaspora actors increased out of necessity. Local and diaspora organisations have been crucial in increasing access to those areas outside Syrian government control – much more than most international organisations. The only means to access most parts of the country has been through a supporting Syrian local and diaspora network; without Syrian relief organisations, structures and networks, international organisations would be very limited in their radius of activities. An increasing number of conventional humanitarian actors, therefore, recognise diasporas as better equipped in particular emergency situations because they are locally embedded and have direct access to crisis-affected populations in hard to reach areas.

There was widespread disagreement among Somali interlocutors in Denmark about the scale and magnitude of the ability of Somali diasporas to influence non-Somali actors in responding to humanitarian crises and emergency situations, with one respondent asserting that “international actors do not take diasporas seriously.”⁴⁹ Some interviewees asserted that the Danish government and international organisations have been particularly non-responsive to their attempts at engagement.⁵⁰

Sierra Leone War Trust (SLWT)

The Sierra Leone War Trust, a registered charity in the UK, was founded by seven Sierra Leoneans based in the UK in April 1999. It was set up in response to the atrocities committed against children in the Sierra Leone Civil War (1991-2002) and is managed by six trustees, volunteers and three members of staff based in Sierra Leone.

During the recent Ebola crisis, SLWT provided assistance in a number of key areas. They were part of the Sierra Leone UK Diaspora Ebola Response Taskforce (SLUKDERT) as part of the Human Resource pillar. SLWT also organised with DFID a series of road shows across the UK to help recruit health workers to go to Sierra Leone. They also held culture awareness sessions for health workers and INGO workers and ran 15 training courses for approximately 325 people.

One of the SLWT trustees became a permanent member of the UK government’s Ebola Taskforce due to high effectiveness of her work. She later went to work with the Sierra Leone government’s National Ebola Response Committee bringing full stakeholder coordination to the response. Her efforts have been recognized in both Sierra Leone and in the UK where she will receive an OBE for her efforts and contribution.

In its own right, SLWT provided 650 buckets for hand washing to assist in improved sanitation and reduction of transference. They printed and distributed 4,000 culturally relevant leaflets across Sierra Leone and the UK to assist diaspora to inform their families in Sierra Leone and be correctly informed themselves. They are currently running a project in Waterloo, Freetown that provides healthcare, schooling and support for 50 Ebola orphans.

SLWT’s activities are funded by multiple sources, among them public and private donor such as DFID and Comic Relief. Funds are also raised with a JustGiving page from within the Sierra Leonean diaspora community, receiving contributions that have reached £25,000.

<http://www.slwt.org/>

Diasporas also tend to respond swifter at the onset of humanitarian crises, often arriving before reinforcements from national and international actors during 'black swan' emergency situations such as Ebola. For example, while Sierra Leonean diasporas provided direct, unrestricted assistance in cash, material resources (food, drugs & medical supplies, clothes), and lobbied for immediate public health interventions and technical assistance,⁵¹ international actors were very sluggish in their initial response partly due to slow dispersals of funding from donors and bureaucratic 'command and control' procedures within multilateral organisations (Grépin: 2015). One interviewed Sierra Leonean local beneficiary lamented that her organisation has not sought support from international donors because of their rigid funding structures and complicated reporting mechanisms.⁵² Similarly, some local partner organisations in Lebanon and Turkey said that they received most of their cash-based funding from Syrian diasporas residing outside Lebanon and Turkey, arguing that they generally favoured this type of financial support because it is direct and flexible, devoid of conditions, administrative hurdles, overhead costs, and enables them to respond quickly to the specific needs of crisis-affected populations; yet, its volume is much smaller and its arrival too unpredictable as basis for proper programming.⁵³ Admittedly, traditional humanitarian actors demonstrated that they have specific mandates/strategic plans based on donor requirements and funding cycles laden with bureaucracy and high administrative costs, which may not address immediate needs on the ground.⁵⁴ Diasporas, on the other hand, also have the flexibility to collaborate with non-conventional actors such as the private sector in rendering emergency relief (Hammond et al.: 2011).

Simultaneous Engagement with Conventional and Non-Conventional Humanitarian Actors

Unlike some of their Somali counterparts in Denmark and akin to their Sierra Leonean counterparts in the UK, Syrian diaspora organisations in Germany and beyond have engaged with a multitude of non-Syrian stakeholders, such as INGOs, political parties and foundations, and media outlets to lobby for humanitarian intervention and relief.⁵⁵ These efforts have been somewhat limited in number, particularly in liaising with donors.⁵⁶ Some Syrian diaspora organisations admitted that, given the hierarchical nature of Syrian social structures, diasporas have been socialised to revere and/or distrust international organisations and are therefore untrained in and/or suspicious of dealing with them directly.⁵⁷ Similarly, a number of Syrian diaspora organisations lamented that they have been unfairly misconstrued as radical and politically explosive by some international actors and within Syrian diaspora networks themselves.⁵⁸

Cooperation amongst international and Syrian local and transnational organisations was enhanced when cross-border access to territories in northern Syria became limited in 2013 due to the deteriorating security situation in-country. According to a conventional humanitarian actor based in Turkey, international actors have no other choice than to work with Syrian local/diaspora organisations and local councils.⁵⁹ As a case in point, the German humanitarian NGO Welthungerhilfe partnered with Hand in Hand for Syria, a Syrian relief organisation established in the UK, which has taken over the distribution of relief food items and non-food items in Syria. The INGO acquires the relief supplies and organises transport to the Syrian border, and Hand in Hand works with local councils in Syria to identify who requires the assistance. The partnership demonstrates the importance of value added on each side of the equation. However, the Syrian interviewees for this report echoed what others have already argued: that the formal humanitarian sector has its difficulties to establish genuine partnerships with 'non-conventional' actors (Svoboda and Pantuliano: 2015). They felt that they were rarely treated as genuine counterparts but as junior partners and implementers if not as service providers.

Part V

Perceptions

How Diasporas and Conventional Humanitarian Actors Perceive One Another

The ways in which diasporas and conventional actors perceive one another is often marked by assumptions that can hinder cooperation and collaboration (Horst et al.: 2016). Some conventional humanitarian actors interviewed for this study argued that Somali diasporas are generally effective if they have a specific cause, though their humanitarian relief can be disorganised, spontaneous, localised and clan-based. Remittances provided in large volumes to keep crisis-affected populations afloat could be used for community-based humanitarian relief, rather than micro-level assistance, they argued.⁶⁰ The same arguments have been made about how remittances are used for consumption solely (Kapur: 2003), yet there is evidence that the use of monetary transfers for expenditures like housing, sanitation, health care, food, and schooling, tend to have positive multiplier effects on local economic activity (de Haas: 2005). Furthermore, diasporas tend to send private transfers to family and kin during emergencies while also fundraising for larger-scale humanitarian assistance at the meso-level, as demonstrated throughout this study.

Conventional actors were not the only ones who had preconceived notions. For instance, several of the Somali diaspora organisations interviewed in Denmark stated that non-diaspora conventional actors lack the cultural competencies to respond effectively to complex emergencies and crisis situations.⁶¹ Diasporas across the three case studies advocated that conventional humanitarians should increase their consultation and exchange with those who have local knowledge about the contexts in which they work in order to improve humanitarian response. Yet, despite the validity of these recommendations, interviews with Sierra Leonean and Syrian local partners revealed that diaspora organisations do not themselves, always assess the needs of crisis-affected populations properly.⁶² In some cases, inappropriate relief supplies sent by diasporas arrived in Sierra Leone, Turkey and Lebanon due of a lack of coordination in assessing needs.⁶³

Some diasporas mistrust international humanitarian organisations and UN agencies because of the financial incentives they receive as well as the substantial amounts of funding they spend on administrative costs. This is often juxtaposed to voluntary diaspora initiatives, with little or no funding going to administration. Such critiques about the shortcomings of the conventional humanitarian system are already part of an on-going internal dialogue amongst international actors and funding governments in the lead up to the WHS to ensure that the system does not continue to fail to meet the global demand for humanitarian assistance.

Local Actor Perceptions of Diasporas and Conventional Humanitarian Actors

Some local partners lamented that the local knowledge deficit of donors and their INGO partners could be augmented by their input. For instance, whereas local organisations like Syrian Eyes liaise directly with refugees in the Beqaa Valley, INGOs work through camp principals (shawish), who do not necessarily represent the needs of displaced populations.⁶⁴ Furthermore, coordination meetings are well-intentioned but ineffective if conducted in English and therefore inaccessible to many non-English speaking local NGOs who rarely have the administrative capacities to participate in coordination meetings, making coordination even harder.⁶⁵

According to some interviewed local partner organisations, diaspora organisations lack at times credible information about the needs of affected populations. Syrian organisations in Lebanon and Turkey supported by in-kind donations from Syrian diaspora organisations argued that relief aid provided by diasporas has the tendency of being disorganised, discontinuous, unpredictable and even politicised at times.⁶⁶ Notwithstanding, Syrian diaspora organisations are part, or rather, have been instrumental in establishing networks with local Syrian relief organisations, such as the Syrian NGO Alliance (SNA), the Syrian Relief Network (SRN) or the Union of Syrian Civil Society Organisations.⁶⁷

Mistrust and Misinformation Fuel Perceptions

If perceptions hinder collaboration amongst local, transnational and international humanitarian actors, then mistrust and stereotypes fuelled by incomplete information are also the foundation of those perceptions. One source of mistrust of international actors is the imbalance of resources available, between themselves, the diaspora, and local actors. Such mistrust is also fuelled by perceptions by the diaspora of externally generated recommendations and policies, in contrast to the self-perceptions of diasporas as having 'a longer-term view' of crisis situations based on social, cultural and political realities on the ground. Conventional actors have perceptions of diaspora ineffectiveness, lack of transparency and accountability.

As this study has demonstrated the situation is far more complex. Given the extent and depth of diaspora humanitarian engagements evidenced in this study, improved understanding, coordination, mutual support and collaboration between the different sectors and actors based on practical and actual interventions would reduce grounds for these stereotypical perceptions.



Photo: Bio-Agriculture and Food Security projects in the provinces of Hasaka and Aleppo in Syria © Union of Kurdish Students in Syria and Germany e. V.

Part VI Recommendations

This research report has generated a number of recommendations that could facilitate greater complementarity between not only diasporas, conventional actors and donors, but also amongst local, transnational and international humanitarians.

Collaboration and coordination should focus on how conventional humanitarian mechanisms can better support diaspora humanitarians and benefit from their comparative advantage. While diasporas and their local partners would maintain ownership and autonomy, their capacity to deliver large-scale relief would be enhanced. The composite list of support identified by the consulted Sierra Leoneans, Somalis and Syrians and detailed below is a good starting point. The lack of core funding remains a serious constraint for these diasporas as well as other diasporas engaged in humanitarian action, who often struggle to sustain their efforts over a longer horizon or to scale them up. The lack of capacity to execute large-scale humanitarian relief, and limited coordination with humanitarian actors are also major impediments.

Composite List of Needs Demonstrated by Diaspora Humanitarians

| Sierra Leone | Somalia | Syria |
|--|---|--|
| Core funding | Core funding | Core funding |
| Support from SL government/ government in neighbouring countries | Capacity building/training | Capacity building/training |
| Support and knowledge transfer from other diasporas | Support and knowledge transfer from other diasporas | Better coordination with conventional actors |
| Capacity building/training | Ease of money transfer | Support from traditional humanitarian and other international actors |
| Support from host government | Support from traditional humanitarian and other international actors | Ease of money transfer |

A number of recommendations follow herein that directly address the challenges of funding, capacity building and coordination:

Funding and money transfer facilitation

A ‘diaspora humanitarian emergency small grants scheme’ similar to micro-financing for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), should be considered by donors as a mechanism that would enable diasporas to access their emergency budgets directly, as opposed to diasporas having to apply for funding through third party implementing partners.

Matched funding schemes should also be considered by donors and conventional actors to support diaspora humanitarian interventions. Similar schemes for diaspora organisations already exist in the development arena, usually involving a combination of matched funding and capacity building. For instance, the DRC Diaspora Programme provides both forms of assistance to Afghan and Somali diaspora organisations registered in Denmark through funding from the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) (Danstrøm, Kleist and Sørensen: 2015).

Conventional humanitarian actors should consider supporting diaspora advocacy for governments to reconsider counter-terrorism legislation that impedes diaspora monetary transfers to those in acute humanitarian situations.

Diaspora humanitarian relief supply shipments should be exempt from export and import duties, through host, transit and homeland governments providing reprieves during extreme emergency situations, where possible. This will enable diasporas to channel these additional funds into supporting further humanitarian action.

Capacity building

Donors and conventional actors should provide organisational development grants and management training to diaspora institutions engaged in direct humanitarian relief.

Diasporas should be supported to organise into formal structures with accountable and transparent reporting mechanisms in order to build their capacity, scale up their efforts and enhance coordination.

Diaspora organisations should adopt gender mainstreaming as a core principle and formally incorporate women into leadership positions so that they are better equipped to drive humanitarian relief at the institutional level.

Coordination

Diasporas should be supported to establish focal points representing diaspora organisations who can liaise directly with local organisations and international humanitarian actors and they should be integrated into crisis planning along with other more “traditional” partners during crises.

Donors should arrange frequent exchanges with the diaspora community where diaspora and donors can talk about their efforts, challenges and successes. This will also help dispel misperceptions and incorrect assumptions.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) should consider expanding its financial tracking systems to include humanitarian funding generated from diasporas, thereby formally acknowledging their contributions.

Given their language skills and cultural competencies, diasporas should contribute to external, qualitative reviews with local partners and beneficiaries of humanitarian aid. This would enable diasporas to collate local feedback and make policy recommendations about good practices, while also incorporating lessons learned into their own humanitarian interventions.

Humanitarian Response Plans should aim to include and incorporate local actors and diaspora organisations in their assessment, development and implementation phases.

Diaspora organisations should use remittances for community-based interventions, by supporting credible and established local organisations on the ground.

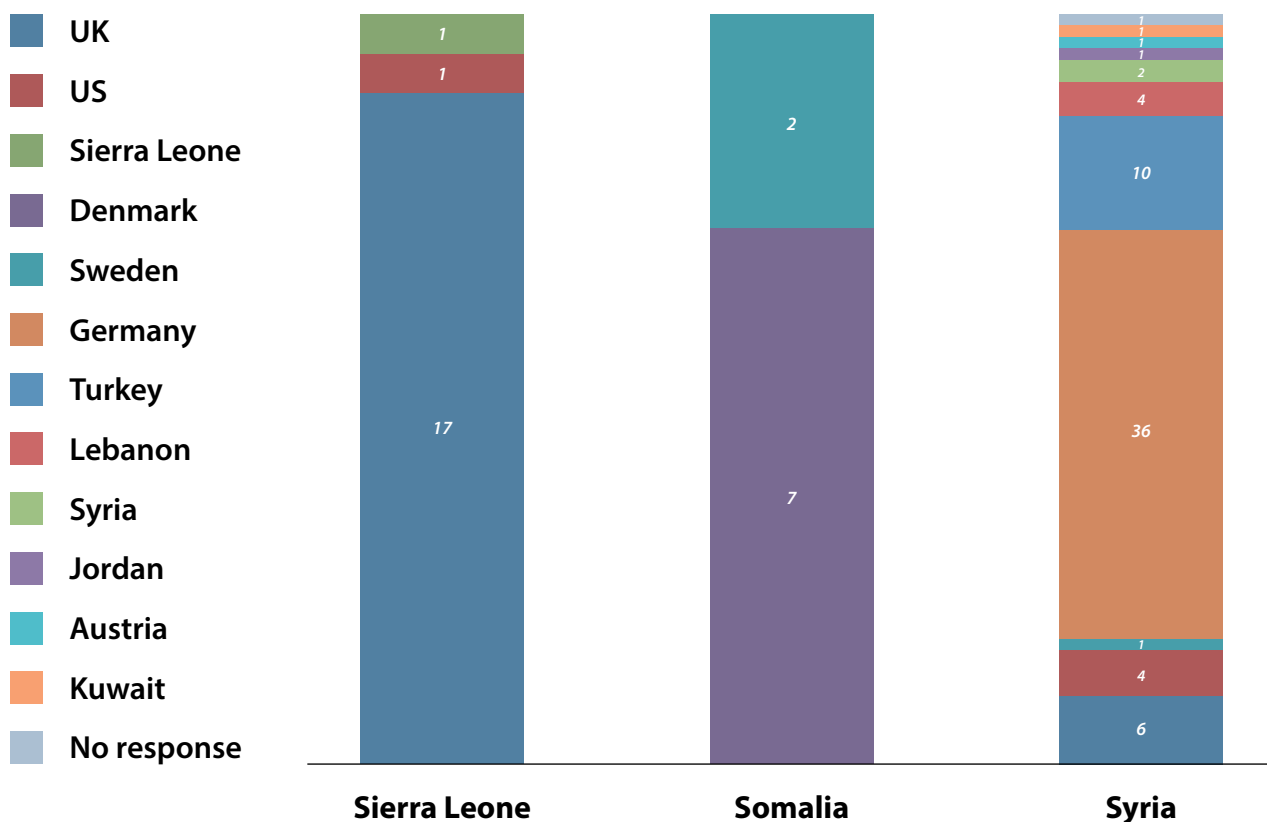
A web interface should be developed in which local, transnational and conventional humanitarian actors can engage in real time dialogue and coordination, particularly as it relates to quick-impact needs assessments of crisis-affected populations and the most safe/secure relief delivery channels.

Academics and policy officials should collaborate on further empirical studies about diaspora humanitarian efforts, including diaspora humanitarian mappings, in order to devise a ‘diaspora humanitarian intervention typology’ as a rubric for engaging transnational groups in emergency relief.

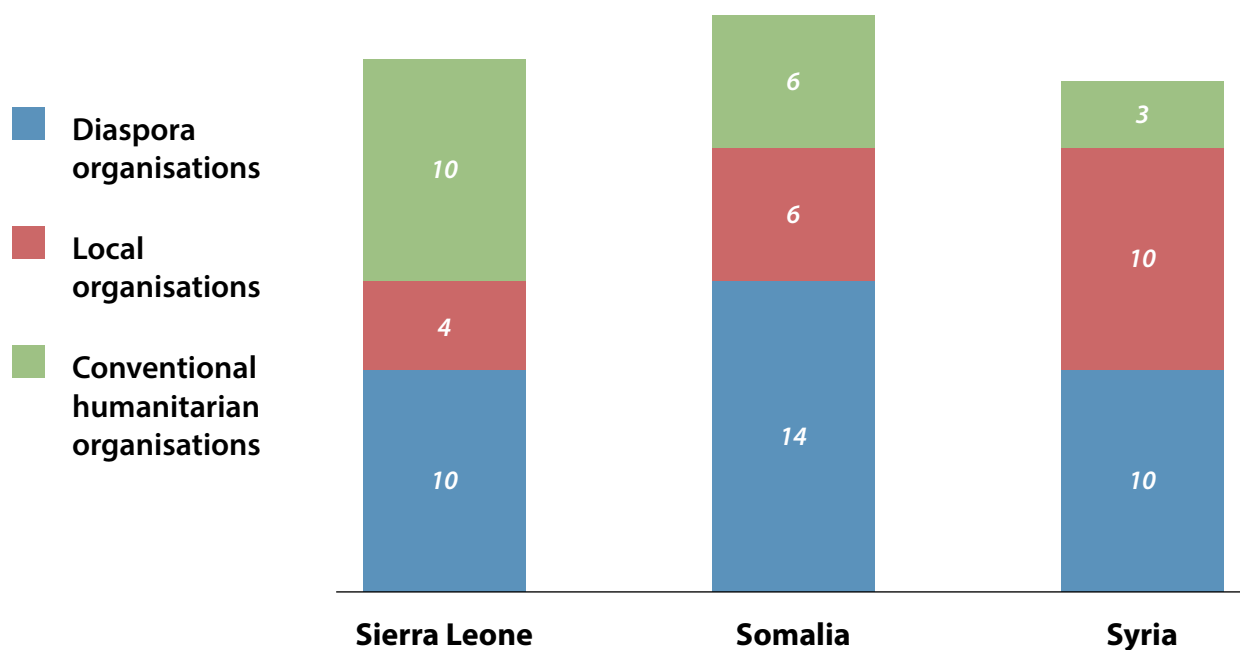
Annex

Summary of Research Methods Generating Data

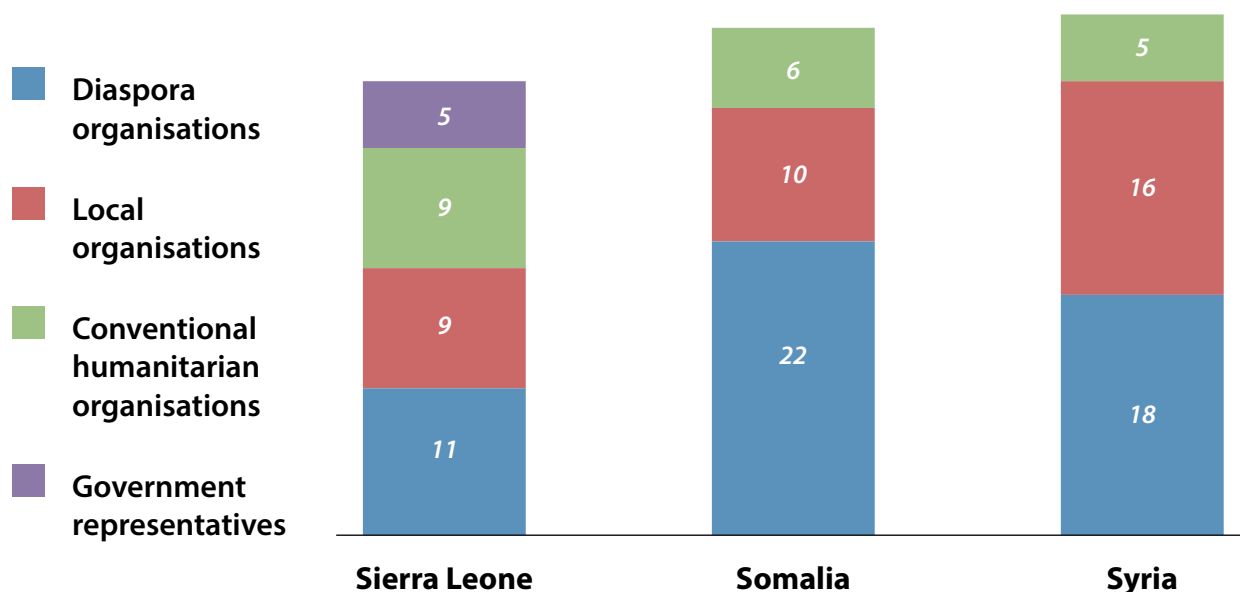
Cross-referencing surveys



Mapping



Semi-structured interviews



| Case Study Country/ Methodology | Cross-referencing surveys | Mapping Exercises | Semi-structured interviews |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Sierra Leone | *17-UK *1-SL *1-US =19 | *10 diaspora orgs. *4 local orgs. *10 conventional humanitarian orgs. | *11 diasporas *9 local partner organisations *9 conventional humanitarian actors *5 government representatives |
| Somalia | *5-Denmark *2-Sweden =7 | *14 diaspora orgs. *6 local orgs. *6 conventional humanitarian orgs. | *22 diasporas *10 local partner organisations *6 conventional humanitarian actors |
| Syria | *36-Germany *10-Turkey *6-UK *4-US *3-Lebanon *2-Syria *1-Jordan *1-Austria *1-Sweden *1-Kuwait *1-No response =66 | *10 diaspora orgs. *10 local orgs. *3 conventional humanitarian orgs. | *18 diasporas *16 local partner organisations *5 conventional humanitarian actors |
| TOTAL | 92 surveys | 73 mappings | 111 interviews |

Mapped and Interviewed Diaspora Organisations

Visit the DEMAC website for a detailed overview of diaspora organisations and sectors/geographic areas of interventions with contact data (<http://www.demac.org/find-a-partner/diaspora-organisations>).

Sierra Leone

Association of Sierra Leonean Healthcare Professionals Abroad (TOSHPA)
Becoming a Child/Heaven Homes
EngAyde
Let Them Help Themselves
Lifeline Network
Lunchbox Gift
National Association for Peace and Positive Change (NAPPC)
Niameh Foundation
Peagie Woo Bay Scholarship Fund
Power Women 232
Sierra Leone Health Initiative
Sierra Leone Muslim Women Cultural Organisation
Sierra Leone UK Diaspora Ebola Response Task Force (SLUKDERT)
Sierra Leone War Trust (SLWT)

Somalia

Gargaar Charity Society
DAN-TA QOYS-KA (Care for the Family)
Danish Human Appeal
Danish Somali Markhir Organisation (DESMO)
Gladsaxe Sports and Cultural Organisation
Ogaden Concern Association Denmark (OCADK)
Organisation for the Rehabilitation of Somalia (OFROSOM)
Quaran
Somali Families Feeding
Somaliland Mothers' Organisation of Denmark
Somali Network
Southern Somalia Peace and Development Organisation (SSPDO)
Viborg Somali Association

Syria

Action League Free Syria (Aktionsbündnis Freies Syrien)
Free Association of Syrian Expats (FAOSE)
German-Syrian Association for the Promotion of Freedom and Human Rights (DSV)
German-Syrian Doctors for Humanitarian Aid (Deutsch-Syrische Ärzte für Humanitäre Hilfe)
German Syrian Forum (Deutsch Syrisches Forum)
Gyalpa
Free German Syrian Society (Freie Deutsch-Syrische Gesellschaft)
Hand in Hand for Syria
Help without Borders (Hilfe ohne Grenzen)
Homs League Abroad
International Humanitarian Relief
Jusur – Bridges (Jusur – Brücken)
Jusoor
Khayr
Social Association Lien (Sozialverein Lien)
Sonbola
Syrian Aid Tübingen (Tübinger Syrienhilfe)
Syrian Forum
Syrian Humanitarian Forum
Union of Kurdish Students in Germany and Syria
Union of Medical Care and Relief Organisations (UOSSM)
White Wings (Weiße Flügel)

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Notes

1. In addition to the four principles, clusters were adopted in 2005 as part of efforts governing the new Humanitarian Reform Agenda. Clusters represent groups of United Nations (UN) and non-UN humanitarian organisations responsible for coordinating 11 sectors of intervention, namely: health (World Health Organisation-WHO); logistics (World Food Programme-WFP); nutrition (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund-UNICEF); protection (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees-UNHCR); emergency shelter (International Federation of the Red Cross-IFRC and UNHCR); water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) (UNICEF); refugee/internally displaced persons (IDP) camp coordination and camp management (International Organisation for Migration-IOM and UNHCR); early recovery (United Nations Development Programme-UNDP); education (UNICEF and Save the Children); emergency telecommunications (WFP); and food security (WFP and Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)).
2. Central Foreigners Register, Federal Office of Administration, Germany.
3. Sierra Leone established an Office of Diaspora Affairs in 2007, which remains incubated in Statehouse, the Office of the President of Sierra Leone. It was agreed by the DEMAC project team that given the fractured political climate in Somalia and Syria, political actors from those two countries would not be interviewed.
4. Two phone interviews were conducted with local partner organisations in Mogadishu and Burao.
5. While Ebola compromised service delivery in health and education, it also significantly interrupted agricultural production, mining operations, manufacturing and construction, travel and tourism, domestic and international trade.
6. The eight clusters are education; food security; health; nutrition; protection; shelter-non-food items; WASH; and multi-sector for internally displaced, refugees and returnees.
7. Information provided during interviews in Sierra Leone.
8. Interviews conducted for the DRC Diaspora Programme Scoping Study Potentials to Promote Diaspora-Related Programming in DRC Country Operations.
9. Information provided during interviews in Denmark. One Somali respondent wished that that the community would put personal differences and issues aside, regardless of age and gender.
10. Information provided during interviews in UK.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. Information provided during interviews in Germany.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*
18. By the date of writing (March 2016), there are approximately 30 active Syrian(-German) diaspora registered associations in Germany that engage more or less regularly in relief activities inside Syria or the neighbouring countries.
19. According to Sezgin, such associations can be defined both as a humanitarian and as a political organisation because it is simultaneously engaged in humanitarian action and diaspora politics.
20. Information provided during an interview in Denmark.
21. Hawala (Arabic for 'transfer') are money transfers based on a network of money brokers, primarily located in the Middle East, North Africa, the Horn of Africa, and the Indian subcontinent. These money transfers made through setting of obligations without cash actually crossing borders and operate outside of, or parallel to, traditional banking, financial channels, and remittance systems.
22. Information provided during interviews in the UK.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*
25. Information provided during an interview in Germany.
26. *Ibid.*
27. Information provided during an interview in Turkey.
28. Information provided during an interview in Sierra Leone.

29. Information provided during an interview in the UK.
30. Information provided during an interview in Turkey.
31. Information provided during an interview in Germany.
32. Information provided during an interview in Denmark.
33. Information provided during a Skype interview with a diaspora informant in Denmark.
34. Information provided during interviews in the UK.
35. Information provided during interviews in Denmark
36. Information provided during interviews in Germany.
37. This also counts for the DEMAC initiative that so far has exclusively worked with Syrian diaspora humanitarians that provide relief to areas inside Syria outside government-control.
38. Information provided during an interview in Germany.
39. Information provided during an interview in the UK.
40. Information provided during an interview in Denmark.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*
45. Information provided during an interview in Denmark.
46. Information provided during interviews in Turkey. UOSSM was founded in Paris-France in 2011, from 13 medical and relief organisations and included hundreds of Syrian doctors or doctors with Syrian migration background working in different Arab countries, Canada, Europe, Syria and the US.
47. *Ibid.*
48. Information provided during interviews in Turkey.
49. Information provided during an interview in Denmark.
50. *Ibid.*
51. Information provided during interviews in Sierra Leone.
52. Information provided during an interview in Sierra Leone.
53. Information provided during interviews in Lebanon and Turkey.
54. Information provided during interviews in Somaliland.
55. Information provided during interviews in Germany.
56. *Ibid.*
57. *Ibid.*
58. *Ibid.*
59. Information provided during an interview in Turkey.
60. Information provided during interviews in Somaliland.
61. Information provided during an interview in Denmark.
62. Information provided during interviews in Sierra Leone, Turkey and Lebanon.
63. *Ibid.*
64. Information provided during an interview in Lebanon.
65. Information provided during an interview in Turkey.
66. Information provided during interviews in Lebanon and Turkey.
67. Information provided during an interview in Turkey.



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