

## **Aid Coordination Project Board Meeting**

Date: 2 June 2021

Time: 15:00 – 16:30

Platform: Online meeting held over Zoom

**Co-chairs: Dr. Mohamed Ibrahim, Permanent Secretary, OPM, and Mr. Jocelyn Mason, UNDP Somalia Resident Representative**

Participants: Muhumed Hussein, Mohamed Ali Mohamed and Hodhan Noor (ACU/OPM), Thomas Oertle and Nimo Jirdeh (Switzerland), Joshua Vetter (USAID), Jake Allen and Amy Slonje (FCDO), Mohamed Gele and Abshir Ibrahim (MOPIED), Jacqueline Olweya, Pau Blanquer, Laura Rio, Aigul Zakirova and Tendai Chabvuta (UNDP), Jean Ives Bonzi (UN IO), Howard Bell (consultant)

The meeting started with introductions of all the participants and thereafter went into the business of the meeting.

### **Opening remarks:**

The Chair, Dr. Mohamed Ibrahim, gave the opening remarks noting the significant progress that has been made by the project from time of its inception. Among other highlights he noted that a Somali-owned open-sourced Aid Information Management System (AIMS) has been developed and is now fully functional and hosted by the Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development (MOPIED), that the aid architecture has been simplified and aligned to the structure of the National Development Plan and is now less costly than before, and that the project has contributed to the national response to the Covid-19 pandemic. He also noted that the participation of the Federal Member States (FMS) had now been enhanced and that greater focus is now being given to ensuring project accountability and taking all stakeholders' views into consideration. He thanked the funding partners in the meeting for their financial support to the project and for technical assistance provided to the staff of the Aid Coordination Unit (ACU). He added that, while the government is fully committed to moving towards a more sustainable management of the aid architecture, joint efforts will continue to be needed to ensure continuity of the aid coordination and management processes in Somalia, particularly in the post-Covid-19 period.

The Chair observed that, among other challenges, the Covid-19 response had been a significant additional burden on the project, but the ACU worked closely with development partners, including UNDP, had risen to the challenge.

Mr. Jocelyn Mason (UNDP) welcomed the donors, government partners and UN colleagues to the meeting. He noted that this was expected to be the last scheduled Board meeting for the project, which is expected to close on 30 June 2021. He observed that the meeting was being held to assess the progress made by the project and to discuss next steps following project closure to ensure the gains made are preserved. He

noted that significant progress had been observed and commended all involved for the hard work during the lifespan of the project.

Mr. Mason remarked on the importance of supporting aid coordination and management in a conflict-affected countries which are highly dependent on external assistance, as is the case of Somalia. In addition, he acknowledged the difficult political situation faced by the country in recent months and expressed hope for a quick and peaceful resolution .

On the meeting, he noted the presentation to be made by the consultant Mr. Howard Bell on proposals for continued support to aid coordination, and the need to agree measures to ensure that no break in the aid coordination function occurred between the end of the current project and the start-up of any new phase of project activity.

### **Presentations**

ACU, MOPIED and UNDP jointly report on a number of issues, including:

**Financial report** – Mr. Pau Blanquer (UNDP) presented a project financial report , which set out overall expenditure per output, donor and implementer, and forecast an end of project (30 June) balance of approximately USD 350,000. He explained that he balance is caused in part by the low levels of aid architecture activity during the ongoing political transition, and in part by the switch to online meetings since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic: both factors have resulted in significant underspends. The report is shown in the attached PowerPoint presentation.

**Project Achievements:** Mr. Muhumed Hussein (ACU Director), Ms. Hodhan Noor (ACU SDRF Officer), Mr. Mohamed Ali (ACU Finance and Admin Officer), and Mr. Mohamed Gele (Head of ICT Unit at MOPIED), presented project achievements (see attached PowerPoint presentation).

Project achievements highlighted included: the endorsement and rolling out of the refined aid architecture and steps taken to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of the aid coordination function. The latter includes a significant reduction in the number of ACU staff funded by the project; the outlining of an approach to sustainability in the new project document ; the shift towards a greater use of online communication systems; and the adoption of the new aid architecture in which the Integrated Coordination Team (ICT) distributes aid coordination responsibilities across government. Attention was also drawn to: the approval by the ICT of a set on digital tools to improve implementation of key managerial tasks, collaboration and communication between aid architecture stakeholders; to the improved capacity of the ACU as independently assessed; and to the contribution of the project to an effective and agile response in 2020 to the Covid-19 crisis.

Finally, Mr. Mohamed Gele (MOPIED) reported on progress towards the development and implementation of a nationally-owned AIMS and annual reporting of aid flows. Mr. Gele highlighted the full ownership of MOPIED in the management of the system, the participation of implementing partners through the uploading to the AIMS of project

data, and the usefulness of the information and reports produced as a result. He concluded by noting the progress made from the initial use of manual Excel spreadsheets to today's fully automated online portal (AIMS), which has gained real traction with stakeholders over the past year, and reported that training for civil service personnel and other stakeholders in the use of AIMS is now regularly organized by MOPIED.

**Main challenges:** Mr. Pau Blanquer and Mr. Muhumed Hussein reported that project implementation has been significantly affected by external factors, including the ongoing electoral/political transition, which has resulted in the halting of the operationalization of many of the structures and processes of the aid architecture, and the covid-19 outbreak, which caused the discontinuation of in-person meetings and obliged the project to shift quickly to the utilization of online communication tools.

Mr. Hussein informed the meeting of progress being made towards the development of a package of products (including leaflets, Standard Operating Procedures, and Guidance Notes) aimed at raising awareness and providing guidance for the effective operationalization of the aid architecture, and announced a workshop to be held in the coming weeks at which they would be presented. He also reported that trainings have been conducted for FMS Director Generals (only Puntland remains to be done) on the refined aid architecture.

The main challenges identified, on which attention will need to be placed in coming months, are the need: to improve the strategic focus of the aid architecture; to shift towards improved evidence-based decision-making; to further strengthen FMS engagement; and to continue improving the sustainability and effectiveness of the aid architecture, including through the strengthening of the Integrated Coordination Team.

### **Questions and comments:**

**Mr. Thomas Oertle** commented that it would be difficult at this juncture to assess the extent to which the project has contributed to improvements in aid coordination given the external factors (such as the political transition) that have affected the operationalization of the new aid architecture. He noted that the management of the Covid 19 pandemic was conducted outside of formal coordination structures and suggested that it would have been interesting if instead it had been handled through the aid architecture as a way of demonstrating its maturity. He stressed the need to accelerate the use of digital and collaborative tools, which is even more necessary under Covid 19 restrictions.

More positively, he noted that there is a very motivated team at the ACU and remarked that Muhumed Hussein has shown great leadership over the years. He highlighted the development of the Somali AIMS and its smooth operationalization as a positive achievement and that sustainability has been improved with the staffing.

On the use of online systems, he suggested that many of the documents discussed in the SDRF Steering Committee and Pillar Working Groups could be reviewed online.

**Mr. Joshua Vetter** thanked the team for the thorough presentation and noted that it raised all the key issues. He added that it was important to acknowledge that some of the challenges faced by the project are political and fall outside the control of the ACU. He also noted that the development of the AIMS has been an important achievement that needed to be sustained.

**Ms. Nimmo Jirdeh** thanked the team for the presentation and commented that there was need to fully operationalize the digital tools presented by the ACU.

**Mr. Jean Ives Bonzi** noted that there is a need to ensure that the momentum gathered in the development and use of the online tools is not lost.

### **Responses by the ACU**

**Mr. Muhumed Hussein** highlighted the strong collaboration and team work between the ACU, UNDP, UN RCO and the donors supporting the project.

On the online platforms he noted that some of the selected digital tools are already in use and that others will be rolled out and tested in the coming months, and added that the issue remains firmly on the ACU agenda. He indicated that the uptake of the online platforms had been very good and though unfortunate, it was also true that the Covid 19 pandemic had enabled that situation. He observed that Covid 19 had reduced travel and movements thus reducing the bill for the Aid coordination processes and the online tools had stepped in to play a major role in the process.

**Mr. Pau Blanquer** agreed with the emphasis placed on the use of online and digital tools. He went on to note that the challenges outlined in the presentation drew attention to the importance of strengthening the planning capacity of Somali institutions, particularly at FMS level, and the need to improve the analytical work of Pillar Working Groups as a means of improving the strategic focus of aid coordination work. He added that streamlining a number of processes which are now advancing in a fragmented manner (i.e. prioritization of NDP 9 interventions by MOPIED, assessment of Covid-19 socio-economic impact, analysis of aid flows, development of FMS strategic plans, ...) and analyzing them in an integrated manner can help improve the contribution of aid to national priorities.

### **Presentation of new project in support to aid coordination by Mr. Howard Bell and discussion on next steps**

**Mr. Howard Bell** presented proposals for continued support to aid coordination following the closure of the current project, as set out in a recently drafted project document. The presentation highlighted the new project's theory of change, which builds on the challenges identified and lessons learned by the current project, and set out proposed activities, outputs and required budget. The draft project document is attached for further reference.

Given that project donors have expressed their preference to wait for the current political transition to resolve before considering the possibility of supporting a new aid

coordination project, and that a balance of around USD 350,000 is forecast by the end of June, **Mr. Mohamed Ali and Mr. Pau Blanquer** proposed a no cost project extension of the ongoing project until 31 December 2021. They argued that the extension would ideally provide time for the electoral process to be completed in a peaceful manner, the aid architecture to continue to be rolled out if political stability continues to improve, a project evaluation to be conducted, and resources to be mobilized for the new project.

**Mr. Thomas Oertle** raised questions on Outputs 2 and 3 of the new project, particularly on the engagement of civil society, as well as on the involvement of non-traditional donors, and on how durable solutions would be coordinated. Mr Oertle supported the proposal to extend the project at no additional cost until December.

**Mr. Josh Vetter** stated that there would be no objection from USAID to the extension of the current project, with a caveat that all funds provided by USAID, the balance of which at this point is less than USD 80,000 out of a total contribution of USD 1.5 million, are expended by the end of June 2021.

### **Closing Remarks**

**Mr. Jocelyn Mason** gave the closing remarks and thanked the team for the well-prepared meeting, and expressed satisfaction that the donors had agreed to extend the project on a no cost basis until 31 December 2021.

**Mr. Muhumed Hussein**, standing in for Dr. Mohamed Ibrahim noted with thanks the decision to utilize the estimated balance of approx. \$350, 000 on a six-month project extension. He also thanked Howard Bell for his work on drafting the new project document and noted that there would be an invitation for an aid effectiveness workshop for the validation workshop of SOPs in the coming weeks.

He also made an announcement that this would be his last project board meeting as Director of the ACU as he will be stepping down. He thanked the donor group members, UNDP, RCO and other colleagues from his team.

The meeting appreciated Muhumed's contribution to the ACU and aid coordination.

The meeting closed at 4:15pm.

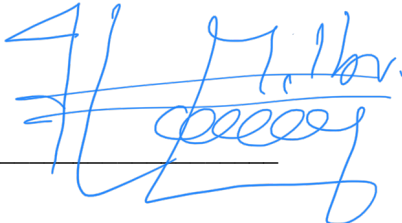
### **Decisions made**

It was agreed to extend the ongoing "Support to aid management and coordination in Somalia" project from 1 July to 31 December 2021 using the estimated balance of approximately USD 350,000.

**Dr. Ibrahim Mohamed**

**Mr. Jocelyn Mason**

**Permanent Secretary  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Federal Government of Somalia**



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**Resident Representative  
UNDP Somalia**

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## **Attendance List**

Dr. Mohamed Ibrahim – PS OPM, Co Chair,

Jocelyn Mason – UNDP RR, Co Chair

Joshua Vetter – USAID

Thomas Oertle – Swiss Embassy

Nimo Jirdeh – Swiss Embassy

Jake Allen – FCDO

Amy Slonje - FCDO

Muhumed Hussein - ACU Director

Mohamed Ali – ACU

Mohamed Gelle - MOPIED

Abshir Ibrahim - MOPIED

Mohamed Ibrahim – MOPIED

Hannan Noor Abdi – ACU - SDRF Officer

Jacqueline Olweya – UNDP DRR – Programs

Laura Rio – UNDP – ERID Portfolio Manager

Aigul Zakirova – UNDP – ERID Portfolio Operations Manager

Pau Blanquer – UNDP – Aid Coordination Specialist

Tendai Chabvuta – UNDP – ERID Portfolio - Monitoring and Evaluation Officer

Jean- Ives Bonzi – UN RCO – Coordination Specialist

Howard Bell – Aid Coordination consultant