

# Assessment of corruption in the humanitarian assistance in Puntland State of Somalia

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – Corruption in humanitarian aid is one of the most worried and worst problems around the world. The existence of corruption acts in humanitarian aid delivery can endanger the already susceptible lives of the neediest individuals in the community. Amid serious humanitarian allegation in the country, this study aims to capture meaningful insights in humanitarian aid corruption in Puntland State of Somalia.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The study applied qualitative method and used interview as a technique of data collection. The information obtained through the interview was analyzed by quoting and narration forms.

**Findings** – The findings indicated numerous acts of corruption in all project stages including corruption in project granting and humanitarian staff employment, distortion of project targets and diversion of humanitarian project from targeted communities. The research also found that governmental and non-governmental actors are involved in the humanitarian corruption such as project managers and support staffs in addition to line ministries, parliament and community representatives.

**Research limitations/implications** – Corruption is a taboo and is difficult to research; people do not want to share the information for fear of victimization. Concerned institutions were not willing to provide necessary materials which led to shortage of secondary data. Another problem encountered during the study has been that the humanitarian stakeholders (for instance, government, non-government and private institutions) acted reluctantly to cooperate because of suspicion that disclosing information may lead to negative effect on their business. To overcome the challenges, the study assured the confidentiality of the members and that information collected would be used for research purposes only. The study further combined various tools of data collection so that the weakness of one tool becomes the strength of the other; while the researcher made efforts to build rapport with the research participants.

The research was undertaken at the request of Kaalo Aid and Development Organization through the Sponsorship of National Endowment for Democracy (NED) where its basis originally stemmed from the passion to enrich the governance knowledge in the country and help the fight against corruption. As the society wills to reach its envisioned statehood, there will be a greater need to study current pressing challenges blocking the road to the ambition. Thus, the research aims to increase the knowledge body and information in corruption. It is confined to the perception of participants and found secondary data. However, it does not intend to denounce the wrongdoings of any specific institution.

In fact, this would not have been possible without a strong facilitation of the almighty Allah. After that I would like to appreciate the conversant adviser Ahmed Muse (Doctoral Researcher) who has provided guidance throughout the research process.

The author is grateful to those institutions and individuals for their participation and help in the research process. It is also worth noting that their responses do not necessarily reflect the behavior of the organizations they are selected from, instead their views are generic and based on their experience in the field.

Thank you all.



**Originality/value** – This study will contribute to the literature on corruption in the humanitarian aid. Specifically, the findings of this study will benefit academicians/researchers by giving empirical insights of corruption in the humanitarian aid in Puntland. It will benefit the government policymakers in the formulation of policies to combat corruption in the sector. Donors and aid agencies may also find the findings useful as they are key stakeholders who are interested in corruption in the humanitarian sector and finally the findings will benefit the wider society that is the primary victim of corruption in the humanitarian sector.

**Keywords** Corruption, Humanitarian assistance, Puntland Somalia, Anti-corruption

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

The notion of corruption is not new but rather has existed for centuries ([Mashal, 2011](#)). For over thousands of years, the acts of corruption such as giving and accepting bribes have been an accepted tradition in many parts of the world ([Treisman, 1998](#)). Studies on corruption have a long history, international scholars and interested organizations presented large publications on corruption as general and in the context of humanitarian assistance ([Andvig and Moene, 1982](#); Erik, 1993; Mohammad, 1998; [World Bank, 1997](#); UNDP, 1999; [Amundsen and Fjeldstad, 2000](#)). As a result of its impacts around the world, it is now recognized as one of the major deterrents of growth and development ([Arvind, 2001](#)). [World Bank \(1997\)](#) defines corruption as the misuse of entrusted power for personal gains. Humanitarian aid is defined as the assistance aimed to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain and protect human dignity during and in the aftermath of emergencies ([Puntland Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2015](#)).

The negatives effects of corruption on humanitarian aid include compromise of aid principles that undermines efforts toward saving lives, reduces the effectiveness of aid and ultimately damages the legitimacy and credibility of organizations to raise future funds ([Maxwell et al., 2008](#)). In past decades, there was growing worldwide concern over the corruption in humanitarian aid ([Bailey, 2008](#)). This is because massive humanitarian assistances donated in response to natural crisis and conflicts have faced shocking human rights and resources abuse ([Maxwell et al., 2008](#)). The role of international media and public interest in the corruption max out which pushed the issue of corruption higher on the agenda of the humanitarian community ([Romero, 2011](#)). Public scandals in the humanitarian organizations are increasingly becoming the norm of the day. The corruption in the humanitarian sector was further compounded by the fact that the majority of the countries receiving humanitarian aid are already suffering from rampant corruption in all sectors that increases the risk and humanitarian aid corruption ([Maxwell et al., 2008](#)).

Recent corruption reports in the humanitarian sector led to the recognition of the risk of corruption and its consequences on delivering life-saving projects and services. However, the dilemma remained on how to tackle corruption ([Maxwell et al., 2008](#)). Aid agencies have exerted efforts on strengthening their financial, logistics, procurement and human resources over the past two decades, adopted various codes of conduct in attempts to improve standards and begun measures to improve accountability to the recipients of relief assistance as well as to those who provide the funding ([Sphere project, 2011](#)). [Maxwell et al. \(2008\)](#) stated that whistle blowing has since become one of the measures to mitigate corruption. Similarly, many developing countries including Africa have signed several regional and international anti-corruption conventions such as the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), the African Union's Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption, the Asian Development Bank/Organisation for Economic

Co-operation and Development Action Plan for the Asia-Pacific and Inter-American Convention Against Corruption (Bhargava, 2005). These conventions help curbing corruption in the humanitarian aid directly and indirectly.

In Somalia, corruption is both a cause and a consequence of unrest political condition; many times Somalia appeared at the lowest places of corruption perception index (Legacy Center, 2016). The effect of corruption disseminates almost every level in the country ranging from bribes in the bureaucracy to complete systematic political corruption, and private business bribes for the government officials and patronage networks of employment (Legacy Center, 2016). However, corruption in the humanitarian sector has not been adequately assessed. Therefore, this study aims to assess corruption in the humanitarian assistance in Puntland.

### *1.2 Statement of the problem*

The humanitarian aid in the developing countries is exposed to financial and non-financial abuse (Romero, 2011). In Somalia, corruption has been rampant in past decades (Transparency International, 2016). Stealing humanitarian foods and other lifesaving projects exacerbates the already catastrophic situation of the country. According to Transparency International (2016), about two million internally displaced people depending on humanitarian aid are affected by the corruption in the humanitarian aid. Food intended to feed them is sometimes sold out to raise personal benefits by entrusted individuals while the humanitarian agencies in Somalia operate under the supervision of weak institutions.

In Puntland, which is a federal member state, corruption in the humanitarian sector includes misuse of development aid, employment corruption, nepotism and that international NGOs are complaisant with the local NGOs in their corruption practices (Deq and Abdikadir, 2016). Stealing of aid is prevailing while the livelihood condition of the community is worsening which is perpetuated by droughts and failure of three consecutive rains in 2015-2016 (CERF-SHF Integrated Approach, 2017). Deq and Abdikadir (2016) conducted qualitative study on the perception of corruption as they mainly focused on corruption in the public sector. This study aims to assess corruption in the humanitarian sector in Puntland.

### *1.3 Objectives of the study*

*1.3.1 General objectives.* The general objective of the study is to assess corruption in humanitarian aid in Puntland.

*1.3.2 Specific objectives.* The specific objectives of the study are:

- To identify the types of corruption acts existing in the humanitarian assistance in Puntland.
- To determine the actors in the corruption in the humanitarian aid.
- To find out the ways to reduce or eliminate the corruption in humanitarian aid.

### *Research questions*

*RQ1.* What are the types of corruption acts that exist in humanitarian assistance in Puntland?

*RQ2.* Who are the actors involved in the corruption in the humanitarian aid?

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RQ3. What could be the possible strategies to fight with the corruption in humanitarian aid in Puntland?

#### *1.4 Significance of the study*

This study will contribute to the literature on corruption in the humanitarian aid. Specifically, the findings of the study will benefit academicians/researchers by giving empirical insights of corruption in the humanitarian aid in Puntland. It will benefit the government policymakers in the formulation of policies to combat corruption in the sector. Donors and aid agencies may also find the findings useful as they are key stakeholders who are interested in corruption in the humanitarian sector and finally the findings will benefit the wider society that is the primary victim of corruption in the humanitarian sector.

#### *1.5 Limitations of the study*

Corruption is a taboo and is difficult to research; people do not want to share information for the fear of victimization. Concerned institutions were not willing to provide necessary materials which led to shortage of secondary data. Another problem encountered during the study has been that the humanitarian stakeholders (for instance, government, non-government and private institutions) acted reluctantly to cooperate because of suspicion that disclosing information may lead to negative effect on their business. To overcome the challenges, the study assured the members of confidentiality and that the information collected would be used for research purposes only. The study further combined various tools of data collection so that the weakness of one tool becomes the strength of the other; while the researcher made efforts to build rapport with the research participants.

## **2. Literature review**

### *2.1 Historical evolution of corruption*

Corruption has existed for thousands of centuries. Kautilya, a Prime Minister of an Indian king wrote a book named “Arthashastra” approximately 2,000 years ago on corruption. Corruption has also been mentioned in early traditional poems and plays such as the prominent play, Shakespeare’s Hamlet. The world’s earliest constitutions, e.g. the American Constitution recognize corruption among the most awful crimes that could lead to impeachment of the president and losing political positions (Tanzi, 1998).

In the contemporary world, the debate of corruption has dominated the international discussion tables. In past decades, as corruption has attracted the global attention, many philosophers and INGOs focused on its mainstreaming as among the most emphasized global agendas. This has been partly embarked by the recognition of its detrimental relation to the livelihood and humanitarian issues (Romero, 2011). As the issue of corruption has been in long discussions in recent decades, many organizations and researchers have described it in various ways. For instance, the World Bank (1997) and UNDP (1999) define corruption as the misuse or the abuse of public office for personal gain (Balboa and Medalla, 2006). Though this short definition is most commonly used, many writers contended that corruption also exists in the private sector (Tanzi, 1998). Similarly, lack of parsimony in emergency aid resource and wastefulness has been viewed as corruption in humanitarian context. In general, the definition of corruption has gone in contention. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Council of Europe and the UN Conventions do not define “corruption.” Instead, they establish the offences for a range of corrupt behavior (Tanzi, 1998).

Corruption generally involves the acts of bribery, extortion, fraud, embezzlement, patronage, nepotism, the theft of state assets or the diversion of state revenues and to circumvent public policies and processes for competitive advantage and profit ([World Bank, 2018](#)). The most common acts of corruption in humanitarian aid context also include bribes, kickbacks, falsified expense reports, the abuse of powerful positions to get jobs for family and friends and the abuse of entrusted power in the allocation of aid in the demand for sexual favors or subservience ([Maxwell et al., 2008](#)).

## *2.2 Types of corruption*

Corruption is classified into different categories: grand corruption and bureaucratic corruption. The areas of action and the magnitude of the actions determine which kind of corruption acts would be categorized in to given type. Grand corruption occurs mostly at the legislatives and political levels while bureaucratic corruption commonly exists at public sector level and lower managerial too.

*2.2.1 Grand corruption.* Grand corruption is the act committed at the top level of the management that distort policies or the central functioning of the organization, enabling leaders to benefit at the expense of the public good [[Transparency International \(TI\) 2018](#)]. To [Arvind \(2001\)](#), grand corruption refers to the corruption acts of the political elite (elected officials) by which they exploit their power to make economic policies. [Donatella and Alberta \(1997\)](#) adds that corrupt political elite can change either the national policies or the implementation of national policies to serve their own interests at some cost to the populace; public spending is diverted to these sectors where gains from corruption are greatest ([Mashal, 2011](#)).

*2.2.2 Bureaucratic corruption.* Petty or bureaucratic corruption refers to everyday abuse of the entrusted power by low and middle public officials in their interaction with the ordinary citizens, who often are trying to access basic goods and services. This involves places such as hospitals, schools, police department and other agencies; it is the bribery in connection with the implementation of existing laws, rules and regulations ([Transparency International, 2018](#)).

## *2.3 Factors that motivate corruption*

Numerous issues such as economic factors, institutional factors and legal and social factors may generally motivate the acts of corruption.

*2.3.1 Economic factors.* Economic preconditions serve as fertile ground for corruption practices. The incidence of social problems such as low per capita income amplifies the existence of corrupt behaviors in the populace ([Pippidi, 2014](#)). In support of this, [Mashal \(2011\)](#) stated that corruption increases when the motivation to earn income is extremely high, for instance, poverty, low salaries and high risks of all kinds such as illness, accidents and unemployment with lack of insurance, when opportunities to engage in corruption are present such as the existence of more regulations. Moreover, the existence of high population relative to natural resources may serve as a predisposing factor in triggering corruption ([Balboa and Medalla, 2006](#)). The evidence also shows that the low incentive and wages increase the opportunities and motivation to engage in corruption ([Tanzi, 1998](#)).

*2.3.2 Political and institutional factors.* Similar to the other factors, there are broad set of policy and institutional challenges that can motivate the spread of corruption such as the existence of many regulations and authorization, discretion, ambiguity of the rules and procedures ([Tanzi, 1998](#)). It is also perpetuated by the weakness of legislative and judicial systems, lack of principles of ethics as well the existence of political instability ([Mashal,](#)

2011). Similarly, weak oversight and enforcement make the system prone to corruption (Balboa and Medalla, 2006).

*2.3.3 Legal factors.* The underlying state of legal condition influences corruption too. The absence of specific laws prohibiting corruption and punishing the corrupt individuals serve as budding nest for corruption (Mashal, 2011).

*2.3.4 Social factors.* In the civil society side, there are major set of conditions that hinder the efforts of fight against corruption including what Balboa and Medalla (2006) called “Soft social control systems” where there is high tolerance of the populace to the corrupt activities. Correspondingly, the existence of poor law abidance by the citizens promotes corruption. For example, when people encourage public officials to contravene rules and regulations and support corrupt practices for their own benefit (Panday, 2012; Pippidi, 2014). It is also encouraged by the conditions when everyone wants appointments, promotions and contracts. The public leaders are constantly inundated by people seeking favors and regarded as hopeless, inefficient or insensitive if their wishes are not granted. People tend to regard every problem as a personal problem instead of being social issue that needs to be addressed collectively through appropriate institutional interventions and policy decisions (Panday, 2012; Pippidi, 2014).

#### *2.4 Anti-corruption measures*

The anti-corruption measures are the strategies designed to fight with corruption. As corruption has become a prime agenda in past decades, there have been a number of measures agreed to carry out globally in the fight against it. This includes the aid granting conditionality policies pioneered by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Other measures include promoting international programs to control organized crime and the flow of illicit funds such as money laundering and improving the institutional framework for resolving international disputes (Bhargava, 2005). These strategies differ from one country to another.

#### *2.5 Corruption in Somalia*

Since the collapse of the central government in 1991, Somalia has been encountering innumerable hitches such as civil war, massive internal displacements, frequent droughts and rampant inflation, turning the country into one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises (SEMG, 2017). Several externally driven efforts to establish a unified central government have failed and the country has been without a functional central government for more than 20 years, making it one of the longest instances of state collapse in recent years (International Governance Institute, 2014). Hence, as tantamount to the other fragile states, Somalia faces rampant corruption challenges that affect in widespread; the ill practice of the corruption exists undoubtedly in the humanitarian sector (SEM, 2017).

The humanitarian aid is known to be obstructed to get bribe in parts of the country, humanitarian workers face the challenges of expulsion and sometimes-unlawful detention. The government officials often seek to interfere in humanitarian aid through influencing employment, amounts of staff salaries and intervention of contracting vendors, involvement of survey and office premises. The officials intervene in the beneficiary list too, to lead the humanitarian agencies to their own specific interests (UN, 2017).

Corruption in humanitarian sector is always perpetuated by the up-scaling status of corruption in the country, for instance, according to Marqaati (2017), only in the year 2016, an excess of 500 reports of corruption has been received from ordinary people. With the limited information and lack of effective data record and enough research studies, the exact information of corruption in Somalia is not exposed. However, there is a broad consensus



that Somalia faces more of corruption challenges in equal if not higher than the other post-conflict countries in the humanitarian sector. [Chène \(2012\)](#) stated that in Somalia corruption permeates all sectors of government and non-government and seriously undermining the humanitarian efforts.

Somalia has persistently occupied among the lowest ranks in corruption perception index rank. From 2006 to 2016, Transparency International has consistently ranked Somalia last on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index [[Transparency International \(TI\), 2017](#)]. In addition, corruption in Somalia extremely affects humanitarian aid sectors ([Legacy Center, 2017](#)). Public hospitals run by the international organizations through humanitarian aid often require "facilitation payments." According to some observers, it is common for pregnant women to be denied assistance until they bribe medical staff, similarly medical equipment provided to public health-care facilities are reportedly sold off to private hospitals ([Dirye, 2014](#)).

[GAN Integrity \(2016\)](#) reported that in Somalia, large proportion of humanitarian aid is diverted from the public benefit to individual pockets of officials and other powerful actors. According to [Ibrahim \(2017\)](#), as cited by [Rahman \(2017\)](#), "Somalia's Public Management Unit reported that over US\$300 million of government funds and another US\$70 million from Arab donors were missing from its treasury. Later SEMG revealed that 70 per cent of funds earmarked for development in Somalia between 2009 and 2010 were misappropriated".

The problem of corruption exists and occurs at all levels in all federal and state governments ([Legacy Center, 2016](#)). Regarding Puntland, despite general corruption allegation that it partly shares with the overall country, a number of corruption acts have been reported in different institutions. For instance, *qorax-joog* (standing under the sun), *fududeyn* (facilitation), *fhacdhaac* (droppings), *jeebka gacanta geli* (put your hand in the pocket) and *fadlan* (please) are invented words that cover up corruption and at least part of these terms are used in every sectors. There is also massive acts of nepotism in civil society organization, private business and employment of humanitarian aid workers ([Deq and Abdikadir, 2016](#)). It is generally known that humanitarian aid delivered in the places where such acts of corruption exist in the public sector is always in risk of corruption and misuse ([Romero, 2011](#)). The same is true in Puntland, like other sectors, corruption is rife in the humanitarian assistance ([Deq and Abdikadir, 2016](#)).

### *2.6 Anti-corruption measures in Somalia*

In Somalia, including Puntland, the country's institutions are dysfunctional and there are no effective measures to curb the prevailing corruption in the country ([Transparency international \(TI\), 2017](#)). Somalia has not signed the UNCAC, which covers a wide-range of corruption offences, including domestic and foreign bribery, embezzlement, trading in influence and money laundering ([GAN Integrity, 2018](#); [Transparency international \(TI\), 2017](#); [UNODC, 2017](#)). Though signed Somalia also has not yet ratified the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption, which criminalizes domestic and foreign bribery, diversion of property by public officials, trading in influence, illicit enrichment, money laundering and concealment of property ([GAN integrity, 2018](#)).

As mentioned by [Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission of Jordan \(2017\)](#), Somalia is not a party in the Arab Convention against Corruption and is not represented in the Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network ([Tranparency International, 2016](#)). The first independent national anti-corruption law was passed in 13 November 2017 by the parliament but it has to be disseminated ([Gargaar, 2017](#)). Though the Somali Provisional Constitution criminalizes several forms of corruption including abuse of office, bribery of national and foreign officials, embezzlement and trading in influence ([GAN Integrity, 2016](#)) neither the federal government nor Puntland has affected anti-corruption laws and mechanism.

### 3. Research methodology

#### 3.1 Research approach and target population

The study used qualitative approach. Qualitative approach permits flexibility and is suitable for sensitive topics. The field study was conducted in Garowe, the administrative capital of Puntland State of Somalia. Garowe hosts most of the governmental and non-governmental organizations in the country; therefore, it was convenient to access research participants. The study used non-probability sampling methods to select the research participants. First, purposive sampling was used to select capital city as it hosts target organizations and research participants. Second, purposive and snowballing techniques were used to select key informants.

Primary data was collected by using interviews. The study also analyzed secondary data such as existing reports. Reviewed documents included UN monitoring group reports, corruption-fighting agencies such as Legacy center, Marqaati and Transparency International, Puntland Aid coordination policy and annual reports. These have been done to get more insights in to the subject matter and compare it with empirical results.

#### 3.2 Data collection and analysis

Key informants interviews (KIIs) were conducted using semi-structured interviews. Government official, internationally displaced people (IDPs), civil society and international aid agencies were interviewed. The interviewed informants were all Somali nationals. The reason preferred for these specific institutions was that they were the most concerned institution of the humanitarian aid, thus they were chosen because of their knowledge on the topic and experience. The interviews were carried out in January 2018. [Table I](#) summarizes the organizations of people interviewed.

Data was transcribed, coded and categorized. The main patterns were identified. Where necessary direct quotes were used to emphasize the accounts research participants gave during the data collection.

### 4. Results and findings

The presentation of the results was guided by the research objectives. First section looked at the types of corruption in the humanitarian aid in Puntland. Second section entails the actors

| Organizations                                      | Gender of the person interviewed | No. of interviewees | Interview date |
|--|----------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Ministry of Interior and Local Government          | Male                             | 1                   | January 2018   |
| HADMA  | Male                             | 1                   | January 2018   |
| Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation | Male                             | 1                   | January 2018   |
| IOM  | Male                             | 1                   | January 2018   |
| Mercy-USA  | Male                             | 1                   | January 2018   |
| World Vision                                       | Male                             | 1                   | January 2018   |
| United Nation Development Program                  | Female                           | 1                   | January 2018   |
| Daryeel Network                                    | Male                             | 1                   | January 2018   |
| PUNSAA   | Male                             | 1                   | January 2018   |
| PUNCHAD  | Male                             | 1                   | January 2018   |
| IDPs   | Male and female                  | 2                   | January 2018   |

**Notes:** HADMA - Puntland's Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management Agency; IOM - International Organization for Migration; PUNSAA - Puntland None State Actors; PUNCHAD - Puntland Center for Human Rights and Democracy

**Table I.**  
Sample population



involved in corruption. The third section explored strategies to reduce corruption in the humanitarian sector.

#### *4.1 The acts of corruption in humanitarian aid in Puntland*

Humanitarian aid passes through different stages that start from donor and other charity-giving members to the recipients. Occasionally, there are intermediary organizations that could be administrators or implementers. During these stages, there are numerous types of corruption acts that occur in the humanitarian assistance.

*4.1.1 Corruption in granting and implementation phases of projects.* In project granting, there are perceptible acts of corruption. The misuse of humanitarian aid is not only committed by the recipients, but it rather commences from the top and descends. The aid agencies have brokers, including influential individuals who are friendly with the donor officials in Nairobi. The brokers work with some staffs of the aid donating countries' embassies and other independent donors, humanitarian aid agencies pay bribes for the stuff through the mediation of brokers thus receive the project without critically examining their effectiveness and ability to implement the project. Many organizations that have no proper mechanism and policies to deliver the aid receive projects through this scenario. This form of bribe is paid in advance while project costs are exaggerated to cover up money paid for bribes. This affects the project accountability and delivery as those responsible for the donors become complacent. Explaining this type of corruption, a research participant stated:

This trade which mostly takes place in Nairobi is facilitated by brokers who have relationships with donors and different embassies. The brokers bribe officials who are responsible to evaluate fund proposals[1].

In 2016, Government of Puntland ousted one NGO that the authorities accused of endless soft activities such as seminars and trainings after they suspected that they were not delivering what they were supposed to deliver. Commenting on this, a key Puntland officer said:

The NGO has willfully misused the project they received with the name of Puntland, we have seen that they had only unending seminars and trainings which was not the project mission [...] the NGOs did not have capacity to deliver trainings neither they engaged the right people [...] this was fraud[2].

*4.1.2 Diversion of the humanitarian projects.* The humanitarian projects are planned to respond to the crisis of the most affected communities. However, the research indicated that some of the pre-planned humanitarian projects are diverted from most affected and needy areas to the preferred places by project decision-makers, the concerned ministries of the project and the government officials also pressurize the implementing agencies to divert the project for the sake of political interests or creating nepotism in the service delivery.

An interview with an international agency staff for instant quoted "Even if you do the assessment the minister will force you to implement the project in his home village." Most of the participants agreed together that many projects' schools have been implemented in areas where the communities have received similar projects or might not have population to exploit the benefits of the project. Similarly, to this argument, most of participants confirmed this issue.

*4.1.4 Corruption in beneficiary selection.* There is a prevalence of corruption in the beneficiary selection stage often leading to misuse of the aid. The main reason of the corruption in this stage is rooted in three overlapping intentions including, nepotism, challenges arising from the host community and convenient based selection, this is the

selection of less cost and more convenient places to reduce the costs and raise profit. Concerning nepotism, previous research studies have reported rampant nepotism in Puntland and Somalia. In the humanitarian sector, nepotism is always found as a challenge (SEMG Report, 2017). During this study, the participants stated nepotism as major problem in the humanitarian sector and aid in particular. The most common nepotism is in the recruitment of staff. However, this study also established nepotism in the selection of project beneficiaries. Interview with an international NGO employee mentioned that:

Nepotism is common in the humanitarian aid, in many instances the rightful beneficiary is not selected rather selection of beneficiaries is influenced by nepotism. This is mostly done by those entrusted with implementation of the project, they could be individuals or institutions, including government institutions [ . . . ] influential select their home villages[3].

Puntland hosts large community of IDPs, recent devastating and protracted humanitarian issues, such as droughts and conflicts, in the country causes the camps to be overfilled by the weakest and most deprived groups of society. The destitute communities were in consensus that privileged groups such as the high social rank members of the host communities share with the meager amount of the humanitarian relieve allocated for them by registering themselves as IDPs[4]. The SEM Report (2017) indicated collusion between host communities and gatekeepers during humanitarian delivery by creating fake camp dwellings to register for assistance. An IDP in Garowe lamented, “There is numerous fake encampments who do not live in the camps regularly, they respond by phone when something is found”[5].

*4.1.5 Corruption in humanitarian staff employment.* Corruption in the recruitment of humanitarian staff is a major concern in Puntland. This type of corruption is rampant. The research found that the process of recruitment is corrupted through kickback and substitutions where responsible persons directly recruit their families, if not, indirectly surrogate the employment of their families with the other humanitarian officials’ family members or in proxy of another interest. [Deq and Abdikadir \(2016\)](#) reported similar findings. One key informant noted:

The person responsible in the recruitment process of the humanitarian projects hires incompetent and unqualified employees, a decision that is influenced by nepotism or demand from an influential individual that the recruiting person expects favors reciprocally[6].

There are multiple set of corrupt behaviours underlying the employment process, this include deception in the humanitarian staff employment. The participants stated that during the short listing stage some NGOs discard the application of the candidates with the strong experience and education for the sake of afraid to challenge their interested individual for the post. Similarly, exams are not corrected, rather the intrested individual is considered; the local word “format marin” which means for formality is common in this process. The recruiting team follows the procedures expected by the donors in the employment through advertising the post, conducting the exams and interviews, while the post has already been allocated. NGOs have mastered tricks of decepecting the donor by following superficial formats which are acceptable to the donor but which do not necessarily reflect from the reality.

*4.1.6 Corruption in tendering and procurement.* The acts of corruption are common in tendering and procurement phases of humanitarian projects. Most of the research participants asserted high degree of corruption in these stages; it is among the situations where large-scale corruption takes place. In the tendering process, the responsible person may take bribes from one of the individuals competing for the project or they may themselves have a share in one of the companies. The interviewees stated that the top

officials of international agencies have different companies, thus they dishonestly award the contracts[7]. In case contracts were not satisfactorily delivered, the “big guys” cover up the gaps and failures. A government employee revealed that he was scorned by humanitarian agency officials for refusing to fabricate reports of mismanaged contracts[8].

*4.1.7 Distortion of the humanitarian project targets.* Similarly, NGOs and government organizations short circuit projects goals and time frames. Explaining this, a key informant interview said:

If the plan was that a project reaches 100 people, or households, they just take 50 people only while span of days may be reduced from 30 days to 20 days or less, this also occurs in the procurement where the material and needed equipment are reduced from pre-planned numbers, some times more than 50 per cent is reduced[9].

*4.1.8 Creation of false reports.* Creation of false reports has been found among the other acts of corruption. The research found that misleading reports play major role in all stages of the humanitarian aid corruption. It is a requirement that government and non-governmental organizations compile period and activity reports, these reports are aimed for quality control and decision-making. There are also project evaluation reports that are conducted periodically or at the end of projects. However, the study established that considerable numbers of these reports are fabricated, while in the case of evaluation reports, the evaluators are bribed to hide the failures of the implementing persons. They hide weaknesses with the aim of establishing rapport with the client organization for future consultancies. There are also instances when project staffs were not willing to send evaluators to distant project sites in avoidance of travel expense. Inaccurate reports misrepresent the reality of implemented projects. The agencies also report unimplemented activities by bribing government authorities responsible in the project monitoring. Discussing on this one interviewee narrated:

[...] those doing monitoring or evaluation ask us what we did and they take whatever we tell them at face value, they don't go the project sites to check if what we told them is true[10].

#### *4.2 Actors in the humanitarian corruption*

Many of those entrusted to save lives are also eager enough to deteriorate them. Based on the research findings, the corruption in humanitarian aid is driven by different actors with different capacities. Fund administrators, implementing and monitoring agencies and government institutions are found involved. Actors with higher decisions are the most benefited followed by those with lesser decisions[11].

In the NGOs, the supportive staff, procumbent and finance officers are major players in corruption in the humanitarian aid. The supportive staffs are responsible for the recruitment process and procurement or tendering processes. The monitoring and evaluation officers, both internal and external such as external evaluators also remain key actors in the corruption in this sector[12]. Puntland aid coordinator stated that corruption in humanitarian aid stems from mutual understanding between three persons: procurement head, finance and program manager[13]. He also confessed that this mostly does not occur unless the government authorities entrusted to oversight are sometimes complicit.

The community representatives (gatekeepers) also participate in corruption. They tend to be complicit by lying from project deliverables in the project sites; they do this to substantiate what project implementers reported. Always there is a mutual interest between gatekeepers and project implementers. There were also scenarios where gatekeepers deviate project deliverables. For example, a gatekeeper may sell mosquito nets when many of the

rightful project beneficiaries do not have nets[14]. This was confirmed by one of the IDP gatekeepers in Garowe.

#### *4.3 Ways to fight with the corruption in humanitarian aid in Puntland*

Fighting corruption is not an easy task; it demands broad strategies, policies and commitment encompassing the humanitarian and country systems. This study proposes some strategies to tackle corruption in the humanitarian aid in Puntland.

Increasing accountability is one of the ways that corruption could be tackled. Government and donor institutions that are responsible for different phases of the humanitarian projects should increase the levels of accountability. Puntland needs to empower decision-making bodies and build their capacities while at the same time increasing internal and external controls. Some institutions such as anti-corruption bodies, courts are better in tackling corruption than others. These institutions need to be empowered[15].

To put an end to impunity, the study revealed high impunity enjoyed by corrupt officers. The successors will follow the path of their predecessors. Commenting on this an interviewee said:

The current corrupt individuals emulate the behavioral acts of previous leaders and politicians therefore taking after the examples given by some previous leaders and officials. Any change should not underestimate impunity enjoyed by the corrupt officers[16].

To tackle the corruption, anti-corruption laws are required. The establishments of the laws need to be followed by implementation. Implementation of laws and policies is a major challenge to many countries and it is one of the key reasons why corruption laws are not effective.

There is a need for independent audits; this should emanate from both externally such as government level and internally at institutional level. According to one key informant, “there is a need to establish strong and independent audit to evaluate the work of the NGOs, their procedures.” The government should independently monitor NGOs’ recruitment and procurement procedures.

## **5. Conclusion and recommendations**

### *5.1 Conclusion*

Corruption is rampant in the humanitarian sector; those entrusted with the lives of the needy people are the same people who profits from the emergency humanitarian. The corruption in the humanitarian sector is very intricate and involves numerous actors at various levels. Some of the actors are powerful enough. Eradicating corruption in the humanitarian aid is tedious task that requires coordination between donors and recipient states.

### *5.2 Recommendations*

Awarding humanitarian fund has been found to be hotbed of corruption sometimes leading to eternal misuse of aid resources. It is important to investigate and identify the aid brokers and their bribery receptive embassies and donor officials.

The diversion of projects is not only treason but also sometimes mislaying the already scarce resources. The recipient governments need to keep an eye on the implementation of the project by creating confirmation committees and expanding decision-making authorities for at least the important projects.

The stages of tendering, staff selection and recruitment of humanitarian project staff are areas where corruption is rampant in the sector. There is a need to independently verify these procedures. Donors, fund administrators and government authorities should play their role of monitoring in these procedures without settling with formal documents that can be

falsified by the same people who have been entrusted with the procedures. Whether formal procedures have been followed is not adequate to guarantee the transparency of the process.

Finally, civil education is equally important while at the same time creating public complaint procedures. Educating the citizens and creating awareness is necessary. The study found that citizens are not fully aware what constitutes corruption and what does not; neither they know what to do if they witness corruption.

## Notes

1. International aid agency senior staff, January 15, 2018.
2. Interview with a senior Puntland officer, January 20, 2018.
3. Interview with an international NGO staff, January 14, 2018.
4. Interviews with IDP dwellers in Garowe, January 11, 2018.
5. Interview with an IDP leader, January 18, 2018.
6. Interview with an INGO senior officer, January 17, 2018.
7. KII January 15, 2018.
8. KII with government officer on January 16, 2018.
9. KII, January 19, 2018.
10. Interview with a local NGO employee, January 21, 2018.
11. Interview with a government official, January 20, 2018.
12. KII, January 17, 2018.
13. KII, January 20, 2018.
14. Interview with a humanitarian agency employee, January 21, 2018.
15. Interview with an INGO staff, January 18, 2018.
16. Interview, government officer, January 14, 2018.

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