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Evaluating International Aid Effectiveness in Post-Conflict Somalia: Governance, Humanitarian Response, and Sustainability

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Abstract: *International aid plays an important role in addressing humanitarian needs, supporting institutional development and promoting socioeconomic recovery in post-conflict Somalia. Despite substantial international engagement, concerns remain regarding governance, accountability, coordination, community participation, and the sustainability of aid-funded interventions. This study examines international aid effectiveness in Somalia, focusing on governance and accountability, humanitarian response, community participation and project sustainability. A cross-sectional descriptive research design is proposed, using questionnaire-based data collection from project beneficiaries, project staff, community leaders and local government officials. The stated study population is 350, with 234 questionnaires distributed. Of these, 197 were reported as valid, representing a response rate of 84.2%. The article presents an illustrative descriptive-statistics framework to demonstrate how findings may be reported; the illustrative means, standard deviations, and demographic distributions are not verified survey results and must be replaced with calculations from the original questionnaire records before publication. Documentary evidence, including the United Nations' 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, provides context for the scale of humanitarian needs in Somalia. The article argues that aid effectiveness should be assessed not only by the delivery of immediate assistance but also by transparent resource management, alignment with national and local priorities, meaningful community participation, and the continuation of project benefits after external funding ends. It recommends strengthening local institutions, improving coordination, expanding participatory monitoring and evaluation, and integrating sustainability planning into aid-funded projects.*

Keywords: International aid, aid effectiveness, governance, humanitarian response, project sustainability, Somalia, accountability.

1. Introduction

International aid has become an important instrument for responding to humanitarian crises, supporting recovery, and improving access to essential services in countries affected by conflict. In post-conflict settings, aid can contribute to food security, healthcare, education, water supply, sanitation, infrastructure development, and institutional capacity-building. However, the effectiveness of international assistance depends on how resources are allocated, managed, coordinated, and evaluated.

Somalia has experienced prolonged conflict, political instability, displacement, recurrent droughts, flooding, and other humanitarian challenges. These conditions have created substantial needs for emergency assistance and longer-term development interventions. International organizations, bilateral donors, humanitarian agencies, and nongovernmental organizations have therefore played significant roles in supporting vulnerable communities and recovery initiatives.

The United Nations' 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan estimated that 6.9 million people in Somalia needed humanitarian and protection assistance. The plan sought US$1.6 billion to assist 5.2 million people (United Nations in Somalia, 2024). These figures demonstrate the scale of humanitarian needs and the importance of prioritizing limited resources. They represent planned needs and assistance targets, however, rather than independently verified evidence of the number of people ultimately reached or the effectiveness of individual projects.

Aid effectiveness involves more than the amount of money provided or the number of activities completed. It also concerns whether assistance responds to actual community priorities, reaches intended beneficiaries, produces measurable improvements, and creates benefits that continue over time. Weak accountability, duplication of interventions, limited community involvement, and inadequate institutional capacity can reduce the benefits of external assistance.

Menkhaus (2014) highlights the importance of local ownership and context-sensitive approaches to institution-building in Somalia. This suggests that externally supported interventions should take account of local governance structures and community needs rather than relying exclusively on externally designed models. Similarly, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2005) emphasizes ownership, alignment, harmonisation, results management, and mutual accountability as central principles of aid effectiveness.

Against this background, the present article examines the relationship between international aid effectiveness and four major dimensions: governance and accountability, humanitarian response, community participation, and sustainability. Its purpose is to

identify practical approaches that can improve the management and long-term value of international assistance in post-conflict Somalia.

2. Problem Statement

Somalia continues to require substantial humanitarian and development assistance because of conflict, displacement, climatic shocks, poverty, and weaknesses in essential service provision. Although international aid supports emergency relief and recovery activities, the availability of financial and material resources does not automatically guarantee successful development outcomes.

Concerns about aid effectiveness include limited transparency, insufficient coordination among implementing organizations, weak participation by intended beneficiaries, and inadequate planning for the continuation of project activities after donor funding ends. Where local institutions and communities have limited influence over project priorities, interventions may not adequately reflect local needs or available resources.

Furthermore, reporting the number of activities completed or beneficiaries reached does not necessarily establish whether an intervention has produced lasting improvements. Evaluating effectiveness requires evidence about the quality of implementation, accountability, beneficiary satisfaction, and the sustainability of project outcomes.

The central problem addressed in this article is how international aid effectiveness in post-conflict Somalia can be assessed and strengthened through improved governance, humanitarian response, community participation, and sustainability planning.

3. Objectives of the Study

3.1 General Objective

To evaluate international aid effectiveness in post-conflict Somalia, focusing on governance, humanitarian response, community participation, and project sustainability.

3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To examine the role of governance and accountability in international aid effectiveness in Somalia.
2. To assess how humanitarian response and aid coordination relate to the achievement of intended project objectives.
3. To examine the importance of community participation in the planning and implementation of aid-funded projects.
4. To assess the factors that may influence the sustainability of international aid-funded projects.
5. To recommend strategies for improving aid management and development outcomes in Somalia.

4. Research Questions

1. How does governance and accountability influence international aid effectiveness in Somalia?
2. How do humanitarian response and coordination contribute to the achievement of aid-funded project objectives?
3. What role does community participation play in improving aid effectiveness?
4. Which factors influence the sustainability of aid-funded projects?
5. What measures can strengthen the effectiveness and long-term impact of international aid in Somalia?

5. Literature Review

5.1 Concept of International Aid Effectiveness

International aid effectiveness refers to the extent to which external financial, technical, and material assistance contributes to intended development or humanitarian objectives. Effective aid should address identified needs, use resources responsibly, deliver measurable results, and support improvements that can be sustained.

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness identifies ownership, alignment, harmonisation, managing for results, and mutual accountability as major principles for improving development cooperation (OECD, 2005). These principles suggest that aid effectiveness depends on cooperation between donors and recipient institutions rather than on the transfer of resources alone.

In Somalia, these principles are particularly relevant because humanitarian organizations, development agencies, public institutions, and community organizations may work in the same locations. Effective coordination can help reduce duplication, identify service gaps, and ensure that projects contribute to shared priorities.

5.2 Governance and Accountability

Governance concerns the institutions, rules, processes, and relationships through which decisions are made and public or project resources are managed. Accountability requires implementing organizations and responsible institutions to explain their decisions, demonstrate how resources have been used, and respond to concerns raised by beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

Weak accountability can undermine confidence in aid programmes and make it difficult to determine whether resources have reached their intended destinations. Strong governance arrangements can improve transparency, procurement practices, financial reporting, and the monitoring of project performance.

Menkhaus (2014) argues that institution-building efforts in Somali contexts have often encountered difficulties, while some locally grounded arrangements have achieved practical results. This highlights the importance of understanding local governance conditions and supporting institutions that are responsive to community needs.

5.3 Humanitarian Response and Aid Coordination

Humanitarian response includes interventions intended to protect lives, reduce suffering, and address urgent needs arising from conflict, displacement, disasters, and other emergencies. Effectiveness depends on timely delivery, appropriate targeting, adequate resources, coordination, and access to affected populations.

The United Nations' 2024 humanitarian plan for Somalia emphasized prioritization, coordinated implementation, and measures to address risks such as aid diversion (United Nations in Somalia, 2024). Such planning priorities illustrate the operational challenges faced by aid agencies in complex environments.

However, a humanitarian response should not be evaluated exclusively through funding targets or planned beneficiary numbers. Evaluation should also consider actual delivery, the quality of assistance, the distribution of benefits, beneficiary feedback, and whether interventions address the most urgent needs.

5.4 Community Participation

Community participation involves including intended beneficiaries and local stakeholders in identifying needs, setting priorities, implementing activities, monitoring progress, and evaluating results.

Participation can improve the relevance of aid-funded interventions because community members often understand local conditions, social relationships, access barriers, and the needs of vulnerable groups. It can also strengthen trust and encourage communities to contribute to project maintenance.

Participation must be meaningful rather than symbolic. Communities should have opportunities to influence decisions and raise concerns without fear of retaliation. Feedback mechanisms should be accessible to women, displaced people, people with disabilities, minority groups, and other populations that may face barriers to participation.

5.5 Sustainability of Aid-Funded Projects

Project sustainability refers to the likelihood that a project's benefits will continue after external funding or direct implementation support ends. Sustainability may depend on financial resources, institutional capacity, technical skills, community ownership, maintenance arrangements, and environmental conditions.

For example, constructing a water supply facility does not guarantee sustainable access to clean water. Continued benefits may require trained operators, maintenance funds, spare parts, effective management, and an agreed system for resolving disputes over access.

Sustainability should therefore be considered during project design rather than treated as an activity undertaken only when donor funding is ending. Projects should identify responsible local institutions, recurrent costs, maintenance responsibilities, and realistic sources of future support.

5.6 Theoretical Framework

This article draws on two complementary perspectives.

Aid effectiveness principles. The OECD's Paris Declaration provides a framework for examining ownership, alignment, harmonisation, results management, and mutual accountability. These principles help explain why coordination and responsible management are important for achieving intended outcomes.

Institutional and local-ownership perspective. The institutional perspective emphasizes the capacity of organizations and governance arrangements to manage resources and sustain services. In the Somali context, Menkhaus (2014) demonstrates the importance of local ownership and context-sensitive institution-building.

Together, these perspectives suggest that international aid is more likely to produce meaningful and lasting benefits when it is coordinated with local priorities, managed transparently, evaluated against measurable outcomes, and supported by capable local institutions.

6. Conceptual Framework

The proposed framework considers four main dimensions of international aid effectiveness.

Independent or explanatory variables:

- Governance and accountability.
- Humanitarian response and coordination.
- Community participation.
- Sustainability planning and local institutional capacity.

Dependent variable:

- International aid effectiveness, assessed through achievement of project objectives, service delivery, beneficiary satisfaction, responsible resource use, and continuity of benefits.

The framework proposes that stronger governance, effective coordination, meaningful community participation, and adequate sustainability arrangements may contribute to improved aid effectiveness. These relationships should be tested with the actual data rather than assumed to have been statistically demonstrated.

7. Research Methodology

7.1 Research Design

A cross-sectional descriptive research design is proposed for examining stakeholder perceptions of international aid effectiveness. This design allows information to be collected within a defined period and used to describe respondents' experiences and views concerning governance, humanitarian response, community participation, and sustainability.

A quantitative questionnaire can provide numerical data, while interviews or documentary analysis may offer additional context. If qualitative interviews were not conducted, the article should not claim to have collected or analysed interview data.

7.2 Study Population

The stated target population is 350 people associated with aid-funded projects in Somalia. The proposed stakeholder groups include project staff, aid project beneficiaries, community leaders, and local government officials.

The precise locations, participating organizations, and eligibility criteria should be identified in the final manuscript. The population total should also be supported by the relevant project or institutional records.

7.3 Sample Size and Questionnaire Response Rate

A total of 234 questionnaires were reportedly distributed, and 197 valid questionnaires were reported as available for analysis.

The response rate is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Response Rate} = \frac{197}{234} \times 100 = \boxed{84.19\%}$$

Rounded to one decimal place, the response rate is **84.2%**.

Table 1. Questionnaire distribution and response rate

Questionnaire status	Frequency	Percentage
Questionnaires distributed	234	100.0%
Valid questionnaires returned	197	84.2%
Not returned or invalid	37	15.8%
Total distributed	234	100.0%

Source: Questionnaire administration figures supplied for this article.

The response rate indicates the proportion of distributed questionnaires represented by valid returns. It does not, by itself, establish that the sample is representative of the target population.

7.4 Sampling Techniques

Stratified sampling may be appropriate if the target population contains identifiable groups such as beneficiaries, project staff, community leaders, and government officials. Each group can be represented in the sample according to its population size or the requirements of the research.

Where a complete sampling frame is unavailable, a carefully justified combination of purposive and other sampling methods may be considered. The final article must report the sampling technique that was actually used, rather than describing a proposed method as if it had already been implemented.

7.5 Data Collection Instrument

The proposed questionnaire contains closed-ended statements addressing four dimensions:

1. Governance and accountability.
2. Humanitarian response and coordination.
3. Community participation.

4. Sustainability of aid-funded projects.

A five-point Likert scale may be used, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The final questionnaire should include clearly worded statements, appropriate demographic questions, and instructions for respondents.

7.6 Validity and Reliability

Content validity can be assessed through review by research-methods specialists and individuals familiar with aid-funded projects. A pilot study may be used to identify unclear questions and improve the instrument.

Internal consistency can be examined using Cronbach's alpha when the questionnaire contains multiple items intended to measure the same construct. The reliability coefficient should be calculated from the actual responses and reported only after analysis. No reliability coefficient is asserted in this draft.

7.7 Data Analysis

Data should be checked for completeness, coded, and analysed using appropriate statistical software, such as SPSS, R, or Excel.

Frequencies and percentages can summarize demographic characteristics and questionnaire responses. Means and standard deviations can describe responses to Likert-scale items when their use is justified by the measurement approach.

Where the research objectives require examination of relationships between variables, appropriate inferential tests may be used after checking the relevant assumptions. Results should include the actual test statistics, sample sizes, and p-values where applicable. The analysis should not claim causal relationships based only on a cross-sectional descriptive design.

7.8 Ethical Considerations

Participation should be voluntary and based on informed consent. Respondents should be informed about the purpose of the study, the use of the information, and their right to decline participation.

Personal identifiers should be protected, data should be stored securely, and findings should be reported honestly. The researcher should obtain the necessary institutional approval and any required permissions from relevant organizations or authorities before conducting or reporting the study.

8. Results and Findings

Important note: The response-rate figures below use the numbers supplied for this article. The demographic distribution and descriptive statistics in the following illustrative tables are examples only. They are not verified results from the 197 respondents and must not be presented as actual empirical findings.

8.1 Response Rate

As shown in Table 1, 234 questionnaires were distributed and 197 were reported as valid. This corresponds to a response rate of 84.2%, while 37 questionnaires, equivalent to 15.8%, were not returned or were invalid.

The response rate provides a description of questionnaire completion. Further analysis of the respondents' characteristics and answers is required to evaluate the study objectives.

8.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The following table demonstrates an appropriate way to present respondent demographics. Its frequencies and percentages are hypothetical examples and must be replaced with counts from the actual questionnaire dataset.

Table 2. Illustrative demographic profile of respondents (N = 197)

Demographic characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage

Gender	Male	119	60.4%
	Female	78	39.6%
	Total	**197**	**100.0%**
Age group	18–29 years	59	29.9%
	30–39 years	72	36.5%
	40–49 years	43	21.8%
	50 years and above	23	11.7%
	Total	**197**	**100.0%***
Stakeholder group	Project beneficiaries	111	56.3%
	Project staff	49	24.9%
	Community leaders	25	12.7%
	Local government officials	12	6.1%
	Total	**197**	**100.0%**

Note: Individual percentages may sum to 99.9% or 100.1% because of rounding. The demographic frequencies and percentages above are illustrative, not actual survey findings.

In the final version, the demographic discussion should explain the actual composition of the sample. For example, the researcher may report which age group or stakeholder category had the largest representation, using the verified frequencies and percentages.

8.3 Governance and Accountability

Governance and accountability concern transparency, responsible financial management, access to information, reporting, and mechanisms for addressing complaints. These factors are important because they help stakeholders understand how project resources are used and whether activities are consistent with agreed objectives.

Table 3. Illustrative descriptive statistics for international aid effectiveness (N = 197)

Study variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Interpretation
Effectiveness of international aid	3.72	0.86	High
Governance and accountability	3.41	0.93	High
Community participation	3.58	0.89	High
Sustainability of aid-funded projects	3.29	0.97	Moderate

Note: All means, standard deviations, and interpretations in Table 3 are illustrative examples. They have not been calculated from the 197 questionnaire records.

For a five-point Likert scale, the illustrative results use the following interpretation ranges: 1.00–1.80 = very low; 1.81–2.60 = low; 2.61–3.40 = moderate; 3.41–4.20 = high; and 4.21–5.00 = very high.

In an actual analysis, the governance and accountability findings should be based on the responses to relevant questionnaire items. The discussion should examine whether respondents report adequate transparency, access to project information, financial accountability, and functioning complaint mechanisms.

8.4 Humanitarian Response and Coordination

Humanitarian effectiveness should be assessed by examining the timeliness of assistance, targeting of vulnerable populations, coordination among agencies, and the extent to which delivered services meet identified needs.

The 2024 Somalia Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan sought to assist 5.2 million people out of an estimated 6.9 million people requiring humanitarian and protection assistance (United Nations in Somalia, 2024). The planned target represented approximately 75.4% of the estimated population in need. This is a comparison of planning figures, not evidence that 75.4% of people in need actually received assistance.

For the primary survey, the researcher should report the actual proportion of respondents who considered assistance timely, accessible, appropriately targeted, and coordinated. Those findings can then be compared with the broader humanitarian context.

8.5 Community Participation

Community participation should be assessed by examining whether beneficiaries were consulted during project identification, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

In the final results, questionnaire frequencies and percentages should show how many respondents agreed or disagreed that community priorities influenced project decisions. If interviews were conducted, relevant themes may be used to explain why participation was considered effective or inadequate.

Meaningful participation can help align interventions with local priorities and strengthen community ownership. However, this relationship should be described as a potential explanation unless the study's actual findings provide evidence for it.

8.6 Sustainability of Aid-Funded Projects

Project sustainability concerns whether benefits continue after direct donor support or implementation activities end. Relevant indicators include the availability of maintenance funding, trained personnel, local management structures, access to spare parts, and community involvement in operating facilities.

The illustrative mean in Table 3 suggests a moderate sustainability rating. Because this figure is hypothetical, it cannot support a factual conclusion about the sustainability of projects in Somalia. The actual results should identify which sustainability factors respondents rated positively and which require improvement.

8.7 Summary of Findings

The article's four main dimensions provide a framework for assessing aid effectiveness:

- **Governance and accountability:** Examine transparency, financial reporting, oversight, and complaints mechanisms.
- **Humanitarian response:** Examine timeliness, targeting, accessibility, and coordination.
- **Community participation:** Examine beneficiary involvement in project decisions and monitoring.
- **Sustainability:** Examine maintenance arrangements, local capacity, continued financing, and ownership.

The final summary of findings must be written after the actual questionnaire data have been analysed. It should not treat the illustrative statistics in this draft as evidence.

9. Discussion

The proposed analysis emphasizes that international aid effectiveness is multidimensional. Financial assistance and the delivery of humanitarian supplies are important, but their value also depends on institutional arrangements, community involvement, and the continuation of benefits.

First, governance and accountability provide the foundation for responsible resource use. Transparent budgets, accessible project information, independent monitoring, and functioning complaints mechanisms can help identify implementation problems and strengthen stakeholder confidence. These measures are consistent with the OECD's (2005) emphasis on mutual accountability and results management.

Second, humanitarian coordination is essential in environments where several organizations may operate simultaneously. Coordination can improve the identification of service gaps, reduce unnecessary duplication, and help direct limited resources towards urgent needs. Nevertheless, coordination should be evaluated through actual delivery and outcomes rather than through the existence of meetings or formal agreements alone.

Third, community participation can improve project relevance. Local stakeholders can identify practical challenges and contribute knowledge that external implementing organizations may not possess. Menkhaus (2014) highlights the value of context-sensitive support and local ownership in institution-building in Somalia. Participation should therefore be integrated into decision-making and monitoring rather than limited to consultation at the beginning of a project.

Fourth, sustainability should be incorporated into project planning from the outset. Infrastructure and services may lose their value if no institution is responsible for maintenance or if recurrent costs cannot be covered. Donors and implementing organizations should consequently assess local technical capacity, financial arrangements, environmental risks, and institutional responsibilities before project closure.

Finally, aid effectiveness requires a results-oriented approach. Projects should establish measurable indicators, reliable baseline information, realistic targets, and regular reporting arrangements. Evaluation should assess whether intended outcomes were achieved, who benefited, and whether the observed improvements are likely to continue.

These arguments provide an interpretation framework for the study. They should be compared with the verified survey findings before the discussion is finalized.

10. Conclusion

International aid remains important for addressing humanitarian needs and supporting recovery in post-conflict Somalia. However, the effectiveness of aid depends on more than the amount of financial support or the number of activities implemented. Transparent governance, effective coordination, meaningful community participation, and adequate sustainability arrangements are also important.

The study framework developed in this article provides a basis for assessing these dimensions through stakeholder questionnaires and documentary evidence. The reported distribution of 234 questionnaires and 197 valid returns corresponds to an 84.2% response rate. However, the response rate alone does not establish whether international aid has been effective.

A defensible conclusion about the performance of aid-funded projects requires analysis of the actual respondent-level data and, where possible, corroboration with project monitoring records, financial reports, and independent evaluations. The article's illustrative demographic and descriptive-statistics tables should therefore be replaced with verified results before the manuscript is submitted for publication.

11. Recommendations

Based on the literature and the proposed analytical framework, the following recommendations are offered.

11.1 Strengthen Governance and Accountability

Aid agencies and implementing partners should publish accessible information on project objectives, budgets, procurement, implementation progress, and results. Independent audits and accessible complaints mechanisms should be used to improve transparency and accountability.

11.2 Improve Coordination Among Aid Organizations

Donors, government institutions, humanitarian agencies, and nongovernmental organizations should strengthen information-sharing and coordinate project locations, target populations, and service-delivery plans. Coordination arrangements should be assessed according to their practical contribution to improved results.

11.3 Increase Community Participation

Beneficiaries should participate in needs assessments, project planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Feedback systems should be accessible, inclusive, and safe, and project managers should demonstrate how community feedback influences decisions.

11.4 Integrate Sustainability into Project Planning

Each project should identify responsible local institutions, maintenance arrangements, recurrent costs, technical requirements, and potential sources of future financing. Sustainability plans should be reviewed during implementation rather than prepared only when funding ends.

11.5 Strengthen Monitoring and Evaluation

Projects should establish clear indicators, baseline data, measurable targets, and reporting schedules. Monitoring should track implementation and outputs, while evaluation should examine outcomes, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability.

11.6 Build Local Institutional Capacity

Donors should support the technical, administrative, and financial management capacities of local institutions. Where appropriate, aid programmes should use context-sensitive approaches that strengthen local systems and avoid creating unnecessary parallel structures.

11.7 Improve Data Quality and Evidence-Based Decision-Making

Implementing organizations should maintain reliable beneficiary records, financial documentation, monitoring reports, and evaluation findings. Researchers and programme managers should use verified evidence when making claims about aid effectiveness and should clearly distinguish planned targets from achieved results.

12. Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be acknowledged in the final manuscript.

First, the findings may be affected by the geographical coverage and sampling procedures used. If respondents are drawn from selected organizations or districts, the results may not represent all aid-funded projects throughout Somalia.

Second, questionnaire responses may reflect respondents' personal experiences and perceptions. Such responses are useful but should be interpreted alongside independent project records where possible.

Third, a cross-sectional design provides information from a particular period and may not capture changes in project performance over time. Longitudinal monitoring or follow-up evaluation would provide stronger evidence about sustainability.

Fourth, the descriptive statistics presented in this draft are illustrative rather than calculated from the original questionnaire dataset. Consequently, they cannot be used as verified empirical findings. The final article must report the actual demographic frequencies, means, standard deviations, and any inferential statistics calculated from the collected data.

Finally, the study should acknowledge any limitations in access to project documents, financial information, or respondents working in insecure or difficult-to-access locations.

13. Suggestions for Further Research

Future research could examine aid effectiveness in specific sectors, such as water and sanitation, education, healthcare, livelihoods, or infrastructure. Sector-specific studies may help identify which governance and sustainability arrangements work best in different contexts.

Further studies could also compare projects implemented by different organizations or across selected districts. Longitudinal research would be particularly useful for determining whether project benefits continue after external funding ends.

Research combining questionnaire findings with interviews, financial records, and independent project evaluations could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how international aid contributes to recovery and institutional development in Somalia.

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