

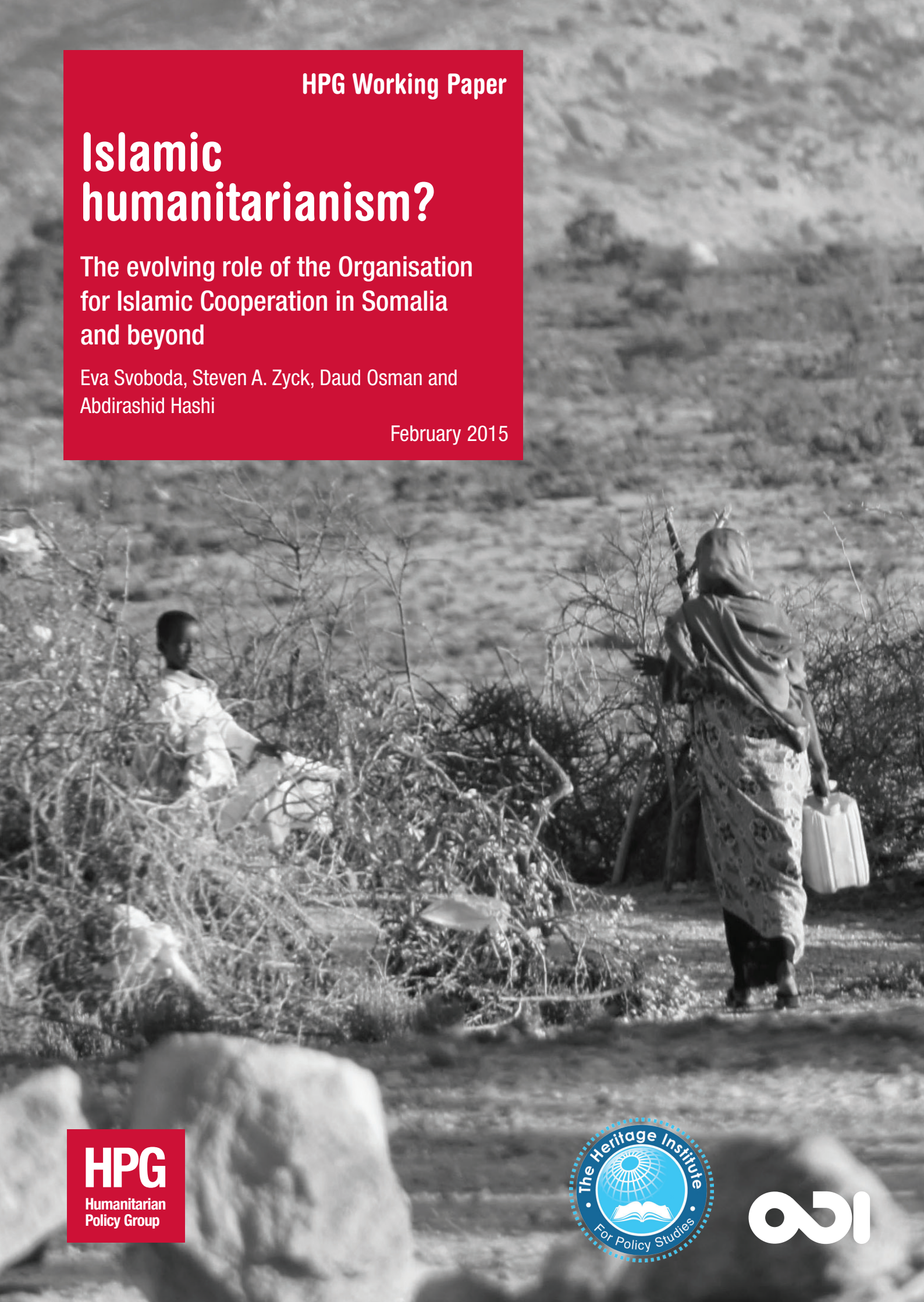
HPG Working Paper

Islamic humanitarianism?

The evolving role of the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation in Somalia and beyond

Eva Svoboda, Steven A. Zyck, Daud Osman and Abdirashid Hashi

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About the authors

Eva Svoboda and Steven A. Zyck are Research Fellows with the Humanitarian Policy Group at the Overseas Development Institute. Daud Osman is Senior Researcher and Abdirashid Hashi is Executive Director at The Heritage Institute for Policy Studies in Mogadishu.

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Humanitarian Policy Group
Overseas Development Institute
203 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8NJ
United Kingdom

Tel. +44 (0) 20 7922 0300
Fax. +44 (0) 20 7922 0399
E-mail: hpgadmin@odi.org
Website: <http://www.odi.org/hpg>

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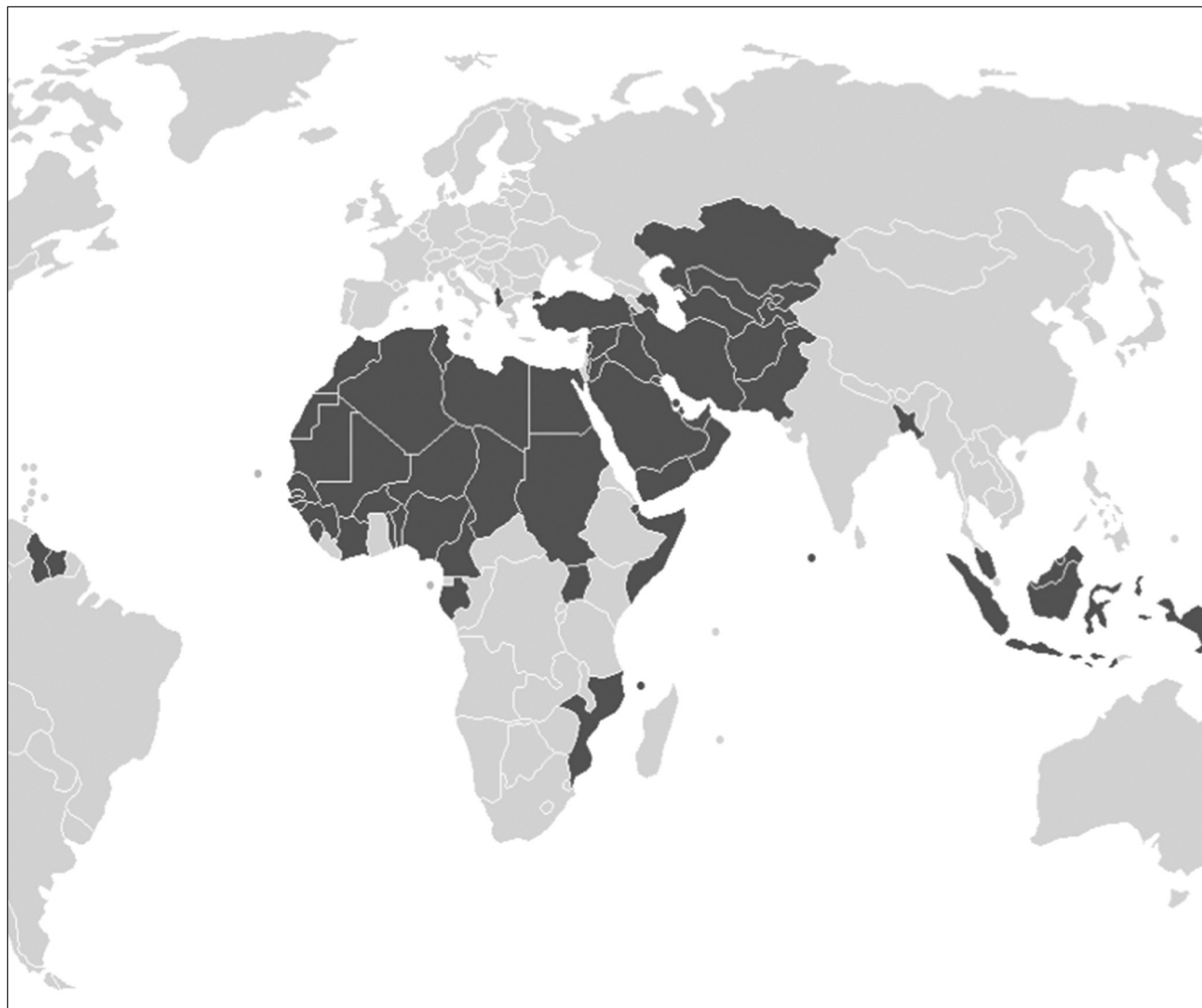
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Figure 1: Map of OIC member states



List of OIC member states

State	Date joined	State	Date joined
Afghanistan	1969	Syria	1972
Algeria	1969	United Arab Emirates	1972
Chad	1969	Bangladesh	1974
Egypt	1969	Burkina Faso	1974
Guinea	1969	(then Upper Volta)	
Indonesia	1969	Cameroon	1974
Iran	1969	Gabon	1974
Jordan	1969	The Gambia	1974
Kuwait	1969	Guinea-Bissau	1974
Lebanon	1969	Uganda	1974
Libya	1969	Iraq	1975
Malaysia	1969	The Comoros	1976
Mali	1969	The Maldives	1976
Mauritania	1969	Djibouti	1978
Morocco	1969	Benin	1983
Niger	1969	Brunei-Darussalam	1984
Pakistan	1969	Nigeria	1986
Palestine	1969	Albania	1992
Saudi Arabia	1969	Azerbaijan	1992
Senegal	1969	Kyrgyzstan	1992
Somalia	1969	Tajikistan	1992
Sudan	1969	Turkmenistan	1992
Tunisia	1969	Mozambique	1994
Turkey	1969	Kazakhstan	1995
Yemen	1969	Suriname	1996
Bahrain	1972	Uzbekistan	1996
Oman	1972	Togo	1997
Qatar	1972	Guyana	1998
Sierra Leone	1972	Côte d'Ivoire	2001

Executive summary

The Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC)'s humanitarian role dates back to the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the mid-1990s. Since then the organisation's humanitarian portfolio has grown considerably, and its humanitarian function has been institutionalised in the Islamic Cooperation Humanitarian Affairs Department (ICHAD), established in 2008. ICHAD and the OIC's Ten-Year Programme of Action (OIC-TYPOA) are both illustrative of the organisation's intention to strengthen its involvement in humanitarian action.

The OIC-TYPOA does not use the term 'humanitarian', nor does it clearly indicate how the OIC understands humanitarian action, and aside from notable exceptions such as the Indian Ocean tsunami and the Somali famine much of the OIC's work has focused on recovery and development-oriented activities, with post-crisis reconstruction seen as a crucial means of cementing initial humanitarian gains. This level of connectedness and interweaving of relief and recovery raises questions with regard to humanitarian principles, particularly when the same organisation provides humanitarian aid alongside support to a government that is not universally accepted by the population. The OIC has been obliged to balance these considerations as it provides humanitarian aid in member states where it also has a diplomatic and intergovernmental status.

In parallel to its growing role as a humanitarian actor the OIC has also developed partnerships with the formal humanitarian sector, including the UN Secretariat, the World Food Programme (WFP), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). From the perspective of the formal humanitarian sector these partnerships not only represent an acknowledgment of the growing role of the OIC, but also a hope that the latter's Islamic identity can assist in developing new approaches to humanitarian action in the Muslim world and facilitate access to areas controlled by Islamist movements opposed to the provision of aid by a system that is largely seen as Western. This is especially important given the large number of crisis located in Muslim states.

The OIC's humanitarian response to the famine in Somalia in 2011 is the organisation's biggest and best-known relief operation to date. Its involvement was diverse, including roles as a diplomatic actor, a technical and operational actor and a donor. Most notable perhaps is the OIC's – or more precisely ICHAD's – role as coordinator of the OIC Coalition, which at one point comprised around 40 Islamic aid agencies and civil society organisations.

Access to areas controlled by Al-Shabaab posed a problem, in particular for Western agencies, whose work was restricted and in some cases banned altogether. Organisations not belonging to the formal humanitarian system, including those coordinated by the OIC, did enjoy greater levels of access. The OIC is often credited with having enabled this access through its Islamic identity. However, the assumption that this Islamic identity was the single most important factor in obtaining access is inaccurate. While playing an important coordination role the OIC did not itself negotiate access – leaving this task to the individual organisations within the OIC Coalition. Their networks and reputation and the perceived quality of their assistance, rather than their affiliation with the OIC, enabled them access to places inaccessible to aid agencies from the formal system.

The ease with which the OIC dispensed aid and the absence of the bureaucratic hurdles often associated with the UN and international NGOs is notable. The OIC showed flexibility, though what it showed in responsiveness it probably lacked in accountability. It will be important for the OIC to find a middle ground between being flexible and adhering to certain standards. The OIC's ability to rally and coordinate a large number of organisations contributed to its success in Somalia. While there is the risk that a mechanism set up in parallel to the UN might add an extra layer of coordination and consume valuable resources, this did not seem to have been the case in Somalia.

As an intergovernmental organisation, the OIC is subject to the varying if not necessarily competing interests and priorities of its members. In the case of Somalia the OIC's response was driven largely by

Turkey and Saudi Arabia, rather than by a strategic decision originating from ICHAD and based solely on humanitarian considerations. If the OIC and ICHAD, in particular, are expected to provide humanitarian assistance on the basis of need – while minimising political influence – it should be provided with a dedicated budget and the necessary distance from the political interests of member states.

The OIC will continue to play an important role in humanitarian action, though ICHAD will need to be strengthened and expanded to achieve its full potential. The UN and the OIC should engage in a frank discussion on the opportunities and challenges of working together. Somalia and the work of the OIC there represent an ideal starting-point for such dialogue.

1 Introduction

Comprising 57 member states, the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the second largest intergovernmental organisation in the world after the United Nations. Its membership extends from Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Middle East to Africa, Eurasia, the Balkans and South America. Many of the OIC's members are among the world's most heavily engaged humanitarian donors; Turkey, for example, was the third largest government donor of official humanitarian aid in 2013, and is set to host the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016.¹ Several other OIC members have emerged as major humanitarian actors within their particular regions. Among intergovernmental organisations, the OIC has been one of the fastest-growing humanitarian actors, building new institutions, adopting new policies, facilitating key dialogues and, at times, financing and implementing humanitarian projects on the ground. Hence, it is crucial for researchers, policymakers and practitioners to better understand the OIC's approach to humanitarian action.

The OIC's humanitarian role has been inspired by the Islamic principles of charity (*Zakat*)² and the notion of a shared religious community among Muslims (*Ummah*). Furthermore, as Ambassador Atta El Mana'an Bakhit (2008), the first leader of the OIC's Islamic Cooperation Humanitarian Affairs Department (ICHAD), stated, the OIC 'could not sit idle and let things happen without intervening given the important number of its Member States which were in need of humanitarian assistance'. More than a quarter of OIC member states are currently in the midst of a humanitarian emergency, including the conflicts in Syria and Iraq, instability in Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia and Libya, chronic suffering in the West Bank and Gaza and the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone and Guinea. Others, such as Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sudan and Pakistan, are affected by multiple forms of vulnerability, including natural disasters, conflict, human rights abuse and terrorism.

Despite the OIC's increasingly institutionalised commitment to humanitarian action and the challenges many of its member states are facing, few studies have independently documented its humanitarian record. This paper – part of the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG)'s research project 'Zones of Engagement: Regional Action and Humanitarian Response' – takes up that task. Rather than attempting to evaluate the OIC's contribution to humanitarian action, the study instead aims to facilitate greater understanding of its activities. How does the OIC – as reflected in its documents and programming – understand concepts such as humanitarianism? How does it approach humanitarian action (in terms of funding, project design and accountability) on the ground in crisis-affected locations? What can other international organisations learn from the OIC's model, and vice versa?

This paper applies these questions not only to the OIC's humanitarian agenda in general, but also to its key humanitarian role – led by ICHAD – in Somalia since 2011. Somalia was selected as an in-depth case study location in consultation with OIC/ICHAD personnel given that it is the largest OIC humanitarian office anywhere in the world, with approximately 40–50 staff members at its peak. As media coverage and other materials have noted, the OIC has been credited with using its Islamic identity to facilitate aid access to areas controlled by Al-Shabaab, the armed Islamist group which until recently controlled much of southern and central Somalia. This study examines the extent of the OIC's role in enabling humanitarian access and in more broadly contributing to humanitarian action in Somalia.

1.1 Methodology and structure

In addition to a detailed literature review, the global element of this project included interviews with ICHAD officials at OIC headquarters in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, as well as interviews with aid experts familiar with the OIC's humanitarian work. In Somalia, the research was led by the Heritage Institute for Policy Studies (HIPS) in Mogadishu,

1 See <http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/countryprofile/turkey>.

2 For an in-depth discussion on the meaning of humanitarianism in Arabic, see Moussa (2014).

Figure 2: Map of Somalia



where ICHAD's sole office in the country is located, and in Baidoa, Kismayo and Galkayo. These areas, Baidoa in particular, were affected by the drought in 2010–12, and the presence of Al-Shabaab made aid access difficult. Thirty interviews were conducted, including with seven OIC staff members in Somalia, representatives of six OIC partner organisations and personnel from five other humanitarian organisations. Eight Somali government representatives, including senior figures and deputy ministers closely aware of the OIC's humanitarian role in Somalia, were also interviewed, alongside three independent experts/researchers and one foreign donor representative.

The paper now turns to a global portrait of the OIC's emergence and growth as a humanitarian actor across a range of contexts (Section 2) before addressing ICHAD's specific role in Somalia, which is outlined

in Section 3. Section 4 then considers how the OIC's approach to and understanding of humanitarian action compares with other aid agencies. The authors ask what traditional humanitarian agencies might learn from the OIC and vice versa. A number of these points – and tangible proposals for furthering the OIC's rapidly growing contribution to humanitarian action in Somalia and globally – are taken up in Section 5.

This paper refers to humanitarianism and humanitarian action as those activities – whether aid delivery or the protection of civilians – which aim to save lives and alleviate acute suffering, particularly amidst or immediately after conflicts and disasters. However, the OIC's broader involvement in poverty alleviation and longer-term post-crisis rehabilitation are closely associated with its humanitarian work, especially in Somalia, and therefore the paper looks at both activities where appropriate.

2 The OIC's growth as a humanitarian actor

The creation of the OIC was first put forward by King Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia in 1969 in response to an arson attack against the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem (Green, 2004). The OIC grew rapidly in 1969 and 1970 as a concept and informal grouping before being legally established in 1971. In the mid-1970s it welcomed a range of new members primarily from Africa, including a number of nations which were not necessarily majority Muslim. Many states were motivated to join the OIC not only because of its values and activities but also because membership was a precondition for loans and grants from the OIC's most prominent subsidiary organ, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), which currently has an authorised capital of \$43.7 billion. Today, however, only Muslim-majority countries are permitted to join the OIC, though the organisation is particularly committed to defending the rights of Muslim minorities in non-member states (Khan, 2010).

Overall leadership of the OIC is provided by the Islamic Summit, which brings together heads of state and government every three years. The strategic direction set at the Islamic Summit is then overseen by the Council of Foreign Ministers, which meets annually. Day-to-day implementation of the OIC's strategy, enshrined in its Ten-Year Program of Action, is provided by the General Secretariat, which is overseen by a Secretary-General. The current incumbent, Iyad Ameen Madani, is from Saudi Arabia, which has traditionally wielded significant influence in the organisation, serving as its chief financier and host in Jeddah. Madani follows Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, from Turkey, who led the OIC from 2004 to 2014. Ihsanoglu, who is often credited with helping to situate the OIC as a truly international body with a broad issue profile, also institutionalised the OIC's involvement with humanitarian action (Bakhit, 2008).

Box 1: Humanitarianism and the OIC's Ten-Year Program of Action (OIC-TYPOA)

The OIC's current Ten-Year Program of Action (OIC, 2005), which lasts until late 2015, does not use the term 'humanitarian' or 'humanitarianism', but does include several elements relevant to humanitarian action. For instance, it calls on member states and the OIC as a whole to 'develop and adopt a clear strategy on Islamic relief action and support the trend towards cooperation and coordination between individual relief efforts of Islamic States and Islamic civil society institutions on the one hand, and international civil society institutions and organizations on the other hand'. The text particularly emphasises post-crisis efforts, with separate sections emphasising post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction after disasters. The document's section on poverty alleviation calls for international institutions to pay particular attention to internally displaced people and refugees within OIC member states. Broader protection issues are not emphasised.

Humanitarianism emerged as a particularly appropriate issue for the OIC given that it was an area where consensus was feasible – unlike the more divisive social, cultural, political and security issues on which member states periodically disagree (Colakoglu, 2013). At the same time, the OIC has been mindful of member states' sovereignty concerns, a sensitivity apparent in the TYPOA, where 'Islamic relief action' is mentioned under natural disasters rather than conflict. Other work that could be considered humanitarian is more closely associated with conflicts in countries with Muslim minorities, and hence not OIC member states.

The OIC traces the beginnings of its formal humanitarian activities to the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the mid-1990s, though it is important

1 See the OIC Charter: http://www.oic-oci.org/oicv2/page/?p_id=53&p_ref=27&lan=en.

to note that – until nearly a decade after the conflict – the OIC’s role was primarily diplomatic rather than formally humanitarian. From the outset of the war in 1992, the OIC advocated for the removal of sanctions, including a UN Security Council arms embargo that had hindered Bosnian Muslims’ attempts to defend themselves against better-armed Croat and Serb forces (BBC News, 2010). In a summit in Karachi in April 1992, OIC members unanimously approved a resolution calling for the lifting of the arms embargo against the former Yugoslavia. The following year the OIC held a special ministerial meeting on Bosnia at which seven OIC countries offered 17,000 peacekeepers to the UN and \$80 million in emergency assistance for Muslims affected by the war (*ibid.*). However, concerns that the OIC’s involvement would exacerbate the ethno-religious tensions that had helped to fuel the war meant that the OIC was largely excluded from broader NATO and UN structures, including an Economic Task Force (ETF) that included many other multilateral organisations and aid agencies. The OIC’s involvement in humanitarian efforts in Bosnia declined in the years after the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement, and OIC members ultimately provided only 6% of the amount they had earlier pledged (Forman and Patrick, 2000: 341). As time passed, however, the OIC became involved in reconstruction in Bosnia and established the Trust Fund for Returnees in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which rebuilt or rehabilitated 680 houses between 2003 and 2013 (out of 317,000 houses repaired or rebuilt with international assistance) (OIC ICHAD, 2010). The Fund has also built or rehabilitated ten health centres, 11 cultural centres and 12 schools and contributed to modest economic development projects, including micro-credit and the distribution of some agricultural machinery and inputs. While beneficial, the OIC’s ultimate contribution to Bosnia’s recovery was relatively small, although individual OIC members provided large volumes of bilateral assistance (Barakat and Zyck, 2010).

While the UN and other aid agencies were concerned about religious institutions becoming involved in Bosnia, where religion had become a deeply divisive issue, the OIC felt that it was being unjustly excluded from diplomatic and humanitarian work more broadly. It thus partly withdrew from these issues, authorising very limited humanitarian aid to ethnic Albanians in Kosovo in 1999 (Maher, 2003). Although the OIC established humanitarian funds in Afghanistan and Sierra Leone in 2002 and 2003 respectively, it was not

Box 2: The OIC and lessons learnt from the 2004 tsunami

In June 2005, at an OIC conference in Yemen, Ihsanoglu stated that the tsunami disaster has ‘exposed the lack of an OIC mechanism to cope with such catastrophes’, and suggested creating a fund for future disasters (Smallman, 2005). The OIC felt that its response was hindered not only by a lack of funding but also by its lack of established relationships with the aid agencies implementing humanitarian projects on the ground. This resulted in efforts by the OIC to strengthen relations and coordinate relief efforts with civil society. A decision was made to host annual conferences for NGOs, and in Senegal in 2008 30 NGOs participated in a side event to accompany the OIC’s 11th Summit of Heads of State. Since then the OIC has sought to strengthen its coordination with NGOs and other civil society organisations (CSOs). For instance, in January 2012 a set of rules granted NGOs consultative status more generally (Petersen, 2012). The OIC’s coordination with NGOs and CSOs has, however, been slower than anticipated given that Ihsanoglu called for closer cooperation as far back as 2005 – and even the initial 2008 civil society side event was held 80 miles from the main OIC Summit given concerns that participating CSOs might protest against the visiting leaders. The OIC has, according to interviews, often had to balance some officials’ and member states’ desire for service delivery-focused aid agencies with other member countries’ concerns about more advocacy-oriented groups that promote human rights, women’s empowerment and accountable governance.

until the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami that it decided to once again seek to engage with humanitarian issues on a large scale alongside the UN and other aid actors. Encouraged by the new Secretary-General, Ihsanoglu, by February 2005 OIC member states and subsidiary organs had contributed a total of \$661.7m to affected countries in Southeast Asia. Ihsanoglu said in a statement: ‘This dedicated support epitomizes the spirit of Islamic solidarity that is characteristic of the member states and the subsidiary organs that stand by the side of the sisterly world countries in times of crises’ (Shaikh, 2005). Attempting to carve out a niche in the humanitarian response, early in 2005 the OIC

established a Special Fund at the IDB for the newly named OIC Alliance to Rescue Child Victims of the Tsunami (OIC, 2005b). The OIC realised that its members would be reluctant to lose the visibility that comes with aid contributions and instead focused on mobilising and coordinating efforts from OIC member states, the International Islamic Relief Organisation, a number of NGOs and individual philanthropists from OIC states. The initiative proved useful but relatively small in scale: by 2007 the Alliance had provided relief to 3,000 orphans in Indonesia (OIC, 2007b).² Also in 2007, Ihsanoglu inaugurated the OIC village in Indonesia, which included 100 houses, a school and a mosque, along with several other schools and facilities for orphans (OIC, 2007a).

The tsunami highlighted to the OIC that many of its members were keener on pledging aid than providing it, and the organisation's aid objectives had to be scaled down. Even so, the disaster left many in the organisation re-engaged with humanitarian issues, and since the tsunami the OIC has been involved in humanitarian emergencies in a wide variety of countries, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Gaza, Mali, Mauritania, Myanmar, Niger, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sierra Leone and Yemen. These interventions range from multi-year programmes and even the potential establishment of a regional office for the Sahel to one-off contributions such as the delivery of \$100,000 in cash for humanitarian efforts in the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan in 2013.

The OIC has also institutionalised its humanitarian function, beginning in 2005 with an 'extraordinary summit' in Mecca. Coming on the heels of the tsunami and amidst Western-led interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, the OIC was keen to show that it could play a greater role not only in humanitarian action but also in governance, rule of law, human rights and other issues where some Islamic countries felt their perspectives and contributions were being overlooked or pushed aside. The Mecca summit called for the formation of an OIC humanitarian department, and in 2007 the OIC's Council of Foreign Ministers called for 'a mechanism to bring together humanitarian organizations and coordinate their activities within

Box 3: The OIC and Gaza

The OIC started assisting the population in Gaza more systematically following the 2008–2009 conflict between Israel and Hamas. In 2009 ICHAD opened an office in Gaza, and for several years the OIC issued monthly situation reports on the conditions facing Palestinians. The OIC has also put in place a broader infrastructure to support its activities in Gaza, including the ICHAD Logistics Coordination Unit (ILCU) in Egypt, which facilitates the transport of aid materials into Gaza. Beyond Somalia, Gaza probably represents the next-largest OIC humanitarian operation anywhere in the world, and the conflict there – like the 2004 tsunami – proved critical in expanding the OIC's engagement in humanitarian action. Following the conflict in 2014 the OIC proposed an 'OIC Action Plan for Palestine' with the aim among other things to increase humanitarian aid into Gaza.

the framework of Council of Non-governmental Organization'. The following year ICHAD, the OIC's humanitarian department, was established through a resolution (11/35-C) adopted by the Council of Foreign Ministers.

The timeline (p. 10) provides more details about the OIC's evolving involvement in humanitarian action.

2.1 A distinct OIC approach to humanitarian action?

The OIC's assistance activities include longer-term development as well as relief. For instance, the OIC's 2010–11 humanitarian programme for Sierra Leone included fish and shrimp farming, agriculture and youth projects, and its work in Afghanistan has focused on women and agriculture (OIC ICHAD, 2010). In Bosnia the OIC has focused on strengthening the health sector and economic development. Indeed, with the notable exceptions of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the 2009 conflict in Gaza, the 2010 floods in Pakistan, the 2011 famine in Somalia and the response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, the OIC has focused more on recovery and development-oriented activities related to basic services and livelihoods. In the case of Somalia, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Atta El Mana'an Bakhit stated

² OIC documentation provides very different beneficiary numbers, with the OIC Journal claiming in 2008 that the OIC had supported 20,000 orphans. In 2014, Madani, the new OIC Secretary-General, put the number closer to 10,000.

Table 1: Key dates in OIC humanitarian activities, 2002–2012

Year	Milestone
1991–94	OIC advocates for protection of Bosnian Muslims, lifting of UN arms embargo
1995	OIC proposes Assistance Mobilisation Group for Bosnia-Herzegovina
2002	Establishment of OIC Fund for Bosnia-Herzegovina
2002	Opening of OIC Assistance Fund for Afghan People
2003	Establishment of OIC Fund for Sierra Leone
2005	Creation of the OIC Alliance for Tsunami Orphans
2007	Organisation of donor conference for Niger during food crisis
2009	Opening of Coordination Office in Niger
2009	Opening of ICHAD office in Gaza
2009	Creation of ICHAD Logistics Coordination Unit (for Gaza) in Egypt
2010	Opening of hospital (operated by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)) in Al-Mazrak camp in Yemen
2010	Establishment of OIC Humanitarian Coordination Office in Islamabad
2010	Hosting of OIC Emergency Humanitarian Conference for Pakistan
2011	Opening of OIC Humanitarian Coordination Office in Somalia
2012	Organisation of Gaza Health Sector Strengthening Conference in Egypt
2012 (Mar)	OIC-OCHA joint humanitarian mission to Syria
2012 (Aug)	Suspension of Syria as OIC member, partly on humanitarian grounds
2012	Signing of MOU with government for OIC humanitarian office in Yemen

Sources: Various, including ICHAD-ILCU (2014)

in late 2011 that ‘Somalia has been moving from relief to relief without much progress, consequently, we have created a large relief-dependent population’ (IRIN, 2011). The OIC and several of its member countries reportedly perceive less of a distinction between poverty alleviation and post-crisis relief – given that both are fundamentally intended to alleviate suffering – than does much of the international community. Likewise, OIC officials see post-crisis reconstruction and recovery not as distinct from relief, but as a crucial means of cementing initial humanitarian gains. As a result, in the OIC’s understanding relief cannot stand alone but must logically be provided in conjunction with development work if people’s lives are to improve. To quote one OIC official interviewed in the course of this study: ‘The best humanitarian practice is ... to take them out of the situation. We have to encourage more development projects, instead of focusing on humanitarian assistance. I believe that 70 percent of the [assistance] should be about development’.

This less clear-cut distinction between relief and development raises questions regarding humanitarian independence and humanitarian principles more broadly. This is especially the case where support is provided to a government that might be contested, as is the case in Somalia. Several respondents also pointed to the fact that OIC funds come from wealthy states or individuals who put less emphasis on humanitarian principles than

might be the case with other donors. Similar to other ‘new’ or ‘emerging’ actors³ the OIC does not dispute humanitarian principles *per se*, though it acknowledges the difficulties in interpreting and applying them especially in complex crises (OIC, 2012c). In addition, Bakhit suggested that the list of principles could be longer than the four commonly accepted though, none was mentioned specifically (OIC, 2012c).

The OIC’s preference for recovery and development also reflects operational realities. Most notably, OIC member states, particularly wealthy donor countries from the Arab Gulf, prefer to provide assistance during and after high-profile disasters bilaterally rather than channelling it through multilateral organisations such as the OIC (Barakat and Zyck, 2010). This approach, which is also adopted by some Western nations, notably the United States, helps to ensure that the donor country wins credit for its humanitarian contributions from officials and others in the disaster-affected area. Financially, the OIC has far fewer resources⁴ for disaster response than other

3 See for example <https://www.wiltonpark.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/WP1269-Report.pdf> and <http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/events-documents/5066.pdf>.

4 As per the OIC Charter the budget is collected through member-state dues, appropriated as a percentage of their national income. See http://www.oic-oci.org/oicv2/page/?p_id=53&p_ref=27&lan=en.

multilateral bodies and, if it intervened rapidly at the peak of a crisis, would risk being seen as a relatively small player in a crowded field involving UN agencies and international NGOs with tens or hundreds of millions of dollars at their disposal. Hence, the OIC may begin planning how to support a country while a crisis is ongoing, but will generally take action – setting up a dedicated fund⁵ and identifying projects in partnership with the national government in the affected country – only in the following months or years.

The OIC has recognised the need to establish flexible and reliable funding for humanitarian emergencies, and commissioned an expert group to explore the possibility of establishing a Humanitarian Emergency Response Fund (HERF). At its Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) meeting in 2012 the OIC passed a resolution requesting that the study produced by the expert group be submitted to the next CFM. During a briefing to the Security Council in October 2013 the OIC Secretary-General stressed the need to establish the HERF (OIC, 2013a), though there is no indication that this has been done.

The OIC has also tended to prioritise assessments given its desire to obtain a first-hand understanding of the humanitarian challenges facing crisis-affected OIC members. The OIC recently sent missions to Chad, Cameroon and CAR to assess the humanitarian situations in those countries (Arab News, 2014), and it has previously sent missions to many other crisis-affected countries. These assessment missions enable the OIC and ICHAD to raise awareness about these crises among OIC members and to push them to contribute to the humanitarian response, either bilaterally or through ICHAD. In some cases OIC member countries may respond bilaterally to a humanitarian emergency while also emphasising that this assistance is being provided on behalf of both the donor country and the OIC.

ICHAD, like other humanitarian actors, has a major concern for highly vulnerable groups. However, it appears to try to safeguard those affected by conflict in a more formally diplomatic rather than humanitarian manner. That is, the OIC has traditionally used its diplomatic status to pursue conflict resolution. For instance, the OIC stepped in

to try to end the civil war which broke out among *mujahideen* groups and then between the *mujahideen* and the Taliban in Afghanistan from the early 1990s through to 2000 (Katzman, 2002; UCA, n.d.). In 1976 and again in 1996 the OIC helped to facilitate peace talks between the government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in Mindanao in the Philippines; the latter negotiations led to a durable peace agreement, albeit one that did not include the other major Islamic movement in Mindanao, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The OIC then turned to supporting negotiations between the MILF and the Philippine government. The OIC's efforts ultimately supported the establishment of a framework agreement between the government and the MILF in 2012, and a comprehensive agreement in 2014 (Felongco, 2014).

The OIC has also engaged in conflict management and protection efforts among Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar.⁶ In response to increasing attacks against the Rohingya by Myanmar's majority Buddhist population, the OIC proposed establishing a liaison office (despite Myanmar not being an OIC member). While the move was initially approved by the government, the initiative was ultimately blocked in 2012 after protests by Buddhist nationalists (IRIN, 2012). Since then the OIC has sent delegations to Myanmar, and OIC members have continued channelling humanitarian aid there (for Muslims and others); however, the OIC has switched strategy and is increasingly working with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to provide humanitarian aid on a 'non-discriminatory basis'.

In Syria the OIC has been supporting regional and international initiatives aimed at finding a solution to the conflict. However, as a result of what the OIC called 'the intransigence of the Syrian regime and its persistence in continuing the policy of violence' the organisation decided to suspend Syria's membership at its Fourth Extraordinary Summit in August 2012 (OIC, 2014). Although the motion to suspend Syria was passed, Iran made it clear that it did not see how a suspension could usefully contribute to resolving the conflict. This is illustrative of how divergent opinions are among regional powers when it comes to Syria's future. Iran's support for Bashar al-Assad stands in stark contrast to Saudi Arabia's backing for calls to arm the opposition. Initially, the OIC had intended for ICHAD to become

5 Under the Charter, Special Funds depend on voluntary contributions from member states.

6 For further information, see USDS (2013) and OIC (2013).

active in Syria, but this plan never came to fruition. On the one hand, having just been suspended the Syrian government was not going to agree to an ICHAD presence, and on the other some member states feared that ICHAD's presence would provide the Assad regime with unintended support and legitimacy.

2.2 Cooperation with international organisations

Despite the small scale of its humanitarian activities, its Islamic identity has led the formal humanitarian system to hope that the OIC could provide insights into how to gain access to areas controlled by Islamist movements, and help in developing approaches to humanitarian action which are more appropriate for predominantly Muslim countries. Such a contribution would be particularly important given that nearly three-quarters of all humanitarian appeals for crises in 2014 were for Muslim-majority countries and/or OIC member states (OCHA, 2014).

The OIC has established collaborations with the UN Secretariat and the Department of Political Affairs, and with every specialised UN agency, including the World Food Programme (WFP), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). ICHAD and OCHA established a three-year Action Plan for 2012–14 aimed at building mutual capacity and sharing information, and have undertaken joint humanitarian missions to numerous crisis zones,

including Mali in 2012 and the Philippines in 2013. The OIC has also agreed to work closely with the UN on promoting the development of disaster risk management frameworks among OIC member states and working to prevent conflicts globally, with a particular focus on the Sahel, Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. These long-term goals come on top of more specific collaboration, including a conference on refugees in the Islamic world organised by the OIC and UNHCR in 2012 and several other joint UN–OIC events.

The UN system and the OIC's other international partners, including the US Agency for International Development (USAID), also hope that partnerships will improve humanitarian access. Following Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon's visit to OIC headquarters in 2012 the two organisations agreed to strengthen their cooperation in areas of common interest, such as conflict prevention and mediation, human rights, humanitarian assistance and refugees, the fight against terrorism and intercultural dialogue. As a result of this commitment the UN and the OIC adopted the joint OIC–UN work plan,⁷ which specifically calls for OIC support to increase humanitarian access in Syria, Gaza, Yemen, Somalia and the Darfur region of Sudan. This message was emphasised at an October 2013 UN Security Council meeting on UN–OIC cooperation and has been particularly evident in the OIC's work in Somalia, though it is too early to judge how effective the collaboration has been in improving access more broadly. The OIC's work in Somalia is discussed in the following chapter.

7 See OIC-UN (2012).

3 The OIC's role in the famine response in Somalia

Nowhere is the OIC's engagement in humanitarian issues more evident than in Somalia, ICHAD's largest overseas operation and its best-known humanitarian mission. This section outlines the crisis that impelled the OIC to take action in Somalia, explains how the OIC engaged there and sets out the lessons that can be taken from its work, drawing on interviews and focus group discussions in Mogadishu, Baidoa, Kismayo and Galkayo.

3.1 Context

On 20 July 2011, the United Nations declared the onset of famine in two southern regions of Somalia (WFP, 2011). By early September the famine zone had expanded to six regions, mostly south of the capital, Mogadishu. The UN warned that 750,000 lives were at risk. Prior to the famine, Somalia had become a byword for lawlessness, insecurity, environmental degradation, piracy, terrorism and political turmoil, with natural and man-made disasters compounding one another. Insecurity rendered humanitarian access virtually impossible.

The immediate causes of the famine were a prolonged drought coupled with state collapse, political turmoil in Mogadishu and conflict between Al-Shabaab (an Al-Qaeda-inspired Somali militant group) and the government. Al-Shabaab's denial of access for humanitarian agencies in the worst-hit regions in southern Somalia helped turn a severe drought into a fully-fledged famine. Signs of the impending crisis emerged in early 2011 with the arrival in Mogadishu of drought victims from Middle Shabelle and Bay and Bakol regions. According to OCHA, between June and September 2011 26 displacement camps were established for close to 45,000 new arrivals (OCHA, 2011a). National NGOs, Nairobi-based aid agencies and the Somali government warned of an impending humanitarian crisis, and the prime minister announced the formation of a 20-member Drought and Famine Committee⁸ consisting of

prominent citizens, MPs, religious scholars and civil society leaders.

For its part, Al-Shabaab, which controlled almost all of the famine zones, denied the existence of an impending crisis (BBC, 2011). The group expelled most UN and Western humanitarian agencies between July 2009 and late 2011, and four months into the famine, in November, it looted the offices of WFP, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Baidoa and Baladweyn in south-west and central Somalia (ABC, 2011). The ongoing conflict and Al-Shabaab's hostility to aid agencies made the area a no-go-zone for the UN and Western aid agencies.

Access constraints were particularly problematic given that the international community had mobilised significant resources to tackle the famine. In mid-2011, the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) for Somalia had received \$363m out of a requested \$530m. Once the famine was declared the emergency appeal for Somalia quickly became one of the best-funded in the world, receiving around \$10m a day during the first month after the declaration (OCHA, 2012).

3.2 The OIC's role in Somalia and its response to the 2011 famine

The OIC was to play several different roles in Somalia, as a diplomatic actor, a technical and operational actor and a donor. At times the organisation found it difficult to strike the right balance between these three roles.

3.2.1 OIC structures in Somalia

ICHAD established the Humanitarian Coordination Office – the OIC's sole office in Somalia – in Mogadishu in March 2011. In the early days the office was reportedly very reliant on instructions from OIC headquarters in Jeddah and enjoyed relatively little latitude to act independently. However, over time the

⁸ In the Somali language the word 'Abaar' is interchangeably used for both drought and famine.

office has expanded and its ability to make decisions autonomously has grown. From an initial complement of five staff, ICHAD today has 35 staff members in Mogadishu, almost all of them Somali nationals. The OIC appoints the head of the office, with the deputy country director selected by the Somali government.

The other major OIC institution in Somalia is the so-called OIC Coalition, a coordination mechanism modelled on OCHA comprising around 40 aid agencies and civil society organisations. All are either Somali and/or based in OIC member countries.⁹ The coalition includes foreign aid agencies such as the Qatar Red Crescent Society, the International Islamic Relief Organisation (IIRO) and the Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) alongside smaller Somali organisations. A small number of members of the OIC Coalition also participate in the UN cluster system, and OCHA and other UN agencies are regularly represented at OIC coordination meetings. The OIC also formerly attended UN meetings, but reportedly stopped doing so after the peak of the famine response in 2011 and 2012.

ICHAD's coordination arrangements mirror those of the UN, with sectors such as food security and livelihoods, health, education, water, sanitation and hygiene and camp management led by organisations with particular expertise in the relevant field. Sector leads include the Qatar Red Crescent Society for food, the Arab Medical Union (AMU) for health, the Turkish Red Crescent Society for camp management and Islamic Relief Worldwide for information and communication. Sectoral meetings take place once a week, in addition to a weekly meeting with all coalition members (meetings were reportedly held daily during the peak of the crisis in 2011, when the OIC was more directly involved in providing aid and physically linking up its members with resources). While this study was not able to obtain any written records of meetings, participants indicate that the main focus is on the geographical and sectoral division of responsibilities, rather than relations with the government, access or other issues.

According to interviewees, the OIC does not have a clear mechanism or set of published criteria for assessing new coalition members, though it

reportedly considers potential members' capacity and their ability to gain access to particular areas. A few Coalition members received occasional small financial contributions from ICHAD for particular projects, though some of the OIC's partners in Somalia have been able to access resources from OIC members with support from ICHAD's head office in Jeddah. Organisations wishing to be part of the coalition make a formal request to the OIC, which then starts a screening process. The main advantages of membership seem to be association with an organisation that is generally seen as credible and reliable by Somalis familiar with it and the opportunity to share information and access funding through the OIC's contacts with the humanitarian community more generally in Somalia and the OIC's headquarters in Jeddah.

3.2.2 Mobilising resources and distributing assistance

In addition to providing a coordination function, the OIC also played a role in mobilising donor support. On 17 August 2011 it held an emergency meeting on Somalia in Istanbul attended by Foreign Ministers from the member states. At the meeting, the OIC's Secretary General presented a needs assessment by OIC partner NGOs in Somalia and, based on this assessment, requested \$500m in aid. Member countries pledged \$350m (Hammond, 2014). Participants at the meeting also created a Somali Task Force comprising Kazakhstan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Senegal and the OIC Secretariat. Contributions were particularly driven by Turkey, which provided nearly half (at least \$150m) of the \$350m pledged at the Istanbul meeting. Two days after the meeting, the Turkish president, his wife and members of his cabinet visited Somalia, including a large IDP camp in the south of Mogadishu. After the visit the Turkish government, which was keen to strengthen relations with Somalia, began a policy of 'humanitarian diplomacy'. As part of this policy Turkey increased its humanitarian aid globally to \$1.6 billion in 2013.¹⁰ Turkey, like other OIC members such as Kuwait and Iran, not only provided aid through the OIC but also bilaterally. Other donor agencies adopted a similar approach, providing assistance bilaterally and drawing on the OIC Coalition in Somalia to distribute assistance and implement projects.

9 Other publications describe this as the 'OIC Alliance' or the 'OIC Alliance for Relief, though ICHAD officials and official documents use the term 'coalition'.

10 According to the Financial Tracking Service (FTS), three-quarters of all Turkish humanitarian assistance reported to the FTS in 2011 went to Somalia (FTS, 2015).

In its response, the OIC distributed food rations, medicine, tents and other materials through the OIC Coalition. It distributed 25,000 tonnes of food during the famine, enough to feed around 25,000–35,000 people for six months. Approximately 10,000 tonnes – consisting of rice, dates and other foodstuffs – was dispatched to Somalia from the Gulf. Respondents noted that food distributed by the OIC, which included some for Iftar dinners to break the fast during Ramadan, was high in quality and suited to the typical Somali diet. The OIC also provided water to ten IDP settlements in Mogadishu during the famine, and ICHAD operated feeding centres and provided medical services. The OIC operated or supported 40 health posts, 31 nutrition centres, 23 special health centres for TB and maternal and child health, 11 general health centres, 17 mobile health teams, nine ambulances and seven hospitals (OIC, 2011).

Many of the OIC's partners felt that the organisation was an easy donor to work with given that it required very short proposals from coalition members and, with regard to monitoring and accountability, little more than short descriptions of activities and photographs of projects. Hence it remains difficult to judge what impact the OIC's assistance had in different areas, particularly since much OIC-associated aid during the famine was not branded with the OIC logo. Stakeholders consulted outside Mogadishu were unaware of the OIC's role even in areas where the organisation and its local partners report having provided or funded substantial amounts of assistance.

3.2.3 Enabling aid access?

As its portfolio grew in 2011, the OIC faced a range of challenges both in accessing adequate resources and in getting aid to areas where Al-Shabaab had placed severe restrictions on humanitarian agencies, or banned them outright. As previously noted, in 2010 Al-Shabaab banned WFP from operating in areas under its control, and in November 2011 the group banned 16 major international humanitarian organisations (UN, 2012). Somali and international Islamic NGOs were not subject to such bans, though all aid agencies faced difficulties operating in Al-Shabaab-controlled areas of south and central Somalia.

The OIC's office in Somalia did not directly help to overcome these access constraints since it did not itself negotiate humanitarian access in Al-Shabaab-

controlled areas, though it was frequently encouraged to do so by UN agencies. According to the OIC's partners in Somalia, individual Islamic and Somali organisations negotiated access to Al-Shabaab areas, for example through clan leaders and other networks (see also Jackson and Aynte, 2013). Representatives of OIC Coalition members felt that the OIC was not sufficiently well known in Somalia – and among Al-Shabaab – to negotiate aid access, particularly as ICHAD's sole office was in Mogadishu, and it had no sub-offices in the hardest-hit parts of the country. In fact, many OIC partner organisations felt that, while Al-Shabaab may have approved of the OIC's Islamic status, there was also a risk that the OIC's close relationship with the Somali authorities – particularly the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), which was battling Al-Shabaab – could have complicated aid agencies' efforts to reach people affected by the famine.

This finding, which is based on input directly from OIC partner organisations involved in responding to the famine in 2011 and 2012, contradicts the common perception that the OIC was the determining factor in enabling aid access to Al-Shabaab-controlled areas (see, for instance, UN, 2013). OIC interviewees confirm this perception, noting that the OIC only once attempted to contact Al-Shabaab to negotiate humanitarian access but withdrew after receiving a harsh response from the Somali authorities.

3.3 The OIC's transition to recovery in Somalia

ICHAD has remained engaged in recovery and development in Somalia through its Humanitarian Coordination Office long after the famine subsided. Many of the OIC's contributions during the post-famine phase are funded by the Saudi National Campaign for the Relief of the Somali People, a project of the late King Abdullah ibn Abdulaziz, which earmarked \$72m for Somalia over two years for recovery activities. The OIC allocated this money into five recovery programmes: 45% for education, 20% for health, 22% for social services and development, 5% for agriculture and 8% for future emergencies. Thus far the OIC has used these resources to build 18 new primary schools and has rehabilitated 15 secondary schools. In the health sector, the OIC is

currently building or renovating hospitals, including one in Mogadishu. In addition, the OIC's coalition partners implemented a pilot project starting in 2012 in which they returned 6,000 IDPs to their homes. However, 30% of those who participated in this project returned to the IDP camps, and subsequent OIC research showed that, prior to resettling in their home communities, IDPs needed agricultural support. To address this the OIC created the Comprehensive Voluntary Program, an integrated project that invests in social services, agricultural support programmes, livestock, market access, skills development, health education and water.

Despite moving on to recovery and development programmes, the OIC has still retained a relief portfolio in Somalia. In mid-2014, for instance, the organisation – through its partners – assisted 200,000 people with food and emergency shelter and provided medical services to 13,000 people and potable water to 15,000. In this instance the OIC directly contributed its own funds, allocating \$150,000. However, it appears unlikely to resume its role – which existed briefly amidst the 2011 famine response, when the OIC provided in-kind aid and a small number of grants to local NGOs – as a donor agency.

4 What lessons can be drawn from the OIC's role in Somalia?

The OIC's involvement in Somalia in 2011 came at a time when the country was struggling to address the consequences of a famine that, according to the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), would kill 260,000 Somalis by 2012 (BBC, 2013). It also came at a time when Al-Shabaab had banned a number of international humanitarian organisations that had previously provided relief. The OIC, through ICHAD and its coalition of NGOs in Somalia, was able to provide much-needed assistance at this crucial juncture. This chapter explores potential lessons that can be learned from the way the OIC began and consolidated its engagement in Somalia.

4.1 Coordination and collaboration

It is not surprising that the OIC's, or more accurately ICHAD's, coordination set-up in Somalia mirrors that of the UN since ICHAD sees itself very much like an 'OCHA for OIC countries'. Ties between OCHA and ICHAD have been close and long-standing, culminating in the formal agreement between OCHA and the OIC in November 2011.¹¹

Most respondents agreed that the OIC's ability to rally and coordinate a large number of local and international NGOs and organisations around a common cause contributed to the success of its operations in Somalia. The coordination mechanisms established by the OIC also enabled the better distribution of tasks and geographical areas among its members. In general, the OIC was complimented on the effectiveness of coordination and information-sharing among its coalition members. At the same time, however, respondents suggested that contacts between the OIC and the UN could be improved. OIC representatives felt that UN agencies had not done enough to share information with the organisation,

while UN agencies expressed disappointment that the OIC was not more consistently present at their meetings. Such a situation is relatively common as two different sets of actors attempt to coordinate and collaborate on humanitarian efforts, as seen in past research on so-called 'emerging' donors, civil-military coordination and the private sector (Svoboda, 2014; Zyck and Kent, 2014). That said, in the case of the OIC and UN both sides agreed on the need for more consistent interaction and two-way information-sharing. UN officials stated that they sent information on humanitarian conditions and activities but found that the OIC office in Mogadishu would not reciprocate. The Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), which included representatives of UN agencies, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and others, reportedly offered the OIC observer status, which it rejected on the basis that it should be a full member.

There is also a concern that mechanisms set up outside of existing ones – usually UN-led – will add an extra layer of coordination that might render the process more complicated and suck in resources that could be used elsewhere. In the case of Somalia this does not seem to be the case. There is added value in the ICHAD mechanism insofar as it involves and partners with NGOs, notably Islamic and Somali organisations, some of which would otherwise fall outside the UN coordination system. Certain organisations in Somalia tend to have a closer affinity with ICHAD than the UN, based on their cultural, religious and linguistic background. In Somalia at least, a separate coordination mechanism seems an appropriate and pragmatic approach.

4.2 Identity and access

The OIC does not have sub-offices outside Mogadishu, perhaps understandably as it does not implement any projects itself, but rather coordinates others whose work would then be known by recipients. In addition, the OIC has been in Somalia only since 2011 and thus is

¹¹ See OCHA (2011b).

still relatively new to the country. Most respondents who know the OIC have a positive perception of it. Even those interviewees who did not know the organisation said that they would instinctively trust a body with a Muslim identity more than they would a non-Muslim one. This Muslim identity has certainly played a crucial role in shoring up support for Somalia and encouraging Muslim organisations as well as OIC member states to become more engaged in the country. The assumption that the OIC's Muslim identity was the most important or indeed the only factor that gave it access to areas inaccessible to others is however inaccurate. There is no doubt that the OIC's political resolve and initiative, coupled with the gravity of the famine, facilitated its operations when others were perhaps more hesitant. It is also clear from discussions with respondents that the OIC's identity resonates with Somalis even if they personally do not know the organisation. A statement by one interviewee is illustrative of this attitude: 'it has Islamic in its title so we know we can trust them, they think like us'. This credibility and authority helped garner the support of international Islamic and local organisations which then chose to become members of the OIC NGO coalition, and it was largely these organisations that negotiated access to areas closed to Western organisations, principally those controlled by Al-Shabaab. Being associated with the OIC was not a determining factor: this research shows that organisations were able to access Al-Shabaab areas in some cases due to their networks, their reputation and the perceived quality of their assistance – rather than due to any affiliation (or not) with the OIC.

Being Muslim does not necessarily guarantee the ability to operate in Al-Shabaab-held areas, as seen in the example of Islamic Relief (IR). In October 2012 Al-Shabaab 'revoked IR's work permit', claiming that the organisation had covertly extended its operations to organisations, including WFP, that had been banned from operating by Al-Shabaab (Al-Jazeera, 2012). Al-Shabaab further stated that, despite repeated warnings, IR had failed to comply with operational guidelines set out by the group. A year later the Turkish embassy was targeted in a suicide attack for which Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility, stating that 'the Turkish are part of a group of nations bolstering the apostate regime and attempting to suppress the establishment of Islamic sharia' (Al-Arabiya, 2013). According to some respondents, access in Somalia depends more on connections and negotiation skills (including requirements imposed by groups such as Al-Shabaab) than being Muslim.

4.3 Responsiveness and accountability

The predominant view emerging from interviews was that the OIC can act quickly with little or no bureaucratic hurdles when it processes project applications. The research showed that the OIC required less documentation in order to decide whether to support a project and generally dispensed funds quickly. This flexibility is often contrasted with the seemingly slow and cumbersome processes often associated with the UN. This is partly due to the fact that the OIC is present in Somalia, while international humanitarian organisations and the UN have only a limited presence, with decision-makers in Nairobi rather than Mogadishu. This started to change in 2013 when the UN began increasing its presence in Mogadishu, which should put it in a better position to anticipate and react to future crises.

Respondents talked about the lengthy assessment process undertaken by the UN before the start of a project and the inefficient release of funds. However, they also acknowledged that needs assessments, adhering to certain standards and being accountable are important tools which could be applied more systematically within the OIC, while trying to maintain the timeliness of its response.

Al-Shabaab is currently on several lists of proscribed groups (US, UN, EU). Counter-terror legislation has had a significant impact on humanitarian organisations in contexts where proscribed groups operate and where humanitarian action can potentially be considered as providing material support to terrorist groups (Pantuliano et al., 2011; Jackson and Aynte, 2013). Although some restrictions were temporarily lifted during the famine, respondents felt that organisations were put under more scrutiny by the UN in an attempt to avoid any diversion of funds to a proscribed group, while the OIC showed greater pragmatism and speed in an attempt to provide assistance where it was needed even if the area was controlled by Al-Shabaab. Some interviewees confirmed what previous research has shown (Pantuliano et al., 2011), namely that after 2001 Islamic organisations in particular have come under increased scrutiny, making it more difficult to attract and receive funds.

4.4 Intergovernmentality

As an intergovernmental organisation with 57 member states, the OIC grapples with intergovernmental relations just as other similar organisations like the UN, European Union and African Union do. In responding to the humanitarian emergency in Somalia, the OIC had to reconcile the goals and priorities of two strong members, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. While not necessarily having competing interests in Somalia it is clear that Turkey spearheaded international support for the country and was seen as driving the OIC's response. The 2011 OIC Summit in Istanbul was seen as an opportunity to showcase Turkey's commitment to Africa. During his speech, Prime Minister Recep Erdogan rallied member states around the need to show solidarity with fellow Muslims, and announced a visit to Somalia together with his family shortly after the meeting at a time when visits by dignitaries to Mogadishu were extremely rare. The visit helped to show Somalia not as a failed state, but rather as a nation in need of international support. While Turkey supported construction projects and scholarships and provided funds for humanitarian organisations, it also established an economic presence, not least through direct flights between Mogadishu and Istanbul operated by its national carrier. Turkey's presence in Somalia is therefore much more a bilateral affair than it is in support of the OIC.

Saudi Arabia's response to the crisis in Somalia has been driven by the Saudi National Campaign for the

Relief of the Somali People, established in August 2011. A cooperation agreement between the Campaign and the OIC was signed shortly afterwards to assist in coordinating how Saudi funds are used. Assistance is marked as coming from Saudi Arabia rather than the OIC even if it is channelled through the organisation. In addition, Saudi Arabia, much like Turkey, is involved in reconstruction and in commercial projects that give both countries a visible presence and in the eyes of Somalis a tangible usefulness in their country. These projects cannot be considered part of ICHAD's humanitarian response, but they are inevitably associated with the OIC, giving the organisation the positive image many respondents spoke of. However, although the OIC as a whole benefited from the engagement of these two member states, it also needs to be able to work in crises that might not receive the same attention from individual members, and must try to ensure that its work, and more importantly that of ICHAD, is insulated from the political agendas and priorities of its members.

As shown above, the OIC's presence has gone through different phases, as has its relationship with the Somali government. During the famine the OIC prioritised the humanitarian response. With the famine ending and the government of Somalia taking shape since 2012 the OIC has moved to support it in the transition period. Today, the OIC is very much seen as assisting the government in consolidating its position. This could ultimately prove detrimental to ICHAD's ability to do its work should another famine erupt and the need arise again to access areas under the control of groups hostile to the government.

5 Conclusion and recommendations

The OIC generally portrays its engagement in Somalia at the height of the famine as a success. It provided crucial support to organisations that delivered much-needed assistance to areas where international aid agencies had limited access. The famine in Somalia is a prime example of the OIC's ability to act quickly when needed, and when a humanitarian response is strongly supported by the organisation's leadership.

This research has shown that the reasons for this success lie in the particular constellation of factors that opened up a window of opportunity in 2011 as much as in the OIC's resolve to seize it. Firstly, at the time the famine was causing deaths on such a scale that neither the government of Somalia nor Al-Shabaab had the means to alleviate it, nor would they gain anything from leaving it unaddressed. The government decided not only to accept the OIC's help, but also allowed the OIC to support organisations that were present in Al-Shabaab-controlled areas. Al-Shabaab was receptive to assistance provided by Islamic organisations, some of which were supported or coordinated by the OIC. Secondly, the OIC's involvement in Somalia had a catalytic impact, leading organisations from OIC member countries to establish operations there and join the OIC-coordinated NGO coalition. Thirdly, in 2011 the Arab Spring revolutions shone a spotlight on the need for more accountability to citizens of member states, and the OIC came under increasing pressure to engage in humanitarian activities, not only from the UN and other aid actors but also from civil society groups, especially in the Arab world. Lastly, Turkey's ambition to become an important player in Africa and its very public call for support during the famine changed the perception of Somalia as a threat among OIC member states and beyond, thereby facilitating engagement by the OIC.

It is not possible to draw hard and fast conclusions regarding the OIC's evolving humanitarian role and agenda. Since its establishment ICHAD has not received the required financial or formal support from member states to establish the financial and

administrative structures it needs. The OIC does not have a stable and significant level of resources and suffers from a lack of insulation from the OIC's internal politics. ICHAD does not have a dedicated budget; funds are provided by member states for a particular crisis, not for a sizable standing ICHAD strategy to prepare for and respond to crises around the world. ICHAD funds wax and wane with particular crises, much as they would for a small to medium-sized international NGO.

And yet, despite limited resources, ICHAD has steadily increased its operations. Although it remains to be seen how the OIC's humanitarian work through ICHAD will develop, it is likely to play a more robust role in humanitarian affairs in the future, if not as a major donor then at least as a driver of humanitarian donations from its members. There also seems to be ample scope for the OIC to continue its engagement in humanitarian coordination, though it will require additional human and financial resources to do so effectively. Here it would be helpful for the OIC not to compete with or duplicate the work of UN agencies such as OCHA, but instead to focus on coordinating smaller NGOs and Islamic NGOs which, due to their size or for practical reasons, such as security concerns or linguistic ability, might not be comfortable participating in UN forums. Such a technical role must, however, be separated from the OIC's broader political or diplomatic mandate. ICHAD personnel in crisis zones will require a degree of flexibility and independence which is not normally afforded to diplomats, and it will be important for the OIC to – physically and institutionally – ensure that the organisation's aid is not unduly intertwined with member states' political and security interests.

The research suggests the following policy options for the OIC in Somalia as well as more broadly:

For the OIC in Somalia:

- The predominant view of the OIC's humanitarian work in Somalia is positive. This is largely

attributed to ICHAD's ability to coordinate coalition members and to respond quickly to funding requests. On the other hand there is limited reporting and accountability. ICHAD could gradually introduce systematic reporting mechanisms including monitoring and evaluation, while maintaining flexibility.

- The wider humanitarian system could benefit greatly from ICHAD's experience in Somalia. A joint lessons-learned exercise from the drought response in 2011 could be used as an example and as a means to discuss coordination for possible future disaster responses. More broadly, contacts between the OIC and the UN could be strengthened with systematic participation in each other's coordination meetings.

For ICHAD/OIC globally:

- Somalia and other regions where ICHAD is active are prone to disasters and conflict. While the OIC has proved flexible when needed it could do better in anticipating when disaster might strike again. Disaster preparedness could play a more prominent role in helping the OIC to respond earlier to droughts and other disasters. In this regard an exchange and sharing of experience with other regional organisations might be useful.
- ICHAD's humanitarian responses should as much as possible be protected from the political agendas of OIC member states. ICHAD should be given

more human and financial resources to maintain its independence.

- The ability of ICHAD country offices to make decisions autonomously from headquarters in Jeddah should be strengthened, including dedicated funds for its humanitarian work. This will be crucial in helping to ensure that ICHAD remains fast and flexible.
- With preparations for the World Humanitarian Summit in full swing the OIC and in particular ICHAD should remain closely engaged to ensure that concerns and suggestions based on ICHAD's experience are adequately reflected in WHS fora.

For the formal humanitarian system:

- Regional consultations in preparation for the World Humanitarian Summit should systematically involve regional organisations and in particular their humanitarian departments, including the OIC and ICHAD.
- More broadly, and in view of some of the current access challenges facing the UN in countries such as Syria and Iraq, it might be useful to discuss potential ways to enhance the humanitarian response.
- Engage in an open and frank discussion on what challenges and opportunities a Muslim equivalent of OCHA would mean for the formal humanitarian system. This would help avoid potential overlaps and duplications and enhance complementarity.

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Humanitarian Policy Group
Overseas Development Institute
203 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8NJ
United Kingdom

Tel. +44 (0) 20 7922 0300
Fax. +44 (0) 20 7922 0399
E-mail: hpgadmin@odi.org
Website: <http://www.odi.org/hpg>

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