

## BUILDING AND STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY THROUGH INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY-BASED DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

Increasing community resilience to  
climate-induced shocks in Somalia

### INNOVATION PROGRAMME

Stronger partnerships: Local Innovations for New  
Climate Realities in Cities



### GRANT RECIPIENT

Action for Women & Children Concern  
(AWCC)

### PARTNERS

Local Authorities & communities

### GRANT AMOUNT

\$29,994

### DURATION

8 Months

### YEAR

2020-2021

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

### What is the problem?

Somalia is a war-torn country that is also highly affected by climate-induced events, like unpredictable droughts followed by torrential rains that cause rivers to burst their banks. Such shocks often hit hardest on people with low resilience, who are already facing food insecurity and loss of assets. Today, more than half of the population needs humanitarian assistance.

### Where is it?

Marka, Lower Shabelle region, Somalia

### Who does it affect?

Women and children; people already suffering from displacement and persistent poverty

### What are the causes?

Protracted armed conflicts and climate change-induced shocks cause internal displacement, food insecurity, and livelihood crisis in Somalia. Thousands of people migrate from their home regions to urban areas every year to seek survival after losing their productive assets to droughts and flooding from torrential rains. Decades of armed conflicts and recurrent climate change-induced shocks have depleted community resources and weakened coping mechanisms across Somalia. There are no strong institutions that address and prepare people to cope with climate-induced shocks.

### Approach

Action for Women and Children Concern (AWCC) Somalia considers “inclusive” community-based disaster risk management (CBDRM) as an effective way to reduce the effects of climate change-induced shocks and increase the overall community resilience to these shocks in Marka district, Lower Shabelle region, Somalia.

The project emphasizes sustainable solutions that are cost effective and require active community participation. In collaboration with local government and mobile phone service providers, the project developed a unique SMS system tailored to local seasonal calendars to inform communities in advance to prepare for upcoming flooding.

AWCC recognizes the fact that women and children are primarily affected by climate-induced shocks, as they are the most vulnerable group. Nevertheless, women also have tremendous potential to contribute to sustainable solutions through an inclusive CBDRM approach.

This project included a series of trainings to introduce inclusive disaster risk reduction (DRR) methodologies, thereby strengthening community resilience capacities and enabling people to better adapt to climate-induced shocks as a community.

## FINAL REPORT

# ACHIEVEMENTS



“Women and men are both adversely affected by climate change, and have different needs, this project is relevant”

*Abdalla Dhere , community leader,  
Council of Community Leaders*

## Entry point – Coordination and synergies

Coordinated with local communities and authorities to conduct a series of community mobilization and sensitization sessions on the effects of climate change, community capacities on DRR, and how to capitalize on existing potential and synergies to increase community resilience and mitigate climate-induced shocks.

Both the project subject area and the approach were completely new, as there was no existing recognition of either climate change effects or climate-induced shocks in Somalia. The impacts of climate change have been viewed as recurrent cyclical events of nature. Thus, there was no prior perception that communities could work together to address risks from recurrent drought and floods in Somalia.

The combination of sensitization and mobilization on climate change as well as CBDRM trainings have increased community engagement and ownership, resulting in successful achievement of project goals.

## Empowering women and youth

Women and girls have been actively involved in the project, demonstrating their ability to effectively contribute toward mitigating community vulnerability to climate-induced shocks and increasing resilience. Further, men in the community recognized women’s potential to undertake these challenges. Women were perceived as coping better with droughts and food insecurity, although they were seen as more at risk from flooding.

The involvement of women and girls in the project provided an opportunity to include conversations about gender-based violence (GBV) and child early forced marriages (CEFM), particularly in relation to climate change induced shocks.

Recognizing that young people will play a key role in reducing the impacts of climate change in Somalia, AWCC sensitized and trained community members on CBDRM. The project seeks to capitalize on the synergies and abilities of young people to mitigate and reduce the effects of climate change in the country in the future.

## Key achievements – Outputs

- Held two community sensitization and awareness raising trainings on inclusive CBDRM, including interactive group discussion and brainstorming sessions.
- Organized and conducted mobilization sessions on inclusive CBDRM for 50 stakeholders (including women and men).
- With local authorities, stakeholders from local NGOs, and private-sector and community leaders, explored early warning and messaging systems to enable early action on possible unfolding disasters to avert or mitigate effects.
- Engaged two mobile service provider firms in the project.
- Held five trainings for 150 community members (women and men), as well as local authorities and community elders from Marka district and 6 staff from network service providers. Through these direct training sessions, the indirect reach of the project is estimated at 56,000 community members (17,360 women; 25,200 children).
- Formed CBDRM committees and created community action plans on inclusive DRR in the Somali context, such that all (women and men alike) are on board to learn, understand and respond each other’s needs before disaster strikes.
- Conducted baseline and endline surveys to help shape the project and evaluate results. Survey data revealed an initial lack of awareness on climate change as a contributor to recurrent natural crises, particularly frequent droughts and flooding. However, perceptions gradually began to shift in Marka after the introduction of the CBDRM intervention.



# LESSONS LEARNED



“Inclusivity means everyone is on board and involved in Community-Based Disaster Risk Management”

*Ahmed Hassan, Executive Director,  
AWCC Somalia*

## Climate shocks and compounded effects

With frequent climate-related emergencies, such as droughts followed by torrential rains and flooding, people in Somalia have become reliant on aid, and almost two thirds of the population is food insecure.

Authorities tend to prioritize quick fix solutions, i.e., emergency responses, rather than long-term sustainable solutions to climate change-induced shocks. But these emergency responses have not achieved sustainable benefits, and instead aid dependency has increased. Communities were just beginning to understand the importance of DRR when the second wave of COVID-19 broke, and government measures were introduced to contain public gatherings.

In addition to the effects of climate change on food security, climate-induced shocks have evidently contributed to increased risks of GBV, including CEFM. GBV has increased as women become more vulnerable, and CEFM has become more of a negative coping mechanism after displacement. Both men and women consider using CEFM as a negative coping mechanism during crises, both to relieve having a girl child on the family (often perceived as a burden) and reduce potential exposure to GBV, in part because if a girl suffers GBV before marriage, it can have implications on family honour. AWCC recognizes that this particular issue requires a lot of transformation on social norms and a lot of engagement through other projects.

## Local capacity and community buy-in

Local capacity already exists in Somalia for reducing the effects of climate-induced shocks. This capacity includes technology and community dynamics, i.e., young people, as 75% of Somalia’s population is below the age of 30. Their contribution is essential for increasing climate resiliency.

Changing social norms and securing acceptance that climate change effects, besides being nature, could be preventable has not been an easy task for the target communities to digest, particularly the traditional community leaders. The AWCC project introduced concepts to change commonly held stereotypes regarding climate change, and the project itself coincided with a tumultuous year of climatic shocks in Somalia, making it more relevant to the existing context and increasing community buy-in.

There is potential and capacity for engaging private sector support. Mobile service providers found the idea innovative and would be natural partners for expanding similar efforts elsewhere.

A mixed communications approach is necessary to reach all community members, including those with low literacy. A common concern was that SMS alerts will not be effective for community members who lack literacy. Oral communications, such as through local radio broadcast alerts, are also needed.

Although it attracted community acceptance and appears to be sustainable, the project may require years of continued external support, given that it was the first of its type implemented in Somalia. Based on this possibility, AWCC would continue to advocate and lobby for more projects of a similar nature in order to strengthen community capacities and gradually institutionalize CBDRM, at least at the local level.

The project needs to be capitalized by bringing NGOs on board from sectors such as WASH, agriculture, food security and livelihoods to develop complementarities with the project for sustainable climate actions.

# MOVING FORWARD



“Inclusive community action plans will increase community resilience to climate change”

*Halima Haile, Secretary,  
Women’s organization*

## Project sustainability and institutionalization

The project introduced community-owned systems of managing and mitigating the effects of climate-induced shocks, and the results need to be sustained. AWCC continues to strive and explore ways to sustain the project outcomes, in close collaboration with all stakeholders. Part of AWCC’s sustainability plan is ensuring the community has an inclusive community action plan that is applicable and cost effective.

AWCC is seeking further support to institutionalize CBDRM for sustainability. This includes advocating for local authorities to take the lead on CBDRM to ensure that its inclusivity is maintained. Further training on institutional management is also needed, as well as office equipment to help CBDRM committees be more functional and self sustainable going forward.

Institutionalizing plans will help improve coordination between local CBDRM, CSOs and Somali weather and climate bodies like Somali Water and Land information Management (SWALIM). Visibility earned through this AWCC project may also be leveraged to acquire funds to expand and institutionalize the project outcomes.

## Outreach and inclusivity

AWCC is exploring an oral communications option with local radio media for participation in early warning/action measures. This would help emergency alerts reach vulnerable people in crisis-prone areas who lack access to mobile phone services or have low literacy and may not be able to read SMS alerts to learn about an unfolding crisis.

The CBDRM committee can initiate further improvements to the project, such as drafting their own bylaws. AWCC will support the CBDRM committee in developing their institutional capacities.

AWCC will continue to transform lessons learned toward potential actions to address existing gaps both locally and at a larger scale. Among the problems that require immediate action locally include poor urban sanitation practices in Marka town and damaged irrigation canals that increase flooding risks. At the larger scale is the need for the institutionalization of inclusive CBDRM in Somalia.

To strengthen CBDRM moving forward, communities should ensure that CBDRM committees are democratized and open to everyone, with transparent eligibility and membership criteria in place. This will increase community participation and sense of ownership.

Furthermore, AWCC is also looking at ways to engage WASH and Food Security clusters in CBDRM in Somalia to coordinate water, hygiene and food security related issues in relation to climate change induced shocks in Somalia.

## FINAL REPORT