

# A **STEP** TOWARDS RESILIENCE

Joint Initiatives Addressing Protracted Crisis in Somali Region-Ethiopia





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**The Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre**, established in 2002, is a Public Benefit Organization under Netherlands law and a specialist reference Centre of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Its mission is to help the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and its partners reduce the impact of climate change and extreme-weather events on vulnerable people. Working at the intersection of science, policy and practice, the Centre's core objective is to make the best global scientific insights operatable at the local level.

The Centre's support for National Societies and the IFRC focuses on climate information for disaster preparedness and response, food security and health, training and technical back-up.



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Maria Twerda  
*Country Representative for Ethiopia*  
*Netherlands Red Cross*  
*November 2017*

## Foreword

Despite progress made in reducing disaster risk at all levels since the adoption of the Sendai Framework for DRR (SFDRR) in 2005, disasters have continued to exert a heavy toll on people's lives and livelihoods. Between 2005 and 2014, over 700,000 people lost their lives, over 1.4 million were injured and approximately 23 million were made homeless as a result of disasters. Overall, more than 1.5 billion people have been affected in various ways, with women, children and people in vulnerable situations disproportionately affected. The total economic loss was more than \$1.3 trillion. In addition, between 2008 and 2012, 144 million people were displaced mainly from armed conflicts which are becoming more protracted. Climate change has added another complication by increasing the frequency and intensity of the hazards, significantly impeding progress towards sustainable development. Recurring small-scale disasters and slow-onset disasters affect communities, households and small and medium-size enterprises, constituting a high percentage of all losses (UNISDR<sup>1</sup>). However, all is not lost, because now there is a growing recognition to stop a short-term fixation for long-term problems. As a result, resilience building and proactive risk reduction is now reflected in all key global instruments such as Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and Sendai Framework for Action.

Ethiopia is a disaster-prone country, exposed to numerous hazards including droughts, floods, epidemics and conflict. Recurring drought and floods have the most severe impact on Ethiopia's population. The country has a long history of recurring drought, which has increased in magnitude, frequency and impact since the 1970s. The severe drought in 2015 exacerbated by El Nino, affected 10.2 million people in the country. A number of studies show that due to climate change and additional human-induced factors, the areas affected by drought and desertification are expanding. Flash and seasonal river floods are becoming more frequent and widespread. Climate models indicate that in the next century there will be a 20% increase in extreme high rainfall events.

Somali Region of Ethiopia is a typical context that shows the challenge the country is facing; moving from one crisis to another before getting adequate recovery period in-between. People living in Somali Region of Ethiopia are not new to drought and floods. In order to address the underlying causes of vulnerability and enhance communities' resilience, an integrated disaster risk reduction approach was designed and implemented in partnership with Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) and 3 Dutch organisations: The Netherlands Red Cross (NLRC), Wetlands International and Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Change Centre (RCCC). The programme's overall objective was to improve food security, livelihoods, water security and adaptive capacity of 50,000 people in 3 woredas, namely Gursum, Jigjiga and Tuli-Guleid in Somali Region. Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) was

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1 Sendai Framework 2015-2030

the key implementing partner alongside the relevant government stakeholders and of course, the target communities who were the drivers of the entire planning and implementation process.

The Protracted Crisis Programme was implemented over a period of 3½ years and provided an opportunity for replicating and up-scaling an integrated approach for resilience, linking disaster risk reduction (DRR), climate change adaptation (CCA), and ecosystem management and restoration (EMR). From beneficiaries' record, so far 38,493 people have been reached with food security initiatives out of whom 36% are women and close to 33,150 people, of whom 42% are also women, benefited from the water security outcome. When activities such as those targeting unemployed youth, rehabilitation of natural resources, water development and the linkage between DRR and development planning are fully implemented, the number of beneficiaries will exceed the target of 50,000 people.

*A Step Towards Resilience: Joint Initiatives Addressing Protracted Crisis in Somali Region-Ethiopia* is a compilation of inspiring stories of the journey of change that started in 2014, bringing together several partners with the common goal of empowering communities of Somali Region to deal with the challenges brought about by the protracted crisis in their communities. The methodology used for the preparation of the writeshop, the simultaneous documentation of lessons learnt during the programme, the extensive use of photographs and the unique editorial strategies, make this book an exciting addition to the big catalogue of literature on resilience.

The book picks a few success stories emerging from the water storage infrastructure for both human and animal consumption, improved incomes from growing fast maturing crops, availability of technical services provided by community animal health workers (CAHWs) at community level and the organisation of community groups (especially vulnerable women) into savings and milk marketing groups to help diversify livelihoods.

Without applying the usual lingo and terminologies associated with evaluations, the stories told in this book make interesting reading while at the same time conveying the beneficiaries' perspectives. This is achieved without necessarily losing the humour and originality that is so evidently the characteristic of African story-telling. Through the stories, the readers will discover the immense potential and comparative advantages of the programme in improving livelihoods and contributing to the development of communities. We would like to thank the partners for their good cooperation and to recommend *A Step Towards Resilience: Joint Initiatives Addressing Protracted Crisis in Somali Region-Ethiopia* for everyone working to build resilience in the context of protracted crisis in the Horn of Africa.

## Introduction

The Protracted Crisis Programme provided an opportunity for replicating and up-scaling an integrated approach for resilience, linking disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and ecosystem management and restoration, along the lines of the “Partners for Resilience” (PFR) initiative that included a mixture of anticipation, response, adaptation and transformation measures. The programme worked directly on water and food security by protecting and restoring natural resources. In the Somali Region, the programme’s overall objective was that, ‘by June 2017, 50,000 people in 9 target kebeles in Gursum, Jigjiga and Tuli Guleid woredas, would be more resilient against shocks and stresses caused by climate-related extreme weather and the effects of environmental degradation.’

One of the three outcomes of the programme was improved food security. The main food security challenges in the region were noted as environmental degradation, declining productivity from lack of access to improved seed and farming technologies, and lack of alternative livelihood options. These challenges were addressed through implementation of a range of activities. The focus of this outcome was on improving agriculture and pastoralist practices and creating (better) access to agriculture extension and veterinary services. Over 100 households received various agricultural inputs like early maturing seeds and cassava cuttings, as well as training. Also, 120 modern beehives and related accessories were produced and distributed to 120 beneficiaries in 2017. The programme undertook to implement rainwater harvesting techniques and to construct 7 farm ponds so as to provide water for farming in the dry season. In order to improve animal health, community animal health workers (CAHWs) were provided with essential veterinary kits to treat animals. Other major activities of the programme included the establishment of income generating activities (IGAs) and the establishment of self-help groups (SHGs) especially for vulnerable women, construction and providing equipment for milk storage center (for wholesale and retail milk trade), purchasing of milk pasteurizing machine for the women group, provision of drought tolerant and short maturing seed varieties such as maize, cassava, onion and training of farmers on agronomic practices.

The second outcome was improved water security. This was largely met through the development of water facilities and establishing and enhancing the capacity of water management committees which was a key element of sustainable use of water structures. Moreover, in order to improve water security in Somali Region, the programme constructed 2 new birkads to serve 300 households and the Bombas sand dam to serve 350 households. In addition, there was the development of a knowledge base through the development of the Atlas as well as preparation work on sub-catchment management plans for watershed protection. The programme also undertook training of trainers (TOT) for regional and target programme woredas targeting experts on participatory range land management and soil and water conservation techniques. The Laftagalol earthen dam was one of the 17 water

facilities contracted out and constructed by the Somali Region Water Bureau (SRWB). The dam has a reservoir holding capacity of 1 million cubic metres.

The third outcome of the programme was disaster risk reduction (DRR) for better preparedness against the common hazards in the region - drought and flood. Results planned on DRR focused on being prepared for shocks and making contingency measures to disasters as well as setting up early warning/early action activities. The main outputs contributing to this outcome included disaster risk reduction measures such as strengthening contingency planning and early warning systems.

Food security in Somali Region requires long-term investment (over 10 years) for landscape restoration and management. The final evaluation therefore recommended a long-term commitment from strategic partners to address the root causes of extreme vulnerability of communities while also upscaling and replicating initiatives and responses that have been seen to work. These included women self-help groups, promotion of climate adapted drought tolerant and fast maturing maize, wheat, cassava and onion varieties through 'model agro-pastoralists'. Water and soil conservation around the new dams are a long term assignment that will require more investment by Somali Region Water Bureau, communities and other partners to fully restore the degraded soils to high yield levels.

Strengthened linkages between community animal health workers (CAHWs) trained by the programme and government livestock extension workers in this area is a key economic indicator for livelihood improvement. Training and provision of equipment and drugs for CAHWs and set-up of vet-related income generating businesses is expected to motivate CAHWs to do this important work for their communities beyond the programme period.

On water security, one of the successes of the Chronic Crises Programme is the development of the "Atlas of Upper Fafan", a knowledge base on the target basin and sub-catchments of Tuli Guleid, Gursum and Jigjiga woredas that identified hydrological and ecological processes, ecosystem services, land cover (including changes over time), stakeholder mapping and assessed root causes of risk.

The restoration of Elbahay dam will provide water for Jigjiga town and its surroundings. An excellent participatory consultation process was applied with representatives from regional and woreda water bureau, agriculture, environmental protection, surrounding kebele administrations, non-governmental organizations operating in the area and Jigjiga University.

Over 20 new water facilities have been constructed or rehabilitated. Despite the difficulties that were faced in the partnership between ERCS and CRWB due to delays and quality concerns, the programme managed to realize most of its goals. Once the soil and water conservation activities at the two dam sites have been finalized, the management of the dams and water facilities will be the responsibility of the trained water committees

and water bureau after the closure of the programme. With all other new water schemes operational, the water projects are expected to have a long-term and multiplier impact in reducing mobility, addressing water shortage and supporting small scale agricultural practices for thousands of people. The new Laftagalol earthen dam is seen as one of the biggest projects implemented in the region and its construction was commended by the Regional President as good work of infrastructural development.

The establishment of community based disaster risk reduction (CBDRR) committees and the development of a community mobilization system in all targeted kebeles enabled communities to better prepare for, mitigate and respond to natural disasters. With support from ERCS, relevant government institutions and consortium partner RCCC, communities organized themselves and indicated that they had already developed a “new mind set” on preparedness and early action through the enhanced community self-organization. They further received training on disaster risk management (DRM) and early warning and early action. This significantly strengthened relations with ERCS, relevant government offices and the regional meteorology office.

The stories captured in this book, *‘A step towards resilience: Joint initiatives addressing protracted crisis in Somali Region- Ethiopia’* are testimonies of how these initiatives have begun to impact the lives of the communities and the implementing agencies. We hope you enjoy reading them as much as the contributors enjoyed putting them together.

Maria Twerda  
*Netherlands Red Cross*

## Abbreviations / Acronyms

CAHWs	Community Animal Health Workers
CBDRM	Community Based Disaster Risk Management
CBDRR	Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
DPPO	Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Office
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EMR	Ecosystem Management and Registration
ERCS	Ethiopian Red Cross Society
ETB	Ethiopian Birr
HFA	Hyogo Framework for Action
HoA-REC & N	Horn of Africa Regional Environment Centre and Network
IGAs	Income Generating Activities
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGOs	Non Governmental Organisations
NLRC	Netherlands Red Cross Society
NMA	National Metrology Agency
PfR	Partners for Resilience
RCCC	Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre
SFDRR	Sendai Framework for DRR
SCRS-E	Strengthening Community Resilience Somali Region - Ethiopia
SRWB	Somali Region Water Bureau
SLCNRDB	Somali Region Livestock, Crop and Natural Resource Development Bureau
UN	United Nations
VCA	Vulnerability Capacity Assessment



# Food Security Interventions





## A step towards resilience

The main food security challenges in the programme areas were severe environmental degradation, declining agricultural production, lack of alternative livelihood options and marginalisation of the most vulnerable segment of communities, particularly women and youth. Over time, livestock and crop production in these areas have been so severely affected by a degraded environment, incessant drought and floods, leading to the most vulnerable households to rely on food assistance either in the form of direct food aid or as beneficiaries of the productive safety net programme (PSNP). Moreover, as a coping strategy, communities

are often forced to move within and across their kebeles together with their livestock in search of other livelihood options.

The Protracted Crisis Programme showed practical changes in the lives of the target communities in many ways. For example, the programme managed to change the attitude of the self-help groups (SHGs) and income generating activity (IGA) groups, especially in terms of looking for livelihood diversification options. Through the programme, group members received business management trainings and subsidies to help them link all possible businesses in their area to diversify their livelihood bases. The economic empowerment through livestock fattening



*Self Help Group in a business training session*



*The sheep fattening project*

and income generating interventions have led to reduced social marginalisation.

The distribution of climate-adapted seeds, as well as working with model farmers who could train their community members, has clearly had an impact. The end line survey demonstrated a critical rise in income from agriculture at the household level. Because of this, it is assumed that the programme's intervention of distributing climate-adapted seeds to 1,600 households and the training of model farmers in new agricultural methods has bore some fruits.

The Protracted Crisis Programme planned to address the challenge of food and livelihood insecurity through various

initiatives that can increase financial means to buy food to support families. While the programme made major investments in infrastructure, there was a strong effort to address other challenges through the implementation of a range of interlinked approaches to improve the incomes and livelihoods of vulnerable people in the area. One of the efforts initiated by the programme was the self-help groups (SHGs) and income generating activity (IGA) groups approach.

The concept of self-help groups was new in the programme area and the programme had to start with only 5 SHGs in Jigjiga woreda and 1 milk IGA in Gursum woreda. There was evidence of significant positive



change in the lives of the women involved. Not only did their livelihoods improve remarkably, the women who joined the SHGs also built more confidence and learnt how to develop themselves in order to change their aid-dependency into self-reliance livelihoods.

This intervention improved and supported agro-pastoralists' livelihood strategies as well as alternative livelihoods. Initially, the effort was on promoting savings, loans and social solidarity where each SHG started participating in a weekly savings initiative. To support the group beyond savings, the programme provided a series of skill enhancement trainings and business start-up financial capital to help members of the SHGs and IGA groups mitigate drought impact by buying household goods in advance and storing them, or engaging in the purchase of productive assets such as sheep for fattening and selling. Others planned to run small businesses such as buying and selling of food items and household consumables.

The other significant outcome of the programme was the introduction of climate-adapted agricultural practices in some selected farming kebeles. Through the provision of fast maturing seed varieties, small-scale irrigation facilities and training, the programme has proven that farmers can harvest vegetables from their small plots of land that can support the immediate nutritional needs and income of the farming families. The case of the Kebrahamed Kebele farmer is a good pointer for this where a group of small farmers are producing onion and pepper using minimal irrigation. In

“ The other significant outcome of the programme was the introduction of climate-adapted agricultural practices in some selected farming kebeles. Through the provision of fast maturing seed varieties, small-scale irrigation facilities and training, the programme has proven that farmers can harvest vegetables from their small plots of land. ”

moisture rich areas, fruit trees distributed by Wetlands International have also shown the possibility of supplementing household income in Fafan. Wetlands International established 1 fruit nursery in Fafan valley that supplied fruit seedlings to the community.

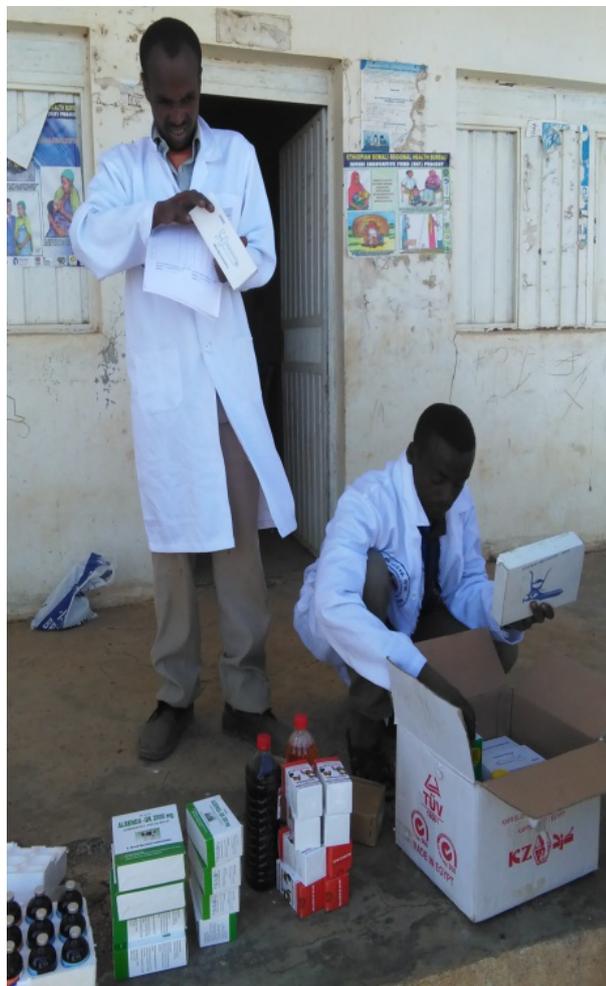
In order to address the challenges related to the provision of veterinary and agricultural extension services, the programme selected 18 community animal health workers (CAHWs) from all 9 targeted kebeles and trained and provided them with start-up veterinary kits. The training was facilitated by a senior veterinarian and extension experts from Jigjiga and Gursum woreda agriculture offices. The training also included a session on setting up CAHWs' business models to sustain their businesses through cost recovery schemes.



## Service to community by community: The case of community animal health workers (CAHWs)

Community animal health workers (CAHWs) are the front line staff in diagnosing and providing immediate veterinary care and services to their communities as in most cases government or private veterinary services are not accessible due to long distances and limited means of communication. Livestock in Jigjiga district is a key economic indicator for livelihood. Through this intervention, CAHWs who had been trained proved that they can play a significant role by carrying out vaccinations in many national disease control programmes and, as an early action, mobilise government experts in good time when there is disease outbreak in their respective communities. There was evidence of significant strengthened linkages between CAHWs, extension workers from district agriculture and livestock offices and the regional bureau which enhanced regular collaboration.

The baseline survey for the Protracted Crisis Programme conducted in 2014 identified livestock rearing as one of the livelihoods for agro-pastoralist communities of the 9 kebeles targeted by the programme. The baseline also established that livestock rearing is undermined by poor veterinary services and inactive CAHWs. Owing to this, the programme provided refresher training to 18 CAHWs (2 from each of the 9 targeted kebeles) in 2015.



*CAHWs receiving provisions for veterinary services*



This was an on-the-job training aimed at upgrading the knowledge and skills of functional CAHWs through practical training on basic principles of veterinary medicine and primary health care, animal handling and restraining, clinical diagnosis, cause, transmission of diseases and treatment, and control measures to be taken. The training also included a session on CAHWs business models to help them set up businesses around the provision of veterinary services. Graduates of the training received start-up veterinary kits with essential veterinary drugs and equipment.

This was intended to strengthen the weak veterinary service delivery system in most of the target villages and to serve as a gap-filling measure in the existing livestock health service supply vacuum. It was therefore unfortunate that 50% of the targeted CAHWs dropped out of the programme for reasons such as lack of income, lack of transport or difficulties in obtaining practice permits and business registration from the government.

Mohamud Mohamed Isse, a 40 year father of 4 from Laftagalol Kebele of Jigjiga District is one of the 18 CAHWs supported by the Protracted Crisis Programme since 2015 to gain skills and support animal health efforts in the programme areas. Mohamud is also a farmer. His livelihood depended mainly on crop farming and livestock rearing. In spite of that, his farm yield and annual income continued to decline year after year as his farm was small and the rainfall irregular in his area.

*“Before I received the refresher training and supplementary drugs from ERCS, I had a constant problem of accessing veterinary drugs and maintaining my business. I did not know where to find the agrovets to buy the drugs I needed for the business. What’s more, I had little knowledge on how to manage my income and expenditure and could not keep myself afloat. After the training nonetheless, I am now able to plan and maintain the business. Though CAHW work is a side-business, being a CAHW has given me some prestige and respect in my community. Community members trust my services and I am always at their disposal whenever they need me to treat their sick animals. However, I feel that their respect for me will wane if I fail to treat their animals due to lack of drugs. Through ERCS, I now get sufficient drugs, working equipment and working capital. I am now able to respond to the calls of my people,” said Mohamud.*

Mohamud was selected in 2015 by the Protracted Crisis Programme to receive another refereshar training based on capacity assessment. He was also provided with various drugs to supplement his small business. The list of inputs he received from the programme included Oxytetracyclin, Ivermectin, Penstrep, Multivit, Anti-strip, Sulphadmindine, wound sprayer, Albendazole for cattle and Albendazole for sheep and goats, Diazinon, Alcohol, Savlon, wound spray, syringes, a thermometer for veterinary use, and a labcoat. For Mohammud, his business has not only diversified his livelihood, but has helped him build a market driven business thus bringing local economic integration.



## Honey-healing our land: The story of Udbi



*Beehives ready for distribution*

Udbi Mahamud Ade, currently living with her 5 children and husband in Laftagalol Kebele, is one of the 115 beneficiaries of the Protracted Crisis Programme who received transitional beehives from ERCS, Somali branch. Overall, the programme provided 230 transitional beehives with accessories such as beeswax, queen-excluder and bee protection dress in the target areas, reaching 115 very vulnerable households that had limited access to farm land.

Udbi's main livelihood is farming that depends on rain and the use of traditional methods of farming. This livelihood is often threatened by erratic and below average rainfall, poor vegetation coverage and land degradation that is prevalent in Laftagalol Kebele. Poor vegetation and insufficient pasture has greatly affected livestock production in the Kebele so much so that although Udbi's family keeps livestock, she does not earn enough from it. Currently, she

sells 8 cups of milk at 5 Ethiopian birr each, earning 40 Ethiopian birr per day, which is not enough to feed and clothe her family.

The extreme climate situation in Somali Region has exposed the people residing in Laftagalol Kebele to the risks of disasters such as drought and chronic food shortages, flood hazards, loss of income and assets, and conflict over increasingly scarce and fragile resources. Moreover, communities in the Kebele have limited access to land, diversified livelihood options, access to information on modern farming and agriculture extension services.

Udbi was selected by ERCS because she already had some experience in beekeeping using traditional beehives. The objective of the beehives intervention was to support the beneficiaries in improving their farm practices and income through provision of transitional beehives (a blend between



*Some of the group members who have benefited from the transitional beehives*

traditional and modern beekeeping methods) and skills training.

Udbi's family received 1 transitional beehive from ERCS and her husband was trained on how to manage the beehive. The training was facilitated by experts from the regional government agricultural office and ERCS. The training covered beekeeping, importance of honey in improving nutrition, installation of transitional beehives, and the transferring of a bee colony from traditional hives to transitional hives. The family is currently using this knowledge to improve their farm practices in beekeeping. Three months after receiving the transitional beehives, Udbi harvested 5 kg of honey. She was able to sell it between 150 and 200 Ethiopian birr per kg, earning a total of 750 Ethiopian birr compared to her earlier

harvests of 2 kg per season which would earn her only 300 Ethiopian birr. She is very happy with the increased income from bee farming. If the weather condition permits she expects to harvest honey at least 3 times per year. Her plan is to buy a second transitional beehive as this has proven to improve the family income with minimal effort.

Udbi and her husband also actively participate in the construction of gabions and in soil and water conservation activities around the Laftagalol earthen dam in the village. She is very happy with the work of ERCS in her area, especially the construction of the dam and the services provided by the community animal health workers (CAHWs), as well as the interventions in water and soil conservation.



## Milk empowers women: The case of Tikidem Milk Group



*Tikidem milk group*

In Gursum woreda women bear the heaviest burden in family management, and often, they are excluded from participating in development. One opportunity for them under the Protracted Crisis Programme was the formation of income generating activities (IGAs) to help them improve their livelihoods. Through the IGAs, women with common problems came together with the purpose of pooling resources, gathering information and offering mutual support to one another. Among the IGAs that the Protracted Crisis Programme helped to start were milk groups that women could use to buy and sell milk.

Zeyneba Abdi, a mother of 5, is one of the milk group members. She is also the deputy chairperson of the group in Tikidem Kebele. Her family's livelihood depends on the income she earns from collecting and selling

milk. The group has 30 female members and one male. According to Zeyneba, the group was established in 2016 and has been operational since then.

*"I used to walk two-and-a-half hours to get to Fafan which is 12 km away from Tikidem", explains Zeyneba. "Each morning, I would leave my children and animals at home and rush to Fafan to sell the milk I collect from the village. I would then hurry back home to feed my children after selling all the milk. Often, during the dry season, I would reach Fafan market with sour and curdled milk because of the hot weather, and I would carry it back home without selling it. On the days I took more time than usual to get back home, I would find my children crying and my livestock grazing in someone else's farm. This was always a source of disputes with neighbours. When the ERCS team came*



*up with this idea of organising women who already sold milk in a traditional way, it took a lot of energy and time to convince us. In the end, we all agreed to see how the process would work out and all the women in our group had a feeling of 'let's see'."*

The programme trained 30 women on small business development, group management and conflict resolution. After the training, each member was provided with 1,500 Ethiopian birr as start-up capital. In addition, as a group, they were supplied with 30 aluminium milk urns, 1 butter churner and 1 milk storage shed constructed by the programme. The materials supplied have improved storage, preservation and marketing of the milk. Moreover, a market linkage was created so that instead of travelling to Fafan to sell their milk, the buyers come to Tikidem to collect from the group. According to Zeyneba, the group now collects 500 litres of milk every day from Tikidem and its surroundings for supply. At the time of writing this book, the group had 50,000 Ethiopian birr at the bank and 5,000 Ethiopian birr for urgent matters.

*"I am able to make 50 Ethiopian birr per day now and my life is better than before. I do not have to walk long distances to sell milk; but most of all, I am proud that I have a job to do each day I wake up. I now send my 3 children to school and take good care of others who are not yet of school going age," explains Zeyneba.*

Zeyneba works as deputy chairperson of the milk group on voluntary basis. All members of the group have additional responsibilities other than their daily task



*Packed milk ready to be taken to the market*

of milk collection. According to her, all members of the group do additional duties happily since they have a high sense of inclusion and ownership of the group.

She now has a shop near her house where she sells various household items, thanks to the income she gets from the group. To build on the work of the Protracted Crisis Programme, she recommended that group members undergo refresher training. She also recommends additional funds in form of a loan to be given to the group to help them expand their businesses.



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## Saving together for tomorrow's prosperity



*Kamburwaku women group in a meeting*

The Netherlands Red Cross supports the Ethiopian Red Cross in Somali Region of Ethiopia with various activities. One of these activities is providing support to self-help groups (SHGs), primarily those of women. This is a conversation with one of the SHGs conducted in June 2017.

*Kamburwaku* which in Somali language means 'the start of prosperity' is the name of a self-help group. The SHG is based in Yoosle Kebele, in Jigjiga District. The group has

been supported by Red Cross since March 2015. Each SHG has 20 members selected from poor families in the community. The aim of the SHG is for members to learn to save, to improve their contacts within the group and support one another. One of the activities they engage in is starting small projects together to financially support their families.

In the beginning, not everyone was interested to become a member of the



SHG as the set up was different. The SHG facilitators, who were members of ERCS, explained to new members that the focus on the group would be on sustainability and that they should not expect ERCS to provide them with food and non-food items. In the first 6 months, the focus was not only on strengthening the group and setting a clear structure with a chairlady and secretary, but also on learning how to save money. Each week, each member would save 10 Ethiopian birr (EURO 0.30) which would be put in a joint SHG bank account that the group had opened. Each member had a personal savings booklet where every amount saved

“ Because many members were (almost) illiterate, the administration of the savings was often done by their sons or other family members. ”

was registered. Because many members had not been to school, the administration of the savings was often done by their sons or other family members.

After 6 months, the group planned how they could save extra money. The Somali community being pastoralist, each member wanted to buy 2 sheep to fatten and sell during the high season (e.g. end of Ramadan when the demand for sheep was high). ERCS provided a grant of 1000 Ethiopian birr (EURO 35) to each group member from which 2 small sheep were bought. The animals

were later sold for 1300 Ethiopian birr (EURO 45). 50% of the profit was returned to the group joint account and the other half was for each member. The money helped group members meet their family needs. The group saved more money and in the next round, 3 sheep per member were bought for fattening.

Asha Farah, the Secretary of *Kamburwaku* SHG, says, *“It took time to understand how to work in a group, and in the beginning, I did wonder if it was a good idea to join the SHG. Now we have seen how members of a group can improve each other’s lives. We help one another, and with the extra money I have earned I can now buy things for myself, like sugar and clothes for my children as well as pay school fees without asking my husband for money. My husband gave me permission to join the SHG. He has realised that I am more entrepreneurial and that I can also contribute money to support our family. Sometimes, when I do not have the weekly 10 Ethiopian birr for the contribution, he gives it to me. The group plans together to buy more sheep for fattening. We now have an interest to start selling second-hand clothes in our kebele. The women who in the beginning refused to become members of the SHG, regret it now as they can see that we are doing well and flourishing. Being a self-help group member is good, especially during the drought season because members would always have something extra for their families.”*

The Red Cross would like to support women in SHGs and start new ones. The first SHGs will be crucial to become facilitators for the new groups.



*A Kamburwaku group member raising a point during training*



## Fruit production for food security



*Fruit harvesting for food security in Fafan zone*

Jijjiga is a drought-prone area and suffers land degradation from livestock overgrazing that leaves it bare and unproductive. Agro-forestry initiatives undertaken under the Protracted Crisis Programme sought to provide long-term solutions to the challenges of food insecurity and ecosystem degradation in the region.

Communities of agro-pastoralists have low capacity to resist drought. Their traditional main crops of sorghum, maize and groundnuts have also been affected by pests in recent years. As a result, their livestock and crop production are decreasing, increasing their poverty and food insecurity. Without the production of these crops, they lack the means to buy rice, sugar, clothes and other materials for their homes. They have traditionally lacked

capacity and access to grow higher value crops such as fruit trees. Fruit tree seeds come from Oromia and the Harari Regions, 80km away making them very expensive.

The Protracted Crisis Programme aimed at improving food security through the production of fruit trees. It established 6 nurseries in communities that had good water availability and employed community members to grow and nurture seedlings. In the Fafan 1 nursery site, 120,000 fruit seedlings were produced. Community cooperatives provided land for planting and 90,000 trees were given to local communities living nearby. This was the first time that communities received seedlings for free, as well as payment to work in the nursery. The fruit seedlings were distributed to about 10,000 households.



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To increase the capacity of the communities, the programme provided training in Jigjiga and at nursery sites on how to grow and care for the trees. A year ago some of the seedlings were still small – only 50 cm tall. However, seedlings like the papaya have grown fast and are already producing fruit. Other fruit trees that have been planted include those of orange, guava and mango.

One of the beneficiaries of this initiative is Deek Abdi from Fafan village. Deek Abdi is a husband and father of 6 children living in a half an hectare of land. Before joining the programme he was a farm hand who used to work in other people's farms. What he used to earn was not enough to sustain his family needs. It was too expensive for him to access fruit seedlings from Oromia Region to plant on his piece of land. Together with his wife, they tried to improve their livelihood by searching for better opportunities even as they worked as day labourers at the nursery.

They were therefore lucky when in October 2015 the programme offered to train them on seedling production and management and then paid them 1500 Ethiopian birr each up to the time the seedlings matured. They utilised the knowledge they gained and the money given to plant guava, papaya, orange, mango and avocado trees.

Today, the papaya seedlings have started producing fruit and a new sun has arisen for Deek and his family. He has been able to sell fruit for the first time and used the income to buy food for his family. He is grateful for the knowledge and opportunity he received

from Wetlands International. He is saving money and is hopeful for the future.

Like Deek, other communities are realising direct benefits from the fruit production as a source of food security. Farmers sell their fruit in Jigjiga town, earning cash and reinvesting the money in other cash crops like chilli to diversify their production and meet demand.

Fruit seedling production was a new undertaking in the Somali Region and therefore several challenges had to be overcome. The pastoralists, through the consortium, had experience in growing sorghum and maize, but needed training on how to grow trees and manage a tree nursery. At the outset, there were gaps in knowing what the local demand was for different types of fruit. The seeds were bought by staff in Addis Abba, and high value seeds for apple, orange and lemon were fewer in number and could not meet demand. There were also logistical delays in planting the seedlings causing some of them to dry up.

The drought in the region created additional challenges. It was difficult to provide enough water to grow the seedlings in rain fed areas. Funding was also diverted to more urgent priorities. Because of this, nursery staff were laid off, resulting in 40,000 fruit trees to be cared for and watered at the Elbahay dam.

Despite the challenges faced, the fruit trees watered at the dam were distributed to community members and are now doing well.

# Water Interventions





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## Water is first out of one thousand needs (Somali proverb)



*Watering of animals at Laftagalol earthen dam*

Somali Region, with a population of about 5 million people depends on rain for its water supply and livestock production. Nearly 60% of the people who reside there are pastoralists and subsist through herding of livestock. People in the region have for long suffered a series of livelihood disruptions resulting from drought. Due to erratic rainfall and lack of pasture, most of the pastoralists and their herds are forced to move long distances in search of pasture and water. Historically, traditional humanitarian and development assistance has fallen short of building sufficient capacities of communities to withstand the endemic shocks and stresses in the region.

As a consequence of these shocks, the region is also the most food and water insecure in Ethiopia. The frequency of

drought has increased from once in every 10 years in the 1970-80s to twice a decade in the 1990s and recently to once every 2-3 years. Flooding along the river banks has also become a regular phenomenon as a consequence of high rainfall in the upstream highlands.

Though drought is the major hazard causing food and water insecurities, there is a range of intertwined and underlying factors that have increased the people's vulnerability. These factors include environmental degradation, severe deforestation and overgrazing, lack of reliable water sources, limited access to basic services such as human and livestock health, and climate variability that exposes people to drought and chronic food shortages.



To address the priority need of access to water, the Protracted Crisis Programme constructed 2 medium sized dams, 3 standard birkads with a capacity of 600 cubic metres each and 3 roof water harvesting structures (commonly called Roto, each with a capacity of 10,000 litres).

By the time of writing this book, construction and development of 3 other new birkads and drilling of 1 borehole and shallow well were under construction. It is estimated that when all these structures are completed and commissioned, the challenges of water insecurity in the target communities will have been adequately addressed.

The Laftagalol earthen dam is one of the 2 completed water structures having a holding capacity of 1 million cubic metres and would serve approximately 30,000 people. This is one of the largest water facilities implemented by the ERCS through a partnership agreement with Somali Region Water Development Bureau (SRWDB). More than 12 million Ethiopian birr was allocated by the Protracted Crisis Programme for its implementation. The other main water facility is the Bombas sand dam which is 30 metres wide and 2 metres high. The aim of the structure is to enhance water percolation and recharge into the sand so as to improve access to ground water using the 2 hand-dug wells constructed near the dam. This water facility is expected to serve another 3,000 people in the region.

Despite challenges in partnership development and programme implementation, good collaboration has been established

with various regional government bureaus such as the Somali Region Livestock, Crop and Natural Resource Development Bureau (SLCNRDB) and Jigjiga University. Capacity building trainings have been organised at the University for over 150 experts and community members, including water management committees to ensure sustainability beyond the programme phase.

The other major achievement of the programme has been in the software area where organised farmer-groups around the 7 small-scale farm ponds established in Jigjiga and Gursum woredas have been trained in crop husbandry, and have started benefiting from the use of the ponds to water their crops. The purpose of the farm ponds is to store rainwater for small-scale irrigation to create alternative income from agriculture. The ponds are small to medium-size pits covered with plastic geo-membrane to prevent water percolation into the ground. They are ideal structures to practice small-scale irrigation by use of harvested rainwater. Each pond is designed and developed to hold 263 cubic metres of water and each serves around 20 farmers for small vegetable production. As a start-up input, the farmers were supplied with the necessary irrigation materials, variety of seeds and training on agronomic practices.

As a result of the interventions of the Protracted Crisis Programme, households participating in these initiatives are beginning to develop better resilience to shocks and moving on to diversify livelihoods from pure pastoralism to agro-pastoralism and agri-business.



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## You will die for water but water will not kill you (Somali proverb): The story of Laftagalol earthen dam



*Laftagalol earthen dam*

Water shortage is a critical challenge for Somali Region pastoral communities. The problem worsens in prolonged and cyclic drought situations. Reliable and perennial water sources are not available in most areas in the region. Sufficient water is only available during the erratic short rainy seasons. The high permeability of sandy soil exacerbates the limitation of surface water availability after rainfall.

Jigjiga District is one of the arid areas in the Somali Region where people suffer due

to lack of water for human consumption, livestock and crop production. Although the area is supposed to have two rainy seasons a year; the “*dyer*” (long rainy season) between September and November and the “*go*” (short rainy season) between March and May sometimes the rains fail and these failures can last for several seasons. This is compounded by the fact that the communities lack the capacity to construct water harvesting structures and have left this role to local government authorities,



ERCS and other NGOs. To help mitigate this problem, ERCS, in cooperation with the Netherlands Red Cross (NLRC), local government and communities of Laftagalol Kebele of Jigjiga woreda, conducted a vulnerability and capacity assessment in 2014. According to the assessment, drought was one of the biggest hazards for the woreda. A strategic solution was found to be the introduction of rainwater harvesting structures, such as construction of dams and birkads. The Protracted Crisis Programme was designed based on the findings of the assessment including the community-proposed solutions of rainwater harvesting structures.

In collaboration with the local government and the community, the ideal location was selected in Laftagalol village and the design and construction of the dam started. NLRC and ERCS provided technical support and the local community provided labour in constructing different soil and water conservation structures (soil bunds, trenches, micro-basins, check dams, etc.), as well as planting of the multipurpose tree seedlings. In addition, the community has formed a community based disaster risk reduction (CBDRR) committee for managing the overall disaster risk reduction interventions in their kebele, including the management of the Laftagalol earthen dam. Community members were trained by the local government, ERCS and NLRC. The Laftagalol earthen dam subcommittee was set up to ensure sustainability of the dam by focusing on water sanitation, fair access to and utilisation of water, as well as repair and maintenance of the water structures.

The construction of the Laftagalol earthen dam improved water access during the peak dry period and migration to other areas in search of water has significantly reduced. The community has been able to settle in their locality thus reducing the stress for children, the elderly and livestock through reduced movement. Cattle deaths have reduced as well and hygiene and sanitation for families have greatly improved.

Women and children spend less time fetching water and can now focus on other activities like school for children and income generating activities (IGAs) for women. The dam was intended to support a population of 31,746 people at the Laftagalol Kebele with their livestock during the peak dry months of the year. However, more than 20,000 other people and livestock from other neighbouring kebeles make use of the dam, therefore, serving more than 50,000 people and livestock. Because of this, the water may not last the intended peak dry months of the year as intended.

Abdulahi Beshar, a 61 year father of 9, is a clan leader at Laftagalol Kebele of Jigjiga district. He is one of the beneficiaries of the Laftagalol earthen dam. *"I have no words to speak for the dam. It is Allah's gift to the Laftagalol Community, I used to travel far, to Fafan Kebele [40 km] in search of water for my 20 sheep and 10 cows. I would take my children with me to help with the watering of the animals and to bring water home for consumption. During my many travels, some of my livestock would die or get attacked by wild animals. Due to mixing with other pastoralists' livestock herds, my livestock*



*would be mistakenly taken to other kebeles. During the dry season, when it gets very hot, I would move my home for months near a water source until the rains came. But now, our situation has changed since beginning of May 2017 as there is water in the dam. My livestock is in good health. I can milk my cows every morning and night for fresh milk to feed my family. In addition, no livestock has been attacked by wild animals or gotten lost due the mix up while trekking in search of water.” says Abdulahi Beshher.*

The Somali Regional government as well as NGOs and UN organisations appreciate the disaster risk reduction work done by the Protracted Crisis Programme, especially the construction of the Laftagalol earthen

dam and how it benefits the surrounding communities. During their visit to the dam, they recommended that the programme should work more on protecting the dam by constructing different soil and water conservation structures in the upstream area to reduce the siltation effect to extend the dam’s service years. In addition, they advised that the community dam management system be strengthened. As the volume of water is big, it is important to introduce irrigation agronomy to promote livelihood diversification of the community and improve food security.

These lessons have been taken up by ERCS and its partners and will be reflected in the second phase of the programme.



*A field visit to the Laftagalol earthen dam*



## Water pocketing: Addressing water needs of pastoral communities in Somali Region



*A birkad under construction*

Lack of water and proper storage capacity during the dry season is one of the biggest challenges in Laftagalol Kebele. The local community is sometimes forced to travel long distances in search of water for their households and livestock. Due to the stress of the journey for animals, milk production is reduced thus affecting food security among households. When the water problem worsens, people are forced to shift their homes temporarily to live closer to the water points until the rains come. This, affects education in the Kebele for school going children and the elderly who are usually left behind without proper care and nutrition.

During this time, people and animals tend to use the same open water sources, making them vulnerable to water-borne diseases.

To address these challenges, the Protracted Crisis Programme in Somali Region wanted to assist the community in Laftagalol Kebele to increase their immediate water storage needs. They offered to build birkads so that the community could store water. Birkads are underground cisterns and are the most common rainwater harvesting structures not only in Somali Region but in other regions as well. An average birkad holds up to 600 cubic metres of water, enough to serve



up to 80 households during the 6 dry months of the year, thus addressing the chronic water crisis.

Mohamed Ali Nur is a farmer who lives with his family of 7 in Laftagalol Kebele. He is one of the beneficiaries of the birkads built by the Protracted Crisis Programme. Mohammed was involved from the beginning of the programme when the assessment team visited his village. The programme staff, together with staff from the SRWB, conducted an initial discussion with communities on how best to address the water scarcity problem. The village had some small privately owned birkads, but there was no other water source for the larger community. During the discussions, the community decided that birkads were the most appropriate solution as they collected and stored water for long and prevented water loss through infiltration and evaporation. *“Now the birkads are full of water. The birkads together with the Laftagalol dam provide us with sufficient water. We will use the water from the dam first and then use the water from the birkads when the other sources are depleted, my family is saved from travelling long distances to fetch water. My children now have time for school and other domestic work. For my cows, water is near and milk production has increased due to less stress. I have more milk for my family and I sell the surplus. Thank you for building the birkads close to my home. I have more time to increase the area of land that I cultivate as I now have more family members who can assist me during the planting season. This will increase the crop yield of my land.”* explained Mohamed.

Mohamed is also a member of the water committee. The committee ensures equitable water use among community members and makes sure that each household has received equal amount of water from the birkads, irrespective of family size. The birkads are regarded as protected water sources and by-laws have been formulated to ensure that domestic and wild animals are blocked from coming closer to them. This keeps the water clean as it is used for household consumption without treatment.

However, Mohamed Ali raised a concern that ERCS and its partners could take into consideration. According to him, the construction did not ensure proper plastering inside the birkads. This has resulted in loss of water through seepage on the walls and floors. This, he said, could be fixed during the dry season when the birkads were empty.



*A birkad in use*



## Creating household income through climate-smart agriculture: The case of Kebreahmed farm pond users' group



*One of the farm ponds in Kebreahmed kebele*

Kebreahmed farm pond is one of the 7 farm ponds established by the Protracted Crisis Programme in Somali Region of Ethiopia. Abdulahi Hassen Hajin is one of the 6 farming family heads organised around the farm pond who has already started to reap benefits from it. He was continuously struggling to cope with the ever increasing climate change and its associated impact. He was losing hope slowly as the fight for scarce water became the norm in his community. That is when the ERCS approached him with this great idea; the use of farm ponds to produce fast maturing crops.

The erratic nature of rainfall and its inadequacy, as well as elongated dry spells, led Abdulahi to be highly vulnerable to the impact of climate change, particularly water stress. Recurrent drought and its associated impact such as deaths of livestock and low income from those that remained, further plunged him into deep poverty and made him dependent on food aid. It is during this crucial time that he joined the Protracted Crisis Programme which is implemented in Kebreahmed Kebele where he lives.

Abdulahi cultivates 8 *koti* of land (equivalent to 2 Ha) where he plants sorghum



and maize. In most cases, the sorghum crop fails before maturing because of the erratic rains. Because of this, Abdulahi is most times not able to provide well for his family. However, this deficit is sometimes covered through income from sale of animals and petty trade. During last year's severe drought however, he lost 15 cows and 15 sheep and goats, and was left with only 8 cows and 30 sheep and goats. Most of his income was also spent on animal feed and industrial by-products as an effort to save his core herd such as cows, heifers and bulls during the drought.

During beneficiary targeting, Abdulahi was selected by his community to be part of this intervention because he was considered to be a model farmer, and for his willingness and commitment to demonstrate and propagate his successes to other farmers. During pond construction, he contributed labour for excavation work as well as in managing the flood inlet and outlet of the pond. As an input, Abdulahi and the other 5 group members received fast maturing drought-resistant seeds of onion, green pepper and tomatoes. They also received a tridle pump for pumping out water to the farm, and 3 consecutive trainings on agronomic practices and post-harvest management. In the last rainy season of 2017, the group used 2 hectares of land for onion production and harvested 20 bags (each bag is 50 kg). They sold a bag at 450 Ethiopian birr on the farm. Abdulahi says that when there is good rain and the pond collects runoff to its capacity, the group is able to harvest early maturing crops thrice a year instead of twice.

He realised that increasing the land was critical to increasing the group's income. The group agreed to commit an additional plot of land for cultivation of onion, pepper and tomatoes. Being in a group has made him learn the importance of team work because it enables him to contribute to the group's effort and learn from other people's experiences. Through the group, he is able to achieve more. This, he says, has become the source of strength for the group to continue aspiring for more.

However, despite the success, the group has faced a number of challenges, one of them being the wild animals that drink from the pond due to the incessant drought. Wild animals drinking from the pond slip inside and while struggling to come out, they end up tearing the geo-membrane. This leads to loss of water through percolation into the ground. To counter the challenges caused by wild animals, Abdulahi was asked to improve the fence around the pond.

In general, this intervention has clearly proved successful and can be replicated to serve as an alternative means of improving the livelihoods of people in such unpredictable environments. Abdulahi suggests an upgrade of the farm ponds to birkads. For him, the journey to success has just started. *"I am now able to feed my family and send my children to school. I get additional income from farming and other sources which has further improved my resilience. As a group, we are able to purchase seed for the next cropping season. We are now planning to expand the size of the pond to collect more water so as to increase our production."*



## Sustaining the Elbahay earthen dam for the future



*Water trucking in Elbahay dam*

Elbahay earthen dam is overburdened by free users and lacks an appropriate owner who cares about its maintenance and long-term sustainability. Even worse, these free users are jeopardising the future of the dam by using it for purposes that can harm the water quality and its life span.

Elbahay dam was constructed in 1986 through an Ethiopian-Italian programme for water harvesting and irrigation purposes. After 34 years of service, it still remains important as the main source of water for Jigjiga town. It provides water to surrounding rural people and their livestock. It is the only source of water for construction works, transported and supplied by water trucks. The dam is also vital as a source of drinking

water for people and livestock in the dry season and the main water source for water trucking during drought emergencies in the surrounding Fafan zone.

This notwithstanding, there are many threats facing the sustainable long-term supply of water and holding capacity of the dam due to siltation. The other threats include lack of a dam management task force, pollution and contamination by car washing activities, washing of clothes, livestock and leakages of oil and petrol from water trucks. All these activities threaten the quality of the water and biological resources such as fish and birds as well as its recreational value.



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In order to conserve and sustain its long-term use, the Protracted Crisis Programme assessed the condition of the dam and the lake it supports. The programme looked not only at the dam site itself which is a man-made wetland, but also at the surrounding landscape that drains into the lake. The landscape suffers from soil erosion that contributes heavily to the siltation of the lake. Therefore the area was identified as important for conservation and restoration in the Atlas of the Fafan Catchment area. The programme identified the “Meles Foundation Park” as a key site for on-the-ground conservation works that also serves as an attractive park for recreation and relaxation.

To improve the management of the dam, the consortium helped establish a regional dam task force that brought different government bodies together. It started with an awareness workshop to create an understanding of the current challenges facing the dam.

Thanks to the mobilisation guideline developed by Wetlands International, the task force has identified roles and responsibilities of members and assigned different tasks among the groups to boost their contribution. They now hold monthly meetings and visit the dam to assess situations and develop solutions.

Results of this collaboration with the task force include greening and planting of trees around the dam to increase the vegetation cover so as to minimise the soil erosion that is causing siltation. This will also increase the attractiveness and recreational value of

“ To improve the management of the dam, the consortium helped establish a regional dam task force that brought different government bodies together. ”

the area, and improve livelihoods from the planting of fruit trees.

The Protracted Crisis Programme also contributed to the rehabilitation and expansion of the conserved area by protecting it using barbed wire fencing. This has minimised livestock entry to the area thus reducing the workload of the guards. The guards now have more time to water the trees rather than keeping animals out of the park.

The work of conserving the dam and the surrounding lake has just begun. In future, the conservation area around the dam should be expanded through the planting of more trees. Irrigation activities around the lake disturbs the soil further contributing to siltation and needs to be addressed. A water purification plant, built under a previous project, could make a big contribution to improved water quality, but it is currently not operational.

While there are still many management issues to be strengthened, the Jigjiga agriculture council office is very motivated to continue with this work.

# Disaster Risk Reduction Interventions





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## A move towards disaster risk reduction



*One of the birkads in Laftagalol Kebele*

Somali Region of Ethiopia experiences severe and chronic food and water insecurities. The frequency of droughts has increased from once in every 10 years in the 1970-80s to twice per decade in the 1990s, and in the recent years to once every 2-3 years. Flooding, which is becoming perennial, is the consequence of high rainfall in the upstream highlands combined with severely degraded vegetation and soil cover that has left the ground barren and unable to absorb water, leading to high runoff and fatal flash floods when it rains.

The rural and semi-arid Somali Region is a land of plains and hills. The 5 million people in the region depend heavily on natural resources for their survival. However, land cover, water resources and pasture are declining at an alarming rate. There are no natural, permanent sources of surface

water (but trans-boundary, seasonal rivers and wetlands). Nearly 80% of the people are subsistent pastoralists herding livestock. For many years, people in this region have suffered a series of livelihood disruptions as a result of ecosystem degradation that is worsened by prolonged drought and internal conflict.

Due to erratic rainfall, overgrazing and deforestation, most pastoralists and their herds are forced to move long distances in search of pasture and water. Traditional humanitarian and development assistance has historically fallen short of building sufficient capacity within these communities to withstand the inevitable shocks and stresses endemic to the region.

Though drought is the biggest hazard causing food and water insecurity, there



are a range of intertwined, underlying factors that have compounded people's vulnerability. These include environmental degradation which is the result of severe deforestation and overgrazing; lack of reliable water sources which is also in part as a result of environmental degradation; limited access to basic services such as human and livestock health; and the ever-changing climate variability exposing people to drought and chronic food shortages, risks of flooding, and increased conflict over increasingly scarce and fragile resources.

In order to address these underlying causes of vulnerability and enhance communities' long-term resilience, an integrated disaster risk reduction approach was designed to be implemented in partnership with ERCS and 3 Dutch organisations who formed a consortium. These include the Netherlands Red Cross (NLRC), Wetlands International, and Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre (RCCC), focusing on improving the food and water security, livelihoods and the adaptive capacity of 50,000 people in 9 kebeles of the 3 targeted woredas, of Gursum, Jigjiga and Tuli Gulied.

The programme intervention included a combination of direct responses to the prevailing problems. It focused on the rehabilitation of water sources, emergency health and nutrition, response to anticipated disaster risks through community based disaster risk reduction (CBDRR) and contingency planning, and early warning and early action systems. It also took into consideration, adaptation measures through climate-adapted crops and farming

practices, ecosystem management and restoration, water resource development as well as livelihood diversifications. These disaster risk reduction measures enhanced the capacities of communities to mitigate and prevent anticipated disasters (drought and flood) and reduce their vulnerability.

A critical first step to reclaim degraded land was mapping the landscape, identifying the changes in land cover over time and understanding how the landscape naturally provides water and retains it. The consortium's resulting maps, manuals and recommendations provided a roadmap for improving the health of the land and water to reverse environmental degradation. To put these plans into action, the consortium trained and engaged people from local government, communities and even school children. With their participation, the consortium has undertaken large-scale tree planting to reduce soil erosion and retain water; restore wetlands, recharge groundwater and increase soil moisture. It has also excluded livestock from sensitive areas to promote the regeneration of vegetation and developed sustainable livelihoods through fruit cultivation and beekeeping.

The consortium believes that building up ecosystem resilience over time as part of disaster risk reduction and adaptation to a changing climate offers the best hope for escaping the growing humanitarian crisis. This can also be replicated in other landscapes facing severe environmental degradation in the Horn of Africa.



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## Enhancing community organisation for adaptive capacity: The story of Kebreahmed Kebele



*Community members of Kebreahmed Kebele in a meeting*

Somali people are the most drought-affected and vulnerable community in Ethiopia. In addition, they have suffered from a lack of inclusive development for a long time and the region has remained one of the least developed in the country, named the 'emerging region.' The main economic activity of the Somali community is animal production with minimal support from crop production. It is often not enough and due to

frequent food insecurity, their sustenance is dependent on food relief from international humanitarian organisations and the government.

The community lacks information due to its scattered settlement and seasonal migration patterns which have made it impossible to deal with disaster risk management and socio-economic challenges. It has limited knowledge of disaster risk



management and inclusive development interventions. In view of the fact that it lacks disaster risk preparedness, cyclic disasters have continually affected the community for a long time making it accept this as the wrath of God. Likewise the limitations of government to reach the community and educate it about disaster risk reduction, disaster response and early warning systems aggravates the challenge.

To understand the challenges in the community, ERCS and NLRC made a vulnerability capacity assessment (VCA) in 2014. The assessment found out that there is no community based disaster risk reduction system that traces the probable hazard and the consequence of risk. The community faced recurrent drought-induced and other fast-emerging disasters without any preparation, thus losing its livelihood.

After considering the VCA results, the Protracted Crisis Programme sought to address the disaster risk issue by bringing the community together and establishing community-based disaster risk management committees (CBDRM). Accordingly, 9 CBDRM committees with 15 members each were established in 9 kebeles of the 3 districts (one CBDRM committee in each kebele). The CBDRM committee was elected democratically by the wider community after considering their acceptance and capacity to lead the CBDRR interventions. There are 3 sub committees under each CBDRM: Development, early warning and water management. The elected members received diversified training on disaster risk management, leadership, community

mobilisation, and agro-pastoralist technical trainings. Also, the committees were strengthened through regular technical support.

Following the training, the community made their own vulnerability capacity assessment and identified their challenges and the possible solutions. The CBDRM committee prepared a 3-year participatory and disaster risk reduction development plan. Based on the plan, the CBDRM committee regularly gathered the wider community and discussed their development, early warning and water management issues. This helped raise community awareness on the DRR system.

Sado Ahmed, a mother of 9, is a resident of Kebreahmed Kebele in Jiggiga woreda. She is one of the beneficiaries of the programme and a member of the Kebreahmed CBDRM committee.

*“Before, we were not engaged on communal response for disaster and we were not involved in disaster risk reduction interventions but now, we are educated on DRR. We now know that people can prepare early, mitigate and reduce disaster risk thus saving lives and livelihoods. Following the establishment of the committee, we the community, prepared a 3-year disaster risk reduction plan and posted it on the board of our kebele’s administration office so that everybody could look at it and contribute to its realisation,”* said Sado.

The CBDRM committee regularly updated their plan and tried to manage the development and disaster response activities in their respective areas. If the case



“ Sado Ahmed, a mother of 9, is a resident of Kebreahmed Kebele in Jigjiga woreda. She is one of the beneficiaries of the programme and a member of the Kebreahmed CBDRM committee. ”

was beyond their capacity, they requested support from the woreda government and other NGOs.

According to Sado, in 2017 the CBDRM committee wrote a letter to the woreda government and ERCS requesting for the rehabilitation of 2 birkads. Since the ERCS response was delayed, the Islamic Relief (an NGO), responded to a request from the government for help. Furthermore, in response to this year's disaster crisis, the CBDRM committee wrote a letter of support to the government for water trucking. *“The water trucking saved our lives and those of our livelihoods,”* she adds. The early warning subcommittee regularly receives metrological and other early warning information from the Regional Metrology Agency and ERCS and passes it to the community through the radio amplifier that was provided by ERCS.

The development subcommittee mobilised the community and conducted different disaster risk reduction activities such as soil and water conservation. The water management subcommittee managed the available water resources by ensuring equal water distribution, maintenance of water

infrastructure and overseeing sanitation.

No one knows the problems of the community and the solutions better than the community itself. Therefore, the formation of CBDRM is a good approach that promotes the engagement of the community vulnerability and capacity assessment, solution seeking and implementation, as well as monitoring progress. In addition, it empowers community members and helps share their social, cultural, political and economic matters among themselves.

In spite of the good approach by CBDRM, the committees faced various challenges such as illiteracy of committee members, lack of office, limited basic office supplies, lack of contingency/reserve fund at community level, delays of response from other actors and the severity of the drought within the year.

Community based disaster risk management is a new approach for ERCS, and the Protracted Crisis Programme has provided valuable lessons. Accordingly, ERCS formulated a DRR policy that included CBDRM as an approach for disaster risk management. In addition, the Somali Regional branch was selected as a pilot area to test the new ERCS-DRR process improvement for 5 months.

Since CBDRM is a new approach for Somali Region in general and the programme area in particular, it is important to strengthen the committee to ensure the sustainability of disaster risk management so that ERCS can scale up the approach in other areas within the country.



## Early warning can save lives: A case of Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre (RCCC)



*Staff of NLRC, ERCS and Wetlands International inspecting one of the birkads under construction*

Rain can cause havoc when it is extreme, especially in the more remote areas where communities and local administration do not know its negative effects. This is exactly what happened in Jigjiga, the capital city of Somali Region of Ethiopia.

Even though heavy rain in the highlands upstream of Jigjiga town had been forecasted accurately (on a probabilistic basis) and the

local Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Office (DPPO) had received the information, the office was not able to comprehend and share its implied risks. Because of this, the community was not informed in time to relocate to higher ground.

Between 2015 and 2016, Ethiopia was affected by a strong El Niño that created a devastating drought, impacting most of the



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country. Then on 3rd and 4th April 2016 a flash flood occurred in Jigjiga town. A total of 23 people died and more than 80 people were injured when the seasonal River Jerer, which flows across the centre of town, rose suddenly and burst its banks.

In response to the disaster, ERCS volunteers distributed food and non-food items to 200 households that had been affected by the flash floods in Jigjiga. The Deputy Secretary General of ERCS had this to say, *“Despite the efforts made by the government and NGOs, the situation still remains a big concern, and ERCS will continue to bring long-term solutions to the affected areas as they are part of its resilience programme implemented in partnership with sister national societies.”*

Within a few days of the Jigjiga disaster and with the lethal flash flood still in the minds of people, ERCS convened an ‘early warning early action’ workshop for regional- and *woreda*-level DPPO personnel, meteorologists and ERCS disaster managers from the Somali and Harari regions and Dire Dawa city. On the agenda were internal communications, annual seasonal conferences, the content and presentation of warnings and alerts, and inter-agency coordination.

That meeting seemed to bear fruit the next few days when on 9th April a highland village near East Imi town, in the River Shebelle area of Somali Region was successfully evacuated by the DPPO with no casualties after the National Meteorology Agency (NMA) issued a flood warning.

Later in April, the NMA and ERCS organised a conference in Jigjiga to discuss the current seasonal forecast that is updated monthly and complemented by more reliable 10-day forecasts. The participants discussed the past years with similar meteorological profiles to see what conclusions could be drawn.

ERCS made sure that the seasonal conference was covered by the press. With this, people started to realise the importance of the information that they were getting. *“This information is used as early warning but can also be used at community level for the cropping season and to help people plant better,”* said Tayib Muhummed, ERCS Somali Region Branch Secretary. ERCS Somali Region branch has joined forces with NMA to agree on possible forecast-triggers for humanitarian intervention and planning to match them with specific actions early and to make sure they are shared with other international partners in the region.

*“We work closely together now, the training convened by the ERCS allowed us to coordinate and communicate much better. Before, there was very little. The importance of improved cooperation among the chain of actors to operationalise ‘early warning, early action’ is very clear.”* Said Tayib Muhummed.

One good outcome of the programme is the fact that it has created linkages between businesses, farmers, herders, town-dwellers, and the local government to identify what early action is to be taken and when. It also recognises that people closest to a problem are best placed to identify solutions. This



effort has brought together the local Metreology Agency and government offices, resulting in improved coordination among actors for early warning and early action.

This experience from Somali Region is now being replicated in Amhara Region,

through ERCS, with support from NMA. Other implementing agencies have also shown interest in this simple yet powerful approach which enhances resilience through consistent, quality and timely early warning information and advisories for actions by different stakeholders.



*ERCS volunteers preparing to distribute humanitarian relief in Jigjiga in April 2016, where a flash flood took people by surprise*



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## Community mobilisation for watershed conservation



*Community members digging trenches*

With natural resource degradation so common in the Fafan Region, it is difficult to address all the ecosystem restoration needs. Also, there is limited funding to do the work. To address this issue, the Protracted Crisis Programme joined the Regional President, Abdi Mohamud Omon, to support the development of community mobilisation guidelines. He brought his experience from Tigray Regional State where he witnessed positive outcomes for soil and water conservation with the help of communities.

The idea behind community mobilisation is that in return for conservation projects that provide direct benefits to the community, and the materials and guidance to do the work, the community donates the labour. This gives the community a stake in the success of the work and enhances its sense of ownership. It also helps in ensuring that the community guards against any harmful activities that undermine their achievements.



The Somali Region Agricultural and Natural Resource Development Bureau was asked to draft guidelines to support community mobilisation, but lacked the resources to do so. Following this, the Protracted Crisis Programme contributed to the guidelines and helped organise two consultative workshops with experts from the Amhara Region who had strong community mobilisation experience.

The next step was to pilot a few community mobilisation projects on the ground to see if they were feasible. The first test was at Laftagalol earthen dam which was built through the Protracted Crisis Programme and which has changed the lives of people living nearby. Before the completion of the dam, members from the local community had to travel 60 km away to access water. Now the community can enjoy the benefits of a reliable source of water; not only for domestic use but for watering their animals and for crop production. However to maintain the dam, a lot still needs to be done. For instance, if not properly maintained, the dam might fill up with silt from upstream erosion due to soil degradation and gullying.

Abdi Aziz is Kebele administrator at Laftagalol. According to him, life was difficult before the Protracted Crisis Programme intervention. Running water formed big gullies upstream where his farm is located, washing away his fertile land. It was too costly to rehabilitate such big gullies on his own. When the programme was launched, he became a major community mobilisation supporter in order to save the dam and his farmland. Training was an important

element in community mobilisation. Abdi Aziz attended a regional level consultation workshop on community mobilisation guidelines for watershed development.

Before the actual work could start, it was important to select the right time to mobilise the community. Notheless the work had to be delayed until after the busy harvest season when the community could find some time. Also, the community had to be mobilised in the right way because it mattered who was asking members to donate their labour. In this case, it was therefore decided that a request from the Somali Region Agricultural and Natural Resources Development Bureau would receive the best response.



*A completed gabion*



*A completed soil bund*

After assessing the situation, the Somali Region Agricultural and Natural Resources Development Bureau in collaboration with Wetlands International and ERCS, provided materials and technical support for free. When the time came, 150 community members came together to conserve the dam by building a fence that has greatly helped

to save their farmlands from degradation and gullyng. More than 400 soil bunds and gabions were constructed in the upper catchment of Laftagalol. These barriers will conserve the soil by intercepting it and filling the gullies. This will help prevent the silt from filling up the dam reservoir.

Abdi Aziz saw the benefits of this approach. He believes that without community mobilisation it would have been too difficult to rehabilitate the big gully that was destroying his farmland. He is happy that his community was used to pilot that part of the programme. *“It was a good thing for our community members to be the first to be mobilised for watershed development. We will continue mobilising them for other development activities after this one is completed. I am very happy today looking at all the people who came out to save the dam from siltation and their farmlands from soil erosion. This is a double benefit,”* he explains.

While community mobilisation in Laftagalol was a success, mobilisation efforts in other trial communities were not. A PSNP cash or food for work programme in the upper watershed that was under the Gursen Agricultural Bureau was unsuccessful. Seedlings that were provided in order to conserve soil and stop gullyng around the community were not cared for and perished due to drought and lack of water.

These trial experiences, both good and bad, provided feedback to the development of the guidelines covering 101 woredas and whose finalisation is yet to be realised.



## One child ten trees – A case of Bombas school environmental club



*Roof catchment activity for Bombas school environmental club*

Deforestation and land degradation are quite prevalent in the Fafan zone. There is very low awareness of environmental issues among the pastoralists and agro-pastoralists who live there. This lack of knowledge compounds the destruction of the environmental resources of Bombas town and its surrounding villages, and undermines the resilience of the communities to cope with stresses like droughts.

To address this lack of environmental awareness, the Protracted Crisis Programme saw the establishment of environmental school clubs as a core activity for changing behaviour. Environmental school clubs are groups of students and teachers who

volunteer to improve the environment of their school compounds and their communities through planting trees and keeping the landscape well-maintained.

Before the Protracted Crisis Programme, the district office of education attempted to launch the clubs but they faced too many challenges such as accessing seedlings from 15 km away and meeting the cost of 10 Ethiopian Birr per tree. Bombas Environmental School Club was the first to be established by the Protracted Crisis Programme and one of the 9 clubs that were started in the 9 target areas of the programme.



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Mohammed Ahmed Bare is the Bombas school and club director. His livelihood depends on the basic salary he earns from his job as Bombas school and club director. He has no land or animals. Of his 6 children, 3 attend school. Part of his job evaluation by the district education office depends on how well the trees are maintained in the school. He therefore takes it upon himself to motivate the pupils who range from the age of 8 to 13 years old to plant more trees. Through his encouragement, his pupils have participated fully in the programme.

To give guidance for the establishment and training of the clubs, Wetlands International partnered with Jigjiga University and the Somali Region Bureau of Education to draft guidelines. Mohammed and other teachers were trained on leadership skills so that they could lead the clubs in their respective schools.

A key achievement of the clubs is the planting of tree seedlings by club members around the school compounds, their own homes and other public places. More than 12,000 seedlings of different tree species were distributed and planted by school clubs. In Bombas, for instance, the environmental club planted 1250 tree seedlings. Every group of trees planted in the school compound is named after the student who planted them. The student is then made responsible for watering and taking care of his or her trees. During the dry season, pupils are encouraged to bring water from home to water the trees. The tree planting extended to local communities, with pupils planting trees around their homes and caring for them. This enabled the club to attract more volunteers.

And the benefits are beginning to be realised by both students and teachers. Some of the trees have grown and provide shade, creating a more pleasant environment for learning. The clubs have made the schools centres of learning on environmental issues for the entire region. In communities with little formal education, different awareness raising events have been held on the need for the conservation of the environment through tree planting as a disaster risk reduction and adaptation measure to cope with a changing climate and its adverse effects.

The environmental clubs have proven popular. To strengthen them, the programme constructed roof water harvesting structures to supply water for the trees. However, more needs to be done to harness and improve the clubs. There is need to fence schools in order to keep away goats and other animals that graze on the trees. More hand tools are required to increase the efficiency of the work being done. Competitions between schools would motivate clubs especially of different games where pupils can be awarded with footballs and other sports regalia.

But as the seedlings are maturing, the future is uncertain. Although the clubs are an activity that could be scaled up with additional funding, the programme is coming to an end with no clear sustainability plan for access to more seedlings for planting. It is up to the district office of education and school leaders like Mohammed to keep the clubs going.



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## Lessons from partnership for future programming



*Some of the seedlings meant for conservation*

The protracted Crisis Programme brought together three international organizations, namely the Netherlands Red Cross (NLRC), Wetlands International and the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre (RCCC); and two local organisations, namely Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) and Horn of Africa Regional Environment Centre network (HoA-REC&N) as implementing consortium partners. In addition to this, the consortium was joined by the following partners: Somali Region Water Bureau (SRWB), several Woreda Agriculture Offices, Jigjiga University and Metrology Agency, plus the community to implement some aspects of the programme. The aim of the

consortium and its local partners was to bring together previously unconnected fields of expertise in disaster risk reduction (DRR), climate change adaptation (CCA), and ecosystem management and restoration (EMR) in an integrated manner to address the humanitarian and development issues identified by the programme, and to ensure sustainability. They were organised under the Netherlands Red Cross (NLRC) as lead agency.

Such partnerships or alliances working together is and has been very common in acute humanitarian emergency operations in Ethiopia and globally; but this was the first time that international humanitarian



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actors were coming together to form a consortium to address a protracted crisis of this nature in Somali Region, Ethiopia. Being a consortium, the organizations found it possible to mobilize sizable resources, minimize duplication of effort and capitalize on innovative actions in DRR, CCA and EMR. It was also possible to engage with the community with one voice and facilitate the process of community empowerment and ownership in DRR.

Furthermore, the partnership facilitated cross learning and made the implementation of integrated interventions possible which would not have been managed by a single organization. The partnership allowed for each organization to focus on their area of expertise, bringing different added values to the programme and benefiting communities who are the end beneficiaries of the proposed interventions.

In spite of the major successes that “*A step towards resilience: Joint initiatives addressing protracted crisis in Somali Region-Ethiopia*” has highlighted in different sections, this partnership has had its own share of challenges as well.

These challenges are highlighted so that other organizations can learn from them and make use of the recommendations for future initiatives.

- The partners organized regular review meetings to discuss progress and challenges in the activity implementation. Despite these joint reviews, it was noted that key challenges that each of the consortium partners faced were not always shared as openly as intended or

discussed and they therefore remained unclear for others. The overall impression was that except for the strong partnership between NLRC and ERCS, and some effort of collaboration between Wetlands International and ERCS on ecosystem rehabilitation, complementarity of each partner’s expertise remained sometimes theoretical. It also appeared that the local implementing partners had some difficulties in appropriately grasping with the concept of integrated DRR approaches and the strengths that each of the partners brought to the table. The partnership between Wetlands International and HoA-REC&N started off well but became harsher at the end and remained difficult until the end of the implementation.

- The programme established a strong link and collaboration with Somali Region government sectors mainly with SRWB, Woreda Agriculture Offices, Jigjiga University and Metrology Agency. The SRWB is a regulatory body that is mandated to ensure improved access to water both in terms of quality and quantity. In this project the SRWB was directly involved in the construction of 17 water facilities including the Laftagalol and Bombas dams. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between SRWB and ERCS was signed to facilitate the construction of these water facilities. Although good progress was made in the construction of the water facilities, several delays resulted in the extension of the programme implementation period. Somali Region Water Bureau being a government institution (not a private



contractor), ERCS and NLRC had limited influence in expediting the speed and quality of the construction process, or review the contractual agreement (MoU). It is therefore very important for future assignments to anticipate the role of government institutions in partnerships at the design stage of a programme and to carry out a risk analysis which includes assumptions in activity implementation.

- The heavy rains and flooding experienced in April 2017 around Laftagalol earthen dam, diverted attention and resources allocated by SRWB for dam construction to flood mitigation. In addition to this, well organised and appropriate environmental conservation measures were not fully put in place by the concerned partners during the design phase and later the implementation phase of the dam. It has now been realised that unless complete and far-reaching physical and biological environmental conservation measures are considered, the long-term use and sustainability of the Laftagalol dam is in jeopardy.
- Other equally important and inter-linked interventions such as the risk reduction management approaches were diverted to the rather painfully necessary but complicated construction and rehabilitation of water facilities, particularly the expansion of the Laftagalol earthen dam and rescue measures at times of high flood emergencies (responding to acute crisis of flooding and linking it to DRR).
- For future programming, the consortium partners should prioritize the joined

development of systematic, simplified and standardized monitoring schemes that capture detailed progress against set indicator and end-line target on a quarterly basis. All implementing partners and their field and technical staff should own and understand these monitoring and evaluation schemes and use them in the work plans and reporting

- It is crucial to conduct an internal evaluation on the “partnership” between NLRC, Wetlands International and the RCCC and its local partners before making new partnership arrangements for future programming. Various dynamics (internally and externally, including agencies’ own agendas) influenced good cooperation, coordination and implementation of the Protracted Crisis Programme.

All in all, despite these challenges, the consortium for the Protracted Crisis was a steep learning curve and the programme gained from the effort of each of the partners. Working in partnership has its advantages and disadvantages and partners need to be fully aware of the limitations and added value of each consortium member. A detailed organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT), and an in-depth analysis of the external environmental would help in minimizing some of these challenges mentioned above. Finally, a partnership agreement should be developed from the start of the programme to highlight the roles and responsibilities of partners, but should also include plans on how to address and mitigate potential challenges and limitations of working as a consortium.



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