

Rapid Assessment on the Needs and Priorities of Agro-pastoral Communities

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Somaliland in a semi-desert climatic conditions and acute food insecurity is one of the problems facing people. According to WFP around 6.2 million people are food insecure in Somalia and almost 3 million people cannot meet their daily food requirements. With these conditions and recurring droughts communities resilience is weak and prone to shocks. Climate change/Global Warming is triggering drier weather conditions in the Horn of Africa affecting food production. Due to poor rainfall last 3 years Somalia and the Horn of Africa at large has experienced severe droughts triggered by El-Nino, Climate Change, and environmental degradation. According to February's technical release by FSNAU and the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET) large parts of the country are in pre-famine stages. Droughts in the Somali context is scarcity of water and in turn food; in the absence of rivers and lakes communities harvest rainfall in Earth dams, Berkads (underground cisterns), rubber sheets and dig shallow wells along the dry river beds. Livestock is the key factor for people's livelihoods and the Somali economy. Priority is given to restoring water sources so that rain water is captured and stored for improved water management. Environmental restoration also plays an important role in ensuring communities are Food secure and are resilient. Promotion of local climate resilient food production is vital to decrease the food insecurity that exists. Farm production not only includes for human and household consumptions but fodder for livestock which is a major livelihood for the Somali communities and a source for nutrition in terms of Meat, Milk and other by-products. According to FAO in 2014 Somalia registers record export of 5 Million livestock increasing the economy. Thus, ActionAid conducted a rapid assessment on the community priorities and needs in 6 villages.

1.2 Objectives

- ✚ To assess and identify the community priorities, needs and gaps
- ✚ To identify the governmental institution capacity needs in producing and implementing strategic plans to increase local production

2. Methodology

The research methods employed by the rapid assessment consisted of Key Informant Interviews (KII), Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and observations.

Key Informant Interviews: Key informant interviews were designed to provide in-depth information from leaders in government, non-governmental organizations, as well as other community leaders. Key informant interviews were designed to elicit information regarding the challenges and capacity gaps faced by the line ministries in developing and implementing plans and/or strategies that are built on their priority and difficulties undergone by the agro-pastoralist communities with regards to access to water and food security. The interviews also generated information pertaining to existing plans in the line ministries, the plans and/or strategies that need to be developed and the possible solutions to variety of challenges undergone both the government institutions in implementing/developing their plan and strategies and the community in their survival.

Focus Group Discussion: This was targeted only to the pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities which was designed to gauge the demand side of integrated community interventions. The focus groups were designed to generate information regarding the difficulties undergone by the community with regards to access to water, food security and fodder production and the possible solutions from community prospective. 6 FGDs with 66 (43M, 23F) participants, were conducted in Horeyhaadley, Xidhinta, Boodhley, Gogeys, Sallaxley and Balligubadle. The FGD participants included elders, women, youth, farmers, livestock herders, committee members from pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities whom the recent drought had devastating effect both on their farms and livestock.

Table 1: FGDs participants' distribution

Village	#participants	Gender		Moderator
		Male	Female	
Horehaadley	11	9	2	Jamal Omer, Consultant
Xidhinta	11	7	4	Jamal Omer, Consultant
Boodhley	11	7	4	Jamal Omer, Consultant
Googeys	11	7	4	Jamal Omer, Consultant
Sallaxley	11	7	4	Jamal Omer, Consultant
Balligubadle	11	6	5	Jamal Omer, Consultant
Total	66	43	23	

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Villages Profile

Table 2: Villages Profile

Village	#HH (community estimates)	Nature of community livelihood	Water Points	Economic activities
Horehaadley	500	Agro-pastoral	Dams, Shallow wells	Petty trade, selling livestock and agricultural products
Xidhinta	450	Agro-pastoral	Berkeds Dams Plastic bags Qarbads	Petty trade, selling livestock and agricultural products
Boodhley	660	Agro-pastoral	Shallow wells, rain water	Petty trade, selling livestock and agricultural products
Googeys	275 (2014)	Agro-pastoral	Shallow wells,	Petty trade, selling livestock and agricultural products
Sallaxley	1800	Agro-pastoral	Berkeds	Petty trade, selling livestock and agricultural products
Balligubadle	2000	Agro-pastoral	Berkeds	Petty trade, selling livestock and agricultural products

3.2 Overview of the drought effect

The most severe drought for decades has hit Somaliland affecting the lives of hundreds of people, mainly pastoralists and agro-pastoralist and devastatingly affected both their livestock and agriculture. The result discovered that the long and dry season has caused scarcity of water following declines in the levels of water in both subsurface and underground sources. As land became dry, animals were left with little or no fodder and pasture and farms failed to yield neither food nor fodder. As a result, food insecurity and malnutrition exacerbated, affecting mainly children under five years, women and other vulnerable groups. Many families were internally displaced once their livestock were claimed by the drought. The majority of the

surveyed villages received hundreds of families who were forcibly displaced and migrated from the eastern regions to the western regions of Somaliland, in search of water and food for themselves and the few livestock that survived from the drought but only to find that the area wasn't spared of the severe drought, either which greatly contributed to the heavy burden. The majority of the respondents indicated that the drought already claimed their livestock and farms, and was threatening to their lives. The respondents added that the recurring challenges are soil erosion, deforestation, lack of enough water, pest and diseases that affected the farms and livestock. As mentioned, all put together triggered this pro-longed and devastating drought.

3.3 Access to Water (WASH)

Water is the most critical resources that all aspect of life relies on heavily and it is becoming among the most scare resources in most of the rural areas of Somaliland. In most of the surveyed villages, water was their greatest worry and its scarcity threatens their existence. They need it for themselves to drink, their livestock and their farms as well.

Most of the surveyed communities have Berkeds and Shallow wells as their major water facilities and some villages have dams in addition. The capacity of the community to construct their own water points or rehabilitate the existing ones, is mainly relied on their farms output or the number of heads of livestock they have as these are their only sources of income and this is now removed by the drought.

The results shows that the access to water is the most critical challenge for all the villages surveyed which is triggered by the very limited water points that are often relied on the surface run off water. The water scarcity is caused by three level cause, firstly, the water facility is not enough given the inhabitants per village. Secondly, most of Berkeds and Shallow wells are privately owned and the publicly owned ones are very minimum, yet these are the major sources of water. Thirdly, considerably many water sources are not functioning properly and the cost of rehabilitation is high for the community. The majority of the respondents indicated that the major water sources are Berkeds that hold up the surface run off water and dry up early during dry seasons. The other two water points that follow this, are dams and shallow wells. As result shows, dams are very limited in most of the villages surveyed with which some have non while others have one or two mostly constructed by NGOs including ActionAid. Dams hold up the surface run off water and mainly are consumed right after the rain water and often do not hold water for very long. Moreover, some of the villages have shallow wells where they can access water, ActionAid has covered up a number of shallow wells in villages like Horehaadley, but most of them are owned privately and the poor people don't have any. The respondents indicated that ActionAid has rehabilitated Berkeds, constructed dams and covered up shallow wells in which they expressed gratefulness. However, the access to water, in these villages, is greatly limited by the inadequate water facility which most of them have been damaged and are not functioning effectively and thus, far from access to enough water. For example, as the respondents indicated, during dry seasons most of the water sources dry up early and this forces people to seek water for more than 5 kilometers distance. Apart from ActionAid, there are not many organization that

are supporting these communities in water infrastructure. *“Action Aid is the only organization that currently supports this community but they only do rehabilitation and covering up of wells for individuals so I would recommend for them to build dams and construct communal wells”*, a respondent in Horehaadley mentioned. The respondent also indicated that ActionAid distributed plastic bags (Qarbads) to hold up water from emergency water tracking interventions. As indicated, these Qarbads has proven to be effective in holding water unlike normal plastic bags which can easily be damaged by the livestock. The community in Xidhin expressed that Qarbads have particularly improved access to water as ActionAid distributed around 53 Qarbads which contributed to the water facility and helped many families who had neither Berkeds nor any other water facility and who would have otherwise travelled long distances to fetch water, to use the Qarbad to store water. *“I am given one Qarbad which have helped me and the community around me, it helped us pour the water from the emergency support and even the rain water”* a respondent indicated.

The major challenges in access to water, as indicated, include inadequate water points, limited publicly owned water points-Berkeds and Shallow wells particularly-, limited financial ability to rehabilitate Berkeds and to cover up and distil shallow wells.

Majority of the respondents requested an increase of water facility to improve water access, which they mainly mentioned, construction of new dams, rehabilitation and construction of Berkeds, covering up of more shallow wells, digging and covering up of new shallow wells for the poor people, and the distribution of more Qarbads. The respondents also suggested the construction of communal water facilities to increase publicly owned water facilities. *“We get water from shallow wells. In spring pastoralists use surface water to water their animals but in winter when these water dry up they use the shallow wells which we dug for our farms. A major challenge we face is the cost of digging and constructing shallow well. So I think construction of dams along the waterway will solve much of the problem”* a respondent stated.

3.4 Livelihoods (agriculture and Livestock)

The livelihoods relied on these communities is mainly water dependent one, agriculture and livestock are the only two sources of livelihoods. The water scarcity demonstrated has profound effect on the livelihood of these communities.

Almost all of the surveyed communities have small plots of land to cultivate and rear livestock [Cattle, goats, Sheep]. The products from their farms and livestock is the only source of income and nutrition which only reflects their capacity.

The results reveal that water scarcity has caused lowest levels of food production both in the cash crops and cereals. The majority of the surveyed communities are agro-pastoralist societies, who mainly produce cereal crops though some of them produce cash corps. In any of them, the water shortage has drastic effect on their farms and nothing has been growing over the last

months. This reduced food production to its lowest level, and now most the households has to rely on external food from the government or the NGOs. Apart from the lack of water that hindered the food production, there are other contributing factors including the lack of proper knowledge on climate change in which farmers were unable to predict this devastating drought and the limited facility, knowledge and skills on how to store food after it's harvested for later use.

The majority of the respondents also indicated due to limited food availability, they have now even consumed the seeds and some of them also questioned the quality of the seeds claiming that it has limited lifespan. *"Yes there is a problem with the seed. We have observed many times that these seeds can be planted only for onetime and I think it is something to do with the quality of the seed. We buy the seeds from the local market and we get no support regarding the seeds form the NGOs or the government"*, farmer mentioned.

Given the effect of the drought on livelihoods, the majority of the respondents complained that they cannot afford to buy tractor hours to cultivate their lands which also poses critically challenge to future of farming, hence food production in these setting. *"Since the rain season comes, I wanted to cultivate my farm but could not afford the tractor hours, I have asked the tractor owner to cultivate the land and I pay the cost when I harvest but he said he cannot do that more than one hour which is not enough. We need support in this"* respondent said.

Apart from agriculture, these communities heavily rely on livestock as sources of livelihoods. The results show that the long dry season left no fodder for the livestock to feed and with very limited water availability means no life for livestock, which caused the death of over hundreds of livestock. This was more severe, in the southern part, Hawd (Sallaxley and Balligubadle) which the livestock rearing is more dominant than the agriculture. The results reveal that a man who had over hundred livestock before the drought has now less than ten of them left which reflects the degree of the drought. As most of the respondents emphasized, no livestock means no food [no milk, meat and livestock cannot be sold to get money to procure other food commodities], thus, a mass internal displacement is experienced in most of the villages which also put pressure on the receiving communities who also had scare resources.

The findings demonstrate that the food shortage is very high and some households can hardly get anything to consume. The failure of rain in consecutive rain season caused very long dry season which water become hardly available. Consequently, the scarcity of water caused agriculture and livestock-the two major sources of livelihoods- to yield nothing to support the lives of these communities.

Apart from improving the access to water which remained the top priority of these communities, the majority of the respondents called assistance in tractor hours, provision of quality seeds, restocking [provision of livestock for those who lost all] and capacity building on food and fodder storage.

3.5 Community Coping Strategies in Drought

As most of the respondents indicated, when there is water scarcity the community responds in a range of different ways which depends on the level of water scarcity. The community members who have the capacity, purchase water trucked from the main regions and then pour on the berkedes or plastic bags. Moreover, most of the assessed communities have community committees who speak on their behalf, thus, these committee communicate the water challenges with the government or NGO [NGO, mainly when they visit] and then wait their response. In some cases, the respondents indicated that, the community mobilizes resources [adding together what they can] at community level with which they then purchase with water. In the event of pasture scarcity, the community- mainly the pastoralist- migrate with their livestock from place to place in search of pasture, meanwhile, the agro-pastoral community uses the fodder from their drying farms.

3.6 Community Governance System and Government Relationship

The majority of the villages had a community committee led by a chairman who is tasked to work on the public affairs of the community which included dealing with challenges faced by the community including water scarcity and speaking on the voice of the community. As the majority of the respondents indicated, these committees are functioning and have played crucial role in distributing the scarce resources like water that comes from the government or the NGOs. As reflected by the respondents, the committees deal with the government institutions and the NGOs when they visit their villages. Some of the committee members [as part of FGD participants] mentioned that they have good relationship with the government and that the government responds to their needs. However, this view is challenged by some of the respondents who indicated that the government institutions only visit them when they have specific agenda and are not performing their duties.

The results present that the relationship between the government and these communities is mainly 'top-down' model, government driven. This is supported by the fact that the respondents mentioned that the government visits them when they have specific agenda but the community rarely gets the opportunity to present their problems without the government having any agenda in mind but just to listen to the voice of the community.

3.7 Technical skills and other capacity development gaps

Though most of the respondents prioritized water and livelihoods as their most important priority, many of them mentioned that they also need technical capacity building in diverse subjects. Most of the respondents indicated that they need trainings on climate change and forecasting techniques, modern farming, food and fodder storage, water management and storage, water cleaning, pests controlling, marketing and identification and treatment of livestock diseases.

3.8 Community Intervention Priorities

On aggregate, the following table indicated the priorities of the surveyed communities.

Table 3: Community Priorities

Priority 1	WASH
Priority 2	Livelihoods
Priority 3	Environmental protections
Priority 4	Hygiene and sanitation, health
Priority 5	Education, social governance

The majority of the respondents indicated that they have benefited the construction and rehabilitation of water sources and soil and water conservation methods – soil bunds and gabion lines. The community scored this as ‘very relevant’ and expressed the need and that they will benefit from these, if these interventions are restored.

3.9 Other organizations in Operation in the area

The following table displays the organizations that are working in the surveyed area.

Table 4: Other orgs in operation in the area

Villages	Organizations	Thematic area	Years of cooperation
Horehaadley			
Xidhinta	-DRC -UNICEF	-seeds and one Barked rehabilitation -Tractor hours	
Boodhley	UNICEF	Sanitation	
Googeys			
Sallaxley	-WFP -ADRA -WVI UNFPA	-Food -Education -Nutrition -Health	-6 months -6 years - 8 years -2 years
Balligubadle			

As reflected by the table these are the organization that are either present or implemented some interventions in the past, their thematic areas are captured in the table but their future plans could only be obtained, if they would have been interviewed.

3.10 Government Institutions Capacity gaps

The Somaliland ministry of Livestock in collaboration with Somaliland Development Fund is implementing project that is aimed to increase water and food for livestock. Thus, as informants from the ministry of livestock indicated, the Ministry has rehabilitated rangelands, increased water points and fodder production in Aroori and Qoolcaday. The informants also mentioned that, the increase in fodder production, water points, and training communities in fodder

production and storage ranks the top priority of the ministry. The informants indicated that the ministry has developed the National Livestock Policy which encompasses all ministry priorities to get water and fodder for livestock. The result reveals that the Ministry is also planning to develop other policies or strategies which includes a policy for livestock trading (exports) and grazing policy. *“To develop a plan is easy but to implement is very difficult, given the limited resources allocated the ministry finds challenging in implementing it is important plans”*, an informant from the ministry stated. Thus, this reflects ministry’s needs of support both in resources and in capacity building.

Similarly, as the results show, the Somaliland Ministry of Agriculture is prioritizing the improvement of water access through the construction of communal water facilities, dams and balleys and the conservation and protection of soil. The respondents from the ministry of agriculture, mentioned that the ministry recognizes water and soil as the fundamental elements of agriculture, thus, focuses on its availability and conservation. As key respondents indicated, the ministry has recently developed a strategic plan that is aimed at improving production by increasing water points, introducing inter-cropping, conserving soil and improving the knowledge of farmers in modern farming and climate change. However, the ministry has limited resource to implement this strategic plan in scale and thus needs more support on capacity building, research and enriching the extension department of the ministry who does train and supervise community agriculture workers, as the key informants emphasized.

3.11 Community Preparedness on Disasters

The majority of the informants indicated that the community can best be prepared through effective, structured, well planned and designed awareness raising programs which promote food production and educate the community on the issue of the climate change, modern farming techniques, food and fodder storage and adjusting their crop calendars. These program should also educate the community on methods to lower the impact of the disaster in case it happens.

4 Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusion

The drought has severely affected communities in the assessed areas. In the majority of the surveyed communities, water shortage was the major challenge and it has increased the impact of the drought. Consequently, the shortage of water reduced food production to its lowest level, given that both livestock and farms do not yield anything at all. Community members suggested, construction and rehabilitation of water facilities, restocking, provision of tractor hours and seeds and increasing community knowledge on farming, livestock and water management as the solutions. The communities has also no or very little knowledge on the climate change and it is important that the awareness of the community to be raised.

Most of the relevant governmental institutions have developed or are developing strategic plans with regards to food production and increasing access to water, however, expressed technical and resources gaps in its implementation.

Informants indicated that community can be prepared through properly designed awareness raising programs which promote food production and educate the community on the issue of the climate change, modern farming techniques, food and fodder storage and adjusting their crop calendars.

4.2 Recommendations

- ✚ Interventions should prioritize the construction of new communal water facilities and the rehabilitation of existing ones to increase access to water
- ✚ If possible the farmers should be assisted in the provision of tractor hours and quality seeds
- ✚ Soil conservation mechanism to be put in place, to slow down the surface run off and increase the rate of infiltration
- ✚ For the pastoralists who lost everything, they need to be restocked to help them maintain their livelihoods
- ✚ The community should be given trainings of modern farming, climate change, food and fodder production and storage, livestock rearing during emergencies and marketing
- ✚ Awareness raising and behavior changing communications to be put in place to promote proactive food production, climate change forecasting and drought response
- ✚ The concerned governmental institution should be supported in developing and implementing comprehensive strategic plans to promote production

5 Annexes

5.1 Focus Group Discussions Guide

General Information

Community Name: _____

Date: _____

- Number of HH in the community
- % of Male, % of Female, % of Children and % of above old people (above 60)
- Nature of Community livelihood -
 - o Agro-Pastoral -
 - o Pastoral

- Water point sources
 - o Dams
 - o Berkads
 - o Shallow wells
 - o Others _____
- Economic activities
 - o Petty trade – selling milk, livestock, agriculture
 - o Labor force – constructions
 - o Agricultural products
 - o Livestock
 - o Milk
 - o Fodder
 - o Other _____

- =====
1. How is your community currently managing to get enough access to water availability? Are there challenges? What do you recommend to solve these water availability challenges?
 - a. How to manage?
 - b. Haffir dams are they working in the context?

 2. Do you feel there is food shortage that is affecting your community? How are you currently coping with it? What do you recommend to solve these challenges?

- a. Seeds quality/utilization
 - b. Tractor hours
 - c. Food storage – replace of storage holes
3. How did the drought affect the livestock/farms? What are the challenges? How are you coping with it?
4. What skills, technical skills and other capacity development gaps exist in your community?
- a. Climate change – traditional early warning vs technology contemporary and how can be interconnected
 - b. Domestic water harvesting – Qarbads, roof catchment
 - c. Livestock management during droughts or emergencies?
 - d. Marketing skills
5. According to your community needs and priorities please rank the following according to importance?
- a. Livelihood – Crop production, livestock and other economic activities
 - b. WASH – construction of water sources, construction of
 - c. Environmental protection
 - d. Social Governance – supported institutions
 - e. Sustainably
 - f. Other supports

Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Priority 5

6. Do you think you have benefited or will benefit the following project activities – how relevant are the activities listed in the proposal?
- Construction and rehabilitation of water sources
 - Construction of Soil and water conservation methods – soil bunds and gabion lines

Very relevant	Less relevant	not relevant

7. During drought emergency, how do communities cope it? What are the traditional methods you use? For livestock
 - a. Livestock migration
 - b. Types of diseases?

8. What is your relationship with government? Do you established connection? How do you want to work with government management?
 - a. District Level
 - b. Regional
 - c. Central government

9. What are the gaps that exist in your priority needs

10. What organizations are working in your community and doing what?

S/n	Organization Name	Thematic Area	Years of Cooperation

That concludes our focus group. Thank you so much for coming and sharing your thoughts and opinions with us. If you have additional information that you did not get to say in the focus group, please feel free to write let any of the team know and we can record it.

End.

5.2 Key Informative Guiding Questions

General Information

Date: _____

Name: _____

Institution: _____

Title: _____

1. As government institution, what are your plans or strategies with regards to increasing food production, water access, resilience building and sustainable management of natural resources? If none is in place, are you planning to develop? Are there any challenges that may hinder your capacity to implement/develop these? If yes, what are these challenges?
2. What support would you need to properly implement/develop your plans and/or strategies and to over-come these challenges?
3. According to your priorities, please rank the following according to importance?
 - a. Livelihood – Crop production, livestock and other economic activities
 - b. Wash – construction of water sources, construction of
 - c. Environmental protection
 - d. Social Governance – supported institutions
 - e. Sustainably
 - f. Other supports

Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Priority 5

4. What are the capacity needs of the government (through line ministry) to support sustainable agriculture/Livestock? What are the challenges the government facing in this? What support would it need?
5. What do you think are the economic vulnerability of agro-pastoral communities? What can be done to reverse these sustainably?
6. What are the challenges, threats and opportunities of agro-pastoral food and water resilience?
7. How best can communities be prepared in case disaster happens that can negatively affect food security, climate (droughts), resilient and sustainable agriculture?

That concludes our interview. Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts and opinions with us. If you have additional information that you did not get to say in the interview, please feel free to let us know

End.