



Save the Children

THE CLIMATE CRISIS: A CHILDREN'S CRISIS



A photostory of the impact of climate
change on children in Puntland, Somalia



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Nicolas Berlanga-Martinez, EU Ambassador

The EU works hard to become one of Somalia's long-term ally in the fight against climate change, explains the EU Ambassador to Somalia, Nicolas Berlanga Martinez. Climate adaptation has been central in EU's support to the country for the last years. One example is happening in Puntland, where we're supporting the pastoral communities in reversing the desertification cycle by developing alternative energy sources and improved management of rangelands. But our efforts do not stop here. The EU will continue enhancing its support in this area during the coming years, in line with the Africa-EU Partnership.

Cover photo: This is Hawa with her daughter Fatima, 7 in Rad, Sanaag region of Somalia. After a long trek from their home to Rad, they're trying to take some rest before they proceed to their final destination. The family depend on their livestock for food, but due to the climate crisis, Hawa and her family face the prospect of losing their main source of income, their goats. Their herd has been reduced from 100 goats to 25 goats because of the recent drought in 2017 that reduced herd sizes across Somalia.

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FOREWARD

Save the Children is a worldwide leading independent organization for children with presence in 120 countries. We have been operating in Somalia since 1951. This initiative is led by the BRCiS consortium and funded by the European Union.

The Member States of the European Union have decided to link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders.

The BRCiS consortium is led by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Save the Children is one of the implementing partners within the consortium.

Simply put, climate change is global warming, associated with depletion of the ozone layer. Human activities are responsible for damage to the ozone layer through emission of greenhouse gases. To date, the earth is one degree warmer than it was in the pre-industrial period. Much of this warming has taken place in the last four decades.

The climate crisis is a children's crisis. Climate change arguably poses the single greatest challenge to the realisation of children's rights, and threatens to undercut decades of hard-won progress to improve their lives. According to UNICEF, "More than 99% of deaths attributable to climate-related changes occur in developing countries – and children make up over 80% of those deaths". Similarly, across Africa, school enrollment rates have declined 20% in regions affected by drought, according to the World Bank. Climate change has been identified as the greatest 21st century challenge to development efforts. Already poor children in the region are experiencing negative impacts of climate change, reducing their chances of development and survival.

This booklet, through case studies and community testimonials, highlights the voice of the communities most impacted by climate change in the Federal Member State of Puntland, Somalia. Puntland is located in the northeastern section of Somalia and has a landmass of about 212,510[2] km² (82,050 sq mi) which is roughly one-third of Somalia's geographical area with an estimated population of 4,285,000 women, men, girls and boys, as of 2016. It is a largely semi-arid with a warm climate and sparse and variable rainfall.

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MESSAGE FROM THE HON. ACTING MINISTER ABDIRASHID ALI, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Climate Change (MoAECC) has strongly invested in addressing the issue of climate change. This is because pastoralism which is our major livelihood and backbone of our economy directly depends on rainfall for survival and is highly vulnerable to climate extremes. The MoAECC has developed the Puntland Climate Change and Drought Management Strategy, this booklet raises awareness on the risks due to climate change and climate variability.

Like pastoralism, climate change has also affected other livelihoods as well as the infrastructure, economy and environment which are vital for development. Our efforts to mitigate and build resilience of communities to climate change risks has faced many challenges which include low financing and low capacity of institutions leading to lack of effective early warning and responsive systems.

Organisations like the BRCiS consortium and Save the Children support the ministry by focusing on climate change adaptive programming. This supports communities to build their resilience against climate risks. The current trajectory for climate change has recurrent and severe impacts on the livelihoods of the people of Puntland, and this needs to be disrupted with impactful adaptation.

OVERVIEW

Through the Paris Agreement, and in alignment with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Somalia agreed to long-term goals for adaptation – to increase ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions, in a manner that does not threaten food production.

Existing downscaled climate change models show that Somalia has experienced increasing long term mean temperatures. The impact of this has been increased occurrence of extreme weather events and rainfall variability. Somalia has been facing weather extremes over the last few decades, ranging from long-lasting droughts to devastating floods and even cyclones being experienced in the same region within months. These events have led to high food insecurity and increased risk of famine, increased water scarcity, widespread disease and disruption of socio-economic well-being disproportionately affecting already vulnerable communities. Rainfall variability has interfered with the conventional seasonal patterns around the onset, distribution (time and space) and cessation of rains. This has made it extremely difficult to engage in traditional crop and livestock production activities.



CLIMATE CHANGE IN PUNTLAND

The drought crisis in Somalia is worsening, especially in rural areas which have experienced consecutive seasons of poor rainfall and low river water levels. The widespread shortage of water for humans, livestock, and crops has led to nearly total crop failures and an increase in livestock deaths. In some locations, especially remote pastoral settlements, water prices have increased by as much as 300%. Those who cannot afford to pay for water are forced to use unprotected water sources, thereby putting them at risk of acute watery diarrhoea (AWD)/cholera. According to a Save the Children assessment, 74% of the population Puntland has lost more than half of their main source of income due to the drought. As such, there is rapidly diminishing food access among poor households as staple food prices continue to rise sharply and livestock prices decrease significantly. Over 2.1 million people faced crisis and emergency (IPC Phases 3 and 4) across Somalia in late 2020. This represents more than a two-fold increase compared to six months ago. An additional 3 million people are classified as Stressed (IPC Phase 2), bringing the total number of people facing acute food insecurity across Somalia to over 5 million. The average household dietary diversity score (on a scale of 0 to 12) is 3.9 in Puntland. Furthermore, 86% in Puntland reported children taking 2 or fewer meals. According to the Nutrition Cluster, almost 1 million children are acutely malnourished throughout Somalia.

In 2019, the Puntland region experienced drought leading to crisis and emergency, and in 2020 the region experienced localised flooding. In December of 2019, Cyclone Pawan made landfall across Puntland causing several fatalities and widespread destruction of crops and property.



PRESSING ISSUES ON CLIMATE CHANGE IN PUNTLAND

Climate change has made it increasingly difficult to predict weather patterns. Whereas communities were used to highly predictable weather patterns in the past, current seasonal weather trends are increasingly unpredictable. The Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Climate Change in Puntland, in partnership with the BRCiS consortium and Save the Children, held three public community climate change hearings. These were designed to raise awareness on the importance of climate change adaptation, and advocate for ownership of climate change adaptation and mitigation measures. The hearings enabled community members to give testimonials on how climate change has affected their life and livelihood. This booklet champions the voices and experiences of these women and men.

During the climate change hearings, the following key concerns were raised: high food insecurity, inadequate water resources, degeneration of natural resource productivity, diminished bio-diversity, declining human health, increased land degradation, increased desertification, coastal zone recession, and increased rural-urban migration.





CAUSES OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN PUNTLAND

Although Somalia contributes marginally to global greenhouse gases emissions, children in Somalia and their families bear the greatest impacts of climate change. Nonetheless, Somalia does contribute to climate change through the following ways, according to participants of the climate change hearings:

- Unsustainable livestock management practices leading to over-exploitation of rangeland resources,
- Extensive use of firewood and charcoal leading to deforestation,
- Poor land use practices leading to high levels of denudation, loss of pasture species and increased aridity,
- Environmental pollution including use of plastic bags,
- Poor governance (low enforcement of environmental regulations and traditional norms).



SALAAD ALI

70-years-old grandfather
from Rad village, Puntland

“ I am now 70 years old. When I was young I used to herd goats. It was very green and we had enough to eat and help our family. Sometimes, our relatives used to come and visit and we gave them goats. In the 1950s ... there was a devastating drought. There was no water and there was no pasture for our goats. That was the most difficult season for our families because we lost the majority of our livestock and what survived was not marketable and we were not able to milk them.

People mainly survived with the help of aid.

But after that drought, many pastoral families went back to their pastoral lives and recovered because there were successive rains.”

“ We did not see a similar drought until 1970s. However, in the recent history there have been recurring droughts. Majority of the pastoralist families do not have enough water or food to survive. There is a drought every two years.

In this valley, you can see the effect of droughts. It became dusty and there are no trees. I tell my grandchildren how this valley used to be green and foresty. I tell them that trees were either cut or died because of the recurring droughts; but they do not believe me. I understand if they don't believe me. It is difficult to compare because for them they have seen it just the way it is now.

By then, we didn't know about climate change. We just used to see two dry seasons followed by two rainy seasons. It now became unpredictable and it is normal to see four dry seasons across the year.”



Salaad, 70, stands in the middle of Rad valley. The valley is one of the areas adversely affected by climate and environmental degradation.



IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN PUNTLAND

Despite the limited capacity to analyse current and forecasted impacts of climate change in Somalia, downscaled climate models have produced evidence of climate change impacts in Somalia with worsening trends.

The climate change hearings in Puntland, led by MoAECC also identified the following impacts of climate change on the State's most important sectors:

1

WEATHER PATTERNS

Somalia's two rainy seasons, the Gu' from April to June, and the Deyr from October to December, have dictated the lives of farmers and pastoralists for centuries. In recent times, rainfall variability and weather extremes, like the failure of the Gu' and the exceptionally heavy Deyr in 2019, have exacerbated already difficult living situations to one of the world's most vulnerable populations. Each climatic shock further diminishes people's assets and reduces their ability to recover.



HAWA

Testimony of a pastoralist mother in Sanaag

“ Nowadays we travel to the main village to buy rice, and cooking oil to feed my children. This tells about how life has changed for us. Instead of milking our goats and getting enough meat to feed our children, we are forced to go to the local markets to buy just something to eat for the family. And if we can't get money, we borrow them from our relatives if possible.

The temperatures have increased and places that used to have grass and trees are becoming more like a desert. When it rains, the scorching sun dries up water catchments quickly and we travel long distances to fetch water for our families. These kinds of treks also put women and girls at a greater risk of gender based violence like rape. ”



“ Nowadays, the rains are becoming less. And when it rains, we sometimes face floods and heavy rains. In both scenarios, we lose our sources of income. For example, when it is dry and there is no pasture, our goats die because of lack of water and pasture. And when it rains there is the risk of losing your goats because they are weak and can not withstand heavy down pour. They can also be washed by floods.

We believe this is because of the climate change. ”

Save the Children, in collaboration with Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, supports communities to improve water harvesting systems to help them combat the risk of water shortage during droughts. With funding from the European Union three earth dams have been built in Sanaag, Bari and Nugal regions to help improve access to water through water harvesting systems.





2

RANGELANDS

Adverse weather conditions cause high temperature leading to increased plant transpiration and floods causing erosion of top fertile soils and forming gullies, spread of alien plant species and widespread water shortages. This together leads to desertification and low production of potential rangelands which adversely affects the agro-pastoral population. The agro-pastoral population of Somalia represents 26% (almost 2 million people) of the total (FAO Somalia, 2011).

3

WILDLIFE

Due to desertification, fragmentation and loss of habitat caused by climate change, some wild animals have migrated, with others going entirely extinct and many more becoming endangered due to illegal hunting and habitat loss.

4

AGRICULTURE

Agricultural production has generally reduced, while costs have increased due to lack of water for irrigation, newly emerged weeds/alien plants, insects and diseases, high temperature, and destruction of crops and agricultural land due to drought.

5

WATER RESOURCES

Shortage of rains have resulted in water scarcity and shallow wells that are buried under dirt, sediment and other debris. Water scarcity has also resulted in declining water quality with higher concentration of pollutants which resulted water born disease.

6

MARINE RESOURCES

Reduction of all types of marine resources due to climate change, degradation of coral reefs, droughts, and waste dumping.

7

SOCIO-ECONOMIC

Economic loss, declining of natural resources, unemployment, reduction of livestock and agricultural products and inflation.

One big stumbling block for the government and other actors in Somalia trying to deal with the effects of climate change is the lack of funds. According to the World Bank, Somalia is one of the poorest countries in sub-Saharan Africa, with nearly 7 out of 10 Somalis living in poverty.

With over 5 million people in need, largely as a result of displacement linked to climate change the need to invest in resilience is ever more present.





AHMED

38, farmer in Kalabaydh village

“ I used to prepare my land for farming when the rainy season was very close but sometimes you prepare your land and there is a drought instead of rain.

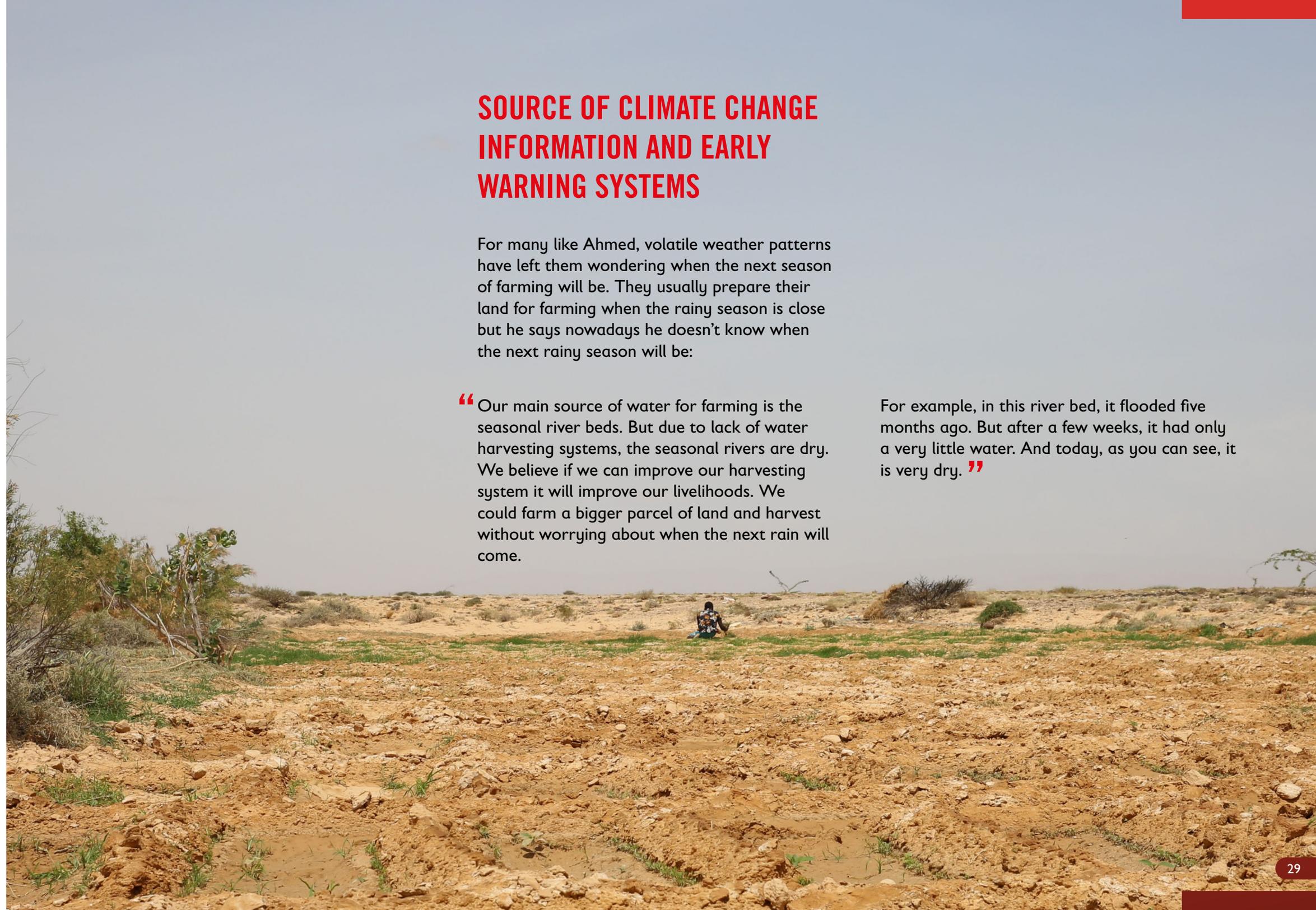
Every year we expect two rainy seasons and two dry seasons. Each season lasts for three months. So, in our farming we used to follow this seasonal calendar. But it is becoming hard now to predict the rainy season, and majority of the time we face drought related challenges. Last year, we had floods and we lost our crops because the floods washed them away. So, climate has become very difficult and unpredictable. We face the prospect of losing our source of income. ”

SOURCE OF CLIMATE CHANGE INFORMATION AND EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS

For many like Ahmed, volatile weather patterns have left them wondering when the next season of farming will be. They usually prepare their land for farming when the rainy season is close but he says nowadays he doesn't know when the next rainy season will be:

“ Our main source of water for farming is the seasonal river beds. But due to lack of water harvesting systems, the seasonal rivers are dry. We believe if we can improve our harvesting system it will improve our livelihoods. We could farm a bigger parcel of land and harvest without worrying about when the next rain will come.

For example, in this river bed, it flooded five months ago. But after a few weeks, it had only a very little water. And today, as you can see, it is very dry. ”





Ahmed, who is a farmer in Kalabaydh village, says through the SMS messages that they receive from the government they are able to follow the weather information in their area.

“ Last year, when there were heavy rains in Puntland, we were able to get warnings from the government. The messages usually come through our mobile’s phones, and I was fortunate to warn my neighbors to leave areas near the seasonal river, where it flooded. ”

Under the EU Restore project, Save the Children is also working with Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management Agency to improve early warning systems to ensure that communities receive timely information about impending heavy rains, cyclones and floods.



ADAPTATION STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As the government of Somalia pursues low-carbon development pathways, appropriate climate adaptation measures are necessary to support climate resilience.

- Low carbon development pathways and adaptation measures could be promoted through: Integrated climate risk analysis with a focus on risks for children
- Involve children in identifying climate change risks and adaptation options
- Promote climate-smart agriculture
- Promote market-based solutions for resilient livelihoods
- Promote household green energy
- Promote early warning and early action to minimize impacts of hazards on children

- Enhance child sensitive, shock-responsive social protection
- Climate-proof education, food and health systems
- Generate evidence on the impact of climate change on children
- Build a climate change literate movement

Puntland's Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management Agency (HADMA) and Save the Children work together on strengthening early warning early action systems. These can be further strengthened with solid mobile phone coverage and efforts help to address information gaps by broadening the reach of early warning systems and information to reduce impact of sudden and adverse weather changes such as tropical storms and flash floods.



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