

# Becoming Early Action Agencies

The SomReP Community Based Early Action System in Somalia, from Conception to Practice





## About SomReP

The Somalia Resilience Program (SomReP) is a multi-year effort seven leading NGOs to tackle the challenge of recurrent droughts and the chronic vulnerability that results among pastoralists, agro-pastoralists, and peri-urban households across Somalia. Designed to address communities' unique needs toward building resilient livelihoods, the program builds on collective lessons learnt by consortium members World Vision, Oxfam, DRC, COOPI, CARE, ADRA, and ACF.

## Applying Lessons from the 2011 Famine

Recent failures to respond sufficiently early to humanitarian food crisis in the Horn of Africa region (2011) by the international community (governments, donors, UN, NGOs) have resulted in significantly preventable deaths and suffering. The crisis in 2011 - with 13 million people affected and up to 250,000 deaths - was the most severe crisis of its kind in 60 years.

Despite Early Warning Systems raising red flags as early as August 2010, the international community was slow to act. In fact, humanitarian funding - the precursor to large scale action - did not spike until July 2011. This increase followed

the affected national governments' acknowledgement of the on-going crisis (May/June) and coincided with the UN famine declaration. Many of the evaluations of the 2011 response have highlighted this failure to heed early warnings as a major failing of the overall response and some major weakness within the broader humanitarian community.

It is clear that droughts (and the food insecurity they produce) in the Horn of Africa are not 'blips' or temporary trends. Somalia now suffers from chronic, predictable annual droughts and is among the African countries hardest hit by climate

change and slow onset disaster. Compared with its neighbours, Somalia was most affected by the 2011 famine.

Somalia remains highly vulnerable to drought and the affects of climate change, particularly when exacerbated by conflict and insecurity in the South Central region. While some disaster risk reduction structures are in place across different regions, the capacity of these actors to implement is limited by poor financing and low capacity. The coordination of these structures with both communities and national level early warning systems also remains limited.

# SomReP's Community Based Early Action System in Somalia

## Early Warning Committees

SomReP's disaster risk management approach is grounded in community empowerment. Using a contextualized community based disaster risk management approach developed in Somalia by member agency Oxfam, consortium agencies facilitate local community efforts to establish Early Warning Committees (EWCs) as part of a holistic community led disaster risk management approach.

These community level EWCs are trained and supported by agencies to monitor simple early warning (EW) indicators and develop contingency plans for rapid onset (floods, conflict) and slow onset (drought and climate change) disasters. By linking EW indicators to their contingency plans, EWCs identify when early action is needed, and when to advocate to the implementing agency or government for actions beyond their own resources and capacity.

Further, SomReP links regional early warnings from FSNAU/FEWS NET through radio and SMS systems to aid their decision making process.

## Member Agency Early Warning & Early Action

SomReP agencies monitor three broad areas including food security and livelihoods, health and nutrition, and conflict for early warning signs of slow onset disasters at a district level. Changes in these thematic areas are measured via 'meta indicators', which are comprised of

a number of specific indicators.

Increasing severity of each meta indicator is determined by a phased approach - **Normal, Alert, Alarm** and **Emergency**. Deteriorating meta indicators trigger a menu of targeted early actions underpinned by best practice including Livestock Emergency Guidelines (LEGs),

SPHERE standards and the Somalia WASH cluster guidelines.

SomReP's EWEA system also includes a donor pooled fund to ensure agencies can access immediate early action funding without worrying about traditional delays experienced in the past while mobilizing additional response funds..



## Preliminary Results of Early Warning Early Action Pilot Assessment

In June and July 2014, SomRep agencies piloted the EW/EA model across three regions of Somalia. The pilot assessment examined the usefulness of each early warning indicator collected, the feasibility and the importance of each indicator in monitoring early warning at the local level.

Some highlights of the pilot's findings:

- The importance of communities and civil society taking leadership in monitoring local early warning signs that may get missed in regional early warning systems
- Traditional food security indicators are generally retrospective and can be too time consuming and expensive to carry out on a regular basis
- Monitoring and responding to early warning signs require NGO staff to be trained in new concepts and skills
- Local understanding of markets, seasons and historic context is essential

## Post Gu 2014 Early Actions

Due to late and inadequate rains during the 2014 Gu season, SomRep saw increased stress and heightened needs among the most vulnerable households in some of its operational areas of Badhan, Eyl, and Dangorayo districts in Puntland, and El Barde and Luuq Districts in South-Central Somalia.

By July 2014, using early findings from its pilot assessment, agency rapid assessments and technical reports from FSNAU and FEWS NET, SomRep circulated an early action request to its donor community for early actions in these five districts. Within 7 days this request was fully funded by donors Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), and the Australian Government (DFAT).

With the FEWS NET forecast of improved Deyr Rains in October, early action activities were focused on Hagaa season water crisis (Dangorayo, Badhan and Eyl), and conflict related food security issues (El Barde and Luuq).



### Dangorayo (World Vision)

Activities: Livestock vaccination; cash programming; borehole rehabilitation; water trucking

Households: 700

### Badhan (CARE USA)

Activities: Cash programming; conflict resolution (water & pasture), water trucking

Households: 1500

### Elbarde (ACF)

Activities: Cash programming

Households: 815

### Eyl (ACF)

Activities: Cash programming; livestock vaccination; water trucking

Households: 2240

### Luuq (COOPI)

Activities: Vouchers for work

Households: 1183

**Target Districts:** Badhan, Dangorayo, Eyl, El Barde, Luuq

**Funding Gap Approved:** USD777,791

**For More Information about SomRep's EW/EA System:**

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