

Programme Evaluation Series

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# Evaluation of the Global Network Against Food Crises Partnership Programme

**Annex 3. Somalia country investment brief**

**Project code: GCP/SOM/060/EC**

## Background

1. The project *“Building resilience and promoting durable solutions in Lower Shabelle Region”*, was funded as the country investment of the Global Network against Food Crises (GNAFC) Partnership Programme in Somalia. It had a budget of EUR 4 million (USD 4.7 million) and was implemented in Lower Shabelle region from October 2018 to December 2021. The project was designed to address the chronic food insecurity, malnutrition, and vulnerability of farming communities, particularly in the Lower Shabelle and Bay regions, which have long been affected by conflict, drought, floods, and political instability. The project focused on agricultural recovery, strengthening community governance, improving access to water, and enhancing food security systems through innovative approaches like cash-for-work programs, irrigation rehabilitation and climate-smart agricultural practices. In addition to these interventions, the project sought to strengthen coordination among stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations and local actors, to promote a more integrated approach to food security.

The GNAFC Partnership Programme objectives were to increase the level of coordination and the global governance around food security analyses, promoting a more systematic use of such analyses for strategic planning and coordination of sustainable solutions to food crises in countries and facilitating a more coordinated and effective global responses to food crises. Of the three main components of the project, component 2 consisted on a number of country-level investments implemented in Yemen, Cuba, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Myanmar, the Sahel (Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso), Somalia, South Sudan, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Palestine. These investments aimed at generating knowledge on a set of typologies of crisis as well as effective response options that can be replicated by relevant national, regional and global stakeholders. This is one of them.

## About the evaluation

2. This brief is the product of the country case study conducted for the GNAFC Partnership Programme evaluation. The aim of the overall evaluation was to provide evidence and learning on performance, as well as accountability for results to the European Union funding the programme. The purpose of this country case study was to assess the project’s relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, sustainability, and impact in addressing food insecurity and building resilience in Somalia, as well as identify lessons learned, challenges faced and opportunities for scaling up.
3. The country investment case studies were guided by a shared evaluation framework, ensuring standardization and alignment across the parallel country case studies and facilitated the ability to synthesise findings. Primary data was collected through phone interviews with beneficiaries, community members and local contractors due to the security situation. Additional interviews with FAO stakeholders and implementing partners were also carried out. Secondary data collection and analysis consisted of a review of existing documentary evidence and data, including project document, progress reports, project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data, complaints and feedback mechanism data and learning products.

## What did the project achieve?

4. *Cash for work and cash transfers:* The project distributed over USD 1.5 million in unconditional cash transfers and cash for work (CFW) programmes, benefiting approximately 15 000 households. These activities supported communities in rehabilitating local infrastructure,

including roads and irrigation systems, while also providing families with direct financial support to meet their food needs.

5. *Agricultural inputs and training:* The project provided high-quality seeds, fertilizers, tools and small livestock to 25 000 households. It also offered training in climate-smart agriculture practices, pest management and post-harvest handling. These interventions helped restore agricultural productivity and reduce post-harvest losses.
6. *Water management and infrastructure rehabilitation:* The project rehabilitated over 150 km of irrigation canals and built or repaired 25 water storage and distribution systems. These efforts improved water availability for both agricultural and domestic use, particularly for vulnerable communities in rural areas.
7. *Capacity building for local governance:* Over 300 local government officials, community leaders and extension workers were trained in water governance, sustainable agriculture and conflict-sensitive approaches to resource management. This helped strengthen local governance structures and improve the community's ability to manage resources and resolve conflicts.
8. *Social cohesion and conflict resolution:* The project created spaces for dialogue and cooperation between different ethnic groups and communities, particularly around the management of water resources. This helped reduce tensions and promote greater social cohesion.
9. The project can plausibly be expected to have long-term impacts on increased resilience and food security of beneficiaries but it was too early to undertake a thorough assessment. There was evidence of the project's contribution to intermediate objectives such as i) making farmers less dependent on rain-fed agricultural production by restoring access to irrigation and increasing efficiency; ii) increasing the use of land and mixed farming; and iii) enhancing the capacity of enhancing in terms of formal activities.

## Challenges

10. *Access and operational constraints:* The security situation in Somalia, particularly in rural areas, posed significant challenges for project implementation. Access restrictions, particularly in conflict zones, delayed the delivery of inputs and services, and affected monitoring and evaluation activities. Delays in procurement and supply chain disruptions, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, slowed down the distribution of agricultural inputs and infrastructure materials.
11. *Climatic shocks:* Persistent drought and limited rainfall affected water availability, reducing the effectiveness of rehabilitated canals.
12. *Gender and social inclusion:* While the project made progress in promoting gender equality, there were limitations: Women's participation in decision-making processes, particularly in leadership positions within water management committees, remained limited due to social and cultural barriers. In addition, vulnerable groups such as internally displaced persons (IDPs) and those from minority ethnic communities faced barriers to full participation in project activities, particularly in areas with a history of ethnic conflict.
13. *Sustainability concerns:* While infrastructure such as irrigation canals and water storage systems were rehabilitated, the financial sustainability of these assets remains uncertain without local revenue generation models or continued external support. Despite training efforts, local authorities and community groups still face challenges in managing the rehabilitated

infrastructure effectively without external support. The capacity for long-term governance and resource management remains a major challenge in the region.

## What did we learn?

14. *Integrated approaches to resilience:* The project demonstrated the value of an integrated approach to resilience-building that combines infrastructure rehabilitation, governance strengthening, and livelihood diversification. By addressing multiple drivers of vulnerability, the project created a more comprehensive response to food insecurity and community needs.
15. *The critical role of community engagement:* Engaging communities in dialogue and cooperation, particularly around shared resources like water, was essential in fostering social cohesion and reducing conflicts. Community participation in design and implementation ensured relevance and ownership, although sustained engagement is necessary for long-term success.
16. *The importance of conflict sensitivity:* The project design was informed by a thorough identification of household, youth and women's needs, as well as context and conflict analysis. Conflict-sensitive programming helped address water-related disputes and fostered social cohesion through inclusive governance structures.
17. *The importance of adaptive management:* The project's ability to adapt to changing circumstances, such as shifting security dynamics and climate-related challenges, proved critical to its success. The project put in place a robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system, which generated crucial information for adaptive management, despite some limitations.
18. *Project duration:* The initial 24-month timeframe was insufficient to achieve and sustain all project objectives, necessitating extensions and adjustments. It is critical to design future interventions with longer timelines (e.g., 40 months) to account for delays and ensure comprehensive delivery of outputs and outcomes.

## Next steps

19. *Programmatic approach:* FAO Somalia should strengthen the programmatic approach to rehabilitate infrastructure that improves access to water, as such access is a key driver of production and income. These broadened strategies should thoroughly address i) risk sensitivity (for instance, disaster risk analysis) to not only prevent future interventions from rebuilding risks but in fact to reduce them; and ii) sustainability, such as the capacity and willingness of users to pay or the capacity of water committees to collect fees. Broadened strategies should also consider addressing other constraints such as limited access to credit.
20. *Strengthen governance:* FAO Somalia needs to support water management committees in developing financial mechanisms for infrastructure maintenance and scaling conflict-resolution capacities. FAO Somalia should also continue its work on strengthening the linkages between institutions, such as ministries that govern the use of natural resources and community institutions. Continued support to the government is necessary to build on the capacities strengthened by the project and further increase its legitimacy and capacity to provide services as well as enhance community structures such as water committees and farmer groups.
21. *Build long-term partnerships:* Enhance collaboration with local governments, non-governmental organizations and private sector actors to ensure sustainability and extend project impacts. For example, collaboration with the private sector to secure credit for farmers could be explored. The project benefited from strong programmatic partnerships with other key stakeholders on building

resilience in Somalia. As such, it drew on various infrastructure mapping studies by Somalia's Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU), and it was complementary to and acted in close collaboration with other interventions in the area funded by the European Union and Sweden, which had similar aims but larger geographic coverage. FAO Somalia should continue building these programmatic partnerships.

22. *Focus on gender inclusion:* Implement targeted strategies to enhance women's participation in governance and decision-making processes within community structures. FAO Somalia should extend the successful approach to mainstreaming gender and youth through contractual requirements to other projects and consider other innovations to promote sustainability of mainstreaming beyond the life of the projects. The project's approach to requesting commercial contractors to engage women and youth proved to be rather beneficial for these vulnerable groups by providing them a source of income (cash for work). The approach should be strengthened by including activities to promote long-term changes and ensure sustainability.

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