

**Community Consultation
to inform FAO-WFP-UNICEF Resilience Strategy**



***Dhigtaar
2nd – 3rd October 2012***

Dhigtaar

Dhigtaar was further from Dolow than other consultation sites, a rural area inhabited by pastoralists and agro-pastoralists that non-Somali nationals were asked not to visit on account of security.

Themes that were raised were:

- **Loss of pastoralism** – droughts come closer together and cannot be easily recovered from, so coping mechanisms have been eroded
- **Farming and alternatives livelihoods** – especially petty trade by women
- **Seasonal vulnerability** – especially in terms of water supply
- **Social support** – crucial to local resilience, this includes credit, collectives, welfare payments to vulnerable
- **Social services** – for health and education these do not exist
- **Movement** – this is a key coping mechanism and might be in and out of camps, other districts, across borders

The community laid out their priorities as follows:

1. Food aid
2. Health care for both humans and livestock including capacity building
3. Water sources mainly construction of berkads [covered water pan] and rehabilitation of rainwater catchment pans
4. A 'revolving fund' for small scale businesses like household level trading, domestic handicrafts, tailoring etc
5. A permanent school with trained teachers
6. Training of CHWs and TBAs

This consultation took place in Somali and notes were made by local staff that were intended to be as close as possible to a full English transcript.

Recent shocks

Various respondents

The most recent shock was the drought which caused the death of animals. The remaining livestock were also affected with new diseases we couldn't identify, and many became non-productive in terms of milk. And that drought caused the migration of many pastoralists in to this area...

The pastoralist community here is very vulnerable because of a combination of poverty and food insecurity – they lost their livestock on which they depended, and most of them failed to get any food support.

The drought affected the elderly, pregnant women and lactating mothers the worst, that's because they were relying on the livestock for their nutrition.

We ended up selling the remaining livestock at throwaway prices, and relying on remittances from relatives. People with donkey carts were able to sell firewood and make an income.

In terms of recovering from that drought, probably ten per cent of the families here recovered because they had the means to support themselves: donkey carts, or animals left over from the drought that could be sold to meet immediate needs. Many families left here: camel herders left this place, they moved with their camels to far places where the camels could graze; and some of the pastoralists who lost their herds have moved to riverine places for farming.

If you look at the last ten years, we've had five good years in total and the rest were bad. The last two years were the most severe.

If you look at seasons, it's *Jilaal* and *Hagai* which are the worst in terms of hunger, that's January to March and July to September. *Gu* and *Deyr* are the good seasons of the year because pastoralists depend on rain for both pasture and water.

You ask how much we eat? We eat two meals a day in good times – one morning and one evening – and in bad times we eat just one meal a day, and that food is prioritized for the children and lactating mothers; the rest of the family take what remains.

Preparedness

Various respondents

Seasons can be predicted in different ways. When it rains early we expect a good season. There's a proverb that says, "*The season that comes late will never help the weak*" [*Sanno Xilligeeda Ku Jiiday Xaaskeeda Ma Gaado*] – and that refers to both humans and animals.

As for preparing for the bad season, the camel herders move to far places for grazing, even crossing the borders, and they also sell the weak stock at low prices for immediate family needs.

Population movement is a common response to hard times and it happens to different places including to IDP camps, riverine areas and urban towns. You move to survive, that's the strategy for communities in difficult seasons. Families may split, for example women and children will move to these places and leave behind young men to tend to the remaining livestock. Movement patterns for a family, and who moves, all depends on the abilities of the members of that family.

Social services

Various respondents

There are no health posts here, but there are some trained community health workers and also community animal health workers. Organisations like COOPI, SWELPA, FAO and TROCAIRE trained them.

There was a Quranic school here before the drought but now it's closed.

Social support

Various respondents

We pride ourselves in how we support each other; particularly those who are weak are supported by those living more comfortably. There is a committee in the community that works for the support of those in need, those who are vulnerable. For example weaker families might be provided with milking animals or with donkey carts to collect firewood with.

We have another system of contribution and saving called *ayuto* or *shalongo*, that's what we use to help each other and it's specifically used for female-headed households. We've had this system for many years and it's sustainable.

Assets, livelihoods, market

Various respondents

We have common assets here like the community-owned grazing zone, with boundaries. Only about 20% of the community have small, rain-fed farms, and a lot of people share donkey carts for firewood collection.

As well as livestock rearing, rainfed farming and firewood collection there is casual work for riverine farmers (like cutting grass for animal fodder for sale), that's another way of making income but it depends on seasons.

A few people with livestock remaining can get credit from store owners in towns, if we know them. This credit might cover a maximum of 50kg of dry foods – for example rice, sorghum, sugar – and it's only available to people with some assets like some animals. People receiving credit will pay back in the good season when they're able to sell their stock. Credit can be used as a revolving amount.

We go to Dollow and Bulahawo market on foot or with donkey carts, and we might go individually or alone. There is no public transport. For vulnerable women and elderly people they can only use a donkey carts to go to town and market, or to a health facility.

We get information from markets in three different ways: through mobile phone communication, but this is in emergencies only – for example when we need to know prices for a quick sale – as we keep our credit; through travelers who come back to this village from towns and bring market information; and through brokers in the area or those who commission livestock sales, they bring information on livestock prices.

There are some small enterprises undertaken here. A few women sell basic foods like rice, sugar, salt, kerosene, tea leaves, maize flour etc, and they sell them home to home. What profit these women make can be used to support their family.

Wealth

Various respondents

Wealth in this place is like this. A well off family is one with 6-10 camels and 40 sheep and goats; a middle-income family might have 30/40 goats and 5 cattle; and the least wealthy family in this area might have 10 goats and 2 cattle. Then there are the destitute families, many of these own only one donkey to collect firewoods and fetch water with.

There is a Somali proverb that says, "*One doesn't have to hide his secret discussions from a hungry person*" [Nin Baahan Lagama Shonto] – that means that when someone is hungry they won't even overhear your secret discussion, they are so absorbed by their hunger. In this area some people first need to be supported to satisfy their basic needs such as food, health care for both humans and livestock. Only after that can such people think better and come up with ideas for bettering themselves.

Priorities

Various respondents

These are our priorities:

7. Food aid
8. Health care for both humans and livestock including capacity building
9. Water sources mainly construction of *berkads* [covered water pan] and rehabilitation of rainwater catchment pans
10. A few people in the community need a revolving fund for their small scale businesses like household level trading, domestic handicrafts, tailoring etc
11. A permanent school with trained teachers
12. Training of CHWs and TBAs