



# EWEA: Early Warning Early action technical brief

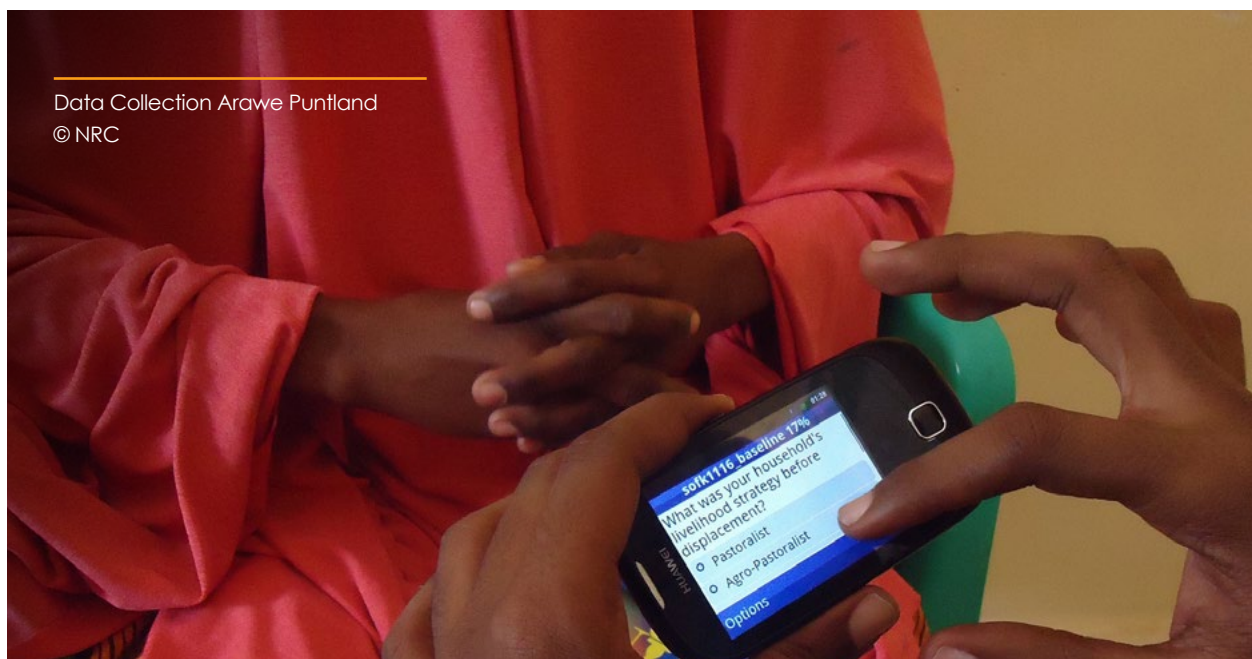
## About BRCiS

The Building Resilient Communities in Somalia (BRCiS) Consortium was created in the aftermath of the 2011 famine which resulted in an estimated 258,000 excess deaths in Somalia. To prevent such mass suffering again, the Consortium focuses on addressing the root causes of communities' vulnerabilities. Committed to a bottom-up model of decision-making, BRCiS thinks beyond emergency response packages. Consortium Members work together to leverage integrated programming models, flexible multi-year funding streams, community participation and ownership structures, and the expertise and resources of local and international organizations. BRCiS programmes are implemented through an area-level approach that seeks to build the resilience of households with a focus on those that are most vulnerable and marginalized. This means that investments are made from a multi-sectoral perspective to generate systemic change and transformational resilience gains. BRCiS has invested significantly in ensuring that programming is driven by the communities, that programming is responsive to changes in the context, and that underlying causes that hinder resilience are addressed. BRCiS has also been at the forefront of adaptive programming, responding to crises in coordination with local authorities and communities. In its eighth year of constant learning, the consortium has evolved to be able to quickly meet emerging needs, putting in place systems and partnerships that are centred in the communities, adaptable, and responsive to the changing context. The Consortium's 5-year vision is the following: "Vulnerable people at the margins of the Somali society are capacitated to engage with and influence their institutions, so that their needs are served in a more inclusive and sustainable way". BRCiS is aiming to be more than a programme and to reflect an approach that engages on the spectrum of resilience in Somalia, pursuing both humanitarian and development approaches. By layering intervention packages,

The Consortium's 5-year vision is the following:  
Vulnerable people at the margins of the Somali society are capacitated to engage with and influence their institutions, so that their needs are served in a more inclusive and sustainable way

BRCiS can deliver on multiple mandates at once, being a mechanism that links projects together to achieve results. This vision therefore presents an overall approach to programming, that can be delivered through multiple projects and partnerships. BRCiS will continue delivering effective humanitarian programming that reduces the severity of humanitarian needs but will also ensure that long-term resilience and moving people out of chronic poverty is directly addressed. These approaches are not mutually exclusive and can be achieved through layering interventions as well as through a holistic programme.

Today, BRCiS comprises nine national and international NGO members and leverages the technical expertise and resources of each partner. BRCiS operates in 34 districts of Somalia and is present in all Federal Member States. More than 450 communities have participated in BRCiS resilience projects since 2013. The multiprogramme, multidonor consortium has implemented over \$230 million of funded activities since 2013. BRCiS' efficient scale-up capacity allowed to reach more than 70,000 people at the height of the 2018 food security and nutrition crisis, contributing significantly to averting the risk of famine. In 2020, the consortium helped more than 26,000 households with cash assistance to mitigate the economic impacts of COVID-19. Results derived from annual surveys demonstrate substantial progress towards improving food security, access to water and community participation, indicating enhanced levels of community recovery in BRCiS operational areas. This trend is shown by advances in standard food security indicators, including the average household dietary index and the food consumption score, with the latter growing from 41.49 to 52.94 on average since the baseline data collection. Similarly, seasonal surveys are showing promising results with the number of households reporting poor food consumption scores having decreased from 24% to 7% between July 2019 and February 2020.





## Introduction

### Why Early Warning and Early Action?

Many households and communities have high exposure and vulnerability to shocks such as drought in Somalia, flood, desert locusts and conflict. For the most vulnerable areas, just one or two minor consecutive shocks can result in people engaging in negative coping strategies, becoming displaced or facing the risk of undernutrition. Observing early warnings of imminent shocks and taking anticipatory action and early action in response can limit the immediate negative impacts on communities.

Early warning Early Action (EWEA) mitigates the risk of vulnerable people adopting extreme negative coping strategies or becoming dependent on aid. Additionally, a growing body of evidence demonstrates that early action is far more cost-effective than late humanitarian response. Two recent studies on early response and disaster resilience in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia showed that even if there is uncertainty that a high-magnitude drought will occur, the cost difference is so significant that investing in early action measures is still more cost-effective.<sup>1,2</sup>

### BRCiS EWEA Conceptual Framework

Through EWEA, the Building Resilient Communities in Somalia (BRCiS Consortium) consortium aims to enhance the resilience of communities and local systems to attain self-reliance and reduce the need for humanitarian response. Achieving overall resilience requires building EWEA capacities at the community and district levels and among the humanitarian stakeholders in the BRCiS Consortium. The programme strives to maintain inclusivity, fairness and equitability by directly engaging local resources and the most vulnerable and marginalised communities.

Early warning early action (EWEA) response mitigates the risk of vulnerable people adopting extreme negative coping strategies or becoming dependent on aid.

This engagement empowers Somali people to develop their own capacities to anticipate, respond to, absorb, recover from and mitigate minor shocks and stresses without undermining their ability, to move out of poverty.

The community-centred EWEA, and generally BRCiS approach starts by considering communities' risk perceptions and capacities to anticipate, prepare for and respond to shocks. Engagement with the communities then balances short-term response to sudden emergencies with long-term resilience-building interventions against recurring stresses that drive such emergencies. Implementing early action measures helps guard against impending shocks, and early response addresses short-term humanitarian needs while protecting overarching resilience gains. This shock-responsive adaptive programming approach cuts across the humanitarian development spectrum and depends on the Real-Time Risk Monitoring (RTRM) system, the strong level of community engagement and the flexible early action funding mechanisms that have until now been supported by the FCDO through a crisis modifier fund allocated to scale up early action responses when shocks occur.



Old woman © NRC

## BRCiS Community RTRM System

### Rationale

Prior to 2019, BRCiS consortium members did not have a single primary data collection mechanism for making informed decisions and bridging the gap between the national-level early warning systems and community information needs. Although there was substantive commonality between the members' individual systems, key challenges remained.

Data inaccuracy, access limitations, a lack of thresholds and inadequate resources for data collection resulted in non-standardised information, preventing comparison across areas and weakening strategic decision-making. Even when receiving timely information on the ground, Members often had to wait for validation from national sources such as the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU) to make decisions, and the resources for anticipatory action were very limited.

In an effort to improve data collection and collaborative decision-making among members, BRCiS proposed during the inception phase (2018–2022) the community RTRM system. The implementation of this system aimed to harmonise members' internal early warning systems, encourage joint periodic shock monitoring and analysis, increase information value through synergy and adopt a common approach to the triggering of early action and the Crisis Modifier.

### Indicators, Thresholds and Red-Flagging

In line with the above objectives, BRCiS designed the RTRM system to provide timely, community-generated shock information on key trends to trigger early actions in BRCiS operational areas. For this purpose, consortium technical specialists used community feedback to determine the most common shocks, stresses and coping strategies. This method resulted in the selection of a set of qualitative and quantitative indicators to warn of shocks (i.e., drought, flood, desert locusts, acute watery diarrhoea/cholera outbreaks and conflict) and another set to capture the impacts of these shocks (i.e., livelihood assets, market dynamics, migration and household coping strategies).

BRCiS technical staff and community leaders collectively developed three indicator thresholds to measure the level of emergency when experiencing a shock: "normal", "alert" and "alarm". Each indicator falls under one of these thresholds, changing as the severity of the event grows or weakens. BRCiS uses the indicators and thresholds to adopt a harmonised triggering approach of early action called "red-flagging". A target area receives a "red flag" either when a sudden, large shock such as flooding or a cyclone occurs or when too many of the indicators for that area pass the alert and alarm thresholds; either 1 alarm or 1 alert for the indicators of shock impact + 3 in alarm/ 2 alarm and 3 in alert for the indicators of shock impact.

A network of livelihood specialists helped BRCiS develop these threshold ranges for the various market indicators. Community committee members reviewed and refined these market items based on historical knowledge in their respective areas. Finally, the team used FSNAU price data to mitigate potential community biases.



| BRCIS community-based real-time monitoring indicators and thresholds summary |   | Normal   | Alert                              | Alarm                                      |   |
|--|---|--|------------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Shock occurrence indicators</b>   |   |  |                                    |  |   |
| <b>1) Climate and non-climate shocks</b>                                     | Perception of rainfall performance **                         | Comparison with expected normal rainfall at this time of the year (during rainy seasons)               | Average/normal                     | Poor/below average                         | No rain recorded  |
|  | Flash flood events  | Presence or not of flash flood events  | No                                 |  | Yes   |
|  | River levels  | Comparison with expected normal river levels at this time of the year                                  | Normal for this time of the season | Below normal/above normal                  | River completely dry/overflowing or at high risk of overflowing |
|  | Acute watery diarrhoea/suspected cholera cases under 5        | Number of acute watery diarrhoea/suspected cholera (reference health facility)                         | 0 cases                            | 1 case where not previously reported       | Double the average number of cases from the previous two weeks  |
|  | Armed/clan conflict events causing displacement of population | Presence of conflict events (armed/clan) resulting in displacement                                     | No population displacement         | Yes, households displaced < 50             | Yes, households displaced > 50                                  |
|  | Locust infestation  | Presence of locust hoppers/swarms in the area  | No locust presence                 | Yes, <2 days in community/neighbouring     | Yes, >2 days in community/neighbouring                          |
| <b>Shock impact indicators</b>   |   |  |                                    |  |   |
| <b>2) Livelihoods</b>  | Primary water source condition                                | Observation of the status of the largest rainwater catchment in the area (at the end of rainy seasons) | More than half-full (75%) or full  | Half-full (50%) at the end of rainy season | Less than half-full (25%)/empty                                 |
|  | Crops condition   | Estimated proportion of crops wilted, affected by pests or flooded per hectare in the area             | None or little impact              | Less than 1/3 of crops                     | More than 1/3 of crops  |
|  | Pasture condition (cattle/shoats/camels)                      | Comparison with normal pasture conditions at this time of the year (during and after rainy seasons)    | Normal/good replenishment          | Below normal                               | No replenishment yet /depleted                                  |
|  |   | Observation of cattle/shoats/camels in the area  | Normal                             | Weak                                       | Extremely weak  |
|  | Animal mortality  | Community-based animal health workers' observation of cattle/shoats/camels in the area                 | Normal animal mortality            | Higher than normal animal mortality        | Very high animal mortality/uncontrolled outbreak                |

| BRCIS community-based real-time monitoring indicators and thresholds summary | Normal | Alert | Alarm |
|--|--------|-------|-------|
|--|--------|-------|-------|

**Shock impact indicators**

|                  |   |  |  |
|------------------|---|--|--|
| <b>3) Market</b> | Price of water (SOS/20 l jerrycan)                    | Thresholds based on area-level market prices during the dry season | Area-level thresholds defined in Annex sheet |
|                  | Price of maize (SOS/kg)                               |  |  |
|                  | Price of shorghum (SOS/kg)                            |  |  |
|                  | Price of local goat (SOS/head) Price of rice (SOS/kg) |  |  |
|                  | Average daily wage                                    |  |  |

| Coping strategies of vulnerable households | Thresholds defined in Annex sheet | Up to 0-2 alert coping strategies | 3 or more alert coping strategies | At least 1-2 alarm coping strategy |
|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|

**\*\*Secondary data for triangulation**

|                  |   |  |                           |  |  |
|------------------|---|--|---------------------------|--|--|
| <b>4) Coping</b> | % Cumulative rainfall (mm) — Climate Hazards Group InfraRed Precipitation with Station data | % decrease below mean 2,000-2,018 on same date (FSNAU thresholds)  | <20% decrease from mean   | 20-60% decrease from mean              | >60% decrease from mean                          |
|                  | Dry spell >15 days  | Presence of a dry spell longer than 15 days (during rainy seasons) | Yes, out of rainy seasons | Yes, at start and end of rainy seasons | Yes, at peak of rainy seasons (May and November) |



Food distribution © NRC

## Learnings on the Indicators, Thresholds and Red-Flagging

During the BRCiS EWEA review workshop in June 2021, a survey among programme managers and early warning Focal Points (FPs) in the field showed that 80% consider the indicators appropriate for monitoring the occurrence of the most common shocks and their effects. Participants in the workshop confirmed that they are using the indicators on livelihood, market prices, health, population movement and coping capacities to monitor the compound effects of multiple shocks.

For example, drought, flood, conflict and COVID-19 restrictions all led to changes in market prices, population movements and coping capacities. Considering that most target communities have experienced consecutive or overlapping shocks during 2019–2021, having a set of indicators that captures the compound effect of multiple shocks rather than individual effects of isolated shocks is more effective for real-time shock monitoring.

Trends during the past two years demonstrate the sensitivity of the EWEA system to the performance of rain-fed crop harvests. However in August 2020, after the good Gu 2020 rains from April to June, the normal seasonal trend would have seen a decrease in the number of red-flagged districts from April to July; however, observations revealed a steady increase. This trend can be attributed to the impact of COVID-19 on markets and the lower-than-normal Gu season yields due to desert locust infestation.

Additionally, between 25 and 31 districts were red-flagged in the 2021 dry Jilal season months of February and March, compared to 8–11 red-flagged districts in the same period of 2020. This change reflects the impacts of several factors, including:

- The below-average precipitation during the 2021 Deyr rainy season from October to December
- Desert locusts affecting rain-fed crops harvest yield in January
- Abnormally high temperatures in January and February
- The continued impact of COVID-19;

## Methodological Approach

RTRM FPs collect shock data monthly according to a collectively agreed protocol. These FPs are consortium NGO staff assigned to cover a selected area based on their networks and understanding of local contexts. To start, the FPs were instructed to select a small group of communities (two to three) that they deemed representative of the larger population (10–12 locations) in their operation area. Within this group, FPs are then required to contact two to four community actors and integrate the shock information into a single data submission per area.

Early response and resilience building measures should be the overwhelming priority response to disasters. These two categories of response are not mutually exclusive



The FPs conduct interviews with these actors either in person during regular NGO field visits or via phone if the situation does not permit in-person interactions. They then submit and store the data via the Ona data collection platform. The RTRM data has been collected monthly since November 2019 in 33 districts across Somalia, with the involvement of approximately 100 community leaders and over 30 project staff. After receiving the submissions, the data is automatically cleaned and visualised to summarise the key shock indicators and their threshold categories (alarm, alert or normal). The data is available on a publicly accessible, interactive RTRM and early action dashboard,<sup>3</sup> providing an overview of red-flagged districts and underlying shock trends.

### Learnings on the Methodological Approach

Facilitated by BRCiS consortium technical staff, the RTRM system undergoes annual reviews through a combination of user surveys and qualitative workshop sessions where RTRM stakeholders can further unpack their reflections. A summary of the analysis showed that, while most users deemed the data collection cost and time-effective, there were still several areas for improvement. Positive opinions of the survey revealed that nine in ten respondents considered the enumeration time entirely adequate, with the average duration spent on filling the shock questionnaire being 45 minutes. Further, most RTRM FPs reported no or minimal operational costs in addition to recurring travel costs in case the interview was conducted during field visits.

Regarding the main bottlenecks, literacy was cited as a key issue hindering community leaders from further participating in digital data collection. Half of all respondents stated that digital shock questionnaires would be too complex to handle if they were filled exclusively by community leaders, and translation to Somali language was recommended. Looking at the survey results, the biases stemming from community-led enumeration also became evident. Around half of survey respondents emphasised that community leaders taking part in RTRM are well aware that reported shock data may influence the probability of receiving future humanitarian assistance in their area. This context highlights the critical importance of trust-building and data triangulation in community-based early warning systems. The challenge looking forward will be determining the best methods for strengthening existing accountability structures and verification approaches to mitigate these biases.

### Decision-Making and Early Action Planning

For every red-flagged area, the respective early warning FPs contextualise the situation, interpret the indicators, triangulate with secondary data sources and propose relevant early action measures. This triangulation stage compares community and area-level data with data at a higher geographical level (e.g., livelihood zone or district), contextualising the situation with the broader situation in other regions of Somalia.



Young woman with her baby  
© NRC

This process includes the analysis of satellite-derived climate data and information from sources. Further third-party secondary data – such as the FSNAU EWEA dashboard, WHO-Early Warning, Alert and Response Network data or other NGO assessments – also contribute to the triangulation process. District-level and macro-level data provide an evidence base to triangulate subjective information from communities, local authorities or field staff.

This range of data enables the consortium to take evidence-based and timely decisions with the early warning FPs – triggering early action immediately, planning for additional assessments or continuing to monitor the situation closely. The BRCiS early action triggering protocol is not exclusively dependent on monitoring data, which has its own limitations, but also acknowledges the value of experienced field staff in the analysis of complex factors affecting resilience and the historical background of previous shocks.

### Learnings on the Early Action Triggering Protocol

RTRM data at the community level is collected by the fifth of every month on Ona and uploaded to the BRCiS dashboard by the tenth of the month. Members then have until the seventeenth of the month to upload EWEA forms to the dashboard with the analysis of the red-flagged areas. Therefore, for slow-onset shocks captured by the BRCiS RTRM, early action decision-triggering is possible within 12 days after the data collection.

In practice, however, delays in RTRM data collection in the field and in the submission of EWEA forms have been frequent due to operational challenges and other factors. The average timeline between the submission of RTRM data and the submission of early action recommendations in the EWEA forms was 25 days. The consortium aims to reduce this time-lapse to a maximum of 12 days. For sudden shocks such as riverine or flash floods, the time for programme managers to trigger early response was limited to one to four days following the rapid assessment of impacts within communities.

The programme teams of BRCiS members propose the type and scale of early action in consultation with the area-level early warning FPs. The harmonised shock frameworks for drought and flood developed by BRCiS serve as guides for members to select from a range of early action or early response interventions. In those districts where BRCiS piloted shock-responsive safety nets, district committees were established to review the RTRM data and evaluate the need for early action or response, including the scale-up of the safety net cash transfers. The committees comprised community resilience committee (CRC) representatives, district authority representatives, including the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management (MOHADM), and BRCiS members' early warning FPs.

These are a predictable cash transfer, targeting the most vulnerable in communities on a longer term basis, in BRCiS case 24 months, when shocks occur, this amounts are scaled up, for a short period, to cushion the vulnerable family during the shock.

### District EWEA Committees Learnings

EWEA committees in the safety net target districts comprise various stakeholders, including local authority staff, CRC members, BRCiS members' staff and, in some cases, staff from other local implementing partners. Key challenges included high expectations for incentives from selected individuals for their participation in the committees, as well as difficulty ensuring inclusivity and representation within the groups – i.e., of gender or clan minorities.

Despite these challenges, it is critical to note that the trained committees are important EWEA governance players. They review the available early warning information, communicate with relevant authorities at the district level to advocate actions and support community members' plans to mitigate impending shocks.

To reduce bias in decision-making, the committees need to triangulate the BRCiS RTRM data with findings from other assessments in the target locations. An important source is the Office of the District Humanitarian Affairs, which also shares a monthly factsheet about the district humanitarian situation. Context and trend analysis is critical to ensure that the proposed locations for safety net scale-up are indeed the right locations.

However, triangulation with secondary sources and the final decision on the scale-up of the safety net is primarily taken by BRCiS members' programme teams. Moving forward, there is a need to improve access of the committees to the sources of information used for triangulation and enable a more participatory decision-making process.



## BRCiS Early Action Mechanisms: Supporting Vulnerable Communities in Mitigating the Impacts of Shocks on Livelihoods, Wellbeing and Coping Capacities

### Overview of the Mechanisms that Enabled Early Action and Response

#### i) Community-based early action and response

Throughout the programme, BRCiS members have invested significant time and human resources in community engagement processes. Members developed relationships and trust with communities, enhancing ownership of community action plans and building the capacity of CRCs. CRCs trained on community-based EWEA played leading roles in monitoring early warning indicators at the community level, coordinating with district authorities and NGOs, identifying the most appropriate interventions and implementing early action and early response activities.

In general, CRCs have a good understanding of individual community dynamics, coping capacities and vulnerable groups. Women, persons with specific needs and members from marginalised and minority groups have representation in most CRCs, contributing to ensuring equitable participation in the decision-making meetings and programme activities. CRCs also took the lead in community mobilisation, beneficiary targeting, community-level verification and dissemination of feedback and complaint mechanisms.

Since November 2018, communities co-funded early action BRCiS interventions with a total USD 29,480 and implemented USD 15,325 of their own community-led preparedness and early action measures. Most of the community-led early actions related to desert locust awareness and control, as well as flood preparedness and response. BRCiS programme inputs often supported community-led early action; for example, in the early stages of riverine floods in Bardere district during the 2019 Deyr season, the provision of empty sandbags to CRCs allowed community members to build embankments around the village and protect households and livelihood assets from floodwater damage.



Shelter Halabokad Puntland  
© NRC

### Value for Money of Community-Led Early Action: Example of Community Water Vouchers

In the absence of water price regulation policy and enforcement, the price of water from wells and boreholes is abnormally high during the dry season. Those vulnerable households that cannot afford safe water often significantly reduce consumption or turn to unprotected water sources. This water insecurity during the dry seasons is further exacerbated by drought conditions after one or two consecutive below-average rainy seasons. In such instances, surface waters deplete earlier than usual, and poor harvests and pasture further diminish households' purchasing power.

In this situation, a temporal subsidy of community water vouchers for safe water access during the last two months of the dry season is an early action measure to reduce the risk of disease outbreak, malnutrition and displacement in search of humanitarian assistance and water. This approach is an appropriate alternative to the water trucking method in areas where there is a functional market of private water vendors already serving communities without permanent water sources. The main characteristics of community

water vouchers are the leveraging of existing market capacity and the leading role of CRCs in community in price negotiation, supervision of water delivery through community vouchers and monitoring of water quantity and quality.

Concern Worldwide implemented the community water voucher approach in the five target communities in Belet Hawa from 26 August to 31 October 2019. The vouchers targeted 1,465 households (10,255 individuals) with 8 litres per day for 65 days. The activity had a total cost of USD 57,035, representing a total investment of USD 0.09 per person served per day, USD 0.013 per litre or USD 0.262 per 20-litre jerry can, which was below the price range of USD 0.3–0.5 per jerry can paid in the target remote communities at the time. The value for money (VFM) analysis showed how the community-based negotiation approach led to savings of USD 20,173 compared to the classic water trucking modality. Communities also reported a significant reduction in diarrhoea cases, likely due to water chlorination and increased water availability for hygiene purposes.

#### ii) **Swift activation and approval of early action and response contingency budget lines within consortium members' budgets**

Flexible and adaptive funding mechanisms facilitated by FCDO and the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) were major enablers of BRCiS early action and response during 2018–2021. Consortium members that included contingency budget lines from the initial stages of project design were able to swiftly implement early action and response to small-scale shocks. The time between triggering and requesting approval from FCDO to the start of implementation would often be under five days, enabling very timely interventions to sudden shocks. Communities, CRCs and BRCiS members were often the first respondents.

BRCiS members were also able to revise their budgets according to community priorities and emerging shocks. When the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting livelihood crisis hit Somalia in April 2020, BRCiS members were able to realign the community action plans immediately with communities. This action transferred USD 4.5 million from long-term resilience-building interventions to prevention and early action in order to mitigate the impact on health and livelihoods.

### iii) Crisis Modifier for intervening at scale in the window of opportunity before a crisis unfolds

The BRCiS Crisis Modifier is a ring-fenced contingency fund of GBP 4 million built into the FCDO Somalia Humanitarian and Resilience Programme multi-year grant (2018–2022). The purpose of the Crisis Modifier is to fund early action measures and early response to reduce the probability of a shock evolving in a humanitarian crisis, acting as a vital bridge until a humanitarian response can mobilise.

For example, during 2019 large-scale flooding along the Shabelle and Juba rivers, the consortium mobilised the Crisis Modifier to ensure an immediate lifesaving response in the first five days from the flood event (17–21 October). Emergency funding from the FCDO Internal Risk Facility (IRF) then enabled a larger emergency and recovery response one month after the flood events took place. The Crisis Modifier was also scaled up with an additional GBP 2.5 million for COVID-19 preparedness and mitigation in May 2020.

#### Crisis Modifier Mobilisation for a Large-Scale Flooding Event

According to preliminary observations from the Beletweyne flood task force the Shabelle River, flooding in 2019 was the worst on record. During the onset of the floods, BRCiS implemented about GBP 400,000 in drought response interventions in several districts through the Crisis Modifier. This effort was later scaled up through FCDO's Internal Risk Facility (IRF) to augment the response interventions coverage. FCDO generously allocated GBP 3 million towards this scale-up.

Funding had already been allocated to members in various locations, mainly for drought and locust infestation response. With the forecasting and onset of the floods in Beletweyne, it became apparent that the response plan needed to be revised to ensure that BRCiS members also supported the growing humanitarian needs in the area. Members (mainly in Hiraan and Bakool regions) shared the outlook of BRCiS communities that were affected or at risk of being affected by the floods. This information was then escalated to the donor, with the IRF proposal being updated.

The proposal was quickly reviewed and approved, allowing for critical and timely support through BRCiS to the displaced communities. As the first responders, BRCiS reached 800 households with multipurpose cash assistance, bolstering their purchasing power in the relocation area. The consortium supported another 1,850 households with non-food items and shelter, as well as 350 emergency latrines. Lastly, emergency water rucking reached 3,000 households to curtail the high risk of acute watery diarrhoea common in such situations.

Through the BRCiS EWEA system, the Save the Children International and Cesvi teams were able to red-flag and respond to emerging needs quickly in Beletweyne in 2019. Thanks to the flexibility within the system, the prevailing response was adapted to accommodate the rising humanitarian context in Hiraan. This enabled BRCiS to be the first responder in Beletweyne – a true testament to the value of the EWEA system, the Crisis Modifier and IRF funding mechanisms availed by FCDO.

BRCiS activated the Crisis Modifier on a needs basis, considering the priorities in all BRCiS red-flagged areas and the overall amount available in the Crisis Modifier. No specific Crisis Modifier budget was earmarked per year or per BRCiS member, and there was no limitation to the number of times BRCiS members could apply to the Crisis Modifier. A committee of BRCiS Technical Working Group representatives evaluated every request using the following criteria:

- The area must be red-flagged by BRCiS RTRM or by a sudden shock
- There must be justification for the need to scale up early action
- The proposed early action must be appropriate
- There should be a lack of humanitarian stakeholders in the area

Value-for-money analysis was not compulsory for Crisis Modifier proposal evaluation, but the consortium aims to introduce basic value-for-money analysis in future Crisis Modifier allocation processes. Generally, panellists considered the evidence available from both primary (BRCiS RTRM and assessments) and secondary data sources to appraise the likely impact of one or multiple shocks on humanitarian outcomes. The final decisions taken by the panel required approval from the donor.



| Crisis Modifier allocations from January 2019 to July 2021 |  |  |  |                 |
|--|--|--|--|-----------------|
| May-19   | Drought early action   | Multi Purpose Cash Assistance, safety net scale-up, fodder distribution, etc.  | Baidoa, Bardhere, Belethawa, Borama, Burtinle, Dhusamareb, Elbarde, Erigavo, Galdogob, Galkayo, Kahda, Lascsanood, Mataban and Wajid | GBP 3,834,226   |
| Oct-19   | Flood early response   | Hygiene kit and water purification tablet distribution, scale-up of hygiene awareness, etc.  | Beletwyene   | GBP 400,000     |
| May-20   | COVID-19 preparedness and mitigation                             | Infection prevention and control COVID-19 protocols in health facilities and mobile clinics, distribution of personal protective equipment, community awareness on COVID-19 prevention, installation of handwashing facilities, etc. | All BRCiS locations  | GBP 2.5 million |
| Oct-20   | Conflict response  | Multi Purpose Cash Assistance, safety net scale-up and community water vouchers  | Dinsoor  | GBP 144,000     |
| Jan-21   | Multiple shocks: desert locusts, drought conditions and conflict | Multipurpose cash-based assistance, safety net scale-up, etc.  | Adado, Afmadow, Afmadow Bardere, Bay, Beledweyn, Dhusamareb, Hudur, Ishkubahan, Lascanood, Mataban and Wanlaweyn                     | GBP 500,000     |



#### iv) Shock-responsive safety net

The BRCiS consortium implemented a 24-month shock-responsive safety net pilot with FCDO and ECHO funding in 16 districts across Somalia. The BRCiS safety net was one of the shock-responsive safety net pilots funded by the Directorate-General of ECHO, along with Save the Children in Somaliland (Hargeisa) and the Urban Safety Net programme with the Danish Refugee Council and the World Food Programme in Banadir District. The aim of these pilots was to provide shock-responsive cash transfers, as well as promote learning on government-led safety nets in the future. The pilots' learning component included coordination mechanisms with government and other agencies, comparing existing sets of EWEA triggers, social accountability systems, feedback mechanisms and protocols for beneficiary registration systems and cash delivery systems used by different actors. The safety net targeted 31 48 HHs extremely vulnerable households, consisting of pastoralists (43%), urban poor (26%), agro-pastoralists (21%), riverine communities (6%) and urban internally displaced persons (5%). The monthly transfer amount scaled up from USD 20 to USD 40 – an early action measure through the same BRCiS early action triggering mechanisms described above. The number of target households also scaled up during the COVID-19 livelihood crisis in May 2020. BRCiS considers the shock-responsive scalability of the safety net one of the early action and response measures.

Although baseline and endline surveys showed a slight increase in the average number of shocks that safety net beneficiaries experienced, the households registered remarkable improvement in food security and shock recovery indicators. Additionally, the proportion of households with poor food consumption scores decreased from 14% to 4%. In relation to shock recovery, the proportion of households that were able to recover from past shocks to the same level as before or higher increased from 38% to 48%. Households that think they will recover from future shocks to the same level as before or higher increased from 37% to 50%.



*Qori-lugid view for the buuls that destroyed completely*  
© NRC

## Summary of BRCiS EWEA: Learning Points and Next Steps

### 1. Community leaders can play a greater role in humanitarian response.

In contexts characterised by conflict and state fragility, community leaders are usually among the first responders in times of crisis. However, their role in humanitarian information and early warning systems, as well as disaster risk planning and anticipatory action, remains largely underutilised. Despite some of the inherent biases of community-led information gathering, proper training and multilayered validation checks can help communities contribute meaningfully to the collection of timely shock data and local anticipatory action. Further, community-generated insights have considerable potential to contribute to high-level aggregated early warning systems at the national level by providing an area-based local perspective validated by the very communities who are affected by shocks.

### 2. Risk monitoring has proved highly effective and essential for future programmes.

BRCiS members used community-based RTRM and secondary data sources to trigger small-scale early action, scale up shock-responsive safety nets and activate the Crisis Modifier. Members also used the data generated for context analysis, informing organisational contingency plans and mobilising resources for unfolding crises. Therefore, BRCiS considers risk monitoring essential at the operational level for future resilience programme design. BRCiS aims to sustain RTRM digital data collection through CRCs and expand access of the BRCiS RTRM dashboard to district authorities, MOHADM and other humanitarian actors.

### 3. Indicators should be capable of capturing the compound effects of multiple shocks.

Somali communities were affected by consecutive and overlapping shocks of different intensities during 2019–2021, including drought, floods, desert locusts, conflict and the COVID-19 crisis. Therefore, having a set of indicators that captures the compound effect of multiple shocks, rather than indicators defined for individual isolated shocks, was a more appropriate system to appraise the complexity of multiple shock impacts. The sensitivity of the BRCiS RTRM system was sufficient to red-flag areas affected by one or more shocks since November 2019. As more data is generated over time, further analysis of the correlation with shocks will be valuable for informing the adaptation of indicators, thresholds and predictive scenarios.



Shelter Halabokad Puntland  
© NRC

#### 4. Vulnerable communities need improved access to climate and weather information.

As communities remain the first responders to shocks, preparedness and early action at the household and community levels can significantly reduce risk to life and livelihood assets. However, target communities have limited access to early warning information resources and largely depend on alerts from authorities and NGOs. In the last year of the programme, BRCiS is expanding communities' direct access to the Somalia Water and Land Information Management Digniin app, which provides flood and other weather hazard alerts to subscribers via SMS. BRCiS is also training community early warning FPs in CRCs to use mobile networks to access basic short-term satellite rainfall forecasts and to report shock events through the BRCiS RTRM system. BRCiS will monitor the use of these systems and, if the pilot model proves sustainable, adopt and scale up this two-way community-based early warning approach in its strategy in 2022.

#### 5. Local-level EWEA committees strengthen local capacities to prepare for and respond to shocks.

The pilot district-level EWEA committees in BRCiS shock-responsive safety net locations met monthly, enabling two-way communication of early warning information and early action coordination. The committees, comprising CRC members and district authority representatives, analysed BRCiS RTRM data, reviewed secondary data, disseminated key information and discussed relevant early actions, including the scale-up of shock-responsive safety nets. This model strengthened local capacities and promoted district-level EWEA governance mechanisms for early warning information sharing, contingency planning and early action coordination between communities and district authorities.

#### 6. Flexible and shock-responsive funding mechanisms successfully improved food security.

Flexible and shock-responsive funding mechanisms clearly enabled timely early action against slow-onset shocks and early response to sudden shocks. These mechanisms included:

- The immediate mobilisation of the early action contingency budget for small-scale shocks
- Vertical and horizontal scale-up of shock-responsive safety nets
- Activation of the Crisis Modifier for large-scale shocks

Crisis Modifier interventions led to remarkable improvements in the food security status of households, although the impact was unevenly distributed across the districts. Thanks to the safety net transfers, more households effectively recovered from the



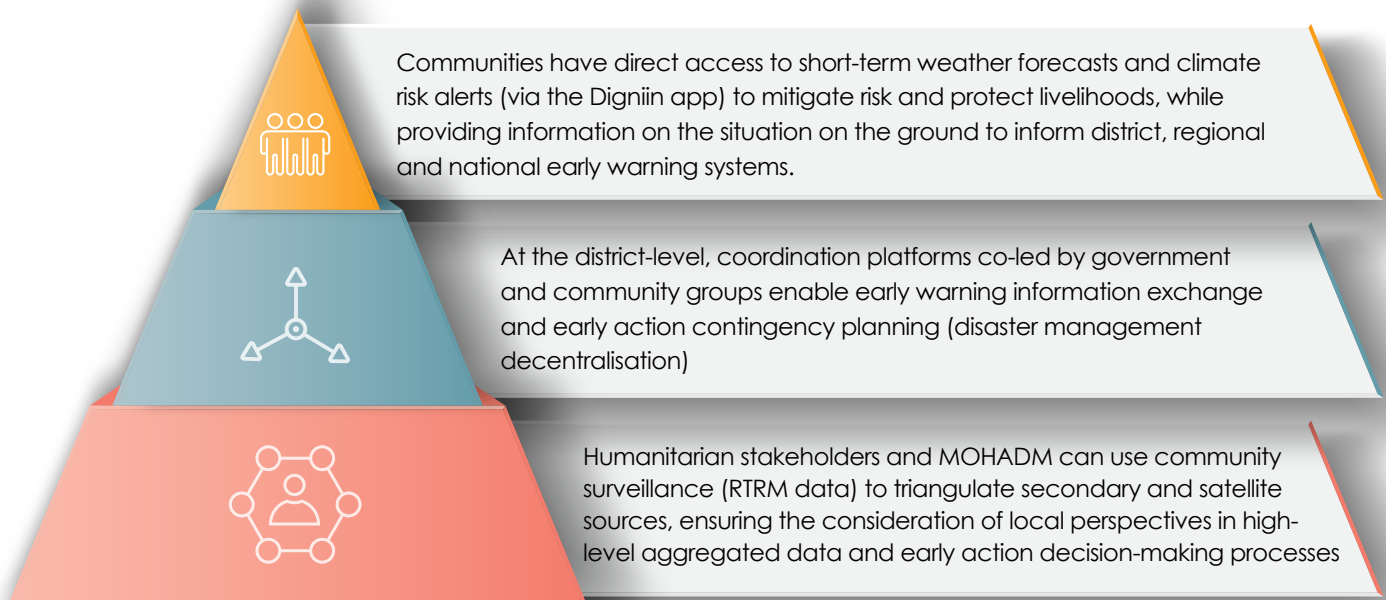
CONTRASTO, Marco Gualazzini / BRCiS

economic impacts of COVID-19, and 10 out of 15 districts recorded an increase in the food security score between June and December 2020. In November 2020, less than 3% of safety net households were food-insecure.

### 7. Communities highly valued and engaged with the BRCiS integrated approach.

Trained CRCs co-led the design and implementation of early actions at the community level, mobilising community members to prepare and respond to shocks such as riverine floods. Between the start of the programme in September 2018 and March 2021, community contributions to early action and response had an estimated monetary value of USD 44,805 – a clear indicator of communities' engagement and ownership of early action interventions. In line with BRCiS community-led resilience approach, strengthening CRC capacities in community-based early action and integrating early action and preparedness in community resilience action plans will remain a priority in upcoming resilience programming.

#### BRCiS early warning and early action vision (2022–2026)



1. Cabot Venton, C., Fitzgibbon, C., Shiterek, T., Coulter, L., and Dooley, O., 2012. The Economics of Early Response and Disaster Resilience: Lessons from Kenya and Ethiopia. UKaid Department for International Development.
2. Cabot Venton, C., 2018, Economics of Resilience to Drought in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. Report prepared for the USAID Center for Resilience.
3. BRCiS Real-time risk monitoring and early action dashboard: [https://brcis.shinyapps.io/EWEA\\_dashboard/](https://brcis.shinyapps.io/EWEA_dashboard/)