

A photograph of a man in a blue and orange striped shirt and patterned wrap leading a caravan of camels. The camels are carrying large yellow plastic jerrycans on their backs. The landscape is arid with sparse, dry trees and a herd of white goats in the background. The ground is reddish-brown dirt.

Midline evaluation summary



BRCiS

Building Resilient Communities in Somalia

Building Resilient Communities in Somalia (BRCiS) is a humanitarian consortium that holistically supports Somali communities in developing their resilience to shocks and their ability to move out of poverty.

Since the consortium's creation in 2013, it has evolved to meet emerging needs quickly, establishing systems and partnerships that centre on communities and adapt to the changing context. Committed to a bottom-up model of decision-making, BRCiS thinks beyond emergency response packages, but maintains a strong focus on those that are most vulnerable and marginalized. BRCiS Members leverage integrated programming models, flexible multi-year funding streams, community structures, and the expertise and resources of local and international organizations to generate systemic change and transformational resilience gains.

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BACKGROUND

The Building Resilient Communities in Somalia (BRCiS) Consortium was established in 2013 with the objective of improving the resilience of vulnerable communities and households in Somalia. BRCiS programming utilises a multi-year, flexible, and adaptable modality to respond to both short-term humanitarian needs and improve long-term resilience. Programming focuses on reinforcing social accountability and natural resource management capacities, nurturing economic opportunities, and enabling access to and utilisation of basic services through innovative approaches that strengthen existing services and adapt to learning, changing contexts, and demand-driven priorities.

The project under review is the FCDO funded BRCiS 2. It started in September 2018 and ended in March 2022. It was implemented in 407 communities across 34 districts of Somalia. The purpose of the midline evaluation is to provide clear and understandable feedback to practitioners in order to inform resilience programming in Somalia. The midline will be the last large quantitative survey in BRCiS 2. Due to the ongoing drought in Somalia, a full endline survey will not be conducted as the beneficiaries and their livelihoods are greatly affected.

The BRCiS Consortium collected the data used in this analysis. Four rounds of quantitative surveys have been completed to date, the baseline (Jun-Sep 2019), two smaller seasonal surveys (Jan-Feb 2020 / Sep-Dec 2020), and the midline (Feb-May 2021). Each covered a wide range of topics from demographic information to aspirations, with the baseline and midline being more robust and deeper than the seasonal surveys. The initial sample size was 7,513 during the baseline survey, which was reduced by roughly half for the midline due to constraints on movement and data collection imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

BRCiS target communities are divided into participant and area communities. Participant communities benefit from both household-level and community-level interventions while area communities benefit from community-level interventions only – with the exception of crisis modifier and IRF responses, through which they also benefit from household interventions. Household-level interventions include: cash transfers, business grants and business-related trainings, savings groups, among others. Community-level interventions include construction of water and sanitation facilities, health and nutrition programs. The sampling is randomized at community level, which means that in both participant and area communities, some of the survey respondents have not directly benefited from the project interventions. When the analysis of the midline wants to highlight the impact of the project on direct beneficiaries, it is highlighted as such.

Programming focuses on reinforcing social accountability and natural resource management capacities, nurturing economic opportunities, and enabling access to and utilisation of basic services through innovative approaches that strengthen existing services and adapt to learning, changing contexts, and demand-driven priorities.

KEY FINDINGS

Overall resilience

Evidence indicates that greater progress resilience capacities gains were obtained within the participant cohorts, except for the urban zones, where participant Resilience Capacity Indices (RCIs) were consistently lower than those of the area communities.

Food Consumption Scores (FCS) increased for all communities from baseline to midline. FCS disaggregated by livelihood zone shows varying changes. Urban and agropastoral respondents from both area and participant respondents experienced on average an increase in the FCS score from baseline to midline. However, in the pastoral areas, FCS has declined slightly for participant communities but increased significantly for area communities. Area FCS has declined in riverine/coastal fisheries and is significantly lower than the slightly increased participant FCS.



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WASH

Overall, BRCiS WASH programming seemed to have a largely positive impact on WASH outcomes, indicating that the interventions were, at least partly, effective.

Access to water increased, especially during the dry season, among communities that received WASH interventions. Participant communities registered 20 percentage point (pp) increase in the proportion of households who had access to water for domestic use during the dry season and 10pp increase in the proportion of households with access to water for productive use during the dry season between baseline and midline.

With regards to the time taken to fetch water (walking and queuing), both participant and area communities saw large reductions in the time it took households to access water (of any kind) during the dry season. Both groups saw reductions of close to 15 minutes.

At midline, participant households who received BRCiS programming washed their hands with better methods (using soap or ash in addition to water), were more likely to use latrines, had a greater use of valid disposal methods for children's faeces, and had better access to water during all seasons, compared to households who did not receive BRCiS WASH programming.

Shocks and recovery

The majority of households surveyed reported that they will rely on NGO aid to feed their families in the event of a future shock. Notably, households in participant communities reported a greater rate of relying on NGO support in the event of future shocks than households in area communities did.

Ultimately, households in participant communities had a 5 percent higher self-reported recovery rating than did area community households. However, the findings vary dramatically by the type of shock households experienced.

There is significant positive differences for those experiencing clan conflict, COVID-19, disease outbreaks and increased food prices. Conversely, negative differences are observed for those experiencing malnutrition, depletion of pasture and flooding. We see virtually the same pattern in urban areas, except for depletion of pasture, as this shock is not common enough to warrant inclusion in the urban model.

Early Action

Households who received early action response funded by the BRCiS crisis modifier experienced a lesser reduction in livestock ownership compared to households who received only standard BRCiS programming. Additionally, households receiving crisis modifier programming had a reduction in casual labour as a main income source, while the comparison group had an increase. When viewed together these two findings seem to suggest a difference in coping strategies being employed by the two groups. Households receiving only standard BRCiS interventions seemed to have had to sell livestock or increase their reliance on casual labour in order to cope with shocks. Households who received crisis-modifier programming did not seem to employ these same strategies when exposed to shocks. Instead, they were able to respond to shocks without selling assets and while maintaining more stable forms for employment.

Coping strategies

Overall, there has been no significant change in rCSI, with absolute values for the participant communities' respondents staying the same, while the area communities' respondents registered a very slight gain. Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) is the weighted index of frequency of use of five coping strategies, that can be repeatedly implemented on any day of a food security crisis, regardless of livelihood type. The riverine zones are the only areas with a significant improvement (decline) in rCSI for both cohorts. In the other livelihood zones, there are mainly non-significant changes between baseline and endline, except



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for the Agropastoral livelihood zone, where the rank order has changed, with area communities returning a nonsignificant higher rCSI at midline.

The riverine livelihood zone is the only one with a significant improvement (decline) in rCSI for both cohorts. In the other groups, there are mainly non-significant changes between baseline and midline.

Social Capital and Collective Action

Analysis showed an increase in the number of groups households could turn to in a time of urgent need both inside and outside their own community. Interestingly, the analysis also showed a reduction in activities carried out by communities to benefit the wider community. One potential explanation for these seemingly contradictory findings is that worsening shocks, and a belief that one's network is less able to help, have led households to broaden their network. This seems to show a net positive impact of BRCiS social capital and collective action programming. Households in participant communities who directly benefited from household level interventions have an overall wider (larger network), but shallower (less support received) network compared to households in the same communities who did not receive interventions.

Confidence in support networks in times of crisis improved significantly for both area and participant community respondents in all but the urban livelihood zone, where only the participant community respondents improved significantly while the area community respondents declined significantly.

Health and Nutrition

The analysis of shocks recovery data showed that BRCiS had a positive impact on participants' ability to recover from health-related shocks. This may be due to investments in health outcomes such as community health workers or the general nutrition-based approach to programming.

Household well-being

The ability to cover basic needs improves or stays the same across all livelihood zones except for riverine where there is a non-statistically significant decline in perceptions of ability to meet basic needs.

Female-Headed Households

In regards to livestock ownership, female-headed households saw a positive programmatic impact and male-headed households did not.

Female-headed households also saw a positive programmatic impact on the number of groups inside of their community who would help them if they were in urgent need. Male-headed households saw no change in this outcome.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Differential Impact of Shocks:

Analysis showed that participant communities' households struggle to recover from climate and agriculture related shocks. These shocks were also the most common among households in the agro-pastoral and pastoral livelihood zones. Additional resources should be focused on these livelihood

Water Access:

Significant and consistent positive programmatic impacts were seen in increasing beneficiary access to water during all seasons. Despite this, access to water remains a challenge for many communities with long access times and low rates of access reported. BRCiS programming should continue to build from its success and continue investments in water infrastructure programming.

Crisis Modifier Programming:

BRCiS should increase the use and scope of early action and early response. Limited evaluation of the programmatic effect showed positive results on changing coping strategies among recipient households. Investing additional resources into this area of programming could see a large return on investment.

Shocks Data:

Additional data should be collected on the shocks that households and communities experienced during programme implementation. While a full range of shock related data was collected during the baseline survey, only a much smaller sub-set was gathered during the midline survey. Collecting additional shocks data, ideally with a longer recall period, would allow for more detailed analysis. This in turn would allow for a more thorough understanding of the coping mechanisms employed by households and the impact of BRCiS programming on shock response.

Shocks Data:

More qualitative surveys should be done to complement the quantitative surveys.

Understanding Marginalisation:

BRCiS programming and evaluations should include a more robust analysis of marginalisation. This should include identification of these groups using traditional factors of marginalisation (context specific clan affiliation, disability, displacement status) as well as socio-economic measures for an individual's capacity to engage with society. Ultimately, this analysis should inform not only future evaluations but targeting of programming as well.

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