INNOVATIVE RESPONSE
ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF WORKING IN SOMALIA
WHAT ARE ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF WORKING?

Alternative ways of working (AWW) is a unique approach used to implement programmes in Lower and Middle Juba. This approach shifts focus from life-saving assistance to recovery by supporting improvement of livelihoods. It creates a link between the communities and humanitarian organizations and individuals willing to support them. It’s a method to provide services in hard to reach areas due to insecurity, so communities negotiate for their access and implement their priority projects.

This new approach uses indigenous knowledge and works within the community to ensure that the support is in line with the socio-political and cultural context of the community. Prior to this, there had been no combined effort to link the diaspora and the community together, although each individual was helping their families and to some extent, their villages. AWW aims to increase access beyond the secure areas in Somalia, especially for nomadic pastoralists, and form basis for cost effective and conflict sensitive programming with positive and long lasting impact.

WHY THE ALTERNATIVE APPROACH?

During the two decades of war in Somalia, local and international organizations struggled to deliver aid in many parts of the country because there was limited access to areas that required support. Where these organizations failed, traditional community institutions and structures that have always been present in Somali society remained intact, and grew in strength to respond to the urgent needs faced by their people. Though informal, these institutions grew to manage complex situations and developed coping strategies that supported many people and helped them rebuild their livelihoods. These traditional institutions were able to negotiate with whatever administration was in power at the time to deliver necessary support to their communities. In addition, they were able to facilitate the aspects of implementation, monitoring and accountability at different levels, and provide the insurance cover to avert the risk of funds misappropriations. They were always at hand and within reach.
This clarification provided the opportunity for Oxfam and WASDA to find a way to ensure that support reached those in need. Based on this study and employing a community-based approach, a pilot livelihoods project was implemented in 2008 and was very successful in addressing the needs of the community in Lower and Middle Juba. An assessment of the effectiveness of the pilot project revealed that the project had a more positive impact on the ability of communities to secure basic necessities when compared to other approaches of delivering support. These positive results led to the implementation of this three-year Community Driven Livelihood and Food Security Initiative in 2010, funded by the European Commission and supported by the diaspora community, WASDA and Oxfam.

In September 2009, Somalia was facing its worst Humanitarian Crisis in eighteen years, with half of the population or an estimated 3.64 million people in need of emergency livelihood and life-saving assistance. At the same time, conflict was escalating in the same areas that were recording the greatest problems of food access and main nutrition. In Lower and Middle Juba, poor seasonal Gu rainfall contributed to poor rangeland conditions and low water availability in pastoral and agro-pastoral areas. This prompted early out-migration of livestock to areas around the Juba river, reducing milk availability and access to the affected areas.

Conflicts over resources were frequent and provision of humanitarian assistance was becoming more and more difficult as a result of increased insecurity. These risks reduced the flow of humanitarian assistance to those in dire need even as the population of those in need rose. Reduced social and economic activities, inadequate inputs for agriculture as well as lack of support for sustained livelihood practices resulted in a lack of livelihoods for those living there. Based on the challenges faced in delivering support to communities in need in South Central Somalia, Oxfam and WASDA developed a unique approach to ensure that support reached those in need.

HISTORY OF AWW
In July 2008, Oxfam conducted a study in Lower and Middle Juba to examine clan dynamics and the role that clans play within Somali communities. The research analysed the methods used by clans to maintain peace among themselves and with their neighbours, how clan conflicts are resolved, and the different groups that exist within the communities.

This study brought to light the importance of the clan, the role of elders in the community and the use of the traditional justice system or ‘Xeer’ to resolve disputes. It highlighted the existence of local committees in the villages. The council of elders comprised of ‘Nabad-doons’ (heads of a sub-clan) and the critical role played in traditional clan lawyers.

In addition, it took into consideration the role of the sub-clan, which acts as the insurance for compensation as well as role played by the trusted individuals, business community, religious leaders and diaspora community members.

OXFAM’S AND WASDA’S WORK IN SOMALIA
Oxfam has worked in Somalia for over 40 years to rebuild sustainable livelihoods, provide humanitarian assistance, advocate for education for all and promote active citizenship and gender justice. Oxfam uses an integrated one programme approach to implementing projects, working across emergency response and development, as well as campaigns to achieve a greater impact.

Oxfam and WASDA have worked together since 2006 to deliver programmes in Lower and Middle Juba that provide sustained support to farmers, clean water and hygiene and sanitation support, and cash transfer programmes to improve access to basic necessities.

WASDA engages communities and other stakeholders in creating strategic partnerships for sustainable management of the environment, water resources, livelihoods, education and public health services in the Horn of Africa.
DELIVERY OF THE PROGRAMME

The aim of this programme was to increase opportunities to members of the targeted communities to secure the basic necessities of life using existing community structures and institutions. The success of this programme relied on the knowledge and capability of the community to prioritise the areas that needed support and deliver this support using structures already in place. This resulted in improved food production, infrastructure for storage and marketing for 250,000 people, and strengthened the capacity of community based institutions and structures to design and implement community driven food security and livelihoods initiatives. The entire project involved five main stages:

1. Project preparatory stage
Communities were gathered together and took part in the project participatory planning process where the needs, opportunities and priorities of the community were identified. This was a weeklong event that brought together all members of the community to discuss ideas, available resources, gender roles, wealth status and capability for income generation. The end result was a detailed and locally owned Community Action Plans (CAPs) for all 30 communities. The CAPs were based on community priorities at that time but changed over time depending on the context.

2. Community based project design
At this stage, communities identified committees to represent their needs and implement the CAPs. Therefore, the committee was selected by the ‘bulsho’ (the residents) and the local authority, ensuring transparency of the process. The committees were involved in the assessment, planning and design of the project and actively participated in its implementation and monitoring.

Committees in all locations were sensitized and mobilised to form three independent arms including Project Implementation Committees (PICs), Project Assurance Committees (PACs) and Project Monitoring Committees (PMCs) headed by trusted community members who include the sub-clan leader or ‘Nabad-dooin’ and the district leader or ‘Gudumiye’.

3. Screening of Community Action Plans and projects
The CAPs generated by the communities were screened by Oxfam and WASDA to ensure they were achievable in line with the funds available.

4. Training of committees
The community committees were involved in various training activities that improved their common understanding of the AWW process. They were also informed of the need to establish all the necessary structures to support the successful implementation of community projects. Training activities focused on general management, financial management, project planning and implementation, and also networking to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes to manage and sustain projects.

5. Project planning and implementation stage
After the CAPs were approved, funds were transferred and disbursed through the local traditional money transfer system known as ‘Hawala’. The Project Assurance Committees then released the funds to the Project Implementation Committees, as per each activity and schedule as defined in the CAPs.
ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF WORKING WORK

Rehabilitation of the Afmadow Livestock Market

Afmadow market is one of the biggest livestock markets in Lower Juba. Livestock traders travel from Garissa, Baidoa and Garowe to buy livestock from there. An average of 100-150 cattle, 200 goats and 40 camels arrive at the market each week to be traded. The market was ill equipped, as it had no loading ramp, shade, fence or sanitation facilities. Afmadow community prioritised the rehabilitation of this market. In the second year of the project, the entire market was revamped. Trader market stalls were constructed, a loading ramp introduced and two latrine facilities refurbished. The rehabilitation and reopening of this market resulted in increased employment opportunities, as was evident with the emergence of brokers, tea vendors, labourers and money changers, known as ‘sarifle’. Over 23,000 people have benefitted from the rehabilitation of the market.

Restocking of Goat Herds

Fourteen villages in Lower Juba prioritised the need to restock their dwindling pastoralist herds with breeding goats. This provided an opportunity for them to return to their traditional pastoralist way of life, as they had relocated to urban areas. Over 485 pastoralist families benefitted from this, receiving 10 goats each, with 80 of them leaving their adopted urban areas. During the drought, those that received livestock used them for meat or sold them to buy other necessities, such as food.

Crop production and agriculture

Construction of water distribution points, bush clearing and ploughing were conducted to promote production and irrigation to benefit 15 farming groups along the Juba River. Most of the farms had overgrown bushes, that were cleared and cultivated using tractors and ox drawn ploughs. Furthermore, farmers developed irrigation structures on their farms. Sowing for their first crop took place in April 2011, which resulted in a series of bumper harvests.

Capacity Building

Capacity building in line with traditional community structures allowed 90 community groups to gain and improve their knowledge. Community members learned valuable management, negotiation, monitoring and financial management skills. The communities in the project areas practiced knowledge and information sharing, and these activities were appreciated as a critical component of the project.

Support to Farmers

Eight communities identified agriculture as an area that needed support, as it is a source of income and nourishment. Farmers received water pumps and farm tools. 463 farming families each received a hoe, a panga or ‘machete’, ploughing tool or ‘kawaba’, an axe, a spade, a harrowing tool, a file for sharpening them and a water pump. In addition, farmers on 190 farms received 4,800 kilograms of maize, simsim and sorghum. All these farm inputs were purchased from local business owners to boost local markets. The farmers were also trained on indigenous pest control methods using locally available materials such as extracts from specific plants and trees, the most common being ‘ananio’.

As a result of these inputs, farmers were able to irrigate their farms using the supplied water pumps thus increasing their food production. Additionally, the farmers were able to access credit facilities from local traders in Jilib. Mohamed Dhubow, one of the farmers who benefitted from this support, stated, “Standing crops to the creditor, are like insurance for the traders in Jilib. Once traders see you with a standing crop, they know you will be able to repay their credit easily.”

Improved Water Supply

Three villages identified lack of access to clean water as a problem that should be addressed. As a result, one replacement borehole and two wells were drilled in the village of Diff and increased water availability to over 43,000 people and 1500 animals, per day. Access to clean water contributed to improved human and livestock health, saved the community members significant amounts of money previously spent to purchase water, and reduced the amount of time spent by travelling long distances to collect water.

Income Generating Activities (IGAs)

• Donkey carts and donkeys were distributed in Lower and Middle Juba in line with the community action plans. These have several uses, including transport and delivery of water, firewood, grass, and construction materials. They can also be used to transport personnel, and provided a new source of income. 396 families received both a donkey and a cart.
• Over 290 small scale traders received $500 to purchase necessary items to boost their businesses. These included tea sellers and kiosk owners.
• In Qoqani town, four women and youth groups, each with ten members, received $5,000 each as initial capital to open a butchery. They were all already involved in the butchery business in the town, but this support improved their access to quality meat and allowed them to work more efficiently. The high trade in wild game meat in Qoqani town has significantly reduced, due to the increased supply of beef, and easy access to the market. Local trade in livestock increased due to the number of willing buyers in Qoqani market.
• Twenty female tailors from Qoqani received $400 each to purchase sewing machines and increase their opportunities to make more money, and therefore improve their businesses
• Ensuring that the environment was not neglected in the process, 108 women participated in cash for work activities for three months, by planting and watering 200 trees. After realising that this could be a way to improve the environment in the long run and to make money, the women formed a group and started a tree nursery.

Previous page: Construction of new market stalls as part of the cash for work programme. These stalls created a clean and secure place for traders to sell their goods.
Protection and promotion of income generation capabilities can be achieved by reducing vulnerability and improving resilience. Livelihoods are strengthened in the long run if a favourable environment is created to protect household assets, promote individual or community initiative and create choice. This is possible by ensuring programmes improve the earning capacity of those they support, investigate potential for diversified income sources and provided an enabling environment to creating opportunities and promote entrepreneurship.

The AWW fosters community participation, cohesiveness and a collective spirit for communities to undertake activities that are geared towards their own development. This is a very strong indicator that this approach will promote sustainability of the gains made by projects.

The community based approaches used to select project committees built on existing community structures that enhanced transparency for community based development initiatives. With the ending of the famine and scaling down of humanitarian interventions in the area, learning from this can be useful in future programming, especially in South Central Somalia.

The AWW model is conceived and perceived by other humanitarian agencies in the area as the most viable approach to respond to a humanitarian situation in a conflict prone area – this is evident by the study and replication of this project by other organisations.

Project implementation by communities is possible, and can be successful. Trust among community members still exists.

Community participation is key in delivering any sustainable programmes, as they have an intimate understanding of their needs and capabilities. The community knows what kind of response suits them and they are key in determining who the most vulnerable are, and the type of response that is most suitable in their community.

The project created a sense of empowerment and ownership. Abdikadir Osman, of the Tabta Project Monitoring Committee said, “What we have learned, is that we can do many things for ourselves. It has made us learn, collect information about prices, compare prices and negotiate. Basically it has opened our minds.”

There was an enhanced ability to reach communities in areas where access was not always guaranteed.

Aid diversion was reduced, because community involvement opened up trust that ensured that support provided, reached those it was intended to reach. The transparency of the process encouraged dialogue and communication between all those involved.

The project helped entire communities by restoring their dignity and pride as well as being able to assist other members of the community and extended family members.

Wider consultation is essential in designing and implementing a successful programme. Understanding and acceptance is important to allow a proactive community driven approach to meet priority needs. These include other NGOs, the community, religious leaders and business leaders.

Above: Completed market stalls in Lower Juba
FATUMA FACES LIFE WITH PASSION AND OPTIMISM

Fatuma Salah, a mother of three in her mid-50s, lives in Janabdalla, a small village in Southern Somalia, several miles from the town of Afmadow. On the outside, Fatuma presents a tough exterior, but behind the facade is a woman who has seen the worst of the droughts that have plagued Somalia over the last two decades.

Fatuma and her husband had a flourishing flock of goats in their predominantly pastoralist community. From this flock; Fatuma could comfortably provide food for her relatively small family. Even with the recurrent droughts in the area, Fatuma was always able to salvage a few of her goats and once the drought was over, she could grow her flock again. Things however changed with the drought in 2011, because the drought was worse than what they were used to and the rains had completely failed. Fatuma’s options were few, she watched helplessly as her goats died one by one. Out of a flock of 65 goats, she was left with only two. “It was painful to watch my remaining goats grow weaker as my children cried with hunger” she recalls.

With few options left, Fatuma, decided to trek to Dobley several miles away. The trip offered a new lease of life when all her children were enrolled at a local hospital in their Outpatient Therapeutic Programme for malnourished children. Hospital records indicated that her children were suffering from severe acute malnutrition, a near death condition. Having no income and pregnant with her last child, Fatuma had no option but to depend on this emergency relief programme to feed her children.

Immediately after the rains started, she migrated to back Janabdalla, hoping to rebuild her life again. On her return, Fatuma heard about the alternative ways of working project. She explained her economic situation to the elders and was considered and approved for a restocking project.

Fatuma received ten goats from the project and today, her flock has grown to 14 goats. Fatuma explains how one of her neighbours, Muktar, saw his goats increase from 10 to 18 in the same period. In Janabdalla, almost all households reported selling at least two of their goats mainly to purchase food for the household during the difficult periods. Having three goats that had calved, Fatuma noticed that her neighbour and young children were facing difficulty in buying milk. She decided to offer her neighbour one litre of milk daily, for a period of three months. She explains, “My neighbour was coming every morning and evening to milk one of my goats for a period of three months, getting two cups of milk in the morning and another two cups in the evening.”
CONCLUSION

Somalia is one of the most challenging places in the world to deliver humanitarian assistance; the conflict has left many communities hard to reach. Alternative ways of working are a great way to ensure that support reaches those who need it. This is ensured by the involvement of the community in all stages of the programme cycle, as they are the only ones that fully understand the complex dynamics of their context and what needs to be done to meet those needs. Interviewed community members confirmed that the greatest achievements of the project were obtained when all the committees were involved in one way or another in the project’s management.

Limited accessibility is a reality in Lower and Middle Juba and more research needs to be conducted to discover even more innovative approaches to reach people there. Recurrent droughts, floods and conflicts are also a reality in Lower and Middle Juba. With such projects having fairly long timelines, there is the need to factor in flexibility and mainstream community driven Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) plans in future programme design.

The success of this project demonstrates how thinking differently and using innovative ideas can provide alternatives to respond in a complex and dynamic context like Somalia. It also shows how partnerships between the private sector, the diaspora and the community can devise new and improved ways of working.

Trying out new ideas is likely to raise a number of challenges, but therein lies the opportunity and potential to change the reach of the project, the level of involvement of communities we are supporting, and most importantly contribute to sustained impacts and greater empowerment within communities.

Above: Donkey cart being used to collect water in Middle Juba.