

EMPOWERING THE VULNERABLE COMMUNITIS TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES: **CASE STUDY OF SELF HELP GROUPS IN SOUTH-CENTRAL SOMALIA**



The DFID funded programme Building Resilient Communities in Somalia (BRCiS II) aims to support and accompany vulnerable Somali communities and systems on their path to restoring and strengthening their resilience to shocks and stresses. Supporting Self Help Groups (SHGs) and Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) has become a component of work under BRCiS, and Concern Worldwide commissioned The Share Trust –to develop a scalable plan for investing in the SHG ecosystem in Somalia by 1) Developing a systems level plan for scaling SHGs in Somalia; and 2) Adapting and scaling the SHG digital platform, developed by Code Innovation, to help scale demand driven SHG growth and facilitation, as well as track and support SHGs as they scale. This case study presented here relate the experience of two women enrolled in the new SHG formed in the urban poor community of Sahan and the agro-pastoral community of Qaranri in Belet Hawa, recently affected by drought and locust infestation in 2019.

CONTEXT

Based on an adapted MYRDA model from India, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) provide supportive social networks, personal savings, credit access, and business development for groups of 10-20 women. The activity offers technical trainings, numerous follow-ups, mentoring sessions, and daily literacy classes over nine months. Throughout the process women are empowered to start their own businesses. This platform generates income, diversifies household revenue streams, increases purchasing power, and builds resistance to local shocks and disasters. Beyond their impact on livelihoods, Self Help Groups also promote women empowerment and social equity. The SHG ecosystem in Somalia/Somaliland is large. Recent research in Somalia/Somaliland and the East Africa region emphasizes the need for livelihoods that are diverse in their risk profiles, highly nuanced to the context, as well as connected to other livelihood zones and resource bases. Therefore, livelihoods diversification is important for resilience because if some livelihood activities are harshly affected by a shock, there is still household income and food potential through other sources, thereby reducing households' vulnerability in the face of shocks

ESTABLISHING AND SUPPORTING SELF HELP GROUPS IN SOUTH-CENTRAL SOMALIA

Supporting the establishment and consolidation of Self Help Groups and Cluster level associations is a core component of Concern's approach to household and community resilience and strategic for the achievement of BRCiS programme outcome 3.3 in which households have access to credit and savings to invest in income-generating activities and serve as a cushion during future shocks. In December 2017, the first SHG Cluster Level Association (CLA) was formed in Mogadishu consisting of 20 representatives from 10 SHGs. Since December 2019, 37 new Self Help Groups have been established under BRCiS DFID II programme in 27 communities including 14 SHGs in urban areas of Mogadishu and 23 SHGs in rural areas of Bardere, Belet Hawa, Borama, Afgoye and Wanlaweyn.

The approach to the establishment of SHGs is to engage the wider community in the concept of SHGs in through community gatherings (before Covid-19), mobilized by the Community Resilience Committees (CRC). The CRC members are involved in the beneficiary targeting process, which is then followed by the verification of the vulnerability selection criteria by the project staff.

A total of two Self Help Groups have already completed the first three training modules on wide range of skills including business development and entrepreneurship. They have also completed 9 months of literacy and numeracy classes to be able to do simple calculations and read and write to perform documentations. Furthermore, fifteen SHGs passed successfully the performance review required to receive the first instalment of the Self Help Group cash injection of 1,500 USD to boost saving and loan capacity. Among these are the Naruuro SHGs in Sahan village, Yaqshid district and Baxsan SHG in Qaranri village of Belet Hawa. The members have already began using these loans to start different kinds of small business to earn and pay for their basic household expenditures such as food, rent, water, electricity and school fees, as well as pay the debt burden from the past.

LESSONS LEARNT FOR FUTURE SELF HELP PROGRAMMING:

- During the community mobilization, it was found that limited time is available to women due to their daily workload in rural communities for instance communities Qaranri. Child care, daily meal preparation, fire wood, water fetching, milking and animal keeping are among the top workloads. This resulted a longer community mobilization and establishment processes in rural areas which required greater engagement from CRCs and field staff.
- The poverty level of the community and the high vulnerability of the selected women group is another challenge to initiate the group savings whereby each member is required to contribute one dollar per week. However, after the training session on the Concept of SHG, good number of woman are motivated to contribute to the group savings and pool funds for loans.

*Published by
Abdikarim Ali, BRCiS NRC Communication and advocacy coordinator*