

## Policy Brief

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# Barriers to Effective Implementation of Climate Adaptation Plans in Somalia

By Mohamed Mire

### Highlights:

- Climate-induced shocks have affected an estimated 8.2 million people (or over 50% of population) in Somalia, including a staggering 6.6 million with critical food insecurity conditions.
- Implementation of government-led climate adaptation plans has been undermined by a lack of formal instruments on climate change management and limited coordination capacities within the relevant mechanisms at various governance levels.
- There's an urgent need to strengthen planning and coordination capacities of relevant mechanisms in climate change to provide sound leadership for implementation of climate adaptation plans.

### Background

Ranked as the World's second most vulnerable country to the effects of climate change<sup>1</sup>, Somalia suffers unprecedented multidimensional climate-induced shocks amid persistent instability and economic crisis, despite contributing less than one per cent (0.03) to global greenhouse gases.<sup>2</sup> These crises include a looming multiyear drought, which has been the most protracted and intense drought in four decades. This has been exacerbated by devastating seasonal flooding in some parts of the country, which has augmented food and nutrition insecurity, and unsafe displacement.<sup>3</sup> Besides the devastating hunger and seasonal floods, Somalia is grappling with a range of systemic gaps in implementation of climate adaptation plans.

These limitations include limited political stability, inadequate formal instruments, and insufficient coordination capacities, to cite a few. As a result, these crises present an array of risks to an already deepening state of vulnerability to climate change, considering Somalia's enormous dependence on climate-sensitive agriculture and pastoralism as bedrock for economic growth. To this end, this briefing examines existing structural barriers to effective implementation of national adaptation plans in Somalia and provides a set of context-tailored policy considerations to tackle the same.

## Widespread desertification

Amid the protracted armed conflict, high poverty rate, absence of renewable energy sources and lack of effective environmental regulatory mechanisms in Somalia, unsustainable deforestation for charcoal production has maintained an upward trajectory in the past couple of decades, due to its high demand for energy consumption not just in Somalia but in some high-income countries within the Middle East. The most recent update notes that Somalia has lost a staggering 8.2 million trees in just a six-year span from 2011 through 2017.<sup>4</sup>

The insurgency group, Al-Qaida-Affiliated Alshabab which was controlling southern parts of the country has accrued roughly \$10 million within the referenced period through illicit charcoal export to allegedly some countries in the Middle East, violating the UN resolution 2036 of 2012.<sup>5</sup> Charcoal export from Somalia, however, has recently deaccelerated following Al-Qaida-Affiliated Alshabab's loss of seaports in southern parts of Somalia and strict enforcement of UN resolution 2036 of 2012 by the Federal Government of Somalia and Federal Member States.<sup>6</sup>

It's argued that a combination of heavy dependence on natural resources for energy such as firewood, drastic logging of trees, and dwindling size of Somalia's forest cover which remains just 10%, drives high-frequent droughts and a failure of Somalia's rivers to absorb seasonal flooding from neighbouring Ethiopian highlands.<sup>7</sup> This makes it difficult for the most vulnerable populations to cope with changing patterns of climate, which had and continues to constitute a range of threats to their livelihoods and resilience that deeply rely on climate-sensitive agriculture and pastoralism.

## High-frequent droughts

Recurring droughts remain one of the most overlapping crises confronting Somalia's peace-building and socioeconomic progress after nearly a

three-decade-long violent conflict and extreme poverty.

An unprecedented drought has devastated a staggering 8.2 million people (or over half of the population) including roughly 6.6 million people who have been affected by acute food insecurity, as in February 2023.<sup>8</sup> Further, 1.8 million children below five, are projected to suffer acute malnutrition by late December while 478,000 are already in severe conditions.<sup>9</sup>

As one of the World's most vulnerable countries to climate shocks, Somalia, since the 1990s, has recorded over 30 climate-driven events. These include 12 droughts and 19 flood incidents, representing more than three times the number of climate-related disasters that the country had suffered in a twenty-year period from 1970 to 1990.<sup>10</sup>

## Devastating floodings

Devastating floods have frequently hit high-risk flood settings in Somalia disrupting livelihoods, economic assets, public health, and education, to name a few. In May this year, heavy floods hit Beletweyne, a district situated in Hirshabele State of Somalia, wreaking havoc on 468,000 people including 247,000 people who fled their homes, after seasonal rains and heavy downpours from Ethiopia's highlands resulted in the Shabele river in Somalia's southern region to burst its banks.<sup>11</sup>

In late 2019, similar seasonal rains resulted in heavy flooding in Beletweyne with an aggravating burden, affecting over 547,000 people including 370,000 people who had been displaced from their homes. This flooding further destroyed agro-pastoral farms and livestock whose economic contributions remain a lifeline to local communities as it plays a catalytic role in Somalia's economic growth.<sup>12</sup>

Somalia, however, faces a range of limitations to tackle climate-induced floodings and their effects on socioeconomic recovery.

These challenges include but are not limited to, a lack of effective disaster risk reduction mechanisms and a limited capacity to provide adequate support to disaster-affected people. These constraints aggravate the dire risks of already looming drought conditions across many parts of the country.

### **Data generation and dissemination**

Access to high-quality data provides the basis for evidence-informed planning, sound coordination and implementation of conflict-sensitive adaptation plans. Despite its importance, the responsible parties constituted to address effects of changing climate are facing a broad set of barriers in compiling high-quality data on existing climate-induced events.

The Federal Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, for instance, lacks technical capacity to gather and monitor weather patterns, neither is it able to predict changes in seasonal rainfall.<sup>13</sup> The Federal Government of Somalia, however, counts on updated climate-related datasets provided by its external partners including Somalia Water and Land Information Management - SWALIM, whose rainfall stations within many regions of the country provide timely information. Local communities, including pastoralists and farmers, however, find it difficult to grasp their updates as its often communicated in English.

Evidence shows that the absence of institutional frameworks on weather monitoring could weaken designing and implementation of climate adaptation plans in Somalia a country that has been devastated by changing climate after violent conflicts and poverty.<sup>14</sup>

### **Legislative and Institutional Arrangements**

Regulatory instruments for climate change management lay the basis for oversight leadership, coordination architecture and approaches for planning and implementing climate adaptation plans.

Despite its relevance, as evidence shows, Somalia lacks a binding legislative instrument for climate change management that enables coherent planning, implementation and coordination of climate risk response measures at the different structures of governance such as Federal and State institutions.

The federal government of Somalia has, however, introduced a set of ad-hoc coordination mechanisms at the Federal level. These include Ministerial Climate Coordination Committee whose work has been retarded by limited guiding instruments, inadequate coordination and cooperation between the Federal government of Somalia and some State authorities.

Further, Federal Member States, have been, as well, grappling with insufficient coordination mechanisms for adaptation planning and implementation, due to a range of constraints including, inadequate technical and analytical capacity to formulate and implement enabling formal instruments for climate adaptation.

### **Planning and Coordination for Adaptation**

Sound technical capacity in development of coherent adaptation plans and policies plays a pivotal role in tackling climate-related risks. Despite its relevance, Somalia's responsible institutions in climate action, continue to face a broad range of barriers including a lack of capacities for participatory designing, and effective implementation of national climate adaptation policies and plans.

As noted by evidence, the newly formed Federal Ministry of Environment and Climate Change and its relevant ministries lack sound technical expertise to develop and implement conflict-sensitive adaptation plans and interventions to tackle the exacerbating climate crisis including, the on-going drought which, by far, has been the lengthiest and most intense drought in four decades.<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, the coordination capacity of relevant institutions at all levels has been ineffective due to a set of overlapping limitations that encompass, political fragmentation, limited cooperation between national and sub-national authorities, and inadequate enabling legislative and institutional mechanisms. These limitations, hence, compromise implementation of both its Nationally Determined Contributions – NDC (updated in 2021) under the Paris Agreement, and the 19<sup>th</sup> National Development Plan - 2020/24, thus deepening existing vulnerabilities, risks and threats to peace and resilience.

### Access to Climate Finance

A stable and sustainable financing instrument plays a decisive role in implementation of climate adaptation plans. The Federal Government of Somalia, despite that, faces innumerable barriers to financing implementation of its climate adaptation plans. These limitations include a lack of climate adaptation financing policy and architecture.<sup>17</sup>

These, hence, present a multitude of challenges to Somalia in mobilizing and accessing financial support from the existing climate financing mechanisms under the UNFCCC, including the Green Climate Fund. In addition, these compromise effective implementation of the decisions of the United Nations Convention on Climate Change – UNFCCC, including, the formulation and implementation of National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) as per the Conference of Parties (COP 16) convened on November-December 2010 in Cancun, Mexico, and Conference of Parties (COP 21) held on November-December 2015 in Paris, France, respectively.

### Recommendations

The following measures present an array of policy considerations to tackle existing systemic barriers to implementation of national climate adaptation plans at all structures of governance in Somalia:

1. The Federal Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) should take concrete measures toward adoption and enforcement of national climate change management instruments to enable and guide effective implementation of national climate adaptation plans and strategies.
  - i. A legally binding national climate change management instrument, for instance, will lay the basis for effective coordination and implementation of climate adaptation plans.
2. The Federal Government of Somalia should strengthen coordination capacities of lead institutions on climate change at both the Federal and State level.
  - i. Implement capacity-strengthening investments to level up coordination Mechanisms’ technical, analytical and operational capabilities to drive sound implementation of climate adaptation plans.
3. The Federal government should improve cooperation and partnership with member States to ensure an integrated and harmonized implementation of climate adaptation plans at all levels.
  - i. Tensions and disagreements over politics as systemic barriers to implementation of adaptation plans should be avoided and addressed accordingly.

## Endnotes

- 1 Rank countries by ND-GAIN Country Index, Vulnerability and Readiness [Rankings // Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative // University of Notre Dame \(nd.edu\)](#)
- 2 Federal Government of Somalia - Updated Nationally Determined Contributions – NDC 2021 [Microsoft Word - Final Updated NDC for Somalia 2021.docx \(unfecc.int\)](#)
- 3 Somalia: 2023 Flash and Riverine Floods Situation Report No. 2 (as of 6 June 2023) [Somalia: 2023 Flash and Riverine Floods Situation Report No. 2 \(as of 6 June 2023\) | OCHA \(unocha.org\)](#)
- 4 [International conference on illegal charcoal trade opens in Mogadishu | UNSOM \(unmissions.org\)](#)
- 5 [International conference on illegal charcoal trade opens in Mogadishu | UNSOM \(unmissions.org\)](#)
- 6 [Security Council Resolution 2551 - UNSCR](#)
- 7 World Bank. Forest Area (% of land area). [Forest area \(% of land area\) | Data \(worldbank.org\)](#) (Accessed: August 22, 2023)
- 8 Somalia: Acute Food Insecurity Situation March 2023 and Projection for April - June 2023 [Somalia: Acute Food Insecurity Situation March 2023 and Projection for April - June 2023 | IPC - Integrated Food Security Phase Classification \(ipcinfo.org\)](#)
- 9 The Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia calls for continued respect of the principles of humanitarian action [The Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia calls for continued respect of the principles of humanitarian action | OCHA \(unocha.org\)](#)
- 10 Somalia: Drought Conditions Update (As of 26 April 2021) [Somalia: Drought Conditions Update \(As of 26 April 2021\) - Somalia | ReliefWeb](#)
- 11 Somalia: 2023 Flash and Riverine Floods Situation Report No. 2 (as of 6 June 2023)
- 12 Somalia Flood Response Update: Beletweyne District, Hiraan Region (28 November 2019) [Somalia Flood Response Update: Beletweyne District, Hiraan Region \(28 November 2019\) - Somalia | ReliefWeb](#)
- 13 [Microsoft Word - GCF NAP Project Somalia \(undp.org\)](#)
- 14 Accessed via [PowerPoint Presentation \(unl.edu\)](#)
- 15 [Microsoft Word - GCF NAP Project Somalia \(undp.org\)](#)
- 16 Access (August 23, 2023) via [Microsoft Word - GCF NAP Project Somalia \(undp.org\)](#)
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## About Juba Institute for Climate Adaptation

**Juba Institute for Climate Adaptation (Jica)** is a Mogadishu-based, non-profit, and independent policy research institute committed to promoting adaptation to climate change and strengthening resilience for peaceful, and sustainable development in Somalia. To achieve its ambitious mission, Jica undertakes a rich blend of cutting-edge research, in-depth analyses, and frank dialogues on climate change, environmental sustainability, and food security.



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