

Getting Ahead of Disasters: SOMALIA IN 2024



Severe drought in Somaliland has caused the death of many animals and badly affected the lives of shepherds. Families have lost their income, along with their main source of food and milk. © Arie Kievit / Netherlands Red Cross

Somalia has experienced repeated humanitarian crises in recent years, with a series of failed rainy seasons causing widespread suffering. Since endorsing the [Getting Ahead of Disasters Charter](#) a year ago Somalia has faced more devastating climate shocks, including flooding due to a strong El Niño that displaced over half a million people. The recurrent climate shocks have put over three million people under the acute and compounding stress of food insecurity, malnutrition and internal displacement. What's more, the humanitarian response has not delivered lasting change.

Abdihakim Ainte, Director of Food Security and Climate Change in the Federal Government of Somalia, is outspoken on the need for the international community to adopt a different approach. He argues that “most humanitarian financing bypasses the government...going straight from donors to UN agencies and big NGOs. This deprives government institutions of the chance to develop – including their ability to deliver humanitarian services...the government has no say over how the money is spent, and the aid community actors are only accountable to themselves.”¹

Ainte's words are echoed internationally. A recent report from Humanitarian Outcomes acknowledges that we are at “a pivotal moment for the international aid community, which needs to reflect on and address the limitations of development and humanitarian responses, and to build on promising new approaches and strengthened Somali capacities.”² The context in Somalia has changed, and international actors

recognize that government and local actor capacities have grown and developed to the extent that a new operational model is necessary. However, the typical approaches of donors and humanitarian actors working in the country have yet to reflect these new possibilities and develop new collaboration styles.

USD 2.2 billion of humanitarian aid reached Somalia in 2022. Despite this, independent research found that “government actors felt marginalized in the conceptualization, planning and strategy of the response. For their part, Somali NGOs felt that their role remained narrowly sub-contractual with risks being transferred but insufficient resources provided to develop capacities to manage risks.”³

The Charter tackles this issue head-on through endorsers agreeing to “prioritise locally-led and people-centred approaches to taking action ahead of disasters, with government leadership and greater involvement of local actors and systems.” The Government of Somalia demonstrates this approach through their National Transformational Plan, which comes into effect in 2025. The Plan is articulated and owned by the Government and emphasizes a proactive and pragmatic approach to setting Somalia's development trajectory, and includes a pillar on environment and climate resilience. International actors working in the country will be able to align with the government's longer-term strategy.

The government is not only looking to change the way it works with non-governmental stakeholders, but where and when they target their action. Moving away from reactive humanitarian response to proactive risk reduction, risk-informed development, and resilience building is embedded in the National Transformational Plan, in line with principle 2 of the Charter: “we will align efforts over the long term to ensure coherent and coordinated finance across climate change adaptation, development and the disaster risk management cycle”.

The Jowhar Offstream Storage Programme (JOSP) in southern Somalia is an excellent example of this approach, designed to mitigate droughts and floods and boost agricultural production along the Shabelle River. The Government of Somalia is partnering with the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Organization for Migration, UN Habitat,



Salah Jama, Somali Deputy Prime Minister, and Said Hussein Iid, Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation of Somalia, hold a round table discussion at the Jowhar Offstream Storage Programme launch event at the State House. © FAO / Arete/Maslah Mohamed

the UN Industrial Development Organization and the UN Environment Programme, with support from the British Embassy in Mogadishu. Launched in June 2024, this multi-partner, multi-year programme is supported by the UN Peacebuilding Fund and planned contributions from USAID and the Somalia Joint Fund.⁴

The flagship programme is constructing offstream facilities to capture and store water during the rainy season. By providing a reliable water source for irrigation, JOSP reduces the vulnerability of local farmers to droughts and ensures a more consistent food supply. The program actively involves local communities in planning and implementation, tailoring the solutions to their specific needs, and boosting ownership and sustainability. The Government of Somalia intends that this long-term approach will reduce the need for emergency interventions in the future and strengthen the knowledge and skills communities need to maintain and operate the storage facilities effectively.

Somalia’s ambition requires appropriate finance, in line with the commitment of Charter endorsers to deliver “more finance arranged in advance of disasters so that support is faster, more reliable and better targeted”.

There are already signs of progress. The Executive Director of the Green Climate Fund, Mafalda Duarte, led the first GCF delegation to Somalia in March 2024. Duarte announced an accelerated climate action investment programme, anticipated at USD 100 million over the next year. Acknowledging the maturing of Somalia’s institutional environment, she commented that climate finance modalities now need to respond: “GCF is committed to supporting the government with what it needs, so that together with the flourishing private sector and civil society organizations it can develop priority projects and investments to deliver sustainable, integrated and impactful climate action for durable peace and prosperity.”⁵ However, despite multiple calls at COP28 to get more climate finance to fragile and conflict-affected states, the reality is that significantly more funding is needed to enable early action in countries like Somalia.

The developments in Somalia over the last 12 months demonstrate considerable progress in line with the principles of the Charter. They showcase the potential for the future, with an engaged government setting out a proactive vision for climate resilience, joined-up programming that listens to communities, and accelerated finance for national-level implementation.

Endnotes

- 1 [The New Humanitarian | The government view on ending Somalia’s humanitarian aid ‘trap’](#)
- 2 [Humanitarian Outcomes | Somali capacities to respond to crisis are changing; how are humanitarian actors responding?](#)
- 3 [Humanitarian Outcomes | Somali capacities to respond to crisis are changing; how are humanitarian actors responding?](#)
- 4 [FAO in Somalia | Forging Partnerships for a Sustainable Future: FAO, Government and UN partners launch the Jowhar Offstream Storage Programme \(JOSP\)](#)
- 5 [Green Climate Fund | Green Climate Fund and Somalia: Accelerated USD 100 million investment partnership](#)