



Fatuma Abdi, a member of the Rangeland Council in Babile woreda, East Hararghe, Oromia Region Credit: Yosef Tiruneh/Mercy Corps/2024

**ARE COMMUNITIES
AND GOVERNMENT
DRIVING
IMPROVEMENTS IN
DRM AND RANGELAND
MANAGEMENT IN
ETHIOPIA'S
LOWLANDS?**

**Evidence from DRM/PRM
Implementation Survey**

In the Somali, Afar and Oromia regions, RIPA- North intends to collectively contribute to enhanced food security and inclusive economic growth for over 129,129 households.

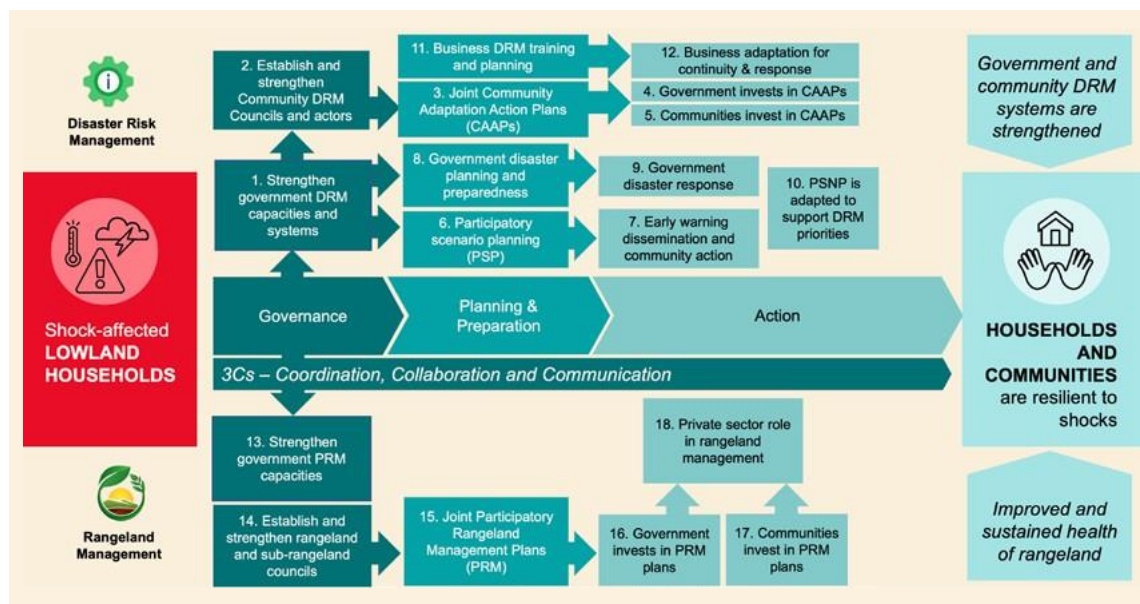
RIPA is composed of four components grounded in social behavior changes that support gender transformative and resilience outcomes. RIPA's complex approach is undertaken through investments in the private sector (Market Systems Development, MSD and governance strengthening activities).

The efficiency and capacity improvement of Disaster Risk Management (DRM) and Natural Resource Management (NRM) actors under RIPA study addressed in this paper fall under component 1. The theory of change for the component is mapped below in figure 1, outlining the resilience pathways for DRM and Rangeland Management.

RIPA- NORTH INTERVENTION APPROACH

The two lower-level outcomes for Component 1 envisioned by RIPA-North are:

- i) Communities take collective action on identified needs for DRM and NRM.
- ii) Local government sectoral offices are responsive to community demands to achieve this; interventions related to enhancing governance capacities of community level DRM and NRM councils, support in development of respective Climate Adaptation Action Plans (CAAP) and Participatory Rangeland Management (PRM) Plans, and facilitation of coordination between the community level councils with the woreda level government sector offices to jointly implement the plans.



METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study is to assess the effectiveness and capacity improvement of DRM/NRM actors in RIPA implementation woredas. Specific objectives include evaluating community disaster planning, assessing government understanding and use of PRM plans and CAAPs, gauging awareness and action on climate change and improved natural resources, and measuring the inclusiveness of plans.

To achieve the objectives outlined above, the following questions guided the assessment:

- What are the roles of DRM and Rangeland Councils (RLCs) in managing disaster risk and natural resource management respectively?
- How are the Community Adaptation Action Plan (CAAP) and Participatory Rangeland Management (PRM) plan mainstreamed in the government sectoral plan and what are the types of support provided by the government sectoral offices?
- What is the uptake and impact of the disaster risk management and participatory rangeland management practices promoted by CAAP and PRM plan?
- What are the main challenges and gaps seen in sustaining the lower-level outcomes identified by RIPA-North under component 1?

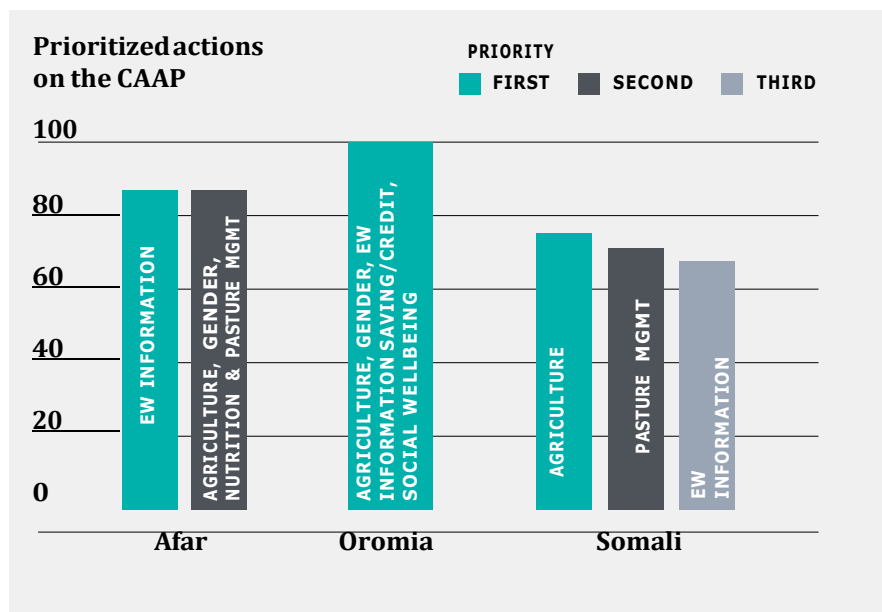
The survey conducted interviews with a total of 144 sector offices at various levels in RIPA implementation areas. The interviews, conducted in small groups for each sector office, aim to assess DRM capacities, CAAP and PRM plans awareness, budgeting, implementation, impact, and inclusiveness. Additionally, 44 Community Groups, including RLCs and DRM councils were interviewed, covering CAAP, resource mobilisation, Early Warning, DRM preparedness, response and PRM aspects.

The analytical approach used in this study is a Descriptive Qualitative Analysis approach. The data was first collected, then cleaned of any errors or inconsistencies. Next, the data was normalised to ensure consistency and comparability. The normalised data was then aggregated to group similar data points together and summarised using tables, charts, and graphs to present the key findings and trends in a visual and clear format. Using visual elements provides an accessible way to see and understand trends, outliers, and patterns. This approach allows for a comprehensive and insightful analysis of the qualitative data set.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

› Actions related to climate smart agriculture, pasture management during cycles of drought and flooding, early warning information dissemination, use of savings and credit as positive coping and adaptive strategies and promoting women's role in addressing the barriers around gender domains were identified as priorities by the respondents in their Community Adaptation Action Plan (CAAP).

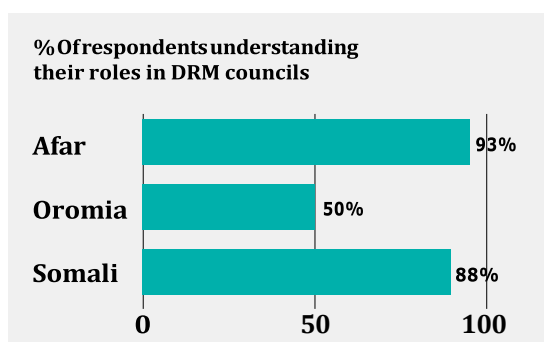


› Majority of respondents of Somali and Afar region confirmed receiving some form of support from the local government sector offices for the implementation of CAAP. For Oromia, half of the respondents felt the same.

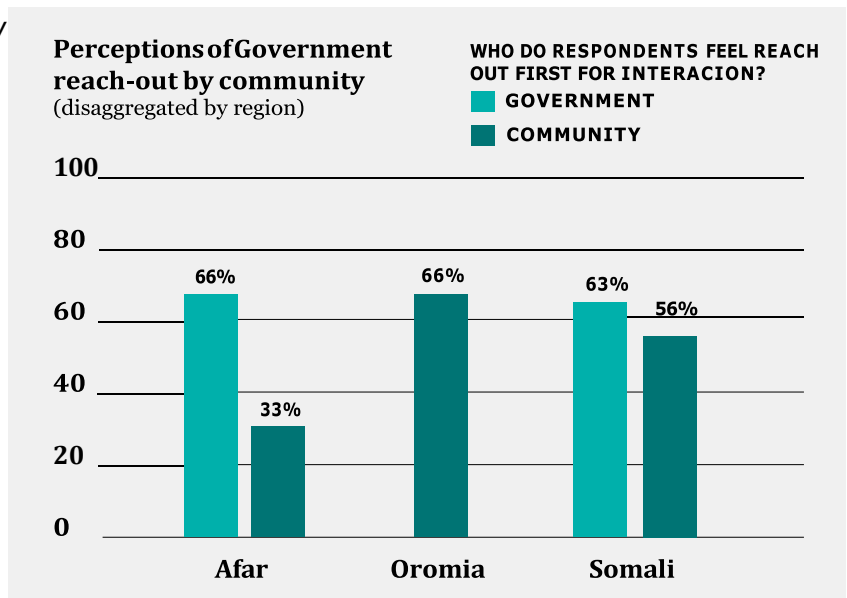
› Technical expertise is the most dominant form of support provided by the government sector office followed by budgetary and material support to implement the actions identified in the CAAP plans.

› Pasture management, water harvesting, fodder savings and flood diversion are the major actions implemented by the communities on their own as part of CAAP.

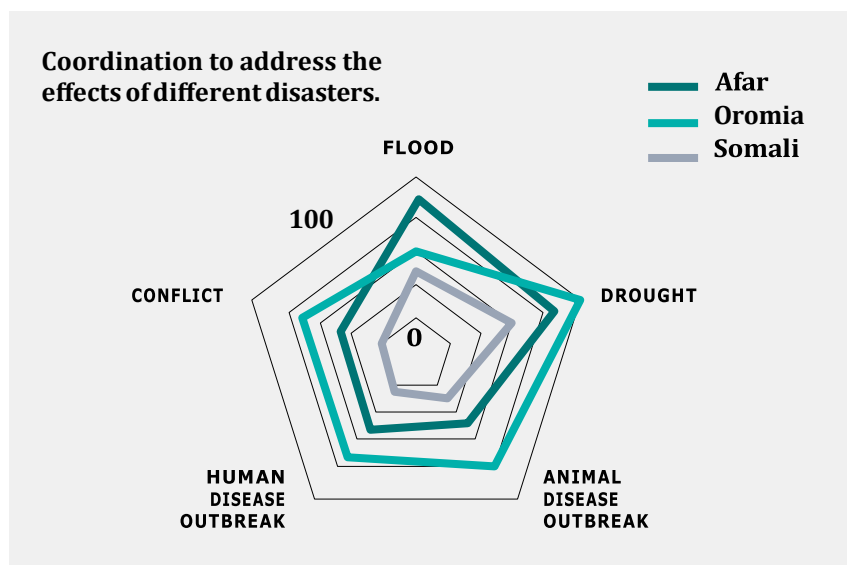
› A large proportion DRM council member in Somali and Afar regions understand their role in the DRM council. In Oromia, half of the respondents indicated that they fully know their role.



- › DRM councils in the Somali and Afar region meet at least once a month to discuss their progress and next steps. For Oromia, the council meets once a quarter.
- › The results showed that labour contribution is the highest form of participation for all the three regions. The second form of participation is mobilisation for community meetings and other DRM related events by providing time. The community are also found to be participating by providing in-kind support. Only a small percentage of the respondents of the Somali and Afar region said that the community has also contributed through cash.
- › The major actions mainstreamed by the sectoral government offices in their plans and those implemented are: i) conducting preparedness activities around cycles of drought and flood, ii) drought management, and iii) sanitation and hygiene related activities.
- › The main source of budget for implementing the sectoral plans are annual sector budget, the budget from implementation of PSNP and adaptation funds.

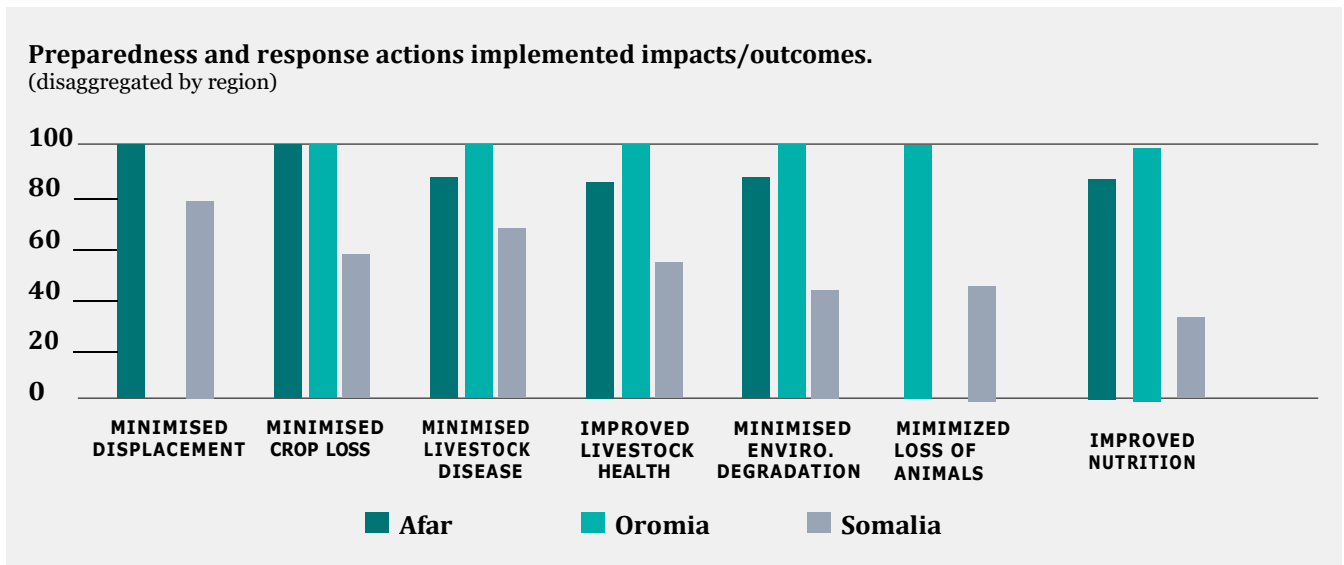


- › For Somali, Oromia and Afar regions, there exists two-way interaction between the DRM council and government sector office. For Somali and Afar, it is the government that has mostly taken the initial step to organise an interaction. For Oromia, mostly it is the communities who have reached out first for any form of interaction with the government.
- › The major platforms for the interaction are review meetings, woreda cabinet meetings and community visits. Across the three regions, the most interactions of DRM councils have been with the DRMFS bureau followed by the Health, Water/ Energy and Women Affairs bureau.
- › Coordination has happened for a diverse set of disasters. Flood and drought are the top priority disasters which have resulted in coordination with the DRM council.

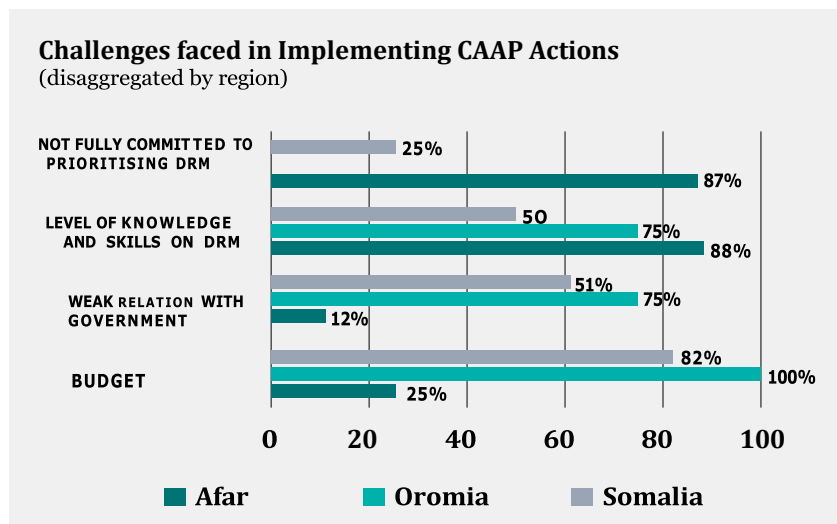


The other disasters are animal disease outbreak, human disease outbreak and conflict.

- › The preparedness and response actions implemented have resulted in contributing to minimised displacement, reduced incidences of animal diseases, improved livestock health, minimised crop loss and environment degradation.



- › Budget constraints followed by having weak vertical linkages with the government sectors and not having a high level of skills and knowledge on DRM were identified as the main challenges to implement the actions of the CAAP.

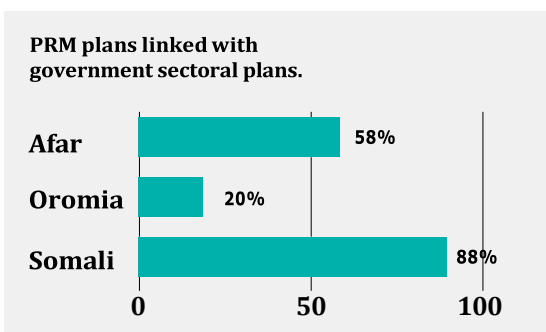
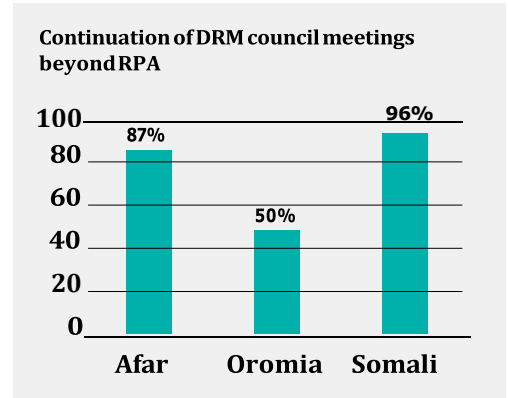


- › 96% of the DRM council members of the Somali region and 87% of the Afar region agreed to the continuation of the DRM council beyond the project period. For Oromia, the respondents were more conservative as 50% agreed that the DRM councils will continue sustaining their roles.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

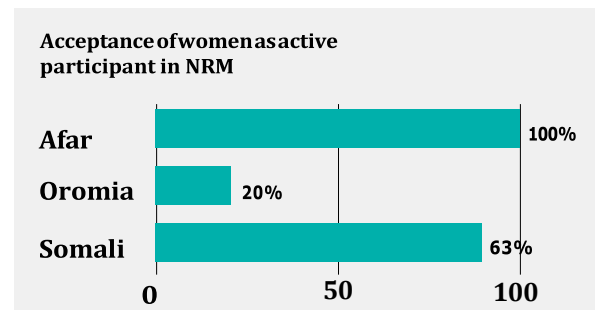
- › The rangeland council members know their roles and responsibilities and have mobilised the community in advance to implement the plan that requires community participation and have participated in the rangeland planning and implementation review meetings.
- › For Afar and Somali regions, the rangeland committees have received full commitment in mainstreaming of PRM plans in their sectoral plans. The Oromia region on the other hand has not received such commitment due to weak linkages.

- › The land management practices implemented to reduce natural resources degradation have been found to be very effective. Similarly, good changes in the ecological health of the rangelands and productivity are noticed on the grazing land due to site rehabilitation and improved grazing land management interventions.
- › The communal land tenure is reported to have a positive effect on rangeland management. Majority of rangeland management committee members reported implementing PRM plans has supported the reduction of invasive species, improving tree cover and overall contribution to the health of the ecosystem.

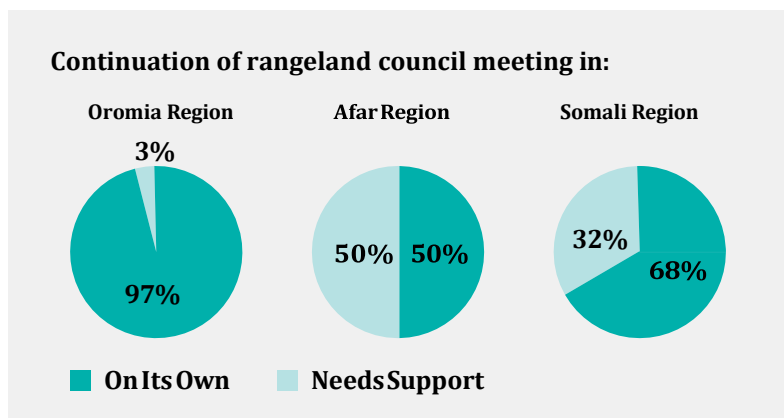


- › Not having enough budget followed by poor community mobilisation and limited coordination with the woreda sector offices, and cycles of drought and floods are considered the key challenges in mainstreaming and implementing the actions identified in the PRM plans.

- › All the respondents from the Afar and Oromia region and majority of those from the Somali region think that the NRM governance approach has changed from male dominated to a more inclusive arrangement because of adoption of the PRM system.
- › Acceptance rates of women as active participants in NRM is highest in Afar, above average in Somali region but acceptance rates remain concerningly low in Oromia.



- › 97% of the respondents in Oromia feel that the community will be able to sustain the woreda level RLC and sub rangeland unit level monthly and quarterly meetings with its own resources. Whereas for 50% of Afar region and 68% of the Somali region respondents feel the same. The remaining 50% of Afar and 29% of Somali region respondents feel the government can support by budgeting for the meetings.



- › 80% of the Afar and Somali regions respondents have seen either or very good improvements in the availability of pasture, water, and other benefits after the implementation of PRM Plans.

For Oromia, 45% of respondents still feel that they have not observed the positive trend in the availability of the natural resources.

- › Improved practices of rangeland management have been able to significantly reduce the trends of conflicts over natural resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM ADAPTATION

The overall objective of RIPA is to sustain the lower-level outcomes, enabling i) Communities to take collective action on identified needs for DRM and NRM; and ii) Local government sectoral offices to be responsive to community demands.

The summary of findings show that great strides have been taken by DRM councils, RLCs and communities so that they continue taking collective action to manage the risks of disasters and improve rangelands. Similarly, the findings also suggest that the local government sectoral offices have taken initiatives to support the implementation of CAAP and PRM plans address community needs. However, the study has also identified gaps that need to be addressed so that the vision of RIPA-North to sustain the outcomes is achieved.

To identify the gaps and provide the recommendations, the report uses the framework of sustainability proposed by Tufts University. The Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University carried out the USAID - funded multi – year studies, which provides guidance to the future USAID projects on how to achieve lasting project benefits, with implications for other development projects as well.



Aman Ali coordinates the irrigation canals clearing work in his village, Afambo, Afar Region.
Credit: Yosef Tiruneh/Mercy Corps/2024

The study focused on the sustainability of activities, outcomes, and impacts in technical sectors. Findings supported the hypothesis that four factors are critical to sustainability: (1) a sustained source of resources, (2) sustained technical and managerial capacity, (3) sustained motivation (of beneficiaries and service providers) and (4) sustained linkages to governmental organizations and/or other entities. The report identifies obstacles as guided by the findings of the study and provides recommended actions for future planning for RIPA-North.

COMMUNITIES TAKE COLLECTIVE ACTION ON IDENTIFIED NEEDS FOR DRM AND NRM: Resources

The DRM council and RLC are struggling to sustain their roles of mobilizing the community and implementation of the actions identified in the CAAP and PRM plans due to financial resource constraint. Continued efforts need to be provided to the councils through involvement at different stages of the government's bottom-up planning processes. It is also recommended to link rangeland and DRM councils with financial service institutions to explore different financing models for investment in appropriate initiatives.

Capacities

The DRM councils do not have the all-round capacity to completely manage disaster risks throughout the DRM cycle at the community level. Additionally, service providers, both public and private, are not available to provide the technical capacities to the councils. It is recommended that RIPA invests in identifying the right training service providers with an appropriate curriculum.

Furthermore, the communities have the knowledge and skills but do not completely believe that the proposed DRM and NRM actions can reduce the risks of disasters or improve the health of the rangeland. It is recommended that the DRM and rangeland councils identify community champions who have done effective risk reduction and natural resource governance activities at household level and group level. This can be followed by peer-to-peer learning through exposure visits.

Motivation

Negative community cultural beliefs are continuing to limit community mobilisation and individual uptake of the promoted DRM and NRM



Community members engaged in clearing activities, Afambo, Afar Region.
Credit: Olivia Chapman/Mercy Corps/2024

practices. It is recommended that the program continues to support leaders and the councils to conduct dialogues with the communities on positive gender behaviors.

Unmet needs by local governments despite collective action for DRM and NRM by the councils could result in the community members losing hope. It is recommended that the program supports communities to identify and submit only the most important needs that can be practically achieved taking into consideration the available resources. The program should also continue facilitating the local government to conduct community level meetings so that they can inform the members the actions they have identified to support, the limitations and challenges.

Linkages

Participation of the local level government sectoral offices at the community meetings was found to be limited. It is recommended that the program continues to facilitate woreda level government sector office staff officials to accompany RIPA-North staff in community visits and monitoring exercises in preparation for handover.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT SECTORAL OFFICES ARE RESPONSIVE TO COMMUNITY DEMANDS FOR DRM AND NRM

Resources

The woreda level sectoral offices do not have enough budget or the right policy to budget for the implementation of CAAP and PRM actions. It is recommended that RIPA-North develop a case from the survey results and share with USAID and other development partners and implementers to crowd in and advocate for policy change for DRM and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA). Only the policy change would allow the ministries and departments to allocate fiscal year funds to DRM and CCA

specifically, and provide the enabling environment to the woreda level government offices to allocate resources and fulfil the demand of CAAP and PRM plan.

Capacities

As the DRM and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) systems are not sufficiently decentralized, the woreda level sectoral offices have limited skills in planning, monitoring and evaluation, execution of professional duties and roles and technical skills related to DRM and CCA. It is recommended that the program continues to strengthen the capacity of woreda level government sectoral offices for budgeting, fund management and engagement with the federal authorities for resource requests. It is also recommended that the program continues investing in the woreda level coordination that would allow the DRM bureau to collaborate with the other offices that bring in a specific capacity that might be needed to manage different phases of a disaster cycle.

Motivation

Non-existence of institutional and legal framework do not motivate/ allow the woreda level government offices to allocate and prioritize DRM and CCA funding due to diversion of funding and lack of specific DRM and CCA functions in strategies and annual plans. It is recommended that RIPA advocates at the central level with the ministries for the operationalization of the National Disaster Risk Financing Strategy (DRFS).

Linkages

It was found that there is very little or no mention of partnership of the rangeland and DRM councils with the private sector which has resulted in assessing, retaining, transferring, and managing risks associated with climate shocks and being engaged in disaster risk financing, particularly at woreda level. It is recommended to RIPA-North to invest in a pilot project on disaster and or climate risk financing by layering a financing structure that draws resources from multiple sources (private sector, government, and the communities).



Temam Sheik Abdulahi, 34, actively participates in RIPA supported environment rehabilitation work, Gerbi Village of Kebribeyah Woreda, Somali Region of Ethiopia.
Credit: Yosef Tiruneh/Mercy Corps/2024



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Resilience in Pastoral Areas – North (RIPA-North) is a five-year, \$38 million USAID-funded program operating in lowland areas of Somali, Oromia and Afar regions of Ethiopia (2020 - 2025). RIPA-North aims to improve the resilience capacities of households, markets, and governance institutions, collectively contributing to enhanced food security and inclusive economic growth.