



Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects Half Year Report (due 31st October 2020)

Project reference	25-025
Project title	Improved seed, food and livelihood security for agro-pastoralists in Somalia
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Somalia
Lead organisation	The Development Fund
Partner(s)	HAVOYOCO, ADO, KAALO
Project leader	Elin Cecilie Ranum
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	October 31, 2020 (HY3)
Project website/blog/social media	https://www.facebook.com/DevelopmentFundNorway/

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed project implementation timetable (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end September).

This reporting period spanned the main cropping season, thus the focus in the last 6 months has been on Outputs 1 and 2, as detailed below.

Output 1. Seed security assessments conducted with local communities and other local agencies. In 2019-20 Seed Security Assessments (SSA) trainings and data collection were completed (**Activities 1.1-1.2**). In this reporting period, good progress has been made in finalizing the assessment reports and developing action plans, despite the fact that COVID-19 has affected trainings, events and community gatherings. Following the compilation of SSA data, DF experts reviewed the data and prepared summary reports that were presented for validation to all relevant stakeholders including community members, government entities and farmers (**Activities 1.3, 1.5**). Partners have also developed draft action plans (**Activity 1.4**) based on the SSA findings and have begun integrating these actions into activities under Output 2. Altogether, Output 1 of the project has engaged 82 farmers (28 female and 54 male), 2 DF partner NGOs and 2 government entities. As described in section 2, DF's ability to support the action plan development has been constrained due to staffing changes and COVID-19 restrictions but will be followed up in the second half-year.

Output 2. Initiatives supported to improve access to diverse quality seeds for women and men agropastoralists. In this reporting period, Beer community seed bank (CSB) conducted adaptation tests and participatory varietal selection trials on seven new seed varieties (two each of maize, cowpea, and sesame and 1 forage grass variety). The results indicate that the varieties are well adapted to the harsh climate conditions in the project area. The varieties are available from local markets and will also be multiplied and made available by the CSBs (**Activity 2.2**). In the remainder of the fiscal year, further genetic resources will be sourced to prepare for varietal selection trials in the next season. This will include collections from farmers (after the current harvest from December-January) as well as submitting requests to regional genebanks (**Activity 2.1**).

Pests and insects are increasingly affecting agropastoralist communities, and local authorities lack the resources and the expertise to support farmers to manage the negative effects on crops

and pastures. In this period, 435 small holder farmers (215 females and 220 males) were trained in post-harvesting in Galooley and Cuun villages. Promoting best-practices by introducing post-harvest activities are an integral part of the improvement of food production systems in Somaliland. It helps to decrease losses of crops during harvesting and improves quality of crops afterwards. The trainings covered practices such as crop drying, sorting, threshing/shelling, cleaning/winnowing, packaging, storage, and marketing, and encouraged local knowledge exchange using a learning-by-doing approach (**Activity 2.3**).

Key seed handling equipment is important to improve the CSBs' capacity to ensure that seeds they produce and store are healthy and free from disease and impurities, and to improve the services they deliver to the communities. Procurement processes for seed cleaning machines and solar-powered generators for each CSB were completed in 2019-20, and delivery is expected in early November 2020. In addition, in this period procurement of threshing machines, moisture metres, and balances were completed. All equipment will be available for handling seed from the upcoming harvest, with the exception of the threshers due to delays in delivery (see section 2b) (**Activity 2.6**).

Further work has been done to consolidate the CSB business plans (**Activity 2.5**) to cover the running costs and upgrades of the CSB. For example, the Beer CSB committee is planning to generate income through the production and sale of seeds whereas Galooley CSB plans to rent out the threshing machine to farmers during the harvesting season. In the remaining half year, DF experts will provide support to help the CSBs further develop these plans, as well as to make final revisions to the CSB operation manual and the Plant protection guideline developed in 2019-20 (**Activity 2.4**).

Output 3. Support provided to reclaim and rehabilitate degraded agricultural land. Work on this output will be pursued in the remaining half year, monitoring and providing technical assistance on the maintenance of established soil and water conservation structures. Cuun village will be supported to finalize flood control plans and to rehabilitate structures washed out by flash floods in 2019. Other households will also be encouraged to replicate the land reclamation efforts on their farms.

Output 4. Support provided to raise awareness among government agencies and other local actors on farmers' rights, seed security and related policy instruments (ITPGRFA).

In the reporting period, 25 smallholder farmers (12 females and 13 males) from Beer village were trained in farmers' rights to strengthen awareness of provisions in the ITPGRFA, following similar trainings already completed in the other target villages in Years 1-2 (**Activity 4.1**). Due to COVID-19, it was difficult to arrange exchanges and field days (**Activity 4.2**) and policy meetings (**Activities 4.3-4.4**). However, one exchange visit was organized for farmers from Cuun village in Puntland to visit Beer CSB in Somaliland (co-financed by Norad) and, in addition, partners will examine the feasibility of organizing field days during the harvest period.

2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months (for Covid-19 specific delays/problems, please use 2b). Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

Participating communities have experienced varying degrees of crop failure/losses due to **insufficient rainfall** in some locations (Cuun and Beer villages) and **desert locust swarms** that invaded almost all pastoral and farmlands across Somalia and the Horn of Africa in general. The locusts have caused extensive damages to crops from germination to early maturation stages. Early estimates from FAO (middle of 2020) indicate average crop losses of 10-15% across Somalia, while the project locations are among the worst affected areas. FAO has supported the government in control operations, treating 10,245 hectares of Somalia's key breeding areas with biopesticides, and DF and implementing partners have worked to raise awareness of farmers in the target villages in combating the effects of the desert locust. This situation poses threats to food security and livelihoods, DF and partner organizations mobilized the community members in Cuun and Beer villages to increase cash crops where there is enough water, whereas vulnerable households are also accessing supports through social networks (remittances) and food aid provided by WFP. Investments made by the project in 2019-20 to establish water

reservoirs and irrigation systems for the CSB have been helpful to sustain seed multiplication efforts, especially in Galooley and Beer villages, though it is possible that the CSBs will suffer from poor repayment rates of seed loans this year. In Cuun village, the CSB is in its first year of operation and still establishing its seed reserves. These challenges may significantly limit the number of farmers that can access loans.

DF's capacity to accompany the development of the SSA action plans has also been limited by the resignation of DF's agricultural specialist in July 2020, as well as more general constraints posed by COVID-19 (see below). A new agricultural specialist has been recruited and will be in place November 1st, 2020.

2b. Please outline any specific issues which your project has encountered as a result of Covid-19. Where you have adapted your project activities in response to the pandemic, please briefly outline how you have done so here. Explain what residual impact there may be on your project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

COVID-19 has affected the project in several ways. From April to July 2020, public gatherings were prohibited in Somaliland and Puntland, and as a result, trainings, events and community meetings were not carried out as planned, and technical accompaniment on crop production and other follow-up to be held after trainings or workshops were not possible as people were supposed to practice social distancing. Since March 2020, all travel from DF headquarters in Oslo to programme countries has been on hold, including a planned monitoring trip to the project area in the fall. Travel between Somaliland and Puntland has also been restricted during the reporting period, so no monitoring trips were conducted by DF-Somalia staff to Puntland.

To mitigate this issue, DF and its partners invested large amounts of time to ensure that information was transmitted across the board. This was done through telephone and email communications between DF and partners, while community groups were also used to disseminate information on the ground. At organizational level, DF fast-tracked plans to mainstream new digital tools such as Teams and Sharepoint to improve communication and collaboration between headquarters and country offices. Since August 2020, trainings and technical accompaniment have been possible with provisions for social distancing.

The residual impacts on the project and results include:

- Losses in crop production due to insufficient technical accompaniment to farmers, for example on new crop diseases,
- Insufficient access to market information for some communities which led to overproduction of some cash crops in relation to market demand (i.e. for onion) and lost income.
- Procurement processes of all supplies were slowed down as trade and import/export was affected, which led to long delivery times for seed cleaning machines (7 months) and threshing machines will likely arrive in December 2020 after some of the crops are already harvested. This reduces time available to train farmers in their use (seed cleaners) and gain benefits in this harvest season (threshers).
- Insufficient capacity of DF Oslo staff to provide technical input on development of SSA action plans.

Overall, the project has managed to sustain progress. Some activities are delayed (i.e. Output 4) and the quality of support to partners and communities (SSA action plans, technical accompaniment) has been constrained. Efforts will be made to compensate for these shortcomings in the remaining half year. DF is also assessing how to enhance use of remote monitoring methods and adaptable technologies.

2c. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with LTS: **No**

Formal change request submitted: **No**

Received confirmation of change acceptance Not applicable

3a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

Yes No Estimated underspend:

3b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully. Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project, please submit a rebudget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a rebudget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes if necessary. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.

4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

The project has a budget of approximately £ for travel of DF staff in Oslo to Somalia which may be underspent if COVID-19 travel restrictions continue. DF will assess this and other possible COVID-19 impacts, and submit a change request in November if deemed necessary.

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with LTS International through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.****

Please send your **completed report by email** to Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk. The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 25-001 Darwin Half Year Report**