

Impact Synthesis: Somalia Project

Infrastructures for Peace and Environmental Peacebuilding in Hirshabelle and Galmudug States, Somalia

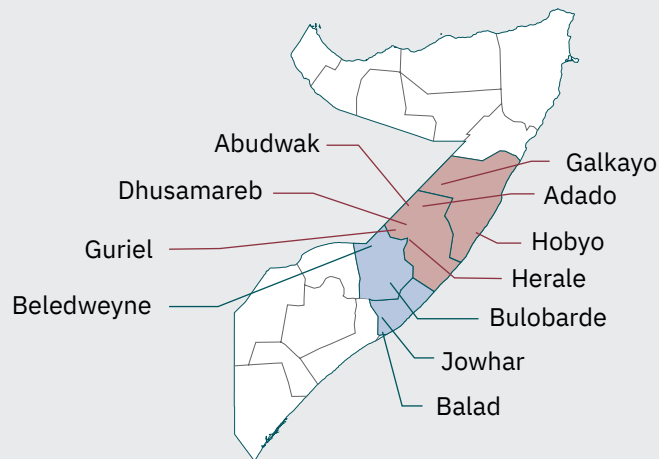
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Project locations:

- Hirshabelle state
- Galmudug state

Map indicates districts with active Insider Peacebuilders Network (IPN) members



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Integrating climate and environmental concerns into dialogue and mediation efforts through targeted capacity development in the federal member states of Hirshabelle and Galmudug has **increased mutual understanding** among communities and government actors of **shared challenges**, such as resource scarcity and environmental degradation, and how to **collectively address** them.
- Utilising radio programmes as a platform for awareness raising and dialogue** on the links between climate, environment, conflict and peace has produced tangible changes in community perceptions and behaviour, promoting more constructive conflict resolution and environmental protection, particularly in hard-to-reach areas.
- Developing climate security action plans (CSAPs)¹ with communities provided both a localised analysis of climate-conflict dynamics and adaptation strategies and served as a **strong environmental peacebuilding foundation** for a Sustained Dialogue process.
- Sustained Dialogue processes in two climate-conflict hotspots have **built trust and cooperation**, leading to reciprocal community visits, the revived trade and shared grazing, joint agreements and coordinated crises responses.
- Focusing on shared environmental challenges has helped create a **less politicised and more accessible space for dialogue and action**, bringing in **more women and young people** who are typically excluded from peacebuilding processes.

¹ CSAPs provide a comprehensive understanding of how climate change and environmental degradation affect local conflicts and livelihoods, while gathering insights on existing and potential adaptation, mitigation and peacebuilding efforts.

KEY OUTCOMES



Secured **formal commitments** through 22 sustained dialogue sessions, involving 100 members of divided communities, fostering cooperation on shared climate and conflict challenges, including resource sharing, water scarcity and deforestation.



Supported over **100 members of the Insider Peacebuilders Network (IPN)**, enabling **57 initiatives** that improved community relations, resource management and environmental protection.



Strengthened collective action through **seven** traditional assemblies (Shirarka)² across Hirshabelle and Galmudug states, where around **50 community participants** mediated conflicts, funded flood repairs and raised awareness of climate and peace interlinkages.



Increased public outreach through **134 radio episodes**³ that raised awareness of climate-related conflict risks, promoted co-operation on resource use and early climate action, and inspired the formation of grass-roots peacebuilding committees, including in remote areas.

Project Overview

Recurrent resource-related conflicts between communities in Somalia are increasingly compounded by climate shocks, undermining livelihoods and intensifying humanitarian crises. In 2025, approximately 680,000 people were displaced by inter-community violence, largely linked to competition over increasingly scarce natural resources, such as water, pasture and arable land, following six failed rainy seasons. Environmental degradation, driven by both climate change and human activity, has devastated livestock and agriculture, pushing 6.6 million people into food insecurity and exacerbating conflict. As degradation persists, the risk of armed conflict over basic necessities is rising, particularly in rural and pastoral areas.

To address these challenges, the Berghof Foundation launched the project Infrastructures for Peace and Environmental Peacebuilding in Hirshabelle and Galmudug States, Somalia in 2023. By focusing on collaborative climate adaptation, environmental stewardship and resource management, the project aims to support communities to create space for conflict transformation and sustained peace. The highly inclusive Insider Peacebuilders Network (IPN), which Berghof has supported since 2017, is central to this work. The network now engages **over 100 community peacebuilders and changemakers from 12 districts**.

² Shirarka are traditional community assemblies, often used for dispute resolution. Traditionally, the Shirarka are male-dominated and exclusive. Therefore, the Berghof Foundation ensures that the Shirarka it organizes are inclusive, bringing together participants from all societal groups and clans.

³ Between 2023 and 2026.

Key project activities, which created space for inclusive dialogue on conflict and environmental challenges, ensuring the active participation of elders, women, young people and marginalised groups included:

- Facilitating nine six-day community dialogue sessions (Shirarka – singular: Shir) across districts in Hirshabelle and Galmudug, each engaging 50 participants to build awareness and strengthen social cohesion around climate, environment, conflict and peace.
- Developing climate security action plans (CSAPs) with communities in two climate-conflict hotspots to identify risks, set priorities for adaptation, mitigation and resource management and reduce tensions.
- Facilitating Sustained Dialogue (SD) processes with community representatives in climate-conflict hotspots to build trust and address shared challenges outlined in the CSAPs.
- Strengthening the environmental peacebuilding skills and capacities of IPN members and state officials through workshops on collaborative learning, conflict transformation and climate resilience.
- Providing micro-grants for IPN-led environmental peacebuilding initiatives – including awareness campaigns, training, dialogue, mediation and sports events – to strengthen social cohesion, reduce tensions and promote environmental action.
- Producing two twice-monthly radio programmes in Hirshabelle and Galmudug, using radio's broad reach to engage large and diverse audiences, including rural and remote communities, in dialogue on climate, environment, conflict and peace, and to promote collaborative environmental peacebuilding.

Key Outcomes and Insights

An outcome evaluation of the first two (January 2023 – March 2025) and ongoing last phases of the project (April 2025 - December 2026) highlighted the following key results and achievements.⁴

INCLUSIVE SUSTAINED DIALOGUE ON ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES AND CONFLICT HAS TRANSFORMED RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN DIVIDED COMMUNITIES AND REDUCED TENSIONS.

In two climate-conflict hotspots in Hirshabelle and Galmudug, Berghof Foundation facilitated the design and implementation of Sustained Dialogue (SD) processes to engage a core group of community members in **structured, regular and facilitated dialogue** on issues at the CEPS nexus.

In Hirshabelle, 30 members from each of the two communities in conflict, including elders, women and young people, formed local SD committees. Members acted as two-way facilitators of the broader dialogue process, contributing to the inter-committee dialogue sessions and disseminating information and outcomes within their own communities. Over 19 facilitated SD sessions, guided by an environmental peacebuilding approach, the committees built mutual trust, discussed grievances, explored shared challenges and developed a shared vision for peaceful coexistence.

A similar process unfolded in Galmudug, where 20 diverse members from each community came together for intra- and inter-committee dialogue across six sessions. Despite delays due to insecurity, it has proven equally fruitful. The SD committee members have progressed from building relationships and identifying shared concerns to taking concrete steps towards greater cooperation, and are now developing informal agreements, reflecting the growing trust and commitment to peaceful coexistence fostered through the SD process.

Using the CSAPs as a structured, locally-owned framework to revisit, refine and prioritise actions, the committees have been able to translate their shared vision of peace into practice. They developed informal agreements to address challenges such as water scarcity, deforestation and resource competition. Direct communication channels have enabled

⁴ The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach, combining outcome harvesting workshops with staff and IPN members, focus group discussions, surveys, interviews, and feedback from radio programme listeners to assess project outcomes.

them to follow up on planned action and swiftly respond to emerging tensions. Through reciprocal visits and joint sessions, committee members have continued to rebuild trust within and between communities. Their work has had tangible results: mediating grazing land agreements between pastoralists and farmers and joint pledges to stop charcoal production, preventing retaliatory violence and reviving a weekly market to restore trade.

LARGE-SCALE COMMUNITY DIALOGUES (SHIRARKA) HAVE DEEPENED UNDERSTANDING OF THE CLIMATE, ENVIRONMENT, CONFLICT AND PEACE, WHILE STRENGTHENING SOCIAL BONDS AND COLLABORATION.

The project facilitated seven large-scale community dialogue sessions in Adale, Dhusamareb, Galkayo, Guriel, Mahaday, Mataban and Warsheikh. These Shirarka brought together elders, local officials, religious leaders, women, young people and marginalised actors, providing a space for joint analysis, learning and action planning. By bringing a diverse group of community representatives together, the Shirarka supported a deeper and shared understanding of how climate change and environmental degradation exacerbate conflict and the implications of these linkages for each of the communities represented. The inclusive and conflict-sensitive design and facilitation combined with the less contentious environmental peacebuilding approach allowed many participants to feel comfortable to speak openly and address historical grievances and strengthened social bonds and collaboration.

“

I have realised that when we are together, we can do more than expected and achieve a lot more than we can do alone ... When we come together with a shared vision and purpose, we can overcome even the most difficult challenges, whether it is rebuilding our communities, addressing climate change or creating peace in Somalia. Unity brings strength and strength brings progress.

- Community member at a Shir in Guriel

The impacts of the sense of unity and increased mediation and dialogue skills fostered by the Shirarka were diverse and showed immediate impact and often resulted in joint plans for action. At the Mahaday Shir, this greater cohesion enabled participants to jointly de-escalated a violent incident taking place outside the Shir venue using the mediation skills they acquired. Additionally, participants responded to recent flooding by collectively raising funds for repairs, a clear sign of growing community initiative and self-reliance in addressing climate-related challenges.

EMPOWERING LOCAL PEACEBUILDERS THROUGH COMMUNITY-LED INITIATIVES STRENGTHENED SOCIAL COHESION AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP.

IPN members engaged in collaborative learning through workshops on conflict transformation and environmental peacebuilding, sustainable resource management and regenerative farming. They co-facilitated or lead projects activities, such as the Shirarka, SD sessions, development of the CSAPs and radio programmes. As a tool for both multiplication and locally-led practical peacebuilding, micro-grants enabled IPN members to implement independent environmental peacebuilding initiatives. Between 2023 and 2026, network members organised over 80 peacebuilding initiatives, including facilitating community dialogues, mediating active conflicts, organising football tournaments to prevent conflict escalation and foster social cohesion. Across the two states, this has enhanced both the visibility and credibility of the IPN with communities and local and state-level administrations, while strengthening community ownership of environmental peacebuilding action and contributing to visible improvements in inter-community relations, environmental care and protection and resource management.

“

With the IPN raising community awareness, we have seen a decrease in soil degradation. What we are witnessing now is a transformation. People are no longer blindly cutting down trees without considering the consequences. They are beginning to understand that protecting the environment is directly linked to their own well-being and the future of our children.

- IPN member

RADIO PROGRAMMES HAVE STRENGTHENED COMMUNITY RESILIENCE BY FOSTERING DIALOGUE AND COLLECTIVE ACTION ON SHARED RESOURCES.

The radio programmes *Hiloow* (longing) in Hirshabelle and *Garasho-wadaag* (sharing of knowledge) in Galmudug combine pre-recorded drama sketches with live dialogue featuring experts and audience participation. Designed to reach remote and rural audiences beyond the scope of other project activities, over 156 episodes have aired across the two states since 2021, covering current and recurrent thematic discourse on issues on conflict analysis, environmental degradation and mediation, not only problematising the themes but also deliberating on practical action to address them.

Listener feedback demonstrates that programmes have increased public understanding of the CEPS nexus and encouraged constructive conflict resolution and cooperation over natural resources, stronger local peacebuilding structures, environmental protection, and greater preparedness for climate change-related risks.

“

[Garasho-wadaag] has made a lot of contributions in raising public awareness ... Many people who used to fight over grazing lands and over water wells now let their animals graze and drink water together. When people see lost animals, they bring them back to the owners. They formed peacebuilding committees.

-Listener from Galmudug

The radio programmes have also strengthened the agency and reach of local peacebuilders by preparing the ground for mediation and conflict resolution. Elders and other peacebuilders described the programmes as integral to their preparatory work, as they convey environmental peacebuilding messages to large and remote audiences who could otherwise only be reached in small numbers or through costly travel. Mediators reported arriving in conflict-affected rural areas to find nomads and villagers already familiar with the programmes and their messages, making it easier to engage them in peace efforts. Others have applied ideas from the programmes directly in their own work, including an elder in Hirshabelle preparing to mediate a farmer-herder conflict and the former *Garasho-wadaag* host brought the programme’s peacemaking approach into a ministerial delegation, addressing a long-running conflict in Galmudug.

Environmental impacts include a reported reduction in tree cutting around Balad in Hirshabelle state, and the establishment of a joint local police force to prevent deforestation and illegal logging near Galkayo in Galmudug state.

The programmes also provide timely information for disaster preparedness. With the impending Super El Niño in Somalia in 2026, this effort is being heightened.

“

Hiloow serves as an early-warning mechanism for the recurring floods of the Shabelle River. Many people who live around the riverbank heeded those warnings and took preventive measures before the water reached them.

– Community dialogue participant from Marib

These examples illustrate how accessible media can improve perceptions of conflicts and behaviour, promote cooperation, reduce tensions and support communities in managing shared environmental and climate challenges.

Lessons learned

Continuous learning has been essential for shaping and adapting the project implementation and generating insights for integrated climate, environment, peace and security programming. The key lessons include:

LESSON 1:

FOCUSING ON SHARED ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES FOSTERS SHARED RESPONSIBILITY AND CREATES OPEN, INCLUSIVE ENTRY POINTS FOR DIALOGUE.

Analysing and addressing climate-related and environmental drivers of conflict helps communities broaden conflict resolution efforts beyond immediate disputes to collectively address underlying climate, environmental and resource pressures. Similarly, framing dialogue around environmental issues, such as land degradation, water scarcity and climate disasters, makes dialogue less politicised and more accessible, especially for women and young people, who are often excluded from traditional decision-making and conflict resolution processes. This approach has led to actions, such as ending charcoal production and coordinating flood relief.

LESSON 2:

MOVING FROM DIALOGUE TO ACTION REQUIRES STRONG PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCES.

CSAPs developed in collaboration with affected communities effectively align local priorities, and guide peace and adaptation strategies by identifying risks and practical solutions for climate resilience and resource management. Combined with conflict transformation approaches and dialogue, community-developed CSAPs build trust by focusing on shared environmental concerns rather than sensitive political or historical grievances. However, limited funding, technical expertise and project scope often hinder implementation. Realising complex community visions requires mobilising additional resources and building strong partnerships across development, environmental and humanitarian sectors.

LESSON 3:

LOCAL OWNERSHIP AND CAPACITY DRIVE IMPACT.

Empowering communities and local government actors with practical skills, resources and decision-making power strengthens dialogue, mediation, crisis response and environmental action. Participants valued training in regenerative approaches, such as sustainable farming and land rehabilitation, which contributed to positive change. However, scaling these efforts from pilot initiatives to broader community impact requires sustained investment from donors, technical support and hardware solutions⁵ from practitioners on the ground, especially in underserved and remote areas.

⁵ Practical help such as the building of physical structures (e.g wells, irrigation systems etc.)

LESSON 4:

LEVERAGING RADIO FOR BROAD, INCLUSIVE CLIMATE AND PEACE DISCOURSE.

Radio programmes have proven highly effective in raising awareness of climate, environmental and conflict issues, sharing practical solutions and acting as an early warning mechanism. In contrast to traditional dialogue approaches in Somalia, radio reaches far more people – including those in remote and hard-to-access areas – fostering cooperation, preparedness and social cohesion. The success of radio programmes depends on broadcasting engaging and relevant content, and featuring diverse speakers, interactive listener participation and dramatic storytelling to make complex issues relatable. Media initiatives can play a crucial role in countering narratives that incite violence, while amplifying messages of peace. Sustaining and expanding these media initiatives will further strengthen community resilience and engagement.

Recommendations for practitioners, policymakers and donors

BUILD AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL PEACEBUILDING APPROACH AROUND SHARED COMMUNITY CONCERNS

- Combine conflict, climate and environmental analysis to address both immediate disputes and underlying pressures such as water scarcity, land degradation and resource competition.
- Embed gender and intersectional analysis, inclusive facilitation and dedicated spaces where needed so that women, young people and other underrepresented groups can meaningfully shape priorities and responses.

CONNECT COMMUNITY DIALOGUE AND ACTION PLANNING WITH THE PARTNERSHIPS AND CAPACITIES NEEDED FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Establish collaboration across peacebuilding, development, environmental and humanitarian sectors early in the process, recognising that some community priorities can be addressed through relatively low-cost local action, while others require technical expertise, infrastructure and substantial investment.
- Ensure that implementation, particularly infrastructure and resource-related interventions, is conflict-sensitive and follows Do No Harm principles, taking account of how benefits, access and resources may affect relationships between groups.
- Use Sustained Dialogue as a structured, community-owned platform for diverse community members and government actors to guide and follow up on joint action.

STRENGTHEN LOCALLY LED PEACEBUILDING AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION, PARTICULARLY IN REMOTE AND UNDERSERVED AREAS

- Prioritise rural and remote communities where violent conflict tends to erupt more frequently due to lack of sustained peacebuilding support. Strengthen local capacities in these areas to address tensions earlier and reduce reliance on outside actors.
- Invest in the skills, resources and decision-making role of local peacebuilders, community groups and local government actors through micro-funding for example.
- Ensure flexible and accessible support for grassroots initiatives, combined with technical assistance, peer exchange and practical learning, to enable locally developed approaches to grow beyond short-term, small-scale initiatives.

MOBILISE LOCAL AND DIASPORA RESOURCES WHILE AVOIDING DEPENDENCY ON EXTERNAL SUPPORT

- Build on existing community capacities, resources and systems, including low-cost actions that communities can initiate themselves.
- Support communities and local authorities to mobilise financial, material and human resources locally and engage diaspora networks constructively for financing, expertise and connections.
- Use external support to complement rather than replace local initiative and responsibility.

SUPPORT THE USE OF ACCESSIBLE MEDIA TO EXTEND CLIMATE AND PEACE DIALOGUE BEYOND FACE-TO-FACE PROCESSES

- Support regular, engaging media programming (both, traditional and new (social) media) that reaches large and diverse audiences, including remote and hard-to-access communities, and combines practical information, early warning, dialogue, creative ideas and peace messaging.
- Ensure diverse guests, interactive audience participation and storytelling to make complex issues accessible, while amplifying constructive alternatives to narratives that fuel violence.

PROVIDE LONG-TERM AND COORDINATED FINANCING FOR LOCALLY OWNED ENVIRONMENTAL PEACEBUILDING

- Align donor funding and policy frameworks with integrated, locally led approaches and recognise that larger adaptation, environmental restoration and infrastructure priorities may require substantial and sustained investment beyond the scope of peacebuilding programmes alone.
- Strengthen coordination between funding streams and sectors, provide sufficient flexibility for programmes to adapt over time, and create pathways for sustained financing through government, donors, the private sector, diaspora and other relevant actors.

Outlook

Building on the progress and learnings so far, the project will continue to strengthen the integration of climate resilience and peacebuilding in Somalia. Future efforts will focus on deepening the inclusive inter-community Sustained Dialogue processes, further developing the capacity of local actors and supporting practical IPN initiatives. Emphasis will be placed on overcoming barriers to participation for women and young people, scaling successful approaches to reach remote and underserved areas, and increasing awareness of the links between climate, environment, peace and security. Through these activities, the project aims to further empower communities, enhance local ownership and contribute to a more sustainable and peaceful future for Hirshabelle and Galmudug.

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