

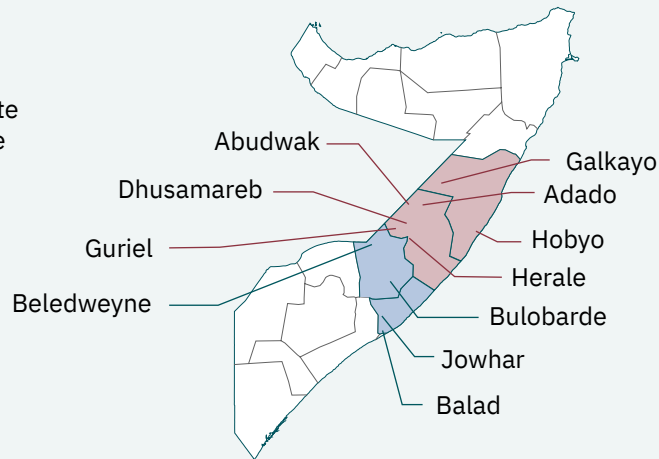
Evaluation Synthesis: Somalia Project

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



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 in the federal member states of Hirshabelle and Galmudug has enabled local communities to **build mutual understanding, and collectively address shared challenges** such as resource scarcity and environmental degradation.
- Sustained dialogue on climate security risks between divided communities has helped **build trust and cooperation**, resulting in reciprocal community visits, formal agreements and joint crisis responses.
- Developing climate security action plans (CSAPs)¹ with communities has created a **strong foundation for peacebuilding and adaptation strategies**; effective implementation of the community strategies outlined in the CSAPs now depends on strong partnerships with development, environmental and humanitarian actors.
- Focusing on environmental challenges and women's leadership has facilitated **less politicised, more accessible spaces that engage more women and young people** – groups often excluded from traditional peace 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 nine dialogue sessions involving **60 rival clan members**, fostering cooperation on shared climate and conflict challenges, including water scarcity and deforestation.



Supported over **100 local peace leaders** through funding for the **Insider Peacebuilders Network (IPN)**,² enabling **19 local initiatives** that improved community relations, resource management and environmental protection.



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



Increased public outreach through **58 radio episodes** that raised awareness of climate-related conflict risks, promoted cooperation on resource use and early climate action, and inspired the formation of grassroots peacebuilding committees, including in remote areas.

Project Overview

Recurrent clan and resource-based conflicts in Somalia are closely interlinked with escalating climate shocks, threatening livelihoods and amplifying humanitarian crises. In 2024, more than 316,000 people were displaced by inter-community violence, mainly driven by competition over increasingly scarce natural resources – such as water, pasture and arable land – after six failed rainy seasons. Climate-induced environmental degradation 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. The project addresses the nexus of conflict, environmental degradation and climate change by strengthening community and institutional capacities for environmental peacebuilding in Hirshabelle and Galmudug. The project's focus on collaborative climate adaptation, environmental stewardship and resource management aims to transform conflict and foster lasting peace.

Key project activities – which promoted inclusive dialogue on conflict and environmental challenges, ensuring the participation of elders, women, young people and local leaders – included:

- Facilitating six-day community dialogues (Shirarka)² across multiple districts in Hirshabelle and Galmudug, engaging 50 participants to build awareness and social cohesion around climate, environment, conflict and peace.
- Developing CSAPs with communities in climate-conflict hotspots to identify risks, set priorities for adaptation and resource management, and reduce tensions.

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 organises are inclusive, bringing together participants from all societal groups and clans.

- Facilitating sustained dialogue processes in two hotspots through intra- and inter-clan meetings to build trust and address shared challenges outlined in the CSAPs.
- Strengthening the peacebuilding and mediation skills and capacities of IPN members and state officials through capacity-development workshops focused on joint 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 cohesion, reduce tensions and promote environmental action in Hirshabelle and Galmudug.
- Producing bi-weekly radio broadcasts – *Hiloow* (longing) in Hirshabelle and *Garasho-wadaag* (sharing of knowledge) in Galmudug – combining drama and expert discussions to raise awareness of the link between climate change, environmental degradation and conflict, promote collaborative solutions, and reach rural and remote audiences.

Key Outcomes and Insights

An outcome evaluation of the first two phases of the project (January 2023–March 2025) highlighted the following key results and achievements.³

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

In Hirshabelle state, nine dialogue sessions brought together 60 participants – including elders, women, young people and local leaders – from rival clans from two neighbouring areas. Guided by conflict-sensitive facilitation, the sustained dialogue process enabled participants to build mutual trust, openly address grievances, explore the links between climate stressors and conflict, and develop a shared vision for peaceful coexistence. The localised CSAP provided a structured, locally owned framework for identifying key, interconnected challenges – including extreme heat, drought, desertification and food shortages which fuel competition – and for shaping commitments to cooperation.

The process resulted in informal agreements on shared challenges such as water scarcity, deforestation and resource competition. In addition, the process established direct communication channels between clans and reciprocal community visits, demonstrating greater trust and willingness to cooperate. Project staff and IPN co-facilitators will continue to monitor implementation of the agreements. Notably, during one of the sessions participants from both clans jointly pledged to stop charcoal production in their communities – directly addressing environmental degradation, while contributing to climate mitigation and signalling a deeper sense of shared responsibility.

LARGE-SCALE COMMUNITY DIALOGUE (SHIRARKA) HAS DEEPENED UNDERSTANDING OF CLIMATE, ENVIRONMENT AND PEACE, WHILE STRENGTHENING SOCIAL BONDS.

Seven Shirarka – multi-day Somali dialogue assemblies – were held in Adale, Dhusamareb, Galkayo, Guriel, Mahaday, Mataban and Warsheikh, bringing together elders, local officials, religious leaders, women, young people and representatives from multiple clans. Organised by the Berghof Foundation and rooted in the Somali tradition of the Shir (a six-day local assembly), the Shirarka (plural) combined traditional conflict transformation and dialogue with a focus on climate and environmental challenges.

³ 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.

Participants consistently reported a deeper understanding of how climate change and environmental degradation exacerbate conflict and recognised the implications of these linkages for their communities. The Shirarka also strengthened social bonds, with many attendees describing a notable shift towards collaboration and unity. As one participant in Guriel reflected:

“

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.

-Dialogue participant in Guriel

The conflict-sensitive design and facilitation combined with the less contentious environmental peacebuilding approach of the Shirarka allowed many participants to feel comfortable addressing historical grievances and speaking openly. Consequently, several communities have requested more frequent Shirarka to continue building relationships. At the Mahaday Shir, this greater cohesion enabled participants to jointly de-escalate a violent incident outside the session using the mediation skills they had acquired, demonstrating practical cooperation and growing confidence. Additionally, at the Mahaday Shir, 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 HAS STRENGTHENED SOCIAL COHESION AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP.

By training IPN members on regenerative farming, sustainable resource management and mediation strategies, integrating IPN members into ongoing dialogue processes, and providing micro-grants and technical guidance, the project supported the launch of numerous IPN-led initiatives. In 2024, the IPN organised nearly three times as many initiatives as in 2023 (increasing from five to 14), ranging from traditional conflict resolution sessions to awareness campaigns and community events. This growth has enhanced the network's credibility, and increased local ownership of peace and climate action in both Hirshabelle and Galmudug.

Specific initiatives have included youth football tournaments between rival clans to reduce tensions, as well as awareness-raising campaigns against tree felling and charcoal production. These initiatives have yielded visible improvements in inter-community relations, environmental protection and resource management. As one IPN member noted:

“

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 CHALLENGES.

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, 58 episodes have aired across the two states, covering conflict analysis, environmental degradation, mediation and collaborative action.

Listener feedback demonstrates that the programmes have increased public understanding of the climate-conflict nexus, encouraged constructive solutions, and inspired peaceful, community-led responses to shared challenges. As one listener from Galmudug noted:

“

It [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 programmes also provide timely information on disaster preparation. A listener from Hirshabelle reflected:

“

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

Additionally, the moderator of the *Garasho-wadaag* radio programme, shared that three rural communities close to Galkayo jointly established a police force to protect against deforestation and fight against the illegal logging. These examples illustrate how accessible media can promote cooperation, reduce tensions and support communities in managing shared environmental and climate challenges.

INCLUSIVE DIALOGUE FORMATS HAVE EMPOWERED WOMEN TO SHAPE LOCAL PEACE AND ENVIRONMENTAL EFFORTS.

The project's various inclusive dialogue formats have elevated diverse perspectives. By framing discussions around climate and environmental challenges, which are often perceived as less politically charged, the project particularly enabled women to participate meaningfully in peacebuilding and climate action. For example, during the first inter-clan dialogue session, the active engagement of women in identifying family connections strengthened social ties and discouraged reliance on violence to resolve conflicts.

Lessons and Recommendations

Continuous learning has been essential for adapting project implementation, and generating insights for integrated climate, environmental and peace programming. Key lessons and recommendations include:

LESSON 1:

ENVIRONMENTAL TOPICS FOSTER SHARED RESPONSIBILITY AND OPEN INCLUSIVE ENTRY POINTS FOR DIALOGUE.

Addressing climate and environmental challenges in peacebuilding helps communities recognise their interdependence, and encourages collective ownership of both problems and solutions. This approach has led to joint actions, such as ending charcoal production and coordinating flood relief. Similarly, framing discussions 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. However, persistent social norms and the influence of male elders continue to limit participation, especially in face-to-face activities, highlighting the need for targeted inclusion strategies.

Recommendations for practitioners and policymakers

Peacebuilding practitioners should strategically use environmental challenges as entry points to engage underrepresented groups. Gender-sensitive facilitation, and regular feedback from women and other marginalised groups reduce barriers to participation and improve programming. Offering dedicated spaces and targeted workshops, alongside integrating gender analysis, ensures that diverse needs and strengths are addressed. Recognising intersectional roles, especially regarding climate and conflict, increases the effectiveness of interventions.

Policymakers and donors can support these efforts by prioritising funding for inclusive, gender-responsive climate and peacebuilding initiatives; requiring intersectional analysis in project design and evaluation; and supporting long-term, locally led strategies that empower marginalised groups to shape responses to environmental and conflict-related challenges.

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 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.

Recommendations for practitioners and policymakers

Peacebuilding practitioners should establish cross-sectoral partnerships from the outset to ensure the full implementation of community action plans. Practitioners need to proactively mobilise external support and resources, and secure long-term commitment to avoid creating unmet expectations that could undermine trust among both local and international actors. Meanwhile, policymakers and donors must promote coordinated funding and integrated approaches, ensuring that efforts across sectors are complementary and mutually reinforcing.

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 particularly 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 and technical support, especially in underserved and remote areas.

Recommendations for practitioners and policymakers

Increased investment in developing the capacity of local peacebuilders – focusing on those in remote, underserved and insecure locations – is key. Together with local stakeholders, practitioners should support flexible, accessible funding mechanisms for grassroots initiatives, employing creative approaches to increase engagement, and allocating sufficient resources to ensure inclusion and safety. Facilitating peer exchange and learning across different contexts enables local actors to strengthen skills, share knowledge and adapt best practices to local settings. Donors and policymakers can support these efforts by promoting policies and funding portfolios that prioritise local ownership and capacity-building, ensuring that resources reach those best placed to drive effective change.

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 providing early warnings of disasters. 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 and policymakers

Practitioners should collaborate with government and civil society to expand peace-orientated media as a strategic tool for promoting awareness, dialogue and social cohesion. Consistent and accessible programming across radio, social media and other media must prioritise reaching diverse audiences, particularly young people. Media initiatives should prioritise developing content that is inclusive – reflecting gender, age, social and ethnic diversity in topics, facilitation, guest selection and audience participation – while actively countering narratives that incite violence and amplifying messages of peace. Donors and policymakers should provide catalytic funding for inclusive media initiatives that promote peace and climate resilience at scale. Support should focus on building community capacity to lead these efforts independently and on creating pathways for sustainable funding from the private sector or local government.

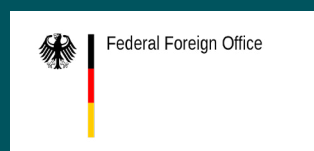
Outlook

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 inclusive inter-community dialogue, 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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