

## Introduction

The Consortium implements the BRCiS programme in 33 districts across all Federal Member States of Somalia. Its overarching objective is to support and accompany vulnerable communities in Somalia on their pathways to resilience through a nutrition-sensitive, integrated and adaptive approach. BRCiS Phase 2 is the second iteration of the first multi-year resilience project funding by FCDO in Somalia. As such, it is an iterative project, with learnings derived from Phase 1 brought forward into Phase 2 and community-designed plans reviewed annually to adapt and adjust to learning, challenges and opportunities. It is a purposefully adaptive resilience-building programming that relies heavily on a community participation approach and concentrates on three primary implementation streams:

- Integrated community action plans (CAPs)
- A focus on shock responsiveness to protect resilience gains against recurrent shocks
- Enhanced learning within a collaborating, learning and adapting framework

## Theory of Change

The Consortium developed the Theory of Change (TOC) with the guidance of resilience expert Peter Hailey through the Centre for Humanitarian Change. The TOC guides the Consortium's project implementation and is underpinned by its learning agenda, which is designed to mirror the TOC and test assumptions laid out therein. By design, the TOC and learning agenda routinely measure BRCiS programme outcomes to ensure an adaptive learning cycle and inform strategic guidance.

The broadline TOC, which the Consortium refines as the project progresses, is as follows:

IF:

- BRCiS creates a stronger collaborative culture and environment of learning and adaptation, transforming its approach to addressing systemic resilience issues, and;
- BRCiS strengthens communities' resilience capacities by reinforcing a sustainable nutrition-sensitive livelihoods approach, and;
- BRCiS uses a harmonised approach to community engagement and learning, and;
- BRCiS' programmes promote local accountability and governance, and;
- BRCiS uses a risk-informed and shock-responsive approach to ensure early action, and;
- BRCiS has context-based integrated programmes by using an area-based approach;

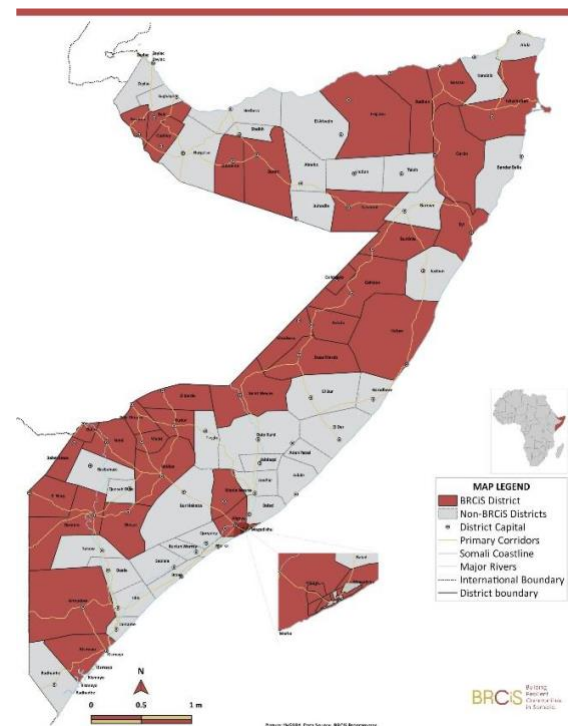


Figure 2. Map of the districts in which BRCiS operates.

## THEN

- The programme will contribute to the increased resilience capacity of chronically vulnerable individuals, households, communities and systems, and;
- Vulnerable and marginalised communities will be more resilient to recurrent shocks and stresses, engage in sustainable nutrition-sensitive livelihoods strategies and contribute to the long-term development goals outlined in the National Development Plan.

### Nutrition-sensitive lens

In line with its historical purpose, BRCiS provides assistance during hunger crises, intending to address their root causes by considering their emergence and recurrence through a systems lens. Hunger crises in Somalia are often the result of food production failures and challenges in food access combined with a failure of political and international responses. Food production failures are recurrent and often relate to climatic shocks, such as delayed or poor rains and flooding, but can also result from locust invasion or conflict. Afflicted by abnormally high levels of child malnutrition and mortality, Somali communities lack buffers to absorb even relatively small production fluctuations.

Nutrition-sensitive programming remains a focus area of the Consortium to ensure the development of a knowledge base for a complete learning loop. Progress towards this objective was noted through the development of a nutrition-sensitive tool aimed at heightening sector integration for improved nutrition outcomes by assessing interim and longer-term impacts. The tool is a guidance document designed to feed into the health and nutrition learning agenda and is in place at the field level.

### Programme approach

#### **Integrated community action plans**

BRCiS has invested significantly in ensuring that programming is driven by the communities and responsive to changes in the context and that underlying causes hindering resilience are addressed. The Consortium designed the project based on an area approach with two levels of community implication: participant communities and area communities.

Participant communities were selected as a cluster of geographically close communities during the inception phase; they are at the core of the programming. Area communities are communities located in the direct vicinity of the participant communities; while they are not benefitting from the full scope of project interventions, they are part of the catchment area for some activities and particularly benefit from basic services and early action. Participant communities are fully engaged in the design of contingency plans and CAPs for their communities, thanks to specific community structures and groups that are supported and empowered throughout the project's lifetime.

The contingency plans include community-led early action and crisis modifier-funded interventions that are actioned based on the BRCiS EWEA System. The CAPs include activities that are designed to address long-term vulnerabilities. Like the contingency plans, CAPs target specific shocks and changes identified through the P-FIM approach and include interventions across all project outcomes to fit the specific context. In addition to the interventions prioritised through community participation processes, the project mainstreamed the delivery of

health interventions, which were destined for improved health and nutrition outcomes for mothers and children.

BRCiS' success in developing meaningful and reliable relationships with communities cannot be underestimated; it has given the programme a distinctive advantage in preparedness, planning and response. In concrete terms, BRCiS has been able to elicit an unparalleled response from its communities for mobilisation, sensitisation and the delivery of support during emergencies. As highlighted by the Consortium Management Unit monitoring data, female representation and leadership in CRCs directly contributed to stronger social cohesion within BRCiS participant communities. Community ownership was also evidenced, with communities contributing approximately 4% of the value of project activities — close to GBP 2.5 million.

### **Focus on shock responsiveness to protect resilience gains against recurrent shocks by sequencing interventions**

A continuum of interventions is necessary to support the communities of Somalia on their resilience-building journey. In contrast with the traditional emergency–recovery–development continuum, the continuum of interventions acknowledges that some early response and emergency interventions will be required alongside the intervention addressing root causes of vulnerabilities; that is, they are not mutually exclusive. With tailored layering and sequencing of interventions, BRCiS 2 strived to maximise the impact of donor funding and consistently protect the communities' resilience gains. Thanks to its community structures and its EWEA System, BRCiS has been at the forefront of adaptive programming, responding to crises in coordination with local authorities and communities.

To inform operational decisions around the timely activation of early action activities, BRCiS piloted an early warning data collection system starting in October 2019 to collect monthly information on key shocks and stresses. A dashboard<sup>1</sup> was developed in August 2020 to then visualise the data. Relatedly, a user survey conducted with BRCiS' early warning focal points showed that the indicators collected were utilised in several ways, including to activate early action or provide evidence-based insights when Members were working together with communities and local authorities to advocate additional donor funding.

### **Enhanced learning within a collaborating, learning and adapting framework**

Whereas replication is often an issue for agencies that follow strict guidelines, the participatory knowledge production structures set up by the Consortium Management Unit have created a learning and adapting environment in which BRCiS Members are more confident in adopting practices that have been tried and tested by other Members. Through its Challenge Fund, BRCiS has been tackling the innovation hurdle with more intention than other projects. The Consortium setting is an ideal space to strike the right balance between collaboration and competition, which is necessary to stimulate fail-fast/learn-fast processes.

The positioning and reputation of the Consortium in the humanitarian, resilience and development landscape in Somalia offer it a chance to influence the humanitarian and development sector by taking the lead on some specific agendas, such as EWEA, community participation and ownership, and DRR. In its eighth year of constant

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<sup>1</sup> Available at [https://brcis.shinyapps.io/EWEA\\_dashboard/](https://brcis.shinyapps.io/EWEA_dashboard/).

learning, the Consortium has evolved to meet emerging needs quickly, putting in place systems and partnerships that centre on the communities while being adaptable and responsive to the changing context.

[...]

## Outcome 1: Community structures

The first outcome of the BRCiS project lays the foundation for working through the existing community structures, to ensure that the needs of vulnerable populations are the forefront of programming throughout the remainder of the existing outcomes. This is done through working collaboratively and effectively, identifying innovative programme approaches and ways of working, and utilising learning to improve programme design and implementation. Sub-outcomes are as follows:

- Outcome 1.1: Local stakeholders actively influence and contribute to the programme.
- Outcome 1.2: BRCiS staff replace under-performing interventions with new innovative and higher-impact programming in a harmonised way.

BRCiS bases its model on the community-led approach to programming. By communicating their needs and priorities, communities enable project teams to initiate undertakings that build long-term community resilience. The Consortium used P-FIM to engage local actors and worked to continuously build the capacity of local organisations. It established several types of committees in these communities to address local response to crisis and strengthen economic resilience, focusing on recruiting traditional community leaders, as well as people from marginalised groups to lead them. In total, the Consortium implemented 154 interventions for improving social capital and collective action, targeting over 2,600 households.

Of the committees established by the Consortium, CRCs play an integral role in establishing volunteer committees and associations that represent community members in decision-making that affects livelihoods, crisis prevention and response. The programme established 194 CRCs and worked to include members of marginalised populations — including women, people with disabilities and marginalised clans — in these committees, as they often do not have a voice in community decision-making or political discourse. Without proper representation, their needs remain unmet, increasing their vulnerability in times of crisis. Ensuring adequate representation of these groups also reduces the risk of conflict by meeting the needs of all and preventing imbalanced decision-making at the community level.

Survey data collected between July 2019 and February 2020 further illustrates an upward trend in community participation. A 10% increase was reported by participant communities when asked if their community supported their needs. Additionally, a phone survey conducted by the Monitoring and Evaluation for the Somalia Humanitarian, Health and Resilience Programmes of FCDO, which assessed over 750 CRC members, provided strong evidence for strengthened female representation and leadership in the CRCs. The assessments highlighted that more than half (55%) of the leadership positions were occupied by female representatives. This finding is also confirmed by programmatic records collected by BRCiS.

CRC responsibilities include implementing projects and resolving disputes within communities. CRCs also encourage villagers to help maintain the community infrastructure, including boreholes, water facilities and health facilities. Through regular meetings and activities, CRCs employ the P-FIM to maintain a community-led

approach when making decisions about new or ongoing projects. For example, CRCs build seasonal calendars that link key livelihood activities with hazard risk exposure, enabling them to determine actions that will increase resilience. They also create a wealth ranking by investigating community members' perceptions of wealth differences and inequalities. This ranking helps the committees identify vulnerable families so they can help them strengthen their coping strategies in preparation for identified seasonal hazards.

Through CRCs, the project stimulates and strengthens Somalis' social capital — the social resources that people rely on to make a living and weather hardship. Marginalised people who gain representation in community committees gain connections that they can draw on in times of need. The community as a whole also connects horizontally through committee activities and vertically through the committees' cooperation with overarching government structures. Evaluation surveys found that the percentage of households reporting that their community supports their needs rose by 14% after programme implementation.

In addition to CRCs, the Consortium promotes community structures by supporting CHWs, community health volunteers, early warning committees, water committees and business associations such as village savings and loan associations (VSLAs). The CRCs are also in charge of ensuring sustainability through community contributions. BRCIS communities contribute 5% of all infrastructure costs from their own pockets, ensuring that ownership and sustainability of the project remains at the centre of the community and represents its needs.

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**Text box 1. The People-First Impact Method.**

## P-FIM

Since 2018, the BRCiS Consortium has used P-FIM to foster two-way dialogue with communities. P-FIM puts people at the centre by cancelling organisational mandates and agendas. It consists of two simple questions: 1) What important changes do you observe in your community? and 2) What do you think that you can do about it? To encourage flowing discussion, the questions are asked to small groups of peers — farmers, community leaders, young girls, people with disabilities etc. — that tend to share perspectives, giving them a safe space to share their concerns and hopes.

P-FIM builds mutual respect and trust with and among communities by starting with people, their abilities, knowledge, challenges and innovations. It establishes a true understanding of the context from the community perspective and from there determines how agencies can add value. BRCiS employs P-FIM to guide programming at all levels of engagement and hand decision-making back to the communities it serves. This process involves training local staff embedded in the local context and moving the focus away from apparent needs to instead focus on what is important to the people in the community.

