Weathering the risk in Somalia

An evaluation and analysis of outcomes

OUTCOME REPORT

Berghof Foundation

ABOUT THIS PAPER

This report has been produced within the framework of the project "Infrastructures for Peace and Environmental Peacebuilding in Hirshabelle and Galmudug State, Somalia" which is implemented by the Berghof Foundation with support from the German Federal Foreign Office and is part of the Weathering Risk Peace Pillar led by adelphi research.

WEATHERING RISK
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1 Executive summary

This outcome evaluation examines the results and emerging impact of the Weathering Risk Peace Pillar project, implemented by the Berghof Foundation in federal member states of **Hirshabelle and Galmudug, Somalia**, between 2023 and 2026. The project addresses the increasingly interconnected challenges of climate change, environmental degradation, conflict and insecurity in Somalia by integrating environmental peacebuilding approaches into local peace infrastructures and community-based conflict transformation processes. The evaluation assesses progress towards the project's intended outcomes and Theory of Change (ToC), identifies lessons learned and generates recommendations to inform future programming.

The evaluation adopts a **mixed-methods approach** centred on outcome harvesting, complemented by surveys, focus group discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews (KIIs), workshop reflections, feedback from guests and listeners of the project's radio programmes, community outreach activities conducted by the Insider Peacebuilders Network (IPN) and insights from an external impact evaluation finalised by an independent evaluator. Recognising the complexity of the Somali context and the non-linear nature of peacebuilding processes, the evaluation emphasises the **identification of behavioural, relational and community-level changes** rather than seeking to attribute impact through linear causality.

Overall, the findings indicate that the project has **made significant contributions to strengthening local peace infrastructures**, increasing awareness of the climate-environment-peace-security (CEPS) nexus and fostering cooperation and dialogue around shared environmental and conflict-related challenges. The project activities have created new spaces for engagement, strengthened relationships among conflict stakeholders and prompted more preventive and collaborative approaches to conflict transformation.

The **Sustained Dialogue (SD) processes** in the Middle Shabelle region and, more recently, in the Galguduud region, have demonstrated that structured and locally rooted dialogue initiatives **can strengthen trust and communication** even in contexts shaped by protracted conflict. Through regular intra- and inter-community dialogue sessions, communities that had previously interacted primarily through violence have begun to develop new forms of communication and cooperation. The SD committees established through the process have evolved into **locally embedded mechanisms** capable of responding to and preventing the escalation of emerging tensions and facilitate practical cooperation around shared environmental and livelihood concerns. Tangible outcomes include the prevention of revenge killings, the reopening of shared grazing areas, improved communication between communities and the revival of local markets.

The evaluation also found that the framing of dialogue initiatives and related activities through an **environmental peacebuilding** lens provided an effective and less politically sensitive entry point for cooperation. Joint analysis of climate stressors, environmental degradation and resource-related pressures enabled communities to identify shared interests and recognise their mutual interdependence. Practical issues such as grazing access and water management emerged as important catalysts for rebuilding trust and fostering cooperation. While meaningful relational and behavioural changes were achieved among individuals directly engaged in our activities, wider shifts in social cohesion will require longer-term engagement and inclusive participation beyond the current configuration.

The support provided to the **IPN**, a core and longstanding element of Berghof's Somalia programming, strengthened locally led peacebuilding efforts and generated tangible results. The evaluation found strong evidence that IPN members have strengthened their conflict transformation, mediation, environmental peacebuilding and climate-security analysis capacities, with many actively applying these skills within their communities. The IPN has contributed to strengthening local peace infrastructures by fostering new connections among elders, women, youth, civil society actors, religious leaders and professionals who had previously not collaborated systematically on conflict resolution efforts. Increasingly, the network has functioned as **an early warning and response mechanism**, identifying tensions and acting promptly to reduce the likelihood of escalation, through inclusive dialogue and mediation.

Importantly, the project has also contributed to **gradual shifts in local perceptions and practices of conflict resolution**, with dialogue increasingly emerging as the first response to disputes over natural resources, replacing violence as the default means of addressing such conflicts. Communities increasingly view peacebuilding as a shared societal responsibility rather than solely the domain of traditional elders or authorities. IPN-supported activities have further encouraged greater participation of women and youth in community dialogue and mediation processes, although significant barriers to meaningful inclusion remain. The findings suggest that the most pronounced outcomes generated through the IPN are currently occurring at the **individual and relational levels**. However, findings from an external, independent programme evaluation show that these changes also translate into broader **community-level normative shifts**, particularly a move from violence to constructive dialogue as the default first response to land, water and pasture disputes.

The **radio programmes** *Garasho-wadaag* and *Hiloow* have proven to be among the project's most effective tools for reaching wider audiences. Through drama, expert discussions and audience calls, the programmes disseminate information and key messaging on the intersection of conflict, climate change and environmental degradation and have evolved into sustained platforms for dialogue that are embedded into the communities. Findings indicate that the programmes have contributed to **increased awareness and behavioural change among listeners**, including in rural and violence-prone areas that often fall beyond the reach of this project and other peacebuilding efforts. Listeners reported a stronger understanding of the links between climate change and conflict, more positive attitudes toward peaceful resource-sharing and stronger awareness of environmental protection and care. In some areas, the radio programmes have also functioned as **informal early-warning and preparedness mechanisms**, particularly in relation to recurring floods in Hirshabelle State.

The large-scale traditional dialogues, ***Shirarka***, also made significant contributions to awareness raising and social cohesion. By adapting the traditional Somali Shir (singular) format to integrate foundational discussions on environmental peacebuilding and the CEPS nexus, the project created **culturally grounded and trusted spaces for communities** to collectively analyse shared challenges and identify local responses. Participants consistently reported a stronger understanding of the links between climate change, environmental degradation and conflict, as well as an increased willingness to engage in collective action. The *Shirarka* also **strengthened relationships across societal divides** by creating opportunities for inclusive dialogue and collaborative problem-solving. The *Shirarka* largely achieved their intended objectives as entry points for engagement with communities and local authorities. They have played a critical role in establishing Berghof's presence in new districts, introducing the concept of broad and inclusive community dialogue and enabling local staff to identify key community stakeholders and peacebuilders, including many individuals who later became members of the IPN.

Overall, the evaluation demonstrated that using shared environmental pressures as an entry point for dialogue can **create important opportunities for cooperation, trust-building and collective problem-solving** in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. While many of the observed changes are most visible in local relationships and conflict resolution practices, the evidence also demonstrated wider shifts in community conflict response, particularly in relation to disputes over land, water and pasture. As trusted channels for dialogue and early action have strengthened, communities are increasingly addressing these disputes through dialogue rather than violence, reducing the risk that they escalate into violent conflict.

2 Introduction

2.1 Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The main objective of this outcome evaluation was to **gather data and evidence on the outcomes of the Weathering Risk Peace Pillar project**, implemented by the Berghof Foundation in federal member states of Hirshabelle and Galmudug, Somalia, between 2023 and 2026 and to assess the extent to which these align with the expected outcomes of the project, as well as to test the current Theories of Change (ToCs). The evaluation further aimed to **identify challenges and gaps** relevant to future programming and planning. Integrating the findings of this evaluation into ongoing learning processes will help the Berghof Foundation adapt and further strengthen its Somalia programme, enabling it to respond more effectively to the needs of the Somali context.

This **report is structured around the project's three objectives** and corresponding ToCs. Following an overview of the context, project design and evaluation methodology, the report presents the key findings for each objective, examining the extent to which the expected outcomes were achieved and assessing the validity of the underlying assumptions. For each objective, the report outlines the project's approach, analyses the key outcomes and changes observed and reflects on lessons learned. The report concludes with an assessment of the project's overall contribution to change across the individual, community and institutional levels, as well as recommendations for strengthening future programming and enhancing its transformative impact.

2.2 Country context

Somalia is widely considered among the countries **most vulnerable to the combined impacts of climate change, environmental degradation and violent conflict**. Recurrent droughts, floods and resource scarcity increasingly intersect with weak governance structures, displacement and communal tensions, undermining livelihoods, human and environmental security and social cohesion. The Federal Member States of Hirshabelle and Galmudug remain highly exposed to interconnected climate and conflict stressors. Climate-sensitive livelihoods, from pastoralism and agro-pastoralism to fisheries, form the backbone of local economies, meaning that shifting weather patterns and environmental degradation compound existing vulnerabilities.

Between 2020 and 2023, Somalia experienced its longest and most severe drought in four decades, marked by five consecutive failed rainy seasons. These conditions contributed to widespread displacement and massive livestock losses severely undermining household food security and rural incomes. According to the Somali Disaster Management Agency the frequency of droughts has tripled over the past 30 years, while rainfall during the *Deyr* season (October-December) in parts of central and southern Somalia has at times fallen up to 60 percent below average, including in Galguduud and the Shabelle regions. In contrast, the 2023 *Deyr* season brought severe flooding that affected millions of people. Somalia continues to face severe climate-related shocks, with renewed drought conditions deepening humanitarian needs in 2025 and 2026.[1]

The recurring pattern of drought followed by flooding has deepened poverty and intensified competition over scarce natural resources, particularly in areas already affected by weak infrastructure, unresolved land disputes and limited state capacity. Research and climate-security analysis by SIPRI and other organisations describe climate change as a threat multiplier that exacerbates existing vulnerabilities and inter-communal tensions in already fragile contexts, including Somalia.

While addressing these complex challenges requires national-level responses, effective action must also be grounded in local realities. Needs and risks vary across rural and urban areas, districts and Federal Member States, making localised data and community-identified priorities essential for programming. The project, in consultation with the ministries of reconciliation of the respective states, identified two climate-conflict hotspots for focused engagement with distinct yet overlapping climate and conflict challenges.[2]

In the hotspot in Hirshabelle State, **prolonged droughts and increased water scarcity have intensified** competition over grazing land and migration routes. Pastoralists increasingly move into neighbouring territories in search of water and pasture after local resources are depleted, placing growing pressure on traditional arrangements that regulate seasonal migration and weakening adherence to them. As scarcity has worsened, host communities have become less willing to share already limited resources, contributing to localised tensions and violent disputes. Furthermore, **desertification**, sand dune expansion and the loss of vegetation cover have reduced cultivable land and pasture availability, undermining crop production and livestock survival. These pressures have also contributed to displacement into newly established IDP settlements around urban areas.

A similarly reinforcing cycle can be observed in the Galmudug hotspot. Recurrent droughts, declining pasture and livestock disease have pushed pastoralists to **increasingly fence previously communal grazing areas and claim private control over water sources and pastureland**. This has heightened tensions between communities and between residents and displaced pastoralist groups seeking access to shrinking resources. At the same time, harmful coping practices, such as tree cutting and charcoal trading, which contribute to deforestation, have accelerated land degradation and reduced soil resilience; this in turn lessens its capacity to prevent flooding and weakens pasture regeneration, increasing livelihood insecurity. The situation was further aggravated during the 2023 floods, which damaged infrastructure, disrupted trade routes and caused further livestock losses after years of drought had already weakened livelihoods.

These overlapping pressures have contributed to rising displacement, economic vulnerability and competition over resources, placing growing strain on traditional dispute resolution mechanisms. They illustrate how climate-related livelihood loss can reinforce social fragmentation and insecurity, particularly in contexts like these hotspots where land governance and conflict resolution mechanisms remain weak.

CLIMATE–SECURITY–LIVELIHOOD CYCLE IN HIRSHABELLE AND GALMUDUG, SOMALIA

How environmental and conflict factors interlink and exacerbate one another

EXAMPLE: HIRSHABELLE

Water scarcity and drought

↓

Herders move into neighbouring clan areas (2020–2023)

↓

Competition over grazing land and water (2020–2023)

↓

Clashes and livestock losses

↓

Displacement to Adale town

EXAMPLE: GALMUDUG

Drought and livestock loss

↓

Pasture becomes scarce

↓

Communal grazing land is enclosed

↓

Migration and tensions increase

↓

Charcoal production worsens degradation

↓

Floods deepen losses and conflict

CLIMATE TRENDS

- 5 consecutive failed rainy seasons (2020–2023)
- 7.8 million people affected by drought (2020–2023)
- › 3 million livestock deaths (2020–2023)
- Drought frequency tripled in the past 30 years
- 2023 Deyr floods affected ~2.48 million people; ~ 1.2 million displaced

NATIONAL CONTEXT

- 4.0 million people (21% of the population) in IPC Phase 3+ (Jan–Mar 2024)
- Displacement driven by drought is among the highest in recent years

2.3 Project design

The **Weathering Risk Peace Pillar** integrates climate and environmental security into peace programming in regions severely affected by conflict and climate risks. Led by adelphi in partnership with the Berghof Foundation, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and the European Institute of Peace, the consortium has been implementing projects in Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, Nigeria and the Bay of Bengal since 2023. These projects focus on the **climate-environment-peace-security (CEPS) nexus, using climate and environmental considerations as entry points for consultations, dialogue and mediation**. This flagship initiative is supported by the German Federal Foreign Office.

The project's overarching goal is to contribute to the constructive transformation of the vicious cycle of conflict, climate change and environmental degradation, through strengthening local infrastructures for peace (i4p), in the Somali Federal Member States of Galmudug and Hirshabelle, thereby enhancing climate resilience, reducing tensions and fostering social cohesion. Guided by an environmental peacebuilding approach, the project engages key community stakeholders and government actors across Hirshabelle and Galmudug through multiple interconnected pathways.

A central pillar of the intervention is the Insider Peacebuilders Network (IPN), a locally rooted i4p established and supported by Berghof over the past decade. The network comprises approximately 120 respected community members from diverse clans, districts, genders, age groups and professional backgrounds across both states. Their embeddedness within local communities, deep local legitimacy, extensive social networks and contextual knowledge, enables them to identify emerging tensions, facilitate dialogue across conflict divides, support mediation efforts and mobilise collective action before disputes escalate into widespread violence. Capacity development on conflict transformation, combined with technical and financial support for independent initiatives, has amplified these existing roles, while grounding them in an approach that links peaceful coexistence of communities with the protection, care and regeneration of the environment they depend on. This helps shift the focus from competing over scarce resources to collectively sustaining them. Moreover, this networked approach to environmental peacebuilding enables the IPN to function as an early warning and early response mechanism for both conflict and environmental risks, while contributing to longer-term social and environmental cohesion and resilience.

In response to the need for locally grounded analysis and solutions to ongoing climate and conflict stressors, the project facilitated a participatory process of developing Climate Security Action Plans (CSAPs) with communities in one climate-conflict hotspot in the Middle Shabelle region of Hirshabelle and one in the Galguduud region of Galmudug.[3] Through these processes, communities identified key drivers of insecurity and social stress, including increasingly erratic rainfall, prolonged droughts, recurrent flooding, declining pasture and water availability, desertification, livestock losses and growing displacement.

Both CSAPs were consultative processes undertaken with the IPN and local communities from each of the hotspots. The purpose was to not only analyse the relationship between climate stressors, environmental degradation and local conflict dynamics, but also to develop locally grounded strategies for strengthening peacebuilding, climate adaptation and community resilience. The CSAPs provided the

foundation for two SD processes that bring together stakeholders from communities from the hotspots to strengthen trust and relationships across divides and to put the strategies into collaborative action.

Finally, with the objective of broadening community awareness and shared understanding the CEPS nexus and strengthening agency and collective action on environmental peacebuilding, the project organises large-scale community dialogue (*Shirarka*) in selected districts of strategic importance and produces two biweekly radio programmes, *Garasho-wadaag* in Galmudug and *Hiloow* in Hirshabelle.

Theory of Change (ToC)

The project is underpinned by three Theories of Change (ToC) corresponding with the project objectives:

ToC 1:
IF we support focused and sustained conflict transformation processes in selected hotspots of protracted clan conflict through intra- and inter-clan consultations, dialogue and mediation, informed by an environmental peacebuilding approach; **THEN** the clans and communities will be able to find collaborative ways of constructively addressing their conflicts through protecting the environment and devising adaptation and mitigation measures; **BECAUSE** they will recognise their interdependence and common interests in managing shared natural resources, which can serve as a basis for building collaborative and peaceful relationships.

The underlying assumption is that there is a general willingness within the communities and the participants to set their differences aside and find peaceful solutions to their conflicts. Another assumption is that the participants of the SD processes will have the necessary influence and standing to impact the conflict and improve the overall relations between the different communities.

ToC 2:
IF we strengthen the conflict transformation capacity and efforts of IPN members and relevant state institutions and create opportunities for strategic networking and coordination among them; **THEN** the Infrastructures for Peace will be rendered more cohesive as the IPN members and relevant state institutions will be more invested in concerted efforts for addressing the myriads of challenges they face in transforming conflicts; **BECAUSE** effective conflict transformation requires coordinated and sustained efforts across multiple sectors and actors and networks can help to overcome the challenges of fragmentation and lack of coherence.

The underlying assumption is that state institutions are generally willing to cooperate and coordinate with Insider Peacebuilders to address community conflicts. This assumption was supported by several conversations with state representatives from the Ministry for Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation (MoIFAR), local district commissioners and other relevant actors. Without this support, the efforts to strengthen the existing Infrastructures for Peace through capacity-development of the IPN and better coordination with political actors would be fruitless from the beginning.

ToC 3:
IF we engage with broader communities through inclusive dialogue and awareness-raising on the links between environmental degradation, climate change and conflict; **THEN** they are more likely to initiate and sustain collective action for conflict transformation, environmental protection and climate change adaptation and mitigation; **BECAUSE** they will recognise the need to strengthen shared understanding and trust, reawaken their sense of collective responsibility and activate their agency in addressing the root causes of community conflict and environmental degradation.

The underlying assumption is that through dialogue and awareness-raising activities, relevant actors will be reached who are not only active and engaged (potential) peacebuilders themselves but are also individuals capable of influencing the perceptions and actions of their community members, including those actively involved in (violent) conflict.

2.4 Evaluation approach and methodology

Given the complexity of the Somali context, the project team adopted a **mixed-method evaluation approach** that combined both qualitative and quantitative elements.
A key method employed was **outcome harvesting**, an evaluation approach designed to capture change in complex and volatile contexts. It systematically identifies what has changed in practice – across actions, relationships, policies and practices – and then assesses the extent to which the project contributed to those changes and how. This makes it particularly well-suited to peacebuilding contexts, where change processes are gradual, multidirectional and rarely attributable to a single initiative.

Several outcome harvesting sessions have been conducted over the three project phases, including a dedicated workshop in February 2025, with 24 IPN members representing all project districts[4]. This workshop provided a valuable opportunity to reflect on individual, network and community-level changes attributed to the first two years of the project, while also gathering insights on future needs. In addition, Berghof staff based in Somalia and Berlin contributed insights through their own outcome harvesting sessions, conducted at different points of the project cycle.

Throughout the implementation of the project, the team **documented outcomes** through activity reports and meeting minutes, ensuring a continuous stream of qualitative data to support reflection and adaptive programming. In addition to outcome harvesting, different monitoring and evaluation methods were used across the project's main activity areas.

For *Shirarka* and capacity-development workshops, **surveys** were used to collect information and (quantitative) data on reception, perception and impact. These surveys focus on three areas: logistical and facilitation quality, engagement with content and any observable long-term impacts such as improved relationships or the application of new knowledge in practice, such as more constructive responses to conflict through dialogue or collective problem solving. However, the process of data collection utilising surveys, both analogue and digital, presented significant challenges. Surveys were

distributed both immediately after activities and digitally 6–8 weeks later utilising Impaxio Surveys[5]. However, the low response rates and the limited engagement with open-ended questions raised concerns about the reliability and depth of the data collected.

In response to these challenges, the project team complemented the surveys through **semi-structured phone interviews** with IPN members and SD committee members. This ensured responses were received from all districts the project is active in and delivered clear information, resulting in richer, more reliable qualitative insights, albeit limited in scale.

In addition, IPN members conducted **community outreach activities** in March/ April 2026 to better assess the changes resulting from their interventions in their communities and identify community needs and priorities. This activity was intended to support more strategic planning and implementation of future IPN activities, while ensuring that these activities are more closely aligned with community needs; they also provided an opportunity to gather **outcome and impact stories**.

The evaluation of the radio programmes relied on several sources. Once a year, the moderators undertook **street interviews** and **FGDs** to assess community awareness of the programmes, gauge audience reach and elicit feedback. In the FGDs, 15 community members gather to listen to selected episodes/clips and engage in dialogue on the themes and provide feedback on the relevance and impact of the programmes as well as suggestions for improvement. The team additionally analysed the **live listener feedback** during broadcast and **social media comments** on the programmes' Facebook pages.

In March 2026, Berghof commissioned an **independent external evaluation** of its programming portfolio in Somalia over the last ten years. The evaluation adopted a **sequential mixed-methods approach**, combining a comprehensive desk review of programme documentation with qualitative field research across multiple locations in Hirshabelle, Galmudug and South West States. Data collection included **FGDs and key informant interviews (KIIs)** with IPN members, traditional elders, women, youth representatives, government officials, civil society actors and other community stakeholders. The evaluation applied a conflict-sensitive and trauma-informed approach throughout the research process and triangulated findings across different data sources. The findings from this external evaluation provide an additional layer of independent evidence, helping to validate, contextualise and triangulate the outcomes and observations generated through the project's internal monitoring, outcome harvesting exercises and other evaluation activities.

3 Key findings

This section presents the key findings of the outcome evaluation, structured according to the project's three objectives and corresponding Theories of Change (ToCs). For each objective, the section first outlines the intervention approach before examining the outcomes and changes observed during the evaluation period. The analysis assesses the extent to which the expected outcomes have been achieved and explores whether the assumptions underpinning each ToC hold true in practice. The section also identifies key lessons learned and reflects on the project's contribution to change at the individual, community and institutional levels.

Overall, the findings indicate that the project has made important contributions towards strengthening local infrastructures for peace, increasing awareness of the CEPS nexus and fostering more collaborative approaches to addressing conflict and environmental challenges in Hirshabelle and Galmudug States. The strongest outcomes are visible at the individual and relational levels, where project stakeholders have developed new knowledge, skills, relationships and capacities to address conflict and environmental challenges. There are also emerging signs of broader community and institutional change, particularly through the strengthening of the IPN, the establishment of SD mechanisms and the wider dissemination of peace and environmental messaging through radio programmes. While deeper and more sustainable transformation remains a long-term process, the findings suggest that the project has successfully established important foundations for future change and provide strong evidence to support the continued integration of environmental peacebuilding approaches within the Berghof Foundation's programming in Somalia.

3.1 Transforming protracted conflict through sustained dialogue and collaborative environmental peacebuilding (objective 1)

Under this objective, the project seeks to strengthen collaborative and peaceful relationships between communities in Hirshabelle and Galmudug States by supporting SD processes in two climate-conflict hotspots (ToC 1).

Activity stream: climate security action plans and the establishment of the sustained dialogue processes

In 2023, assessments were carried out in consultation with the ministries of reconciliation of the respective member states to identify **two climate-conflict hotspots** and designate potential entry points for SD processes. One district in the Galguduud region of Galmudug State[6] and one district in the Middle Shabelle region of Hirshabelle State were selected on the basis of the pronounced effects of climate change and environmental degradation on community livelihoods, as well as the prevalence of community-based resource conflict with a tendency to escalate into violence.

To get a deeper understanding of the highly localised conflict dynamics and how these are influenced by climate stressors and the resulting environmental degradation, a CSAP was developed for each of the identified hotspots. The project team, in close cooperation with IPN members from districts in the vicinity of these hotspots, facilitated multiple focus group discussions (FGDs) during June and July 2023. In total, 20 FGDs were conducted in the Galguduud region and 11 FGDs in the Middle Shabelle region, with an average of 12 participants per discussion. This resulted in the participation of approximately 240 individuals in Galguduud and 132 individuals in Middle Shabelle. It is important to note that participant selection for the FGDs was carried out in close consultation with the respective district administrations and followed strict pre-developed selection guidelines. These guidelines ensured the representation of minority clans and other marginalised socio-economic groups. Each FGD represented one specific socio-economic group with participants belonging to this specific group, such as traditional elders, civil society leaders, businesspeople, women, youth actors, religious leaders and other key community stakeholders.

The FGD facilitation team's strong contextual knowledge and prior participation in capacity-development workshops on the climate-conflict nexus ensured the necessary expertise needed for the CSAP development process. Complemented by field visits to directly observe environmental degradation, the FGDs informed the analytical core of the CSAPs, identifying community-perceived climate stressors, their links to conflict and security dynamics, their social and economic impacts, as well as existing coping mechanisms and community needs. Based on this analysis, the project developed short- and long-term strategies aimed at simultaneously reducing conflict, addressing climate and environmental challenges as well as strengthening intercommunal trust and cooperation. At the end of 2023, the findings and recommendations were validated through consultations with key community stakeholders to ensure the CSAPs accurately reflected local perspectives, experiences and priorities.

Subsequently, representative and inclusive committees were established in each climate-conflict hotspot. In both hotspots, two committees were formed, with each committee representing one of the two communities in conflict. Committee members were identified in close cooperation with the respective district administrations and selected according to strict pre-developed guidelines that ensure inclusion of diverse perspectives and voices in the communities. All committees involve approximately 30 participants and include key community stakeholders such as respected elders, who play critical roles in community decision-making and peacemaking processes, religious leaders, youth representatives and a minimum 30% women. The close cooperation with local administrations during the selection process ensured that committee members were respected and influential representatives of their communities.

At the same time, it provided the committees with the necessary political buy-in and legitimacy to operate effectively. Once the committees were established, the **SD processes** were officially initiated. One SD process is being implemented in each climate-conflict hotspot, with each comprising of two SD committees representing the communities engaged in the conflict.

The SD process between the two communities in the Middle Shabelle region of Hirshabelle began in June 2024. These communities have experienced decades of conflict and recurring violence, resulting in significant hardship and suffering. The process was carefully designed and began with **intra-community SD sessions**, during which each SD committee met in facilitated discussions led by local Berghof staff. Throughout 2024, each community had three two-day SD sessions, with six intra-community SD sessions in total.

These regular dialogue spaces were instrumental in identifying key drivers of conflict, exploring the interconnections between climate, environmental challenges and conflict dynamics and reflecting on shared concerns using the CSAP as a reference framework. The sessions also provided participants with opportunities to critically examine perceptions of the other community, challenge existing stereotypes and envision pathways toward peaceful coexistence with one another and with their shared environment. Beyond fostering reflection and learning, the intra-community dialogue played a vital role in strengthening participants' understanding of the SD committees' long-term role and responsibilities. They also enhanced committee members' motivation, ownership and commitment to sustaining the dialogue process. Importantly, the project leveraged an ongoing, government-supported peace process addressing a land demarcation dispute between the two communities as a strategic entry point for the SD process. The SD facilitation team raised awareness of the agreement's provisions during the sessions. Committee members who had participated directly in the official peace process were able to explain the agreement in detail to their peers, ensuring a clear understanding of its content, objectives and implications. This contributed to broader community ownership of the agreement and strengthened support for its implementation.

Although initial plans for **inter-community SD sessions** in the Middle Shabelle region were disrupted by renewed violence in late 2024, the project adapted its approach by convening a smaller SD session in Mogadishu. The session focused on strengthening the mediation, dialogue and conflict resolution skills of the SD committee members. Importantly, the session brought together selected members of the two committees for the first time in a neutral setting, away from the immediate context of violence. This proved to be crucial in building trust and relationships beyond prevailing conflict narratives; it also laid the groundwork for inter-committee engagement during the following months when bringing them together again was impossible. In early 2025, when the security situation improved, two SD sessions were organised in each location, with the respective committee hosting delegates from the other. The trust that had been built in the process thus far had enabled them to cross community borders through areas previously associated with insecurity and tension. The sessions contributed to a broader process of improving relations between the communities based on direct communication, relationship-building and joint reflection on shared challenges and aspirations. Overall, six intra-committee dialogue sessions and six inter-committee SD sessions were conducted in the Middle Shabelle hotspot.

The **establishment of the SD committees** in the identified climate-conflict hotspot in the Galguduud region of Galmudug State had to be postponed due to the unstable security situation. The Berghof team, in consultation with the IPN members and local authorities, deemed the risks involved in setting up the necessary elements of the process untenable in 2024 due to the looming district council elections, which risked increasing tensions and violence in case civilians felt the election did not play out fairly and thereby exposing participants and facilitators to significant security risks. In particular, the overall tense political environment and the heightened risk of an outbreak of violence underpinned the decision to delay the process. Stakeholders to the dialogue agreed to wait until after the district council elections. However, these elections were themselves postponed, which contributed to an escalation of conflict in the area, particularly in the context of a political dispute between the Deputy President and the Ministry of Interior of Galmudug State. Although the district council elections eventually took place, the overall political climate remained fragile and persistent tensions continued to delay the establishment of the SD committees. In late 2025, the project team was able to establish an SD committee in one of the communities in the Galguduud region and facilitate two intra-community dialogue sessions in September and December. Until April 2026, the situation in the other community continued to be fraught with violence, preventing the project team from traveling there for replication of the steps taken in the first community (a necessary pre-requisite to any SD process between the two communities). At the time of writing, five intra-community SD sessions have been conducted in the Galguduud region, with both committees demonstrating strong motivation and commitment to engage with one another through the SD process. This became particularly evident during the first inter-committee session in August 2026, which laid the groundwork for strategic collaboration between the two SD committees. Throughout August 2026, further inter- and intra-community sessions strengthened trust between the committees and enabled members to develop plans for extending this trust and cooperation to their wider communities. Notably, SD committee members have already begun independently engaging within their respective communities to mediate conflicts, prevent revenge killings and raise awareness of the CEPS nexus.

A notable session held in Mogadishu in July 2026 brought together representatives from all four SD committees to strategize and develop plans for how each process could continue despite the challenging security situation in the respective regions. In particular, learning from the experiences of the longer standing SD process in the Middle Shabelle region has proven highly motivating for the committees in Galguduud. Hearing concrete examples of progress made, challenges overcome and approaches applied has provided them with practical ideas that they can incorporate into their own engagement and adapt to their respective contexts.

The district authorities also recognised the SD committees' growing role within the communities and requested their support in facilitating an ongoing official peace process between the two communities. Within this process, the committee members are currently helping the communities draft a peace agreement. With support from Berghof staff and IPN members, the SD committees are exploring how they can contribute to ensuring that this agreement is inclusive, locally owned and effectively implemented across both communities. Importantly, the locally led SD process facilitated by the Berghof Foundation will remain separate from, but complementary to, the official peace process. While the official process provides a framework for reaching formal agreements, the SD process focuses on building the relationships, trust, local

ownership and community-level cooperation needed to support implementation and sustainability of agreements.

Importantly, for both SD processes in the two climate-conflict hotspots, the finalised CSAPs served as a successful entry point for initiating dialogue between the communities involved in conflict. By emphasising the shared climate stressors and environmental challenges faced by the communities, the SD process framed these issues as common challenges requiring collective solutions.

Outcomes of the sustained dialogue processes

1. Agreement on and commitment to the SD processes
In both SD processes, the communities involved have verbally and **formally committed to a sustained, long-term dialogue process**. This commitment underscores the recognised **value of structured and regular spaces** for constructively addressing grievances, fostering peaceful conflict resolution and integrating environmental considerations into community discussions. This commitment is particularly significant given the history of prolonged and severe intercommunal violence in both hotspots. The SD processes have created spaces that are **vital for de-escalation and proactive problem-solving**, that are driven by the common interest to a peaceful coexistence and the recognised interdependence among SD committee members.

> “Community trust has increased significantly because, for the first time, people across divides worked together consistently on awareness raising and conflict resolution. This was a new and highly effective approach. Establishing joint committees composed of influential community members from both sides to work together for peace was an important innovation.”
>
> TRADITIONAL ELDER, AN SD COMMITTEE MEMBER

2. Improved trust and relationships among SD committee members
The insights shared during post-activity team debriefs and outcome harvesting sessions suggest that both SD processes have significantly **increased trust** between representatives of the two communities in both hotspots. During regular follow-ups and strategic planning meetings with SD committee members, an integral part of our ongoing support and engagement with the communities between formal sessions, we received overwhelmingly positive feedback on the inter-community

SD sessions through our regular communication with the SD committee members. Many participants emphasised the **value of meeting members of the other community** in a safe space that encourages open and honest dialogue. They noted that **exchanging contact details**, which was only possible through the SD process, will greatly improve their communication, coordination and collaboration in the future – helping to prevent or address violent community conflicts as they arise.

Women, in particular, expressed enthusiasm for identifying family connections between the two communities during the SD sessions. This culturally rooted practice of identifying family and social links **deepens ties** with the other side and discourages the escalation of violent conflict among each other. It demonstrates a genuine commitment to establishing mutual trust and laying a solid foundation for closer relationships.

In both SD processes, the committee members have reaffirmed their dedication to **implementing joint activities that would foster cohesion** between the two communities. The shared commitment for future collaboration clearly reflects the growing trust and collective willingness to cooperate.

> “Community trust has increased significantly as a result of the work of the two committees. We have organised exchange visits between the two areas and we now maintain regular communication that did not exist before these committees were established. Together, we work to promote messages of peace within our communities and to prevent actions that could trigger conflict. The collaboration between the two committees on peacebuilding has been widely welcomed by both community members and local authorities.”
>
> SD COMMITTEE MEMBER

For the SD process in the Middle Shabelle region, both groups involved have expressed a strong **willingness and commitment to visit each other’s communities** again and to explore ways of expanding these joint visits to include the wider community. The growing trust among the SD committee members was also reflected in their willingness to travel to each other’s areas despite ongoing tensions and the potential risks of violence. The visits demonstrated **their commitment to the SD process** and suggested an improved degree of confidence in their counterparts’ ability to **host them safely**.

The visits also provided opportunities for **direct communication and mutual support** between the two groups. For example, during one visit, the car of the visiting delegation broke down. Using the contact numbers exchanged at the inter-community session in Mogadishu, delegation members were **able to call their counterparts directly for assistance**. The host community responded promptly, providing help and hospitality that further deepened the trust between the two groups. Similarly, when the roles were reversed, the visiting delegation encountered several challenges and risks along the way, yet was welcomed by their host community with warmth and generosity.

For the SD process in the Galguduud region, the increased trust among the SD committee members is apparent in the strong commitment and dedication demonstrated by the participants involved. Once the security situation allowed the process to move forward, their participation in intra- and inter-committee SD session has been consistent. Beyond the SD sessions, their community engagement has become increasingly visible, drawing the attention of district authorities.

3. Enhanced conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives within communities

Verbal **feedback from** SD committee members from both processes at each SD session[7] consistently stresses the need to continue the **structured dialogue process**, as it has created a much needed **regular space for communities to come together** and is enhancing dialogue and mediation capacities that they apply in peacebuilding within and between the communities. They considered the deliberation on the **CSAP particularly useful** for gaining a comprehensive understanding of the connection between climate change stressors, environmental degradation and conflict within and between their communities. Participants attested that, by **jointly analysing** the implications of climate stressors and environmental degradation on conflict and security, they were able to **identify potential actions** for addressing these issues and define the respective roles of various stakeholders, including the local administration, elders and diverse community members such as religious leaders, women and youth representatives.

SD committee members in both processes have played an active role in responding to outbreaks of violence, where disputes between individuals quickly spread across their communities and escalate into cycles of retaliation.

IMPACT STORY: SD COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN THE MIDDLE SHABELLE REGION ACTING AS A CONFLICT RESOLUTION MECHANISM

In the villages surrounding the locations of the SD process in Hirshabelle, cycles of revenge killings have historically followed a predictable and dangerous pattern, whereby individual acts of violence rapidly escalate into broader conflict, driven by deeply rooted notions of collective responsibility. Recently, when such an incident occurred, the situation appeared to carry all the hallmarks of escalation. This time, however, the outcome was different.

Members of the SD committees—particularly elders from both communities—moved quickly to engage their counterparts in the affected rural areas, working to calm tensions and reframe the incident as an individual legal matter rather than a collective grievance. At the same time, the youth connected through the SD process mobilised via telecommunications to reach out to peers across the villages, advocating for restraint and encouraging respect for both formal and customary justice processes. Together, these coordinated efforts succeeded in containing the violence and preventing wider retaliation.

This response was enabled by the cooperation and communication mechanisms established by the SD process, which have strengthened intra- and inter-community relationships and built local capacities for conflict analysis and resolution, including through environmental peacebuilding and conflict mapping exercises. Through these engagements, participants developed greater trust, a stronger sense of shared responsibility for peace and practical mechanisms for collaboration.

The establishment of SD committees and the exchange of contact information enabled continuous communication between communities, allowing actors to respond rapidly and in a coordinated manner when tensions emerged. For many community members, this represented a significant shift: strengthened trust, dialogue capacities and joint action had succeeded in interrupting a cycle of violence that had long defined intercommunal relations.

In addition to these reactive initiatives, SD committee members proactively create space for the two communities across both processes to come together.

IMPACT STORY: RE-OPENING OF A MARKET

At the height of the conflict between the two communities of the Hirshabelle SD process, insecurity and deep mistrust had effectively brought inter-community trade to a standstill, cutting off a vital economic lifeline and making any form of shared marketplace unthinkable. Today, however, a different reality is beginning to emerge. Every Friday, a rural market between the two communities once again comes to life, with traders from both sides gathering to exchange livestock, crops and other goods in what is now regarded as a safe and accessible space. What was previously considered a high-risk setting prone to tension and violence has instead become a site of regular, peaceful interaction and economic activity.

This shift has been made possible through the SD process and the efforts of SD committee members, who have worked to build trust across communities and translate it into practical cooperation. Through continuous engagement and strengthened relationships, they supported the re-establishment of the market as a shared space grounded in communication, coordination and mutual assurances of safety. As interactions increased, confidence gradually grew, enabling economic exchange to resume and slowly normalise.

Beyond its economic function, the market has become a visible symbol of improving relations and the tangible benefits of peace. As traders meet, interact and increasingly depend on one another, cooperation becomes embedded in everyday practice, reinforcing the understanding that stability and collaboration offer far greater benefits than conflict.

Across the impact stories, a pattern has emerged of change unfolding at multiple, mutually reinforcing levels, illustrating how seemingly small shifts can generate wider ripple effects over time.

At the **individual level**, SD committee members from both processes have demonstrated changes in perception, understanding and behaviour. They credit the SD process with deepening their understanding of conflict dynamics, including the role of environmental stressors and with prompting them to question entrenched patterns of behaviour such as collective blame and revenge. The mother's testimony reflects this wider shift in community perceptions and relations, suggesting that growing trust and changing expectations are beginning to influence how tensions unfold.

At the **interpersonal level**, particularly among SD committee members, these individual shifts translated into new forms of connection and cooperation. Relationships were built across communities, supported by regular interaction, the exchange of phone numbers and the discovery of shared social ties. These connections proved practically significant: they enabled rapid communication in moments of tension, coordination across communities and even everyday forms of mutual support (for example, assisting one another in unforeseen situations such as travel disruptions). Trust, in this sense, became operational — embedded in both formal coordination and informal social exchange.

While the most notable positive relational effects have been recorded among the individuals directly involved in the SD process, there are emerging indications of positive relational change at the **community level**, indicating broader and sustained transformation across communities. Some early examples — including the prevention of retaliatory violence, the reopening of shared grazing areas and the revival of the

inter-community market — suggest that improved communication and trust-building efforts are contributing to localised stabilization and cooperation. These developments can be understood as initial signs of progress and wider community-level change. Given the intensity and protracted nature of the intercommunal conflicts in both locations, even successful initiatives such as the SD processes operate alongside more deeply rooted conflict drivers. Their contributions to social cohesion and conflict dynamics across the wider population are therefore difficult to determine and may fluctuate over time.

Yet, SD committee members across both processes have expressed a clear ambition to **deepen and expand** these peacebuilding gains in the future, particularly by strengthening engagement in rural areas where conflict pressures and resource competition are often most acute. Current initiatives appear to have generated important entry points for dialogue and relationship-building most notably among the directly involved groups. Moving forward, scaling these efforts geographically and socially — including through more sustained outreach into rural communities and broader inclusion of affected populations — will likely be necessary for relational changes to translate into more durable community-wide outcomes.

Taken together, these levels illustrate a **ripple effect**: individual learning and attitude change enable new relationships; these relationships facilitate coordinated action; and over time, such actions contribute to broader community-level shifts. While some of the initial outcomes may appear small or localised, they are critical building blocks for more sustained and systemic change.

This dynamic interaction is illustrated in the visualisation below:

TOWARDS LASTING PEACE: HOW DIALOGUE LEADS TO CHANGE ACROSS LEVELS

How the SD process in the Middle Shabelle region generates change

RIPPLE EFFECTS ACROSS LEVELS

How change unfolds and reinforces over time

1 INDIVIDUAL LEVEL
Within a person

- Greater understanding of dynamics in conflict through the lens of environmental and climate stressors
- Realisation that challenges are shared and interlinked
- Change in understanding: we have the power and responsibility to change something ourselves
- Increased openness, empathy and willingness to engage with the "other"

EXAMPLE

A mother is surprised her son returned safely home from grazing after a cycle of violence is prevented.

2 INTERPERSONAL / COMMITTEE LEVEL
Between SD committee members (60 in total)

- Trust-building between communities
- Exchange of phone numbers and regular contact
- Discovering common ties (family, friends, networks)
- Practical coordination in crisis and daily life (e.g. calls, car breakdowns, messenger support)

EXAMPLE

Elders coordinate quickly to de-escalate tensions. Youth mobilize peers across villages via phone.

3 COMMUNITY LEVEL
Within and between communities

- Prevention of revenge killings and de-escalation of incidents
- Safe access to shared grazing land
- Revival of inter-community market and trade
- Stronger livelihoods and sense of security
- Improved relations and social cohesion (emerging)

EXAMPLE

Friday market between the two communities of the Middle Shabelle region revived — a visible "peace dividend".

OUTCOMES

Where we are heading: Sustained peace, resilient communities and shared prosperity.

OUR AMBITION

Expand and institutionalize these gains—especially into rural areas—so that cooperation becomes the norm.

AT THE HEART OF IT ALL

A shared environment
Shared challenges
Shared future

Dialogue changes mindsets. Relationships enable action. Cooperation builds peace.

Key lessons from objective 1: the sustained dialogue processes

Evidence from both SD processes supports the value of continuous, structured and practical dialogue in enabling communication, maintaining engagement and developing trust between communities affected by protracted intercommunal conflict. The formal commitment of communities to engage in long-term dialogue is itself a significant achievement in settings where relationships have long been characterised by violence and mistrust. Trust has developed not only through dialogue sessions, but also through repeated interaction, exchange visits, regular communication and practical cooperation over time. By creating predictable spaces for discussion, the SD process has enabled de-escalation, joint problem analysis and relationship-building, while concrete experiences of mutual support have transformed dialogue into trust that supports collaboration and collective action across conflict lines.

A central insight is the importance of establishing trusted communication channels and locally owned coordination mechanisms before crises emerge, rather than attempting to build them in moments of heightened tension. Once violence and mistrust intensify, creating the conditions for communication becomes more difficult and resource intensive. The direct communication links between SD committee members have enabled rapid coordination during periods of heightened tension, allowing timely interventions that prevented escalation. This highlights the importance of investing in relationships and locally owned coordination mechanisms as a preventive measure rather than relying solely on reactive responses.

The project also demonstrates the value of environmental issues as an entry point for peacebuilding. Joint analysis of climate stressors, environmental degradation and resource pressures helped communities recognise their shared challenges and mutual dependence on natural resources. Framing issues such as grazing access, water management and livelihoods as common concerns created opportunities for cooperation that may have been more difficult to achieve through discussions centred exclusively on historical grievances.

Over time, the SD committees have evolved beyond dialogue platforms into locally embedded peace infrastructures capable of both responding to emerging tensions and proactively addressing conflict risks, including through negotiating land-sharing agreements. Their role in preventing revenge killings, facilitating safe grazing access and coordinating peaceful responses illustrates the value of community-based mechanisms that combine legitimacy, contextual knowledge and rapid response capacity.

The experience further shows that small, localised achievements can generate wider ripple effects. Early outcomes such as safer grazing access, the reopening of shared markets and coordinated responses to violent incidents represent important shifts in behaviour, expectations and relationships. These visible peace dividends have strengthened community confidence in dialogue, reinforced participants‘ commitment to the SD process and demonstrated that intercommunal cooperation can produce tangible social and economic benefits.

At the same time, the findings underline that community-level transformation requires sustained engagement, particularly in contexts marked by decades of entrenched conflict. While promising signs of broader social change are emerging, the most significant relational shifts are currently evident among those directly involved in the dialogue process. Achieving wider improvements in social cohesion and conflict dynamics will require continued long-term commitment.

Finally, scaling up and broadening participation remain important priorities. To translate localised trust-building into more durable peace outcomes, the process will need to expand its reach into rural areas, where competition over natural resources and insecurity are often most acute. Equally important is the greater inclusion of women, youth, marginalised groups and wider community members to strengthen local ownership, legitimacy and the long-term sustainability of the peacebuilding process.

IMPACT STORY: GRAZING AGREEMENT

Until recently, the lands between the two communities involved in the Hirshabelle SD process were effectively "no-go zones," as years of hostility had eroded trust to the extent that even essential practices such as communal grazing were no longer possible. This not only deepened economic hardship for pastoralist communities but also reinforced patterns of division, where any perceived incursion could trigger retaliation.

A recent incident, however, illustrated a notable shift in these dynamics. When tensions emerged over livestock grazing in previously contested areas—circumstances that would have previously led to confrontation and potentially violence—no escalation occurred. Instead, herders were able to move safely and livestock returned without incident. Reflecting on this, one mother described her surprise and relief, explaining that she had not expected her son to return safely from grazing, as similar situations in the past would almost certainly have resulted in revenge killings. For her, this was the first time she had witnessed a different outcome.

This change was made possible through the work of the SD committees, which identified access to shared grazing land as a key entry point for cooperation. Building on the trust developed through sustained intra- and inter-group dialogue, the committees facilitated joint communication mechanisms and promoted coordinated access to resources. Through these efforts, communities gradually and cautiously resumed sharing grazing practices, restoring movement across previously contested areas.

The process was further supported by a growing recognition that environmental pressures affect both communities equally, making cooperation not only beneficial but necessary. By framing grazing access as a shared livelihood concern rather than a source of division, the SD process enabled practical collaboration while reinforcing peaceful coexistence between communities and with their shared environment. What has emerged is an early form of renewed interdependence, in which shared resource use is beginning to replace isolation and mistrust, demonstrating how environmental cooperation can help reshape relationships and reduce the risk of conflict.

3.2 Strengthening infrastructures for peace through IPN engagement at the climate, environment, peace and security nexus (objective 2)

Under this objective, the project seeks to strengthen local peace infrastructures in Hirshabelle and Galmudug States by supporting the IPN (ToC 2).

Activity stream: support to the insider peacebuilders network

Conflict resolution in Somali communities has traditionally relied on a combination of customary systems, community leadership and informal mediation mechanisms. Traditional elders play a central role in de-escalating tensions, initiating dialogue and facilitating negotiations between groups in conflict. Dialogue forums are commonly used to bring communities together to discuss grievances, rebuild relations and negotiate agreements. These processes are often guided by customary Somali law (Xeer), which provides locally accepted frameworks for compensation, forgiveness and dispute settlement. Compensation agreements between affected families or communities are frequently used to reduce anger, prevent cycles of revenge and restore social balance following violent incidents. Religious leaders and other respected community figures also play an important mediating role, helping parties reach sustainable and culturally legitimate solutions. Alongside these customary mechanisms, government actors contribute to conflict resolution through security provision, disarmament efforts and the enforcement of formal laws, although state presence and capacity remain weak in many areas.

Within this landscape, the IPN helps fill important gaps and complements existing community-based conflict resolution systems. While traditional mechanisms are often reactive and centred around elders or community leadership, the IPN introduces more continuous, inclusive and preventive approaches to peacebuilding. The network brings together a broader range of community actors — including women, youth, religious leaders, civil society representatives and professionals — who do not traditionally collaborate closely in conflict resolution processes. Through joint analysis and coordinated action, the IPN strengthens communication and cooperation across communities and supports earlier responses to emerging tensions before they escalate into violence. In addition, the IPN members integrate environmental peacebuilding and climate-security perspectives into local conflict resolution efforts, helping communities address increasingly important resource-related and environmental drivers of conflict that are not always sufficiently addressed within traditional mechanisms alone.

The IPN was first established in Hirshabelle State in 2017 and in Galmudug state in 2019. The network is intentionally composed of a diverse cross-section of influential community actors, including traditional elders, women, youth representatives, religious leaders, civil society actors and professionals from different sectors.

These individuals often hold important roles within their communities but, prior to the network, had limited opportunities to engage or collaborate systematically with one another. Through the IPN, many members now work together for the first time across generational, social and professional divides, creating new relationships and channels of communication. Through regular capacity development and collaborative learning on different topics, such as mediation, dialogue facilitation and environmental peacebuilding, the members have developed and deepened their knowledge and skills. As part of the network, members can act as multipliers of knowledge in their respective communities, as well as serve as early warning and response mechanisms to prevent violent conflicts. In the framework of this project, 15 capacity-development workshops have been conducted. Although most of the workshops were tailored to strengthen the capacities of the IPN members, several involved government officials.

Since 2023, workshops have focused on the CEPS nexus and environmental peacebuilding, for instance on regenerative approaches. To date, all IPN members have partaken in a workshop focusing on the CEPS nexus, meaning the entire network is equipped to intervene when conflicts, including those over natural resources, arise in their communities.

The **microgrant mechanism** has enabled IPN members to translate knowledge, skills and relationships into concrete initiatives within their communities. They independently design, plan and implement small-scale activities to respond to community needs, which ensures local ownership. Grants are awarded based on short proposals and budget estimates that they develop every three months. Activities range from more traditional peacebuilding approaches, such as mediation or dialogue sessions between communities, to more innovative approaches, such as sports tournaments or environmental restoration campaigns that create space for interaction across conflict lines.

Initially, the microgrants primarily supported rapid, one-off interventions designed to respond to immediate tensions or emerging incidents within communities. Over time, however, the approach was gradually restructured toward a more strategic engagement model that focuses on sustained and long-term interventions, rather than short-term responses and one-off initiatives. IPN members have increasingly worked collectively within their districts to create long-term plans that have enabled continued engagement, follow-up activities and longer-term processes within their communities. The adaptation has enabled the IPN to link individual activities with longer term peacebuilding processes, which may contribute to broader community level change and strengthen local infrastructures for peace over time.

Following the increasing emphasis on environmental peacebuilding and the CEPS nexus within the workshops, many IPN initiatives began to centre around **environmental and livelihood-related conflict issues**. Activities have frequently incorporated capacity development components focused on environmental peacebuilding, regenerative practices and shared natural resource management within communities. In several cases, IPN members jointly developed practical action plans that identified a small number of achievable measures to implement collectively. Within the four years of implementation of the project, support was provided for the implementation of over 80 IPN-led activities across Hirshabelle and Galmudug States.

Outcomes of the IPN engagement

1. Strengthened conflict transformation and the CEPS nexus
There are strong indications that IPN members have **significantly strengthened their capacities** through the workshops and are applying what they learned in their daily work. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with participants reporting increased knowledge on **conflict transformation and the CEPS nexus**, alongside a deeper understanding of its relevance for their communities. The participatory approach encouraged reflection, peer exchange and more informed planning of IPN peace initiatives.

Post-workshop surveys show that IPN members intend to share this knowledge locally, with many believing it will benefit their communities; this has also been shown in practice in the way the IPN conduct their activities on the ground. Some IPN members have also reported **greater independence** from external support and increased initiative in developing IPN activities, demonstrating the practical application of new skills.

One IPN member described a shift in environmental awareness in communities:

> “The government should be supporting us to reach our goal of sustainable livelihoods. We can do more as a community, but what we need is awareness because yesterday, we used to cut trees and hurt our soil. But now, 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. If the government prioritises agriculture and works alongside communities, we can achieve food security and economic stability. We have fertile land, we have the knowledge, but we need resources and policies that empower and support us.”

The quote also highlights a key gap: the need for stronger government support to sustain these changes. IPN members widely called for more regular workshops to deepen learning and collaboration and some noted that the workshops renewed their hope and motivation.

IMPACT STORY: BREAKING A DEADLOCK IN JALALAQSI

In Jalalaqsi, a man was detained by local authorities, prompting members of his community to respond violently. A cycle of retaliation followed, causing significant loss of life, destruction of homes and displacement. Communities described the violence as unlike anything they had experienced before. Efforts to resolve the conflict reached a deadlock, as affected families demanded blood compensation while the local authorities rejected this, arguing that they had been attacked first.

A group of elders intervened, including several who had taken part in an IPN training on dialogue and mediation that built on the traditional compensation system while introducing more creative ways to look beyond stated positions and explore the underlying interests and needs in a conflict. This deeper exploration took time and the elders remained in the area for 22 days, far longer than a typical compensation negotiation. By helping the communities and local authorities better understand what was driving their opposing claims, the elders were able to break the deadlock and eventually reach a resolution that went beyond the competing demands for compensation.

The broader approach taken by the IPN-trained elders drew the attention of other elders involved in the process. They expressed strong interest in taking part in similar training to strengthen their own practice. This illustrates the wider multiplier effect of the project's IPN engagement: members apply and share approaches developed through workshops and peer learning in their communities, exposing other local peacebuilders to these approaches and gradually strengthening peacebuilding capacity beyond the network itself.

2. Applied knowledge among IPN members and communities

Survey responses indicate positive changes in communities because of IPN activities. Besides the shift in awareness and behaviour mentioned above, IPN members observed that their communities now place greater **trust** in the IPN, recognising the tangible benefits brought about by their initiatives. Increased community **awareness** on the importance of peace, dialogue and the CEPS nexus was reported, alongside noticeable **changes in the way communities are dealing with conflicts**. As one IPN member stated: "The awareness of conflict resolution has improved. Previously, only elders handled disputes, but now, **all community members are taking responsibility**."

In some cases, **IPN activities have directly inspired** communities to launch their own initiatives to **contribute to conflict resolution and address climate and environmental** challenges.

IMPACT STORY: FORMING A REGIONAL DROUGHT COMMITTEE IN HIRAAN

In response to recurring drought and its devastating impact on livelihoods in Hiraan, communities came together to establish a regional drought committee aimed at coordinating support to those most affected. As livestock losses increased and access to basic resources became increasingly constrained, the committee played an important role in mobilising local action and identifying urgent community needs.

Through the committee's efforts, affected households began receiving targeted assistance, including access to clean drinking water - an essential resource during periods of acute water scarcity. By organising collectively, the committee not only helped mitigate the immediate effects of the drought but also strengthened local capacity to respond to future climate-related challenges.

This initiative reflects a growing ability within communities to proactively address environmental stressors and to develop collective mechanisms for protecting vulnerable livelihoods.

In surveys assessing the impact of IPN activities on communities, IPN members noted several challenges in following up on the community's initiatives. These included **travel restrictions** due to security risks, **limited resources** and occasional attempts by the **local administration** to exert excessive influence over the IPN activities.

3. Increased ownership and inclusion in community life through IPN activities

Community feedback gathered by IPN members suggests that people are observing changes in some areas of community life and partly attribute these changes to the IPN's work.

Across multiple locations, IPN activities have contributed to a noticeable shift towards **greater local ownership** of peacebuilding and community processes. Communities are increasingly taking the initiative rather than waiting for external actors to intervene. In Balad, for example, young people independently organised an Iftar event to strengthen social cohesion, reflecting a growing sense of responsibility for community well-being. Similarly, in Jowhar, communities have taken more proactive steps in areas such as flood prevention and revitalising agricultural production, demonstrating increased confidence in their own ability to address local challenges. In Beledweyne, communities trained by the IPN are applying their knowledge and skills in their daily lives, including mediating conflicts. This has also contributed to **improved communication between communities and local authorities**, although both sides acknowledge that further progress is needed. Overall, more individuals are stepping up to engage in peacebuilding efforts, even if the reach of these efforts is not yet sufficient to significantly impact the broader challenges of insecurity.

Furthermore, IPN activities have contributed to gradual progress towards **more inclusive participation**. Across locations, more community members are engaging in dialogue and collective action, with particular success in relation to the involvement of women and youth. In Bula Burte, for instance, women reported increased confidence in addressing and resolving conflicts following the trainings, although social norms continue to limit their full participation as mediators. In Jowhar, women and youth are becoming more involved in community decision-making processes, supported by regular meetings that bring together authorities and community members. There

are also emerging examples of inclusion of people with disabilities, particularly in Galmudug State, though this remains at an early stage. While these developments signal important progress, they also show that achieving meaningful and sustained inclusion will require continued effort and engagement.

The assessment suggests that the IPN has so far contributed most visibly to change among **individual actors** and immediate participant groups. IPN members demonstrate increased confidence, motivation and capacity to engage in mediation, dialogue facilitation and environmental peacebuilding initiatives, while several beneficiaries of IPN activities reported greater awareness of the importance of cooperation, dialogue and shared responsibility for peacebuilding. In some cases, these shifts have translated into more proactive engagement by community members themselves, including locally initiated peace and environmental response initiatives. The findings also indicate that trained actors are increasingly applying these approaches in practice and are perceived as more capable of navigating complex conflict dynamics.

The project team observed emerging signs that these individual-level shifts are beginning to extend outward into **broader community and institutional spheres**, although these developments remain at an early stage. As IPN members gain visibility and credibility through successful interventions, some are increasingly being approached by traditional elders, community leaders and local authorities to support mediation efforts or to share their approaches with others. At the same time, repeated examples of peaceful problem-solving and cooperation may gradually contribute to changing perceptions within communities around how conflict can be managed. While it is too early to speak of wider societal or cultural transformation, the assessment suggests that the IPN is beginning to normalise alternative approaches to conflict resolution that differ from more reactive or exclusively traditional responses. If sustained over time and expanded more broadly, these processes may contribute to longer-term shifts in local peace infrastructures and community conflict dynamics.

These findings are further corroborated by the independent impact assessment, in which the external evaluator identified **the IPN as the most effective intervention stream** across all districts where Berghof operates. Importantly, responses to the Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) counterfactual question ***"Would IPN members have fulfilled their roles to the same standard without Berghof Foundation support?"***[8]. As a woman representative from Galmudug State explained: "No, they would not fully perform these duties at this same standard if the Berghof project did not exist. The project provided them with training, support and clear procedures, which significantly enhanced their mediation capacity and execution of peacebuilding." The external evaluator noted that this rare convergence of views across multiple independent informants from all districts included in the study provides strong contribution evidence in a field such as peacebuilding, where attribution is inherently difficult. Furthermore, the evaluator concluded that the impact assessment findings support a robust contribution claim, with a high degree of confidence that the programme enhanced the systematization, timeliness, documentation, networks and inclusivity of local peacebuilding efforts.

Key lessons learned about the IPN

Survey findings indicate that, in several locations, IPN activities have become embedded within existing conflict resolution systems. Rather than replacing existing mechanisms — such as mediation by elders, customary law practices, compensation agreements and formal governmental and justice institutions — the approaches used by the IPN complement and strengthen them. These approaches build on established practices while introducing additional tools and perspectives, enabling communities to address conflicts in a more comprehensive and adaptive manner.

IPN ACTIVITIES STRENGTHEN AND COMPLEMENT EXISTING CONFLICT RESOLUTION MECHANISMS

Survey findings show that in several locations,
IPN activities have become part of the conflict resolution landscape.

EXISTING CONFLICT RESOLUTION MECHANISMS

- Elders as mediators and dialogue facilitators
- Customary law mechanisms
- Compensation agreements
- Governmental initiatives
- Justice institutions

IPN CONTRIBUTION

- IPN Trainings
  Equip community members with environmental peacebuilding knowledge and skills.
- Community Application
  Communities adopt a more modern and effective approach to conflict resolution.

RESULT: COMPLEMENTARY AND STRENGTHENED SYSTEM

- Existing mechanisms remain central and respected
- IPN approaches add new tools, perspectives and skills
- Conflicts are addressed in a more comprehensive and adaptive way
- Stronger collaboration between communities and institutions
- More sustainable and peaceful outcomes for communities

IPN initiatives do not replace existing mechanisms –
they complement and strengthen them,
helping communities resolve conflicts more effectively.

The findings demonstrate that sustained and locally-led dialogue processes can **strengthen trust, cooperation and coordination** across conflict lines, even in contexts shaped by long-standing inter-communal tensions. The integration of environmental, livelihood and peacebuilding issues has also proved to be an effective entry point for cooperation around shared challenges, while the diverse composition of the IPN has **strengthened local peace infrastructures** through improved communication, collaboration and early response capacities. Tangible local successes, including the prevention of retaliatory violence, have helped demonstrate **practical alternatives to violence and to reinforce confidence** in peaceful cooperation.

The findings suggest that an important foundation has now been established upon which future efforts can build. Moving forward, there is a clear opportunity to **strengthen and systematise these processes further** in order to translate localised outcomes into wider and more durable change at community and institutional levels.

3.3 Broadening awareness and shared understanding of climate, environment and conflict through radio programming (objective 3)

Under this objective, the project seeks to strengthen community-led collective action for conflict transformation, environmental protection, as well as climate change adaptation and mitigation by engaging broader communities through awareness-raising utilising the radio programmes in Hirshabelle and Galmudug States (ToC 3).

Radio remains Somalia's most important mass media[9] with the widest reach. The radio landscape, with more than 60 stations nationwide[10], is diverse, vibrant and influential and remains especially relevant for rural communities with limited access to television and the internet. Reliable audience data is limited, but a BBC Media Action survey found that 51% of adults listened to the radio every week[11], including 54% in urban areas and 46% in rural areas[12]. Radio programmes range from news, political debate, religious content, sports and entertainment to call-in shows, dramas and public-service formats on health, drought, food security, agriculture, livestock, climate resilience and livelihoods[13]. Besides such constructive use of radio to disseminate trusted and critical information and support dialogue, media outlets have been noted for spreading propaganda or reinforcing communal and political divisions[14].

For the Berghof Foundation, the use of radio programmes was a deliberate strategic decision to extend its environmental peacebuilding approach to areas beyond the physical operations of the project, particularly to rural and hard-to-reach communities or highly insecure locations. Large parts of rural Somalia lack the infrastructure necessary for regular travel to urban centres, with poor road conditions and limited transportation options significantly restricting mobility. In many areas, movement is further constrained by violent conflict, road blockages and the presence of non-state armed groups, all of which pose considerable security risks for both residents and external actors. These challenges often make it difficult, and in some cases impossible,

for rural populations to participate in project activities that require physical presence. Radio programming therefore serves as a critical tool for community engagement, transcending physical and conflict-related barriers to reach audiences across conflict lines and in remote locations, ensuring broader access to environmental peacebuilding messaging.

Activity stream: radio programmes *Garasho-wadaag* and *Hiloow*

The radio programmes *Garasho-wadaag* (Sharing of Knowledge) and *Hiloow* (Longing) are designed to engage listeners in a discourse on the CEPS nexus. *Garasho-wadaag* is broadcast in five key districts in Galmudug: Galkayo, Hobyo, Adado, Dhusamareb and Abudwak. Building on the experience, *Hiloow* was launched in Hirshabelle in 2023 and is broadcast in the districts of Jowhar, Balad and Beledweyne. While most of the audience tunes in via radio, both programmes are also available through a **livestream** on Facebook (*Garasho-wadaag* Facebook, *Hiloow* Facebook) and **popular podcast streaming apps** (*Garasho-wadaag* Podcast, *Hiloow* Podcast). In recent years, the programmes have developed an enthusiastic listener base, not only in Galmudug and Hirshabelle States, but also across Somalia and within the Somali diaspora across the world.[15] As of June 2026, the programmes have 2,183 and 963 followers respectively on Facebook.

Through audio drama and storytelling and live guest interviews, the programmes address current and emerging issues at the nexus affecting Galmudug, Hirshabelle and broadly Somalia. This involves not just raising awareness and problematising the issues but also discussing practical ways of dealing with them through inclusive dialogue, outreach and collective action. Live audience interaction via phone calls further allows community members to share their own stories and engage directly with the guests, which include government officials, thematic experts and peacebuilders, with the consideration of inclusivity across societal cross sections, as illustrated below.

FIGURE 1: COMPARISON OF GUESTS BY GROUP FOR GARASHO–WADAAG AND HILOOW.

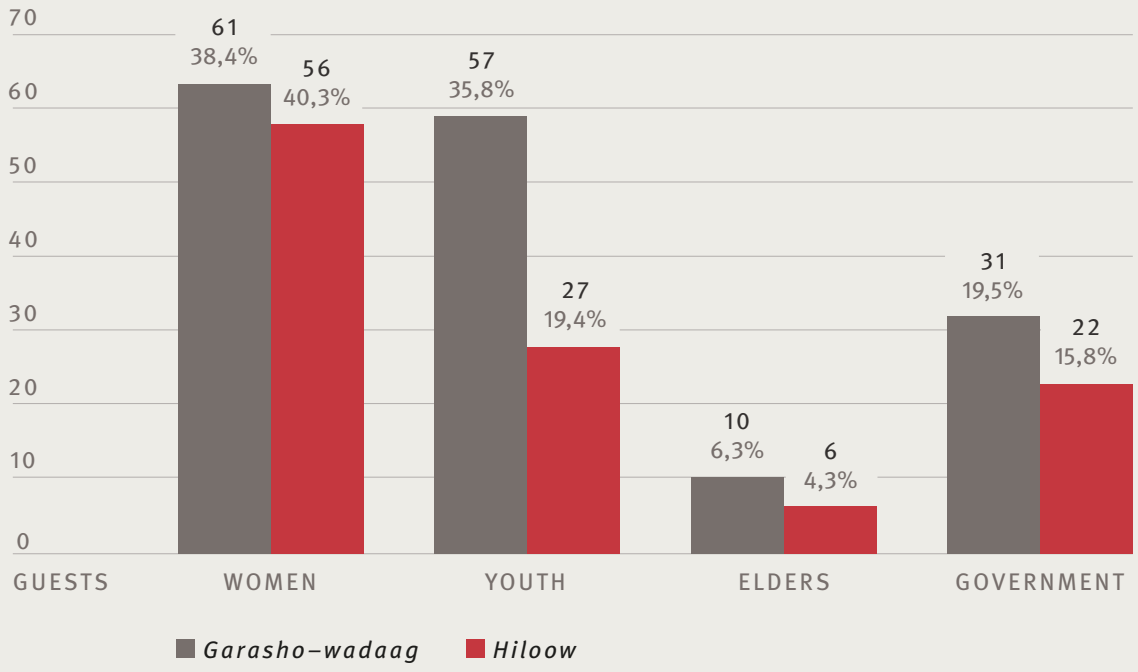
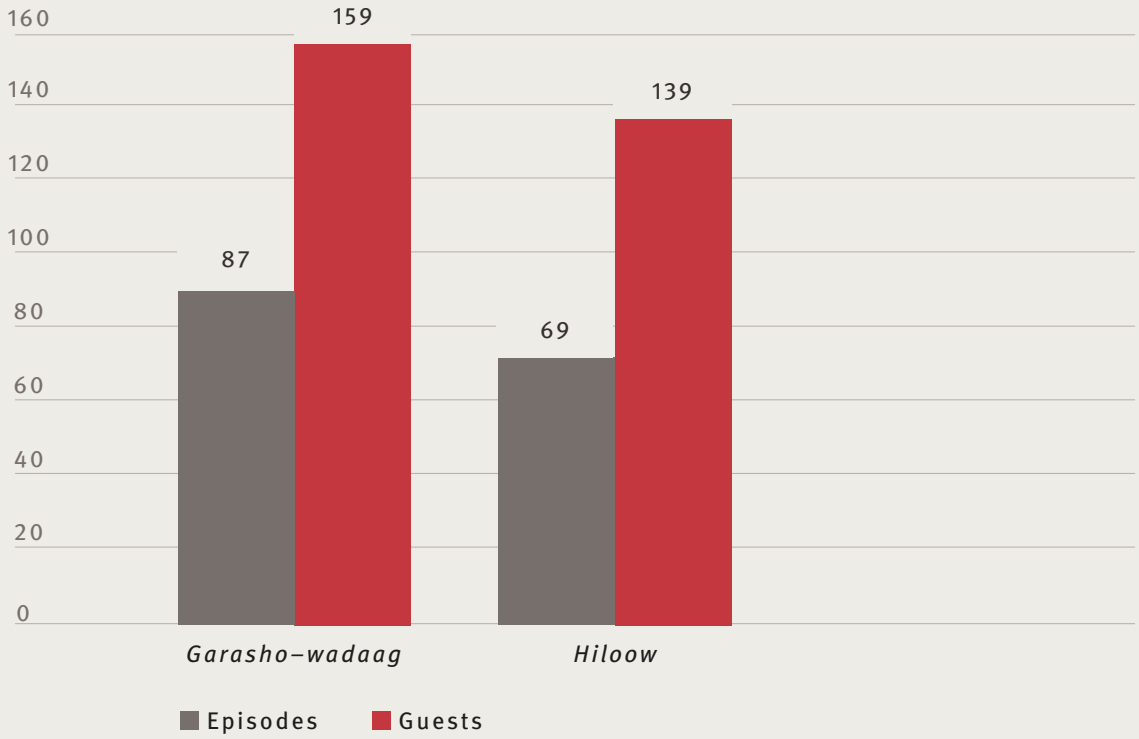


FIGURE 2: EPISODES AND GUESTS.



The programme episodes have addressed a wide range of interlinked themes around the impact of climate change on community life, livelihoods and conflict. Episodes dealing with drought and floods have treated these not as isolated environmental issues, but connected to wider concerns such as biodiversity loss, desertification and displacement, and to harmful coping practices, such as tree cutting and charcoal trading, or the early marriage of girls. Episodes dealing with violent conflict, revenge cycles and collective trauma have opened space for reflection on culture, religion, forgiveness, collective healing and justice. Other topics that may appear more remote from the nexus, but are deeply connected to it, have also been explored, including gender-based violence, drug addiction, human trafficking and the role of elections in civic participation and conflict transformation. Across these episodes, the programmes have shown how social harm, environmental pressure and conflict dynamics often reinforce one another.

The programmes have also critically reflected on societal drivers and dynamics that erode social cohesion, disproportionately affect women or disenfranchise youth and inhibit transformation of conflict. These included historical grievances, a culture of revenge, socioeconomic marginalisation, poverty and inequality, discrimination and injustice, exclusive leadership and lack of representation, the misuse of religious norms, violence against women and misinformation. At the same time, structural deficits have remained part of the discussion, including governance limitations, weak services and infrastructure, gaps in education, lack of recreation and economic opportunities, lack of housing and shelter, gaps in justice and dispute resolution mechanisms and insufficient support systems.

Individual and collective health and wellbeing, both physical and psychosocial, remain central to the discussion of rebuilding social trust and cohesion. The programmes have consistently offered stimuli for inclusive, just and accountable governance, community-powered development and the joint leadership of traditional elders, youth and women in dialogue, mediation and awareness raising on social cohesion and environmental responsibilities. They have also highlighted the mobilisation of community support, economic systems and resources such as education, poetry, media and sports, alongside the need to reconnect with religious and cultural resources and to promote environmental revival, care and protection. Over time, the programmes' format and content have adapted to audience feedback, leading to greater engagement.

In summary, the programmes capture how everyday community concerns are deeply connected to wider questions of peace, environmental resilience, inclusion and shared responsibility.

The programmes are moderated by IPN members with media and journalism backgrounds who have received overwhelmingly positive feedback from listeners and guests during previous phases of the project. This feedback included increasing the frequency of the programmes, which was taken up by the project, changing the frequency from once to twice a month, starting in 2024. While there is strong demand for weekly broadcasts, which would further amplify the programmes' impact, current financial and human resource capacities within the Berghof team and among IPN members makes this unfeasible for now.

Outcomes of the radio programmes

1. Strengthened community awareness and action on the CEPS nexus
Listeners of the two programmes highly appreciate the inclusive and diverse composition of the guests, to be inspired by them and to have the opportunity to engage with them. They highlight the uniqueness of the programmes, reporting that no other radio programmes they know of specifically address the CEPS nexus. Many listeners interviewed for this evaluation reported positive changes in CEPS awareness across their communities. According to some guests and listers, this awareness translates to behavioural and relational changes and collective action, particularly with regard to **constructive approaches to managing disputes over natural resources**, particularly in rural areas.

> [Garasho-wadaag] has made a lot of contributions in raising public awareness, e.g. among listeners in the rural areas of Galmudug. 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.
>
> A REGULAR LISTENER

In Balad, listeners indicated a **reduction in tree cutting** for charcoal production within approximately 35 kilometres of the radio station, showing a growing collective commitment to environmental protection and care. Listeners also highlighted how the programmes have helped **frame environmental protection as a pathway to peace**, emphasising the value of preserving shared resources as a means to reduce violent conflict and improve social cohesion. Listeners described profound personal shifts, such as re-evaluating the importance of trees and understanding environmental protection as vital to human well-being. The programmes also contribute to **social cohesion**, with many listeners describing a shift in how communities relate to one another, moving beyond political and communal divides toward shared goals of peace and environmental protection. These insights point to the programmes' growing influence in shaping everyday practices and encouraging more sustainable, peace-oriented choices across communities.

Many community members and local administrations credited the programmes with **strengthening social networks and cooperation**. Listeners regard the programmes to have evolved into sustained platforms for dialogue on environmental peacebuilding.

> Since the programme was introduced, communities have gained a better understanding. It has helped them put aside their political and communal differences and see what is good for the development of the society, which is peace and a good climate in which the communities can live.
>
> A REGULAR LISTENER

2. Enhanced use of radio as a community-based early warning and preparedness mechanism

The *Hiloow* programme has also been recognised by guests and listeners as a **valuable source of early warning and practical guidance for collective action to prepare for disasters and reduce their risks and impacts**, particularly recurring floods in Hirshabelle. Listeners highlight that the programme complements messaging from the Somali Disaster Management Agency through its distinctive storytelling and dialogic approach, using drama and exchange with experts and audience. By making warnings relatable and connecting them to people's lived experiences, the programme appears to help messages resonate more strongly and translate into action. Communities along the Shabelle River reportedly acted on the programme's warnings before floodwaters reached them, including by stockpiling essentials, relocating to safer areas, building embankments and extending collective support.

3. Expanded reach and resonance of peace messaging

Interviews with **IPN members** and other **community peacebuilders** who have appeared as guests on the programmes and/or follow them closely showed appreciation of how they **amplify and sustain their peacebuilding efforts**. While their in-person mediation typically reaches only individuals they have direct contact with, the programmes extend peacebuilding messages to a **much wider audience with far greater efficiency**.

> "Our peacebuilding and mediation efforts are limited in the sense that we can only gather four to five people to discuss issues, whereas the programme uses mass media to convey the message."
>
> A COMMUNITY PEACEBUILDER

In **rural and violence-prone areas**, where travel is often dangerous, costly and time-consuming, *Garasho-wadaag* and *Hiloow* have become essential tools for spreading messages of peace and environmental awareness. Participants in focus group discussions mentioned the particular importance of broadcasting peace messaging on a wider scale and having a platform for public discussion on issues of peace. Many peacebuilders have actively supported the radio programmes by reinforcing messages within their communities and providing feedback to the moderators of the programmes or the broadcasting radio stations.

During one interview, an elder from Guriel explained that the radio programme enables pastoralists in rural or remote areas to access peace messaging, giving the example of camel herders who carry small radios with them and regularly listen to the programme. This is particularly significant given that access to peacebuilding engagement is often limited in these areas.

> When we go to mediate in violence-ridden areas, we meet nomads and villagers who are connected to the programme. On one such occasion, we met an old man in a remote village who said that he has listened to all the episodes and he will continue to do so as it is very effective. He said the programme has reformed him, listening to the guests' convincing points. The programme, in such ways, has brought change in people's minds and hearts.
>
> A COMMUNITY PEACEBUILDER

By raising awareness of conflict and environmental issues and bringing these conversations into everyday spaces, the radio programmes have the potential to influence attitudes and behaviours in communities most affected by conflict and climate change impacts. The radio programmes also appear to reach women who may not otherwise be able to participate in the otherwise elder/male-dominated conflict resolution or dialogue spaces. As one FGD participant noted, "even women who never attended any meetings heard the messages [in the radio programmes] and began discussing peace at home".

Key lessons learned from the radio programmes

The programmes have proven particularly effective in reaching audiences that are often excluded from peacebuilding and awareness raising activities, including pastoralists, women and rural communities. In some remote and conflict-prone areas, radio remains one of the few accessible and trusted sources of information, allowing peace and environmental messaging to travel far beyond the direct reach of project activities. The interactive format, combining storytelling, expert discussions and listener call-ins, has also shown value in encouraging communities to engage with sensitive issues in a more open and constructive way.

The independent external evaluation reinforces the project's internal findings that the radio programmes are highly effective in the areas where they are implemented. It recommends expanding the programmes' geographic reach. Interviewees of the external evaluation emphasised that combining radio programming and community-led peace initiatives would make both stronger and more effective. This recommendation aligns with the recurring requests from programme listeners to increase both the coverage and frequency of the radio programmes. However, such expansion is currently constrained by limited human resource capacity within both Berghof and the IPN, as well as insufficient technical infrastructure in some districts.

3.4. Strengthening community agency and collective action through large-scale community dialogue (Shirarka) (objective 3)

Under this objective, the project seeks to strengthen community-led collective action for conflict transformation, environmental protection, as well as climate change adaptation and mitigation by engaging broader communities through large-scale community dialogue (*Shirarka*) (ToC 3).

Activity stream: *Shirarka*

A Shir is a traditional Somali community-based dialogue format for addressing local issues and conflict, joint planning and decision-making. Since 2015, Berghof has built on this format to incorporate conflict transformation approaches and since 2021, has further expanded it to include awareness-raising on challenges related to the CEPS nexus. In 2023, three *Shirarka* were conducted in Adale, Mataban and Galkayo, followed by four in 2024 in Warsheikh, Dhusamareb, Mahaday and Guriel. In 2025 the project organized two *Shirarka* one in Hobyo, Glamudug and one in Mataban, Hirshabelle.

Berghof has placed particular attention on **inclusivity**, ensuring participation of community members with diverse social functions and professions, including traditional elders, religious leaders, women, youth, people with disabilities, educators, poets and businesspeople and ensuring representation from all communities in the area, including the marginalised. Local government officials formally open the event to provide their endorsement and then leave the space to allow community members to engage in open discussions.

Shirarka serve as a strategic entry point for engagement with communities and local authorities and have played a critical role in establishing Berghof's presence in new districts, thereby enabling the geographical expansion of its programming. As an initial engagement mechanism, a Shir helps communities and local administrations recognise the value of broad and inclusive community dialogue, enables local staff to identify key community stakeholders and serves as an effective platform for awareness raising, collaborative learning and community mobilisation around environmental peacebuilding.

Outcomes of the *Shirarka*

4. Increased understanding of CEPS challenges and their implications for community action

Through the carefully facilitated *Shirarka*, which create space for intensive collaborative learning, brainstorming and dialogue, community members have **deepened their understanding** of issues across the CEPS nexus and strengthened their sense of **collective responsibility and agency** in addressing them. This has translated into concrete community-led initiatives, including actions undertaken without relying on institutional support. Post-*Shir* feedback, periodic surveys and IPN community outreach have provided evidence of these outcomes.

> “While the situation may seem overwhelming, what we learned yesterday also planted a seed of awareness and hope. It’s clear that understanding the environment and the ecosystem is not just about knowledge — it’s about survival. And as a community, we must start thinking about solutions, about how to adapt and protect what we have left. This is not just the government’s responsibility or that of organisations; it’s something that requires all of us to work together.”
>
> COMMUNITY MEMBER FROM GURIEL

> “I now understand that the droughts, the floods and all the other environmental challenges we face are not isolated events — they are deeply interconnected and are having a direct impact on our daily lives. We’ve learned how these extreme weather events are not just temporary inconveniences, but long-term consequences of a changing climate. I also now realise that the regeneration of our land is not just a possibility — it’s a necessity. Through the knowledge we’ve gained here, I feel more empowered to take action in my own community, to raise awareness and to contribute to the solutions. We’ve seen that by working together and adopting new methods for land rehabilitation and sustainable practices, we can begin to reverse some of the damage and create a more resilient future for our people. This workshop has shown me that there is hope and now we must act to make a real difference.”
>
> COMMUNITY MEMBER FROM GURIEL

This shift towards recognising climate-related challenges, such as water scarcity and land degradation, as key drivers of conflict is **critical for building climate and environmental resilience and transforming conflict**.

> “Our people are unaware of the environmental challenges we are facing and this ignorance is fuelling conflicts. While we see little direct conflict over climate issues in our region, it is crucial to recognise that the consistent problems stemming from environmental degradation, such as water scarcity and land disputes, are often the underlying causes of the conflicts we experience. If we can raise awareness about climate change and its far-reaching consequences, we can mitigate the risks and work towards a more peaceful, sustainable future.”
>
> COMMUNITY MEMBER FROM GURIEL

A clear example of this increased agency can be seen in Mahaday, where participants of the *Shir* took collective action after severe floods in 2024. During the Shir, they decided to pool resources to repair flood damage, demonstrating a growing sense of responsibility and **local problem-solving**, rather than relying solely on external support. At the same *Shir*, several participants promptly intervened to de-escalate a violent incident outside the venue and later reflected that the confidence, skills and sense of collective agency strengthened through the *Shir* had enabled them to act.

These stories and testimonies demonstrate that participants are not only increasing their theoretical understanding of conflict transformation and climate change but are also **applying this understanding in their daily lives** – mitigating climate and environmental risks, resolving conflicts peacefully and raising awareness within their communities. This underscores the role of *Shirarka* in **fostering community resilience, agency and responsibility**.

To ensure lasting impact, ongoing support is needed so that participants can implement the collectively developed action plans. This was a key request after the *Shirarka* in Mataban and Warsheikh. This would require integrating specialised expertise — ranging from climate and environmental to development and humanitarian aid — along with adequate funding and infrastructure, underscoring the need for strong nexus partnerships with either local or international organisations. Additionally, many participants have called for **expanding access to conflict resolution training** in their own communities and have requested the expansion of the IPN to more areas. This reflects a growing commitment to sustaining the impact of the *Shirarka*.

5. Strengthened social relations among different social groups
Over the past two years, the intentional fifty-person, six-day design of the *Shirarka* brought together community members with diverse experiences and perspectives on shared challenges in a **safe and inclusive space for constructive dialogue**. The *Shirarka* created opportunities for people who might not otherwise have interacted to **exchange views and ideas, deepen their understanding of shared realities and resources and jointly identify challenges and co-create solutions**. In doing so, they helped strengthen social relations and build the capacity for collaborative action on CEPS issues.

In expanding project engagement into new districts, the *Shirarka* have proven to be a valuable approach for building trust, establishing relationships and facilitating community entry. Many individuals identified during the *Shirarka* as active and influential community peacebuilders later became members of the IPN, where collaborative learning and microgrant-supported initiatives have enabled them to engage their communities with strengthened skills, confidence and capacity.

Communities consistently describe the intensive and inclusive *Shirarka* as a unique and **transformative experience** that contribute to positive changes in perceptions, attitudes, behaviour and relationships.

> “I have realised that when we are together, we can do more than expected and achieve a lot more than we can do alone. I think that teamwork is not just important; it is absolutely necessary for us as a country. 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. If we continue to prioritise working together, we can lay a solid foundation for a brighter and more prosperous future for all our people.”
>
> COMMUNITY MEMBER FROM GURIEL

This statement reflects the broader impact of *Shirarka* in strengthening social ties and **fostering a culture of cooperation**. Communities have developed a greater appreciation for collective action and a sense of shared responsibility, laying the groundwork for environmental peacebuilding.

Shirarka have proven to be critical spaces for **building trust and overcoming historical divisions**. In the post-*Shir* surveys, many community members expressed how the experience of the Shir made them feel more comfortable addressing historical grievances, leading to **more direct and open communication**. This shift has encouraged a growing sense of **ownership** over local challenges, with communities recognising that the transition towards a more peaceful society, one founded on dialogue, mediation and trust among its members, must be driven from within the community itself, rather than relying solely on the government or external actors.

By focusing discussions on shared concerns, such as climate change and environmental degradation, the *Shirarka* have enabled participants to **find common ground that transcends societal divides** and take **collective action**. This has also been the case in the inclusive and participatory development of CSAPs in the climate-conflict hotspots.

After each *Shir*, communities have consistently expressed a **strong desire for ongoing support to continue dialogue**. This indicates the perceived relevance and value of a dialogue, as well as local ownership and willingness to sustain engagement.

Key lessons learned from the *Shirarka*

Key lessons learned from the *Shirarka* highlight the value of creating inclusive dialogue spaces that enable communities to collectively reflect on the links between conflict, climate change and environmental degradation. The *Shirarka* have proved particularly effective in bringing together actors who would not normally engage with one another — including elders, women, youth and religious leaders — and fostering constructive conversations around shared challenges. The traditional *Shir* format has also provided a culturally grounded and trusted entry point for discussing sensitive issues, which has strengthened participant engagement and ownership over locally driven solutions.

A key lesson is that awareness-raising alone can already have a significant impact. Across the different *Shirarka*, participants have demonstrated increased understanding of the CEPS nexus and a stronger sense of collective responsibility, which in several cases translated into tangible community action, such as local flood response initiatives and mediation efforts during conflict incidents. The *Shirarka* have also contributed to stronger social cohesion and trust-building by creating opportunities for communities to move beyond social and political divides and instead, focus on common interests and shared resilience.

Furthermore, the evaluation highlighted that sustaining the momentum generated through the *Shirarka* would require substantial follow-up support, resources and long-term accompaniment to implement the jointly developed action plans. This includes stronger partnerships with organisations that can provide technical expertise and development support beyond the scope of the current project. These findings

are validated by the independent external evaluation where interviewees stress the importance of follow-up activities to sustain the agreements made during the *Shirarka*.

Importantly, the findings suggest that the *Shirarka* largely achieved their intended objectives as an entry point for engagement with communities and local authorities, playing a critical role in establishing Berghof's presence in new districts. Given that *Shirarka* are most relevant during the initial stages of engagement, there are currently no plans to continue this activity stream in its present form in districts where the Berghof Foundation already has an established presence and active programming. Nevertheless, the *Shirarka* remain a valuable and proven approach for establishing relationships and gaining community entry in new districts and would likely form a key component of any future geographic expansion. Instead, the project will focus on consolidating and building on the awareness, relationships and community engagement that have already been established through the *Shirarka*, while investing in other approaches such as SD processes that can sustain and expand these outcomes over time.

4 Conclusion and recommendations

A central objective of this evaluation was not only to assess outcomes achieved by the project between 2023 and 2026, but also to test the assumptions underpinning the project's three Theories of Change (ToCs). Overall, the findings provide strong evidence that the project's core assumptions remain valid and relevant in the Somali context. At the same time, the evaluation highlights that change is unfolding unevenly across different levels. While substantial progress is evident at the individual and relational levels, signs of transformation are also emerging at the broader community and institutional levels, although further progress will require sustained long-term engagement. The contrast of the project's ToCs against the implementation and observed outcomes points to a key lesson: sustainable peace and resilience depend on change taking place simultaneously on three interconnected levels:

- **Individual level:** changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills, confidence and behaviour;
- **Community level:** changes in relationships, social norms, collective action and local conflict dynamics;
- **Institutional level:** changes in the systems, structures, networks and mechanisms that enable societies to prevent violence and manage conflict over time.

Evidence from the evaluation points to important changes across all three levels, although they vary in depth and in their likelihood of being sustained.

Environmental peacebuilding as an entry point for conflict transformation (ToC 1)

The evaluation findings largely validate ToC 1. The SD processes have demonstrated that environmental and climate-related challenges can serve as effective entry points for engaging communities in dialogue around conflict and cooperation. By focusing discussions on shared concerns such as grazing access, water scarcity, environmental degradation and livelihoods insecurity, communities have been able to move beyond entrenched narratives, identify common interests in addressing these concerns and define collaborative pathways towards reduced violence, strengthened trust and more sustainable resource management.

The strongest outcomes under this ToC were observed at the individual and relational levels. Participants developed a greater understanding of the links between environmental pressures and conflict dynamics and increased trust in counterparts from other communities, while demonstrating a greater willingness to cooperate. These changes have translated into practical actions, including improved communication between communities, efforts to de-escalate conflict, gain safer access to grazing land and reopen shared markets.

At the community level, encouraging signs of transformation have been observed. Relationships between previously disconnected communities have strengthened, new channels of communication have been established and practical examples of cooperation are becoming increasingly visible. While these changes are currently most pronounced among the SD committee members directly engaged in the processes, they provide a strong foundation for broader community-level transformation. Given the depth of historical grievances and recurring cycles of violence, these early achievements represent important milestones. If engagement by the SD committees continues, these positive dynamics are expected to extend further to the wider community over time.

The findings therefore suggest that the theory remains valid, but that meaningful community-level transformation requires significantly longer time horizons than a single project. SD processes should therefore be understood as laying the foundation for longer-term transformation rather than producing immediately measurable outcomes.

Strengthening local infrastructures for peace through the IPN (ToC 2)

The evaluation provides strong evidence supporting ToC 2. Engagement with the IPN has strengthened local capacities, improved coordination within community peacebuilders and with government actors and enhanced communities' ability to respond to conflict constructively and prevent or reduce violence.

At the individual level, IPN members have demonstrated increased confidence, knowledge and practical skills in mediation, conflict transformation, environmental peacebuilding and climate security analysis. They actively apply these skills while engaging with their communities and are well recognised for this.

At the community level, the IPN has helped broaden participation in peacebuilding beyond traditional actors by creating opportunities for women, youth, civil society representatives and people with different professional backgrounds to contribute to conflict transformation efforts. Communities are increasingly beginning to view environmental peacebuilding as a shared responsibility rather than solely the domain of informal or formal authorities.

At an informal institutional level, the IPN has gradually evolved as a central element of the local infrastructure for peace, which consolidates communication, coordination and collective action across districts and social groups. It plays a crucial role as an early warning and early response mechanism with regard to brewing tensions and violent

conflict, complementing traditional conflict resolution systems while embodying more preventive and inclusive approaches.

The findings suggest that the core assumption underpinning ToC 2 is valid: stronger networks and improved coordination do contribute to more effective local peace infrastructure. At the same time, the evaluation hints towards the fact that institutional transformation requires sustained investment. The effectiveness of the IPN is closely linked to the strength of relationships, regular interaction and opportunities for collective action. Without continued support, there is a risk that these gains could gradually diminish over time.

Awareness raising as a catalyst for collective action (ToC 3)

The evaluation findings generally support ToC 3. Both the radio programmes and the *Shirarka* have contributed to significant increases in awareness and understanding of the CEPS nexus among participants and listeners. Across different locations, communities have demonstrated a stronger understanding of how climate change, environmental degradation and conflict interact, while increasingly recognising their own agency in addressing these challenges.

At the individual level, gains in awareness and knowledge were consistently reported. Participants and listeners frequently described shifts in how they understood environmental challenges, conflict drivers and their own role in contributing to solutions.

At the community level, there is evidence that these increased levels of awareness have translated into collective action in some locations. Examples include community-led flood response initiatives, local environmental activities, peacebuilding committees and a greater willingness to engage in dialogue around shared challenges. The radio programmes in particular demonstrated a strong capacity to extend these conversations beyond direct project participants and into households and rural communities.

At the same time, the evaluation highlights important limitations. Increased awareness does not automatically lead to sustained behavioural or social change. While the Shirarka proved highly effective as entry points for awareness raising and relationship building, deeper transformation requires follow-up mechanisms, continued engagement and opportunities for communities to practically apply new knowledge.

The findings therefore suggest that awareness raising is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for transformation. Its impact is greatest when linked to sustained processes, practical action and local structures that enable communities to act on what they have learned.

Overall conclusions

Across all three ToCs, the evaluation demonstrates that the project has successfully established important foundations for longer-term transformation. The strongest and most consistent outcomes are evident at the individual and relational levels, where participants, peacebuilders and communities have developed new knowledge, relationships, skills and approaches to addressing conflict and environmental challenges.

Emerging community-level outcomes suggest that these individual changes are beginning to influence broader social dynamics, although these processes remain fragile and uneven. Institutional-level outcomes are most clearly reflected in the strengthening of the IPN and the establishment of local mechanisms for dialogue, coordination and conflict response.

Overall, the evaluation suggests that the project‘s core approach is both relevant and effective. At the same time, sustainable transformation in contexts characterised by protracted conflict and environmental stress requires a long-term perspective. Lasting change will depend on the project‘s ability to move beyond generating individual and relational change toward embedding these changes within communities, institutions and local systems capable of sustaining them over time.

Recommendations

The evaluation findings suggest that future programming should place less emphasis on creating new entry points for engagement and greater focus on deepening, upscaling and institutionalising the gains already achieved. The next phase should be guided by the objective of translating individual and relational change into broader community and institutional transformation.

1 Build an inclusive environmental peacebuilding approach around shared community concerns.

- Combine conflict, climate, and environmental analysis to address both immediate disputes and underlying pressures, including water scarcity, land degradation, and competition over natural resources.
- Embed gender and intersectional analysis throughout programming, using inclusive facilitation and dedicated spaces where appropriate to enable women, young people, and other underrepresented groups to meaningfully shape priorities, decisions, and responses.

2 Connect community dialogue and action planning with the partnerships and capacities needed for implementation.

- Establish partnerships across peacebuilding, development, environmental, and humanitarian sectors early in the process. While some community priorities can be addressed through relatively low-cost local action, others require technical expertise, infrastructure, and more substantial investment.

- Ensure that implementation—particularly infrastructure and natural resource-related interventions—is conflict-sensitive and follows Do No Harm principles, considering how access, benefits, and resource allocation may affect relationships between groups.

- Use Sustained Dialogue as a structured, community-owned platform through which diverse community members and government actors can jointly guide, review, and follow up on agreed actions.

3 Strengthen locally led peacebuilding and environmental action, particularly in remote and underserved areas.

- Prioritise rural and remote communities where access to sustained peacebuilding support is limited and conflict risks may be high. Strengthen local capacities to identify and address tensions early, reducing reliance on external actors.

- Invest in the skills, resources, and decision-making roles of local peacebuilders, community groups, and local government actors.

- Provide flexible and accessible support for grassroots initiatives, complemented by technical assistance, peer exchange, and practical learning, so that promising locally developed approaches can grow beyond short-term, small-scale activities.

4 Mobilise local diaspora resources while avoiding dependency on external support.

- Build on existing community capacities, resources, and systems, including low-cost actions that communities can initiate and sustain themselves.

- Support communities and local authorities to mobilise financial, material, and human resources locally, while engaging diaspora networks constructively for financing, expertise, and connections.

- Use external assistance to complement and strengthen local initiative and responsibility rather than replace it.

5 Support the use of accessible media to extend climate and peace dialogue beyond face-to-face processes.

- Support regular and engaging programming across traditional and social media to reach large and diverse audiences, including remote and hard-to-access communities. Combine practical information, early warning, dialogue, creative approaches, and peace messaging.

- Ensure diverse guests, interactive audience participation, and accessible storytelling to make complex climate and peace issues relevant to different audiences, while amplifying constructive alternatives to narratives that contribute to division or violence.

11 Provide long-term and coordinated financing for locally owned environmental peacebuilding.

- Align donor funding and policy frameworks with integrated, locally led approaches, recognising that larger climate adaptation, environmental restoration, and infrastructure priorities may require substantial and sustained investment beyond the scope of peacebuilding programmes alone.

- Strengthen coordination across funding streams and sectors, while providing sufficient flexibility for programmes to adapt to changing conflict and environmental conditions. Develop pathways for sustained financing through government, donors, the private sector, diaspora networks, and other relevant actors.

12 Focus more explicitly on individual, community and institutional transformation

Future programme design, monitoring and learning should explicitly distinguish between individual, community and institutional change.

Activities should be intentionally designed to strengthen the connections between these levels:

- Individual learning should lead to collective action.

- Collective action should strengthen community relationships and norms.

- Community initiatives should be connected to institutions capable of sustaining and scaling change.

Transformation is most likely to become durable when progress occurs simultaneously across all three levels. Future programming should therefore focus not only on generating change within each level, but also on strengthening the linkages between them.

ENDNOTES

[1] According to UNHCR, Somalia is in need of USD 110 Mio. to cover its humanitarian needs, however only 15% of that have been funded so far until August 2026.

[2] The project supported communities in two climate-conflict hotspots, one in Hirshabelle and one in Galmudug, to jointly develop Climate Security Action Plans (CSAPs) that identified key local climate stressors and analysed how these interacted with local conflict dynamics (see Section 2.1).

[3] Due to the heightened security situation in the area where the CSAP was conducted, the location cannot be disclosed.

[4] In this project, the IPN is currently operating in the following districts: Galkayo, Hobyo, Abudwaq, Adado, Herale, Balanbale, Guriel and Dhusamareb in Galmudug State and Beledwayne, Bula Burde, Jowhar and Balad in Hirshabelle State.

[5] A software designed for conducting surveys via text message.

[6] Due to the heightened security situation in the area where the CSAP was conducted, the exact location cannot be disclosed.

[7] The feedback is not systematically collected as it emerges organically in every session through the traditional Somali way of storytelling.

[8] The external evaluator conducted 18 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with community-level informants as part of the study, with three KIIs conducted in each of the six districts covered across the three Federal Member States (FMS) in which Berghof is active. The 18 KIIs included traditional elders, women representatives and activists, civil society organisations, youth representatives, government officials, a deputy police commissioner and Insider Peacebuilders Network (IPN) members.

[9] https://www.medialandscapes.org/country/somalia/media/radio.html.

[10] https://www.fao.org/newsroom/story/I-learned-it-on-the-radio/en.

[11] https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/pdf/research/somalia-covid-19-learning-22.pdf.

[12] https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/rmhttp/mediaaction/pdf/research-infographic-covid-hbcc-media-landscape-somalia-2021.pdf.

[13] https://www.mediasupport.org/news/radio-ergo-a-critical-information-provider-in-somalia/.

[14] https://www.peaceagency.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/AP_Media-and-Peacebuilding-in-Somalia_2023_FINAL.pdf.

[15] Particularly from Kenya, Ethiopia, South Africa, Uganda, Egypt, South Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Finland, the Netherlands, the UK, the US and Germany.

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