

# Building pathways out of poverty in Baidoa, Somalia

## Qualitative evidence around resilience in the context of flood shocks

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### Overview and study objectives

Somalia is among the most impoverished nations globally, grappling with severe poverty, persistent armed conflicts, and recurrent droughts and floods, leading to a humanitarian crisis marked by substantial internal displacement. The site of this evaluation, Baidoa, has 517 sites for internally displaced persons (IDPs), housing nearly 600,000 households. Notably, 64% of the residents in these sites are women and girls. The 2nd Somali High-Frequency Survey (Pape and Karamba, 2019) revealed that poverty is particularly pronounced in IDP settlements, compounded by high unemployment rates and a lack of income-generating opportunities, thereby exacerbating the challenging circumstances in this area.

This brief reports findings from a qualitative assessment conducted in January 2024 exploring the effects of severe floods in Baidoa and the role of the Ultra-Poor Graduation (UPG) intervention in protecting households from these shocks.

The Ultra-Poor Graduation (UPG) program aims to empower internally displaced households facing extreme poverty to graduate towards self-sufficiency within displacement-affected communities. This involves establishing gender-sensitive, context-appropriate, and sustainable livelihoods in an urban environment. IFPRI, Delta, and World Vision are collaborating to conduct this study. The intervention provided cash transfers for nine months and simultaneously established savings groups. The program also provided either technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) or assets to households. Additionally, participants also received coaching on financial literacy and business facilitation.

In terms of Somalia's vulnerability to climate change, Somalia has a score of 9.3/10 for flood exposure score and a score of 8.8/10 for vulnerability and lack of coping capacity score (EC accessed

24/4/2024). Consequently, Somalia does not have the means to sufficiently respond to the impact of these floods. Baidoa is characterized by frequent extreme weather events, in particular, heavy floods. In October 2023, severe flooding affected over 122,000 people in Baidoa district (ACAPS, 2023). Shelters housing over 92,000 IDPs were affected, causing a second displacement (OCHA, 2023). This extreme weather shock was the focus of this qualitative exploration.

The qualitative study yielded valuable insights into the extensive impact of recent floods in Baidoa. The floods wreaked havoc on livelihoods, homes, and infrastructure, causing disruptions in education and employment while limiting mobility for both UPG participant and non-participant households. Notably, food insecurity was a significant challenge, particularly for women. While many households exhibited resilience through relocation, social networks, and mutual support, non-participants were more vulnerable than UPG participants, given that the latter had additional resources to draw on. Those receiving the UPG program leveraged vocational skills, assets, and community savings that they saved with help from the program to meet their basic needs and generate income during the recovery period. However, the effectiveness of the UPG interventions with respect to resilience to floods varied, with some facing challenges in putting their training to use and others experiencing complete asset loss. Gender and the type of support received also influenced vocational training outcomes with respect to livelihoods. Infrastructure damage exacerbated existing challenges, prompting calls for rehabilitation and disaster preparedness support. Both UPG participant and non-participant households underscored the need for sustainable solutions, including disaster preparedness, strengthening of infrastructure, job creation, and diversified training programs.

## Sample and Methods

The sample included both UPG participants and non-participants, all of whom were affected by the floods. The research focused on a diverse group of stakeholders, including male and female participants who had either completed TVET programs or received assets, as well as men and women who were not participants in the UPG program. The study used purposive and simple random sampling to comprehensively represent the target population affected by floods in Baidoa, Somalia.<sup>1</sup> Purposive sampling deliberately selected individuals with diverse demographics and perspectives, including both UPG program participants and non-participants. Simple random sampling within these groups was used to aim for relatively equal representation to reduce bias and enhance the generalizability of the findings.

**Table 1: Study Sample**

Category	Description	# of Focus Group Discussions	Total number of participants
UPG Non-participants	Men	2	16
UPG Non-participants	Women	2	15
Male UPG Participants	TVET Graduate	1	7
Male UPG Participants	Asset Recipient	1	8
Female UPG Participants	TVET Graduate	1	6
Female UPG Participants	Asset Recipient	1	8
Total Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)		8	60

The study used Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), creating separate groups for male and female participants to provide a comfortable space to share experiences. Discussions were recorded and subsequently transcribed. The analysis involved carefully reviewing the transcripts of the discussions, iteratively noting recurrent topics, sentiments, and narratives. Particular attention was paid to differences and similarities in the experiences of the UPG program participants and non-participants.

## Primary findings

*Research question one: How did the recent flood affect the target communities in Baidoa?*

Primary finding 1: The floods substantially affected both UPG participants and non-participants. Households experienced large-scale displacement, the destruction of infrastructure, and loss of livelihoods.

The target communities in Baidoa were severely affected by the floods in many respects. Both UPG participants and non-participants experienced food insecurity during and after the floods. The floods washed away food, leading to scarcity that was made worse due to blocked roads that restricted food supply and increased food prices. Women were particularly affected due to their role in meal provision and the compounded challenges of lack of savings and access to other financial services.

The floods also caused large scale displacement, destruction of homes, and loss of household items. For example, all households shared that a majority of houses at their site were destroyed or severely damaged, leaving people homeless and forced to evacuate and seek shelter elsewhere. A male non-participant from Bodan IDP Camp said,

*"The house I was sleeping [in] filled up with water, the roads became muddy; my home was washed away by the floods and schools closed and collapsed."*

Another major challenge was the destruction of schools' infrastructure resulting in a sudden disruption of education, affecting both government schools and madrasas (Quranic schools). Disruptions to education were also caused by parents' inability to pay fees once learning had resumed due to income losses during the flooding. A male UPG participant from Guudka explained that,

*"The schools and Madaras closed, and we could not manage paying the fees during the floods."*

Mobility was also severely reduced. Almost all the study respondents reported that the flood significantly affected their movement, restricting their ability to travel within the affected areas and hindering access to basic services like food, healthcare, and markets.

Predictably, livelihoods were negatively affected, also partly due to the lack of transportation. Many UPG participants and non-participants highlighted a complete disruption in employment opportunities due to the floods. Households were unable to travel to work or travel to find employment opportunities, and safety concerns for family members led many people to stay at home. One female non-UPG participant from Barariye IDP Camp noted,

*"I used to go to the market for pushing wheelbarrow to work for the day, but due to the flood, I could not go to the market to work."*

Conversely, those with businesses found that demand for their products was low. Another female UPG Asset participant from ADC4 IDP Camp added,

*"My plans changed because there is no business now since the flood affected my business."*

*Research question Two: After the floods, how did households and communities cope with this negative event? What resources did they draw on to cope?*

Primary finding 2: Households relied a great deal on other community members. They helped each other financially and with food and helped to relocate. However, UPG participants had more coping strategies available to them.

There was some overlap in coping strategies among UPG participants and non-participants with both groups reporting strong reliance on other community members. Study participants noted a lot of support (social and material support) from relatives and friends. One male non-participant from Madhayto IDP camp stated,

*"We have handled the situation by looking help from relatives and they have supported me with some foods."*

Communities helped each other relocate and provided food assistance, as well as assisting one another with hygiene and sanitation during and after the floods to prevent disease. UPG participants were able to leverage their training and assets. Unfortunately, non-UPG participants primarily relied on community support and prayer due to the lack of external resources. Lacking in access to such resources and support systems, coping strategies were more severe, leading to greater vulnerabilities and challenges in the aftermath of the floods.

Many respondents, UPG participants and non-participants, stated that their families had to move to high level ground areas for safety. They also put sacks of soil and stones around their houses to prevent flooding. However, many households, both UPG participants and non-participants, reported being homeless at some point. Households had to resort to negative coping strategies in many cases. Some limited their food consumption to two meals per day. Many borrowed money from community members and savings groups.

*Research question Three: What role did the UPG program play in assisting communities to cope with the flood, and recover?*

Primary finding 3: UPG participants were able to leverage skills and training, as well as assets that were provided by the program to cope with the negative effects of the floods. Some sold assets to maintain consumption while others used their carpentry and tie and dye skills in particular.

UPG participants, with access to vocational skills and assets provided by the program, were able to employ these resources effectively to mitigate some of the impact of the floods. They employed skills such as sewing and carpentry, and assets such as livestock, to continue to generate income and support and safeguard their families. Men reported that carpentry skills were particularly useful, with almost all of male respondents describing how these skills were used for earning income through repairing and making furniture, contributing to theirs and their neighbors' recovery. Forty percent of male TVET participants highlighted that carpentry tools were helpful. A male TVET recipient from Hanaana2 said that,

*"The specific support that I got from the UPG program was the carpenter tools such as the hammer, measuring tape, and hand saw. This was helpful to me as I was using them to make tables*

*and chairs for the neighbors. I repaired the damages that made floods to our house using the tools and skills I was provided by World Vision."*

Women also noted that the training helped them. A female TVET participant from Bodan2 stated that,

*"The skill of the tie and dye [skills] that I gained from UPG program was useful during the flood, I sold some clothes that I designed before the flood started to some women who are my neighbors and I used the money for my family needs."*

Female participants from Bodan 1 IDP camp also reported using saved funds to cover basic needs with some women reporting that VSLAs were very helpful during the floods. A female participant shared that,

*"We were saving money before the flood through the VSLA, I borrowed money from the saving and bought food for the family during the flood."*

TVET training also helped other members of the community. UPG participants reported providing some support to their family members that was only made possible by the program. A male TVET participant from Hanano 3 leveraged the tools provided by the project, such as a hammer, to support multiple households. Female asset participants reported helping neighbors by sharing assets. One woman reported providing her neighbors with a goat for milking to ensure their children had enough food. In contrast, the majority of male asset participants reported losing livestock due to diseases caused by the flooding. The reason for these differences is because of the location of male and female respondents (i.e., they tended to be located in different IDP camps). One lesson here is that assets and training can be provided with a view towards skills that may be useful to respond to disasters. Carpentry is a clear example here.

### *Needs of Displaced Households*

Households shared several areas where they wished to have more assistance. Forty percent of study participants highlighted the need for proper housing, latrines, water blockade areas, storage for food, and channels through which water can flow. In addition, they suggested educating the community about future disaster prevention techniques, for example, constructing easily accessible education and health facilities during floods.

Both UPG participants and non-participants highlighted the need for early warning systems and early information dissemination. Others suggested timely assistance in relocating families from low-lying areas to higher ground and distribution of essential supplies like WASH kits to promote hygiene and sanitation to reduce the negative impacts of future shocks.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> The qualitative study sites were: ADC Kulanyare, ADC2, ADC4, Barariye, Bay & Bakool, Bodan, Buulosheeb1, Guudka, Hanaana 2, Hanaana 3, Madhayto.

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