

Role of Social Connections in Coping with Drought

Evidence from Somalia



Today's Presenters:

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Somalia Resilience
Population
Measurement (RPM)



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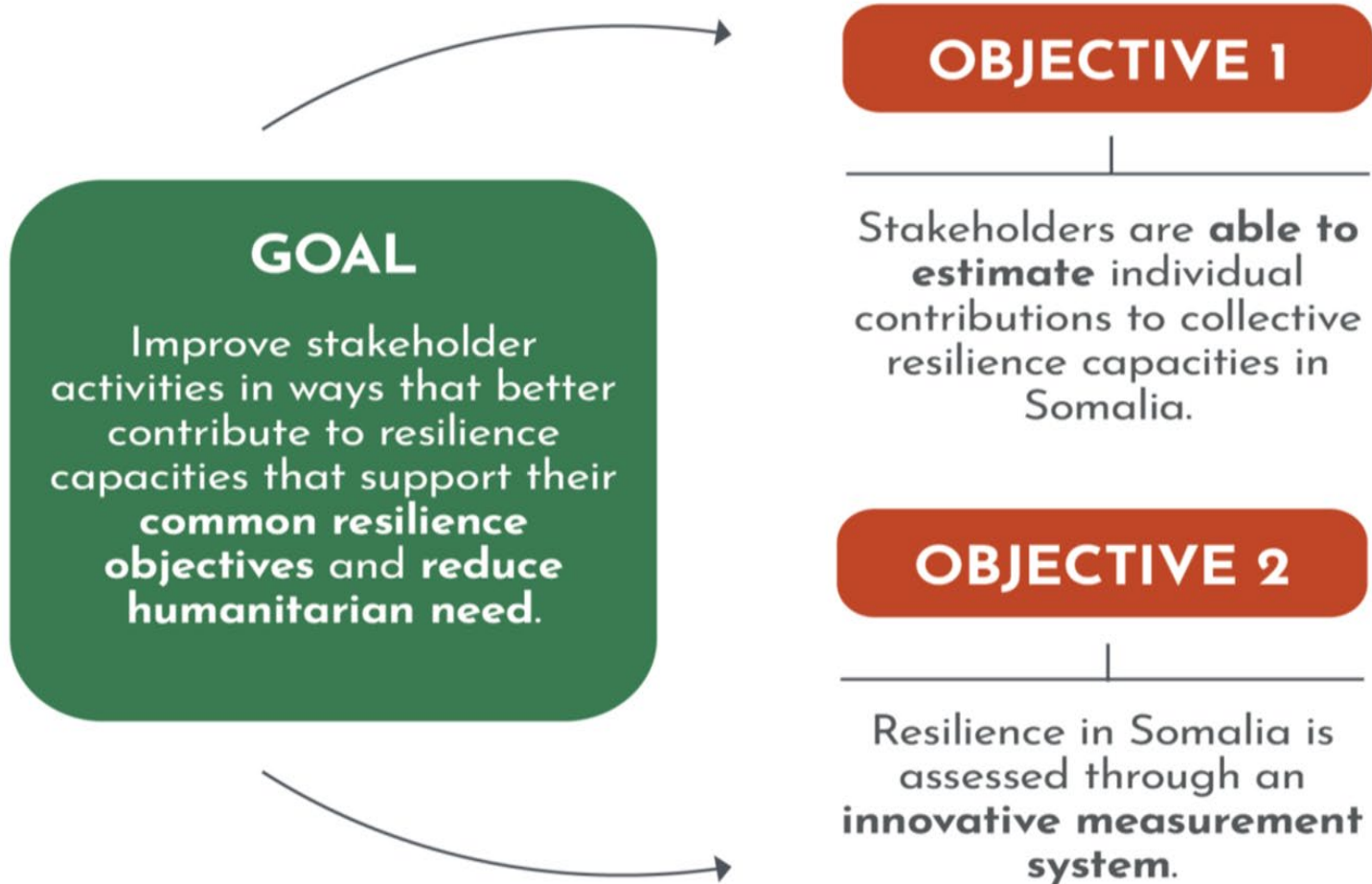
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SomRep



Session Agenda

- 1 Welcome & Introductions
- 2 Session Structure
- 3 RPM & SomRep
Background
- 4 Question #1 & Reflection
- 5 Question #2 & Reflection
- 6 Question #3 & Reflection
- 7 Wrap Up

Overview of RPM



Drought Context



COMPOUNDING SHOCKS AND STRESSES

SEASON 1

Households rely on savings, grain stores, water sources and livestock herds to cope

SEASON 2

SEASON 3

Households have begun borrowing and taking out credit from local businesses, engaging in casual labor, turning to their social connections, migrating to nearby urban towns or IDP camps, and/or reducing their food consumption

SEASON 4

Widespread food insecurity and increased household reliance on external assistance

SomReP's Intro

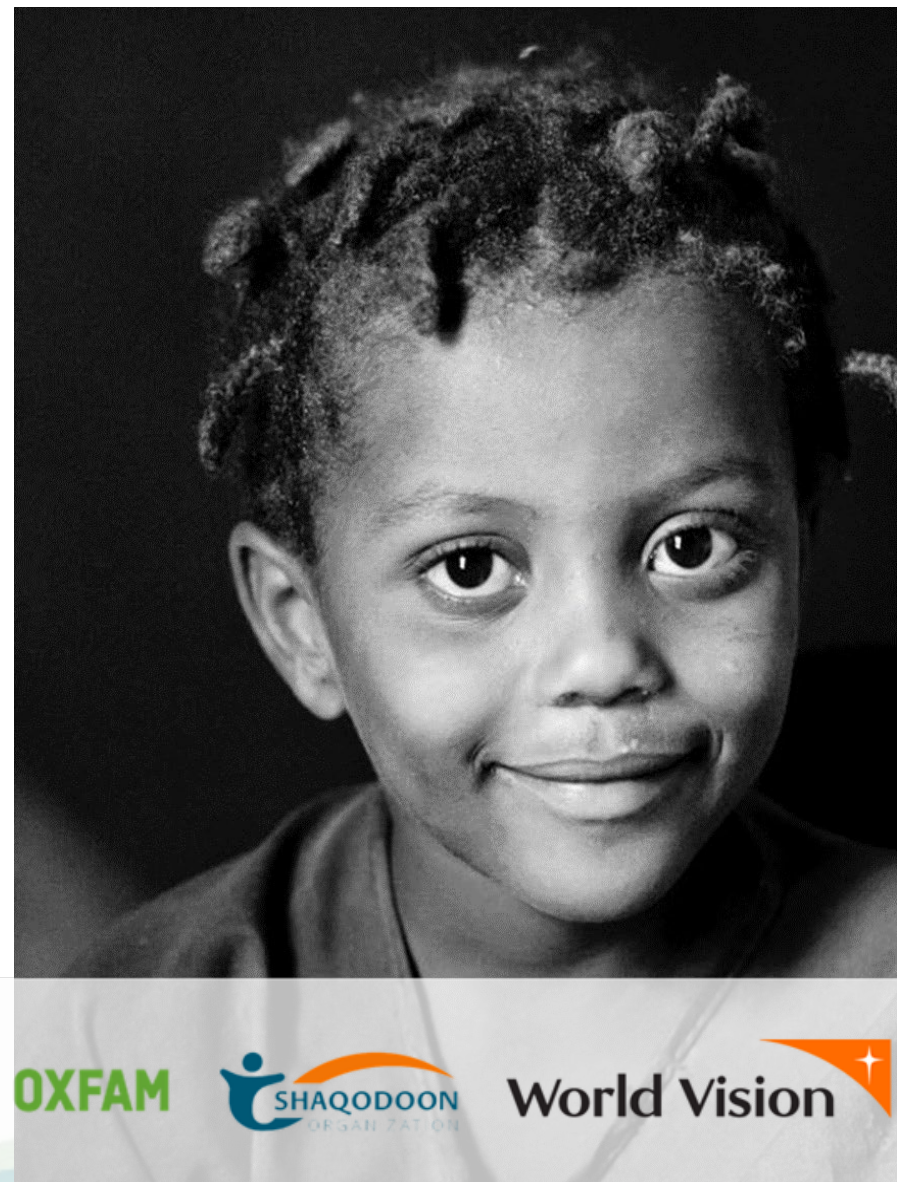
- Formed after the 2011 famine as an **area-based, multi-sector, multi-actor, multi-year** program.
- NGOs came together to explore ways of being proactive in building resilience and protecting gains so people can overcome shocks.
- 8 members NGOs – **Action Against Hunger (ACF); ADRA; CARE; COOPI; DRC; Oxfam; Shaqodoon; World Vision.**



- Hosts the **Response Innovation Lab (RIL)**
 - Brokering innovation and new ways of working.



- Hosts the **Resilience Nexus Learning Action Network (RNLAN)**
 - Promoting capacity strengthening and localization across Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan.



Measuring Resilience : Analytical Framework

OUTCOMES

- Improved Income
- Household dietary diversity
- Household hunger scale
- Coping strategies index.
- Diversified Income



IMPACT IN:



Food security



Health



Living standards



Absorptive Capacity

- Household education
- Productive assets
- Social networks



Adaptive Capacity

- Livelihood diversity
- Women's participation
- Mobility
- Aspirations/risk tolerance



Transformative Capacity:-

- Access to natural resources
- Local ecological health
- Access to basic services
- Social support and protection
- Government performance

Context

- **Demographic focus:** We center our analysis on three distinct groups - Agro-pastoral, Peri-urban, and Pastoral households in SomReP locations. Each has unique livelihoods, vulnerabilities, and coping mechanisms.
- **Temporal scope:** By comparing ARM data from 2020 to 2022, we can observe trends and potential shifts in communal behaviors and attitudes.
- **Outcome of interest:** The main metric is a community member's likelihood to provide support to others - a direct measure of social cohesion and resilience.
- **Prelude to results:** Different community groups may showcase varied reactions to similar stressors.



Question 1:
**What have you
learned about the
role of social
connections?**

RPM findings



- **Resource sharing:** Well-connected households had easier access to support and often share resources with less-connected ones
- **Access to credit:** Two decisive factors for accessing credit - well-known or well-established individuals and households receiving external assistance from INGOs and LNGOs had easy access to credit.
- **Psychosocial well-being:** Family members, relatives, community health workers, traditional and religious leaders played a critical role in provision of psychosocial support.
- **Exhaustion of social connections:** As crisis deepens, households capacity to share resources declined. Notable Fact: 64% of households

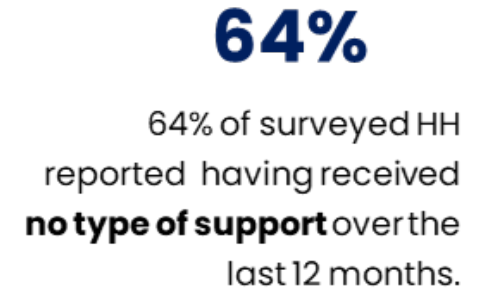
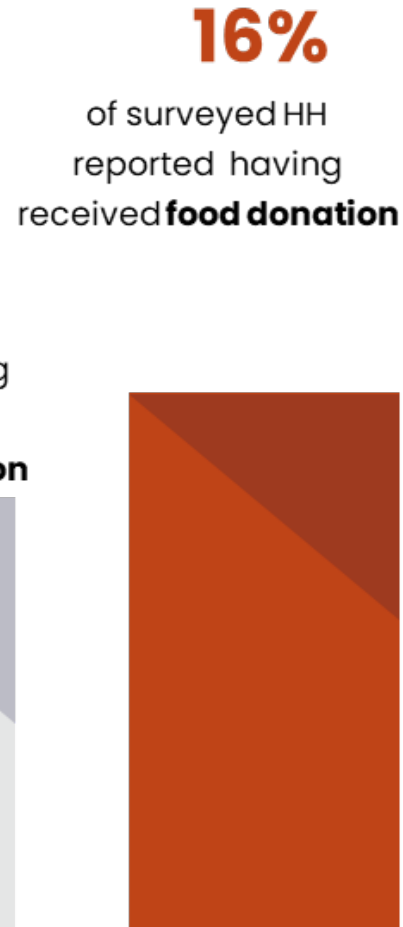
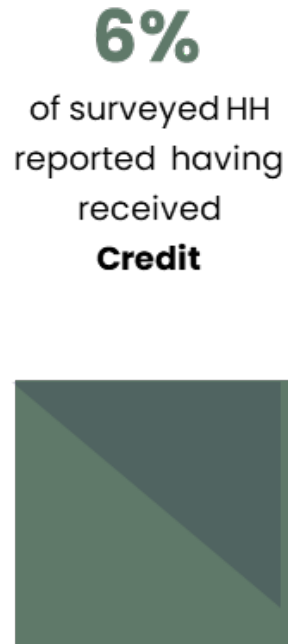
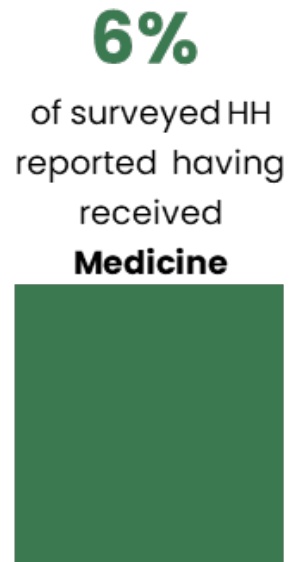
Sources of social support received



56%
of surveyed HH reported having **no sources of support** - due to protracted nature of the drought and exhausted support



Forms of social support received



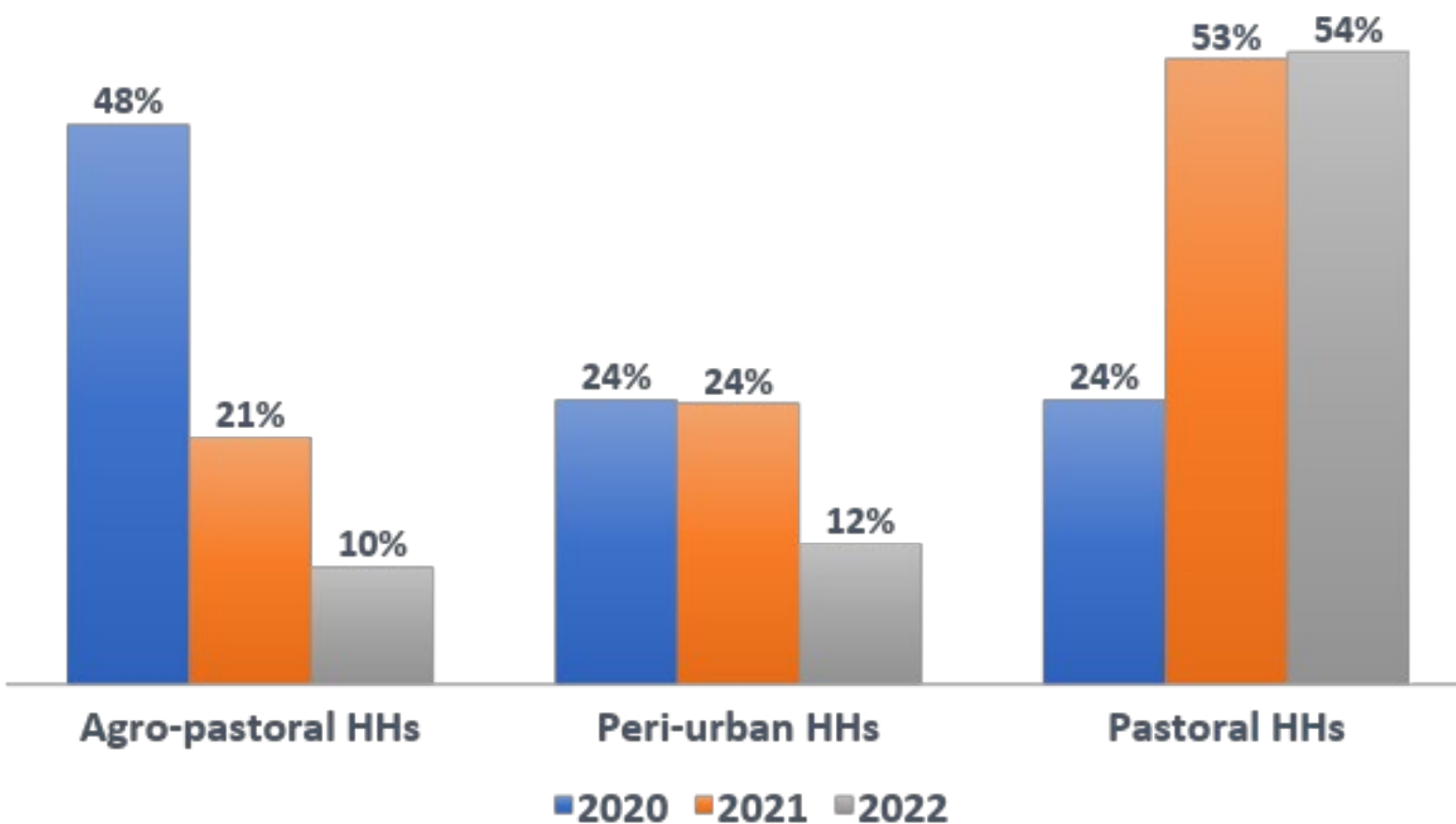
SomReP Findings

- **Reliance on Traditional Support Mechanisms:** Households leverage existing networks as their primary safety nets during shocks: friends, families, broader community ties
- **Cultural and Financial Mechanisms:** Zakaat (a form of almsgiving) and VSLAs (Village Savings and Loan Associations) provide support to affected households.
- **Systems offer both immediate relief and a structure** for resource pooling and redistribution.



Annual Resilience Measurement Data

Likelihood to provide Support to others



Agro-pastoral Households

- **Overall Picture:** Evidence of decline in their confidence to support others from 2020 to 2022.
- **2020 - A year of relative confidence:** Starting off strong, almost half (47.8%) felt they could likely support others in 2020.
- **A shift in dynamics:** The numbers decline to 21.1% in 2021 and further plummet to 10% in 2022. This indicates increasing vulnerability coupled with dwindling resources.
- **Potential reasons:** A combination of prolonged drought affecting agriculture, leading to diminished yields and income, and potentially affecting their capacity to help.



Peri-urban Households

- **Overall picture:** data shows a more gradual, but still notable, decline over the three years.
- **2020:** Starting with almost a quarter (24.3%) feeling confident in providing support.
- **Consistency and eventual decline:** Maintaining similar levels in 2021, the confidence drops to 12% in 2022.
- **Urban challenges:** Urban areas, though less directly affected by drought in terms of agriculture, still face challenges. Reduced agricultural outputs can lead to increased food prices, impacting urban households.



Pastoral Households

- **Different Trend:** Contrary to the previous groups, pastoral households exhibit increased confidence from 2020 to 2022.
- **2020:** Starting at 24.3%, a relatively lower starting point compared to agro-pastoral households.
- **Significant Increase:** An increase to 53.4% in 2021 and slightly rise to 54% in 2022.
- **Hypotheses:** Pastoral lifestyles involve frequent movement in search of pasture, possibly making them more adaptive. Their inherent nomadic traditions and culture of resource-sharing might have bolstered their resilience.



**Group Reflection #1:
How might these
insights affect the
way we design and
target interventions?**

Implication on design and targeting



- Support community-led initiatives
- Targeted support for vulnerable groups
- Facilitate access to credit
- Enhance social capital
- Monitoring and accountability
- Community engagement



**Question 2:
How do locally-led
initiatives support
shock-affected
households?**

Social networks are integral components of local-led initiatives.

- Remittance support Systems/Fundraising
- leverage resources sharing
- Zakat and food distributions
- Psychosocial support



Importance of Traditional Support Networks

- **Cultural capital:** Somali communities have deep-rooted traditions of mutual support. These practices have evolved over generations and form a critical part of their identity.
- **Safety nets:** Friends, families, and broader community ties often act as the first line of support during hardships.
- **Zakaat and VSLAs:** Religious tenets, like Zakaat (a form of almsgiving), and local financial cooperatives, like VSLAs (Village Savings and Loan Associations), play critical roles in communal support.
- **The future of these networks:** While these traditions have served communities well in the past, the changing nature of challenges, like more frequent and intense droughts, might necessitate adaptations or additional support mechanisms.



**Group Reflection #2:
How might these
findings impact the
way we implement
programs?**

Additional observations on Social Connectedness

- **External Shocks and Impacts:** Communities in the northern region were severely impacted by floods in November-December 2019. The situation was exacerbated in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions. Additional challenges arose from the closure of international livestock markets, the devaluation of the shilling, and cross-border trade.
- **Transfer Value Constraints:** Transfer values (through crisis modifier), during crises, are often inadequate, exacerbated by them being susceptible to price shocks which reduces recipients' willingness to share.
- **Sharing Intent vs. Actual Sharing:** While the intention to share is commendably high, the actual resources available for sharing are limited. The existing transfer value might not sufficiently encourage sharing, indicating that social connectedness does not always lead to actual support. Culture of resource-sharing might have bolstered their resilience.



**Question 3:
What is the role of
social connections in
responding to
recurrent and
compounding shocks?**

Role of Social Connections in Coping with Drought

- **Resilience through Community Support:** In absence of formal structures, social networks become key for resource pooling, information sharing, and emotional support in crises.
- **Information Sharing and Early Warning:** Social connections enable swift and effective communication about aid, market changes, and safety in emergencies.
- **Economic Support and Resource Sharing:** Communities utilize social connections to pool resources, create crowd-funded funds, and form saving groups like VSLAs in response to challenges like food scarcity.
- **Mental and Emotional Resilience:** Social networks offer crucial emotional support, a sense of community, and trauma counseling, especially vital post-COVID-19 and amidst insecurity and conflict.
- **Addressing the Economic Impacts of COVID-19:** Community-based initiatives, such as shared business ventures and cooperative markets, emerge through social connections to mitigate economic hardships.



Barriers & Unintended Outcomes

- **Strain on Shared Resources:** Agro-pastoral households show declining confidence in supporting others, indicating a strain on shared resources essential for mutual aid, exacerbated by prolonged drought.
- **Vulnerability in Urban Areas:** Peri-urban households feel drought's indirect impacts like rising food prices, revealing limits in traditional support systems to cope with wider economic effects of environmental crises.
- **Economic Struggles:** Droughts directly affect agro-pastoral livelihoods, limiting their capacity to aid others and suggesting that economic challenges are major barriers despite strong social ties.
- **Challenges in Locally-led Initiatives:** Despite the benefits of traditional, local initiatives in fostering resilience and cohesion, the evident challenges from shocks like droughts call for integrating traditional practices with innovative strategies for a more effective response.



Social Connections Empower Communities to Thrive Amidst Adversity



- **Critical Coping Mechanism**
- **Resource Accessibility**
- **Community Cohesion**
- **Enhanced Resilience**
- **Versatile and Inclusive**

**Group Reflection #3:
How might these
findings change our
approach to
monitoring?**

Recommendations based on findings

- **Enhancing Transfer Value:** Transfer values should be adjusted in accordance with the intensity of the shock to ensure they adequately support the affected community hence the need to improve costing models to be responsive to shock intensity.
- **Capitalizing on Social Bonds:** The evident willingness to share underscores the depth of social connections. This can be leveraged to scale and graduate collectives for saving mechanisms, such as VSLA, crowd-funded contingency funds, Producer Groups, and Associations.
- **Scalable Crisis Modifiers:** Crisis modifiers should be designed with scalability in mind, factoring in trend analysis on historic shock occurrence and impact on the number of affected individuals and the overall impact of the crisis on the community. Providing considerations for determining forecast models for crisis modifiers.



Implications of findings on social connectedness

- **Shared resources under pressure:** Community-shared resources, especially in agro-pastoral areas, might be under strain. Reduced crops or water sources can limit the capacity for mutual support.
- **Reliability amidst adversity:** Pastoral communities, with their adaptive lifestyles, seem to have maintained their social structures, even amidst challenges.
- **Urban vulnerabilities spotlighted:** Droughts have a ripple effect. Urban areas, though not primary agricultural hubs, still face indirect challenges.
- **The broader picture:** Overall, while some segments of the community exhibit resilience, others hint at feeling more isolated or vulnerable, pointing to potential strains in social connectedness.



Key Considerations for MEL

- Risk Mitigation Strategies
- Gender and Age Considerations
- Dynamic Measurement
- External Aid Impact Assessment



Thank you!

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