



Surviving a Drought: How Emergency Assistance is Alleviating the Climate Strain in Hargelle, Somali Region



Shafi Abdi is a resident of Hayer locality in Hargelle Woreda of the Somali Region, Ethiopia. He is also the deputy administrator of the locality.

He states that the residents of Hayer locality often had to walk for two hours to collect water from the river. *“If we can find a 200-liter container, we use it to collect water in one round and transport it back with a camel. Otherwise, we make two trips to the river with 20-liter jerrycans,”* says Shafi.



“Because the river is seasonal, the water gets muddy especially when the water level reduces. Since we didn’t have any alternative, we relied on the murky water for our daily consumption such as for cooking, drinking, and bathing.” explains Shafi. *“Other times, when the river tide is high, it becomes challenging to collect water.”*, he notes.

The seasonal river from which the community of Hayer locality relied on for drinking water. Photo:Kedija Sefa/NCA



Shafi Abdi, the Deputy Administrator of Hayer locality in Hargelle Woreda. Photo: Kedija Seife/NCA

Shafi states that the community utilized the water from the river as it is, without any treatment, exposing them to various health issues. He believes that his neighbour, who fell ill and passed away, lost his life due to consuming the extremely contaminated river water.

In addition to the shortage of clean drinking water, Hayer locality also saw the impact of what is said to be the worst drought in 40 years, according to the UN. The drought's manifold impact has depleted the community's resilience in many ways.

Multi-layered Drought Impact

Asad Salad, a 31-year-old mother of eight children gives a vivid picture of this impact. She and her family were forced to migrate from their village and find shelter at the Bulad displacement camp.

"Two hundred of my goats, along with 20 camels, and 30 cattle all perished during the drought.", says Asad. She shares that following the loss of their livestock, survival became a challenging ordeal for the family. It was at this point that they had no choice but to seek refuge in the camp.

Asad, who was a cattle farmer a year ago, notes, *"Our lives have been greatly impacted by the drought, and we're facing significant challenges. However, to ensure the survival of my family and myself, I've taken on the responsibility of fetching water from faraway rivers on a donkey and selling it to the city dwellers, striving to make the best out of this difficult situation."*

"If we managed to make some money from selling water that we transported from remote locations, it was solely to sustain our basic food requirements, provided we had enough to meet our expenses. Unfortunately, we lacked the means to afford other essential items such as soap, preventing us from maintaining proper hygiene. The hygiene items we received through NCA were very useful for us to maintain our hygiene.", says Asad.



*Asad Salad, who is forced to be displaced due to the drought is seen inside the Bulad Camp for internally displaced persons.
Photo: Kedija Sefa/NCA*

Since February of 2023, NCA Ethiopia in partnership with its local implementing partner OWDA and with funding from UN OCHA responded to the drought emergency in the Woreda with life-saving initiatives focusing on four thematic areas: WASH, agriculture, health, and nutrition including food assistance.

In the Hargelle Woreda, one of the WASH response initiatives involves the construction of shallow wells that will provide much-needed access to clean drinking water. Hayer locality is among the three localities that will be able to have such access. Currently, a shallow well has been constructed and is in the last stages of completion, bringing immense relief to the local community.

"We are very happy that a water scheme has been dug in our village. It will save us from the hardships of having to collect unclean water and suffering from health problems," says Shafi.

The emergency response in Hargelle Woreda aims to address the critical needs of vulnerable communities, mainly 26,000 internally displaced people and 31,000 host communities affected by the drought.

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