

## Climate shock at the Somali coast.



A case study on how climate change affects the livelihood of Laskoreh fisher community

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## 1. Project area:

The community of Laskoreh at the Gulf of Aden, in Sanag region, about 110 kms west of Bosaso capital of Bari region puntland state of Somalia with an estimated population of 450 families, (2,700 to 2,800) consisting of: fishers, pastoralist and Agro-pastoralists. There are 364 fishing boats of different size with an average crew of 5 persons (364x5= 1,820 fishermen)

## 2. socio-economic:

The socio-economic status of this community is very poor; depending on the natural resources mainly on marine resources, livestock, supplemented with small scale agro products of cash crops, citric fruits, Frankincense and Qad, but all above except livestock which have reduced in number have ceased and stopped nowadays due to lack of accessibility in to the agriculture area, the road (**Geel-Doora road**) that connected the Laskoreh to the mountain has been completely blocked and damaged by the torrential rains and is no more in use. Therefore, all that investment and efforts are in vain.

Also, the community elders have mentioned that, apart from the small mixed farming they used to collect especial type of Gum called (MURKUD) from the mountains during the summer and was exported to the Arabian countries and Ethiopia. This particular gum was resulted from condensation of Fog mixed with the gum of particular tree/species found in the area of Al-madow, at previous years fog and clouds were hanging on mountain peaks about 7 or 8 months, but presently neither the fog nor the clouds are there for 2 months or so.

Before the collapse of the Somali central government, the biggest fish factory in Africa was built in Laskoreh, and when that was gone, again some business group from Diaspora has built another fish factory in 1998/9 but after 3 years it was closed down due to mismanagement, also, a freezing plant was established in 2004 owned by one person, he is very disappointed at the moment due to the decline of the local supplies and lack of enough catch from the sea.

However; it is very apart that, the above mentioned opportunities have attracted a lot of people in to the area seeking for employment, that are in a desperate situation at the present time.

## 3. Background of the organization (CORRECTED)

Regional Marine Conservation Organization (RMCO) is an environmental org. involved with the development of the Somali coastal communities and conservation of marine resources and the related ecosystem for the last and recently implemented a Tsunami response project at 8 communities along the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, with geographical coverage area of (3,333) kms Somali coasts.

### Vision:

"We strive for wholeness in the management of our natural land and marine resources, bringing understanding and healing to regain a stable, productive ecosystem. Only in this way can human livelihoods improve

## 4. Current and expected impacts of climate change.

The older folk of the fishing communities at the Gulf of Aden lament the effect of stronger winds, longer periods of higher temperatures and rising water levels, are having on their livelihoods with apprehension. The fishermen explain that the winds are so strong they are unable to stay out in the sea to fish. This means that the price of fish has gone up and the people's source of income is inaccessible, the nutrition of the people is on the decline because their purchasing power has also gone down and is unable to afford alternative sources of protein.

The temperatures are significantly higher and storage of the few fish



available has become a real challenge because the ice does not last. ...says "it is so hot these days that I am unable to put in a whole days work, am always tired and it is just the thought of my children going hungry that makes me go out". The sea level has gone up and structures along the beaches are gradually eroding and it is a matter of time before they collapse.

Mr. Ali Shabeele a 74 old fisherman at Elayo adds "the change in weather patterns has affected the sustainability of the community's livelihoods at the coast of Somalia. Tidal waves with storms have occurred at the end of every month have reached inland areas not previously observed", we used to go fishing till June 15<sup>th</sup>, but on these days, we are compelled to leave sea by early May.



**Fishing is in idle at May.**

Rise in sea levels has created additional lagoons with the previous ones venturing further inland. This has damaged the rough feeder roads that connect the villages to the main urban centers, thus halting traffic movement, which is time consuming. This affects the productivity as well as the marketing system. We have seen at one location a warehouse that was intact in 1994 and ample distance from the sea is collapsing, during the high tide it is partially submerged.



Parts of the beach that were used as roads before 2004 during the low tide now have boats anchored on them. Occasional torrential rains with excessive flooding that causes severe soil erosion, desertification and rapid environmental degradation at the coastal and sloppy areas have been on the increase. A one time-unheard of incidence of frozen rains with devastating effects was experienced in 2005.

The fishermen have mentioned that, they used to work on experiences and the time of sea storms were known/predicted based that experiences collected from generations and generations, so when that time is approaching they used to go to a known safer places for protection, but very unfortunately these places are no more safe because of the rise in sea level, and things are very unpredictable these days, among their wonders was that, previously the storms used to throw the fishing boats out of sea or drag them away along the shoreline and break them in parts, but now the boats are just sinking while they are anchored at about 4 to 5 nautical miles from the shore, because of very high waves levels the boats become full with the sea water and with in a short time sinks down.

## 5. Policies:

There are no policies in place or in practice of either national or regional level, whether being of environmental conservation or adopting and even being aware of the climate changes, due to the absence of effective central government in Somalia. While it's side effects are happening so drastically on the ground and the community is suffering so scarcely.

The local people have a premonition that the end of time is drawing nigh as they observe the changes in the environment. However they do not see any link with the signs and their activities. They are on a "wait and see mode"

Historically Laskoreh community has established a small mixed farming at the mid of the high mountains of (AL-madow area) 45 kms south of the town and used to spend there their off fishing seasons (summer) June to Sep. as temperatures at the coast areas are higher in these months, but now it is getting more hotter with longer period of time, (temperature reaches within the range of 35 to 38/40c) so families have to be moved in early May till late Sep. this means longer time of family separation, extra expenses, permanent movement and reduced income generation since fish harvesting period has reduced.

## 6. Alternate strategic livelihood.

At the moment some of fishermen have moved to the urban centers in search of job,



**Some Families are rearing livestock and chicken, while children are happy.**

some are making a small scale seasonal farming activities around the town, some are rearing small amount of livestock (goats) and chicken, very few have gone back to the pastoral life, while others are staying back at the village according to our last assessment in July 26—28. 2007.



**Seasonal farms with date palm, lemons and cash crops.**

However; RMCO is very uncertain of about the future intention of the later group, they might go to charcoal burning, or might join in to a more risky attempt of immigration to Yemen across the sea, where hundreds lost their lives every month

On the other hand the issue of lack of employment after the fishing activities have ceased has a very serious and extra burden on the women when compared to men, because they have to look an alternate method and means of maintaining the family, I.e. opening of tea shop, buying vegetable or cigarettes on the road sides, washing cloths for these better off than them.



**Preparation of Hand Dug wells for the farms.**

RMCO as an organization realizes that changes are taking place at such a rapid pace with devastating impact on the communities, their livelihoods and the environment.

Conducting training to selected community members, environment management committee. (EMC) about the climate change and how it is affecting their livelihood.

Planting mangroves forests along the coastal areas, this was not previously planned to act against the effects of the climate change, but has accidentally coincided with climate change as a coping mechanism, as far as mangrove forest provide a complex system of food chain for the fish and shellfish, nesting grounds for a lot of sea mammals, high protein forage for the livestock, reduces soil erosion and reduces the velocity of both inland floods the tidal waves.

#### **7. Urgent community Request, as their priorities:**

- a. Rehabilitation of Geel-Doora road, (45 kms), so that these people will get access to their farms.
- b. Excavation/opening of 7 lagoons along the shoreline, that are blocked by sand dunes at inlets or sea entering points, so as to be shelters for the fishing boats during the storms cycle period.
- c. Financial assistance to support for new initiatives of coping mechanism strategies.

#### **8. Appeal for;**

- a. Rehabilitation of Geel-Doora road, (45 kms), so that these people will get access to their farms.
- b. Excavation/opening of 7 lagoons along the shoreline, that are blocked by sand dunes at inlets or sea entering points, so as to be shelters for the fishing boats during the storms cycle.
- c. Establish an early warning system between the RMSN member organizations for data collection about temperature rise, wind variation and tide level.
- d. preparation and application of policies at both regional and national level and lobbying among the different policy makers.
- e. Community training about alternate skills and action programs.
- f. Assistance for the alternate livelihood source for the fisher communities.I.e. (Agriculture, Salt production, Beekeeping and animal husbandry).
- g. Extension of mangrove forests.
- h. and harvesting of rain waters by reducing the rain water runoffs, through water catchments, contours, check dams and planting of drought and high temperature resistant trees, cereals and forage along the coastal areas.