INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN SOMALIA

INTRODUCTION

The African Union Commission led AU-AIP Multi-Country Green Climate Fund Readiness Support Initiative implemented in 15 AU Member States, supported an indigenous knowledge campaign aimed at documenting knowledge that contributes to drought and flood management, water harvesting, soil and ecosystem conservation, climate forecasting, and livelihood resilience.

This learning brief documents Somalia's identified indigenous knowledge for flood and early warning systems, as well as drought management & soil conservation.

TRADITIONAL RAINWATER HARVESTING (BERKADS AND BALLEYS)

Communities have long practised traditional water harvesting through hand-dug balleys (small surface reservoirs) and berkads (cemented underground cisterns). These systems capture and store rainwater during the wet season, ensuring access to drinking water for households and livestock during long dry periods. The practice enhances water security, reduces conflict over scarce resources, and remains a vital adaptation measure in drought-prone regions.

The practice is mostly practiced by rural and pastoral communities and women's water-management networks. It is widespread across drought-prone regions, including Sool, Sanaag, Bay, Bakool, and Galguduud.

PASTORAL ROTATIONAL GRAZING AND SEASONAL MOBILITY

Traditional systems of rotational grazing and seasonal mobility among pastoralist communities reduce overgrazing, allow rangeland recovery after drought, and form a key local adaptation strategy to climate variability. These practices underpin rangeland resilience and food security for the country's substantial pastoralist population.

The practice is widespread across the rangelands of central and northern Somalia. Custodians of the practice include pastoral elders, and clan and sub-clan grazing governance institutions.

FLOOD PROTECTION WITH MUD AND SAND BARRIERS

Communities along the Shabelle and Juba Rivers place sacks filled with mud or sand as barriers during seasonal floods. This indigenous practice reduces water overflow, protects farmland and settlements, and operates as a first-line response before formal disaster risk management interventions reach affected communities.

COASTAL MANGROVE STEWARDSHIP

Coastal communities have traditional practices of conserving and using mangroves for flood protection, fisheries productivity, and shoreline stabilisation. These practices are increasingly recognised in the Somalia NAP as vital for coastal resilience and ecosystem-based adaptation.

This is commonly practiced by coastal fisher associations and community-based natural resource management groups.