



Project funded by  
the European Union



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SOMALI CASH  
CONSORTIUM

# ILED TIPF Social Protection

**Somalia Social Transfer to enhance human capital through the first 1000 days**

*First lessons learnt from SAGAL project implementation*

## Brief 3

### **Shock Response Activation – Lessons Learnt From the Field**

This paper has been prepared by the ILED TIPF Social Protection Team with the support from the SAGAL partners and the outcomes of their MEAL activities. The Real-Time Learning Agenda of SAGAL aims to contribute to adjusting the programme and strengthening the National Social Safety Net system by building evidence around best practices, and documenting and disseminating it. The Learning agenda is mobilising a wide range of tools and stakeholders across the country, including the Government of Somalia, the Donor Working Group, and other Agencies.

Last updated: 18 January 2023

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## ACRONYMS

BRCiS	Building Resilient Communities in Somalia
CC	Cash Consortium
CMU	Consortium Management Unit
CRFM	Community Response Feedback Mechanism
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
EAP	Early Action Plan
ECHO	The Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EU	European Union
EWS	Early Warning System
FEWS NET	The Famine Early Warning Systems Network
FGS	Federal Government of Somalia
FMS	Federal Member States
FSNAU	Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit
MoHADM	Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management
IDP	Internally Displaced People
ILED	Integrated Local Economic Development
MoLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
MCH	Maternal Child Health
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
SCC	Somalia Cash Consortium
SPP	Social Protection Policy
SR	Shock Response
SRSN	ShockResponsive Safety Net
ST	Social Transfer
SWALIM	Somalia Water and Land Information Management
TAF	Technical Assistance Facility
TC	Technical Committee
VRC	Village Relief Committee

WFP

World Food Programme

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Somalia has faced threatening humanitarian crises for over three decades, ranging from poverty to natural disasters, exacerbated by decades of civil war and the disintegration of crucial social services. These recurrent and protracted shocks have destabilized sources of household livelihoods, making a return to normalcy for most of the affected families very challenging. As years of reactive humanitarian programs have had little impact on increasing the community's resilience, there is mounting debate on how shock-responsive social protection systems can reduce the dependence on humanitarian aid in Somalia and improve the resilience of the poorest.

The Government of Somalia adopted a National Social Protection Policy (SPP) in 2019 to establish the building blocks for a functional shock-responsive social protection system to deliver predictable assistance and help families and communities recover from the impact of the shocks. The policy also puts emphasis on the importance of improving the nexus between humanitarian aid and longer-term developmental support to strengthen the resilience of poor and vulnerable people. The Somali government's policy paved the way for growing momentum and support for using long-term, self-sustaining and reliable social assistance to support communities to cope with the impact of shocks and as an instrument of state-building. The years 2019 and 2020 ushered in new forms of programming led by the Government of Somalia, supported by both development partners and humanitarian donors and focusing on a longer-term safety net approach tailored with risk-informed shock-responsive components integrated into the programs during the initial design.

The SAGAL Social Transfer Project is one of the social protection programs providing cash-based assistance to poor and vulnerable households in Somalia to help reduce vulnerability to shocks. The project also aims to support the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) in establishing the basic building blocks of a national shock-responsive social safety net system. The project spearheads the efforts to transform the multiple humanitarian cash transfer projects into a longer-term, predictable, sustainable safety net that is scalable when needed. SAGAL is part of the Inclusive Local and Economic Development (ILED) Programme funded by the EU, Denmark, and Sweden to promote stability in Somalia by extending state authority and services, fostering local reconciliation and peacebuilding, creating inclusive economic opportunities, and protecting the most vulnerable. The project is targeting 265,000 individuals facing conflict, climate-related shocks, and disasters, and has a shock-responsive component embedded which is funded by ECHO. The project has different social transfer schemes targeting mothers and young children, elderly people, youth and other vulnerable groups to enhance Somalia's human capital and support the development of the National social protection system. The four social transfer models of SAGAL is shown in figure 1 below.

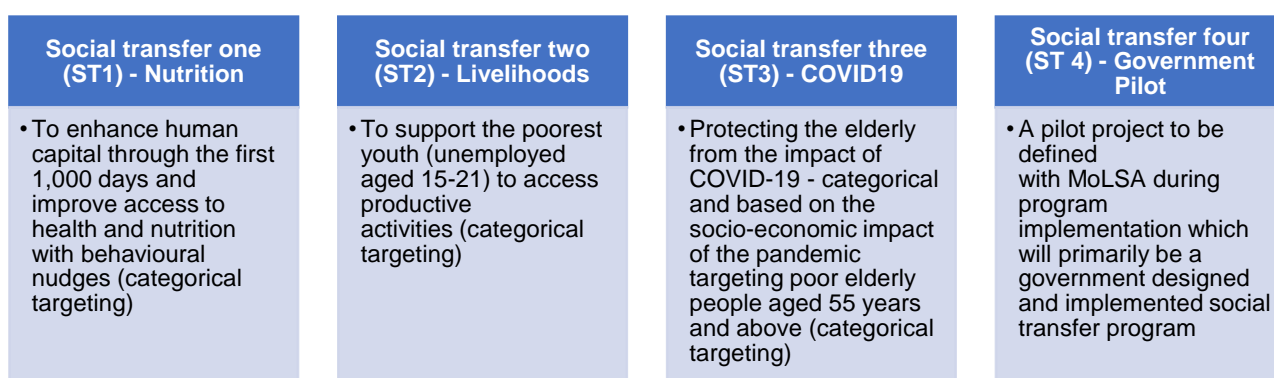


Figure 1: SAGAL Social Transfer Models

## 2. SAGAL SHOCK RESPONSIVE SOCIAL SAFETY NET

### 2.1 Background information on SAGAL Shock Responsive Social Transfer Model

In 2019 and 2020, the Cash Consortium piloted a shock-responsive safety net program funded by ECHO in close collaboration with the Social Protection Donor Working Group, the EU-Technical Assistance Facility (EU-TAF), relevant Government Ministries, the World Food Programme (WFP), and the Building Resilient Communities in Somalia (BRCiS) consortium. The ECHO-funded Shock Responsive Pilot informed the development of an Early Action Protocol based on a set of indicators obtained from the FSNAU early warning systems with additional indicators from SWALIM on flood risk thresholds and the BRCiS Consortium’s Early Warning and Early Action Protocol. This pilot project and the EAP served as the blueprint for developing the shock-responsive component of SAGAL.

In December 2020, The Cash Consortium rolled out the SAGAL Social Transfer program, which had an embedded shock-responsive component funded by ECHO through the humanitarian funding pool. The shock-responsive funds are preserved for unplanned increases in caseloads due to shocks and for increasing the transfer size to existing beneficiaries during the shocks. The following tables summarise the critical components of the shock response component.

Table 1. Key Elements of the Shock Responsive component

Key elements	Description
Type of Shocks	Drought, floods, cyclones, displacements, evictions, locust infestations, and pandemic
Triggers	EAP indicators
Actors	SCC Members, ECHO, MoHADM & MoLSA-State and Federal, and District Committees
Source of Funds	ECHO Shock Response Fund
Response Time	15 – 48 days from when the Shock Response is activated
Geographical Location	SAGAL Program areas
Targeting Approach	Both Vertical and Horizontal expansion
Target group	<b>Vertical</b> - ST1 and ST3 beneficiaries & <b>Horizontal</b> - new beneficiaries
Transfer Value	50-70 USD depending on the region
Duration	3 months

## 2.2 Shock Response Activation Process

The SAGAL shock response component was activated in late 2021 to respond to the unfolding humanitarian crises in the SAGAL targeted regions due to severe drought resulting from consecutive below-average rainfall seasons since late 2020 leading to decreased harvests, excess livestock losses, and exceptionally high food prices. FSNUA and FEWSNET early warning reports indicated an elevated number of households facing food insecurity, extreme food consumption deficits, diminished coping capacity, and prevalent acute malnutrition.<sup>1</sup>

Between December 2021 and March 2022, SAGAL activated the shock-responsive funds and disbursed additional transfers to 582 of the beneficiaries who were already in the SAGAL project. An additional 1,756 new beneficiaries were enrolled from the locations affected by the severe drought and the rising food prices. Vulnerable households from three SAGAL-targeted districts (Dollow, Balatweyne, and Eyl) benefitted, enabling them to meet their immediate needs for three months.

The activation of the SAGAL Shock Response component was triggered by the alerts generated using the data from the early warning and early action online dashboard developed by SCC. The SCC CMU triangulated the alerts with the situation assessments conducted by SCC Members at the field level and reports from other humanitarian platforms. The figure below depicts some information sources utilized in the triggering process.

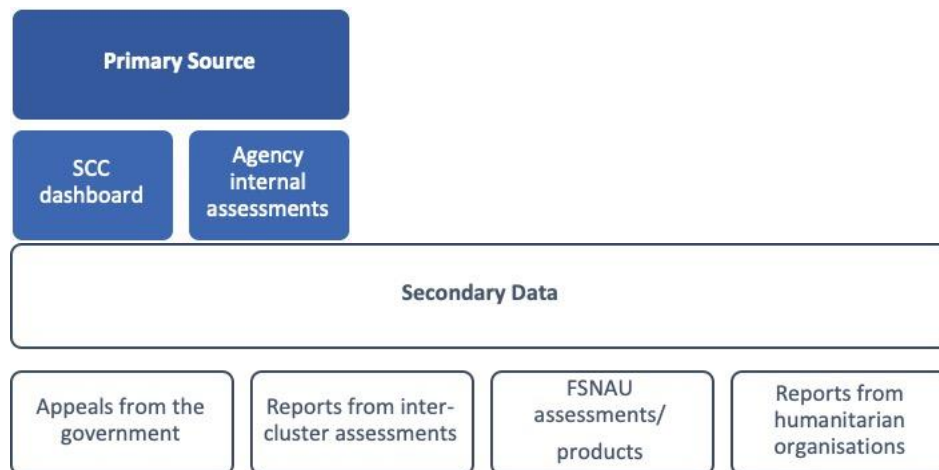


Figure 2: Sources of information for triggering shock-responsive action - Somalia Cash Consortium

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<sup>1</sup> FSNUA/FEWSNET Reports 2021

Table 2 below explains the shock response activation process following the triggering of the shocks in detail:

Table 2. Shock Response Activation Process

STEPS		Process
STEP 1	<b>Needs assessments</b>	This step was used to categorise the crisis' nature, scope, and impact. NGOs that were already functional on the ground conducted a rapid needs assessment. The use of NGO staff on the ground sped up the process as they had already established connections with the community and had the required infrastructure to conduct a rapid assessment. The information was gathered using a customised survey administered to community focal points and a sample of SAGAL clients in the relevant geographical area.
STEP 2	<b>Formation/ activation of TCs</b>	Once areas had been assessed and categorised, CMU convened a meeting of partners to confirm the hotspot areas and plan for response. A technical committee was then established at the district level, at FGS MoHADMA and FMS MoHADM. These committees comprised government staff, district mayors, religious groups, and other community members. Partners convened meetings for TCs at district-level meetings, roles were defined and the next steps of the SR process was discussed and agreed.
STEP 3	<b>Triangulation of information with communities</b>	NGOs presented the information collected during the needs assessment to confirm the information gathered through the early warning system and needs assessment with the communities and SAGAL clients.
STEP 4	<b>SR Activation decision at District Level</b>	Based on the assessment outcome, the SR Technical Committee at the district level decided whether to recommend the activation of the SR fund or not. The committee could also recommend whether the expansion of the ST model should be only vertical (top up to already registered SAGAL clients) or horizontal (registering additional community members).
STEP 5	<b>SR Activation decision at State and Federal Level</b>	Following the meeting and decision of the district level TC, meeting minutes were communicated to TCs at the FMS and Federal levels. The FMS and Federal Level could either question the decision-making or accept the proposals. If accepted, the proposed response plan was further discussed with partner agencies to ensure quick implementation. In case the decision was to activate the process, this information was shared with ECHO and EU-INTPA as a contractual obligation for final approval expected to be done within 48 hours period.

STEP 6	<b>Sensitisation and awareness creation</b>	<p>After the SR activation was agreed, SAGAL clients were sensitised on vertical expansion, highlighting entitlements (duration of vertical expansions and top-up value) and reason for vertical expansion (incl. information about the shock and decision-making process) and CRM details as a reminder on the accountability mechanism.</p> <p>As for the horizontal expansion, communities were sensitized on mechanisms for selection of beneficiaries, verification, registration for horizontal expansion, and accountability. The community mobilisation and sensitisation was conducted by project staff and community leaders through public consultations in the target location. The topics covered during the meetings included discussions on the project objectives, targeting criteria, entitlements, CRM, work plan and role of the Village Relief Committee (VRC). Project representatives conveyed the difference between the continuing SAGAL response and the "horizontal expansion" regarding the selection process, criteria, objective entitlements, and length.</p>
STEP 7	<b>Targeting</b>	<p>There were two targeting approaches the program adopted and each had different processes. The first approach was vertical expansion, targeting the existing beneficiaries through vertical expansion to avoid the relapse of the ST beneficiaries due to the drought impact and to sustain their food and livelihood security status. The program identified beneficiaries eligible for vertical expansion from a database prioritising beneficiaries living in the most affected locations in the district.</p> <p>The second approach was horizontal expansion, targeting community members affected by the drought. The eligible beneficiaries were identified by VRCs using a set of agreed criteria and the VRCs proposed a list of potential beneficiaries to be verified. This was carried out with the community members by SCC staff members on the ground by posting the name of selected beneficiaries in important areas, and allowing them to contribute input and recommendations on the list or to raise objections using the CRM.</p>
STEP 8	<b>Registration of additional beneficiaries</b>	<p>After the list of potential recipient HHs was verified, the details of the new households were registered using a common registration platform. Another layer of data verification was done online to cross check duplications and any other errors detected. Once the verification process was completed, both the new beneficiaries and the already registered SAGAL beneficiaries were enrolled for the SR payments.</p>
STEP 9	<b>Disbursement of funds</b>	<p>A disbursement of the payments followed the enrolment of beneficiaries. A lumpsum of three month payments was sent to the beneficiaries using mobile money payment systems.</p>



## 3. LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE ACTIVATION OF SAGAL SHOCK RESPONSE

### 3.1 What Worked Well

**Availability of common triggering indicators and guidelines for activation.** The SAGAL EAP provides indicators and thresholds informed by macro-level data to inform when to raise the emergency belt. The availability of this information simplified the decision-making process. The data gathered from the multiple sources presented on the SCC Early Warning and Early Action Dashboard informed the decisions of stakeholders on when to activate the SR funds and to identify hotspot districts to assess the impact of the shock.

**Stakeholder engagement in the activation process.** The SCC members implementing the SAGAL project on the ground involved the local authorities and stakeholders in the processes that followed the triggering of the shocks. Technical Committees representing the different layers of the administrations were formed to participate in the decision-making process and endorsement of the Shock Response Activation. The Technical Committees had representation from the relevant government agencies at the district, state, and federal levels.

**A comprehensive beneficiary selection criteria.** The SCC members implementing the SAGAL project adopted comprehensive beneficiary identification criteria with clear vulnerability thresholds. SAGAL's method provided clear guidance for selecting beneficiaries and coordinating players. Different ministries and government agencies had distinct priorities at the start of the project but the program criteria assisted in guiding the conversations with stakeholders.

**Flexible targeting approach.** The SAGAL shock response fund was not restricted to particular caseload categories and the project was flexible to cover households from both existing caseloads and additional caseloads from the shock-affected community members. This provided households that were affected by shocks but did not fulfill the requirements for the initial SAGAL project's targeting an opportunity to benefit from the shock response component.

**Availability of preallocated funds.** The availability of the ECHO funds facilitated the SR activation and responses. The Cash Consortium already had the allocated funds and only needed to notify the donor of program decisions. With the absence of bureaucracy in fund mobilization, the availability of preallocated shock-responsive money, a decision-making chain with fewer criteria, and an effective cash disbursement system, SAGAL was able to respond rapidly.

**Embedded government capacity building component.** The overall design of SAGAL offered opportunities for improving the government's capabilities. SAGAL provided funding to recruit technical advisers for the government to support the capacity building of civil servants, the designing of a pilot program for a national social transfer administered by the government and facilitation of discussions related to shock response activation.

**Ground presence of SCC members reduced the time spent on planning and operations.** The presence of Cash Consortium member agencies on the ground facilitated the timely collection of data and information necessary to inform decision-making. The SCC members were also able to respond within the shortest possible time using the resources available for SAGAL.

### 3.2 Program Limitations

**Slower activation process:** The shock-responsive activation was slower due to overreliance on macro-level data from FSNAU for initial triggering and the length of the decision-making process which involved different layers of government institutions. The initial activation was also top-down

(donor/partner driven) instead of adopting the bottom-up (community/local actors/government-driven) approach agreed upon during the design of the project. This was due to lack of functioning Early Warning committees at the community level and the limited capacity of the government.

**Limited funding for scaling up:** The shock response activation was dependent on funding from the humanitarian donors. However, the caseload of needy households often exceeded the programming resources available during emergencies due to chronic poverty in Somalia. Therefore, the shock-responsive funds can only be used for limited caseload/locations as inadequate funding often limits the scale-up.

**Lack of clarity of the Technical Committees' role:** The committees were established at the community/district level when shocks happened. While the TCs generally played a vital role in fostering coordination and accountability throughout the activation process, in many cases the TCs were new and insufficiently organized to participate in the decision-making process. The TCs' relative contribution was not uniform across all sites and was based on capacity, which was proportional to the duration of their operation. The TCs were already established, active, and crucial in advocating for the drought-affected population and offering responses only in Gedo region.

**Lack of data to identify priority areas and communities where the need was the greatest beyond the district level.** The sensitivity thresholds of the EW triggering mechanism were not always precise. NGOs reported difficulties using the current system to inform decision making, as the data from the dashboard was updated on a quarterly basis and only showed district-level data. This made it difficult for NGOs to identify which villages to assess and when.

**Over-reliance on the community based selection committee for identification of new beneficiaries.** Community-based beneficiary selection mechanisms using VRCs increase potential inclusion and exclusion errors, especially with Somalia's notable high caseload and elite capture practices. The EAP doesn't provide clarity on how the new beneficiaries targeted through a horizontal approach should be selected. There were challenges encountered in the timely inclusion of households since the new beneficiaries are not pre-enrolled and there was no comprehensive socio-economic data to inform systematic targeting during shocks. The current Shock Responsive indicators are also inclined to respond to natural disasters instead of less acute shocks linked to poverty and unemployment, as sources of vulnerability.

**Limiting geographical scope:** SAGAL's shock-responsive component is only activated when shocks overlap with the geographical location of the ILED project. The current project location is also predominantly in urban and pre-urban areas limiting the scale-up of support to rural communities affected by the shocks.

**Disconnection with the government Early Warning systems:** The program lacks a clear roadmap to reinforce existing capacities and support an effective and timely government-owned EW system, considering the SCC eventually aims to transfer this monitoring role to the National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Center of MoHADM. The Cash Consortium EW Dashboard informing the current shock response activation process for Linking Early Warning to Early Action, FSNAU FEWSNET, and SWALIM data is not connected to the government's system.

**Weak government leadership in design and coordination of actions:** The government's position in broader decision-making on design and implementation parameters, including when to intervene, the type of support to provide, and the implementation modalities, is ambiguous. Emerging Social Protection interventions are funded by different development partners, with

missing elements of harmonisation or coordination between programs. The role of the state and local governments, which is limited mainly to site identification, has a high potential to encourage political motives influencing decisions on target locations and increases the risk of exclusion, thus compromising the need-based agenda of the program.

**Lumpsum payment modalities:** The SAGAL shock response component adopted a one-time lumpsum (three-month sum) payment modality. A Cash Transfer equivalent to three months' transfer value was sent to the beneficiaries to maximise the impact. There are concerns about the impact of the lumpsum payment due to the dire needs within the population, social interdependency, and a higher tendency to share resources within the community during crises.

### 3.3 Future Considerations

#### 3.3.1 Program Implementation

- Establish mechanisms for collecting granular local data and comprehensive socio-economic data to inform shock-responsive activation in hotspot areas at the community level and for systematic targeting during shocks.
- Explore how lumpsum payment modalities are affecting family decisions on how to use the money, sharing practices and gatekeeping impact.
- Expand the current EAP taking into consideration issues raised about the program design, triggering process, targeting approach, guidance on beneficiaries identification and elaborate more on the role of government agencies and the operationalisation of technical committees at local levels.
- Conduct targeting evaluation to better understand concerns regarding inclusion and exclusion errors and how the HH verification can be improved to reduce.

#### 3.1.2 System building, knowledge transfer and strengthening government role

- Promote localized decision making process and strengthen community and local actors involvement in triggering shock responses,
- Increased government involvement in monitoring of shocks by transferring the management and updating of dashboard to MoHADM with support from SCC CMU continuing and linking it with the Multizard early warning system of MoHADM.
- Publish and disseminate the information from the Dashboard on a regular basis to the relevant government personnel at district, state and local level.
- Strengthen coordination between all stakeholders for a more robust and more inclusive response.
- Develop a clear roadmap reinforcing systematic capacity building of local and state governments and provide clarity on the transfer of the roles and responsibilities to government civil servant staff.
- Strengthen the learning component of the program and organise frequent workshops and meetings at state and local level.
- Explore how future programs can use the government unified system registry system can offer comprehensive socio-economic data for routine targeting during shock