

WAHEN MARKET FIRE: SOMALILAND'S DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

ABDIFATAH AHMED ILEEYE



MARCH, 2023

COPYRIGHT © 2023 by ISIR
Think Tank

All rights reserved.

No part of this Research Paper may be reprinted or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical or other means, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Address:

ISIR THINK TANK

Off Airport Raod, Masala Hargeisa
SOMALILAND

Phone: +252634796383

www.isirthinktank.org

info@isirthinktank.org

Twitter: @IsirThinktank

The Institute for Strategic Insights and Research (ISIR) is an independent nonpartisan think tank dedicated to contributing to building democratic public institutions and pluralistic societies in the Horn of African countries.

ISIR seeks to inform decision-makers and drive change through policy-relevant research, dialogue, and training.

TABLE OF CONTENT

INTRODUCTION	1
BACKGROUND	2
METHODOLOGY	3
THE BUILD BACK BETTER STRATEGY AND ITS OPERATIONALIZATION	3
ALL-STAKEHOLDER NATIONAL LEVEL DISASTER RECOVERY FRAMEWORK	4
PRE-DISASTER RECOVERY PLANNING AMONG ALL STAKEHOLDERS	4
STRENGTHEN POLICIES, LAWS, AND PROGRAMS THAT SUPPORT BUILD BETTER BACK IN RECOVERY, REHABILITATION, AND RECONSTRUCTION	5
IDENTIFIED GAPS IN THE RECOVERY, REHABILITATION, AND RECONSTRUCTION MECHANISMS IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT	6
SOMALILAND PRE-DISASTER RECOVERY PLAN AMONG STAKEHOLDERS	7
SOMALILAND INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES, LAWS, AND PROGRAMS THAT SUPPORT RECOVERY, REHABILITATION, AND RECONSTRUCTION PROCESSES	9
CONCLUSION	12
RECOMMENDATIONS	12

Abstract

Disasters are threatening the lives and livelihoods of people all over the world, and specifically the global south. In most developing countries, rising urbanisation and weak governance systems, coupled with urban infrastructure that is insufficient to support the high urban populations, lead to higher instances of disasters. Moreover, the state institutions mandated with disaster risk prevention, mitigation and management lack adequate disaster preparedness and often employ poor recovery mechanisms. On 1st April 2022, Wahan Market in Hargeisa was destroyed by a fire that led to damages worth approximately USD 2 Billion, the equivalent of about 60% of Somaliland's GDP. This paper explores the potential recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction processes that could be employed to rebuild the market using the Build Back Better strategy. Importantly, primary data collected from the relevant authorities synthesized with the available secondary data is employed for the analysis of the study. The paper discusses the disaster preparedness mechanisms which have a wide range of impact on recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction process in disaster settings. The paper found undeniable gaps in the country's disaster recovery framework, among others. Accordingly, the paper recommended that these life-threatening gaps including the absence of the disaster recovery framework should be filled by the relevant authorities both local and national levels.

Keywords: Wahan market, disaster preparedness, disaster recovery mechanisms.

INTRODUCTION

Urban cities have increasingly gained popularity as settlement areas over the years; currently, 56% of the world's population — 4.4 billion people already live in urban areas, and that number is expected to double by the year 2050. This means that in the next three decades, nearly 7 out of 10 people will live in cities. It is therefore unsurprising that more than 80% of the world's GDP is produced in cities, making them crucial to national economies¹. Owing to the high rates of urbanisation, cities play an increasingly important role in climate change, because their exposure to climate and disaster risk increases as they grow². In particular, cities in developing countries face a greater challenge in such disaster risks because of their inferior infrastructural designs and poor governance systems and structures.

Somaliland being a developing country, it has inadequate infrastructure and poor urban planning, which exposes it to the risk of various disasters. On 1st April 2022, disaster struck the Wahan Market in Hargeisa City, razing the market structures to the ground. While there were no lives lost, the fire destroyed property worth approximately 2 billion USD according to the Hargeisa local government. This has had far-reaching impacts on the local economy and lives and livelihood of local population³. Further, the disaster set in motion a complex chain of events that has the potential to disrupt Hargeisa city's economic flow of activities and consequently adversely impact the national economy, with spillover to regional economies.

In the wake of this disaster, there has been an enormous expression of sympathy and support from a wide spectrum of donors including the business community, the Somaliland government as well as regional governments, and the international community.

Various assessment reports and papers have been published in efforts to quantify the impact of the Wahan fire. The majority of those reports are focused on either quantifying the cost of the economic damage or the causes of the fire, overlooking the most important aspects, recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction processes. The reports have also had gaps in recommending approaches to empower the stakeholders in disaster prevention and management to enable them handle similar disasters more effectively and efficiently in future. In this regard, this paper attempts to address the key gaps on the recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction mechanisms through the lens of the 'Build Back Better' strategy, a crucial component of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030) of United Nations Disaster Risk Reduction Office⁴.

The paper is structured as follows: the first section presents the introduction, gives a brief background of the study, and outlines the methodology of the paper. The second section presents the key components of the Build Back Better strategy and its operationalization. The third section analyses the gaps in the key recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction mechanisms in Somaliland. The last two sections present the conclusion and the recommendations of the paper.

¹ See: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/overview>. Accessed: 10.12.2022.

² Ibid

³ See: <https://unsom.unmissions.org/nimo-abdillahi-muhumed-rebuilding-ashes-waheen-market-fire>. Accessed: 10.12.2023.

⁴ Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030). <https://www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030>. Accessed: 10.12.2022.

BACKGROUND

Wahen market was established in 1954 by the municipality of Hargeisa and grew into a relatively large open-air traditional market before the civil war. It was a critical business hub for local trade flows in and around the Northern Somali region. During the civil war in Somalia, the Wahen market was among the key infrastructures targeted by the Barre regime since it was the economic powerhouse of the region and was heavily demolished and destroyed by Barre's military fire power⁵.

Following the end of the civil war and the reconstitution of Somaliland, the local Hargeisa city administration immediately embarked on a reconstruction drive under the leadership of Mayor Awl Elmi Abdalla and loosely constituted the Market Committee. The market reconstruction project was successfully completed in 1999. The newly rebuilt market constituted three hundred and forty (340) business stalls and was allocated to its original proprietors. It is, however, important to note that the reconstruction and subsequent management of the market was a joint local government-community initiative. The local government was only taking up the oversight responsibilities while the market committee was responsible for the overall management of the market. Furthermore, the strategic location of Wahen Market, in the central district of Hargeisa city, naturally elevates its agglomeration status⁶.

Wahen Market since transformed into a modern-day open-air Market over a period of two decades and underwent drastic and dynamic changes in shape and form in terms of business scale and size.

However, its infrastructure, including electricity, telecommunication, and roads were either substandard or poorly installed. Similarly, the sanitation services were also poor and were only offered to those who could pay for them. Evidently, there were no provisions for sanitation services during the design phase of the market. Over time, the market underwent unapproved and unplanned expansion which further put pressure on the already weak and substandard architectural structures. This compounded the market's vulnerability to potential disasters. There was also a noted lack of adequate emergency services including firefighters, medical first aid services, and other essential emergency mechanisms.

Due to the calamitous infrastructural status of the market, a disaster in any form or shape was expected. Regrettably, though highly anticipated, disaster struck the market on April 1st on a calm Friday evening at 8:10 pm dreaded fire engulfed the market razing the market premise to ground zero, property worth billions of dollars (1.5 up to 2 billion according to Hargeisa local government) destroyed with far-reaching impact on the local economy and lives and livelihood of the local population. Furthermore, the disaster set in motion a complex chain of events that has the potential to disrupt Hargeisa city's economic flow of activities and consequently adversely impact the national economy with spill over to regional economies⁷.

The Wahen market fire destroyed 5,000 small-, medium- and large-size businesses, and approximately 12,000 jobs are believed to have been lost. The business people affected are currently being supported so as to re-establish their businesses.

⁵ Muuse, Ismail. December 9, 2022. An interview for the historical background of the Wahen Market.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ National relief and support committee of the victims of Wahen market. 2022. Joint report on the impact of the fire disaster engulfed the Wahen market.

The business people affected are currently being supported so as to re-establish their businesses. So far, six temporary locations have been identified and organized and the affected people were temporarily resettled in those areas⁸. Similarly, 988 business owners — the most vulnerable business people affected by the fire who possessed the smallest businesses, were financially supported through grants of between \$500 and \$5000⁹. The reconstruction of the buildings owned by the private developers has also commenced with the financial support of the government.

Methodology

This study was conducted using the qualitative approach. The data was collected through primary and secondary data collection methods. First, a comprehensive review of relevant literature on disaster management was done so as to purposely select an appropriate conceptual framework for analysis. Secondly, primary data collection was done through Key Informant Interviews with different governmental officials based in Hargeisa (Wahen National Relief Committee, Hargeisa Local Municipality, Ministry of Public Works and Housing, and NADFOR). KIIs were also conducted with DRM experts and officials drawn from the governance sector.

The Build Back Better Strategy and its Operationalization

Build Back Better (BBB) and Its Terminological Attributes

The Build Back Better strategy explicates the recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction phases after a disaster so as to boost the resilience of nations and communities through integrating disaster risk reduction measures into the restoration of physical infrastructure, societal systems, and into the revitalization of livelihoods, economies, and the environment¹⁰. **Recovery** is about the restoration or improvement of livelihoods including health, economic, physical, social, cultural, and environmental assets, systems, and activities, of a disaster-affected community or society, aligning with the principles of sustainable development and “building back better” strategy to avoid or reduce future disaster risk¹¹. Regarding **Rehabilitation**, it relates to the restoration of basic services and facilities for the functioning of a community, or a society affected by a disaster¹². On the other hand, there is a **reconstruction** component which comprises of the medium- and long-term rebuilding and sustainable restoration of resilient critical infrastructures, services, housing, facilities, and livelihoods required for the full functioning of a community affected by a disaster, aligning with the principles of sustainable development and “build back better” strategy to evade or reduce future disaster risk¹³.

⁸ See: <https://unsom.unmissions.org/nimo-abdillahi-muhumed-rebuilding-ashes-waheen-market-fire>. Accessed: 10.12.2023.

⁹ Watch the ceremony event held at presidential palace on 16.04.2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hyoO3c3CJH8>. Accessed: 10.12.2022.

¹⁰ United Nations General Assembly. 2016. Report of the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Expert 2 Working Group on Indicators and Terminology Relating to Disaster Risk Reduction. Seventy-First Session, Item 19(c). A/71/644.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

All-stakeholder National Level Disaster Recovery Framework

Recovery, as one of the disaster management functions, is the most sophisticated and most challenging component in disaster management. It engages with the largest stakeholders from various mandates and affects the greatest long-term impact on a community's social and economic success¹⁴. Regarding the operationalization of the recovery process, the effectiveness and efficiency of the national disaster recovery framework are attributed to the following four significant functions¹⁵:

- To establish a common all-hazards disaster recovery framework to better manage pre- and post-disaster planning and operations; it brings together the country's diverse community of disaster recovery stakeholders.

- It realizes the stakeholders' capability to collectively identify, analyse, and document the parameters within which recovery effectiveness and efficiency are maximized at the central and local governments and by all stakeholder groups (including businesses, non-profit organizations, communities, households, and individuals);

- To ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the recovery processes, the national disaster recovery framework clarifies the intergovernmental, inter-institutional, and inter-organizational relationships, roles, and responsibilities. Similarly, it also develops common recovery goals, objectives, and vision statements so as to prevent any sort of strategic misunderstanding and operational malfunctioning.

- Despite the fact that various countries' National Disaster Recovery Framework might vary in their structure and design from each other, they share a basic function; to define and clarify recovery phases and timelines, explain recovery support programs, provide information on transitioning from relief to recovery, and explain how recovery operations are concluded.

Pre-disaster Recovery Planning among all Stakeholders

Pre-disaster Recovery Planning (PDRP) is a process of institutionalizing recovery capacity in line with the response and mitigation planning before any actual disaster is imminent or occurs in order to strengthen the disaster recovery plans, initiatives, and outcomes. The concept is built on the recognition that much could be done before a disaster happens so as to facilitate recovery planning after the onset of a disaster and improve recovery outcomes¹⁶. Similarly, the PDRP encourages obtaining a collective effort to build effective and efficient leadership initiatives, policies, and laws at national and local levels of governance not to promote only planning the interventions, but also to develop the necessary mechanisms and programs for recovery processes¹⁷.

During the disaster period, everything seems messy; those affected get frustrated, affecting their capacity to make decisions and implement disaster management interventions. In this regard, PDRP allows some of the difficult and time-consuming decisions to be addressed in a time-relaxed environment where ample thought and energy can be dedicated to identifying possible challenges and opportunities within the Build Back Better strategy.

¹⁴ US Federal Emergency Management Agency. 2016. National disaster recovery framework. Second addition. US Department of Homeland Security. https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-06/national_disaster_recovery_framework_2nd.pdf. Accessed: 10.12.2022.

¹⁵ United Nations General Assembly. 2016. Report of the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Expert 2 Working Group on Indicators and Terminology Relating to Disaster Risk Reduction. Seventy-First Session, Item 19(c). A/71/644.

¹⁶ Pre-disaster recovery planning: guide for state governments. 2016. <https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/pre-disaster-recovery-planning-guide-for-state-governments.pdf>. Accessed: 10.12.2022.

¹⁷ United Nations General Assembly. 2016. Report of the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Expert 2 Working Group on Indicators and Terminology Relating to Disaster Risk Reduction. Seventy-First Session, Item 19(c). A/71/644.

Likewise, all possible options, solutions and disaster management infrastructure can be deeply reflected on before the onset of disasters. Such pre-planning facilitates the urgent mobilization of resources, informed decision-making and effective response and mitigation interventions for the tragedy¹⁸. In addition, PDRP results in an effective and efficient recovery. Effective and efficient recovery implies:

- **Effective Recovery:** it refers to the achievement of mission objectives and desired outcomes. The effectiveness of goals can be measured only if: a) those goals are precisely articulated and actions may be measured against them, and; b) necessary mechanisms for the recovery processes are in place to measure those actions. In disasters, the planning process itself should be informed, inclusive, and accurate for these measures to have any value. In line with this, effectiveness measures are typically established during the recovery planning process (both pre-and post-disaster. Recovery goals should run parallel to the overarching long-term goals of both the individuals and the greater communities to which they belong¹⁹.

- **Efficient Recovery:** The term efficiency pertains to how a task or action is performed by ensuring that productivity is maximized while cost, time, and effort are minimized. Efficient recovery actions are typified by a high degree of coordination between stakeholders and concurrent efforts are performed with a high degree of competence, and achieve an acceptable level of benefit given the resources invested for recipient individuals or communities²⁰.

Strengthen policies, laws, and programs that support Build Better Back in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction.

Effective and efficient disaster management which includes components of recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction is not an isolated task that can be accomplished through a single policy or intervention. It is widely influenced by various attributes of sustainable development in recovery. Governance structures, institutional policies, laws, political culture, social norms, and the level of capacity and education are considered the key pillars that support effective and efficient recovery tasks. The 2015 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction (GAR 2015) described the importance of this task by stating, “[i]n general, countries that already have effective policy and regulatory frameworks, as well as strategies and financial mechanisms in place to prevent new disaster risks, can take full advantage of the gap to transform development, whereas the window of opportunity opens and closes rapidly for those which have made little progress in putting disaster risk management measures in place before a disaster happens²¹. This implies that countries which build and operationalize multi-dimensional and consistent institutional mechanisms for disaster management are subject to an easier way of transformation to development than those which do not avail of such institutional mechanisms.

In fact, availing an effective recovery framework is significant to the establishment of a precise structure and coordination for planning and operational activities.

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ International Recovery Platform. 2015. Implementing Efficient and Effective Recovery through the Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. 2015 World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR).

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR). 2015. The 2015 Global Assessment 10 Report on Disaster Risk Reduction. https://www.preventionweb.net/english/hyogo/gar/2015/en/home/GAR_2015/GAR_2015_3.html.

However, the absence of necessary legal, technical, financial, and other support mechanisms hinders the effectiveness and efficiency of the established institutional mechanisms. Thus, it is imperative that the relevant stakeholders work together to identify the fundamental challenges including practices that unnecessarily increase the time between disaster onset and recovery operations, over-reliance on compensatory disaster risk management, misguided or weakly-enforced regulations, insufficient funding, poor coordination, or a lack of technical guidance and expertise which can weaken the effectiveness and the efficiency of the recovery, rehabilitation, and the reconstruction processes.

Identified Gaps in the Recovery, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction Mechanisms in Disaster Management

Somaliland National Recovery Framework

Recovery is the most complex and challenging component in disaster management in general. It calls on the largest stakeholders from various mandates to consistently, systemically, and effectively work together in addressing the recovery needs. Similarly, such a recovery process affects the greatest long-term impact on a community's social and economic recovery accomplishment²².

Despite the fact that numerous state and non-state actors participated in the response and recovery activities of the Wahan Market fire calamity through technical assistance, funding, and coordination, available data from the Hargeisa local municipality indicates a lack of a National Recovery Framework in disaster management which would have precisely illustrated the roles, responsibilities, relevant structures and resources required. In an interview, the Hargeisa local municipality's director of planning stated:

“As far as I know, a written national recovery framework that states in detail the pertinent number of state and non-state entities, roles, responsibilities, jurisdictions, and resources needed in a disaster incident is not yet available. In general, the central government takes the role of coordination and leadership. The local government protects the properties, registers the affected people, and prevents the re-emergence of the fire. Similarly, the NGOs provide technical and humanitarian assistance, while the private sector participates in fundraising and its mobilization.”

Similarly, a council member of the Hargeisa Local Government and also a member of the Wahan market fire tragedy national committee interviewed in this study had the following to say.

“What I know, as a member of the Wahan Market fire tragedy committee which has been assigned to work on the recovery, reconstruction, and rehabilitation of the market, is that there is no National Recovery Framework document to implement at all.”

²² US Federal Emergency Management Agency. 2016. National disaster recovery framework. Second addition. US Department of Homeland Security. https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-06/national_disaster_recovery_framework_2nd.pdf. Accessed: 10.12.2022.

An officer from the Ministry of Public Work and Housing added that.

“In fact, a number of stakeholders including state and non-state actors participated in the recovery and reconstruction process of the burnt Wahan Market. Of course, each stakeholder has been taking their role whether it’s technical assistance, coordination, or funding. As far as a comprehensive National Recovery Framework document is concerned, there is no such document in place and the entire interventions are being carried out on an ad-hoc basis”.

Such consistent evidence reflects the absence of the National Recovery Framework document in disaster management in general. This implies that the roles and responsibilities of the involved stakeholders in disaster recovery like the Wahan market fire tragedy are ambiguous and result in inter-institutional controversy regarding the roles and the jurisdiction of a given entity in the recovery interventions. Empirically, the Somaliland Ministry of Public Work and the Hargeisa Local Municipality had a jurisdictional dispute regarding the reconstruction of the Wahan Market. The former Somaliland Minister of Public Works, Abdilahi Abokor, who addressed the issue, told local reporters that the government is overseeing the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the market, noting that the rebuilding contract will be referred to the government’s Contract Board. This has provoked the Hargeisa Municipality²³. Consequently, The Mayor of Hargeisa, Abdikareem Ahmed Moge, announced on May 4, 2022, that he has nominated a special committee for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Hargeisa’s largest market.

The statement seemed to be an immediate response to the Ministry of Public Works, Land and Housing, which released a list of names with the same task. This, in fact, jeopardizes and delays the smooth planning, recovery, and reconstruction process of the market on one hand and creates unnecessary apprehension for effective and efficient recovery of the market on the other. Second, there was a lack of a framework that would have identified, analysed, and documented the parameters of the recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. Such a framework would have maximized the effectiveness and efficiency of the recovery processes. Similarly, it would have set common recovery goals, objectives, and vision statements, defining recovery phases, timelines, and how recovery operations are concluded. The fact that this mechanism is lacking means that the entire recovery process is operationalized through an ad-hoc basis rather than well-designed, consistent, and systemized processes.

Somaliland Pre-disaster Recovery Plan among Stakeholders

At the moment of a disaster, the almost messy setting is being dealt with; officials are in a so frustrating situation and such an environment expectably weakens the effectiveness of the decision-making process and the interventions being undertaken. For this reason, PDRP facilitates some of the difficult and time-consuming decisions to be addressed in a time-relaxed environment where ample thought and energy can be dedicated to identifying possible challenges and opportunities²⁴.

²³ Jurisdictional Dispute over Wahan Market escalates in Hargeisa. 2022.

<https://www.somalidispach.com/latest-news/jurisdictional-dispute-over-waaheen-market-escalates-in-hargeisa/>. Accessed: 26.12.2022.

²⁴ United Nations General Assembly. 2016. Report of the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Expert 2 Working Group on Indicators and Terminology Relating to Disaster Risk Reduction. Seventy-First Session, Item 19(c). A/71/644.

Such pre-planning enables the required urgent mobilization of resources, informed decision-making, and effective response and mitigation interventions for the tragedy²⁵.

The study sought to establish whether this mechanism is in place in Somaliland to guide the effective response to a given tragedy, mitigate its economic, social, and infrastructural damage, and meaningfully assist the recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction process. An officer from Hargeisa Local Municipality's department of planning was interviewed. He stated that:

“There is no such pre-disaster recovery planning among all stakeholders at the local level. Basically, instead of pre-disaster planning, our institutions rely on Qadar and we are not concerned by the huge multi-dimensional damage caused by the calamities such as the fire tragedy that happened in Wahan market, Hargeisa”.

On the other hand, an officer from Somaliland National Disaster Preparedness and Food Reserve Authority's (NADFOR) department of planning, research, and statistics stated that:

“As NADFOR, we do not have a pre-disaster recovery plan, but we have a preparedness strategy and contingency plan....”

This evidence is reflecting that the pre-disaster recovery plan which encompasses all stakeholders is not in place yet.

This implies that tactical (functionality and responsibility), operational (focused on specific processes and procedures), and financial (reality-based and universally-accepted resource allocation) processes are not formulated in a very consistent and comprehensive plan in order to effectively and efficiently respond to a tragedy like the Wahan market fire calamity. This also complicates the processes of mitigating its painful economic, social, mental and infrastructural damage. In addition, the absence of a significant mechanism has a direct impact on disaster recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. If the disaster is addressed as early as possible in an effective and efficient manner, it denotes the recovery process of the disaster is shortened, the required resources are reduced and its other negative impacts are minimized.

NADFOR has the Preparedness Strategy document and the Contingency Plan instead of the pre-disaster plan, as its officer stated. If this implies that these mechanisms can play the role of the pre-disaster plan, this is a misconception. First, the preparedness strategy is about the act of making an integrated set of choices, which positions the institution to overcome a certain problem or to achieve a goal²⁶. In this regard, the strategy assists an institution in the way in which it can develop a comprehensive plan, but it does not substitute the plan itself. Second, the contingency plan, as its term denotes, refers to an alternative plan to another plan (Plan A). So, the pre-disaster plan is needed first, then the contingency plan.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Mintzberg H. 1996. The strategy process: concepts, contexts cases. Prentice Hall, New York

The Wahan market was poorly constructed, overcrowded, and lacked emergency fire response mechanisms. The fire started on Friday April 1, 2022, at 8:00 PM and was only put out on Saturday, April 2, 2022 — more than 20 hours later²⁷. The Wahan Market fire spread very fast through the entire market owing to the poor design and inaccessibility of some sections of the market. However, the tactical interventions (the functionality and responsibility) and the operational activities including procedures, as part of the pre-disaster recovery plan, also hindered the effectiveness of the response interventions. For instance, the fire fighting brigade was using water to put out the fire. The private-owned water tankers were the main water suppliers of the fire fighting brigade. The researcher spoke to one of the owners of the private tankers who had this to say:

“I was driving from Haleya when the fire engulfed the market. One of my relatives called and informed me about the fire tragedy. As soon as I reached the market, I supplied the first tank of water to the fire fighting brigade. I went back for the second one, but it took three hours for me to reach the burnt market again because our water source was so far away from the market (Dararweye) and it was so difficult to pass through the overcrowded road and access the market”.

The water supply pipes for emergency purposes should have been installed around the market so that they would have been easily accessed by the fire fighting brigade and other first responders. In contrast, as above-mentioned, supplying water to the fire fighting brigade in the Wahan fire calamity was ineffective and time-consuming.

This had a negative impact on the response activities and contributed to the fact that the fire was not brought under control as early as possible. This increased the economic and infrastructural damage of the fire. Four hours after the fire started, Mayor Abdikariim Ahmed Moge spoke to the media, appealing for assistance from the other firefighting brigades in the main cities of Somaliland and from the public²⁸. The appeal was a good move, but the time interval between the onset of the fire and when the mayor made the appeal was too long. In the four hours it took to make the appeal, it is obvious that property worth millions of money was destroyed. It should never have taken four hours for the administration to realize that assistance was needed. The city administration was also using the media as a channel of communication between the firefighting brigades from neighbouring towns so that they could come to Hargeisa and assist in the fire fighting activities. This indicated a lack of coordination between the Hargeisa administration and the administration units of other towns. . These examples are just some of the ways in which a lack of a pre-disaster recovery plan is disastrous in such a disaster.

Somaliland institutional policies, laws, and programs that support recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction processes.

Governance is very important for the recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction interventions in disaster management. The institutional structures, policies, laws, political culture, social norms, and level of knowledge are considered the key pillars that support effective and efficient recovery tasks.

²⁷ Dozens injured in fire at market in Somaliland. 2022.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/02/dozens-injured-in-fire-at-market-in-somaliland>. Accessed: 20.1.2023.

²⁸ Watch it from here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lzgPQVL8ebM>. Accessed: 20.1.2023

▪ *An Absence of Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Mechanisms (Law and Policy Evaluation Framework)*: In Somaliland, as discussed above, there is no single pre-disaster recovery plan (PDRP) both at the national and local levels of the government. Before demanding a PDRP, there should be a legal framework that spells out the mandate of the relevant institutions on one hand and also formulates legally binding consequences for those who neglect their institutional responsibilities on the other. In fact, neither PDRP nor the legal framework for disaster preparedness is in place. This leads to an acute lack of accountability, paving the way for more frequent man-made disasters due to the absence of disaster preparedness and accountability. In addition, the disaster recovery processes are run on an ad hoc basis rather than precise relevant mechanisms including legal frameworks. When a disaster occurs, such as the Wahan fire calamity, a lot of financial resources are mobilized from different actors including NGOs, UN agencies, states, business communities, and the Somaliland diaspora. These resources are managed by the disaster relief committee nominated by the president without a proper public financial management system. Furthermore, there is a disaster management policy developed by NADFOR, but this policy, similar to most of the other public policies, is operationalized without tailoring the policy evaluation framework. This makes it difficult to measure how far this policy was utilized, and to measure its effectiveness and efficiency in responding to and managing disasters.

▪ *Corruption in Disaster Setting*: when a disaster happens, business people and other institutions perceive it as a source of resources where they can make money through corruption²⁹. Sometimes, despite the fact that there is a legal gap in the interrelated public institutional mandates, corruption-motivated intention creates inter-institutional disputes which damage the effectiveness and efficiency of the disaster recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction process. For instance, right after the Wahan market fire tragedy, there was a jurisdictional dispute between the Hargeisa local municipality and the Ministry of Public Work and Housing over the reconstruction of Wahan Market. Many different analysts believe that such a dispute was related to the resources dedicated to the reconstruction projects, and the greed of benefiting from the resources, particularly the collapsed building owned by the local government rather than disagreement concerning the legal perspective. In fact, the private-owned buildings affected by the fire have begun being reconstructed while the reconstruction of the public-owned building has not started yet. Since the financial resources set aside for the response to disasters including the Wahan market fire case are not managed through existing public financial management systems and reporting, corruption in disaster settings is still an issue that creates mistrust between public institutions and citizens.

²⁹ E. Calossi et al. 2012. Disasters and Corruption: Corruption as a Disaster. https://www.academia.edu/19524666/Disasters_and_Corruption_Corruption_as_Disaster. Accessed: 21.01.2023.

▪ **Decentralization Concept in Disaster Management:** According to the Stigler's Menu Principles for decentralization, one of its key jurisdictional principles which are considered as an attribute of the better functioning governance formulates "the more authorities are allocated closer to the people, the better it works"³⁰. Similarly, relevant theoretical insight has been advanced by Wallace E. Oates, the Decentralization Theorem. One of its key theoretical propositions is that the local decision-making in the governance system enhances the effectiveness and efficiency and the local service delivery provision³¹. Decentralized disaster management systems are better equipped to effectively prepare for and respond to disasters compared to more centralized systems. This superiority of decentralized disaster management systems may seem obvious since local actors are first on-site when a disaster has struck. However, the Hargeisa local municipality lacks its key disaster preparedness and recovery mechanisms including the pre-disaster recovery plan that would help reduce damages caused by fire. So, the Wahan fire tragedy can be perceived as a wake-up call for empowering local authorities when it comes to disaster preparedness, response, and recovery aspects. It can be an opportunity to strengthen institutions through learning from their experiences and adopting reforms.

▪ **Retrofitting and Annotation:** Wahan Market had the highest level of vulnerability to such a disaster. There is a need for reinforcement or upgrading of existing structures to become more resistant and resilient to the damaging effects of hazards.

Such retrofitting necessitates include the design and function of the structure, the stresses that the structure may be subject to from particular hazards or hazard scenarios, and the practicality and costs of different retrofitting options. Examples of retrofitting include adding bracing to stiffen walls, reinforcing pillars, adding steel ties between walls and roofs, installing shutters on windows, and improving the protection of important facilities and equipment.

▪ **Prioritizing and Allocating Resources for Disaster Preparedness and Recovery:** From the national input perspective of disaster risk reduction, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, as a historic mechanism that facilitates the paradigm shift from disaster management to disaster risk management, urges a focus on four priority areas for action for achieving substantial reductions in loss of life, economic losses, and the numbers of people affected by disasters in cities and elsewhere. Apart from priorities 1 and 2 which focus on "understanding risk" and "strengthening governance", priorities 3 and 4 are about "Investing in DRR" and "Enhancing preparedness for effective response and build back better"³². This means that there is a need to prioritize disaster risk reduction by allocating adequate resources to the relevant institutions. Such commitment can result in the establishment of strong institutions which can scientifically and systematically analyze risks and enhance disaster preparedness and recovery. In contrast, actually, disaster preparedness is not prioritized in the Somaliland national budget. For instance, the budget allocated to the national disaster preparedness authority (NADFOR) in the 2021 fiscal year was 10,189,099,111 Somaliland Shilling.

³⁰ Shah, Anwar. 2006. Local government in developing countries (edt). World Bank, Washington DC.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/02/dozens-injured-in-fire-at-market-in-somaliland>. Accessed: 20.1.2023.

³¹ Ibid

³² Wahlström, Margareta. 2015. New Sendia Framework Strengthens focus on Reducing Disaster Risk. <file:///C:/Users/hp/Downloads/s13753-015-0057-2.pdf>. Accessed: 2.2.2023.

For the 2022 fiscal year, it was 9, 787, 033, 234 shillings. Comparing the 2021 budget allocation for that entity to the 2022 fiscal year, there is a budget decline of -3.95%³³. In addition, much more resources will be needed for the development and operationalization of the identified mechanisms including the National Disaster Recovery Framework and the Pre-disaster Recovery Plan.

Conclusion

The lives and livelihoods of people in developing countries are often at higher risks for disasters, owing to a number of factors. First, urbanisation and the attendant shortcomings of poor planning and poor infrastructure, coupled with inadequate governance structures, expose these cities to various disaster risks. This paper focused on the required recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction mechanisms in disaster management in Somaliland through the lens of the Build Back Better strategy. The losses caused by the different forms of disasters are felt long after the disasters have been contained. Addressing these tragedies demands strong institutional capacity so that the institutions are able to comprehensively assess, systematically analyse and proactively respond to the disasters. Institutional strength depends on the extent to which an institution has comprehensive and context-based institutional mechanisms and how far those mechanisms are effectively and efficiently executed. This paper found key disaster recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction mechanisms lacking. More specifically, the Somaliland disaster recovery framework and pre-disaster recovery plan are among those missing.

The Somaliland institutional policies, laws, and programs that promote, guide, and support recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction processes are widely discussed. The Absence of disaster preparedness and recovery mechanisms including disaster management policy evaluation framework and disaster preparedness and recovery-related legislations are also identified.

Recommendations

▪ *All-stakeholder National Level Disaster Recovery Framework should be developed and operationalized:* the paper established that this key mechanism, National Disaster Recovery Framework, is lacking. This resulted in the malfunctioning and ineffectiveness of the response and recovery interventions of the Wahan Market fire tragedy in Hargeisa. In this regard, Somaliland central government and local municipalities with the collaboration of the UN agencies, INGOs, and civil society organizations should work together so as to develop a comprehensive, context-based, and mutually agreed-upon national disaster recovery framework for disaster recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. Through this mechanism, the precise roles and responsibilities for every institution engaged in disaster recovery, the core capabilities including operational coordination and public information and warning, the coordination structures, and the framework, application should be defined.

³³ Somaliland national budget book. 2022.
<https://slmof.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/National-Budget-Book-A4-2022-1-1.pdf>. Accessed: 2.2.2023.

▪ ***A Pre-disaster Recovery Plan should be developed and executed:*** The paper established the absence of the Pre-disaster Recovery Plan. The mechanism would be a significant instrument for the response and recovery process in disaster management, and the lack thereof negatively affected and jeopardized the effectiveness and the efficiency of the response and recovery interventions of the Wahan market fire calamity. The Somaliland National Preparedness and Food Reserve authority (NADFOR) should develop a pre-disaster recovery plan with the collaboration of the relevant policies. It should institutionalize the recovery capacity before actual disaster occurs to strengthen disaster recovery plans, initiatives, and outcomes. Similarly, it should also develop standard and stakeholder-specific guidance to inform the planning process, design and develop a national-level recovery planning information and knowledge management platform to promote the sharing of lessons learned and best practices and to ensure that recovery planning efforts are informed with relevant and current data, etc. At the local level, the local municipality should coordinate with the national pre-disaster recovery planning, assess local disaster risk based on scientific and academic research findings, assess local disaster recovery planning capabilities and identify gaps, establish or strengthen inclusive recovery coordination and decision-making mechanisms, etc.

▪ ***Developing disaster preparedness act and disaster management evaluation framework:*** the paper has established the absence of the disaster preparedness act which resulted in extreme malfunctioning of the disaster preparedness throughout the public institutions, and it which hinders accountability when disaster happens.

In this regard, the Somaliland House of Representatives should develop and enact disaster preparedness activities as soon as possible. This legislation will address all the above-mentioned gaps and reduce the causal factors of the disasters on one hand and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the disaster response and recovery processes on the other. In addition, public policies are developed and operationalized with the ultimate purpose of addressing the existing challenges in a given domain. To measure whether those objectives are achieved or not, there should be a policy evaluation framework. The NADFOR should come up with a disaster management policy evaluation framework so that it can measure the impact of the policy.

▪ ***Fighting corruption in disaster setting:*** the paper identified instances of corruption in the post-disaster context in Somaliland. Evidently, the resources being raised for the response and the recovery from the disasters including the Wahan market fire tragedy are perceived as an opportunity to make money through corruption. The need for relatively large-scale reconstruction that resulted from massive destruction triggers substantial economic opportunities for potential suppliers and contractors. To fight corruption in disaster settings, the resources, including the financial aspects, should be operationalized through the existing public financial management system so that the credibility and transparency of the disaster response and recovery interventions are enhanced. In addition, the effectiveness and efficiency of the programs should be periodically monitored, evaluated, and reported so as to improve accountability and transparency in disaster settings.

▪ *Promote decentralization ideals in disaster management:* In accordance with the analysis of the paper, the Wahan fire calamity depicted how far the decentralization concept in disaster setting needs to be improved and promoted in order to effectively and efficiently strengthen disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. So, the central government of Somaliland should motivate the public administrative and fiscal decentralization regarding disaster reduction in general. More specifically, the intergovernmental fiscal transfer should be increased so that the local municipalities are able to allocate adequate resources for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery interventions.

▪ *Prioritize and allocate adequate resources for disaster preparedness and recovery:* the paper found that disaster preparedness and recovery are not adequately prioritized. In this regard, the central government should prioritize disaster preparedness and recovery programs in order to enhance the capacity of NADFOR and the local municipalities. To this end, adequate resources including budgetary allocations should be channelled into these institutions so that they can improve their institutional mechanisms, train their staff and establish functioning coordination instruments that can facilitate better preparedness, response, and recovery in disaster management.

Abdifatah Ahmed Ileeye is researcher and consultant specializing in governance and sustainable development in the Horn of Africa. He has written extensively on a wide range of topics related to governance, public policy, institutional development as well as in the humanitarian and development sector. His research interests emphasize on institutional development in Somaliland and study the effectiveness and efficiency of Somaliland's local municipalities and governance strategies for both National Ministries and the UN/ INGOs Development Organization

Abdifatah serves ISIR Think Tank as a visiting research fellow. Abdifatah received his M.A in Governance and Public Policy from the University of Passau, Germany. He also obtained his B.A in Global Studies and International Relations from New Generation University, Hargeisa, Somaliland. He is currently based in Kassel, Germany.