ACCELERATING COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CROSS-BORDER INTERVENTIONS

TECHNICAL BRIEF   January 2022

Kenya and Ethiopia Crossing point

BACKGROUND

Cross-border interactions remain multi-faceted and complex with a wide variety of economic, political, social, cultural and environmental factors at play. These factors create both opportunities and challenges in borderland areas. The Mandera Triangle is an area prone to environmental shocks coupled with high competition over resources, isolation from central governments and varied levels of insecurity and conflict. Economic development barriers in the Mandera Triangle include poor linkage between financial service providers, lack of infrastructure, unsupportive legal regulations, and weak capacity of business communities. The macro-level barriers impeding economic growth stem from insecurity, conflict, environmental shocks and political shifts.

Cross border engagements and interventions are critical in a region linked by similar cultural, programmatic and environmental factors. The shared identity in language, history and family linkages form the single strongest argument to support cross-border programming. If families, clans and community structures remain tied across borders, then their economic development and prosperity also remain interlinked. In an area with high levels of human and livestock movement across borders, a coordinated approach is necessary for programming as in the case of management of livestock disease and livelihoods. Environmental shocks transcend borders and can have compounding effects on economic development. Similarly, natural resources such as the river Dawa and grazing fields are shared across borders and need to be coordinated accordingly, as natural resources are the key drivers of economic development in the region.

BORESHA implements cross-border interventions that foster economic development in the Mandera Triangle, with a recognition of the intersection between conflict and resilience. This paper explores how cross-border programming can foster economic development, presenting experiences and lessons learned to inform ongoing and future related programs.

BORESHA Project

The overall objective of Building Opportunities for Resilience in the Horn of Africa (BORESHA) project is to promote economic development and greater resilience, particularly among vulnerable groups in the Mandera Triangle. The project adopts a community-driven approach to address the shared nature of the risks and opportunities in this border area. The BORESHA project is led by Danish Refugee Council in a consortium of Care International and World Vision as partners.

APPROACH

Cross-border programming model

- Comprehensive analysis (conflict, market assessment, political economy)
- Stakeholder mapping

Contextual Analysis

Local Stakeholder Buy-in
- Community consultations
- Targeting
- Joint planning

Adaptive programming
- Flexible funding mechanisms
- Integration
- Knowledge sharing initiatives

Coordination Mechanisms
- Division of roles
- Governance structures
- Community-based committees

Economic Development

Gender and conflict sensitivity mainstreaming

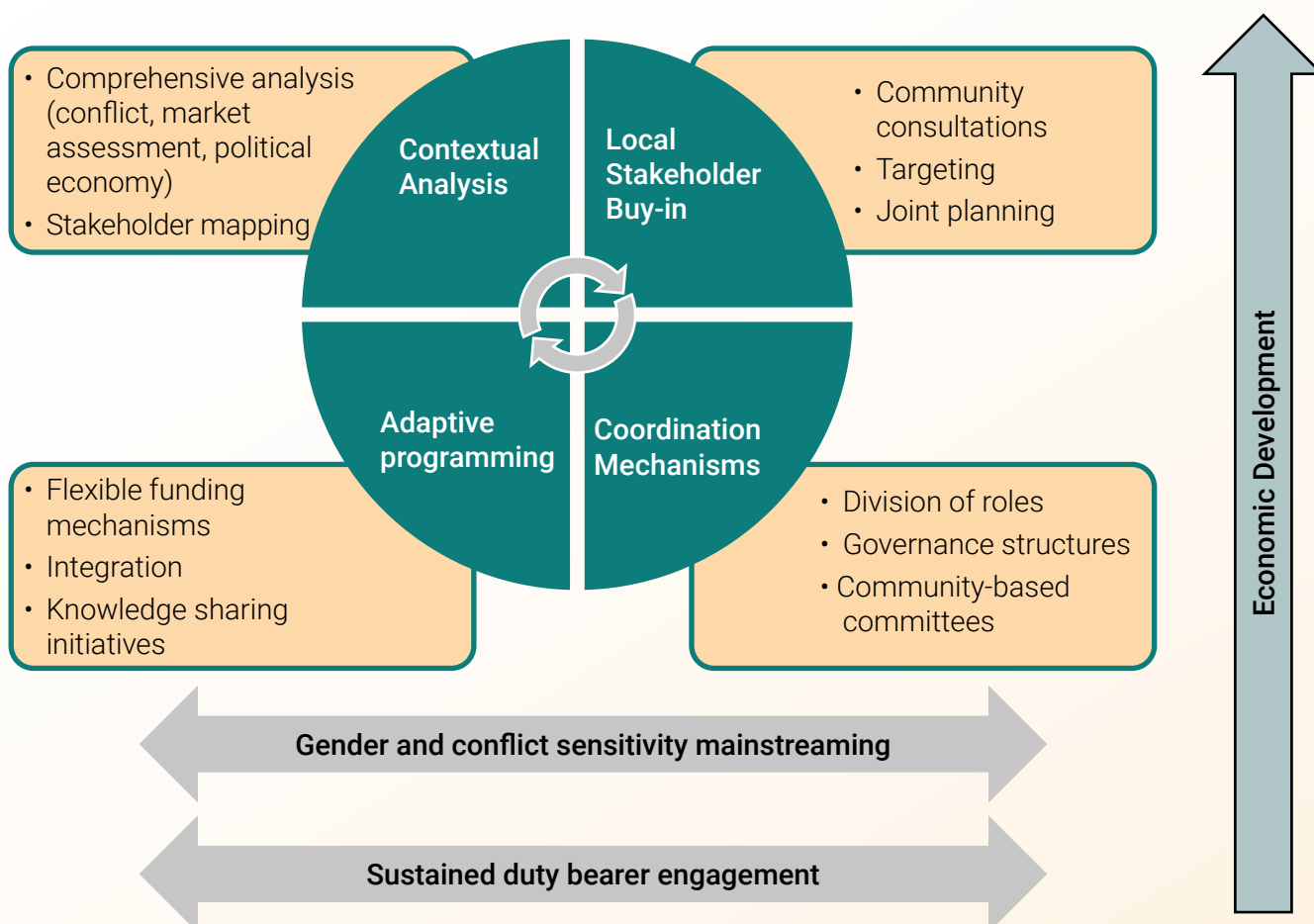**Sustained duty bearer engagement**

Figure 2: Cross-border programming model
Source: BORESHA Writeshop 2021

In 2021, a team of experts on humanitarian response, development and peacebuilding developed a program model for cross-border programming, at a DRC-organised writeshop. The model addresses the complexity of cross border programming with four key pillars. They include, in-depth contextual analysis, local stakeholder buy-in, strong coordination mechanisms, and adaptive programming processes. These pillars are built on a foundation of sustained duty bearer engagement and ongoing gender and conflict sensitivity mainstreaming throughout programme implementation.

Contextual analysis: At baseline, cross-border programs should conduct comprehensive analyses inclusive of conflict, market assessment and political economy. The findings will build a strong foundation to inform programmatic interventions that foster economic development and improve interactions of various actors with one another. With findings from the analyses, teams should then be trained in conflict sensitivity to ensure that project staff have the tools necessary to apply a conflict sensitive lens to their work. For the case of Boresha, DRC's Humanitarian Disarmament and Peacebuilding team conducted conflict sensitivity training for the consortium members.

Stakeholder buy-in: Successful cross-border interventions must have local stakeholder buy-in from each side of the border. Local stakeholder buy-in will include communities, local authorities, government departments, border management actors and civil society. Findings from contextual analysis will be shared with stakeholders, and community consultations will be held for programme implementation processes. Local stakeholder buy-in has remained at the centre of the BORESHA model. At the onset there was an extensive local stakeholder buy-in process with community consultations regarding BORESHA's proposed interventions, and a participatory selection criteria process for target community members.

Coordination mechanisms: Cross-border programs in consortium arrangements need effective coordination and clear roles and responsibilities. A governance structure comprised of a project management unit (PMU), a technical working group (TWG), technical implementation groups (TIG) and a Steering Committee (SC) strengthens internal partner coordination leading to continuous learning, harmonisation of information sharing and joint planning. In addition to having strong internal coordination, BORESHA also played an external coordination role, linking stakeholders to regional bodies such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Regional Approaches for Sustainable Conflict Management and Integration (RASMI), and Borderlands Working Group (BWG) to raise advocacy on borderland areas.

Adaptive programming: Learning and adapting must be intentional in cross-border programming. With rapid and often unforeseen changes, programs should have contingency funds that can facilitate speedy response to alleviate human suffering. For example, BORESHA used its contingency funding to respond to shocks and social fund under VSLAs to support select beneficiaries who experienced unforeseen challenges. With emergence of Covid-19 pandemic, BORESHA shifted committee meetings to virtual forums and introduced Covid-19 interventions which were initially not part of the program design. BORESHA engaged an FM radio broadcasting stations to spread Covid-19 awareness messages reaching a total of 350,000 people within the Mandera Triangle.

Beyond the four pillars, crosscutting drivers include gender and conflict sensitivity mainstreaming, and sustained duty bearer engagement for accountability. As long-term livelihoods interventions are developed, the need to incorporate a conflict pillar remains instrumental given the innate linkages between resilience and conflict.

RESULTS

Improved coordination among actors for service delivery: Stakeholder forums conducted at the end of the first phase of BORESHA project have shown perceptions of improved collaboration and coordination amongst actors as a result of the project. BORESHA first phase final evaluation revealed that men and women in the three borderland areas appreciate the long-term benefits from the cross-border project including access to water, improved livestock health and production, employment creation through Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) and business grantees, and improved working relations with ministries of livestock from the three countries. With improved coordination, cross-border livestock disease management has improved. A total of 1,776,005 animals were vaccinated across the three countries which proved an effective way to manage livestock diseases and sustain livelihoods.

Economic Empowerment: VSLAs can be a great model for economic empowerment of the community. In BORESHA the model was a great success, with 92% of VSLA respondents indicating an increase in their overall household income. Of the youth engaged through TVET training programs, 78% indicated that the training had helped improve their income."[1]

Skills Development: Cross-border interventions allow for knowledge and skill exchange. In Boresha, key demographics (597 TVET trainees) in the three countries have received skills development with 50% gender representation. The TVET graduates often cross borders to apply their training skills to existing opportunities which continue to foster cross-border economic development. From the final BORESHA evaluation, 93% confirmed applying their gained skills in their jobs, including management of their own businesses.[2]

Daud Ibrahim a 22-year-old Man, from Dadacha Burki in Ethiopia was trained under BORESHA's TVET program as a motorcycle mechanic. He has opened a motorbike garage in Eymole location, Banisa sub-county in Kenya, and now earns a monthly average of 700 Euro. He also has a motorbikes spare parts shop in Kenya and trains other youths in his hometown in Ethiopia. *"Six months before the training, my life had no direction! Today, I am a proud owner of a motorbike garage, and earns good income from it thanks to BORESHA TVET program,"* says Daud.

Trade and market linkages: Borderlands zones are characterised by high levels of trade, and resilient market systems. The Boresha project fostered information sharing and coordination mechanisms for trade and markets through creation of business development support centres. These centres supported the management of mobile-based market platforms and sharing of market information to traders thus improving quality of trade in the three border regions. The creation of tri-border committees in each country also enhanced cross-border market linkages and learning on common challenges affecting businesses.

Improved Natural Resource Management: Given that scarcity of natural resources can be both a cause of conflict and a hurdle to economic empowerment, cross-border programming benefits from an NRM lens. Boresha, in consultation with the community, has constructed 16 water points, benefiting a total of 108,814 people across the three countries. Water is key in driving economic development and supporting livelihoods in the entire cross-border area. The project helped establish 10 functional water management committees at community level. It facilitated a NRM process culminating in the Natural Resource Use, Sharing and Management Agreement in September 2021 between the range councils of Dollo Ado/Dollo Bay Woreda in Ethiopia and Dolow/BeledHawa district in Somalia.

Tri-border business committee meeting in Dolo Ado, Ethiopia

1   Report for the End-Line Evaluation of Boresha, pg. 1

2   Report for the End-Line Evaluation of Boresha, pg. 29

Private sector linkage: In areas with weak regulatory frameworks and varying levels of public institutions, bolstering private sector linkages is essential. BORESHA has supported development of both local level private sector initiatives as well as entering partnerships with innovative larger regional companies to support economic development. An agreement with Sauti Africa, a private sector player that provides mobile trade and market information across East Africa allowed for innovation such as usage of technology to share market prices across the different sides of the border. The project supported 78 **(28 Kenya, 25 Ethiopia and 25 Somalia)** private businesses with grants amounting to **608,000** Euro to start or grow their businesses, as a result, improving their profitability and opportunities to create jobs.

CHALLENGES

Contextual:

- Lack of a regulatory framework has meant that there is no avenue to engage in safe and official cross-border trade. Because the borders are officially closed, movement of goods, services and people at the border remain restricted. Changing dynamics of border security hinder free movement of commodities across the borders, which ultimately affect consistency of market supply. Lack of functional customs means that goods crossing from one country to the other do so through illegal entry points where police officers manning the border extort money from traders, often leading to increase in the price of commodity.

- Female traders face greater barriers, having even less access to finance due to traditional systems of asset ownership. Initiatives to support capacity building of traders are not always scheduled to ensure women's attendance since they must balance family obligations and time for trading to earn income.

- Lack of infrastructure such as roads means that these border areas are far removed from central cities in each of the three respective countries leading to increased marginalization.

- Environmental factors remain a primary challenge in the Mandera Triangle context given the recurrent shocks like drought and environmental degradation.

Programmatic:

- The current design of cross-border programming is relatively short term in vision, as it is primarily designed within the framework of existing funding calls. Projects have less flexibility for contingency funding to respond to unexpected shocks. Without flexible funding, it is challenging for interventions to address the environmental shocks, political shifts and incidences of conflict that can affect the operational environment.

- Movement restrictions remain a challenge for tri-border committees. However, space has been created for communication and coordination between the different committees through regular meetings in their respective countries with interest to increase the number of cross-border meetings where possible.

Mandera and Somalia border post.

LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Humanitairn-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus approach. There is a growing recognition of the need for an integrated approach to programming that takes into consideration the intersection of the humanitarian, development and peace pillars. No single intervention is sustainable in isolation, and livelihoods and peacebuilding programming should be designed together.

Context-aware design. Knowledge of context in design and implementation including existing economic realities, security situation, political climate, environmental factors, development strategies and inter-linkages between all the different variable is important. Proper contextual analysis will improve understanding of the barriers, opportunities and catalysts for economic development in the target cross-border areas. This will boost relevance of the interventions, alignment to prevailing needs, and future aspirations of the communities.

Flexible and sufficient funding. Building contingency funding mechanisms can enable response to unintended and, or sudden changes. The fluid environment requires constant innovating to respond to new shocks and challenges. There is need to advocate for increased donor flexibility in allocated budgets and funding disbursements. Continued building of an evidence base for cross-border resilience programming will enhance efficacy and cost-effectiveness of future interventions.

Building with the community and stakeholders. Relationship and trust building are key for fostering an environment for cross-border economic development to thrive. Consistent dialogue and feedback among stakeholders at all levels including the local and national governments on each side of border, relevant regional bodies, community members and other NGOs and CSOs working in the target areas is needed. Working with existing local cross-border mechanisms enhances trust and assures sustainability in community dialogue processes. A case study on EUTF Cross-border Programme noted that "cross-border approach proved relevant to foster socio-economic development and peacebuilding in border areas...

all supported government and community-based cross-border structures to foster local actors' capacity to address transboundary issues."[3] It is important to foster or support community-based networks or mechanisms and create the space for inclusive dialogue around how each community defines economic development for themselves.

Increased private sector involvement. Private sector opens opportunities for innovative solutions to existing barriers and provides alternative employment. Strengthened linkages between private and public sectors through joint local planning processes and alignment with existing economic planning processes of relevant ministries and departments in cross-border states has the potential to drive both private sector interest and public investment for improved community livelihood. Also, close collaboration with heads of cooperative promotion agency offices could enhance impact of interventions as their role and mandates is closely connected to service provision and economic development.

Joint advocacy for borderlands and cross-border issues. BORESHA identified the need for supporting space for discourse with other partners and elevating key cross-border perspective which led to close coordination with the Borderlands Working Group. The BWG is a platform through which agencies, research institutes and other key stakeholders can come together to discuss borderlands issues, share information on latest interventions and studies, and work towards influencing policy dialogue on borderlands.

Cross-border regulatory frameworks. Despite the existence of cross-border regulatory frameworks such as IGAD's Informal Cross-Border Trade (ICB) policy framework, there remains gaps in concrete steps towards operationalising them. Community involvement in operationalisation of policies remains vital and as documented in a recent REF report, "government, civil society, donors and other stakeholders must coordinate efforts to support context-specific and gender-sensitive livelihood strategies, all the while promoting community involvement in border management strategies and plans."[4]

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3   Collaboration in Cross-Border Areas of the Horn of Africa Region: Case study on the EUTF Cross-Border Programme, Altai report, pg6.

4   *Borderlands Infrastructure & Livelihoods: a review of implications for the development of formal border crossings in Mandera County, Kenya,* REF report, pg. 7

Crossing point for people and goods between Ethiopia and Kenya.

Cross-border long-term development vision. In order to implement cross-border modalities for economic development there is need for a broader, longer term vision that recognises the complexities involved in supporting and developing sustainable cross-border mechanisms. It is imperative to have a long-term plan for project implementation rather than short term indicators that create pressure to show quick results and impact.

CONCLUSION

Cross-border interventions have clear advantages that can be observed from current and previous projects. Although some areas would benefit from further quantitative research, such as the link between cross-border interventions and reduced conflict, sufficient evidence exists that a cross-border approach has the ability to foster socio-economic development among resident communities. Nevertheless, systemic bottlenecks remain inhibitors for accelerated pathways to development, hence the importance of adaptive program approaches. Dynamic programmatic models need to be anchored in holistic contextual analysis, with meaningful stakeholder buy-in processes and strong in-built coordination mechanisms.

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Contacts:
BORESHA Consortium
Danish Refugee Council - East Africa and Great Lakes
Lower Kabete Road (Ngecha Junction)
P. O. Box 14762 – 00800 Nairobi, Kenya
Office: +254 709867000

Website: www.boreshahoa.org