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project facts

Key words

Community resilience, Drought, Ethiopia, Maternal and child nutrition, WASH and food security

Behavioral themes

Social norms, Trust (messenger effect), Behavioral Adaptation, Delayed gratification, and Intergenerational altruism

Research design

Qualitative study - with in-depth interviews and focus group discussions

Scope

Start date: 12th July 2023

End date: 15th November 2023

Location

Drought-affected Ethiopian communities within the Oromia, Afar, and Somali regions

Partner

UNICEF

Ethics approval

AMREF

How do Ethiopian drought-affected communities cope with the dry period, and the effect of these coping mechanisms on behavioral priorities?

Background: Addressing drought impact and community resilience in Oromia, Somali, and Afar regions

In Oromia, Somali, and Afar regions, communities adopt proactive drought measures but face severe challenges including food insecurity, malnutrition, disrupted water access, and barriers to education, with persistent issues like child marriage and FGM (female genital mutilation). Post-drought, there is a pressing need for practical long-term solutions to improve water infrastructure, healthcare, and education, alongside continued efforts to address cultural practices and strengthen overall resilience.

Conducting the research

IDIs- 102 IDIs were conducted across 10 groups, including pregnant women, parents, health workers, caregivers, and social workers. This captured detailed, context-specific insights on sensitive issues—WASH, Nutrition, and Child Protection—by providing an in-depth understanding of behaviors, emotions, and attitudes in Ethiopian communities across Oromia, Afar, and Somali regions.

FGDs- 25 FGDs were held with groups including pregnant women, parents as well as adolescent girls, and boys. Gender-segregated groups encouraged open dialogue, particularly among women, helping surface diverse community-level perspectives on Nutrition, Child Protection Education and Health, alongside shared and divergent views on key issues.

- » In the Ethiopian regions of Oromia, Somali, and Afar droughts lead to challenges related to hygiene, resource limitations, and disrupted education, which result in malnutrition, food insecurity and the persistence of child marriage. This continues to be the case despite committing to infrastructure improvement, health and education awareness, and child protection.
- » Oromia features traditional structures such as the “Buusaa Gonofaa” and “Idir” as a strategy for resource-sharing and crisis support, but new initiatives often fail to build on or optimize these existing systems, focusing instead on introducing new methods.
- » Despite efforts to promote sustainable practices like afforestation and diversified crop farming, new initiatives provide only basic training and neglect essential aspects of crop management, while inadequate infrastructure and health-care access continue to challenge effective service integration.

Implications

Implications for policy makers:

Policy makers should consider designing solutions that leverage and optimise already existing coping strategies rather than implementing new ones.

Efforts to promote sustainable practices like afforestation and diversified crop farming must go beyond basic training and build the community's capacity in crop management.

Recommendations for future research

Future research should focus on evaluating drought-resistant crops, nutritional interventions, and gender dynamics in food security to improve nutrition and healthcare. Additionally, studies should explore water accessibility, sanitation solutions, financial aid impacts on education, and climate change adaptation strategies to enhance resilience and address the complex challenges in Oromia, Somali, and Afar regions.

Further reading

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