

Building Local Resilience: VNG International Supports Somaliland Municipalities Ahead of El Niño 2026-2027

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As the World Meteorological Organization confirms that El Niño conditions have strengthened and are likely to persist through the 2026-2027 rainy seasons, Somaliland's municipalities are preparing, not waiting, for what comes next. Under the DANWADAAG programme, led by VNG International together with CARE Netherlands, Free Press Unlimited and MediaINK, local governments across Somaliland are translating climate forecasts into coordinated, practical early action.

For Somaliland, El Niño raises the likelihood of heavy rainfall, flash floods and urban flooding, water contamination, damage to roads and infrastructure, livestock losses, displacement, and outbreaks of climate-sensitive diseases.

Municipalities, the level of government closest to communities and most directly responsible for local infrastructure and services, are on the front line of managing these risks. Too often in the past, early-warning information reached national institutions well ahead of a hazard but arrived too late, or too generally, for a municipality to act on it. Closing that gap between forecast and local decision-making has become a central focus of DANWADAAG's support to Somaliland's local governments.

On 8-9 September 2026, ALGASL and NADFOR convened the Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Conference for Somaliland Municipalities in Hargeisa, with support from VNG International. The Conference brought together the ALGASL member-district Mayors and their DRM focal points, NADFOR, national ministries, meteorological experts, and humanitarian and development partners to assess municipal preparedness, review district-level risk profiles, and agree on a shared way forward.

Its outcome, a formal Communiqué on Preparedness and Early Action for El Niño-Related Risks, established an El Niño Preparedness and Early Action Task Force and set in motion an Anticipatory Action Plan built around four institutions with distinct, complementary roles: NADFOR, providing national leadership; ALGASL, connecting national coordination to local government; the Somaliland Information Management Center, consolidating risk data into a single dashboard; and municipalities themselves, as the plan's frontline implementers.

“El Niño will not wait for us to be ready, so our municipalities cannot wait either. This Plan puts real responsibilities in the hands of local government, from clearing drainage before the rains to warning our own communities in time. That is what protects our people, and it is what a genuine partnership between national institutions, municipalities, and partners like DANWADAAG looks like in practice.”

— **Mayor AbdiRisak Mohamed (WIIWAA), Mayor of Hargeisa and Chairperson, ALGASL**

What distinguishes this Plan is its insistence on specificity. Rather than assigning generic responsibility to “local government,” each of its priority actions names exactly what a municipality is expected to do, from mapping flood-prone wards and clearing drainage channels, to operating community early-warning networks, identifying evacuation sites, and reporting weekly into the national risk-monitoring system.

This is DANWADAAG's underlying premise in practice: that resilient, trusted local government, one that can act on early warning before a hazard becomes a crisis, is what strengthens the social contract between citizens and the state.

The approach also reflects a deliberate shift in how early warning itself is understood. Rather than treating forecasts as background information for national planning, the Task Force has agreed on quantitative triggers, measurable thresholds in rainfall, water levels or disease surveillance data, that automatically activate pre-agreed actions once they are reached. A unified climate-risk dashboard, maintained by the Information Management Center and fed weekly by municipal data, allows decisionmakers at every level to see the same evidence at the same time.

For municipalities, this means early warning is no longer something that happens to them; it is something they help generate, interpret and act on directly, often reaching communities through radio, mosques and local leaders well before a flood or disease outbreak takes hold.

By grounding the Plan in verified early-warning triggers, transparent reporting, and a pre-arranged financing framework, DANWADAAG is also offering development partners a clear, accountable basis for aligning support with government-identified priorities, rather than parallel, ad hoc interventions. This model of anticipatory, locally led preparedness offers a template that extends well beyond a single rainy season.

As municipalities build the systems, relationships and institutional confidence to act early on the risks they know best, they are also demonstrating a broader principle at the heart of DANWADAAG's work: that effective disaster risk management is, at its core, a matter of governance.

As the Deyr and Jilaal seasons approach, VNG International and its DANWADAAG partners continue to work alongside NADFOR, ALGASL and Somaliland's municipalities to ensure that this early action model translates into protected lives, livelihoods and infrastructure on the ground.

Photos

Somaliland DRM Conference



Mayor of Hargeisa and Chairman of NADFOR with ALGASL ED

