Improving Flood Forecasting and Early Warning in Somalia

Feasibility Study

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¹ SAIC, contractor to U.S. Geological Survey, Centre for Earth Resources Observation and Science (EROS), Sioux Falls, SD 57198 USA (work performed by SAIC under USGS contract 03CRCN0001)
### List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADCP</td>
<td>Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEFA</td>
<td>Comitato Europeo per la Formazione e l’Agricoltura</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFMC</td>
<td>Community Flood Management Committees</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEM</td>
<td>Digital Elevation Model</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMWR</td>
<td>the Ethiopian Ministry of Water Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>EROS</td>
<td>Earth Resources Observations and Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organisation of United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>FEWS NET</td>
<td>Famine Early Warning System Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>FFC</td>
<td>Flood Forecasting Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>FFG</td>
<td>Flash Flood Guidance</td>
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<tr>
<td>FSAN</td>
<td>Food Security Analysis Unit - Somalia</td>
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<tr>
<td>FSDRSC</td>
<td>Food Security and Rural Development Sector Committee of the SSS</td>
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<tr>
<td>FWG</td>
<td>Flood Working Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAA</td>
<td>German Agro-Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>GFFS</td>
<td>Galway Real-Time River Flow Forecasting System</td>
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<tr>
<td>GFS</td>
<td>Global Forecast System</td>
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<tr>
<td>GSM</td>
<td>Global System for Mobile</td>
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<tr>
<td>GTS</td>
<td>Global Telecommunication System</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITCZ</td>
<td>Inter tropical Convergence Zone</td>
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<tr>
<td>JOSR</td>
<td>Jowhar off Stream Storage Reservoir</td>
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<tr>
<td>KMD</td>
<td>Kenya Meteorological Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>LVGFM</td>
<td>Linearly Varying Gain Factor Model</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoA</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOFFS</td>
<td>Management Overview of Flood Forecasting System</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOLAE</td>
<td>Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>MPWT</td>
<td>Ministry of Public Works and Transportation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCEP</td>
<td>National Centres for Environmental Prediction</td>
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<tr>
<td>NOAA</td>
<td>National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRCS</td>
<td>Natural Resources Conservation Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>NWS</td>
<td>National Weather services</td>
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<tr>
<td>PET</td>
<td>Potential Evapotranspiration</td>
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<tr>
<td>QPF</td>
<td>Quantitative Precipitation Forecast</td>
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<tr>
<td>RFE</td>
<td>Rainfall Estimates</td>
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<tr>
<td>RFFCs</td>
<td>Regional Flood Forecast Centres</td>
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<tr>
<td>SFFM</td>
<td>Somalia Flood Forecasting Model</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSS</td>
<td>Somali Support Secretariat</td>
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<td>SWALIM</td>
<td>Somalia Water and Land Information Management</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>USGS</td>
<td>United States Geological Survey,</td>
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<td>WMO</td>
<td>World Meteorological Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glossary of terms</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deyr</td>
<td>October to November, minor wet season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gu</td>
<td>April to June, major wet season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hagaa</td>
<td>July to September, minor dry season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jilal</td>
<td>December to March major dry season in Somalia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Togga</td>
<td>Anon perennial (seasonal) stream which deep and narrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waadi (Wadi)</td>
<td>A non-perennial (seasonal) stream which is wide and shallow</td>
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**Table of Contents**

Glossary of terms ........................................................................................................................................ iv  
Table of Contents........................................................................................................................................ v  
List of Figures ........................................................................................................................................... vii  
List of Tables ............................................................................................................................................ ix  
List of Annexes .......................................................................................................................................... ix  
Acknowledgement ....................................................................................................................................... x  
Acknowledgement ....................................................................................................................................... x  
Executive Summary ................................................................................................................................... xi  

1. INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................................. 1  
   1.1 Problem Definition......................................................................................................................... 1  
   1.2 Purpose and Objectives............................................................................................................... 2  

2. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE JUBA AND SHABELLE RIVER BASINS ......................................................................................................................................................... 4  
   2.1 Physical Characteristics .............................................................................................................. 4  
   2.2 Climatic Conditions of the Juba and Shabelle Basins .............................................................. 9  
   2.3 Soil and Land Cover Characteristics of Juba and Shabelle Basins ........................................ 12  
   2.4 Major Infrastructure on the Juba and Shabelle .................................................................. 12  
   2.5 History of Floods along the Juba and Shabelle .................................................................. 13  
   2.6 Trans-boundary Issues ......................................................................................................... 16  

3. REVIEW OF CURRENT FLOOD MONITORING CAPACITIES ............................................................................................................. 19  
   3.1 Databases & Information Management Systems ................................................................. 19  
   3.2 Operational Hydro-meteorological Network .................................................................... 20  
   3.3 Flood Forecasting and Early Warning Methods in Place .................................................. 23  
      3.3.1 Hydrologic and Hydraulic Models in Use .................................................................. 23  
      3.3.2 Weather Forecasting Systems .................................................................................. 24  
      3.3.3 Dissemination of Flood Warning Information ....................................................... 25  
   3.4 Traditional Flood Early Warning Mechanisms and Alerts ................................................ 25  

4. TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS .......................................................................................... 27  
   4.1 Meteorological Networks ........................................................................................................ 27  
   4.2 Hydrometric Systems .............................................................................................................. 29  
      4.2.1 Rating Curves .................................................................................................................. 29  
      4.2.1.2 Acoustic Doppler Current Profilers ....................................................................... 29  
      4.2.2 Simulated Rating-Curves .......................................................................................... 31  
   4.2.3 Hydrometric Stations ....................................................................................................... 32  
   4.3 Hydrometric and Meteorological Data Transmission Systems ......................................... 32  
   4.4 Flood Forecasting Models ..................................................................................................... 33  
      4.4.1 Rainfall-Runoff Models ............................................................................................... 33  
      4.4.2 Flood Routing Methods ............................................................................................. 34
List of Figures

Figure 2.1: Drainage Pattern of the Juba and Shabelle Rivers ........................................ 5
Figure 2.2a: Stream flow at upstream and downstream stations with recorded data on the Shebelle River in Somalia .................................................................................................. 7
Figure 2.2b: Stream flow at upstream and downstream stations with recorded data on the Juba River in Somalia. ........................................................................................................ 7
Figure 2.3: Mean Monthly Rainfall and Evapotranspiration Variation for Selected Stations in the Two Basins .................................................................................................................. 10
Figure 2.4: Long-term monthly average flows of the Juba and Shebelle Rivers at Luuq and Belet Weyne ........................................................................................................... 10
Figure 2.5a: Exceedance flows and river bank full discharge at Jamaame on the Juba River ................................................................................................................................. 11
Figure 2.6: Flows of the Juba and the Shabelle during the flooding events ..................... 15
Figure 2.7a: Gauging stations along the tributaries of the Juba River in Ethiopia. .......... 17
Figure 2.7b: Gauging stations along mainstream Shabelle River and tributaries in Ethiopia ............................................................................................................................... 18
Figure 3.1: Historical gauging sites on the Juba and Shabelle Rivers. ............................. 19
Figure 4.1: Observed Shabelle River water levels at Godey in Ethiopia .......................... 30
Figure 4.3a: Observed and Estimated Flow for Bulo Burti .............................................. 40
Figure 4.3b: Observed and Estimated Flow for Mahadey Weyne ................................. 41
Figure 4.3c: Observed and Estimated Flow for Afgoi ..................................................... 42
Figure 5.1: Impacts of May 2005 flash floods on a section of the Bossaso highway in the Puntland area .................................................................................................................. 45
Figure 5.2: Bridge in Hargeysa on the Marodi Jeex Wadis that was washed away during the flash flood event of May 2005 ................................................................................. 45
Figure 5.3: Impacts of Allaybaday flash floods: a photo of a broken sand dam in the area due to a recent flash flood ........................................................................................................ 46
Figure 5.4: Garowe Town Plan produced using Quick-Bird Satellite image acquired for March 2003 ....................................................................................................................... 48
Figure 5.6: Mean annual rainfall for northern Somalia region ........................................ 52
Figure 5.7b: Proposed locations of rainfall and stream gauges sensors for Garowe .......... 55
Figure 5.8a: Flash Flood Guidance values for the Togga Gorowe and tributaries for one,
three, and six hours duration rainfall events ................................................................. 58
Figure 5.8b: Flash Flood Guidance values for the Togga Moroodi Jeex and tributaries for
one, three, and six hours duration rainfall events .......................................................... 59
Figure 6.1: Phase installation of hydro-meteorological network ..................................... 68
Figure 6.2: Belet Weyne Gauge Site ........................................................................... 70
Figure 6.3: Diagram of the data flow between the field, partner organizations, the FFC,
and the end user of the forecast product ................................................................. 74
Figure 6.4: Envisaged institutional arrangement for the river Flood Forecasting Centre
(FFC) .......................................................................................................................... 75
Figure 6.5: Data, information, actions flows from the detection of a flood onset to issuing
and dissemination of flood warning ........................................................................ 76
List of Tables
Table 1: Juba and Shabelle river reaches characteristic data, based on 1963 to 1990 observed data .......................................................................................................................... 8
Table 2: Locations and metadata for the archived stream flow data for the Juba and Shabelle Rivers .................................................................................................................. 22
Table 3: Correlations for the observed and estimated flow for selected stations .......... 43

List of Annexes
Annex 1: Existing Network of Rain Gauge Stations ......................................................... 81
Annex 2: Proposed hardware for the hydrometeorological network ............................ 83
Acknowledgement

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Executive Summary

Floods are the most prevalent form of natural disasters along the Juba and Shabelle Rivers in Southern Somalia, whereas flash floods are common occurrences along the intermittent streams in the northern part of the country. Both riverine and flash floods cause high numbers of casualties and economic impacts. As the population grows and urban development encroaches into traditional floodplain areas, in the riverine areas, and in the towns of Garowe and Hargeysa, the potential for loss of life and property will rise in the coming years. For example, Hargeysa and Garowe cities in northern Somalia have grown rapidly due to high influx of immigrants resulted from the long civil war. Due to lack of legislations, many people have settled in floodplains risking their lives and introducing high vulnerability. Early warning and alert systems are not in place and if existed are rudimentary. Establishing flood early warning systems for the areas at risk of flooding is the most effective means to reduce the death toll caused by these floods.

One of the FAO SWALIM’s mandates is support to the Somalia interagency efforts in developing information products and tools that will provide early warning information and aid preparedness and response to floods in Somalia. SWALIM has been providing supportive information and technical capacity to the interagency efforts for the past four years in collaboration with USGS and FEWSNET. This feasibility study was commissioned in line with these mandates with a main goal to improve flood forecasting and alert systems through assessment of existing capacities and lay out of technical options for the development of a river flood forecasting system for the Juba and Shabelle basins and flash flood alerts systems for Hargeysa and Garowe cities in Northern Somalia.

The report provides the basis for implementation of flood forecasting and flash flood alert systems for the above mentioned areas. As part of the preparation of this document, a number of documents that provided physical details of rivers and Wadis in Somalia were reviewed, assessment of the existing hydro-meteorological data collection network, and consultation with agencies and organizations that are active in flood response and relief within Somalia were carried out.

To put into effect a program to reduce the recurring losses in human lives and economic assets due to riverine flooding in the Juba and Shabelle Rivers, the following recommendations need to be implemented.

1. Establishment of automatic real-time hydrometeorological data collection, transmission and monitoring system

The network can be housed and operated by the same organizations that are operating the manually read hydrometric and meteorological stations that are in place at selected key stations. Routine maintenance of the equipment and data archiving can be done by a central organization such as SWALIM or SWALIM in partnership with the Kenya Meteorological Department (KMD). As part of this real-time hydro-meteorological data collection network, the following steps are considered essential:
i. Upgrading of some of the existing manually read hydrometric and rainfall recording stations (outlined in Figure 15) to automated stations.

ii. Implement a proper satellite-based data telemetry system that is capable of transmitting data in the worst conditions of flooding possible in the area.

iii. Implement training programmes for local personnel on equipment operation and maintenance for the hydro-meteorological measuring equipment.

iv. Establish an operational maintenance plan for the hardware components of the hydro-meteorological data collection and transmission network.

v. Establishment of a collaborative working relationship with KMD for the automatic weather stations equipment maintenance and data sharing.

vi. Start a process that will add the automated weather stations installed under this program into the WMO Global Telecommunication System (GTS). In that regard, approach as soon as possible the WMO.

vii. Institute hydrometric and weather data archiving and quality control procedures.

   a) For the archiving of the hydrometric data, we suggest that SWALIM continues to use the HYDATA database.

   b) For the archiving of the weather data, suitable software such as the FAO-supported AGRISOFT should be explored.

2. Establishment of an Operational Flood Forecasting Centre (FFC)

The main task of the FFC will be the issuance of daily and sometimes sub-daily (during the course of a flood event) flood forecast advisories and bulletins for forecast service sites. The forecast service points should be expanded to include new locations along the two rivers as more points with stage/discharge rating relationships are made. The FFC should include:

i. Hydrologic modelling capacity should be established at the FFC, and the personnel at the FFC should be capable of calibrating and adapting existing hydrologic models to the hydrologic and hydraulic conditions of the Juba and Shabelle rivers system. As a first phase of building the flood forecasting capabilities the following is recommended:

   a) A forecasting model based solely on routing could be used. We recommend the parametric wetness-index-based Linearly Varying Gain Factor Model (LVGFM), a module of the Galway Real-Time River Flow Forecasting System (GFFS), a freely available software package developed by the Department of Engineering Hydrology of the National University of Ireland, Galway.

   b) With time, we suggest that a semi-distributed physically based rainfall-runoff model (e.g., GeoSFM, version of the MIKE-SHE model), that could incorporate remotely sensed and observed rainfall, be used as a flood forecasting model; such a model should have a modelling domain that covers the whole Juba and Shabelle basins when implemented.
c) Develop a flood warning dissemination protocol. For the dissemination of the warnings on river floods, investigate what kinds of data and information needs the potential users of the system have. For now, we suggest that SWALIM practice of disseminating warnings through e-mail be continued, but that effort should be extended to contact media outlets that are widely listened to and watched in Somalia, e.g. BBC Somali Service.

d) Implement a program of sensitizing and educating the communities at risk of river floods on the meaning and actions required during and after a flood alert or warning is issued.

3. For major settlements along the two rivers (Belet Weyne, Bulo Burdi, Jowhar and, Afgoi along Shabelle, and Luuq, Bardera, Jilib and Jamame along the Juba), create possible floods inundation maps. Such maps, if linked to observe/forecasted river levels and superimpose on high resolution satellite imagery (e.g., QuickBird imagery), will provide information on the potential number of properties and people affected by a flood. Such maps will also be useful for public awareness and for flood relief work.

4. Acquire high resolution Digital Elevation Model (DEM) data that cover the floodplains of the Juba and Shabelle. Closer to major settlements, the survey area should be widened when acquiring the elevation data source.

5. Delineate floodplains from hydrologic modelling and satellite imagery based on the peak historic floods that every area of interest has experienced. Such maps will be of immense value for areas with authorities who can enact land use laws that are needed to restrict economic activities in the river and streams natural floodplains.

6. Implement a program of updating the pre-war river stage/discharge rating curves for all the forecast locations.

7. For all the proposed hydrometric station locations we propose that stage–discharge relationship be develop using hydraulic models that are based on the complete one-dimensional equations of the unsteady flow.

To implement flash flood alert systems for the towns of Garowe and Hargeysa, we recommend the items listed below.

1. Establish a network of automatic rain and stream gauges in the two basins supported by real time satellite rainfall estimates.

2. Create a series of probable rainfall intensity estimates for the Garowe wadi at Garowe town and Hargeysa wadi at Hargeysa town.

3. Carry out community-based preparedness and early warning programs in the region to raise community awareness and capacity to reduce vulnerability to extreme floods.

4. Map the floodplains extent of the two wadis.