

Strengthening the Somali enterprise culture, improving working conditions and creating employment opportunities: The Case of Construction Shades in Burao Livestock Market

By Ib Knutsen



‘Milk and meat is the life of Somalis’, says Mohamoud Abdi Falay, the Deputy Mayor of Burao Town, located some 170 kilometres east of Hargeisa, Somaliland.



He is gazing over the new shades built at the Burao livestock market, initiated by the community, implemented by the Burao district authority in cooperation with ILO through the UN Joint Programme on Local Governance and Decentralized Service Delivery (JPLG).

Support to the livestock industry may seem like an unusual task for the International Labour Organisation (ILO); but maybe not when seen in the context of job creation and improvement of

V Deputy Mayor of Burao, Mr. Mohamoud Abdi (Left) with George Okutho (ILO) – extreme right and Mr. Mohamed Haccan (centre)

‘The ILO in Somalia works by building on approaches improving livelihoods through employment generation, enterprise development and improvement of working conditions’ says Mr. George Okutho, ILO’s Country Office Director for Ethiopia and Somalia.

This particular facet of the JPLG started with an agreement between the municipality and the JPLG to work together for the development of the District (One of six districts selected by Somaliland under the first phase of the LPLG. There are a further four districts undertaking similar work in Puntland and opportunities are still being sought for districts qualifying in south and central Somalia). Community leaders, women representatives and local stakeholders were invited by the municipality to

take part in a participative planning process resulting in a prioritised list of interventions they would like to see conducted in Burao.

At the same time, ILO conducted training for municipal staff in procurement and project management and then let them handle the planning and contracting phases of the project while providing technical assistance and oversight when needed.



Finally, the project was implemented using appropriate technology, employment intensive approaches, maximising skills development and income generation for day labourers. The craftsmen were also found locally and the procurement processes emphasized local procurement of as much material as possible. So, even before the formal project output of market shades was finalised, the project had strengthened local participative planning processes, local services and labour markets through decentralised governance structures.



‘My visit here today is really to see if people are benefiting, and that our methods are working’, says the ILO Country Director. ‘The message I am getting is that it does.’

Everybody used to be in the sun in the livestock market. With temperatures reaching as high as 40°C in summer, the effects on both people and livestock can be devastating without the provision of shade and water.

‘In the hot season, one can only manage one hour in the sun, before you have to find a shade’ the Deputy Mayor noted. ‘Now it is good when it is sunny. And it is good when it rains! We are suffering from climate change and the rains are missing too often nowadays’

Burao has the largest livestock market in Somaliland receiving animals from Ethiopia and southern Somalia as well as closely to the town. Different traders, many international, purchase as many as 100,000 animals per day in the weeks leading up to the Haj, with the entire stock of the Somali livestock being involved, although at different levels.



'I buy animals in the rural areas and sell them here for the international market' says Burao trader Musa Adam Douale Aleh.

He does not want to talk about the prices he is paying as he is surrounded by fellow traders; some of whom he might have just traded with. In general, there are three quality categories, excellent, good and fair. Presently, the best quality sheep goes for about USD 50 dollars, and the fair sheep for around USD 35 dollars. Prices fluctuate according to a number of

factors and traders will often link animal prices to the cost of commodities such as sugar or rice which have become a stable exchange measure in an environment of changing currencies, inflation and world prices. Burao is part of the supply chain and traders will take advantage of lower prices in rural areas, making a margin by selling on to international traders. A prime sheep in Saudi Arabia goes for between USD 300 and 350 dollars; but this is dependent on the health of the animal.
