

## Developing self reliance – Building hope: The ILO Employment for Peace Programme in Somalia

*Mogadishu, the capital city of Somalia, has been racked by violence and insecurity for nearly two decades. But there are signs of hope: among them, an ILO programme which provided a visible peace dividend to poor communities by engaging them in large scale employment-intensive projects. This and similar projects will be discussed at the ILO-IGAD-African Union Conference on "Employment for Peace, Stability and Development" on 11-12 April 2011 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Conference will map out a regional strategy for the Horn of Africa built upon a "virtuous triangle" consisting of the creation of employment opportunities, social protection for the most vulnerable and empowerment of people and communities. ILO Online reports from Mogadishu.*

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*FTR/somalia*

MOGADISHU, Somalia (ILO Online) – "This is the first time that I have ever seen women and men treated the same in my lifetime. It is also the first time that I have seen women employed in manual labour in my district", says Fadumo, a 43-year-old widow with 3 children in her care.

She is a garbage collector, employed by the ILO's Employment for Peace Programme (EFP II) in Wadajir District in Mogadishu. Both sexes receive equal pay for their work. Their pay is determined not simply by market forces but has been adjusted to ensure that the workers are able to meet their daily living expenses, pay off the debts they have incurred in the absence of work and possibly put some money toward their children's needs which are so often neglected in times of economic stress.

The ILO runs the garbage collection project in collaboration with SAACID, a Somali NGO for women which is based in Mogadishu. The project has been in operation for 20 years. SAACID has been successfully implementing this large-scale programme in Mogadishu for a decade now. Even when conflict and violence were at their worst, SAACID was able to deliver.

"The raison d'être of an international organization lies in its ability to achieve goals that cannot be achieved by Nation States alone. This is even more important during periods of trouble and turbulence", states Charles Dan, ILO Assistant Director-General and Regional Director for Africa. "That's why our approach is based on a 'virtuous triangle' consisting of the creation of employment opportunities, social protection for the most vulnerable and empowerment of people and communities".

The partnership with the ILO is a long standing one which has aided these organizations to empower people and local communities when their leaders have the confidence and respect of the people.

Fadumo tells us how the programme has helped her to settle outstanding debts to a shop owner "I never thought I could repay my loan, but fortunately, when I received my first month's salary, I was able to reimburse the holder of my debt, and now I feel free".

Fadumo and other beneficiaries hope that the ILO programme will continue. "We hope SAACID and the international community will accept our request positively, as this is a very difficult time for the poorest people in the city", says Maryan Raxow Muumin, a 47 year-old mother with 3 children.

Related work has also continued to benefit women and youth particularly. "While countries have stepped up their efforts to counter piracy around the Horn of Africa, the projects which are financed by the UK and Japan seek to address the root causes of violence, insecurity and piracy in the country by giving the people in this region jobs in Puntland and Somaliland.

With the USAID funded project in Mogadishu, and Norwegian funded support for employment programmes in Bakool, the ILO continues to assist those who want to work for themselves; to ensure people obtain the dignity which is to be found in earning their families' living through decent work", explains Paul Crook, Chief Technical Advisor of the ILO Somalia Programme.

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## A golden opportunity

According to Hassan Takow Jim'ale, a 40 year-old man who had been unemployed for three years before he joined EfP, the programme is a "golden opportunity" for women and men alike.

Hassan is a father of two children, a girl and a boy. Hassan's family has been displaced from the other side of the district where opposition factions control the area. He left because of the regular shelling and the stray bullets. According to Hassan, there are three kinds of people in Mogadishu:

"Some depend on their families who live abroad, while others run their own businesses. A third group, the poorest one, mostly depends on humanitarian assistance and money earned from begging. I belong to the third group", he says, adding that "this programme is the only programme from which poor people here have received material support. My family used to eat only one full meal a day, but now we eat three times daily".

SAACID first partnered with the ILO in 2003-4 in a pilot garbage collection programme covering six of Mogadishu's 16 districts. At that time, no one could successfully collect garbage there, as militias controlled the city, and demanded payment for their garbage to be removed.

In partnership with district leaders, SAACID pioneered district-based partnerships, which empowered community leaders to select the poorest in their district to clear garbage at US \$2 per day, and transport it to dumpsites outside the city. The programme was an outstanding success, with very few problems encountered, and all outputs met. In 2006-7, the ILO was able to secure donor support to implement city-wide garbage collection in the capital.

In 2010-11, SAACID has again partnered with the ILO and the International Office for Migration (IOM) to run a 12-week citywide garbage collection programme throughout Mogadishu City. To date, some 1,100 workers have been employed – this time at US \$4 per day. During the first 6 weeks, some 9,210 tonnes of garbage were removed from the city, with no serious incidents occurring.

The ILO Programme in Somalia engages communities in large scale employment-intensive projects improving access through infrastructure works, undertaking environmental work to restore primary production, reviving local markets and building local skills and capacities. Work with local administrations continues to grow and there are signs where training has been provided that local accountability is developing. In the end, this creates the virtuous circuit for fresh entrepreneurial engagement which further enables employment led economic development.

Immediate temporary employment – such as small scale work on road construction and environmental conservation to increase agricultural productivity – has already created over 165,000 worker days across Somalia. Additionally, longer- term employment is also being created, as there are opportunities to move into development even in a fragile situation. Approximately 3,500 jobs are being created this way. What's more, for every job created, short or long term, the jobholder supports five to nine people within a household.

"Decent jobs matter in crisis. This is a powerful, tested rope that pulls people and societies out of conflict and sets them on a sustainable path of development. Decent and stable jobs offer crisis-affected people not only income, but also freedom, security, dignity, self-esteem, hope, and a stake in the reconciliation and reconstruction of their communities", concludes Paul Crook.

*The International Labour Office is the permanent secretariat of the International Labour Organization.*