



Women and Girls of SDF

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WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SOMALILAND

Numbers: Women in Somaliland make up 51% of the population. They form a key part of society, with clearly defined and important roles in the family, in the economy and in politics. In urban areas a woman is more likely to be the head of the household. In rural areas gender disparities and low status, mean that women generally have less control over the use of productive resources.

Women in the Economy: Entrepreneurship is a driving force of the economy in Somaliland and Somaliland women are renowned for being highly capable businesswomen. Women are often the main income earners in their families. This is because war, drought, the declining value of wages, and male migration have all hit the income contribution from men. Around 60% of jobs come from entrepreneurial activities - and except for large businesses, women play a leading role in this area.

Women in Politics: In the political realm, the influence of women is constrained. Although women form the majority of voters, they lack female political representation. This is despite historically playing a key role in establishing political stability in Somaliland. Although women are excluded from the male-dominated clan negotiations, their role as mediators between their birth and marriage clans, along with female-led grassroots campaigns for peace, have been central to ending clan-based conflict in their communities over the years.

Young women: In general youth are not consulted or involved in decision making, and suffer from very high unemployment rates. Young women are even more disadvantaged. However young people are often more open to adopting new economic strategies. Youth groups are often more gender mixed. And more committed.



WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SDF2

SDF2 supports the implementation of the Somaliland National Gender Policy. This focuses on five thematic priority areas: poverty reduction and economic empowerment, education and training, health and reproductive health, political participation and decision-making, and gender-based violence.

Through its Community Engagement Framework and Gender Equity and Social Inclusion approach, SDF supports the Government of Somaliland in moving forward on its gender commitments. SDF 2 includes affirmative action to target and then directly improve women's engagement in, and benefit from, its projects. Projects take account of the different needs of women and men, their different interests, concerns, and barriers to their participation.

SDF2 creates opportunities to directly engage of women through the successive stages in the project cycle. All SDF Projects incorporate actions and activities that ensure that women and marginalised groups will benefit from projects through building consultation, participation and decision-making into design and implementation stages.

This booklet shares some of the stories about how SDF is working for economic development for all, and especially those who have much to contribute but lack opportunities to contribute. The focus is on women and girls.



Our stories



KAWTHER ISHMAIL

STUDENT

In the beautiful village of Dayaha, 24km West of Erigavo (the administrative seat of the Sanag region), there was once one of the nation's best three schools, Dayaha Secondary Boarding School. First built in 1957 by the British Government under the Somaliland protectorate agreement, it is the alma mater of many known politicians that hail from the wider Sanag region. The school collapsed after the fall of the central government of Somalia in 1990.

But after 26 years, the school was renovated and equipped in 2016 by the Ministry of Education and Science with funds from the Somaliland Development Fund Phase 1 (SDF1). The students were also provided with school materials and new teachers were recruited.

After rehabilitation, the school's first year group was brought from Sanag's El-Afweyn district, where clan clashes were raging at the time. The boarding school has been able to provide a space where students can set the troubles at home to one side and focus their attention on education.

Kawther Ismail, 17, from Gudmo-biyo As (not far from Dayaha) is among the third cohort to be enrolled at the school after its re-building. Upon completing her primary schooling, Kawther did not know where to continue her education as she did not have any relatives living nearby Erigavo to stay with while attending one of its secondary schools. Luckily, she heard from a neighbour that Dayaha school, located 20 km from her village, offers free and quality education with accommodation.

"I told my mother that I want to continue my education at Dayaha Secondary Boarding School" says Kawther.

Kawther sat for the entry examination and was admitted in September 2019. She liked the school from the beginning and for four years she would get up early in the morning and bury herself in the new library to read her favourite books. Her favourite subjects are ICT (Information and Communications Technology) and Chemistry,

Dayaha is the only school in Sanag with a science laboratory, and Kawther spends some time every week with her classmates conducting experiments. In her spare time, she enjoys playing basketball and soccer. She is also a member of the students' leadership council, which connects students with the school administration and helps organise events.

Looking back to the days in her village, Kawther reflects on how Dayaha Secondary Boarding School changed her perspective towards education:

"I didn't have any idea about education after primary school but joining Dayaha gave me ambitions for my life and helped me to think beyond my small village. I have learned some subjects that I had not learned before, like English and Maths. I am so lucky to be in the best school in the region."

According to Mubarak Hasan, the Deputy Principal of Dayaha Secondary Boarding School, the national examination top students in Sanag come from this school. Therefore, the school is now well respected in Sanag and this year received record enrolments, double compared to the previous year. 70 percent of the students come from pastoral communities living outside Erigavo.

Every holiday, Kawther goes back to her village and volunteers as a teacher in the village's primary school with special support to girls. According to Kawther, there are four teachers in the village, and they must teach every subject whether they know it or not. Sometimes, some subjects are missed and not taught for months. Kawther will be graduating this year and is planning to go back to her village for five months to teach girls in her village and then pursue a degree in Software Engineering.



ASHA ABDI OMER VILLAGER

Asha Abdi Omer, 30, a mother of seven children, has lived in Tuur Anood, Dilla district, since she was born and understands what it is like to live with limited access to water. But her face lights up when she talks about water now. Looking back, the state of water in her village was dire. She and several other families in her community would walk for at least two hours each day to the nearest water source.

"I had to walk 10 km on an arduous journey under the blazing sun every day just to collect four jerry cans of water for basic use like drinking and cooking and rarely for washing and bathing. Imagine a family of nine with that little amount of water. I also didn't have good time to feed my babies," says Asha, recalling days of long treks in search of water. And hours lost each day that culminated into weeks lost each year.

All of that changed when in 2022, through the SDF-funded Sustainable Land Management Project (SLMP), implemented by the Ministry of Agricultural Development (MoAD), a decade-old derelict water berkad (an underground water reservoir) was rehabilitated in Asha's locality for the community to be able to harvest water during the rainy season. Because of the rains in August and September, Asha and her fellow villagers now have water in their berkad which is close to their homes.

Asha is excited to talk about water because the rehabilitated berkad is just in front of her homestead:

"No more long treks. I can spend time taking care of my family, especially the newborn baby that needs me the most. I can now use water for multiple purposes without fear of running out. It is like the berkad is meant for me."

Asha's fellow villager, Khadijo Jama, 50, has a similar experience and reflects on the water brought near her house:

"It is just one minute walk to get water and we can get it anytime of the day." She now has sufficient time to work on her farm and aim for produce. Women in this village are now feeling the difference. Not only do they have more time, but they have readily available water nearby which helps with cleaning and washing.

Asha has also received seeds and tractor-hour assistance for her farm through the SLMP's water and soil water conservation component. Furthermore, soil bunds were laid near her farm using cash-for-work to help retain water and prevent soil erosion for improved crop production. She expects to harvest cash crops from her farm this month



HODAN ABDI JAMA

CONSTRUCTION SUPERVISOR

Hodan Abdi Jama, 35, is a mother of eight children, who she is raising on her own after her husband began ailing two years ago. They lived happily for many years with her working as a housewife and her husband working as a casual worker and loader for development organizations in Jaarahorato, Dilla district.

When my husband's health deteriorated and we had no one else to help us, I stepped out of my house to find work and support my family financially," Hodan says.

Fortunately, in early 2022, Hodan was among the 20 women selected under the community labour scheme by the Agricultural Development Organization (ADO), a local NGO contracted under the SDF-funded Ministry of Agriculture Development (MoAD) Sustainable Land Management Project (SLMP). ADO implements the SLMP's soil and water conservation activities in the Awdal region, particularly areas like Dilla, Jaarahorato, Bedembed and Heego. Among the activities are the construction of 500 km of large soil bunds near the farms and 30,000 semi-circular bunds to retain water and halt soil erosion in order to increase farmers' productivity. Furthermore, water sources in these areas are rehabilitated for the communities to harvest water during rainy seasons.

Hodan has been assigned a supervisory role during the construction of soil bunds and semi-circular structures in Jaarahorato. She and her team go to site every morning to monitor the progress, check the quality and evaluate the casual workers against set targets.

Among the activities are the construction of 500 km of large soil bunds near the farms and 30,000 semi-circular bunds to retain water and halt soil erosion in order to increase farmers' productivity. Furthermore, water sources in these areas are rehabilitated for the communities to harvest water during rainy seasons.

As this is her first paid job, she describes how the support came at the right time. "We receive money every month. I spend most of the money on basic family needs, debt repayment, keeping the kids in school and gaining the trust of the village shoppers, who are willing to lend me money again." Hodan intends to start a small livestock business after receiving the money this month, first purchasing three goats, selling them, and purchasing more. "One of the ways this project benefited me was that it improved my social skills; I now know many people in my community. If this ends, I know how to find work in my community," says Hodan.

Basra Mumin, who is also in Hodan's team and does similar work in another part of Jaarahorato, talks about how the project has been beneficial to the village of Jaarahorato:

"Aside from the construction of soil bunds and other soil and water conservation structures to improve farmers' production, it has provided an employment opportunity to this community during the most difficult time of the drought and many people received money from community labour activities, so it was a win-win situation."

"Nearly 1,000 people in Jaarahorato work on the construction of soil bunds under the community labour scheme," says Yasin Nur, an ADO community mobilizer. "It is the major project that is currently ongoing in these areas," he added enthusiastically.



BILAN ABDIRAHMAN

CIVIL ENGINEER

Bilan Abdirahman, 25, who graduated from Gollis University's Department of Civil Engineering, relocated from Hargeisa to the Togdheer region to work on one of the biggest infrastructure projects in Somaliland to get hands-on experience for her career take-off.

"Sometime after I graduated, I was employed by the Roads Development Authority (RDA) and worked on a couple of their projects. Working on the Burao-Berbera Road Rehabilitation Project, on the other hand, is a turning point in my career and a golden opportunity that has opened my eyes to the professional world," says Bilan at Karasharka, one of the road rehabilitation sites.

Bilan and five other recently graduated engineers are now working on the Burao-Berbera Road Rehabilitation Project, which is funded by the Somaliland Development Fund (SDF). She is among six young engineers chosen as understudy engineers under the project's capacity development component. They are contracted to stay in Burao and Sheikh for 16 months, learn from experts, and contribute to rehabilitation efforts.

The Burao-Berbera Road Rehabilitation Project entails the rehabilitation of a 62 kilometre road section and the construction of four bridges between Burao and Berbera towns in order to improve livestock trade between Berbera Port and the largest livestock base in Somaliland's eastern regions.

Bilan collaborates with the Resident Engineer on project supervision and quality assurance as part of the rehabilitation work.

"I shadow the Resident Engineer for supervising the road diversions, demolition activities, culverts, and the reconstruction of a 12-kilometer stretch of road from Dubur village to Sheikh district, which is going well. He also taught me how to approach contractors and what to look for when inspecting", Bilan says on a site monitoring day.

Bilan also helps with construction progress reporting and attends regular meetings with the contractor to discuss tasks and progress. "I learned to read construction plans and supervise proper surveying, measurement, road diversion, clearing, and grubbing."

After working with a group of experts, Bilan has built a variety of skills and became more familiar with various codes and manuals that are commonly used in the industry. She has also had the opportunity to work in various towns and communities and become financially self-sufficient. She learned how to prepare work requests and Interim Payment Certificates for large contractors, in addition to rehabilitation work.

After this SDF-funded attachment, Bilan intends to move to RDA's technical division and advance to the top. Additionally, she is planning to establish a small engineering company in the near future to sharpen her skills to the next level and provide entry for more women into the engineering arena.

Every project funded under the Somaliland Development Fund's second phase has a significant capacity development component that is related to the fund's broader objectives. The goal is to provide hands-on knowledge to MDA staff so they can help ensure the projects' sustainability by providing longer-lasting services to communities. In the future, these engineers will assist the government in managing the country's infrastructure.

SAWDA MOHAMED MUSA

TECHNICAL OFFICER: WATER

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FATIMA AHMED VILLAGER

Before 2017, the nearest water point for the residents of Gargoorey was Xaliimaale, which was an arduous journey of eight hours there and back. Named after the Gargoorka, a whitish grass good for livestock, Gargoorey is known for big trees and green hills. It is a predominantly pastoral area, but now has small-scale commercial farms after the introduction of the Gargoorey Water Supply Project implemented by the Ministry of Water Resource Development in 2017 and funded under the first phase of the Somaliland Development Fund.

Fatima Ahmed, 56, who lives near one of the kiosks built in Gargoorey recalls the long treks before the water project was implemented. "We used to get up at 2 am at night and travel to Xaliimaale to collect water. With no lights and torches, we undertook this dangerous trip that could cost our lives. I remember one night; a hyena attacked us and ate one of our donkeys. We used to return home late in the morning or even noon without eating since last night. To bathe fully, we used to wait for the rainy seasons," Fatima adds.

The Gargoorey Water Supply Project included the construction of a 50m³ water reservoir, connected through 2.5 km of pipelines to 4 water kiosks, the construction of four animal troughs, an accommodation centre, and a generator and solar system to run the supply system.

Fatima believes that women over the last four years have been in a better position than during her time as water is brought around their premises.

Axado, 32, is Fatima's neighbour and moved here three years ago. She has been able to get water at any time of the day which broadens her options as her family can bathe and wash when they want.

Ibrahim, 50, returned to his village last year and was among the increasing number of people who are establishing commercial farms in Gargoorey.

"Life has flourished in Gargoorey since we got water. The communities here are now evolving to agro-pastoral communities," Ibrahim explained, expressing his feelings about how livelihood is evolving in Gargoorey. Ibrahim is now planning to expand his farm. He harvested the cash crops and has now added mango, papaya and banana to his list of crops.

"I provide onions, tomatoes, potatoes, chilies and other important vegetables and crops to the people of Gargoorey. Before they had to go as far as the nearest village, Boon, 17 km south of the village, by foot," says Ibrahim.

Ilyas Nur, who is in charge of the water point, explained: "We allow the people and animals to use the kiosk in the morning and farms in the afternoon".

Since the number of people settling around Gargoorey and commercial farms being established are on the rise, the village management are campaigning for building another water tank dedicated for irrigation of farms while the old reservoir will be left for human and animal consumption.

RAHMA OMER

ROLE?

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AMAL YASIN IBRAHIM

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SPECIALIST

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SHUKRI MOHAMED IBRAHIM

FINANCE OFFICER: ROADS

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XARA CHURCH SAFEGUARDING EXPERT

Globally, safeguarding has been a topic of interest for the last two decades. Safeguarding concerns the prevention, reporting and response to harm caused by people or those delivering assistance on behalf of certain organisations. While policies are in place and employees sign up to uphold them, there is always the need for more awareness to prevent and mitigate safeguarding concerns.

Xara Church, the Mott MacDonald Safeguarding Lead delivered a two-day safeguarding workshop to the SDF Secretariat and Project staff. Xara is the Safeguarding Lead at Mott MacDonald, the SDF2 Fund Manager.

"Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and we must have zero tolerance to abuse," says Xara.

The training began, first with the SDF Secretariat team and then on the second day, brought together SDF project management teams from all the ministries that work with SDF2.

Key topics were understanding how people can be vulnerable to the misuse of power; and recognizing the tell-tale signs of abuse and neglect. The workshop also aimed at improving staff's communication ability; and enabling them to record and report abuse and neglect appropriately.

By giving all staff the tools and confidence to tackle abuses of power, the workshop helped participants focus on how safeguarding issues were relevant for them. By working in groups, participants were able to reflect on safeguarding scenarios and their applicability across the cultures and diversity in the groups they worked with.

"With the knowledge gained from this workshop, we will ensure that all the people we work with are treated with dignity and respect." Ahmed, the SDF-funded livestock project's cross-cutting officer, promises.

Two very important safeguarding issues that were central to the training were power abuse and modern slavery and its impacts. Specifically, Xara used individual stories and plenary session approaches to make the team understand how violence occurs within the context of power and how poor organizational culture allows power abuses to go unchallenged or incorrectly addressed.

Xara encouraged teams to know and communicate through the known reporting mechanism in place if they encounter misconduct both in the workplace and while delivering projects.

A short survey conducted at the end of the training revealed that the staff's knowledge of safeguarding had improved by 90%.

In addition to that, the experiences from the workshop will inform safeguarding plans that will be rolled out in the ensuing weeks for SDF.

"We continuously go out for monitoring and evaluation to observe if assistance is delivered safely without harming people," said Lakew Desta, Technical Advisor to the Ministry of Agricultural Development.

sdf somaliland development fund

The Somaliland Development Fund is a multi-donor fund with contributions from the United Kingdom, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway



**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
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Kingdom of the Netherlands



ROYAL NORWEGIAN EMBASSY