

## Somalia Recovers From Conflict Through Employment

Prolonged conflict in South-Central Somalia has greatly reduced the level of petty trade and other informal economic activities—meaning that many women formerly active in this sector can no longer contribute to their households' incomes. The Employment Generation for Early Recovery (EGER) programme aims to generate employment opportunities and income for the region's most vulnerable populations, particularly women, marginalized groups and youth. The programme will ultimately employ at least 50,000 beneficiaries in labor-intensive physical and social infrastructure rehabilitation activities. Individual projects are formulated with the participation of local communities and are implemented in partnership with a number of Somali NGOs and community-based organizations. Since the inception of the initiative in mid-2008, nine projects have been successfully completed, employing more than 16,000 beneficiaries and generating a total of 450,000 working days.

Some illustrative examples of EGER's works in the last 18 months include:

- Rehabilitation of five irrigation canals and four culverts in Beletwein, in collaboration with Somali Youth for Peace and Development; 430 beneficiaries; 10,750 work days
- Rehabilitation of the maternal and child health care facilities and emergency room at Benadir Hospital, in collaboration with Soma Action; funded by the Italian government
- Rehabilitation of roads and the Afaraad Canal in Lower Shabelle, in collaboration with Aragti Relief and Development Organization; 652 beneficiaries; 13,000 work days

Some of the EGER programme's 16,000 beneficiaries have spoken to UNDP about their experiences, detailed here:

**Khadija** is a 40-year-old widow with three children in her care. She is a beneficiary of an EGER project in Korjiga, near Arabsiyo. "Seeing women and men given equal employment opportunities, especially on an equal scale of pay is unheard of in Somali society," she says. "This is also the first time women are employed in manual labor in our village—it's a complete behavior change for our society."

**One of the women** interviewed in the village of Sayla Bari was touched by how EGER activities have ended her worries about drinking water. She says: "Most of our drinking water was contaminated, and so construction of a central communal berkad [cistern] with a hygienic component will greatly change our lives, particularly those of our young children who will no longer be affected by diarrhea or water-borne diseases."



**Hodan Arreh Magan** is an EGER project beneficiary at Dhabolaq village in Farawayne district. Project employees diverted water from feeder roads and channeled it to her farm, enabling her to achieve a decent harvest even in a difficult year. She also used income she earned from EGER labor projects to pay her outstanding debt to a tractor owner who had plowed her land. She spent the balance of the money she earned on badly needed new clothes and food supplies for her family.



**Abdillahi Sheikh Ahmed** is another EGER beneficiary in Dhabolaq village. He worked in an EGER project and used the income to cultivate his rain-fed farm. "I had borrowed tractor hours to till my farm in the beginning of the season without expecting any assistance," he recalls. "Luckily I was given a community labor position, and I used the money I accumulated to clear my debts."



**Mohamed Saleban Jama**, a farmer in Gumburaha, benefited from an EGER project implemented by local NGO Heal. He says: "We gained new knowledge and skills to construct soil bunds capable of reducing rain water runoff and increasing rain water percolation or infiltration deep into the soil, hence improving farming productivity. The project has increased morale among us rain-fed farmers, because now we are ensured of increased production."



**Kowser Ali Mohamed** is another EGER project beneficiary in Gumburaha. "When working for the project, I do not have to walk to other villages to earn money like I usually do," she explains. "I am lucky and happy to have job opportunities and also remain with my kids. There are now many teashops that emerged as a result of the jobs created by the project."

"These are unique projects," says **Ali Shaqale**, chairman of the Makhayada Inanta Village Development Committee. "They respond to needs that we ourselves have identified. Agencies used to come to us with projects that they developed and carried out. Now we are doing everything ourselves."