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Community-driven development strengthens partnerships for children

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Communities have been and continue to be UNICEF's closest allies in the delivery of services for women and children in Somalia. In the past three years UNICEF and its partners have been piloting the Community-Driven Recovery and Development (CDRD) approach in Northeast Somalia ('Puntland') and Northwest Somalia ("Somaliland"). This process is important for UNICEF because it puts the people it is assisting at the centre of the recovery and development process. Communities are expected to participate in processes and decisions that affect them not as objects of charity, but as equal partners.

Empowering communities to become agents of their own development ensures that activities are demand-driven and guarantees their sustainability.

Water supply is one of the priority needs for communities in Somalia. © UNICEF Somalia/2009

To ensure empowerment entails taking steps that include community-based planning, local authority capacity development and strengthening of the link between communities, local and central governments or administrations where they exist in some form. It also entails giving marginalized communities the opportunity to unite as cohesive groups and to communicate effectively with their leaders.

Most importantly, it is a strategy to protect, respect and fulfill the rights of children and women. Community-Driven Recovery and Development enables community members to set the development agenda for social service planning and oversight; to participate in policy dialogue; and to influence governance from an informed position given the limited resources available in Somalia for service delivery.

This approach aims to provide social services, organize economic activity and resource management, empower poor and marginalised people, improve governance and enhance the security of the poorest.

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Contributing towards education for all in Somalia

Due to the on-going conflict and lack of a strong central government, Somalia has the lowest primary school enrolment rates and the lowest adult literacy rates in the world.

The gross enrolment rate for girls is 25% compared to 37% for boys (Somalia Primary Education Survey (PES) 2006-07), and the female adult literacy rate is estimated at 27% as compared with 50% for males.

With limited resources available within the different levels of government for service delivery, educational facilities are mostly limited and those available are usually faced with severe challenges in meeting the operational costs such as teachers' salaries, materials and equipment and overall maintenance of schools.

This was the case for six primary schools in Reebi community in Bossaso town, Northeast Somalia ('Puntland') with a population of approximately 18,000 people of whom 80% are internally displaced persons (IDPs). There are few social services available in Reebi most of which are provided and maintained by the community. One of these services is education. The six schools in Reebi community were previously managed by the Bosasso Municipal Council until 2007 when the municipality was unable to meet the running expenses of the schools and closed them down. This left the community without a functional public school forcing them to seek education in private schools in the surrounding neighborhoods of Bosasso town; an alternative that most people in this community could not afford. In 2007, Reebi community was identified by the Bossaso Municipal Council to be part of the Community-Driven Recovery and Development (CDRD) pilot project implemented by UNICEF and partners.

Nuro Farah at a beneficiary school in Reebi, Puntland. © UNICEF Somalia/2009

After going through the community consultation process under the CDRD, the Reebi community identified a number of priorities at the top of which was re-opening of a school.

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Communities are the centre of social service planning and oversight...

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Building Bridges: The Story of Sheikh Osman Village

Residents of Sheikh Osman Village in Borama town, Northeast Somalia have more reason to smile with the recent completion of a footbridge across a seasonal river-bed which cut their location from the town whenever heavy flooding raged.

Lack of infrastructure such as bridges or dilapidated infrastructure is a common problem in Somalia and Sheikh Osman village was no exception. With a population of approximately 400 households, Sheikh Osman Village would be cut off from the rest of Borama town whenever heavy rains fell and flooded the seasonal river-bed that separates the village from the rest of the town.

Residents of Sheikh Osman village walk across the completed footbridge.© UNICEF Somalia/2009

Residents of Sheikh Osman village have always depended heavily on services and supplies from Borama town such as food rations. During flooding, access to the services was always a problem for families particularly those whose members were poor or weak such as the elderly and children. The situation was made worse due to their inability to hire a four-wheel drive vehicle every time they needed to cross over to the town after flooding not to mention their inability to do the crossing by foot.

Rahma Samriye, a resident of Sheikh Osman village and the guardian of her nine siblings narrates, "whenever heavy rains flooded the river, people would be unable to cross; this was made worse by the unpredictable nature of the rains which caused families to be separated, sometimes for days."

Rahma speaks from experience having on several occasions been separated from her siblings for days after going to another part of Borama town in search of food. "The children had to be taken into the care of other people in the village until I was able to return," says Rahma when asked who took care of her siblings after she found herself stranded on the other side of the river away from Sheikh Osman. The situation is now different for the residents of Sheikh Osman as they now have a foot bridge to cross the river. "This was a problem for as longs as I can remember and we never thought that we could actually do anything about it as a community until the community-driven development facilitators helped us realize the possibility during their social mobilization effort. We were made to realize that the power to change our communities and destiny was in our hands; the facilitators asked us to critically think of what was preventing us from accessing services and developing our community. "

"Given that we are just a stone throw away from Borama town centre, as a community we felt that the main obstacle for us was being cut-off from the rest of the town by the river and we put this as the top priority in our community action plan," explains Rahma. It is on this basis that the Sheikh Osman Community Development Committee submitted a proposal to use a Community-Driven Recovery and Development (CDRD) grant to construct a footbridge to address this problem. Though the cost of the construction was more than USD 15000 the community did not let this stop them from realizing their vision of being connected to the rest of the town.

The community mobilized resources close to $3600 towards the construction as well as provided the labor for the construction. The bridge was completed in January 2009 easing accessibility of services and facilities by the community. "Families are now able to cross at their convenience. Now we are not worried about the rain," says Rahma.

Community-driven development spurs partnerships for children

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UNICEF will continue to support work through this approach to help create conditions that allow children and women to participate in community life by securing their rights. UNICEF's goal is to help build greater integration in communities and facilitate the convergence of several interventions so that the organization's work and the work of others contributes holistically to the realisation of children's and women's rights.

Since the initiative started in 2006, UNICEF and its major partners who include the World Bank, UK's Departiment for International Development (DFID), Danish Refugee Council and UN-Habitat has undertaken projects in areas such as health, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene as well as education and infrastructure development activities. The input so far has benefited 200,000 people through injection of approximately $USD 1,000,000. It is UNICEF's intention to undertake projects, jointly with these partners, in Health, Education, Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Livelihoods sectors in five districts in Northwest Somalia ('Somaliland') and Northeast Somalia ('Puntland') in the coming two years .

UNICEF is grateful to the key supporters/donors in this initiative, the World Bank, Danish Refugee Council and the UK Departiment for International Development. We look forward to enlisting the support of more communities in Somalia and the Diaspora as well as international partners to implement the initiative.

The community mobilized $3600 towards construction of the bridge...

Somali communities get a major role in development projects

Somali communities have a greater chance to identify development priorities at the grassroots courtesy of an initiative supported by the World Bank, UNICEF, UK's Departiment for International Development (DFID), UN-Habitat and the Danish Refugee Council.

Through the collaboration of these organizations, 30 communities in Northwest Somalia (the self-declared republic of 'Somaliland") and Northeast Somalia (the semi-autonomous region of 'Puntland') will benefit from financial disbursements to support priority projects that they have identified. The international partners involved in the initiative have since 2007 facilitated a participatory planning and budgeting process at community level.

The pilot project started among 10 communities in Berbera, Borama and Bosasso. This entailed holding in-depth discussions with the communities thus enabling them to identify their needs and priorities leading to the design of specific development projects.

"This project was different from what we were used to in the past. Agencies would come for one day, talk to the elders, leave and come back with a project," says Ali Roble from Tulli village, one of the beneficiary communities of this joint initiative. "This project however engaged us in a very extensive dialogue. The facilitators stayed with us for more than a month. It helped us understand each other and our problems better.

Remote project locations have been identified on the basis of having limited or no social services such as health, water and education facilities. Internally displaced persons' camps and neighbourhoods with a high population of urban poor were also given consideration. The initiative helps ensure the participation and inclusion of communities/groups that have traditionally been marginalized. The project has helped improve women's involvement in community matters.

A farm that has benefited from water supplied through the Community-Driven Recovery and Development initiative in Somaliland. ©UNICEF Somalia/2009

"As women, we realized that it is in our interest to participate in the development of the community since we equally have a role to play and that it is only through our participation that our interests can be included in the community priorities," says Maimuna Adan Gelle, member of the Tulli Community Development Committee (CDC).

"Women are very important members of the CDC. We have two representatives out of the nine committee members. Out of the two, one is the treasurer and the other is the custodian of the cheque book. No payments can be done by the CDC without the consent of the cheque book custodian (who is a woman)," says Khadra Ismail Egal, treasurer to the CDC. Tulli CDC articles of association even stipulate that the quorum of any of the CDC meeting should include the two female members of the committee. Without them there can be no meeting or decisions taken by the CDC.

Twenty communities in Somaliland and nine in Puntland have already received grants to implement priority social service projects amounting to $450,000. This has resulted in improved access to facilities such as schools, safe drinking water and opportunities to improve livelihoods through income generating activities such as micro-credit grants and markets for buying and selling produce as well as support to agricultural activities such as irrigation.

"I have two daughters," says Fatuma Sulub from Tulli village." Previously, I sent one to school and kept the other at home so that she could help out with household chores as I went to look for water. Now that we have a *berkad* (water collection pond) in the village through the Community-driven Recovery and Development (CDRD) initiative, I have time to carry out other household chores myself and was able to send the second daughter to school."

The Community-Driven Recovery and Development strategy places communities at the centre of social service planning and oversight enabling them to set the development agenda, participate in policy dialogue and to influence governance from an informed position.

Contributing towards education for all

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They established a Community Development Committee (CDC) charged with the responsibility of fundraising and mobilizing the stakeholders in the community and district to ensure that the school was functional and affordable to all members of the community including the IDPs.

As a result of replication of this original initiative, five schools out of the six reopened in September 2008 under the management of the Community Development Committee. The schools now have a total of 660 children enrolled of whom 356 are girls. These schools also offer adult education in the evenings with a total of 440 students attending of whom 347 are women. The CDC has so far managed to pay for the salaries of the teachers and cater for other running costs of the schools derived from the small fees that they charge students.

The fees structure was agreed upon between the community and the Ministry of Education in Puntland to make it affordable to community members. The CDC also identified community members who are too poor to afford the fees per student to get waivers.

The CDC is currently working closely with the Regional Education Officer in Bossaso, Puntland's commercial capital to ensure that the schools receive the required supplies distributed by the Ministry with support from UNICEF as well as training for teachers.

Thanks to the CDRD project, the Reebi community reallzed the need and importance of working as one community to address their problems. This has ensured that children as well as adults in Reebi have access to education. When Nuro Farah was asked how she felt to be in school, she shyly responded: "I am happy to be back in school…we used to play in the market all day and boys (would) bully you…in school we play as well as study."

When asked what she would like to be when she grows up she responded: "I want to be a teacher." Due to collective efforts of the community, Nuro Farah is on they way to realizing her dream as she is now in school.

Women are very important members of Community Development Committees...

Community builds dykes to prevent flooding

Community level participation in development processes in Somalia has been, and continues to be weak. The re-current drought and occasional flooding in several parts of Somalia has often left communities feeling even more powerless. Additionally, development agencies have often determinined the kind of assistance/support required by the communities most of which is short term without any measures of preparing communities to mitigate against the devastating effects of a drought or any other natural disasters that they may be prone to. Through the community-driven drought and recovery initiative, UNICEF is striving to empower communities to take a more proactive role in mitigating against the risks and the recurrence of natural disasters a good example being the Darole community in Berbera, Somaliland.

Part of the dykes put up by the community in Darole. ©UNICEF Somalia/2009

"We had very bad floods here with one of the worst being in 1997. There was water everywhere and sanitation was very poor. Many people were affected. There were injuries as a result of the floods but no deaths thankfully," says Zeki Mohamed, a member of the Darole Community Development Committee.

Darole, a village in Berbera town of Northwest Somalia ('Somaliland') with a population of approximately 15,000 people experiences annual flooding from the Red sea due to its proximity to the ocean. "We used to fear the *Habso* (full moon) so much because this is when the flooding would occur. We know the periods of the Habso and feared when they approached. The 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th and 30th of every month is the first period and 13th, 14th and 15th of each month is the second period. When the flooding occurred, we would get relief assistance from the local municipality and community members but no NGOs came to our help," explains Zeki.

According to Willo Sakadi, a widow with two daughters who is also a member of the Darole Community Development Committee, with the flooding came mosquitoes and water-borne diseases due to poor hygiene and sanitation. "There were a lot of mosquitoes and problems with hygiene and sanitation. Houses were destroyed, including my own. I had another house nearer the sea, that was completely destroyed by the flood waters so I moved," she says. According to Zeki, the community in Darole now no longer worries about the *Habso* thanks to the Community-Driven Recovery and Development project.

"It all started in 2007," says Zeki, when dialogue was facilitated between the community and representatives of donor agencies. "This was a good initiative because almost everybody in the community attended. The participatory process led to the formation of a Community Development Committee which now has a permanent office.

During the first planning session, the community identified nine priority projects. Among the proposals included building a community centre, creation of employment, provision of small fishing boats, setting up a revolving fund and sanitation and drainage of flood water. This dialogue gave us confidence to help solve our problems."

According to Zeki, the initiative helped the community unite to overcome their challenges. "Now we have community goals and plans. We sit down as one community to discuss and plan. This is how we came up with plans to mitigate the flooding. The community worked together to procure sand to build dykes along the sea shore so as to stop flooding due to the tides. The dykes stopped water from flooding our homes. We managed to divert it in such a way that it flowed back into the sea. The process also helped strengthen the relationship with the municipality which provided a tractor to fetch sand and stones for the dykes, support that the community had not benefited from previously," said Zeki.

Now the Darole community is not only relieved from the flooding but also has reduced incidences of water-borne diseases due to improved sanitation. "The land is now dry and we have no more mosquitoes to disturb the children. My children are older now but I am still grateful to the fact that there are fewer illnesses related to the flood water," explains Willo. The community has benefited by being in a position to make decisions that benefit them and help them realize their development priorities "If anything happens we can always plan as a community and find our own solutions," says Willo.

Strengthening local governments for improved service delivery

Service provision relies largely on local authorities being able to perform their responsibilities, manage resources appropriately and to earn trust with their constituents. Across the three administrative areas in Somalia — Northwest ('Somaliland'); Northeast ('Puntland') and Central/South, financial resources are often incommensurate with mandated responsibilities. The majority of resources, often above 60%, are absorbed by salaries and allowances of staff, and security.

Levies and fees collected were reported in the UN Joint Needs Assessment to rarely exceed $2.00 per inhabitant per year in rural areas, and $4.50 per inhabitant per year in urban areas. This is well below the norm for Least Developed Countries which is between $20 and $50 per capita. These capacity and resource deficits render Somali local authorities weak in the face of commitments to local development and designing and delivery of basic services. In response to the lack of public investment in social services, non-state actors (charities, NGOs and the private sector) are mostly providing basic services through working directly with the communities. Though this addresses needs partially, and in the immediate term provides for certain basic services, it often creates huge discrepancies in terms of coverage due to inadequate coordination and oversight from the side of government at both local and central government resulting in duplication of efforts.

It is with this background that UNICEF, UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN-Habitat, International Labour Organization and UN Capital Development Fund initiated the Joint Programme on Local Governance for Decentralised Service Delivery, a five year programme that aims at building the capacity of local authorities in Somalia to effectively deliver basic services and play their mandated roles as local authorities.

In order to achieve this, the programme will provide resources for local authorities to invest in public services including infrastructure as well as a series of capacity development packages to enable them to undertake their roles and responsibilities effectively. The capacity building package is meant to ensure that the local authorities undertake their responsibilities in participatory, transparent and accountable manner. The sectors of investment using the resources provided under the joint programme will be derived from the district development plan which every local authority participating in the programme will be required to develop through a consultative process with its constituents.

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The community worked together to build dykes to stop flooding by sea tides...

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Support to farming initiatives improves community livelihoods

"The farm I cultivate is owned by me and three other people. In the beginning farming activity was difficult because we had no water pumps to facilitate irrigation. Additionally, harsh climatic conditions made it difficult to cultivate," says Mahmoud Said a resident of Doxa Guban village, Berbera district. However, these circumstances facing Mahmoud changed when his community received a grant through the Community-Driven Recovery and Development (CDRD) project to put in place an irrigation system to service the farms in his village. "Previously, I used to cultivate an area of about 100 metres by 100 metres. Now the area under farming stretches 400 by 200 metres thanks to water pumps bought through the project. I have planted chillies, green pepper and tomatoes which I sell in the markets in Hargeisa and other locations."

Halima Said Farah, a widow and mother of seven, is another beneficiary of this initiative through a revolving fund supported by the CDRD in Sheikh Ali Jowhar village in Borama, Somaliland. " I was part of a group that took part in dialogue that helped us identify our problems follow-up to which a committee was formed to implement our proposals. We received US$ 3,000 which we planned to use as a revolving fund. I am the secretary of the committee that manages the money. After we got the first money, we divided it up and gave 10 families US$ 300 each which they used to set up a business. At the end of the month, we recover US$ 30 from the profits all the 10 families make so that we get back US$ 300 and give this to another family to set up a business or income generating activity of their choice". Ms Halima used her $300 to set up a clothing and butter business in Borama town. "I bought the cloths from Djibouti and Dubai and the butter from Ethiopia. I did not spend much on transport because I sent someone trusted to buy them for me. I have a shop in the main market through which I sell my clothes and butter".

On his part, Mahmoud travels to Hargeisa town every 10 days to collect his money from an agent he has there. I harvest the crops every two days and vehicles come from Berbera, Borama and Hargeisa in Somaliland to purchase them. Personally I prefer selling the produce in Hargeisa because it is more profitable," says Mahmoud. "I used to harvest seven crates of my produce but now I harvest up to 25 crates. "I sell a crate at US$ 50 and after taxes my profit comes to US$ 25. Though the vegetables I produce are for sale, my family also eats produce from this farm," says Mahmoud. For Mahmoud, the most important benefit from the project is that it has helped him to better provide for his family. "My production has increased by more than 300 per cent; I have three children whose lives are now better because I can afford to take care of their needs," he says. For Halima, the most important achievement for her is that she can now guarantee her children three meals a day unlike before when she could barely provide for a meal a day. "The children I take care of are orphans who depend on me entirely. Thanks to the money that I got to start my business, I can now take the children to school, buy them clothes and provide them with three meals a day".

Mahmoud displays tomatoes from his farm. © UNICEF Somalia/2009

Halima with six of her children. © UNICEF Somalia/2009

Strengthening local governments for improved service delivery

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As the key principles of the programme are participation, transparency and accountability, the district council capacity building will go hand in hand with community capacity building, building on experiences gained under the Community-Driven Recovery and Development (CDRD) initiative in enhancing community capacities to demand services and hold their local governments accountable. UNICEF will be responsible for ensuring participation and inclusion of citizens particularly women and children, in all relevant steps of service delivery management and organization. The programme has received support from the Government/Authorities in Somalia as well as donors such as European Commission, Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), Denmark, Norway and USAID who jointly have put forward USD 10, 000, 000 towards the implementation of the programme in 10 districts over the next two years.

For more information on our programming or to learn how you can help, please contact us at:

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