

PROJECT PROPOSAL SUMMARY

ENHANCING NUTRITION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP AMONGST VULNERABLE WOMEN IN SOMALIA

Context and relevance

Somalia's protracted civil war has not only destroyed the country's infrastructure and institutions, but has significantly affected its social fabric. Somali women had historically been principal agents of change, peace, community cohesion, development and social transformation. However, they were marginalised and denied their traditional roles in business and social development, which can support peace and stability. Young mothers face even greater challenges due to pressures of family care as well as the need to engage in livelihoods to support their families within a very instable socio-political environment. Though they have encountered and are still face enormous challenges of exclusion from many forms of public life posed by patriarchal culture Somali women were well known of their business creativity and entrepreneurial talents known in Somali language as "*Qararaf*"¹. This entrepreneurial spirit remains and is a source of resilience and opportunity for economic and social empowerment. Despite the continuation of extremist violence, the fragile state of Somalia is recovering from prolonged civil war and Somali women actively seek to participate in and play their traditional role in social development, business and even in politics which will immensely contribute to peace building in Somalia. This re-emergence of women, especially those that are vulnerable, must be actively supported.

We undertook a rapid needs assessment of vulnerable women in Mogadishu late October 2016. A random sample of twelve (12) young women, aged 24 – 32 were interviewed through our local contacts. Many women were not engaged in livelihood activities and also mentioned a lot of food health problems linked to poor availability and choice of diverse food items that can improve their family nutrition levels. Key concerns mentioned included unhygienic food, lack of nutrition and vitamins, poor knowledge of cooking recipes, shortage of diverse foods, and health problems such as gastric and diabetes. One respondent said "our food health problems include lack of nutrition, vitamin and food that contains iron". To improve these food health problems, 11 out of 12 women believed that Somali cooking styles and food handling abilities and skill should be improved. Again, 10 out of 12 women believed that Somalis especially children do not get nutritionally balanced food, which negatively affects their growth. Another respondent said "I

¹ Qararaf is an informal Somali word used to describe Somali women who used to travel over Lorries and trucks with their goods and business materials, selling or buying. They travelled across Somalia: from city to city in Somalia as well as between Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia.

would like to be taught the best ways to cook Somali farmers' produced food such as maize, and other corns so it will be consumed locally, and we will not need to import (an expensive) food from overseas such as pasta, rice and canned food". In fact 8 out of 12 women surveyed believed that protracted civil war destroyed the confidence of Somali people to consume their own local products which is cheap, fresh and full of nutrition. Instead, they believe and use the imported food that is unaffordable by poorer families. They feel unable to improve the wellbeing of their families despite their knowledge that nutrition is essential due to their current economic and social circumstances. As Somali wisdom says "*Cududii fayowbaa maskax caafimaad leh*" (healthy mind is in healthy body), but for it to ring true to vulnerable women and their families, a project fostering livelihood development with improved nutrition is required. This project seeks to make a small but important contribution in that regard.

Overall project objectives are to:

- Create employment and business opportunities for 100 disadvantaged and marginalised Somali women.
- Improve women's skills which will enable them to establish their own businesses by cooking and selling nutritious local food.
- Support the health and nutritional wellbeing of their families and the community.
- Promote community cohesion, peace-building, team work, collaboration, dialogue and social engagement skills amongst women.
- Promote, encourage and empower women to use cheaper and healthier local products in their business ventures.
- Improve women's customer service skills which will enhance their social engagement, networking and marketing of products.

Project description

This is a women-centred project promoting training, employment and business development opportunities for 100 women from marginalised and disadvantaged groups. All 13 women in Mogadishu surveyed in late October 2016 showed strong willingness to participate in and benefit from a project of this nature. Technical training provided to women will enhance their cooking skills using local recipes and products. The training will start the restoration of their self-confidence and self-reliance, and enable them start their own businesses. The businesses, which they start will be supported with micro-enterprise loans, asset finance, entrepreneurship training and marketing linkages. Social cohesion will be encouraged by inviting women from different

marginalised clans to benefit from this training. The skilling program will facilitate their interact amongst each other to work collectively and share their experiences and stories during and after the training. This is the heart of peace building and stabilisation of Somalia.

The target group for this project will be young women aged 25-35 years, with a focus on those who are already mothers. These beneficiaries will be selected using a predetermined selection criteria by our local representatives from different marginalised clans. We have already consulted with Somali Centre for Women Empowerment (SOCWE) based in Mogadishu, Nabad & Naruuro (Peace &Passion) based in Hargeisa, and a group of women based in Bosaso. These groups have endorsed and supported this project.

The overall program will continue for 18 months starting with a 3 month preliminary phase for project start up. The project will be implemented in three subsequent phases, with 30 beneficiaries selected for each of the first two phases and the 40 for the final phase. 30 young mothers (10 from Mogadishu, 10 from Hargeisa and 10 from Bosaso) will participate in the first phase. Each group will be offered a training program consisted of 10 days of learning customer service skills, 2 months of practical diverse, sustainable cooking skills with especial focus on health and nutrition related teaching methods. 20 days of business start ups and then follows up of their progress by our local representative.

Project Management

ILAYSNABAD: Dialogue & Development Initiative (IDDI).

Target area

Mogadishu, Hargeisa and Bosaso

Partners

Global Reconciliation based in Australia, Somali Centre for Women Empowerment (SOCWE) based in Mogadishu, Nabad & Naruuro (Peace &Passion) based in Hargeisa, and a group of women based in Bosaso.

Implementation period

2018-2019

Contact

Dr Khadijo Osman and Dr Yusuf Omar

E: info@ilaysnabad.org