

The Refuge

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**NEWSLETTER
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Ministerial Conference on Somali refugees

Representatives from more than 40 countries and organisations met in Brussels, Belgium on 21st October 2015, and pledged 94 million Euros (or USD 105 million) to support Somali refugees in Kenya and help them to voluntarily return to Somalia in safety and dignity. In addition, a pledge was made to provide training and job opportunities in Somalia for 10,000 returnees. While recognizing that conditions in Somalia are not yet conducive for large-scale returns, participants committed to support those refugees who have already chosen to return to make their reintegration back home more secure and sustainable. In addition, the delegates agreed to increase support for hosting communities, in particular in Kenya, which has been hosting hundreds of thousands of Somali refugees over the last two decades.

"Somalia needs our help, now more than ever", High Commissioner for UNHCR, Antonio Guterres said. "I am deeply grateful for the unwavering support by the international community, for the commitment by the host countries to continue to provide protection to Somali refugees and for the promise by others to step up their contributions to make returns safe and sustainable".

"Too many of our citizens have been in exile for too long", said Somali Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmake at the conference. "After 25 years of feeling unable to come home, the positive changes in the country have given them hope. They want to return and help rebuild Somalia into a prosperous and successful nation. We are grateful for the support of the international community to help us achieve this".

"Somalia remains a fragile state and many areas are not secure. Security must be reinforced and strengthened to pave the way for safe return. In addition, donor countries urgently need to increase the funding, to ensure proper assistance both to the Somali refugees, the returnees and the host communities", said Gabriella Waaijman, Regional Director of Norwegian Refugee Council in the Horn of Africa, South Sudan, Uganda and Yemen.

A vast majority of Somali refugees, more than 430,000, are hosted by Kenya. In 2013 the Government of Kenya, the Government of Somalia and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) signed an agreement providing the legal framework for the safe and dignified voluntary repatriation for Somalia. More than 5,300 refugees have now returned to Somalia since December 2014, assisted by UNHCR and partners while a significant number of Somalis have returned spontaneously. Over 2 million Somalis remain displaced in the

*Children looking for water in Baidoa, Somalia.
Photo: Christian Jepsen*



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Gabriella Waaijman, Regional Director, NRC Horn of Africa, South Sudan, Uganda, Yemen



Dollow: vocational trainees awarded certificates

A colourful ceremony was held in Dollow, Somalia where 100 vocational trainees received certificates of achievement, and trainees had a chance to exhibit their artistic products and skills. Held on 26th of October 2015, this was the first ever graduation ceremony to be held in Dollow since the establishment of the Youth Education Pack (YEP) center in 2014. The courses taken by the graduating classes included tailoring, beauty salon and carpentry skills alongside the literacy and numeracy skills.

The education project in South Central Somalia is funded by UNICEF and implemented by NRC in four different locations, namely Baidoa, Dollow, Kismayu and Mogadishu. The aim of the project is to equip youth with skills, knowledge and positive attitudes that contributes to peace building and enhance livelihood opportunities for them.

The Dollow ceremony was attended by local authority administration, community leaders, UNICEF Education Officer, representatives from civil society, business community and international humanitarian and development agencies. Trainees were urged to start their business projects in groups and use skills acquired to better their lives. Dollow's social affairs officer said: "It was difficult getting a carpenter when I was constructing my house a year ago but now as an administration, we appreciate the initiative of establishing a YEP center. As a result, there are many skilled youth within Dollow and some of the trainees from the YEP center are taking part in the construction of homes within the town".

During the event, a tailoring trainee demonstrated how to sew a blouse, a carpentry trainee made a table while two beauty salon trainees performed henna decoration as participants observed with curiosity. NRC Field Coordinator, Mr. Sayid Ali urged the business community and other agencies to prioritise YEP graduates for employment opportunities. Finally the trainees were awarded certificates and start up toolkits based on the skills undertaken. Some of the product on display at the exhibition stands were bought by members of the public, a gesture that served to motivate the trainees to work harder.



18 year old Maryan Mukhtar has finally relocated to Mogadishu from Kenya's Dadaab refugee camp together with her parents. She was one among 25 hair dressing trainees who completed studies and received certificates in Dadaab.

"I look forward to a new beginning and hope to make the best use of my hair dressing skills here in Mogadishu", she says.



The Youth Education Pack (YEP) provides literacy and numeracy training, vocational skill training and life skills training. It targets youth from both refugee and vulnerable host communities aged between 15 and 25 years, with limited or no formal educational background.

Between 2007 and 2014, over 400,000 youth learners have been enrolled in youth training centres in the region, with 90% completing training. The main vocational courses include auto-mechanics, carpentry, tailoring, hair and beauty therapy, welding and fabrication, satellite dish and solar installation, henna, barbering, kitchen gardening, photography and housekeeping.

NRC continues to adopt an integrated approach that focuses on provision of quality education, safe learning environment and enhancing child protection. NRC is also focusing on strengthening institutional capacity of the government and teachers to deliver quality education to learners.



Shelter support through cash transfers

The Yemen programme of NRC in the Horn of Africa has been reaching out to the most vulnerable internally displaced populations living in Amran and Hodeidah Governorates, providing households with cash subsidies that can enable them to rent homes as they begin to rebuild their lives and destroyed homes. This is an emergency intervention, titled 'Rental Subsidy Project' that links emergency response to protection of the most vulnerable members of the community. Homeless women and children face constant risk of exploitation, sexual violence and exposure to harsh climatic conditions.

In 2014 and 2015, sharp political differences and Al Houthi advancement from the North quickly escalated into an all-out war, leaving millions of Yemeni civilians caught up in air strikes, mortar shelling and armed confrontations. The catastrophe left more than 20 million people in urgent need for safety, food, water and medical assistance. The continued lack of basic facilities and disposable income has reduced the purchasing power of Yemeni families, while fuel shortages have disrupted transportation networks and the functioning of markets which in turn has hampered supply of food and basic services.

The Rental Subsidy Project is funded by European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO). The project has supported 200 IDP households in Abyan, 200 in Amran, 600 households in Hajjah, 550 households in Dhamar and 370 households in Aden. The cash amounts distributed range from 100 to 120 US Dollars per month per family. The IDPs also received shelter kits with kitchen sets, mattresses, blankets, sleeping mats and jerricans.

"A home provides safety, warmth and privacy which enables families to recover from other social shocks that are linked to humanitarian crises in conflict and post-conflict environments", says Sultan Mahmood, NRC Shelter Manager in Yemen. The project is targeting an additional 1000 households through emergency shelter.



*Proud to have a roof over their heads.
Photo: Bander Al Radaie/NRC*

Water provision and hygiene support in Amran



A water collection point in Amran, Yemen. Photo: Bander Al Radaie/NRC

Access to clean, potable water is at the top of the hierarchy of needs in Yemen following a destructive conflict that left many killed, displaced from homes and water supply networks disrupted. NRC has been helping community in Amran access the precious commodity through a water trucking and collection project funded by Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

In addition to water provision, hygiene sensitisation and awareness activities have been held in Eial Yazed, Al Sahl School, and Raidah. Community monitors have been trained in various aspects of hygiene and sanitation during emergencies and are able to provide support and outreach services.

"We are incorporating know-how in specific methods such as water chlorination, safe disposal of solid waste, and proper hand-washing techniques. We receive a daily attendance of 300 people with women being the majority. We encourage more women to attend awareness sessions since they are the ones responsible for handling food and water", says Bander Al Radaie, NRC's Hygiene Coordinator in Yemen.

South Sudan: Food from heaven



Women at work: "We see that even men are weak now. When we arrive with food, the men are not strong enough to help carry the bags" says NRC's Regina Gariwe. Photo: NRC/Tuva Raanes Bogsnes

South Sudan is home to the largest aerial humanitarian operation in the world. In the most food insecure areas of the war torn country, NRC's Rapid Response Team is going in to the hard to reach communities to make sure the food dropped from the sky reaches the people. NRC has currently three such teams operating in South Sudan. They are specially trained humanitarians, going in to hard to reach areas. Due to the conflict and the massive displacements the harvest this year will not meet the needs. A significant number of people are experiencing a catastrophic lack of food.

Regina Gariwe is one of the Rapid Response team members engaged in aerial food drops and ground distribution efforts. "They survive thanks to this. They dance with joy and thankfulness. The food is their lifeline", she says. As soon as the community knows that Regina and her team are coming, they clean the compound and start setting up tukuls, small traditional huts. "They always try to do their best out of the small things they have", she explains.

The war torn country has for decades been one of the most food insecure places on earth. Food prices on imported goods are going up, and people have no money. Together with ensuring areas in hard to reach locations meet their immediate food needs through the emergency food distribution teams,

Food supply is dropped from the World Food Program airplanes in an hard to reach location in South Sudan. NRC's Rapid Response Team ensure the drop zone is clear before planes can drop the goods. Then the team ensure the distribution goes according to the plan and supervise the community on how to store the food.

As long as the food insecurity remains high, food must continue to be dropped in hard to reach areas. "It is all a fight against time", says Regina. "The reason why we cannot find more durable solutions with these people is that they live in a conflict zone and they move all the time."

"I don't consider myself a hero. We have a job and responsibility to help people who are suffering. They are the ones that have seen a lot and still have to cope with the situation. For me, the people in those villages are the heroes", says Regina.

Regina hopes the international community will turn their eyes towards South Sudan before the situation gets even worse. "It is strange to see how things can change from one day to the other. In Europe it was that small boy lying on the shore of the sea. Maybe we need a picture of a boy like that in South Sudan to raise the world's attention?"



"The food is their lifeline", says Regina. Photo: NRC/Tuva Raanes Bogsnes