

PENHA

Women's Economic Empowerment Program Pastoral Areas of Somaliland - A Photo-Essay (December 2009)



Donkeys carrying water on the road to Xayndanle.

Women and girls spend a lot of their time fetching water. The establishment of new water points and the introduction of new water harvesting systems would help to free up women's time for more productive activities and enable more girls to attend school.



Xayndanle literacy class

With support from a Danish NGO, literacy classes for women have been established in Xaydanle village. Classes take place in the evenings in school rooms built under the project, with a teacher whose salary is paid under the project. Local women have participated enthusiastically, and local men, after initially opposing the project, are now supportive. PENHA's program will complement and strengthen this initiative.



The Alla-Amin Women's NGO Centre – established for women's literacy training



PENHA staff (Sadia Ahmed and Amsale Shibeshi on the left) meeting with the Alla-Amin Women's Group. (Camel milk was served in the traditional way.)

PENHA has supported the group over a number of years and we enjoy warm relations – they are enthusiastic about the economic empowerment program.



Sheep grazing on the road to Xayndanle
– local women earn incomes from the sale of sheep to markets in the capital city.



A Retail Shop at the road side in Xayndanle

Women earn good incomes from shops in trading centres and by road sides.
Infrastructure and the growth of trading centres helps local women
– in business and in terms of social development.



The Asad Women's Group with PENHA staff



GWX Women NGOs meeting with PENHA staff



Collected wood for charcoal burning (GWX)

Charcoal burning is the most profitable alternative economic activity locally – unemployed young men and “drop-outs” from traditional pastoralism earn incomes supplyin the demand for energy in towns and trading centres. The environmental impact is devastating and seriously undermines pastoralist livelihoods.



A tree nursery project at the Dabis River (GWX)

There is great potential for local women to earn incomes and at the same time protect the environment through tree planting projects – fruit trees and horticulture are promising opportunities.



Shop and restaurant at road side (GWX)

Women run shops and restaurants in pastoral area trading centres – these businesses have the potential to expand and develop their services.



Heavy charcoal trucks on the GWX road

The charcoal trade, with the associated trucking, provides the main stimulus for local business in trading centres and by the road side. Women have been quick to take advantage of these business opportunities – with support, and greater access to credit, they can improve and expand their businesses.



Broken water reservoirs Dabis River (GWX)

Dry season hardships make life difficult – the men move with the animals in search of pasture and water, women generally stay behind with the children.



Telesom office Salahley

Telecommunications are vital to economic activity, as well as to social integration. The extension of mobile phone services to pastoral areas has been transformational. In Salahley town, Telesom, one of the three big national service providers, has established an office. PENHA has agreed to promote Telesom's phone banking services at our training workshops.



PENHA staff with two Egyptian Arabic teachers at Salahley school

With pastoral systems under pressure, parents increasingly want their children to be educated. But local schools struggle to pay and attract teachers. Various donors from the Gulf are stepping into the breach, but some worry about the implications for women and girls of the spread of a strict form of Islam.



A homestead near Riiga Village on the road to Salahley Town

PENHA staff talked with a displaced pastoralist who had just set up his mobile home in the area and was eager for his wife and daughters to participate in our training workshops.



Restaurant at the road side on the way to Salahley



School girls walking to school in Salahley

More girls are attending school, but there is a strong new trend towards a new, strict form of Islam, promoted by organizations from the Gulf. In the past, young girls did not have to cover their hair.



In Salahley, a woman loads a goat on a truck for sale in Hargeisa, the capital.

The reliance on trucks for transport is a major issue. Pregnant women, when there are complications, are often “loaded onto trucks for transport to Hargeisa” – children are often born on these trucks, and some are given the name “Safar” (“Journey”). Transport and infrastructure are major issues – socially and economically.



A boarding school in Salahley – a vital new institution in need of support.



Dahabshiil, the main Somali remittance and currency exchange company has an office in Salahley.

Remittances from the Somali diaspora are vital to Somaliland's economy.





PENHA staff at Dabis River (GWX)



Leaving Salahley Town