

August 2021

Somali youth build livelihoods and peace

With support from AFSC and partners, youth bring positive transformation to communities in Kismayo and Dadaab.



Youth peace forum in Kismayo, Somalia.

Photo: AFSC Somalia

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) works with young people in Kismayo, Somalia and Dadaab refugee camps in Northern Kenya to build lasting peace. With funding from Misereor, AFSC and local partners help youth develop skills to support themselves and their families. We also provide them with trauma healing and training on peacebuilding.

From 2018 to 2021, a total of 4,463 young Somalis (2,113 males & 2,350 females) have actively taken part in programs in Kismayo and Dadaab. Today they continue to promote nonviolence by participating in innovative community-based initiatives and engaging others in peacebuilding—contributing toward safer, more peaceful communities in Somalia and Northern Kenya.

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The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) promotes a world free of violence, inequality, and oppression. Guided by the Quaker belief in the divine light within each person, we nurture the seeds of change and the respect for human life to fundamentally transform our societies and institutions.

Building skills, livelihoods, and resilience

AFSC and partners have trained 405 youth in Kismayo in vocational skills, including carpentry, electrical work, plumbing, tailoring, and mechanics. Not only are they building sustainable livelihoods, they are learning conflict resolution skills to work for peace in their communities (see more on next page).

Many graduates of our program have started their own businesses, while some are employed and earning an average of \$100 U.S. dollars per month (compared with Somalia's minimum wage of around \$78 USD per month). Having economic security also reduces their vulnerability to recruitment by militia groups, supporting more peaceful coexistence within their communities. Many Somali youth who once had few options are now creating new possibilities for their futures.



Youth in Somalia are trained in tailoring and other skills to build livelihoods and peace in their communities.

Photo: AFSC Somalia

STORY

Halima*

Halima* and her three children fled their village after her husband was killed in an attack on the minority group they belong to. After arriving in Kismayo, she found it difficult to provide food and shelter for her family.

Halima soon enrolled in AFSC-supported training to learn tailoring skills. She also received startup materials, which helped her open a small tailoring shop. Today, Halima earns between \$80 to \$100 U.S. dollars monthly. She is also a mentor to other young women in her community.

“Now I see myself as safe,” Halima says. “I am like any other person in the village since I have improved my living standard and I can feed my children and pay their school fees. My dignity is restored.”



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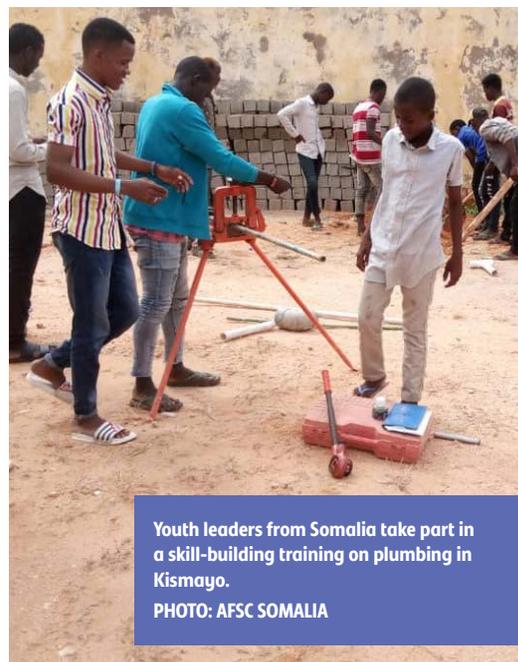
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Strengthening young peacebuilders

AFSC supports young people to develop peacebuilding skills and resolve conflicts in their families and communities through nonviolent methods.

In Dadaab refugee camps, youth have positively transformed conflicts and fostered peaceful connections between refugees and members of the host community. AFSC's local partner, Refugee Consortium of Kenya (RCK), engages youth in quarterly meetings, which include training on peacebuilding, trauma management, suicide prevention, addressing drug use, and other pressing issues. Young people also coordinate sporting activities, such as football tournaments, to bring together youth from divergent backgrounds and promote cohesion.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many youth stepped up to help community members face increased stresses. They played a critical role on a COVID-19 response taskforce, sharing vital information with others and referring individuals in need of legal and psychosocial support to RCK.



Youth leaders from Somalia take part in a skill-building training on plumbing in Kismayo.

PHOTO: AFSC SOMALIA

Building capacity for local partners

Four of AFSC's partners in Somalia have been trained on a range of skills to help them more effectively carry out their programs and better serve communities.

Those skills include:

- advocacy
- marketing peace
- impact reporting
- photography
- videography
- program sustainability
- project management



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Helping refugees heal from trauma

Most community members in Kismayo and Dadaab refugee camps have experienced trauma, and the impacts are long lasting. Many have fled civil war, drought, famine, violence, and extreme poverty. Today they face tremendous stresses in their everyday lives, including limited opportunities for education, employment, or earning enough income to support themselves and their families. The pandemic exacerbated many of these challenges.

AFSC supports trauma healing programs in both Kismayo and Dadaab, reaching a total of 9,058 community members since 2018. About 4,595 of those individuals were reached through radio broadcasting of trauma healing messages. Working closely with Refugee Consortium of Kenya (RCK), our program includes training and ongoing support for community-based counselors; hosting community forums on trauma management and peacebuilding; facilitating dialogues among youth, religious leaders, and community elders; and helping young people build skills to help themselves and others heal and work through conflicts peacefully.



Youth leaders from Somalia take part in a peacebuilding training in Dadaab refugee camps.

Photo: AFSC Somalia

STORY

Muna*

Muna* is among the many asylum seekers who have received counseling services in Dadaab refugee camps. At 28, she is a survivor of sexual violence. She has no family support and is now raising her six children on her own. Muna has struggled with stress, anger, an inability to form relationships with others, and suicidal thoughts.

In August 2019, Muna reached out to RCK after hearing counselors on Radio Gargaar. She took part in individual and group counseling sessions, which helped her understand and address her trauma, develop coping skills, and begin to establish bonds with others. Now Muna earns a living through a small business of selling mandazi (fried bread) and tea.

**Names are pseudonyms*

“This has helped me to focus on positive lessons from my traumatic experiences,” Muna says.



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To learn more about AFSC's Somalia Program, visit
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