

AU-CIDO & HIRDA Consultations with
Somali Diaspora in Europe on the impact
of COVID19

I. Introduction

HIRDA Foundation and AU-CIDO held a Somali Diaspora consultative meeting with a number of experts on 27th of May 2020. The consultation provided an opportunity for Somali diaspora expert and Somalia diaspora organizations based in Europe to share experiences and build networks as well as to exchange on the main opportunities and challenges linked to Somalia diaspora engagement for the development of Somalia and specially COVID-19 response.

II. Impact of COVID19 on Somalis in Europe

Applying the guidelines of COVID19 to the Somali community faced a few challenges:

- Guidelines came in the official country languages. For first generation diaspora, the lack of diversity of languages was a barrier towards receiving information.
- Communication; Information was provided in the mainstream media and didn't diversify their approaches. Communication approaches are often tailored to the target community, in this instance the marginalized or disadvantaged areas where many migrants in general including Somalis reside in, and understand the nature of the target community (spiritual, religious).
- Crowded households; most Somalis live in households that house up to 3 generations. Applying physical distancing with the existing household conditions was not always a feasible nor applicable.
- Awareness raising was later carried out by the Somali community, and by some governments such as Norway.

Education; Home learning was mandatory for all school pupils during COVID19. This measure emphasized disadvantages especially within the community. Many students did not own their individual laptops. Other factors include lack of technological literacy amongst parents, and inability to tutor their children either due to work or their educational attainment.

Employment; Most Somalis are either self-employed or work in low paid service jobs such as hospital workers, care assistance, taxis, restaurant owners, etc. The duty of care towards these jobs is often missing, putting them at risk.

Remittance and Debt;(Impact on remittance- there are conflicting info on this Dahabshiil can definitely speak to the impact on Somalia)(Debt, this was mentioned by the rep of Dahabshiil, that many are now accruing debt, but I wish we can get more clarity on it)

Community resilience is a feature of many African communities including the Somali community. To overcome these challenges. Students and families supported in teaching each other's children. It has created a stronger bond between the families. Despite the

hardship, many continued to provide acts of voluntarism and charity by supporting others in need especially during the month of Ramada.

III. Impact of COVID19 on Somalia

In summary four (4) areas were highlighted:

- **Misinformation or infodemic;** there is a lot of information that is shared within social media. The sources, the public health guidelines and information are often hard to verify leading to misinformation.
- **Health in Somalia;** There were efforts led by the diaspora to raise funds for buying the needed equipment for COVID! (such as ventilators, PPEs, etc. Other efforts include knowledge transfer. Most of the efforts are adhoc in nature.
- **Education;** 65% of schools in Somalis are private, with a majority being run by community NGOs. With COVID many schools are on lockdown. This has resulted in many students not paying fees and accordingly the private or community NGO schools inability to pay teachers.

The impact of the lockdown has direct economic impacts on the teachers and the financial viability to sustain the school.

- **Food Security;** Most of the food in Somalia is imported. With the closure of borders, access to food has proven difficult which led to a surge in the price of food. The fragility of the food situation in Somalia is further exacerbated by the locust swarms which started in early 2020 and caused the country to declare a national emergency,

IV. Recommendations:

- Set up a one stop information hub that can be in partnership with the Ministry of Health to validate information that are being shared within the Somali community.
- Health; coordinate efforts with the MoH on knowledge transfer by providing trainings to health care workers online
- Remittance; segmenting remittance to directly pay for school fee through online payments. Use remittance for insurance, i.e. agricultural insurance, livestock insurance, health insurance.
- Food Security; Support the up scaling of businesses that invest in agriculture.. Invest in Technical training and capacity building in areas such as agribusiness, food production and food storage.

