



**GCERF**  
Global Community Engagement  
and Resilience Fund



**INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT FOCUS  
(IDF)**

**2023 ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT**

## **INTRODUCTION**

During the year under review (2023), several activities were conducted as part of the project. Capacity building sessions were held virtually with paraprofessionals to train them in problem-based learning and psychosocial case management. The aim was to enhance their skills and knowledge in these areas.

The SWERC, GCERF Mental Health Paraprofessional Training Project aims to provide training to paraprofessionals to improve their capacity to provide effective mental health support. The project focuses on topics such as anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, and substance abuse. The goal is to equip paraprofessionals with the skills and knowledge necessary to support individuals with mental health challenges.

Overall, these virtual capacity building sessions successfully provided paraprofessionals with the necessary knowledge, skills, and tools to address the challenges associated with Binge Eating Disorders, Anorexia Nervosa, and Bulimia Nervosa. The participants' enhanced understanding and improved capabilities in problem-based learning and psychosocial case management will significantly contribute to better support for individuals affected by these eating disorders.

The project enhanced the youth and communities' skills and knowledge in key areas on mental health management and detection. As well attracted interest from different stakeholders including other NGOs, Government institutions among other private entities.

The positive outcome was a significant increase in support and enthusiasm from the local government towards the mental health paraprofessional training program. The first-hand accounts of the program's graduates, along with the active participation of local authorities and government stakeholders in the graduation event, contributed to a stronger level of trust and endorsement for SWERC activities. During the graduation ceremony and subsequent individual meetings, local stakeholders consistently expressed their belief that the SWERC project had the potential to greatly benefit the community, and they expressed their hope for its expansion in the future.

Furthermore, during the year review (2023) IDF implemented Strengthening Women's Leadership in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism. IDF's and CBLA goal has been to enable women in Belet-Hawa district, Somalia, to take a leading role in preventing and combating violent extremism (CVE) ever since the Community-Based Leadership Award (CBLA) project was started. The aforementioned endeavours, which include needs analysis, training and empowerment, networking, and forming partnerships, have been methodically executed with the aim of fortifying women's networks within the local community to prevent and counter violent extremism

# ACTIVITIES

## 1. Capacity building

From January to March 2023, capacity-building sessions enhanced mental health services. Training included case study management, serious mental illness, and social anxiety. Implemented in January and February, it reached 150 youth monthly. Nine paraprofessionals improved their skills in psychosocial support and case management through virtual sessions. January saw four lecture sessions on trauma, PTSD, depression, and tips for survivors. These sessions enhanced community knowledge, reducing mental health issues and increasing productivity. Paraprofessionals now provide mental health counseling and engage in economic activities. Overall, these programs improved mental health services and client outcomes, emphasizing the need for continued support.

In April 2023, the IDF held four virtual capacity-building sessions for 150 mental health paraprofessionals. Topics included the impact of upbringing and genes on mental health (April 1), child and adolescent psychology (April 6), anxiety disorders and hypochondria, and fictitious disorder and malingering (April 26). In May, three additional sessions covered Binge Eating Disorders (May 6), Anorexia Nervosa (May 11), and Bulimia Nervosa (May 24). These sessions enhanced paraprofessionals' knowledge and skills, focusing on symptom identification, assessment, treatment, and psychosocial case management. The training aimed to improve support for individuals with various mental health disorders, fostering professional development and effective mental health interventions.

During the quarter, two follow-up psycho-social assessments were conducted each month with 150 trained youth. The assessments revealed significant improvements in mental health and well-being, with participants displaying increased self-confidence, better communication and interpersonal skills, and greater resilience. Additionally, positive changes were noted in attitudes towards education, career development, social responsibility, and community involvement. Overall, the psycho-social training positively impacted the youth's personal and social development, demonstrating the effectiveness of the training programs.

In addition, October, November, and December, IDF organized twelve virtual capacity building sessions for mental health paraprofessionals under OTPA-3.017. The sessions focused on psychotic disorders, schizophrenia, cognitive disorders, dementia, and delirium. Key lectures included:

- Psychotic disorders and schizophrenia case management (October 14-29).
- Dementia etiology, clinical manifestations, and management (November 3-25).
- Cognitive disorders, dementia epidemiology, and delirium management (December 1-22).

Paraprofessionals gained comprehensive knowledge, enhancing their ability to provide effective psychosocial support. The interactive sessions fostered collaborative learning, equipping participants with practical tools for managing complex mental health cases in their communities.



## 2. CBT

120 CBT youth counseling sessions were conducted, reaching 150 youth monthly. The sessions focused on cognitive-behavioral therapy techniques, including recognizing thought distortions, emotional self-regulation, and stress management. Training involved breathing exercises, muscle relaxation, and writing about emotions. Paraprofessionals, providing CBT, resulted in significant reductions in anxiety symptoms within the community. Youth were also educated on behavior change, expressing feelings, and managing mental health disorders like depression, anxiety, PTSD, and schizophrenia. The training improved youth knowledge, skills, and confidence, enabling them to manage mental health issues effectively and reducing fear and stigma.

April to June, the CBT counselling sessions targeted 150 youth, focusing on Anxiety Disorder, Phobia and Panic Attacks, and PTSD with tailored approaches like exposure therapy and cognitive restructuring. Sessions also addressed conditions such as OCD, schizophrenia, and substance abuse using CBT techniques for triggers, coping, and behaviour change. Paraprofessionals taught relaxation techniques and symptoms awareness to manage stress and improve mental health literacy. Over eight sessions, youth showed improved self-awareness, coping skills, and emotional management. The sessions effectively empowered youth to challenge negative thoughts and behaviours, enhancing their ability to manage mental health challenges and fostering healthier lifestyles and community support.

### Follow-up

During April, May, and June 2023, 450 project youth (270 males, 180 females) received two phone calls each as part of follow-up and mentorship sessions. These sessions aimed to enhance personal and professional development, resulting in increased confidence, improved communication skills, and active community engagement. Participants made strides in education and career goals, supported by personalized mentorship that addressed individual challenges. The program's success is evidenced by participants' positive outcomes, including skill development and goal achievement, highlighting its effectiveness in nurturing youth empowerment and fostering ongoing growth and success in their endeavors.







### 3. PFA

Psychosocial First Aid (PFA) sessions focused on engagement, safety, stabilization, and social support. Conducted over one day, the sessions provided immediate assistance to 150 youth and their families following traumatic events. Key topics included emotional stabilization, practical assistance, and connection to further services. Mental health paraprofessionals delivered the training, which led to reduced distress symptoms, including anxiety and depression, and improved emotional management and coping strategies. The program's success highlights the importance of continued intervention to ensure individuals receive necessary emergency psychosocial support and access ongoing care, enhancing community well-being.

IDF conducted Psychosocial First Aid (PFA) sessions and follow-ups to support crisis-affected communities. Participants reported feeling more supported and informed, with increased awareness of available resources. The sessions focused on emotional stabilization, needs assessment, and guiding participants towards further services. Mrs. Saadia Bashir's case exemplifies successful intervention with schizophrenia treatment, showcasing improvements through medication and CBT counselling. These sessions effectively provided immediate assistance, empowered participants to manage crises, and built resilience within project communities, emphasizing compassionate and culturally sensitive support for mental health needs during emergencies.

Between July and September 2023, IDF conducted three Psychological First Aid (PFA) sessions, each for 50 youth (108 males, 42 females), focusing on immediate psychosocial support and coping mechanisms. Sessions covered PFA principles (Look, Listen, Link), at-risk populations, and ethical considerations. Follow-up included tracking the progress of Mrs. Saadia Bashir, a 40-year-old with schizophrenia, receiving antipsychotic medication and counseling. These activities aimed to empower youth and enhance community resilience. The PFA sessions provided immediate relief, increased mental health awareness, and promoted dignity and cultural sensitivity. Follow-ups ensured sustained support, demonstrating a comprehensive approach to community mental health and development.

During the last quarter of the year, three Psychological First Aid (PFA) sessions were conducted, providing emergency psychosocial support to 30 participants (18 males, 12 females). Each session reached 50 youth monthly, with follow-up support.

### Session Breakdown:

- October 25, 2023: 50 youth (37 males, 13 females). Topics: psychoeducation, referrals, PFA for children, and follow-ups.
- November 25, 2023: 50 youth (35 males, 15 females). Topics: psychotherapy, behavior therapy, and follow-ups.

### Outcomes:

- Equipped participants with coping skills for psychosocial challenges.
- Ongoing follow-ups by Mental Health Paraprofessionals (MHP) provided sustained community support.
- Enhanced community mental health awareness and resilience.



## 4. Sensitization.

Mental health sensitization sessions were conducted in six schools within the Belet Hawa district, with three schools visited each in January and February. Led by mental health paraprofessionals and a supervisor, these sessions involved interactive presentations and discussions on mental health issues, causes, symptoms, and treatment options. The workshops increased awareness and reduced stigma, engaging teachers, pupils, and school management in practical emotional management activities. This enhanced understanding and willingness to seek help for mental health issues, improving access to mental health resources. Continued support is essential for addressing mental health comprehensively and effectively in the community.

Mental health paraprofessionals conducted monthly sensitization sessions in three learning institutions, including madrasas and schools, aiming to increase awareness and reduce stigma. Participants, including teachers and pupils, reported feeling better informed and more willing to seek help for mental health issues. The sessions utilized interactive methods like discussions and games to educate on self-care strategies and available resources, enhancing understanding of conditions like anxiety and depression. Overall, these sessions successfully promoted mental health literacy and fostered a supportive school environment, where individuals prioritize mental well-being and show empathy towards those facing mental health challenges.

During the year, mental health paraprofessionals conducted sensitization sessions in 12 different learning institutions. On July 24-25, August 15-16, and September 26-27, 2023, sessions were held at local madrasas and schools, reaching a total of 420 students and involving 12 dedicated teachers across 12 sessions. The aim was to raise mental health awareness and reduce stigma. Participants developed communication, listening, interpersonal, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Recreational activities, including walking, running, board games, reading, spelling, and football, were introduced to promote holistic well-being, fostering a supportive and empathetic community.





## 5. Job fair

Job information training sessions reached 171 youth, including 57 SWERC project participants each month. The training aimed to enhance job search skills, focusing on writing resumes and cover letters. Youths practiced CV writing and presented their work for feedback. Training covered job applications, emphasizing skills and professional formatting, proofreading, and CV structure, including contact information, education, experience, skills, achievements, and referrals. Tips for seeking job opportunities included internships, networking, and confidence-building. The sessions effectively equipped youth with practical skills for job searching, enhancing their employability and confidence in the job market.

During the quarter, mental health paraprofessionals conducted sensitization sessions in nine learning institutions, covering mental health topics such as depression, bipolar disorder, trauma, PTSD, schizophrenia, and autism.

### October Sessions:

- Dates: 21st-22nd October
- Schools Visited: 4
- Classrooms: 4
- Teachers: 4
- Students: 140
- Activities: Educational and recreational, therapy skills, first aid, and environmental cleanliness.

### November Sessions:

- Dates: 20th-21st November
- Schools Visited: 3
- Classrooms: 3
- Teachers: 3
- Students: 105
- Activities: Recreational activities, therapy skills, first aid, environmental cleanliness, trauma, and PTSD focus.

### December Sessions:

- Schools Visited: 2
- Classrooms: 2
- Teachers: 2
- Students: 70
- Activities: Recreational activities, therapy skills, first aid, environmental cleanliness, trauma, depression, and PTSD.

Therefore, increased mental health awareness and practical skills among youth and children for maintaining mental well-being.



## 6. Workshop women and leaders

IDF organized a workshop targeting influential community figures, empowering 20 participants from diverse backgrounds. The workshop focused on leadership skills, effective communication, and gender equality, fostering collaboration and problem-solving through interactive sessions. Participants reported increased confidence in their leadership roles and shared insights with their communities, amplifying the workshop's impact. Recommendations included expanding the SWERC project, establishing mental health facilities, engaging more paraprofessionals, and conducting community mobilization events. Overall, the workshop successfully equipped leaders with essential skills, promoted gender equality, and catalyzed positive community change, emphasizing ongoing support for sustained development and mental health awareness.

## 7. SWERC Business

SWERC business beneficiaries were monitored by a team of M&E and Livelihood officers to assess grant impact. Thirty businesses were visited, and interviews with youth hires were conducted. Key challenges identified included low purchasing power due to prolonged drought, high fuel and food prices, and a preference for credit over cash purchases. Despite these issues, businesses provided on-the-job training for youth, reducing vulnerability to drug abuse and crime. Positive outcomes included business growth and improved household livelihoods and mental health. An emergency response for the most affected families was recommended.

Also, IDF conducted follow-up assessments on 30 SWERC Business Network grantees to evaluate grant impact and support needs. Most businesses showed improved performance with increased revenue and expanded product lines, despite challenges like market competition and supply chain disruptions. Nine businesses employed project youth, benefiting 17 individuals, fostering gender inclusivity. Paraprofessionals received capacity-building on eating disorders, while CBT counseling addressed various mental health issues. Sensitization sessions in local schools reduced stigma. Mentorship activities ensured ongoing support for youth development. The report underscores the effectiveness of interventions and advocates for sustained monitoring and support for long-term business and community resilience.

The SWERC project in Beled Hawa district, Somalia, faced challenges due to heavy rains causing infrastructural damage, increased costs, and supply chain disruptions. Despite these, the project empowered 123 of the target 150 youth (82% success rate), with 27 youth employed outside the grants. Notably, 76% of female participants gained essential business skills, resulting in new job opportunities. The project's efforts led to economic growth and increased female participation in business activities, fostering self-sufficiency. Overall, SWERC proved to be a catalyst for positive change, exemplifying strategic interventions' impact on individuals and communities.

## 8. Conduct Entrepreneurship Training

In August 2023, IDF conducted a five-day entrepreneurship training program aimed at empowering youth from the SWERC project target area. The training, which engaged 10 young men and 8 young women, sought to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary for successful entrepreneurship. Key topics covered included business planning, strategies for strengthening entrepreneurial abilities, and financial planning. The participants actively engaged in the training, sharing their experiences and challenges. Notably, the training helped increase the participants' confidence, fostered self-effectiveness and self-advocacy, improved their communication and problem-solving skills, and positively impacted their access to financial resources through both training and mentoring. This initiative is a crucial step toward enhancing the entrepreneurial capacity and economic prospects of young individuals in the community.

Entrepreneurship training was incredibly useful for individuals who were interested in starting and running their own business. The training provides the participants with a solid foundation in business concepts, such as marketing, finance, operations and strategies. This knowledge can be invaluable for those who are new to entrepreneurship or want to expand their skill set. The entrepreneurs often face complex and unique challenges and therefore, the training helped individuals develop problem-solving skills and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances.





## 9. Execute community recreational or cultural

Community recreational or cultural event was undertaken on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at Hire Hotel in Beled Hawa district Somalia. The event was invited to local authority, religion leaders, traditional elders, youth, women and business groups. The objective of the event was to promote cultural awareness, fostering community engagement and raising awareness on effect of drug abuse to community

### Outcomes of the event.

- An increase of community engagement; a more engaged and connected community promote the event widely through different channel including social media platform and open places where people have tea during evening.
- Skill development; community members acquire new skills and knowledge
- Health and well-being; improved physical or mental health for participants.
- Social inclusion; Fostering a sense of belonging for all community members.
- Fun and entertainment; providing an enjoyable experience for all participants
- Development of support networks for individuals and families affected by drug abuse.

### Reflection of the participant.

During the event the participants have been actively listening and watching the drama played or presented by the 9-paraprofessional youth and women. “Building a robust support network for individuals and families affected by drug abuse requires collaboration among community organizations, healthcare providers, mental health professionals and as well as the local authority. It’s a long -term effort that can significantly improve the lives of those impacted by addiction”. Noor Cadawe – head of District social affair department Challenges. No challenges encountered during the activity implementation.



## Activities progress Updates

### Needs Assessment:

In order to uncover leadership skills and knowledge gaps among women in connection to CVE, the project started with the design and production of project needs assessment questionnaires. This was followed by a full requirements assessment. Through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), focus groups, and community participation, we were able to gather important information about the particular difficulties that women in Belet-Hawa and the surrounding areas experience. The results showed a considerable lack of leadership abilities and expertise in the area of thwarting and opposing violent extremism. Due to a lack of gender inclusion in attempts to address the issue, it is challenging to make decisions to oppose violent extremism when there is insufficient participation of women in community decision-making. Additionally, how the community views women's roles in preventing and opposing violent extremism as well as other aspects of community development plan is a major hinderance to address or prevent the problem. Therefore, women play key roles in ensuring community peaceful cop-existence and sustainable development.





### **Training Program Implementation:**

Following the needs assessment, a training program was developed and put into action to help women in Somalia become more skilled leaders, with an emphasis on thwarting and opposing violent extremism. A focused training program was created and put into place to improve the leadership abilities of women in the Belet-Hawa district community, building on the findings of the needs assessment. The course, which consisted of multiple modules, addressed topics including resolving conflicts, organizing communities, and comprehending the gendered aspects of violent extremism. Participants and the local community in the project regions felt empowered as a result of the well-received training sessions.

### **Networking and Experience Sharing:**

Women's cooperation, feeling of community, and shared learning have all benefited greatly from the Community-Based Leadership Award (CBLA) project in Belet-Hawa, Somalia, thanks in large part to its networking and experience-sharing component.

Understanding the value of teamwork and mutual education, the project gave women in the Belet-Hawa district access to networking possibilities. Frequent forums were established, giving women a place to discuss best practices and their experiences in thwarting and resisting violent extremism. In addition to fostering a stronger feeling of community, these exchanges helped spark the creation of creative solutions for pressing regional issues. The project started hosting frequent networking gatherings, giving women in Belet-Hawa a place to socialize. The Forums set up a monthly exchange of meetings, offering a regular forum for discussion and collaboration. Therefore, the networking forums contributed to the formation of a supportive community among women in Belet-Hawa district. This will increase sense of solidarity and mutual understanding amongst participants.





### **Partnership Building for Sustainability:**

Establishing a strong foundation for the project's long-term impact in the Belet-Hawa neighborhood has been made possible in large part by the Partnership Building for Sustainability component. As a result, by working with regional groups, non-governmental organizations, and governmental establishments, we have expanded the scope, guaranteed sustainability, and capitalized on regional knowledge for the empowerment of women in the fight against violent extremism.

In order to guarantee the project's lasting effects, collaborations with nearby groups were promoted. To construct a supportive ecosystem, partnerships with governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, local government officials, and community leaders were formed. This expanded the initiatives' scope and efficacy and established the groundwork for ongoing efforts after the project's implementation period.



### **Outcome and Achievements:**

As of the reporting period, tangible achievements have been realized in line with the project's outcome. The local community women structures in preventing and countering violent extremism in Belet-Hawa have been significantly strengthened.

Key achievements include:

1. **Increased Women's Participation:** As a result of the project, women's involvement in decision-making processes pertaining to violent extremism prevention and counteraction has significantly increased. Women regularly participate in community conversations and projects, which helps to make CVE more inclusive and all-encompassing.
2. **Enhanced Leadership Roles:** Women who took part in the training program have advanced into positions of leadership in their local communities. They are spearheading neighborhood projects, fostering conversations, and serving as agents of constructive change.
3. **Greater Understanding of Gendered Dimensions:** The project has been successful in increasing community awareness of the gendered aspects of violent extremism. Because of this awareness, there are now more focused and efficient ways to address the unique problems that women and the community as a whole confront.

### **Lessons Learned:**

Throughout the implementation of the project, several valuable lessons have been learned:

1. **Contextual Sensitivity:** It is essential to modify interventions to fit the local situation. It has been crucial to comprehend the socio-cultural dynamics of Belet-Hawa community in order to customize our projects so that the community will support them.
2. **Continuous Capacity Building:** The process of developing leadership skills never ends. The project has highlighted the necessity of ongoing capacity-building initiatives to guarantee women leaders' continued empowerment and development.
3. **Importance of Partnerships:** Project sustainability depends on forming solid alliances with neighborhood organizations. Making use of already-existing networks has made it easier to integrate the project into the larger community development plans.

# STORIES OF CHANGE

## 1. Community recreational or cultural event



A group of talented young mental health para-professional, led by a visionary director, decided to tackle a pressing issue that was plaguing their generation: drug abuse. They came together to create a drama production titled “Effect of Drug Abuse”, a heartfelt exploration of the devastating consequences of addiction. They worked tirelessly, researching and sharing their own stories to breath life into their characters. The rehearsals were grueling, with intense scenes depicting the downward spiral of addiction, the pain it caused, and its far -reaching effects on prolonged drought, inflation and conflicts affected families and communities.

The audience watched in silence as the actors portrayed the heart- wrenching stories of addiction, loss and recovery. Tears flowed, hearts ached, and a deep sense of empathy and understanding permeated the room.

The impact of the drama (Effect of Drug Abuse) extended beyond the stage. Event participant vowed to create a structure that will implement drug education and community sensitization program in schools and youth playing grounds. Support groups for those affected families by the addiction were established, providing guidance and some recourses for families in crisis.

The young talented mental health para-professional had learned that their voices, when raised together, could make a profound impact and continued to work together to build a bright, drug – free future for themselves and their peers.

“Effect of Drug Abuse” started as a heart-wrenching drama but evolved into an inspiring success story of resilience, redemption, and the power of community support. It reminds us that even in the darkest of times, there is always a chain reaction of positive change in an entire community.

## 2. Success story

Mohamud Abdi Abdulle, 35 years old was a SWERC project beneficiary. He was given capacity building on business skills by SWERC Business grantee – Huriye Construction & General trading co. After having business skills, he was employed by KHALIIL Company. The young man had a dream and vision to support self-sufficiently as well as his family.

His dream was made factual by the support from GCERF through the implementing partner IDF as well as SWERC project Business network grantees. ***“Even though I was jobless before joining SWERC project and from poor family, I had dream and vision which was to have my own business initiative.”*** Said Mohamud.

The young man was willing to create opportunities for the youth by providing them business skills, job opportunities and counselling them to seek help from the existing business companies in instead of been idle. ***“Being a manager for your own initiative does not mean that you should do everything; however, I have colleagues and friends who are working with me here in my business premises. Some got employment while others are getting skills and business ideas.”*** Mohamud

The SWERC business network grantees have been encouraging the youth and were willing to improve the socio-economic status of the youth despite the fact that the support from the GCERF was very insignificant compared to the challenges and obstacle that has been there for many years.



Figure:1 Mohamud working at previous business premises as an employee



Figure: 2 Mohamud at his own business initiative. *“I started the business borrowed money from my relative and I returned 90% of it, thanks to almighty and those who supported me in different ways”*. Mohamud

### 3. Success story – Livelihood support

**Fat-hi**, a 32-years -old beneficiary of the SWERC project. Underwent a transformative experience that propelled her towards success. Through the SWERC business grant provided to Ladan Beauty Salon, she received comprehensive capacity -building in essential business skills.

Armed with her new found expertise, Fat-hi secured employment at Ladan Beauty Salon. Her personal journey is marked by resilience, as she navigates the challenges of being a widow with three children, her husband having lost his life to an unknown militia group. Undeterred by adversity, Fat-hi assumed the role of the sole provider, becoming the daily breadwinner for her orphaned children.

Fuelled by a dream and vision for self – sufficiency, Fat-hi leveraged the business skills and ideas acquired at Ladan Beauty Salon to establish her own beauty salon called **UMU CIMRAN Beauty salon**. This strategic move aimed to create sustainable sources of livelihood for herself and her family.

The success of Fat-hi ‘s endeavour became evident when a client, traveling all the way from Dollow Ethiopia, sought her services. The client was drawn not only by the quality of services offered but also by Fat-hi’s exceptional personality and professionalism. This incident exemplified the far-reaching impact of Fat-hi’s journey, underscoring the success and recognition she has achieved in her pursuit of an independent and sustainable livelihood



#### 4. Success Story: SWERC Project Impact

The SWERC project has made significant contributions to the community, particularly in influencing the behaviors and attitudes towards mental health among the target groups. One of the key achievements has been in the area of livelihood improvement, especially for the youth



## **Key Impacts:**

### **1. Behavioral and Attitudinal Change:**

- The project has successfully altered community perceptions and behaviours regarding mental health, promoting a more positive and supportive environment

### **2. Youth Empowerment and Skill Development:**

- Youth participants have received essential skills and support to improve their livelihoods and lifestyles
- Daily mentorship provided by the project team and the business network has been instrumental in guiding the youth.
- This mentorship has motivated many youths to be engaged by the business companies and others to start their own businesses,

### **3. Achievement of Support Goals:**

- The project initially aimed to support 150 youth through various interventions.
- This goal has been fully and successfully achieved, with all planned participants receiving the intended support.

Overall, the SWERC project has had a profound impact on the community, fostering positive changes and empowering youth to pursue sustainable livelihoods.

## JOURNEY OF WOMEN INCLUSION IN LEADERSHIP AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM



### Case Study: Hawa Adan Artan Journey Towards Women Inclusion in Leadership and Countering Violent Extremism

#### Background

In Somalia, women face systemic exclusion from public life, with governance traditionally dominated by clan elders. Despite the critical need for diverse perspectives in decision-making, women are often sidelined, their contributions overlooked. In Belet-Hawa district, Hawa Adan, the member of the Barwaqo women group, has emerged as a passionate advocate for change.

#### Hawa Adani's Journey

Hawa Adan Artan is among the 40 women who participated in a leadership training program under the Caro Bellamy Award project. This training aimed to equip women with the skills and confidence to engage in leadership roles and counter violent extremism in their communities. Hawa's determination to knock on every door until her dream of women's inclusion is realized epitomizes the spirit of resilience and advocacy necessary for transformative change.

#### Activities Undertaken

1. **Leadership Training:** The Caro Bellamy Award project provided comprehensive training in leadership, negotiation, and conflict resolution. These sessions helped participants, including Hawa, develop critical skills needed for effective participation in governance.
2. **Community Engagement:** Hawa spearheaded community meetings, bringing together women from different clans to discuss their roles in peacebuilding and governance. These forums created a safe space for women to voice their concerns and propose solutions.

3. **Advocacy Campaigns:** Hawa organized awareness campaigns highlighting the importance of women's involvement in leadership and countering violent extremism. She used local media, social gatherings, and religious events to spread the message.
4. **Collaboration with Authorities:** Hawa worked closely with local authorities and clan elders, advocating for the inclusion of women in decision-making processes. Through persistent dialogue and negotiation, she managed to secure platforms for women in local community fora.

### **Recommendations for Promoting Women's Involvement**

1. **Continuous Leadership Training:** Regularly scheduled training sessions should be provided to women across the district, focusing on leadership, public speaking, and advocacy skills.
2. **Mentorship Programs:** Establish mentorship programs pairing experienced female leaders with emerging ones to provide guidance, support, and inspiration.
3. **Inclusive Policy Development:** Work with local governments to develop policies that mandate the inclusion of women in decision-making bodies. This could include quotas for women in local councils and committees.
4. **Community Awareness Initiatives:** Implement ongoing community education programs to change perceptions about women's roles in leadership and peacebuilding. Engage men and traditional leaders to foster a more inclusive mindset.
5. **Support Networks:** Create support networks for women leaders to share experiences, challenges, and strategies. These networks can provide emotional and practical support, fostering a sense of solidarity.
6. **Economic Empowerment:** Implement programs aimed at the economic empowerment of women, as financial independence can enhance their ability to participate in public life and decision-making.

### **Conclusion**

Hawa Adan's journey is a testament to the power of determination and resilience in overcoming systemic barriers. Through targeted activities and sustained advocacy, significant strides can be made towards women's inclusion in leadership and the fight against violent extremism. By implementing the recommended activities, Belet-Hawa district can pave the way for a more inclusive and peaceful society.