



Transforming Lives

Enhancing women's livelihoods through Non-Formal Education

Through basic literacy and numeracy courses, young women are provided with a platform to either re-enter formal education or to pursue vocational skills to re-engineer their lives.



Female students attending class at the Boondere Girls Orphanage NFE center in Mogadishu

“I was fully dependent on my children to do simple things like write text messages and save numbers on my mobile phone. Thanks to the course, I can now read and write on my own.”

-- Aisha Mohamed, 32 years
Learner at Boondere Girls Orphanage NFE Centre

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In recent years, Somalia has made significant strides in improving its education system. Since the inauguration of the new federal government, both primary and secondary school enrollment rates have increased across almost all regions of the country. This, however, has had little impact on the vast number of youth who have had no access to formal schooling during the 25 years of civil war. The challenges have been even more extreme for young women who are much less likely to be enrolled in any schooling due to cultural practices, such as early marriage.

In March 2015, USAID's Somali Youth Learners Initiative (SYLI) enrolled over 470 young women in a six-month literacy and numeracy course in Mogadishu. This Non-Formal Education (NFE) course is aimed at ensuring that these vulnerable young women are empowered through basic education, and provided with a platform to either re-enter formal education or to pursue vocational skills to re-engineer their lives.

Aisha Mohamed, mother of three, is one of the students attending the NFE course run at Boondere Girls Orphanage in Mogadishu. She was only seven years old when the war broke out in her hometown and like thousands of others, she never had a chance to go to school. When she was told about the opportunity to learn how to read and write, she was very eager to enroll and make a change in her life.

“I was fully dependent on my children to do simple things like write text messages and save numbers on my mobile phone. Thanks to the course, I can now read and write on my own,” said Aisha. “Additionally I will now also ensure that my children do not face the same challenges I did so I will enroll them in school.” The flexible learning hours at the Boondere Girls Orphanage NFE center also allow her to attend classes whilst looking after her children and her home.

Aisha represents thousands of Somalis who have had their education disrupted by years of war. Her story resonates with many young girls who have enrolled in these courses. SYLI has established over ten NFE centers across Mogadishu, providing over 744 youth with access to educational opportunities.