



Transforming Lives

Non-Formal Education provides an alternative option for the unschooled youth of Somalia

Young girl gets a second chance at education through non-formal schooling.



“Education has no age limit, and without knowledge there is darkness. I am learning how to write at my age and it is a great feeling.”

-- Fahima Ali Ahmed, 19 years
Beneficiary of the Non-Formal Education
classes in Hargeisa, Somaliland

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Cultural barriers are some of the many reasons why illiteracy is wide spread among women in Somalia. Girls are expected to fulfill a traditional role, staying behind to care for the home while male members are given the opportunity to go to school.

At 19 years of age, Fahima Ali Ahmed has never sat inside a formal classroom. She has never had the opportunity to learn to write her name or count numbers like the rest of her three siblings. Instead, she had to stay behind at home and watch as they left for school every morning.

“I felt left out, they were given the chance to learn and be educated and I was not”, Fahima said. “Being the first born of the family as well as a girl meant that it was my duty to care for my younger siblings and help my mother with the household chores.”

Today, her siblings are all grown and in secondary schools, freeing up much of her time. To occupy herself, Fahima enrolled at a local Non-Formal Education (NFE) center in Hargeisa, Somaliland supported by USAID’s Somali Youth Learners Initiative (SYLI) where she learns basic literacy and numeracy. She spent the last six months in classes and sat for her final exams at the end of July 2015.

“I can now write my own name. This may not mean much to others but to me it’s a whole different world.” Fahima said, “It shows me that it is not too late for me to start learning.”

SYLI is bringing hope and new opportunities to the many women and girls of Somalia who have had their education disrupted.

SYLI currently operates 19 NFE centers in Somaliland, providing over 1,000 youth with access to educational opportunities. NFE centers help young girls and women alike build on vital skills such as reading and writing, which in turn open other doors for them.