

# DONOR IMPACT STORIES

## Mohamed's story: From dependency to self-reliance



Mohamed Noor Omar in Mogadishu, Somalia 2018 ©UNHCR / Abdullahi Hassan

Mohamed Noor Omar is counting his blessings. Just under a year ago, the 47-year-old was a struggling refugee with an uncertain future. But with support from UNHCR, he is now making a decent living out of his small fishing business in Mogadishu.

“By 6 a.m. in the morning, I am always deep in the sea casting my nets. I enjoy fishing,” says the 47-year-old with a grin. In a month, Mohamed can make about \$280 after selling his fish at the local market - a tidy sum that easily caters for his daily needs.

Until September 2017, Mohamed was living in Kakuma refugee camp in North Western Kenya after fleeing Somalia's civil war in the early 1990s.

Like most refugees in Kakuma camp, Mohamed had limited economic opportunities and depended solely on humanitarian aid for survival. His desire to be resettled one day kept him going. “Life in the camp became uncertain and it was not as hospitable as before,” he recalls. He learned that any chance of resettlement was very small, as it can only be offered to very vulnerable refugees who meet the strict resettlement criteria.

Mohamed decided to return to Somalia through the assisted voluntary return program of UNHCR. As part of the program he received a cash grant offered by UNHCR to returnees. From the cash his family received, he was able to make a down payment of \$800 on a fishing boat which was on sale for \$1,300. “I have been paying the balance with the income I get from the sale of the fish,” he explains.

Through his partnership with a friend who owns a generator that runs the boat, Mohamed earns up to USD \$10 daily from selling fish. He takes home a third of the total profit earned from the business and hopes to buy his own generator so he can keep all the profit.

Following a [Tripartite Agreement](#) between UNHCR, the Governments of Kenya and Somalia, over 82,000 Somali refugees have voluntarily returned from Kenya to Somalia since late 2014.

The agreement seeks to create a safe, voluntary and organized return of refugees who are willing to return home.

To help in their reintegration, UNHCR assists returnees in various ways, including through Cash Based Interventions (CBI) - a key strategy that UNHCR has used globally for decades.

In Somalia, UNHCR is working with a money transfer company to disperse cash grants to returnees. The cash grant offer includes a one-time cash allowance of US \$200 per family member upon arrival, US \$200 monthly grant for six months from the second month of arrival and US \$25 for each school-going child per year. A US \$1,000 shelter grant per household is also available in some cases.

“The decision to deliver cash through a financial service provider has enabled beneficiaries to access cash in a dignified and respectable manner,” explains Urayayi Mutsindikwa, UNHCR’s CBI Officer based in Mogadishu.

He adds that the money that has been spent within the local economy has boosted local businesses and benefitted the host communities, hence contributing towards peaceful co-existence between returnees and locals.

While Somalia has made notable gains in the last few years, the overall situation is still fragile and lasting solutions for returnees are still limited.

“Many returnees depend on us and other humanitarian agencies to help them reintegrate,” adds Mutsindikwa. “CBI has been a major lifeline to thousands of Somalis returning home after years in exile.”

Somalia is the biggest CBI operation in Africa and fourth in the world, with nearly 98,000 individuals reached with an estimated US \$28 million in 2017.

In 2018, over 8,000 returnees have received repatriation grants, as Mohamed did. Other individuals who benefit from the CBI programme include refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs) and the host community.

Mohamed is grateful for this support that has helped him get back on his feet and looks towards the future with hope.

“I hope that in the future I can buy a wider net and an engine so that I’m able to make greater profit,” he adds.

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UNHCR is solely dependent on donor funding to run its programs. UNHCR Somalia is grateful to all its donors for their generous contribution. Without their generous funding, our support to beneficiaries such as Mohammed (as well our overall projects in Somalia) would not be possible.

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