

SOMALIA TELLING THE REAL STORY

So far this year, an estimated **1,221 persons lost their lives or have gone missing** crossing the Mediterranean Sea on their way to Europe. Such losses happen to asylum-seeker, migrants and refugees every year. Many among them, Somalis.

In an effort to respond to this devastating situation, UNHCR rolled out an information campaign titled Telling the Real Story aimed to **inform communities in Somalia of the full scope of the perils and difficulties of such journey**.



Raising awareness on the danger of irregular movements in Hargeysa.

TELLING THE REAL STORY

The Telling the Real Story is a community-based campaign that disseminates stories about the extraordinary journeys made by Somalis to Europe. The campaign seeks to raise awareness among people, especially youth, to make an informed choice or decision about their movement and/or future plans but not stop them from moving.

The right to leave any country, including one's own, and to return is a human right. So too is the right to seek asylum in other countries.

It is a human rights violation to prevent an individual in need of international protection from seeking asylum. Should an individual then decide to move onwards from the country of asylum, it is vital that she or he possess information and know the risks prior to making this perilous decision.

Research shows that too often, those opting to flee for safer havens in Europe are reliant on heavily biased sources of information from either the smugglers who stand to profit from the journey, or untruthful feedback from relatives or friends in Europe that paints an unrealistically positive picture of life in Europe.

The Telling the Real Story project therefore strives to provide a counter-narrative, and inform the community of the full scope of the dangers associated with irregular movement to Europe, reveal the

challenges and problems related to living in Europe, and debunk the myths about life in Europe. The project also enhances intra-community dialogue, informs about the legal safe pathways but most importantly identifies and informs about the opportunities in the home country.

COMMUNITY-BASED OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Somalis use well known and popular routes for irregular onwards movement through Ethiopia or Yemen to Sudan, Libya and then across the Mediterranean to Europe. So far this year, 20,000 persons were reached through community-based outreach activities in Berbera, Borama, Burao, Gabiley, Hargeysa and Wajaale. Below is a highlight of a few activities.

SESSIONS AT SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES

Students from around 35 schools and universities heard stories of returnees and watched video testimonies of persons affected by irregular movements. They were also offered career counselling and information sessions on market opportunities.



READING SESSIONS

At book reading sessions organized in schools, students had a chance to read stories of their irregular movements, distributed books titled "The journey" and interact with returnees who shared their story from journeys and situation in transit countries.



DEBATE COMPETITION

Students are often easy targets for smugglers and traffickers. UNHCR had therefore organized debate competitions among students to counter these appealing but untrue narratives and raise awareness.



DIALOGUE SESSIONS

A number of dialogue sessions were held with a range of community members and actors to stay abreast of the emerging issues, including the trends, dangers, and protection concerns of people on move.



POSTERS AND BILLBOARDS

Dozens of posters and billboards had been placed across towns with a message: *Tahriib (irregular movement and or migration) is the longest journey with the most uncertain end, learn the truth before going on the journey, putting your life in the hands of smugglers means certain danger and to the smugglers you are just a cargo not a human being.*



CELEBRITY PERFORMANCE

A popular music band [Xidigaha Geeska](#) created and performs songs on trafficking in Hargeysa.



AWARENESS THROUGH SPORT

The Telling the Real Story campaign carried out awareness through sport activities. The aim of such activities was strengthening community-based perception and raising awareness on the impacts of irregular movement.



YOUTH FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Youth comprise a significant proportion of people on the move. The Telling the Real Story therefore, carried out a number of focused group discussions with youth groups to reframe the discourse on irregular movements and migration



I CAN GET MONEY, BUT I CAN'T GET ANOTHER LIFE

Mustafa, 23, dropped out of school when he was in his fourth semester. His family had financial difficulties and he wanted to help them. He left behind a mother and five sisters and left for Europe in a search of employment.

Tempted by the life his friend was living in Germany, Mustafa sought to follow in his footsteps. He contacted a friend who was already in Libya, who provided him information about the routes and people who can facilitate the travel. That is how Mustafa began his journey in November 2016.

He hit the road to Bossaso where he crossed the Gulf of Aden. After an 18-hour ride in an overcrowded boat he reached Aden. There he waited for six months. When he heard that boats do not go to Sudan anymore, he decided to return home. The next year in August, he decided to try again. He took a ferry to

Yemen and after a five-day long travel by boat he reached Sudan. It took him 16 days to cross the Sahara desert.

“We drank water and ate only bread. One piece in the morning and one in the evening”, recalled Mustafa.

When he reached Libya, his life changed. After staying in a house for seven months, he developed an allergy. He was tortured, beaten and threaten to be sold if he does not cover the payment. He contacted family and asked for help. It took them six hard and long months to collect the money.

He finally reached Bani Walid where he thought he was going to wait for a boat. Instead, he was to be sold a modern-day slave. His only solution was to escape from the traffickers, and luckily he managed. Contacting UNHCR for support, he managed to remain protected in Tripoli until June 2018 when he decided to return.



“After I reach Libya, I realized that my contact did not tell me the truth. If I knew that I will be tortured I would never leave home”, he said.

His family is happy to have him back, but his friends would say he should continue his journey from Libya to Europe.

“I know the reality of the journey. I saw people being raped. I saw people dying. I can always earn money, but I cannot get another life, if I die”, he replied to them.

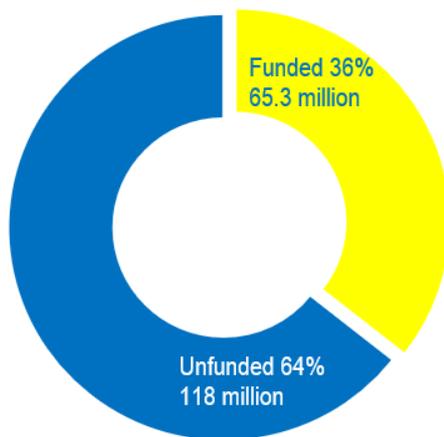
Upon his return, Mustafa benefited from the UNHCR re-integration grant and six-month subsistence allowance. Today, he owns a small shop and plans to finish his education. He is now married and wants to expand his business.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds.

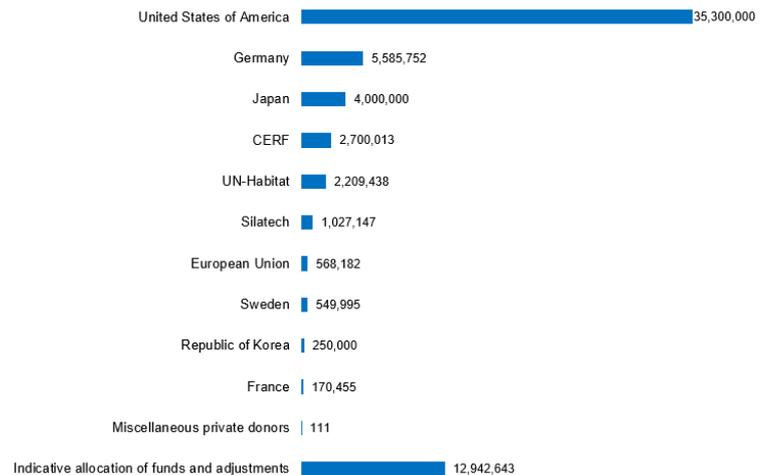
FUNDING (AS OF 9 DECEMBER)

USD 183.3 million
 requested for the Somalia situation



EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Earmarked contributions for the operation amount to some **US\$ 65.3 million.**



BROADLY EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Special thanks to the major donors of broadly earmarked contributions that can potentially be used for this operation due to their earmarking to a related situation or theme, or to the region or sub-region.

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