



FIRST PERSON

Food for Work Rejuvenates Community

Community members rehabilitate their village's war-torn infrastructure



Photo: Caroline Kihara, CARE

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Ayan Abdi Mohamed is a mother of seven who has lived all her 56 years in Beledweyne, a village in Somalia. She remembers the time before her village was engulfed in tribal fighting. She remembers when she and her children lived peacefully.

Somalia’s civil war and unrest changed all that. Ayan had to depend on relatives for help, but their living situation was often no better than her own. It did not take long before her entire family was completely destitute.

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USAID supported food assistance to the people of Beledweyne for years after the civil war, and their situation has improved tremendously. Recently, USAID refocused its efforts in the Beledweyne area, replacing food distribution with a food-for-work program that aims to rehabilitate the village’s infrastructure.

Ayan was among the first to register for employment through the new program, and she was encouraged when she realized that she would get paid in food for her work. “Now I am happier. I can work to secure my food, and my living situation is improved.”

Nowadays the sounds of pounding sorghum and grinding mills have replaced the sound of gunshots in Beledweyne. Young people have their traded guns for hammers and are beginning new lives instead of taking the lives of others.