

# Stories of Change

**USAID's Building Pathways out of Poverty for Ultra-Poor IDPs and Vulnerable Host Communities Project in Baidoa**



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REMARKS FROM PROGRAM LEAD:

## **Empowering Journeys – A Reflection on Resilience and Growth**



It is with great excitement and pride that I present the publication of our *'Stories of Change'*, which encapsulate the journey, experiences and insights we have gained through the implementation of Ultra-Poor Graduation project. This resource is more than just a reflection of our work; it's a testament to the dedication, innovation and resilience of our team and the communities we have partnered with. It highlights our commitment to improving children's well-being and empowering communities to build a brighter future in Somalia.

The creation of these Stories of Change has been a collaborative effort, drawing on the expertise of field staff, technical advisors, community stakeholders and our partners. Each story tells a narrative of a transformed life, the challenges overcome, lessons learned and impact achieved. These stories are designed not only to document our achievements but also to serve as a guide and inspiration for others working in fragile contexts like Somalia. Our goal in sharing these stories is twofold:

1. To ensure that the valuable knowledge generated from this project reaches a wider audience, fostering replication and scaling of effective practices.
2. To contribute to the global discourse on graduation by offering practical insights and evidence-based recommendations.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who has contributed to this endeavor, from the project team and to the editors and designers who brought these stories to life. Your hard work and commitment have made this achievement possible.

As we make these publication available, I encourage our stakeholders, partners and peers to engage with the content, share feedback and explore how these lessons can inform their own efforts. Together, we can amplify the impact of our work and continue to make meaningful contributions to Somalia's recovery effort

Thank you for being part of this journey, and I look forward to seeing how these stories of transformation spark new ideas and innovations.

**Charles Otieno**  
UPG Program Lead

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'C. Otieno', written over a horizontal line.



Lul Hassan, World Vision Somalia Project Officer for Economic Development (USAID funded), mentors a savings group named Degsan meeting in an IDP camp in Baidoa, Somalia.

## Summary of the Ultra Poor Graduation (UPG) Project

The Ultra Poor Graduation (UPG) project is a 39-month initiative funded by USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), running from November 2021 to January 2025. **Its primary goal is to lift ultra-poor households out of extreme poverty and food insecurity.** The project aims to achieve this through improved food security, enhanced quality of life, better financial stability, and increased capacity for disaster risk management and positive coping strategies.

A key component of the project's success is robust participant coaching. The project has developed a graduation criterion and uses a database to continuously track the performance of each participant. This database helps identify participants who are lagging and directs additional support to these households to ensure they meet the graduation criteria.



Adow Abdullahi Ibrahim, 21 sews a garment in the cloth shop he works at in Baidoa, Somalia.



Atiko Mursal Mohamed dyes cloth at her IDP shelter in Baidoa, Somalia, creating colorful tie and dye cloth that she sells to earn money for her family.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS:

**Key findings indicate that 68% of the households have graduated from extreme poverty to sustainable livelihoods. Additionally, 32% of households have shown a positive shift towards graduation, evidenced by improved savings from saving groups, increased incomes from skills acquired through TVET, and enhanced food security, nutrition, and asset possession.**



6 Cycles Transferred at **US\$ @42.5** to **5000 HHs**



**2621 HHs** received livestock over the last three years translating to **13,105 goats**

Saving for Transformation (S4T)



**5,186** members (**4328 females, 858 males**) are actively saving and trained in saving methodologies, business development skills, life skills, and financial literacy.



Target: 2000 participants; 1945 enrolled, with 1892 (**97%**) successfully completing training. Additionally, **76%** of TVET trainees are employed (self/formal) with average earnings of **\$110/month**.



**87%** of the goats have kidded so far and household members are consuming fresh milk



Disaster Risk Reduction Policy and Practice (DRR)

**24** Disaster Risk Reduction Committees formed/Strengthened

Community Owned Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (**COVACA**) developed for all the communities

Community Action and Adaptations Plans (**CAAPs**) developed



Design Monitoring & Evaluation (DME)

Last Mile Mobile Solution (LMMS)

Period graduation criteria data collection

Vulnerability assessment Baseline, Labour market assessment, TVET Tracer Study, Midterm and endline evaluations



# From Aspiration to Resilience Transforming Lives Through Empowerment

Fadumo Abdi Sheikh, a 64-year-old mother of 12 from Qansaxdhere in Somalia, faced immense hardship due to severe famine and drought. She had supported her family through livestock rearing, farming and running a small tea shop. However, the devastating drought forced her to flee her home, leaving behind her livelihood and plunging her into uncertainty. ***“We lost everything—the animals, the farm, even my small business,”*** Fadumo recalls. In her new settlement in Idaale 1 internally displaced persons (IDPs) camp, she struggled daily to secure basic needs for her family.

Fadumo’s life began to change after she joined the ultra-poor graduation program aimed at improving food security and the quality of life for ultra-poor households. The program provided her with multi-purpose cash assistance of \$42.50 and enrolled her in a VSLA group, where she received training on the importance of saving, life skills, financial literacy and business development. Additionally, Fadumo received five goats and training on animal husbandry to rebuild her livelihood.

With her experience in livestock rearing and the necessary training, Fadumo carefully



Fadumo rearing and milking her goats



“

**We went from having nothing to building a stable life”**

managed the goats. Soon, her herd tripled to 12, providing milk for household consumption and butter to sell for income. She also purchased three additional goats, totaling 15, further boosting her home consumption and income, improving her family’s food security and quality of life.

Fadumo also accessed a loan from her savings group to buy chickens, which she reared and resold for profit. The income from her livestock’s milk and small business totaled \$30-50 monthly, allowing her to provide food, clothing, and other essentials. Eight of her children are now attending school, while four are grown up. Her previous struggles were replaced with a sense of security and hope for the future. ***“We went from having nothing to building a stable life,”*** Fadumo says.

Looking ahead, Fadumo plans to continue expanding her herd and growing her small business. She is committed to ensuring her family’s long-term stability and resilience. ***“I want to rebuild everything we lost,”*** she shared.

Fadumo Abdi Sheikh’s journey from loss to recovery illustrates the transformative impact of targeted support and determination in restoring livelihoods and hope for ultra-poor households.



## Youth Empowerment Abdifatah's Road to Resilience

Al-Madin Aluminum and Metal Work was an established Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET) center contracted by World Vision Somalia to offer training in an enterprise-based TVET (EBTVET). It enrolled 10 youth trainees from the USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA)-supported project. Al-Madina took the trainees through practical sessions for four months. After completing the practical sessions, Al-Madina retained four trainees and linked another five to other similar companies dealing in aluminum and metal fabrications.

Nine of the 10 trainees had secured a job which helped them generate income to support their households to move up the trajectory out of extreme poverty.

Abdifatah Mumin Sidow, 18, graduated from Al-Madina Aluminum and Metal TVET Center. Abdifatah's household was displaced from Gof-goduud, a village about 90km from Baidoa. The household lost everything to the

drought. This household became destitute and was among the most vulnerable households that did not have any means of living. The household settled in Faajar IDP in Baidoa eight years ago.

In 2021/22, Abdifatah's household had the opportunity to join the Ultra-poor Graduation (UPG) project, a BHA-funded initiative supported by World Vision Somalia. The household received multipurpose cash assistance of \$42.5 per month for six months. Additionally, they benefited from the TVET intervention, choosing to enroll Abdifatah at the Al-Madina Aluminum and Metal Work TVET Center. Abdifatah completed the four-month course and graduated. Upon graduation, he was offered employment by the center and has now been working there for seven months.

Abdifatah earns a regular salary of \$70 per month. In addition to his regular duties, he takes on extra tasks



Abdifatah Mumin working at a workshop in Baidoa



such as fixing kitchen items, furniture, windows and gates. For these additional duties, he earns an extra \$30 to \$50 per month. Overall, his monthly income ranges from \$100 to \$120. From this income, Abdifatah contributes \$50 to his mother, \$10 to his father, and uses \$10 for his personal expenses. He saves the remaining \$30 to \$50 each month.

Abdifatah's household also joined a savings for transformation (S4T) group. The household contributes about a dollar per month to the savings group.

He hopes to open his metal workshop in the future. He is happy and thanked BHA and World Vision Somalia for the opportunity.

Through implementing ultra poor graduation project (UPG) funded by USAID, World Vision Somalia has successfully trained 1892 trainees (62% Females) in TVET courses for period of 6 months in Baidoa district. The trainees have graduated and supported with start-up kits for starting their livelihoods activities.

**Through implementing ultra poor graduation project (UPG) funded by USAID, World Vision Somalia has successfully trained 1892 trainees (62% Females) in TVET courses for period of 6 months in Baidoa district.**



Somali young women learns the art of henna as part of training through World Vision Somalia Ultra Poor Graduation in Baidoa



## Mano's Journey to Rebuild Her Life

Amina Hussein Dooli, a 40-year-old mother of eight, faced severe hardships when she fled to Bodan-1 IDP Camp in Baidoa in 2017. Originally from Bodan Village in the Bakol Region of Southwest State, Somalia, Amina was forced to leave her home due to prolonged drought, famine and conflict. As a single parent, she struggled daily to provide for her family's basic needs, making survival a constant challenge.

Amina's life took a positive turn when she and her family enrolled in the Graduating to Resilience (UPG) program. She received comprehensive support, including coaching in nutrition, savings, goal-setting, and household responsibilities. The program also provided her with \$42.5 in multi-purpose cash assistance for six months. Additionally, Amina received training in the Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) methodology, financial literacy, life skills and tailoring through a six-month Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) program.

Upon graduation, she was given a sewing machine as part of her start-up kit to launch her tailoring business.

With the skills and resources gained from the program, Amina began offering tailoring services from her home. Her business flourished, allowing her to open a small shop where she expanded her services to include selling rolls of cloth and vegetables. As her business continued to grow, she started supplying clothes to villages around Baidoa. Currently, Amina earns approximately \$130 monthly from her tailoring business. She has also embraced a savings culture, saving \$2 monthly and securing loans through the savings group to further invest in her business.

Amina expresses her gratitude for the skills she learned, saying, ***"The skills are very important to every IDP participant struggling in life, and I appreciate the support, it helped me gain these useful skills that have totally changed my life."***

**"The skills are very important to every IDP participant struggling in life, and I appreciate the support, it helped me gain these useful skills that have totally changed my life."**



Amina at her workshop: Sewing clients' clothes and building a stable income.



## Rising from Despair to Mohamed's Inspiring Journey to Rebuild His Life

Mohamed Manur Mohamed, a 44-year-old father, lived in Goofgadud Shabeelow, Somalia, with his wife and eight children. He relied on livestock rearing and farming to support his family, but severe famine and drought devastated the region, forcing them to flee and leaving behind their livelihood. The loss of their animals and crops plunged them into uncertainty, struggling to survive in a new settlement.

Mohamed's circumstances began to improve after enrolling in the ultra-poor graduation program. He received multi-purpose cash assistance of \$42.50, which helped cover immediate basic needs. He also joined a Village Saving and Loan Association (VSLA) group, where he learned the importance of saving. Through the program, Mohamed received two goats and training in animal husbandry, management and good agricultural practices, which helped him restart his livelihood. Additional training in financial literacy, business development skills, and life skills further empowered Mohamed to manage his resources effectively.

With careful management, Mohamed's goats doubled to four, and his agricultural efforts yielded a bountiful harvest of crops and vegetables for household consumption and income generation. Through agriculture, he participated in a project that provided \$75 monthly for 11 months. He saved some of this money and added it to a \$300 loan from the VSLA group to buy a bajaj (auto rickshaw), generating a monthly profit of \$200. Mohamed has four children attending school, significantly enhancing his family's financial stability and lifting them out of extreme poverty.

Looking ahead, Mohamed plans to expand his livestock, increase agricultural production, and invest in additional income-generating activities, ensuring a secure future for his family. ***"I want to keep building on what we've achieved,"*** he shares.

Mohamed Manur Mohamed's journey from hardship to stability highlights the transformative impact of the ultra-poor graduation program, illustrating how targeted support and training can lead to sustainable livelihoods and improved well-being.





Mohamed Manur Mohamed, a 44-year-old father, attending to his farm, Somalia,

“

**We've transformed our lives from nothing to something substantial. I am determined to keep building on what we've achieved,”**

Mohamed shares with pride and determination.



# Transforming Lives through the Graduating to Resilience Program

Bishaaro Cadow Keerow, a resilient mother of 12, faced immense challenges when she arrived at Banadir ADC IDP Camp in Baidoa. Originally from Boholey Village, Jubaland State, her primary livelihood was livestock farming.

However, prolonged drought and famine devastated her cattle, leaving her without any means of support. The dire situation, compounded by insecurity and conflicts, forced Bishaaro and her family to flee their home in search of refuge.

Upon enrolling in the Graduating to Resilience (UPG) program, Bishaaro's life began to change for the better. She received comprehensive coaching on nutrition, saving techniques, goal setting and shared household responsibilities. Additionally, she was trained in financial literacy, life skills, saving methods and business development skills. The program provided her with \$42.5 in consumption support for six months, helping to meet her immediate needs.

Her husband, Hassan Nishow, also benefited from the program by participating in the TVET program, where he trained in mechanics and driving, for four months. Upon completion, he received start-up kits, including a license and repair tools, enabling him to start his own business. The program's interventions have transformed Bishaaro's family. Hassan co-founded a garage business with a fellow TVET graduate specializing in welding. The garage now generates approximately \$350 per month, with Hassan saving \$150 each month. Bishaaro is actively involved in savings groups, contributing \$5 monthly. The household's income has brought stability and improved their living conditions. The family now enjoys three nutritious meals daily, and all school-age children regularly attend school, with school fees paid on time.

***"Before we enrolled in the UPG program, our livelihood was very difficult, but now everything is moving in the right direction. My husband and I appreciate the support,"*** says Bishaaro.

Looking ahead, Bishaaro and her husband plan to expand their garage business and continue their saving practices, ensuring a sustainable and secure future for their family.



**Before we enrolled in the UPG program, life was very difficult, but now everything is moving in the right direction."**



Bishaaro attending to her shop: A beacon of resilience and enterprise



Hassan hard at work repairing a car at a workshop

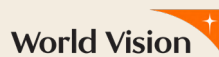
# The USAID/BHA-funded Ultra-poor Graduation (UPG) Project Summary

In Somalia, the ongoing armed conflict and insecurity with recurring climate shocks have resulted in protracted economic vulnerability and internal displacements across the country.

Baidoa is home to hundreds of thousands of IDPs who have abandoned their livelihood strategies in their places of origin as they fled from conflict or other natural disasters. Empirical evidence identifies some as former traders, herders and farmers whose lives and livelihood strategies have been disrupted.

The USAID/BHA-funded Ultra-poor Graduation (UPG) model is a 39-month project (November 2021 – January 31, 2025) implemented in Baidoa, Somalia through a consortium of World Vision Somalia, a prime recipient, ACTED - an implementing partner, and The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) - a research partner. It is an integrated program that covers four main sectors namely, Multipurpose Cash Assistance (MPCA), Agriculture, Economic Recovery and Market Systems (ERMS), and Disaster Risk Reduction Policy and Practice (DRR). The focus in the MPCA, Agriculture, DRR, and Economic Recovery Market Systems (ERMs) sectors is intended to enhance food security by improving the availability of food and non-food items to the targeted communities and also creating employment opportunities through TVET, hence enhancing graduation out of poverty.

The project aims to graduate 5000 ultra-poor IDPs and host community households out of extreme poverty to self-reliance in Baidoa. To achieve the objective of the project, the vulnerable households are to go through a series of interventions, including coaching, and mentoring.



For more information on Ultra-poor Graduation (UPG) Project, please reach out to Charles Otieno  
[Charles\\_Otieno@wvi.org](mailto:Charles_Otieno@wvi.org)  
[somalia\\_relief@wvi.org](mailto:somalia_relief@wvi.org)

[wvi.org/somalia](https://wvi.org/somalia)

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