

Case Study 1: Habibo Mohamed Abdirahman - From displacement to business success

Enter Energy Somalia (EES), funded through the UK Government's Transforming Energy Access (TEA) initiative, aimed to improve electricity access and promote the Productive Use of Energy (PUE) for livelihood enhancement in Barwaaqo settlement, Baidoa, Southwest State of Somalia. Under the programme, 149 small businesses including Habibo's enterprise received PUE equipment, mentorship, and business development support to help vulnerable households transition into sustainable, energy-enabled businesses. The intervention focused on strengthening income generation, improving resilience, and creating economic opportunities for internally displaced and host communities.



Habibo at her retail shop

Habibo Mohamed Abdirahman, a 37-year-old mother of four lives in Barwaaqo settlement. Originally from a pastoralist background, she was displaced from her home and arrived in Barwaaqo with no assets, no stable source of income, and limited opportunities to rebuild her life. Like many displaced women, she faced significant economic vulnerability and depended on irregular means of survival to support her family. With strong determination, Habiba started selling essential food and small household items in Barwaaqo, however, she lacked the financial capacity and business experience needed to grow her business into a more sustainable model. Without savings, collateral, or a credit history, she had no access to formal financing or business start-up capital. After operating her small business for nearly one year, the lack of productive equipment and refrigeration limited her to around 20–25 customers per day and an average monthly income of approximately 160 USD, making it difficult to adequately support her family's basic needs.

The absence of reliable business assets and productive equipment meant she could only do selling of small household items including selling of perishable food items like potatoes, cooking oil and spices etc. As a displaced woman with limited economic opportunities, her prospects for continued engagement and operation of her business appeared extremely limited. Recognising these constraints, the EES programme, through Mercy Corps in partnership with IBS Bank, provided Habibo with a 2,500 USD business support package to help transform her small business into a more sustainable livelihood.

Thanks to the EES programme, Habibo received technical support from Mercy Corps and financing facilitation through IBS Bank and received a business support package, including fridges, blenders and ice storage items. The equipment allowed her to safely store and sell perishable products such as cold drinks, dairy products, and frozen goods commodities that were previously difficult to maintain in the settlement due to lack of refrigeration facilities. In addition to the equipment, Habibo benefited from mentorship, business guidance, and financial inclusion support aimed at strengthening her business management capacity and long-term sustainability. Habibo's business rapidly became one of the most important retail businesses within the Barwaaqo settlement. The refrigeration equipment enabled her to stock high-demand products like ice that many smaller vendors could not preserve or sell consistently. Income generated from the business now enables her to comfortably support her children's education, healthcare, food, and other household expenses.

'At first, I was a person with little hope and never imagined my business could reach this level or that I could receive such support. I never thought that a displaced woman like me could own a successful business. The support I received completely transformed my life.'



Habibo's new refrigerator