

JOURNEY OF SUCCESS: THE STORY OF SAINAB HAJI HUSSEIN

VSF-Suisse Somalia

Sainab Haji Hussein is a woman from Gedo region of south Somalia with a humble background. She has never attended any school in her life apart from going to the local compulsory Quran and Arabic school in her early teens. She got married at the age of 15 and has nine children.

Sainab used to sell meat and milk at the Ceelwak market where in 2002 there was an outbreak of livestock diseases leading to vaccination campaigns by VSF Suisse and other NGOs. Sainab became part of the 15 CAHWs who were selected from in and around Ceelwak to undergo a 14-day Community Animal Health Workers (CAHW) training sponsored by VSF-Suisse.

“When the outbreak happened, I saw an opportunity to learn more about these diseases and how I can take care of my animals and prevent the spread of the outbreak,” says Sainab.

This made her the third female CAHW in the community. The female CAHWs attend to small animals that are kept within the town and villages while their male counterparts operate mainly in watering and grazing areas to offer their services.



Sainab Haji Hussein

Sainab also attended training in Animal health interventions at a later stage. This was also organized by VSF-Suisse. Upon completion she fully engaged in animal health extension services.

“This training helped me to become fully engaged practicing as a CAHW and also enabled me supplement our family income” she says.

VSF-Suisse (under another program) also donated start-up kits and equipment to

Sainab and other trained CAHWs and she took advantage of this and increased her

coverage area to neighbouring locations like Dibayo, Kukuma, Sandaar and Meri.

“The equipment I was given enabled me to expand my practice. My services to these communities include helping them with disease control and surveillance activities, offering preventive and curative animal care services, promotion of improved management and production of small stock (small ruminants and poultry).” explains Sainab.

The starter up kit of veterinary drugs and equipment was worth USD 400. The local network of 15 Ceelwak CAHWs were also mobilized, trained and linked to the Ceelwak pharmacy with an initial support of start up kit of drugs worth about USD 150 each.

The Ceelwak pharmacy is owned by a fellow female CAHW and so they were able to get veterinary drugs on credit on mutual trust basis and paid back after they treated animals.’ This was intended to provide a revolving fund to sustain their services to the community through the pharmacy.

Sainab and other CAHW from Ceelwak offer a wide variety of services to their customers. They prescribe and dispense drugs by themselves, they offer disease control and surveillance services through their network of CAHWs by organizing vaccination and deworming campaigns, either through VSF-Suisse or other NGOs.

CAHWs also carry out treatment services under VSF-Suisse guidance and supervision and also play a major role in public health awareness campaigns through community dialogues.

Some of the challenges they face in their work include long distances travelled to reach to pastoralists and their animals; many vulnerable relatives and extended family members seeking support and lack of cooling facilities for veterinary drugs that require to be kept cool.

All in all Sainab Haji Hussein is happy with her work as a CAHW. "I have made it possible for drugs to be available to my community at affordable prices and this is a source of great joy and satisfaction to me," she says.

The community trusts her and is very proud of her achievements; her success is frequently cited by local authorities and community leaders when they counsel the youth.

"I appreciate the work VSF-Suisse has done in my community and the region as a whole. I have benefited from the successive programmes and I can now support my immediate as well as extended family from the income I get. Long live VSF-Suisse." Concludes Sainab.