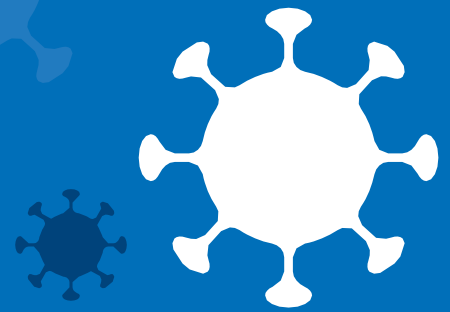




USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

COVID-19 Efforts in Somalia



The U.S. leverages strategic partnerships in Somalia with governments, donors, NGOs and the private sector to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. As of July 2020, more than \$23 million dollars has been newly committed to Somalia in order to prevent the spread and mitigate its effects.

MEETING EMERGENCY NEEDS

USAID swiftly reallocated resources to help the Government and people of Somalia prevent and respond to COVID-19, as well as address secondary impacts such as food security and child welfare. Like other emergency situations, COVID-19 exacerbates marginalization, inequities and discrimination. We are coordinating with humanitarian partners in Somalia and relevant ministries to ensure that ongoing emergency food, nutrition, acute health, water, sanitation and hygiene needs are met in all communities, particularly those which are most vulnerable and marginalized.

As the COVID-19 caseload increases, we are supporting disease surveillance; training of professional and community health workers on infection protection measures; installing isolation points; setting up handwashing stations; rehabilitating water points and boreholes to improve access to safe water; and strengthening case management through fixed facilities and mobile health clinics and in IDP camps. USAID also helps child protection committees to expedite the identification of cases and provide care for children when the main caretaker needs to be isolated from the rest of the family.

Despite restrictions on movement, quarantines, and chronic security concerns, we continue to support rapid and targeted humanitarian logistics that facilitates the movement of essential medical supplies and personnel.

“The U.S. Embassy through USAID is providing critical protective and medical equipment for the Somali people and doing so in partnership with the local private sector to build the skills of Somalia’s youth.”

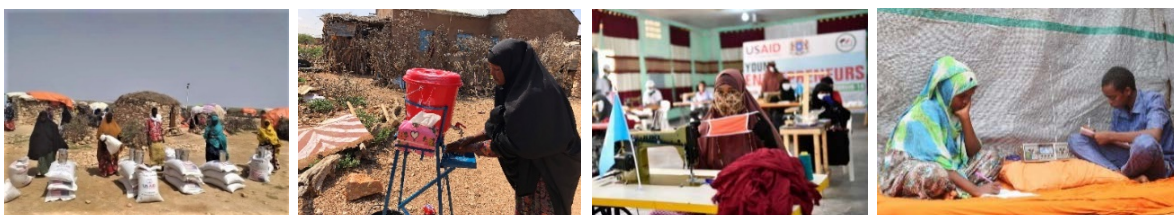
U.S. Ambassador to Somalia, Donald Yamamoto

SUPPORTING SOMALI GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO COMBAT COVID-19

USAID has helped to strengthen the effectiveness and legitimacy of government institutions in their management of COVID-19. Following a direct request from the Prime Minister to the U.S. Ambassador to Somalia, USAID provided 350 hospital beds and bed sheets for use in hospitals and isolation centers in all regions of Somalia. USAID also provided IT equipment and furniture to COVID-19 testing labs, which has improved their ability to process tests efficiently and effectively. In partnership with Somali local textile companies, more than 300 youth were trained in basic sewing, gaining essential work skills and earning much-needed income – while helping to meet the country’s growing demand for reusable masks. As a result, over 500,000 locally made, non-medical face masks were provided to the Somali Ministry of Health for distribution all over the country.

EDUCATING SOMALI CHILDREN

Nation-wide school closures due to COVID-19 have had an unprecedented negative impact on children and young people’s cognitive, social and emotional development. While children are out of school, many of them can listen to USAID’s daily radio programming called Tisqaad, ‘courtesy,’ and Bidmaamiye, ‘enlightenment,’ in the Somali language. The diverse programming includes short skits, dramas, and stories for children and families that focus on the importance of education, gender equality, problem solving skills, stress management and good behavioral practices that help prevent and stop the spread of the virus. USAID is also working with Somalia’s Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education to develop distance learning policies and approaches that can be used in non-formal education and will include COVID-19 safety and mental health messaging via radio, social media, print and interactive materials, where possible.



LEVERAGING VIRTUAL SOLUTIONS TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Our work to equip government institutions to respond to crises such as COVID-19 contributes to broader efforts that focus on strengthening democratic institutions, promoting civic participation, contributing to credible and inclusive elections, and supporting political parties to become more competitive and representative. In addition to observing appropriate prevention behaviors throughout their interactions, government officials are increasing their use of virtual platforms for training and meetings.

To continue to expand access to justice for Somalia's most vulnerable populations, USAID has developed a variety of online learning content for Somali lawyers, paralegals, and management personnel, teaching them how to use existing legal frameworks to empower individuals. Tailored webinars have equipped legal aid workers and paralegals with skills and approaches they can use to promptly investigate and address complaints of conduct that may violate professional ethics.

USAID is making civic education available through radio call-in clinics and "hotlines." The latest program focused on the justice challenges faced by women and internally displaced persons. Messaging on individual rights and access to justice is also being promoted through targeted social media campaigns and local television shows. These activities play a critical role in helping advance aggrieved Somalis understand how to interact with justice institutions and authorities.

Upcoming elections remain a key area of interest for the Somali people. A recorded program broadcast on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube encouraged viewers to comment and pose questions to high level officials on how COVID-19 will affect electoral preparations and discuss the future of the political process in Somalia. Similar online discussions with well-known political activists are ongoing. Our recently opened Political Party Resource Center in Mogadishu is now hosting online consultations and training for political parties. Staff moderate and translate trainings and forums at the Center, taking full advantage of its fast internet and its safe, quiet, and controlled environment.

USAID also supported the Somali Parliament to broadcast live debates on television and Facebook. The Minister of Finance made his first online public appearance to address the implications of debt relief for Somalia. Other programs focused on the effect of COVID-19 on the federal budget, the impact of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition – including the disproportionate impact on women and children – and the increase of gender-based violence and female genital mutilation during this time.

SUSTAINING ECONOMIC PROGRESS

USAID is helping to safeguard economic growth and pivoting its programs to address today's new challenges. Our support to export-oriented agribusinesses is helping maintain trade flows, employment and incomes. We are positioning businesses for swift recovery in the aftermath of the outbreak; promoting improved agricultural practices to increase domestic food production and cushion Somalia against price increases and shortages of basic food commodities; and coordinating with Somali financial institutions to modify existing loans to micro and small enterprises to allow flexibility in repayment terms. As a result of USAID outreach efforts, many fish, fruit and vegetable vendors throughout the country are following COVID-19 protocols with handwashing stations, protective gear and social distancing at the markets. Dairy farmers are increasing the production and supply of high-quality milk to meet the increased demand for local milk due to decreased imports of powdered milk, and a few hundred metric tons of bananas and sesame seed continue to be exported.

Working with Somali financial institutions, USAID plans to provide \$3 million of micro and small loans (maximum of \$50,000 each) primarily to women and youth-owned businesses to help them withstand disruptions to their businesses as a result of COVID-19, and retain jobs that otherwise would be lost due to COVID-19. The loans will help ensure there is enough local food production to fill supply gaps due to trade and movement restrictions in countries like China, India and UAE, the sources of most of Somalia's food imports.

