

Cases LEAD program

Text and photos: Ministry of Foreign Affairs & LEAD partners SPARK, Hivos and Oxfam Novib

Boosting female entrepreneurial skills to combat youth unemployment

SPARK is one of the four implementing partners of the LEAD program. SPARK has set up a LEAD project in Somalia that aims to support Somalia's new and existing SMEs, particularly businesses led by women.

One of those women is Amina Caydiid. She is a local businesswoman living in Hargeisa, Somaliland and who is being supported under the LEAD program of SPARK. She has been active as an entrepreneur for many years but her efforts to establish and run her own tailoring shop were not successful as she lacked the necessary technical and business skills.

Amina's business is one of the 600 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Somalia that was by assessed by Spark in 2016 to discover the challenges facing Somalia's SMEs to grow and expand. The business assessment identified marketing skills as one of the major challenges hampering Amina's business along with other entrepreneurs.

After her business was assessed, Amina got an opportunity to participate in a two-days business development training on marketing and bookkeeping for women-led businesses in Hargeisa. During the training Amina's business was linked to one of the female business coaches who has studied business and human resource management in Canada and returned to Somaliland in 2014 to assist the Somali women in business. The coach had understood Amina's challenges and provided full coaching support through face-to-face and group coaching approaches to improve her marketing skills.



Thanks to the training and coaching Amina reported that she had been able to develop and built up her long aspired dreams in the tailoring business. Since December 2016 Amina has experienced great improvement in her business and she recruited three new staff for the positions of manager, book-keeper and door-to-door marketing. Amina noted with no doubt that her business will be of great value to the area and will benefit more youth in getting employment.

Fresh Direct in Nigeria

The Work in Progress Alliance (Oxfam Novib, VC4A, Butterfly Works and IOM), as one of the four implementing partners of LEAD, have set up the She Leads Africa (SLA) Accelerator program. The 3-month program is designed to identify, support and fund the next generation of Nigeria's brightest entrepreneurs



Angel Adelaja is one of them. She is a young Nigerian entrepreneur, living in Abudja and participant of SLA. Angel started the program in July 2016 and spend one week of residency at SLA HQ in Lagos being trained by the SLA team and connecting with some of most prominent business and operational experts. After that, she returned to Abudja to implement the lessons she had learned and was supported by the SLA team whenever she needed support. In November 2016, she joined the Demo Day to pitch Fresh Direct. Fresh Direct is an

agricultural production and processing company that provide exquisitely grown organic fruits, vegetables and meats and processed end products, to potential investors. Fresh Direct won the 2 million Naira prize provided by the Guaranty Trust Bank that joined the Accelerator Programme of SLA.

Since winning the Demo Day, Angel is focused on developing the technology her business uses through the use of sensors and automation to build a fully off grid solution for African Farmers. Angel stated *“She Leads Africa Accelerator program helped us really focus activities at Fresh Direct. The classes plus peer interaction ensured that we could bounce ideas around and critically look at our business in a safe and honest way. She Leads Africa helps us make sure that we are heading in the right direction, focus on key goals, measure our progress critically, develop a market strategy and ultimately become investor ready. I’m really glad we could participate in the program and we’ll continue to utilize the resources available on the She Leads Africa Platform.”*

Co-working in remote Tunisia - “New oases for collaboration”



As an example of the LEAD program, Hivos supported over 10 co-working spaces in 2016 for young people in remote regions in North Africa. High unemployment rates, lack of prospects, and the inability for youth to express themselves are some of the most urgent problems contributing to societal discontent and to patterns of migration.

Hivos has supported the establishment of the co-working space Cirta in Kef, a small city in the northwest of Tunisia, right on the Atlas mountains that border Algeria. The city is plagued by skyrocketing unemployment rates among youth and terrorist groups are waiting in the mountains to recruit the desperate youth from the city. With financial and technical support, which included training on business modelling, finance, marketing, leadership and community building, the Tunisian entrepreneur Walid Hammami opened in November 2016 Cirta, a cultural and co-working space. Walid build the space in the middle of a poor neighborhood in Kef to stimulate dialogue and cooperation among youngsters. Since its inception Cirta’s activities have rapidly expanded and it has employed in the meanwhile 11 youngsters. Cirta receives mentoring and financial support from Cogite, one of Hivos local partners and the country’s first co-working space located in Tunis. Cogite was awarded world’s third best co-working space by Forbes in 2016. The space hosts more than 100 coworkers daily and 90 events every year. Co-founder Housseem Aoudi of Cogite, whom is a partner of Hivos since 2013, explains the need for mentoring new spaces: *“Cogite has become a green oasis in Tunisia. A place where like-minded can meet and build our country together. People don’t leave to Europe just because of better salaries. They leave because of our closed culture, because you can’t be free and join forces to build something good. Cogite was the first oasis, but I imagine thousands of safe spaces throughout the country. All serving different sectors and communities like Cirta.”*

For Hivos and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs these results in the field work to the benefit of young entrepreneurs like Walid Hammami. The LEAD program seeks to establish more co-working spaces and as such LEAD also aims to inspire structural solutions to give young people the productive economic future they aspire and deserve.