

Charitable donations made by the Anglo-Somali Society

The Society has neither the financial resources nor the manpower to act as a funding body. However, the following charitable donations were made by collecting money from members and by using the historical portion of the Society's reserves known as the Relief Fund. This Fund is now depleted and there are no plans to make further donations in the immediate future.

When deciding which organisations to support the Society's Council was guided by the need to show favour to a variety of geographical locations throughout the Horn. For practical reasons some areas have been easier to support than others.

2010 £1,500 to the Hargeisa School for the Deaf

2008 £880 to Dr. Hawa Abdi Hospital, Mogadishu.
£300 to the Borama (Storm) Disaster Appeal initiated by the Henley-Borama Friendship Association.

2007 £800 to John Kelly Technology College in the UK as a contribution towards cost of transporting general equipment (including photocopiers) from the UK to the 26 June School, Hargeisa and the Berbera College of Fisheries and Marine Studies.

2006 £1,624 to Pastoral Concern Association Ethiopia (PCAEE), in the Somali Region of Ethiopia, for the purchase of water pumps to alleviate the effects of drought.

2005 £1,697 through ActionAid to tsunami victims in Puntland (Somalia).
£500 to furnish library of the Omar Samatar Secondary School in Galkaio, Puntland.

2004 £40 to Hargeisa Hospital, Somaliland.

2003 £1,000 for the rehabilitation of the paediatric ward of Hargeisa Hospital.

Dr. Hawa Abdi Hospital, Mogadishu



Since making a tiny charitable donation to the Hawa Abdi Hospital in May 2008 the Anglo-Somali Society has followed its fortunes with interest, concern, and horror. The hospital is located in the Mogadishu-Afgooye corridor in which huge numbers of displaced persons live in destitution. It was founded by Dr. Hawa Abdi and she runs it

with the help of her two daughters, Dr. Amina Mohamed Abdi and Dr. Deqa Mohamed Abdi (see photograph above).

On 5 May 2010 a private dispute escalated into a violent clash in the area surrounding the hospital. This triggered the occupation of the clinic compound by armed members of *Hizbul Islam* whose leader was Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys. A number of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) non-medical staff were detained and this organisation had to evacuate its patients and suspend its activities. MSF was deeply saddened by the loss of two human lives during the incident.

Issue 48 of the Journal, published on 5 October 2010, quoted on page 36 from some emails from the hospital describing the horrific conditions suffered during this episode. On the basis of a report by IRIN (the UN news service) the article incorrectly stated that the hospital and the MSF clinic closed. It also said that, 'fearing for her safety' Dr. Hawa Abdi left the hospital in July. In fact, an email from Dr. Deqa Mohamed Abdi dated 7 October showed that only the surgery department was closed, being in need of 'some fixing after attack'. Unfortunately the MSF had stopped their work but the hospital was open and staff were 'doing what we can'.

Women of the Year

On a happier note Deqa also reported that the three women doctors would be honoured on 8 November 2010 in New York by Glamour Magazine as Women of the Year 2010. This duly happened. Though an unlikely organisation to bestow such honour the Magazine has a track record of recognising outstanding achievements by women, and is working with the non-profit-making organisation Vital Voices to raise funds to support the hospital. The 'strongest women you'll ever meet' were introduced in the Carnegie Hall as living 'in war-torn Somalia' in 'daily fear of rape, of death, and bands of rebels who ravage without warning'.

Founding of the hospital

At 17, Hawa Abdi won a scholarship to study gynaecological medicine in Kiev in the Ukraine; she was the only woman among 91 Somali students. Her dream to become a doctor began when, at the age of 12, she watched her mother die in childbirth.

After Kiev, she returned to Somalia and worked for government hospitals. She married and had three children, two daughters and a boy, though her son was killed in a car accident in 2005. He was 23. Both daughters, Amina and Deqa, became doctors.

In 1983 Dr. Abdi opened a one-room private women's clinic on the 400-acre farm owned by her family. Somalia's president at the time, Mohammed Siad Barre, personally gave her permission.

That clinic grew steadily to 2-storey hospital with 400 beds, 3 operating theatres, 6 doctors, 43 nurses, an 800-pupil school and an adult-education centre that taught women how to cook nutritious meals and make clothes. As the civil war raged the area became a camp for 90,000 people fleeing violent conflict, two out of three being women and children.

Daily life before May 2010

On separate patches of land, Dr. Abdi arranged for families to farm and she bought a small fleet of fishing boats to help feed the camp. However, since fishing in Somalia is considered to be low-class work it took some encouragement to break this old taboo. Female genital mutilation was an important issue. The doctors did not tell parents not to follow tradition. Instead, they educated both men and women about the health risks associated with the practice, and let people decide for themselves. Relying on small international donations, the doctors managed to start a school for 850 children. There were plenty of out-of-work teachers in the camp, so the school paid them a small salary. They offered continuing-education classes—including foreign-language training—to 100 women. Former child soldiers were even trained to work as nurse's aides in the hospital.

There was no talk of clan at the hospital. Also, any man caught beating his wife went to jail—an old storeroom with barred windows, until his wife and the camp council of elders decided to let him go. This usually meant just a few hours in the cell, but the effect was revolutionary: this kind of control of their lives by Somali women was probably without precedent.

Dr. Abdi had long performed surgical procedures herself, everything from Caesarean sections to teasing out bullets and shrapnel. Measles, malaria, diarrhoea, epilepsy, tuberculosis and especially life-threatening malnutrition, in a

country constantly teetering on the edge of a full-blown famine, are what she confronted on a daily basis. She believes some 10,000 famine victims are buried on her farm.

The events of 5 May 2010

On the morning of 5 May bullets from automatic rifles tore through the concrete walls and woven grass screens. A woman crawled away from her bed in the middle of giving birth. Another burst her stitches from a Caesarean operation as she ran, blood spilling from her body. Mothers were forced to tear intravenous tubes from their babies' arms as they fled into the bush.

The *Hizbul-Islam* militants smashed the four glass incubators, the only ones in Somalia. In their looting spree they broke open the metal containers of the centrifuges used for blood tests, looking for cash. They wrenched the doors and windows out of their frames and carried them off. Beds, food, medicine, equipment, and written records were stolen or destroyed. For hours Dr. Abdi was held at gunpoint whilst young teenage boys ransacked the premises. A guard and a bystander lay dead.

The militants demanded that, since Dr. Abdi was old and a woman, she hand control over to them. When they hoisted their black flag as a show of power, she refused to surrender and ripped a bed sheet off bed to display as a white flag. The gunmen, put Dr. Abdi under house arrest for the next five days and shut down the hospital, causing two dozen malnourished children to die in the bush after their families ran off.

Extraordinary aftermath

But something extraordinary happened. News of the attack raced through Somalia and the diaspora. Thousands of women from the sprawling refugee camp dared to protest, adding to a flood of condemnation from Somalis abroad that forced the militants to back down. Dr. Abdi insisted that the Quran says you cannot enter someone's house without their permission and she had not give them permission. Somalia's clan system mobilised – a curse when warlords are battling for primacy, but a powerful blessing when the weak can call on their ties to the strong. The militants agreed to leave. But Dr. Abdi refused to go back to work until her tormentors wrote an official letter of apology; which they did.

The struggle continues

At the age of 65, having recently survived a benign brain tumour, Dr. Abdi is deeply tired. She has been resting in Kenya on her doctor's orders, but she is determined to return. She has visited international donors to appeal for money. Some Somali expatriates are also trying to help. Italy gives Dr. Abdi money to buy medicine. The UN World Food Programme, which had suspended aid because it could not be protected, resumed shipments, sending food for 800 malnourished children and 440 patients in the hospital's care.

In 2009 the hospital treated more than 162,000 people and helped more than 14,000 malnourished children. Now the hospital has just 140 beds but it is gradually being rebuilt, and it still receives more than 250 patients a day, including about 15 women a day who give birth.

Hargeisa School for the Deaf



The school was established in 2001 by a deaf Kenyan Somali who had been educated at Kerugoya School and who later taught at the Borama School for the Deaf. Although the School has faced many difficulties, mainly because of its lack of permanent premises, Doreen Woodford of the Deaf Africa Fund has said recently that it provides a remarkably good standard of education and is well led by Miss Yasmin, the head teacher. She has been recognised by an award from the Somaliland Government.

A building plot of 60 x 40 metres is now available for the construction of new facilities. This will include eight classrooms, a sewing or computer classroom, a head teacher's office, a staff room, a store, a watchman's room, six toilets and a fence. The estimated cost of the building is \$65,750, and donations will also be needed towards the costs of equipment and materials. In the future it is hoped to build a second floor to accommodate the increasing number of students.

Abdullahi, another deaf Kenyan Somali teacher, has made a large contribution to the current success of the school and has successfully completed a five-week training course for deaf teachers of the deaf at Salt, in Jordan. He is sponsored by the Deaf Africa Fund but the costs are high and donations would be appreciated for such training and associated expenses.

The initiative to formulate a standard Somali Sign Language came to fruition in April 2009 when a ceremony in Hargeisa, attended by Government officials, NGO personnel and members of the deaf community, was followed by a highly successful three-day workshop.