

Water and Habitat programme provides basic services to vulnerable communities and facilitate their access to safe water supplies, improved conditions of living and sanitation.

NEW BOREHOLE BRINGS RELIEF TO QARDO RESIDENTS



The water kiosk in Qardo, usually a busy spot, is where residents get their clean water supply from

As dusk approached, a caravan of camels rushed towards a trough of water to quench their thirst after a long journey to Qardo, a remote town located in northern Somalia.

Access to clean water in a country plagued by seasonal drought has become a challenge. The years of conflict have disrupted normal life with not nearly enough suitable water points. Herders are forced to travel long distances in the scorching heat in search of this precious resource.

"We used to suffer most as herdsmen. Animals died due to drought and if we wanted to sell, we would sell it at a throwaway price. It was such a nightmare for us," said Abdirizak, a camel herder.

To help alleviate the problem, the International Committee of the Red Cross

(ICRC) drilled a borehole in Qardo last year with the aim of benefiting residents of 16 nearby villages.

The relief and convenience amongst residents is palpable in the area. Children playing soccer close to the borehole fill their plastic bottles after the game while old men chat away as their animals drink from the trough.

"Apart from selling our camels at a good price because of their healthy condition, this borehole has other positive sides. Our bond with fellow herdsmen is stronger than before as everyone traveled in different directions in search of water. Today we are

bonded by the availability of this water," explained Abdirizak.

The Qardo borehole has benefited a diverse group of people, including displaced families who fled conflict in other parts of the country and resettled here.

Mama Amina, is among the hundreds of internally displaced people in Qardo. She makes regular visits to the water kiosk, usually accompanied by her four children. "I used to walk many kilometers to get our water; this is much easier on all of us," Mama Amina says.

Fernando Resta, the head of ICRC's water programs in Somalia, is heartened by such feedback. "Our main aim is to help families have easy access to safe water by setting up a functional structure in the heart of communities. Once set up, the structure is run by the community to ensure that everyone has access and that the facility is well maintained," says Resta.

Since January this year, ICRC Somalia has facilitated access to water for over 65,000 people, the majority of whom are pastoralists in dire need of a steady supply to sustain their livelihoods.

To find out more about the ICRC Somalia visit www.blogs.icrc.org/somalia

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