



Hilaweyn Refugee Camp, Dollo Ado, Ethiopia

LIVELIHOODS & SHELTER: 31 year old refugee Abdul now works as part of the in-camp construction team for the ‘Transitional Shelters’.

It has been eight months since 31 year old Abdul started his job of building the new ‘Transitional Shelters’ for refugees.

“My team of 19 people have built over 250 shelters for families here in Hilaweyn Refugee Camp. It usually takes four people to build a house. We split into teams and build as many houses as we can”

“When we build the new homes , the families are always very happy. They thank us very much. It makes me proud”

Abdul, who is married with four children, is manager of a team of builders – a mix of refugees and members of the local host community - who have been selected and trained by UNHCR ‘s partner, The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) to construct refugee shelters. The team uses parts – windows, roofs, doors and frames – made of bamboo and steel sheeting that have been prepared by other refugee’s and host community members in an on-camp workshop. All workers are paid a small, but important wage. The project is funded by UNHCR’s partner The IKEA Foundation.

“We pick up the parts from the workshop and transport them to the location to build. Once we have built the shelter, it is then the responsibility of the new homeowners to mud plaster the walls. This plaster makes the houses much cooler in the hot sun, more secure and more private.”



Apart from providing an employment opportunity for the producers and the builders, the new innovative ‘Transitional Shelters’ provide better housing for many of the refugees in the camp and also vulnerable members of the local host community, as they are longer lasting than traditional UNHCR Emergency Tents and are more suitable for the extreme heat and dust of the region, which has seen over 190,000 Somali families arrive in Ethiopia to escape drought and violence in their homeland.

“I arrived in the (Hilaweyn) Refugee Camp 18 months ago. In Somalia I used to buy and sell animals but by the time we left Somalia, we had no animals and very few possessions.”

With the help of the regular income provided by his construction job, Abdul is gradually building his life.

“I spend the money I earn from this job to buy food for my family. Whilst it is not a lot, my wage makes a big difference.”

“In Somalia there was no security, but here in Hilaweyn we feel secure. Where we have security, we can survive and we are happy.”

And with the security and safety provided, Abdul is able to have hopes for his family in the future.

“My children now go to school and are learning. I hope they get enough knowledge to get jobs and to earn good money in the future. Then they can help their parents and any others who need it.”

Photos: © UNHCR/ R.Nuri

Case studies written in February 2013. Data and figures correct as of March 2013. All names have been changed.

About UNHCR

For six decades, UNHCR has helped save lives, restore hope and rebuild futures. As we strive to bring protection and solutions to millions of refugees around the world, some of the world’s leading corporations are helping us have maximum impact, providing an opportunity for collaborating together on initiatives that serve both their social and business interests.

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