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JIGJIGA

*Diaspora Engagement for City Development:
Institutionalising the Concept of Migration and Development
into Plans and Actions of Jigjiga City, Ethiopia*

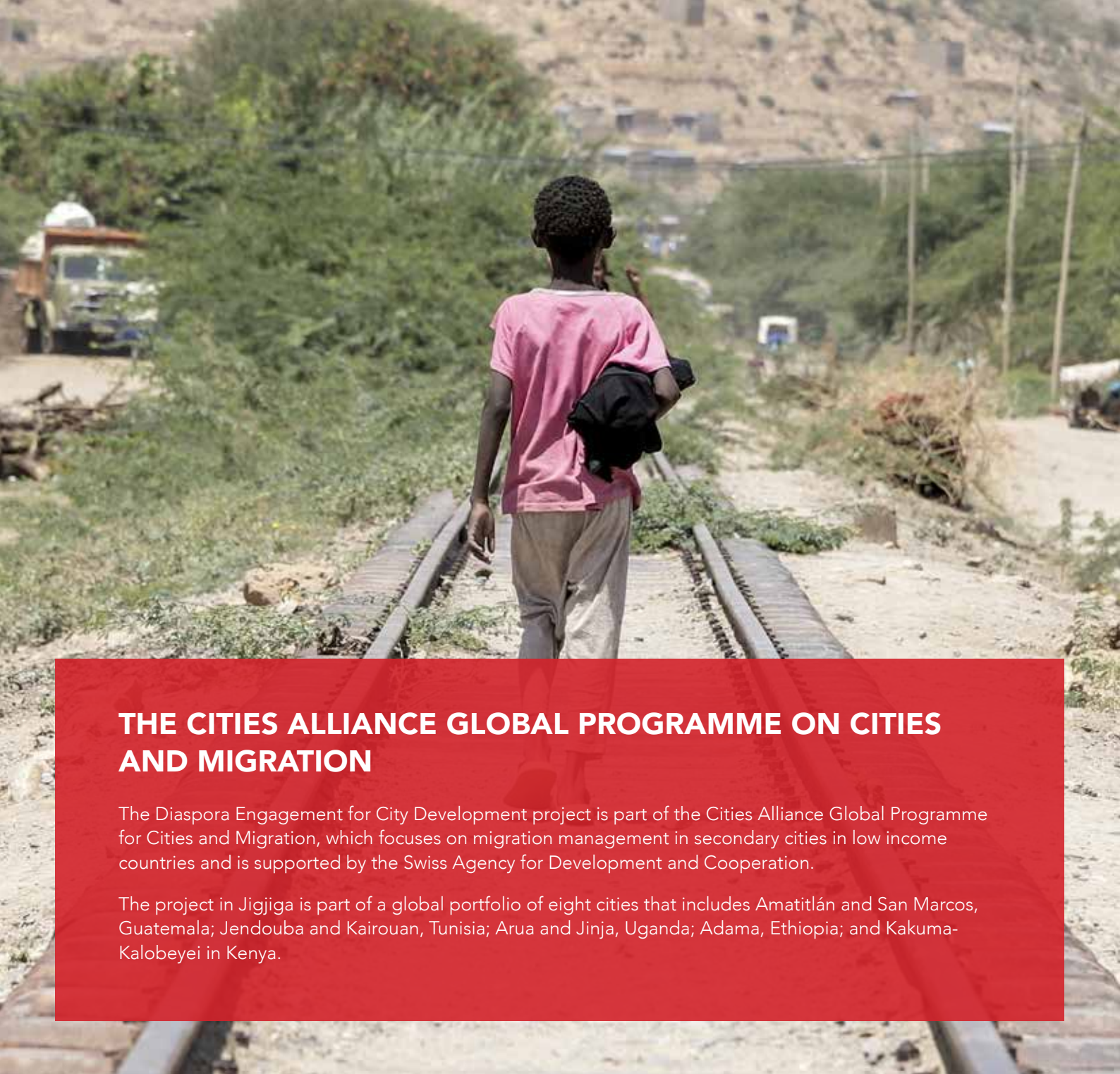
Implementing Partner: Jigjiga University and the Regional Investment and Diaspora Affairs Bureau of the Regional Government Council of the Ethiopian Somali Region

Location: Jigjiga, Ethiopia

Duration: November 2019 – November 2021

SUMMARY

The Diaspora Engagement for City Development project will help the Ethiopian Somali regional and local governments to mainstream diaspora engagement in policies, development plans, and approaches to better leverage the important role the diaspora plays in local development. The project will produce a comprehensive profile of the diaspora, strategies for engagement, and capacity building for local governments to implement the strategies.



THE CITIES ALLIANCE GLOBAL PROGRAMME ON CITIES AND MIGRATION

The Diaspora Engagement for City Development project is part of the Cities Alliance Global Programme for Cities and Migration, which focuses on migration management in secondary cities in low income countries and is supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

The project in Jigjiga is part of a global portfolio of eight cities that includes Amatitlán and San Marcos, Guatemala; Jendouba and Kairouan, Tunisia; Arua and Jinja, Uganda; Adama, Ethiopia; and Kakuma-Kalobeyei in Kenya.

CONTEXT

The Ethiopian government has officially acknowledged the important role that the Ethiopian diaspora plays in the country's development. A dedicated Diaspora Engagement Affairs Directorate under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs aims to create an enabling environment for the diaspora to maximise the transfer of knowledge and skills and to promote trade and investment. At the regional state level, branches of the Diaspora Coordinating Office engage directly with their diaspora.

The Ethiopian Somali Regional State has a considerable share of its population living abroad. Members of the Ethiopian Somali diaspora have retained a strong emotional, financial, and familial connection with the region, and they have shown an enduring sense of responsibility to support their clans. The Somali Regional State is one of the largest remittance-receiving states in Ethiopia; according to estimates, 20-30% of local households depend on remittances from the diaspora.

Remittances are especially important to Jigjiga, the capital of the Ethiopian Somali Region. The Jigjiga regional and local government offices have demonstrated a strong commitment to engaging their diaspora to support social and small investment projects. Although this engagement is fairly recent, it is already showing promising results. Transfer accounts have been established at the district level and USD 1 million has been raised for local social projects in eight months, according to data from the Somalia Regional Government Diaspora Affairs Bureau in Jigjiga. There is much scope and willingness to enhance the city's institutional and policy arrangements to better leverage the diaspora's impact on local development.

ANTICIPATED RESULTS

“Our diaspora’s driving potential can only be unlocked if adequate engagement mechanisms are in place, if their organisations and representation bodies are strengthened to become part of a trustful relationship between diaspora, institutions and local residents.”

— Mr. Ali Afi Ali, Deputy Bureau Head, Regional Investment and Diaspora Affairs Bureau

Result 1: A comprehensive profile of the Ethiopian Somali diaspora

Jigjiga University will establish a comprehensive profile of the Ethiopian Somali diaspora with information including size, geographic distribution, skills, investment capacities, interests, and type of current versus aspired relationship to the homeland. The database will specifically target the diaspora with links to Jigjiga who are involved or invest in the city. Special attention will be paid to fostering gender equality perspectives while understanding the role of the diaspora.

The information collected during the project will help the local governments ramp up their engagement with the diaspora in a more effective, targeted way. It will also inform various university curricula, ensuring that the knowledge generated will continue to impact students and future Ethiopian decision makers.

“The regional and local governments can only fulfil their role to engage the diaspora for local development if they know their diaspora, its skills, knowledge and investment capacity and interest. To date, no diaspora profile exists. This project will address this knowledge gap in collaboration with the regional Investment and Diaspora Affairs Bureau.”

Result 2: Strategies for regional and local governments to better engage the diaspora

Local and regional government officials acknowledge the diaspora as major investor for the city of Jigjiga (particularly in the construction, agriculture and hotel sectors) and as a provider of emergency relief in times of crisis. Improved policies and legal frameworks can further enhance the diaspora's impact for local development.

This project will work with key stakeholders – members of the diaspora, remittance-receiving households and businesses, and the government – to identify and address bottlenecks that are preventing the diaspora's potential from being fully tapped, as well as strategies for addressing those bottlenecks. Gender aspects will be taken into considerations.

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— Mr. Tingirtu Gebretsadik Tekle, Director for Migration and Displacement Studies at Jigjiga University

For example, the project will support the development of a strategy to engage the diaspora in regional and local decision-making processes and development plans. To date, the diaspora is rarely included or consulted, which is a missed opportunity to tap into the diaspora's intellectual capital and tie it closer to the homeland. "Offering to the diaspora the possibility to contribute intellectually to the development of the city increases their sense of belonging, while at the same time building trust between the diaspora and institutions at home," notes Mr. Ali Afi Ali, Deputy Bureau Head for the Regional Investment and Diaspora Affairs Bureau.

Stronger regulatory frameworks are another priority for the project, as the diaspora finds the market entry and protection of its investment complex and uncertain.

Result 3: Greater institutional capacity to implement strategies

The third component of the project will further build the capacities of regional and local government offices to implement the strategies for engaging the diaspora. It will institutionalise dedicated, decentralised diaspora offices at the regional and local level and develop operational procedures and guidelines for their use. Government officers will receive training and instruments to provide adequate, tailored services to their diasporas.

Improving coordination across the different regional and local government offices is recognised as a major prerequisite to providing better services to the diaspora. To meet this need, the project will support coordination efforts through multi-stakeholder forums and conferences that will include existing networks of consular and diplomatic representations around the world.

We strongly believe that engaging the diaspora is a complex process that cuts across many themes and sectors (economic, political, cultural and social), and that diaspora issues are of concern to a range of national institutional bodies, as well as to different levels of government.

— Mr. Mohammedzeyen Kedir Shurea,
Ministry of Urban Development, Housing
and Construction



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