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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*

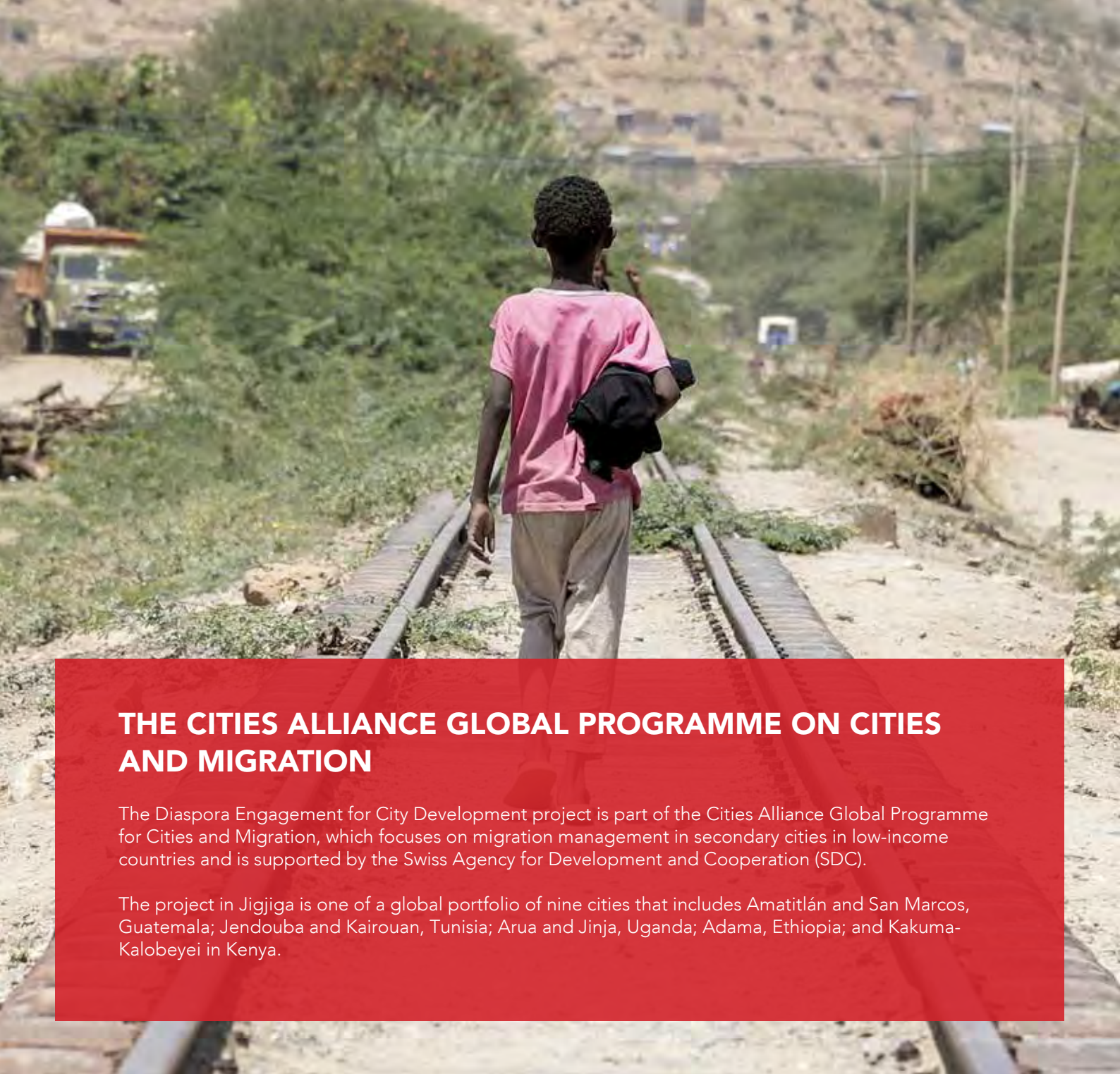
**Implementing Partner:** Jigjiga University and the Regional Investment and Diaspora Affairs Bureau of the Regional Government Council of the Ethiopian Somali Region

**Location:** Jigjiga, Ethiopia

**Duration:** November 2019 – November 2021

## SUMMARY

The Diaspora Engagement for City Development project helped 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 produced 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 (SDC).

The project in Jigjiga is one of a global portfolio of nine cities that includes Amatlán 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 \$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.

## RESULTS

### Result 1: A comprehensive profile of the Ethiopian Somali diaspora

To help the city ramp up its engagement with the diaspora in a more effective, targeted way, Jigjiga University established 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 specifically targeted members of the diaspora with links to Jigjiga who are involved or invest in the city.

The profiling also included a study of Jigjiga's remittance economy and how remittances can be better channeled into contributing to local development and private sector-led job creation, as well as increasing local livelihood options for those who do not want to migrate.

The study paid special attention to fostering gender equality perspectives while understanding the role of the diaspora; it found that women receive the bulk of remittances, which represent a large share of household income. Only 10 % of respondents invest remittances in businesses; others use them for food, services, rent, health, and education. The study recommended improving the saving capacity of remittance recipients.

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

With the information from the profiling, Jigjiga developed a Regional Diaspora Engagement Strategy to engage the diaspora in regional and local decision-making processes and development plans. The strategy was produced in consultation with regional authorities and the financial sector. It presents recommendations for improved policies, legal frameworks, engagement, and support mechanisms to enhance the diaspora's impact on local development, alleviating bottlenecks and uncertainty about market entry and procedures. Jigjiga is now taking steps to implement the strategy, including holding forums and exchanges to discuss roles and responsibilities, among other issues.

As a result of these knowledge exchanges, the Ethiopian Diaspora Agency (EDA) fully endorsed the relevance of a decentralised diaspora engagement approach for Ethiopia and requested that Jigjiga University support the integration of regional recommendations into the national diaspora policy.

### Result 3: Greater institutional capacity to implement strategies

The project conducted an analysis of current approaches and the capacities of local authorities, and then matched the findings against the recommendations of the Regional Diaspora Engagement Strategy.

Three dedicated diaspora coordination offices have been set up at Jigjiga University, the Jigjiga City Administration, and the regional diaspora office. Staff are being trained and equipped to provide adequate, tailored services to their diasporas and engage them more effectively.

The project also provided capacity building for refugees, returnees, and the local community. It developed a dynamic online platform that links the remittance-receiving community in Jigjiga with the diaspora and returnees, so that the community can benefit from their skills, knowledge, and experiences.

A pilot financial inclusion programme has also been very successful. Through the two-month programme, around 1,200 beneficiaries (more than half female) received training in entrepreneurship, giving them the tools to start their own businesses.

One of the success stories and the thing which makes us proud of this project is stakeholders believe in the value of the new policy and also the mentorship platform, these are exemplary things which should be copied and used by other cities too.

— Tirsit Yetbarek,  
Project Coordinator

