

## Celebrating Social Work Month in Somalia

Somalia becomes the latest country to develop social work education to address growing workforce needs. Following 30 years of conflict, Somalia now has six universities offering bachelor degrees in social work. Hargeisa University in Somaliland, once the only social work program in the country, joins with UNICEF and five other universities across the country to implement social work education in the three regions of Somalia: Mogadishu, Puntland and Somaliland. Through the partnership with UNICEF and the Somalia Ministry of Women and Human Rights, this year alone there are over 270 students enrolled, most with scholarships. Partner universities implementing the new BSW are City University of Mogadishu, East African University, Hargeisa University, Mogadishu University, Puntland State University, and Somali National University.

To effectively move the educational effort along, Dr. Abdullahi A. Barise, President of City University Mogadishu provided training on *Effective Instructional and Assessment Techniques* during a recent nationwide instructor's meeting. Dr. Barise, a graduate of McGill University in Canada, has many years of experience teaching social work in several countries. He shared valuable insight including instruction on his expertise area which focuses on the use of case studies to engage students in the classroom.

Under the contract with UNICEF, 240 social work students will be funded each year—40 students at each of the six universities--for four years. The curriculum, developed in English, is being translated to Somali to reach the workers who are currently on the frontlines of child protection in the country.

In addition to the development of comprehensive social work education, the participating universities have moved forward to develop the Somali Social Work Association. The Association will be a platform for social workers to organize for the profession, focused on the pressing needs in Somalia. The Somali Social Workers Association, like social work education in the country, is shaped by a very strong commitment to social, economic and environmental justice in a location characterized by limited resources and an emergent civil society with many challenges to overcome. Dean Mohamoud Mohamed Ahmed of East Africa University has been organizing the association effort and he said, "Launching the Somali Social Workers Association has come at the right time. We need social work services in both urban and rural areas to ensure well-being of our people. Capacity building with civil society organisations is one of our critical commitments. The Social Work Association will create awareness programs, with a special commitment to critical problems like domestic violence, rape and social exclusion."

PHOTOS