STRATEGIC INITIATIVE FOR WOMEN IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

FINAL NARRATIVE REPORT

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TOWARDS SOLIDARITY AND INCLUSION OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN
THE HORN OF AFRICA

Project Background

This two year regional project is aimed at empowering under-represented grassroots women's associations, informal labourer associations, and local-level human and women's rights activists across the Horn of Africa to fully exercise their economic, social, and cultural rights and make positive contributions to the broad promotion of women’s and human rights in the region.

With the significant support from OSI based on a clear set of project interventions, SIHA is creating an enabling environment for women in the informal sector economy in Uganda, South Sudan, Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia, to be active participants in their communities through mobilization, awareness, and solidarity. Using country-specific challenges, successes, limitations and lessons learned respective to the conditions of women’s rights within a social and economic development context, this project is providing a regional analysis of women informal/invisible laborers.

Firstly, the project is providing support to existing movements and members through capacity building in order to ensure effective management of the expanding network throughout the Horn of Africa. Added to this, the project is unifying members and activists at the grassroots level under the common goal of women’s equality in order to build the indigenous women's rights movement, so that women’s issues are integrated into societal issues.

Secondly, the project is using knowledge building and dissemination to strengthen the ability of relevant actors to support and amplify the voices of local women's associations and movements. Women in marginalized and alienated communities and sectors are being empowered to feed into the women’s movement in their respective countries.

Lastly, through in-depth research and awareness, raising our regional platform is being strengthened and enhanced to engage activists and organizations in the peripheries across the Horn and undertake corresponding advocacy opportunities.
Project Report: 01 January 2016 -01 January 2018

Project Objectives

01 – To promote the voice and impact of under-represented women's rights activists and their organizations in Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia/Somaliland, Ethiopia, and Uganda, increasing their capability to inform social and political change in their contexts.

Within this component of the project, SIHA strengthened engagements with its network of over 90 CSOs and groups. During the project period, 8 member associations were identified to conduct activities on ground promoting the SIHA regional strategy and broader women's human rights objectives. Over the reporting period, OSI funding has been instrumental in providing funds for civil society engagement specifically targeting SIHA member organizations.

These initiatives targeted members in Ethiopia, Uganda, Sudan, Somaliland and South Sudan.

In Uganda, SIHA supported the efforts of RUTH fund-Rural Women and Youth Fund Uganda to establish links with the local government authorities. In an event organized and attended by rural elderly women, the RUTH fund attempted to support the women in channeling their issues and experiences to their local duty-bearers. This event, among many other interventions sought to support rural women and youth to claim and enjoy their economic and political rights in Uganda.

In Ethiopia, SIHA supported a fundraising event led by one of her in-country member organizations - Network of Ethiopian women Associations (NEWA). At present, Ethiopia national law stipulates that national civil society organizations are required to receive 90% of their funds from Ethiopian sources. In order to continue their work on women’s economic and social empowerment, NEWA has been undertaking a broad variety of funding mechanisms which includes the fundraising dinner event that was held in August 2016. SIHA provided financial support for the event which was directed towards the establishment of a women’s centre in order to ensure the wellbeing and safety of women and girls in Ethiopia.

In 2017, SIHA also provided support to Good Samaritan Association (GSA) to implement a project that addresses the challenges that victims of women/girls trafficking are faced with as a result of cross-country human trafficking. In that vein, GSA executed a project that aimed at strengthening the institutional structures of local community structures to provide support sustainably for orphan and vulnerable Children.

As a result of the intervention, victims of trafficking have been provided with shelter, clothing, medical, counseling services and the effort exerted by GSA has brought about changes in terms of improving the physical, mental, psychosocial and health status of victims of trafficking. With SIHA supported, GSA supported thirty (30) victims of human trafficking with basic services. All of the returnees received shelter services like food, bed, night cloths, and slipper shoes, showering supplies, medical and counseling services.
These services were provided until the psychosocial and health conditions of victims of women/girls trafficking became physically, mentally and psychologically stable to return to their normal conditions. After obtaining the addresses of family/guardians, GSA conducted reunification of victims of trafficking with their respective families/guardians in the presence of local administration concerned sector office representatives. With the participation of stakeholders targeted women and girls were reunited with their families / guardians and started a new life at their place of origin.

In South Sudan, SIHA supported a five (5) month project aimed at providing literacy classes and skills training for identified women living in Yida Camp, Unity State in South Sudan. Specifically targeting refugee women living the camp, this project identified fifty (50) women between the ages of 18-55 and provided capacity in the English language and on book-keeping. At the same time, the women attended tailoring classes and received a contribution of three (3) sewing machines to foster skills development and access to a potential source of income and acknowledgment of their economic rights.

In Sudan, SIHA has supported the capacity building of three of our members, Um Doraan, No to Women Oppression group, and an association engaged in grassroots women economic empowerment and children’s rights. Nuba Women for Education and Development Association is also another association that received support from SIHA. SIHA organized a number of awareness sessions for group members in areas of Domestic Violence, Reproductive health, Women’s Rights and Leadership. OSI-funded member engagements have supported capacity building on proposal development, as well as monitoring and evaluation, and fundraising skills. No to Women Oppression group organized a symposium on Sudanese women status during international Women’s Day 2017. Over 400 people attended. A number of other engagement activities were

One the Project Beneficiaries (girl) reunited with her family in Addis Abba, 2017
organized including drama and debates. In an effort to strengthen their grassroots work, Um Doraan has since the training acquired UNICEF donor funding.

**In-country Staff and Member Strategy Consultation and Capacity building**

In April 2016, SIHA secretariat office organized an in-country focal point and member strategy consultation meeting in Uganda. Representatives from the eight (8) countries of operation convened at SIHA offices in Kampala to embark on three days of brainstorming and strategy development. The intention was to review the previous strategy paper (2013-2016) and based on the continuously changing dynamics of the contexts on ground in each country; develop a relevant paper to guide and direct SIHA work for the period 2017-2020. Outcomes of the meeting showed that the meeting allowed for our regional strategy and position to remain relevant to assist women in the Horn in the most effective manner. The presence of the members and staff from the various countries of operation was an opportunity to ensure that SIHA’s direction and focus was clearly responding to the needs and priorities of women in the Horn region. The discussions provided an opportunity for each country to present the existing contextual situation along with recommended strategic thematic areas. One of the key outcomes of the strategy meeting was the re-emphasis of the importance of building inclusive movements. Discussions among the meeting participants pointed towards the significance of diversity within the women's movement and the critical importance for women's rights movements to embrace the politics of inclusion and collective activism in resisting violations against women’s rights.

During the same month, SIHA utilized the opportunity presented by the presence of SIHA in-country members to conduct capacity building on religious militancy, inequalities and exclusion within the region. The seven (7)-day training program was designed by Musawah for women and human rights activists from Muslim countries to equip them with knowledge to enable them participate in ongoing discourse Islam in their home countries. This training addressed the knowledge gap of SIHA members who have no formal education on Islam and provided an understanding of the differences and diversity of Qu’ran interpretations and juristic opinions. As a direct result of this capacity building, in-country engagements and advocacy initiatives have been strengthened.

**Annual Board meetings**

SIHA organized 2 Board Meetings to among other objectives, solidify the organization’s overall strategy. At the first meeting in 2016, a final draft of the SIHA strategy paper 2017-2020 was presented to the Board of Directors, highlighting some new areas: Inclusion of Kenya into SIHA strategic programme areas and regions of operation, re-emphasis on social inclusion as a strategic area of focus, and the cautious approach SIHA is using in their engagement with men; SIHA is treading carefully in our approach to working with men as a means to an end and as a methodology employed to achieve a specific goal to reduce violence against women and girls. The board members provided valuable input that informed the final review and finalization of the strategy paper.
Overall, the Board was cognizant of the relevancy of the thematic areas of focus identified in the paper, particularly the growing harmful and negative religious ideologies promoted by Islam and social inclusion. Some of the suggested additions to the paper shared by the Board of Directors included: A stronger emphasis on peace-building among women in the midst of collapsing states such as South Sudan, and perpetual states of conflict such as Somalia and parts of Sudan. Further to this, political participation and engagement of women was another recommended area for SIHA to think about going ahead. The last sessions of the Board meeting provided an opportunity for the staff and Board members to go over the SIHA constitution not only as a reminder of various roles and responsibilities but to also identify gaps in its implementation. As a direct result of these discussions, it was agreed that in-country committees led by the respective Board representative for each country would be established with the sole purpose of reviving SIHA member engagements and driving a shared local agenda. At the second Board meeting which was held in November 2017, the SIHA the Final SIHA strategy paper 2017-2020 was presented to the Board and Board Advisory committee. SIHA organized a joint Board and staff meeting which provided a space for the staff from the 5 countries of SIHA’s operation to interact and interface with the board and advisory team.

SIHA Regional Strategy 2017-19, verified by members and Board, is approved and finalized.

Following the completion of the brain-storming and discussion sessions, a draft strategy paper was developed around 5 key thematic areas.

1) Reducing the prevalence of violence Against Women and Girls;

2) Empowering women economically toward realizing economic, social and cultural rights;
3) Strengthening Women’s access to justice and transforming harmful and negative cultural and religious ideologies;

4) Combating trafficking in women and girls from the Horn;

5) Building Inclusive women’s movements.

In August, a copy of the draft paper was shared with member organizations and the SIHA Board of Directors for comment and feedback. The strategy paper is now finalized and designed. The Board meeting of November 2017 endorsed the strategy paper.

Women in Islam Journal is compiled, approved, and finalized:

The Third (3rd) volume of Women in Islam was released in August 2017. 2500 copies have been printed, including 1500 copies in English and 1000 pieces in Arabic. The 2017 issue of the journal consists of thirty three (33) articles divided in five chapters – People, Equality, Between two Worlds, The Public and the Private, Perspectives – and one dossier – Living with Religious Militancy. It addresses a wide range of topics including polygamy, inheritance, dress codes, sexual violence, inter-religion relations, etc. The journal is composed of a majority of original articles (about 80%). A total of 27 authors, including academics, journalists and activists as well as 13 artists have contributed to the journal.

Launch events were organized in Uganda and Sudan and a blog - https://womeninislamjournal.com and a Facebook page - https://www.facebook.com/womeninislamjournal/ have been created to
SIHA currently disseminates the journal using its network of partner bookshops and civil society organizations (in Uganda, Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, and Malaysia). Women in Islam is also available globally on Amazon.

In Sudan, Women in Islam journal was printed and distributed to twenty five (25) bookshops, cultural centers and twelve (12) libraries in universities (Arabic version). SIHA Sudan conducted a launch of the Arabic version characterized by a high number of guests especially the young people. The Journal achieved high sales among the Muslim and non-Muslim people especially among university students, researchers who have since used it as referencing material, civil society, youth groups, human rights activists and progressive Muslim scholars. The journal has broadly instigated public debates between student groups and social media and activists.
SIHA is currently developing the 4th volume of Women in Islam. A total of twenty (20) articles have been collected and edited so far. Ten (10) additional articles will be collected by the end of February 2018. Contracts with translators and designers have been established and part of the artwork has been identified. The journal is expected to be finalized around June 2018.

02. To conduct advocacy on behalf of informal sector laborers ('Invisible Laborers'), improving their ability to exercise their economic, social and cultural rights as defined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), particularly aspects related to labor rights, standard of living, and participation in cultural life.

Research papers: Women in the informal sector in the Horn region

SIHA has finalized the process of compiling 3 papers on the legal, social and religious challenges encountered by Invisible laborers in Uganda, Somaliland and South Sudan, the status of local-level economic and social rights promotions carried out by association of informal sector workers, and the strategies on the ground to navigate challenges and achieve livelihoods. Presently, data collection exercises for South Sudan and Somaliland papers have been concluded and the SIHA program team together with the researcher is discussing findings and development of final versions of the papers.

Somaliland: The research was undertaken in the town of Hargeisa and targeted urban poor women, specifically local and IDP women. The dynamics portray an informal sector significantly dominated by women laborers involved in petty trade, tea selling, khat selling, clothes and food trade. The paper highlights the transformation of gender roles with women bearing the brunt as breadwinners, while at the same time grappling with growing extremist and militant Islam and the effects it has on informal women laborers. The final research paper is attached to this report.

South Sudan: The research was undertaken in Maban County, Upper Nile State (former) and targeted refugee women from Blue Nile state, Sudan. It should be noted that a formal notification of change in research locations from Wau County to Maban was shared with OSI. The dynamics of the context in Maban portray refugee women who in the midst of heavy reliance on humanitarian aid deemed as significantly insufficient, are attempting to forge a way forward using various survival and coping mechanisms to support their households. The paper highlights the recurring conflict between the refugee and host community women fuelled by competition for resources as well as the challenges of sexual violence which remain largely unaddressed.

Uganda: The research was undertaken in the Kampala city which hosts big numbers of street vendors. In Uganda, the research highlights the extreme care and responsibility born by women with majority of whom are female heads of households. The vendors operate at the wrath of
Kampala Capital Authority Law enforcement officers and with no formal platform to voice their concerns to the authorities. The Paper is currently undergoing final editing and designing.

SIHA intends to organize in-county seminars to share findings and provide space for structured discussions, feedback and interactions. These papers are supporting a regional study of issues faced by women informal sector workers in the Horn and at the same time, placing SIHA and her member organizations in a better position to assist these populations. Through using these findings, SIHA will advocate better on behalf of this large population for better labor rights and positions within society.

**Country engagement spaces on issues of Invisible Laborers**

In **Somaliland**, SIHA and WORDA jointly commemorated the 16 days of Activism campaign for ending violence against women and girls. A dialogue with key officials was attended by women’s rights organization, Ministry officials, City authority representatives and women street vendors.

In **Uganda**, in conjunction with SIHA members and other Women’s rights organizations, SIHA organized engagement sessions between Women vendors and Local authorities.

The sessions in both locations were intended to raise awareness on the plight of women street vendors. In Kampala, the session was attended by over 200 people including women’s rights organizations, Police, general community and the women street vendors.

In Hargeisa, so far 20 women have benefited from the advocacy and networking training. The objectives of the workshop were to build the capacity and knowledge of selected women street vendors on their advocacy, lobby and campaign skills, and to create new representative groups of
women street vendors who will effectively advocate for their women issues and also to build collective voice of women street vendors to speak out their demand on basic service and market improvement and subsequently building women street vendors networks. During the training, women were introduced to key sessions including introduction to advocacy and its effectiveness, importance of advocacy and networking (women street vendors), the importance of collaboration amongst women street vendors, principle of networking and exchange of ideas and common voice.

In Uganda, SIHA initiated an engagement meeting with the Kampala city Council Authority, Gender department which is mandated with addressing the Gender related challenges and working toward promoting women empowerment. SIHA introduced project objective to KCCA which was very open and willing to collaborate with SIHA to find a safer and accessible work space for women street vendors. The engagement process has started and SIHA intends to organize more dialogues between Women Vendors and KCCA to brainstorm on the most appropriate approach and solution to the problems faced by women street vendors.

**Video Documentaries**

Two Video documentaries have been shot in the cities of Hargeisa and Kampala. The draft films have been produced and the firms are currently doing final edits. Final video documentaries will be shared in February 2018.

**Participation at the African Union commission event**

SIHA participated in the 2017, ACHPR in Gambia, SIHA delivered a statement on the situation of women, the public order regime and prison conditions in Sudan. In addition, SIHA along with REDRESS, the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) and Amnesty International organized a side event on Sudan women and prison conditions.
Panelists discussed how national and regional mechanisms could be utilized for seeking legal redress for ill-treatment, torture and incommunicado detention. The aim of the panel discussion was to raise awareness about the situation of women prisoners in Sudan, give participants an understanding of the procedures for seeking remedies before Sudan's judicial system and lead to collaboration and sharing of information amongst participants. (*See the paper attached to this report*)

03. To solidify associations of Invisible Laborers in the Horn of Africa via the provision of financial support, capacity building training, and local-level monitoring and technical advising.

Women’s Cooperative support:

In order to solidify the efforts of associations of Invisible Laborers in the Horn of Africa OSI, through this project is providing financial support, capacity building training, and local-level monitoring and technical advising for women focused associations, cooperatives and groups.

During the project period, SIHA supported the operations of a Khartoum-based women's cooperative union. The women's union constituting 13 women cooperatives represents urban poor women working in the informal sector in Sudan. Over the years, SIHA has helped to bring together tea and food sellers, petty traders selling various goods and domestic workers in an effort to undertake collective advocacy for recognition which was achieved in 2014. Since then, SIHA has been supporting the strengthening and expansion of the union.

Through Invisible laborer support funds provided by OSI, SIHA is helping women’s union efforts to establish links with relevant stakeholders in the Khartoum locality. In 2016, a formal breakfast event was organized by the women union members, where the local officer and commissioner directly responsible for Khartoum town were invited to take part in a dialogue session. This event provided the women cooperative members with an opportunity to share their grievances and discuss a way forward. Often, the women suffer arrests, exploitative fines and swiping of their goods at the hands of the local police. This engagement was an important initial step towards addressing the ongoing challenges faced by women in the informal sector.

Again, the women union with the support of SIHA took a step further to respond to and address the suspension of tea-selling businesses in certain locations in Khartoum. After twenty eight (28) days of suspended street vendor operations by Khartoum locality Director, SIHA helped bring together the women laborers and household breadwinners affected by this move led by the Sudan local authorities, to prepare an open letter addressed to the Khartoum Commissioner requesting for his intervention in what was referred to as a violation of their economic rights - since submission of this letter advocating for their rights to return to work.
Business Management skills for Women Vendors in Somaliland and Uganda

In Kampala and Hargeisa, a total of 145 women (70 in Hargeisa and 75 in Uganda) have received business skills training. Women street vendors were equipped with basic business and financial skills, and increased their knowledge in daily business transaction management to improve their income and sustainability of their business.

During the training sessions they have learned the concept of the business definition, understand the types of business; Understanding Income and Expenditure, basic understanding how to use the Cashbook, Calculation of Profit and Loss, Costing and Pricing and Business management. In addition, the women were introduced to sessions on life skills to enable them to adapt with positive behavior for the challenges and opportunities in the market and workplace.

Success story: Statement made after the business skills training in Hargeisa

"I have been running petty business in Waahen market for ten (10) years, it's my first time to participate in training where the skills and capacity of the women street vendors have been developed. Before the training, my daily transaction was based on the traditional system of accounting; I didn’t know how much profit or loss I made, but now I can estimate how much profit I expect to receive from the commodity I purchased from the market even before selling! Moreover, the most important thing I learnt was the importance of creating women street vendors networks and it's brilliant to have networks and groups of women who can advocate and speak for their issues and demands".
Ms. Maryam, a mother of 7 children, has been working on the street vendors for the last 10 years, and her family depends on the income generated from her daily activities on the streets of Hargeisa.

04. To strengthen the engagement of SIHA within its network of over 90 civil society organizations/groups, ensuring that SIHA’s orientation and goals respond to those of its members and that SIHA can confidently and effectively advocate for women’s activists and their organizations in the Horn of Africa.

SIHA maintains In-Country Coordinators in all sites:

SIHA continues to maintain presence in all its countries of operation except Eritrea. Over the reporting period, the in-county coordinators have been provided with capacity building as well as the opportunity to contribute towards and influence strategy building and development for SIHA. As a direct result of the participation by coordinators from Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia and Somaliland, our strategy paper is legitimate and remains relevant to the needs and priorities of women in the Horn of Africa.

Regional support visits to country teams and Members

SIHA Regional Programme team conducted several monitoring and support visits to six (6) countries of operation. The visits also involved interface meetings with civil society organizations (CSOs) including member organizations implementing small grants projects. The meetings were very instrumental in informing SIHA of context in relation to Women rights violations. Using this information builds the capacity of SIHA to represent member interests and supports the development of advocacy statements, briefings and press releases on the operating environment of women human rights in the Horn.

Regular communication with network members on Human rights status

SIHA continued to play a watch dog role on issues of Women rights and Human rights defenders. Joint statements have been produced together with Member organizations in the different countries. SIHA produces monthly briefings on the Human rights and legal status in the different countries and shares widely with government agencies, Donor community, and Civil society including the media organizations using both traditional and social media. You can view the links for see some of the statements produced by SIHA.


Annex

1) Draft Report Uganda in editing process

2) Semi-final report Somaliland in Process of layout and printing

3) Link to the women vendors film in Uganda

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sm5hJTkXkw0pwv5hPKg-mJJPZCpkmtY/view?