

Somaliland Water Projects Coming To Fruition

Following recent rains, the benefits of the Foundation's three most recent water projects in Somaliland are more visible than ever.

The Somaliland team completed the Taysa berked in the Gabiley region in December 2022 and following recent rains this is now at full capacity of 1,260 cubic metres of water – serving almost 300 households. However, this is just the start of their success...

The Ijaara dam (Gabiley region) and the Wado-Makahiil dam (Maroodi-Jeex region) are much larger projects and are now near completion. The two dams will have water capacities of 60,000 cubic meters each once complete. These two dam projects are progressing quickly and having both started in November 2022 they are estimated to be complete by mid-late June this year. Wado-Makahiil dam is at 83% completion and as the concrete inlet had progressed enough by the time of the region's first seasonal rain, the team was able to let water in, and as such the dam is already filled to over half capacity. Currently holding approximately 35,000 cubic meters of water, this dam should soon be ready to reach full capacity in mid-June and then be fully able to serve the local community.

Work on Ijaara dam is slightly behind Wado-Makahiil in its progress but still well on track. The dam is estimated to be at 75% completion but as the inlet works are still in progress, the team has not yet been able to allow water in. However, with the aim of the dam being completed by 22nd June 2023 (a week after Wado-Makahiil dam), the Gabiley region will soon have access to a 60,000 cubic meter dam, as well as the already completed Taysa berked.



Taysa berked in the Gabiley region

Some short-term benefits of these projects can already be seen. In the construction of these projects, the foundation employed approximately 2,600 skilled labourers (masons, carpenters, steel fixers and geo-membrane installation specialists) as well as 8,100 un-skilled labourers. And once completed, Ijaara's dam will serve the 465 local households (approx. 3,255 people) and Wado-Makahiil dam will serve its 720 households (approx. 5,040 people) - both also potentially having capacity to serve people from neighbouring communities that might travel to them.



Ijaara dam under construction



Wado-Makahiil dam under construction

Before we started construction, the locations of these water projects were based on several factors. These included the water scarcity in a region (i.e. the lack of rainwater), the population size and the average distances people were travelling to fetch water during the dry season. Community contribution was also a significant factor in deciding the location of these large-scale water projects as the dam and berked locations were donated by individual members of the community. Pharo Foundation was then able to officially notarise the spaces as public property with local government coordination.

The foundation's hope is that these water projects will have significant medium and long-term impacts on the regions they have been built in. Ultimately, we aspire to building the beginnings of a sustainable medium-term solution for the water problem in Africa.

Yet the Foundation's ability to scale up its efforts also depends on other systemic interventions, and on reaching beyond the management of its outstanding fixed asset network in a missions-based perspective. One instrument it could use for this purpose is the creation of a novel metric of water scarcity, which would create demand for its water solutions. Indeed, by creating a measurement tool, it could become a reference that other institutions come back to. Measurement means data and data is power, especially in our current AI-driven society. Based on such data, Pharo Foundation would be able to then convene high-level dialogues to improve water policy and attract partners.

In the meantime, we look forward to the projects being finalised in June and encourage you all to keep an eye on the foundation's social channels for updates on the dams filling with water and being put to good use!



Wado-Makahiil dam filling with water

On A Mission: Deploying Health Infrastructure With Strategic Purpose



Lab technician Abiy using a machine in the Serology and Immunology Department

The COVID pandemic has grabbed the spotlight when it comes to global awareness of healthcare risks, but in East Africa, a silent killer which requires serious attention is non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which include cardiovascular diseases, cancers, respiratory diseases, mental illness and diabetes. This is evident from the chart below, which displays trends in the percentage of all deaths attributable to NCDs in the East African Community (2017-2020). The rising trend has continued in the latest data sets ([WHO's NCD Progress Monitor 2022](#)). Yet in many cases NCDs remain undiagnosed and NCD policy is underdeveloped (see the Progress Monitor for a useful scale of pro-activity in national NCD policy).

Enter Pharo Diagnostic Centre (PDC). In June, we opened the PDC in Assosa, Ethiopia, the only advanced diagnostic centre of its kind in Benishangul-Gumuz. It offers a range of diagnostic tests and has welcomed 5,318 people since opening, with an accelerating trajectory which saw an all-time high in patients in March at 1,045. While our data does not allow us to quantify the scale of NCD diagnosis per se, we are picking up on a remarkable spread of symptoms associated with NCDs.

For instance, of the 587 blood glucose tests we have performed to date, 40% showed raised blood glucose levels, which is correlated with diabetes. Similarly, 35.8% of cholesterol tests showed raised blood cholesterol levels, which can contribute to cardiovascular disease. Creatinine and blood urea nitrogen tests also pointed to a non-negligible presence of kidney dysfunction (c. 10%).

Mr Fantahun, a Director at the Benishangul-Gumuz Development Association Network, has undergone six rounds of check-ups at the PDC since October. He told us 'the customer service at the PDC has exceeded my expectations. The lab test results are always accurate and delivered in a timely manner, all at an affordable cost. Although I have the opportunity to access similar services in Addis, I prefer to continue coming to this PDC'.

The Centre is an outstanding fixed asset in the portfolio of Pharo Foundation. Yet as Pharo Foundation steps into a missions-driven era, it is also starting to think of ways that the PDC could become the focal point for a greater strategy that would not only solve the diagnosis gap for NCDs, but also play a catalytic role beyond the provision of diagnosis itself. In this perspective, the PDC could become an institution that 1) generates data on NCDs which can motivate investments by other institutions, not least towards NCD treatment; 2) runs information campaigns to promote behaviour changes; 3) recalibrates health policy to address the NCD problem. Indeed, WHO data suggests that 1) while many East African health sector strategic plans were reported to include NCDs as a priority area, implementation is weak; and 2) the quality of NCD services is poor in public healthcare facilities. In the words of Mr Fantahun, 'as the incidence of non-communicable diseases appears to be on the rise, I would like to suggest implementing health education programmes to raise awareness and promote preventative measures. Educating the community on the causes and prevention of non-communicable diseases can help individuals make informed decisions about their health and potentially reduce the prevalence of such diseases in the region'. The foundation could not agree more, Mr Fantahun.

% of deaths attributable to NCDs in East Africa

