Commemoration of International Literacy Day

08-September-2014

Education for All Somalia “EFASOM”, a local civil society organization, celebrated the International Literacy Day 2014 today by organizing a radio discussion forum. More than 4 different local FM radios in Mogadishu aired the discussion sessions. "Literacy and Sustainable Development" was the theme of the year 2014 and we strategically reached more audience than before.

The purpose of the event was to raise people's awareness of and concern for literacy issues and the importance of reading and writing. Because of its "multiplier effect", literacy helps eradicate poverty, reduce child mortality, curb population growth, achieve gender equality and ensure sustainable development, peace and democracy.

It is true that Somalia ensured substantial achievements in literacy campaigning since 1974 where the government structured a mass education campaign for teaching people skills of reading and writing in the semi-urban and rural areas. However, there was by some means retardation during the civil war. Many Diaspora returned Somalia speaking other languages and having difficulties in the mother language. Local primary and secondary schools also made their own decision to use their medium of instruction as “English language” or “Arabic language” where they use foreign curriculums from neighboring countries.

“We have a desire for reminding Somali people the importance of learning the mother language and using it in reading and writing” says Adam Mohamed, the National Coordinator of EFASOM. “We are thrilled to notice that the National Curriculum in Somali version is now ready for use. Discussion is going on, of the implementation of it in the primary schools where children in lower classes can firstly learn subjects in their mother language. That is the reason pushed us to take part in today’s commemoration” he added.

Prof. Hussein Tohow Farah, the President of Green Hope University and a former UNESCO expatriate staff stated: “After the mass education campaign in 1974, the first success of the implementation of literacy in
Somalia was that every Somali person was able to read and write in the mother language. Secondly, the government made Somali the official language of Somalia. Instead, the government used other languages in their offices in the post colonial period. Thirdly, all textbooks were translated into Somali. That led the possibility for children to learn with their mother language. Finally, every language in the world has values of culture. Then the Somali language led us to exhibit arts and culture” says Prof. Tohow.

Yusuf Mohamed Abdullle, one of teachers in primary schools in Mogadishu recapitulated people’s gains of the mass education campaign in 1974. “This literacy campaign was a step forward and the Ministry of Education was leading it while other national government agencies supporting the ministry. Students from primary and secondary schools took part the campaign to eradicate illiteracy. That made possible many people to learn how to read and write. A well organized task forces of teachers and students visited semi-urban and the far-reaching rural areas and taught how to read and write elders, mothers, and youth in there. Nomad people immediately started exciting how to read and write” Says Yusuf Mohamed. “The mass education campaign reasoned stoppage of one complete school calendar (1974-1975) in order for the government to ensure literacy for nomad people” he added.

Ms. Idil Abdikadir Hussein, member of EFASOM, indicated every society will lead innovations when they have base in literacy and education.

“Enhancing our mother language is important to us” says Ms. Nurto Mohamed Addow, Headmaster of an Orphan Girls School in Bondere district of Mogadishu and member of school teacher union. “Every educated person is like somebody living in a bright house.” She said. “The educated can lead to country development. I encourage Somali girls to pursue their education until graduation of university.” She added.

In general, Education for All Somalia “EFASOM” requests Somali educated people wherever they are to give a second chance to non-educated people. In particular, we request the Ministry of education, the education umbrellas, school headmasters, and all education stakeholders to collaborate in implementation of literacy for all with our mother language.

**Media Coverage**

1. Dalsan FM Radio
2. Danan Broadcasting Network Radio
3. Xamar Radio the Voice of Democracy
4. Ifftin FM Radio (Education channel)