

Open for Business - after decades of civil war, business in Mogadishu is reviving

The following interviews are excerpts from the Open for Business video series, filmed in Mogadishu.

Ahmed Jama Mohamed – Village Restaurant Owner & Businessman

“I left Mogadishu in 1983 and went to London and then came back in 2008. When I set up the restaurant here (in 2008) it was on the frontline and people thought I was mad, but I wanted to show Somali communities,



wherever they are, that we need to be brave and that we can change the situation. My restaurant serves organic local Somali food and I buy the fresh produce from the local market. We have customers from all walks of life. We have Arabic and Turkish people and of course middle class Somalis. When I compare Mogadishu to what it used to be like, I can see that things are getting better now and I hope people like me return to show others how to live here and how to start a

business here. All of the flights to Mogadishu are full these days and you can't get a ticket. This is a positive sign and proves that the Somali diaspora is returning.”

Mohammed Mahmoud Sheikh – Owner of a Laundry Shop

“I was born in Italy and raised in Tanzania. I felt that I had to return to Mogadishu to see what I could do for my country. I had a lot of ideas to start with, but the dry cleaning one was really good because there was no one focusing on this and I saw a gap in the market. In the past, people had no choice but to take their clothes to Kenya, Djibouti or Addis to get them dry-cleaned.

One of the biggest challenges was finding a location for the shop. But we found a property on the main road connecting us to the airport. We had to let the Somali people know about dry cleaning as most Somalis handwash their clothes, so I put a lot of effort into marketing the business. My



business is doing really well now. We open at eight in the morning and close at six, but sometimes we stay open until nine in the evening. Right now I have customers who come to the shop three times a week and they bring five or six suits each time they visit.

Mogadishu is changing alot and business is booming. People have confidence in the place. I'm telling people to come to Mogadishu to see for themselves how life has changed."

Daud Cabdi Salad – Artist

"When I qualified as an artist in 1985 business was good because there was peace. The country was moving



forward and we had exhibitions to display our work. During the war there was no business and Al-Shabaab stopped us from working. In the past we've lost artists in the war. A colleague of mine, Mohamed, died when there was an explosion where he used to work. I have been shot as well, but have recovered from that ordeal. People blame each other for the problems in Mogadishu. Young people blame the elders for the security situation, while others blame youth, saying they have brought destruction to the city. I want to change this and give people opportunities. I am training a second

batch of young artists now...among them are my two sons. Life is getting better now because of the new government and the diaspora is making a big difference".

Idrus Hussein Ahmed – Shop Owner

"When I was 10 years old the war broke out and I fled with my family to Afgoye (30 km northwest of Mogadishu). I came back in August 2011 and I bought shop premises here. At that time this was the only building which was not destroyed on this street in the centre of Mogadishu. The reason why I came back was because there was some form of peace here. Another reason was to help rebuild my country. We were born here, we grew up here and we are creating employment for our people. We have become role models for our people. Business is always risky, but sometimes you have to take the risk in order to succeed in life. The purchasing



power of people is now returning and the diaspora is coming back and they have money to spend. People were cash conscious before, but now they are quality orientated.”

Ali Mohamed – Fishmonger

“I started working as a fishmonger recently, but I used to fish on the rocks before with handmade rods. I buy fish for 300-400 Shillings from local fishermen and then cut it into pieces and sell it for the best price we can



agree on, so I’m making a good living now. In terms of peace, the situation is good now and you can see that people are rebuilding their homes and business is doing well. I have two business partners and we operate all over the city...we send the fish to several markets and supply restaurants with fresh fish. We earn enough money to feed our families and still have enough to have a float of cash for our expenses as well. I have never seen lasting peace here, but this is what I hope for in the future.”

Hussein Osman – Owner of a Construction Business

“I grew up in Mogadishu but left for Turkey to study around 10 years ago. But I returned in 2011 to start my own construction business, it’s called the ‘Star of Somalia’. When you go to the city you can see lots of construction taking place and this means that people are motivated to invest in the country. They are renovating houses and other buildings. We have around 200 people working for the company. When people get these opportunities it creates good morale and stops them from picking up guns and getting involved in fighting. We have been trying to establish businesses which can help people and make an investment in the country and creating jobs.... Everybody brings a new vision back with them when they return to Somalia”.



Watch the Open for Business video series

online:

Produced by AUUNIST in collaboration with the United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS).

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