

# **Annual Report 2008-2009**

## **The Horn of Africa Relief and Development Agency of Australia Inc**

HARDA, a not-for-profit organisation, was incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act NSW in November 2003. It has been classified as a public benevolent institution and has deductible gift recipient status from the Australian Tax Office. It is co-located with the Edmund Rice Centre which provides fully serviced office accommodation at Homebush West NSW free of charge.

HARDA is administered and managed entirely by a volunteer workforce with pro bono services provided by our auditors McIntosh Bishop.

HARDA works with governments, national and international aid agencies in Australia and with non-government organisations in Africa to raise and acquit funds and to ensure that they are targeted to support settlement programs, cultural diversity, community capacity building and integration in Australia and education, health and peace building projects in the Horn of Africa countries

### **Mission**

HARDA'S mission is to unite refugees and migrants from all Horn of Africa countries in Australia, through their community leaders, in order to act as a strong and effective advocate and lobbyist for their issues and concerns, both domestic and international.

### **Vision**

- That HARDA performs a positive and effective role in communicating with government and as an advocate for Horn of Africa individuals, families and communities living in Australia.
- That Horn of Africa refugees and humanitarian entrants have access on an equitable basis to the services and accommodation essential for their wellbeing, including affordable housing, education, vocational training, community services, employment and health care.
- That HARDA provides support services to member organisations from the Horn of Africa countries, including incorporation and compliance, policy development, accounting and finance, fundraising & sponsorship, submission writing, event planning, graphic design & layout.
- That HARDA forms a strong and effective alliance with government through AusAid and works with non-government overseas aid organizations in Australia including the National Council of Churches (act for peace), Human Appeal International and Muslim Aid.
- That HARDA uses its contacts with Horn of Africa communities and individuals in Australia and their contacts in the Horn of Africa ('the diaspora') to identify humanitarian sustainable model projects in their countries of origin; works with non-government organisations in those countries to develop and cost their

proposals; seeks Australian support for them by government; and acts as a catalyst through joint ventures with Australian based NGOs.

### **Membership**

Membership is open to all persons eighteen years of age and over who support HARDA's aims and objectives and available irrespective of nationality, race, religious, political or other affiliation.

### **The Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee's responsibilities include setting HARDA's strategic direction, establishing goals for members and the volunteer workforce; monitoring the achievement of those goals, ensuring that the Agency meets its legal and ethical responsibilities and that the members of the Committee and volunteers meet the highest standards of conduct.

It is essential that individual members of the Committee communicate and consult with their own constituencies i.e. the communities from each of the Horn of Africa countries that they represent.

At 30<sup>th</sup> June 2009 members of the Executive Committee were:

John Cornwall, President

Dr Mahmoud Sheikh, Vice-President, Director of Overseas Projects

Mohammed Omar, Secretary, Director of Youth Affairs

Rissom Welela, Treasurer

Petros Tesfay

PC Mouly

James Adegh

Degeufe Hailu

Associate Committee members

Rosemary Kariuki

Carmel Clark

### **Sub-Committees**

The Executive Committee may appoint members of the Committee or ordinary members to sub-committees and delegate to them such powers or duties as the Committee may decide. Members of the Executive Committee may also maximize the effectiveness of the sub-committees by co-opting individuals with relevant expertise from within and outside the Horn of Africa countries.

### **Volunteers. The HARDA Secretariat**

John Cornwall joined HARDA in December 2007 and was appointed as the Executive Director on a pro bono basis. He was appointed as President at the AGM in November 2008 when the late Hassan Omar transferred to the position of Director, Overseas Aid Programs. Carmel Clark is a key volunteer with social welfare and community service qualifications and experience. Carmel's dedication to her work

for both HARDA and the Edmund Rice Centre during the past six years is an inspiration for all of us. The other core members of the senior volunteer professional staff are Judi Flaherty, formerly a senior manager at Deloitte (Administration & Management Support) and Fiona Carr B.Comm, FSIA (Policy & Projects).

Faduma Geddi, Samira Ibrahim and Aileen Narayan are working with Mohammed Omar to develop the HARDA Youth Affairs Committee.

We were delighted when PC Mouly, a Sri Lankan refugee and HARDA's 'gofer', was not only granted permanent resident status this year but was joined by his wife and two teenage daughters whom he had not seen since he was forced to flee the country seven years ago. Special mention must also be made of Rosemary Kariuki who works as HARDA's 'Ambassador at Large' in the African communities.

### **We Have a Voice-Hear Us**

In March this year HARDA had the great misfortune to lose our founding President, Hassan Omar (see box) but his legacy endures and his vision has been taken up by some highly motivated HARDA members and volunteers. There is much to be done and we are actively seeking members to join our Executive Committee and strengthen our lines of communication with the HoA communities.

In 2008 under Hassan's leadership, HARDA commissioned Dr Eileen Pittaway, the Director of the Centre for Refugee Research at the University of New South Wales, to lead a research team to survey members of the Horn of Africa communities in Sydney and in June this year we received their report. 'We Have a Voice - Hear Us' was written following many individual and group consultations. It reported the views, problems, unmet needs and successes of participants. The full report and an eleven page summary are posted on the HARDA website ([www.harda-australia.com](http://www.harda-australia.com)). It has given us goals for the future and has been commended by many prominent individuals in public life in Australia, including the Governor-General, Quentin Bryce, the President of the Australian Human Rights Commission, Professor Cathy Branson, and the UNHCR Commissioner for Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, Rick Towle.

### **Speaking with one voice**

From January through May 2009 members of HARDA's Executive Committee conducted a series of informal consultations with community leaders and rank and file members of Horn of Africa communities in Sydney to seek their views on future directions for HARDA. As a result of their advice we are developing a role as an umbrella or peak body in the Sydney basin (SSD), seeking input from all the Horn of Africa countries and organisations and able to speak with one, united voice to government, service providers, the media and the wider Australian community.

As part of this project HARDA has developed a skills register and offers a range of support services to Horn of Africa organisations. They include advice about risk management, incorporation, financial accounting, submission writing, publicity and promotion, marketing, graphic design, fund raising, sponsorship and advocacy.

## Vale Hassan Omar 1958-2009

### Contributions by Aden Omar, John Cornwall and Phil Glendenning

This tribute has been reproduced from 'Refugee Transitions', a publication of the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS). Winter 2009

Hassan Omar arrived in Australia in August 1983 on a scholarship from his motherland Somalia. As soon as he arrived up until his untimely death on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2009, he worked tirelessly to help others, building bridges between Australians and his fellow Africans from the Horn. As President of HARDA, and in every action and deed, Hassan lived the life of a true humanitarian.

His commitment to his 'brothers and sisters' in Africa and Australia was legendary. He was never daunted by 'people in high places' and would always pursue his agenda at every opportunity. Phil Glendenning, the Director of the Edmund Rice Centre, has many Hassan stories over their twenty year friendship.

HARDA's President, John Cornwall said: "One of my favourite stories concerns a public meeting that they attended together which was addressed by Kim Beazley, then the Leader of the Opposition and Australia's alternative Prime Minister. When the meeting was over Phil saw that Hassan had cornered Kim at the door on his way out for an unscheduled 'consultation' and was pressing home one of his latest proposals. The usual response to these encounters is 'write to me with the details', then walk briskly to the waiting car protected by minders. But Hassan had winning ways: Kim had his notepad out personally writing down the details,' John laughs.

"And while regularly counselling me not to overcommit my volunteer time, he was remarkably generous with his own,' John said. 'He worked long hours at his job with NSW Health, arrived home late but never failed to open his emails and always worked on a one day turnaround. When I switched on my computer in the morning I often saw a response from him that had been sent around eleven o'clock the night before. He literally gave his life to the cause'.

Together with this commitment to 'the cause' was a dedication to lifelong learning and growth, not just for himself but for countless others that he pushed to achieve. In 1985 Hassan received his Postgraduate Diploma in Ecosystem Management from the University of New England. He continued his studies and gained a Certificate of Interpreting Preparatory Paraprofessional level, a Certificate in Community Welfare Work and a Diploma in Community Welfare Work in rapid succession. These qualifications were in addition to the Diploma in Animal Science and Range Management and the Certificate in Wildlife Management earned by Hassan back in Africa.

Hassan was employed by the Northern Sydney/Central Coast Area Health Service from 1986 to 2009. He had worked at Gosford Hospital as Revenue Officer for twenty years before taking up positions at the Royal North Shore Hospital in 2006 as Workforce Coordinator, Immigration Registration and Accreditation officer in addition to other roles.

Hassan married Kathleen Moloney on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1985, moving to the Central Coast where they lived until his death. He commuted tirelessly to Sydney to undertake his duties in assisting African communities.

In 1993 he established the Horn of Africa Settlement Group which helped to settle more than twenty families from the Horn of Africa. Hassan also started the Somali Community Association and the Ogaden Relief Association to help the troubled people from the Ogaden region of Ethiopia. He was the founder of the Voiceless Children's Network and an active executive member of the African Communities Council. In 2003 he founded HARDA and was president for five years to 2008, then Director of overseas Aid in 2008-2009.

Hassan took it upon himself to assist anyone in need and did this with sincerity and compassion. He always said that he belonged to the 'greater global family' and would not refuse anyone in need of help. He will be greatly missed by his loved ones and the greater global family.

He is survived by four children whom he adored: Deeqo, Aden, Jamaal and Salah.

His life of giving can be summed up by the following words spoken at his memorial service, echoing sentiments that had been expressed so many times before.

'Now that he's dead who are we going to turn to? He's the one that we always turned to from a little problem to a big problem. He would take our problems to Ministers at any level. Whatever happened, whatever we faced we knew that we could talk to him'.

### **Humanitarian Aid Projects in the Horn of Africa and the Hassan Omar Trust**

Australian based aid organisations with whom HARDA is working on demonstration projects include act for peace (the NCCA), Human Appeal International and Muslim Aid Australia. We are using Horn of Africa communities and individuals in Australia and their contacts in Africa to identify non-government organisations in those countries with high value humanitarian project proposals. Our priorities include maternal and child health, education (technical as well as school), water capture and storage and peace building,

### **The African Pastoralist Vision Association Dagahmadow school project**

The establishment costs and the first two years recurrent funding for this project were provided by act for peace (National Council of Churches of Australia). HARDA's input is for \$36,000 over the period September 2009 to December 2011, cost shared with Human Appeal International. The school is located in a village in the Dagahmadow district of Ethiopia. It is a primary school for children from nomadic families (and some orphans). Currently there are thirty five students in residence - the school has to provide accommodation as well as teaching because the families are dispersed, nomadic and often dysfunctional as a result of local violence. The APVA (African Pastoralist Vision Association) which conducts the program is a local NGO.

### **Student Cultural Exchange**

HARDA has received a \$10,000 grant from the Scanlon Foundation and \$5,000 from the James Kirby Foundation for a cultural exchange program between the an Intensive English Unit in Western Sydney and a High School in regional New south Wales. Recently arrived refugee students from the Horn of Africa will travel to a participating high school where they will be billeted with the families of students from the school. This will be followed by a visit by the country students to Sydney where further friendships and cultural exchanges will be fostered.

### **HARDA & the Department of Immigration & Citizenship**

The following submissions for program grants under the **Diverse Australia Program** were lodged with DIAC in May 2009 and at the time of reporting are short listed for further consideration.

- A Youth and Young People's Employment Expo and mentoring program in association with the Muslim Students Association.
- A HARDA Young Women's Discussion Forum

### **The HARDA Cultural night**

Almost two hundred people from the Horn of Africa countries celebrated their cultural heritage at HARDA's annual cultural night in December 2008. Guests from the wider community who joined them included Laurie Ferguson MP, the Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services; Barbara Perry, the NSW Minister for Local Government and Minister Assisting the Minister

for Health (Mental Health Services); and Stepan Kerkkyasharian, the NSW Commissioner for Community Relations.

Traditional dancing, craft and an exciting range of food were among the attractions of a very successful night. The evening was sponsored by STARTTS, the ACL and the Hills-Holroyd-Parramatta Multicultural Resource Centre.

### **Strategic alliances, partnerships and thanks**

HARDA values its relationship with and the support it has received from many individuals, organisations and agencies in 2008-2009:

- The Edmund Rice Centre, especially Phil Glendenning, Daphne McKeough, John Sweeney and Aranza Munoz
- STARTTS (Service To Assist the Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors), especially Jasmina Bajraktarevic-Hayward and Mohamed Baaruud
- Hon Laurie Ferguson MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services
- The Hills-Holroyd-Parramatta Migrant Resource Centre, especially Melissa Monteiro (Manager) and Maeve Brown (CDO African Communities)
- Colleagues and friends from the Horn of Africa countries
- The AMP Foundation
- Auburn Council, especially Jennie Dunlop and Glenn Harding, the Youth Affairs Officer
- The Centre for Volunteering NSW
- Dr Eileen Pittaway and the Centre for Refugee Research, University of New South Wales
- The Macquarie Legal Centre
- The Foundation for Humanity
- The volunteers who staff HARDA's Secretariat: Carmel Clark, Judi Flaherty, Fiona Carr and Faduma Geddi
- The Settlement Council of Australia
- The Refugee Council of Australia
- The National Council of Churches
- Human Appeal International
- Muslim Aid Australia
- The Community Relations Commission (NSW)
- The Granville Multicultural Community Centre
- The Auburn Youth Centre

John Cornwall  
President and Executive Officer