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Transforming Lives

Ice Machine Improves Livelihoods for Young Fishermen in Baargaal, Puntland

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--Mohamud Ali Jama, 26, fisherman

For questions, please contact:
Cael Savage: csavage@usaid.gov

The youth of Baargaal have experienced several challenges in the last few years, including piracy, insecurity, unemployment, and a poor local economy. With few livelihood opportunities, many turned to crime, piracy, or human trafficking, which led to instability in the district. Despite having rich fish resources, fishermen had no ice to keep the fish fresh while at sea and no cold storage space after they returned. Profits were low and opportunities scarce presenting a bleak future for many youth. Abdinasir Muse, a member of the Baargaal Fishing Association, said, “In the past, we had no location where we could store the fish. We did not have ice-making machines and no refrigerators to keep them frozen. This had a negative effect on our livelihoods because regardless of how hard we worked that day, the fish we did not sell, and we were forced to throw them away... This not only damaged our economy, but the environment as well, with our beaches and market places filled with wasted and stinking fish.”

In April 2015, nearly a year and a half after USAID rehabilitated the offices of the Baargaal Fishing Association and provided a new ice machine, the Association is exporting fish outside of its district. Baargaal District now trades and transports tons of fresh fish to neighboring Ethiopia for the first time since the fall of the central government of Somalia in 1991. “We collect fish for several days and keep it frozen in the association building with the help of the ice machine... Without the ice-making machine this would not be possible... This not only helped expand our local economy, but it also encouraged and made us proud to trade fish with our land-locked neighbor Ethiopia,” said Abdinasir.

USAID’s support to the Baargaal Fishermen’s Association has also strengthened the relationship among different youth, and between youth and their local government. Mohamud Ali Jama, 26, a young fisherman, said, “Today there is a strong bond between all the fishermen in Baargaal. We work together, and gather all the catches, then sell it to the association, which handles the exporting and distribution to the markets in the region and the neighboring countries, using trucks and boats... No individual fisherman is left behind, and everyone who catches fish can earn a living. I am proud of the role our local government and fishing association played in making these opportunities possible.”