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History of the Organisation

The Raaso Relief Rehabilitation and Development Organization Inc. is a Melbourne based, volunteer-run organisation. The Organisation was founded by Abdalla Ahmed, a Somali Community Leader in West Heidelberg. Abdalla was deeply affected by the poverty and sickness he witnessed on a visit in 2005 to Raaso, located in the Somali region of Ethiopia. After a second visit in 2006, Abdalla promised the people of Raaso that he would help them. Thus our Organisation, assisted by Banyule Community Health, was created and is committed to improving the lives of people living in Raaso.

Raaso

Raaso is the Somali region of Ethiopia and is occupied by over 300,000 displaced persons. There is currently infrastructure - electricity, clean water, education or health facilities. No aid agencies or non-government organizations service the area; the only assistance the people of Raaso receive is minimal food deliveries from the Ethiopian Government. **A 50-kilo bag of rice or wheat is expected to feed 10 people for six months. This equates to just 27 grams of rice per day.** Needless to say, people are starving and many die from preventable diseases which have been all but eradicated in Developed nations. The average life expectancy is less than 45 years.

The Melbourne Somali Community

The Melbourne Somali Community have strong links to Raaso, and many have relatives living there. Virtually every Somali person in Melbourne has a story of forced displacement and many have left relatives behind in Raaso. Such experiences have adversely affected the Somali community who continuously fear for their relatives' safety and wellbeing.

“I am a single mother, caring for two of my own children and four other children, my brother’s children. He and his wife died in Somalia. My sisters and brothers live in Raaso with their families. I am not working. My children are teenagers. They do not understand that the extra money I have must go to Raaso – I cannot buy them clothes or spend money on things here when my family in Raaso does not have any food”

Somali West Heidelberg Resident, April 2007

The Hospital Project

The Somali community of Melbourne has been empowered by making the decision to help the people of Raaso on a large scale, by building a hospital. **The Somali community of Melbourne raised over \$25,000, a remarkable achievement for a small community who faces their own difficulties.** Banyule Community Health, located in West Heidelberg, recognised that by being empowered, there would be positive health implications for the Somali Community which they service. Therefore, the Board of Management at Banyule Community Health is pleased to support this project and provide office space, advice and administer the funds for the project.

Support of the Ethiopian Government

The Ethiopian Government is highly supportive of Abdalla Ahmed and his volunteers' efforts to help the people of Raaso and have pledged to staff the hospital if a hospital is able to be built through donated means.