

“We need to make the SDGs more accessible”

Interview with Abdihakim Ainte on creative solutions for local SDG implementation in Somalia

Mr Ainte, you recently founded iRise Hub in Mogadishu. What is its goal?

iRise is Somalia’s first innovation and technology hub. It is also a platform that brings together technicians, corporates and local people to think outside the box. We bring them together around virtual spaces to find innovative solutions to Somalia’s problems. So you can also call iRise Hub a get-together space for techs and corporates who are really looking to locate solutions to Somalia’s problems.

How does iRise contribute to the implementation of the SDGs?

Out of the 17 SDGs, we are working on a variety of goals. One of our main questions is: How can we turn the SDG framework into Somali language? We are trying to make the SDGs more accessible to local people. What we have realised is that the SDGs are largely driven forward by a small, elite group. But that group does not relate to people in local communities. So through our innovation and technology hub, we are trying to make the SDGs more accessible. That means that people should be enabled to understand the content of the goals. But they should also be put in a position to help in implementing them.

“We try to make the SDGs more accessible to local people.”

Additionally, we are trying to create jobs for young people in the tech sector and the creative sector. We are looking at how to unlock the future potential of the Somali people. How can we really think in terms of creative solutions? Here, we are teaching young Somalis basic technical skills such as coding, editing

and video recording. We hope to equip them with forward-looking skills so that they can be an addition to the market.

What is necessary for a country like Somalia to feel a sense of ownership towards the SDGs?

As already mentioned, to me, the SDGs are mainly an elite-driven talk. It is necessary to expand that talk and include as many people as possible. Local communities need to be part of the implementation process through a holistic approach. It is essential to accelerate the level of involvement in the country. Somalia is currently on the cusp of transformation. Really transforming the country would require huge involvement from the technical side. Further investment in infrastructure and in creating an enabling environment is necessary as well.

“We want to help the local people to be part of the Somali transformation process while making use of the SDGs.”

We want to help the local people to be part of that transformation process while making use of the SDGs. We want to set up platforms that would enable those willing to contribute their potential to develop a sense of belonging. There are many Somalis who feel excluded from the discussions at the national and international level and, of course, also from their implementation. And that’s the case even though it touches their everyday lives! So we want to create an inclusive package of SDG implementation that is genuinely innovative, creative and more sustainable.

Abdihakim Ainte

Abdihakim Ainte co-founded iRise Hub in 2017. Previously, he was a senior advisor to the Somali government and various international organisations, the UN, multilateral companies and donors on investment and economic development. He has written for newspapers and media organisations with global reach, including the New York Times, the BBC, Newsweek and Al Jazeera. He is passionate about investing Somali youth with the necessary skills to transform Somalia into an innovation and technology hub.



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