

USAID PROVIDES SOLID WASTE COLLECTION EQUIPMENT TO JIJIGA KICKING OFF SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR MUNICIPAL SERVICES

Trash collectors in Jijiga, the capital of Somali Regional State in southeast Ethiopia, used to move along the city's unpaved streets and alleyways picking up broken bottles, animal bones, hazardous materials, and every imaginable, and often unspeakable, type of waste material. The 70 trash collectors deployed by two solid waste collection cooperatives have been working under the unregulated, informal approval of the City administration for the past 4 years. Dressed in tattered clothes, wearing rubber sandals, and lacking gloves or other protective gear to protect them from injury or infection they represented a very weak and under-funded front line in the City Government's battle against environmental degradation and poor sanitation.

That situation is starting to change, thanks to a comprehensive performance improvement program for Jijiga's solid waste collection service through USAID's Regional and Municipal Services Strengthening (RMSS) Project. On September 15, 2011, USAID Ethiopia's Deputy Chief for the Office of Democracy and Governance Mr. Brian Gilchrest handed over to Mayor Abdi Tahir and the heads of two solid waste collection cooperatives equipment aimed at improving the solid waste collection service:

- 175 uniform coveralls,
- 175 helmets, caps, boots, rain gear, protective shoes, and masks,
- 175 leather gloves, as well as rubber gloves for handling hazardous waste materials,
- 150 push brooms, shovels, and rakes,
- 3000 re-usable trash collection/disposal sacks,
- 5 wheelbarrows, and
- 4 purpose-built trash collection push carts

Gilchrest acknowledged the efforts of the city in a statement: *"In addition to the City Department of Sanitation and Beautification, I want to acknowledge the participation and contribution of the: Hope for Jijiga and Hawl-Wedag sanitation and beautification cooperative. The members of these organizations have worked very hard and under difficult conditions to earn the respect of the government, residents, and business owners in Jijiga. USAID is well aware of their efforts and because of their performance we are pleased to provide this equipment to support them as well as the City."*

The USAID program, managed by Mercy Corps and ICMA, consists of training, technical support, and equipment and materials to manage and operate solid waste collection services including through contracts with private groups.

Jijiga City Mayor Tahir Abdi, thanked the US Government for investing in Jijiga's future and helping the City Administration carry out its functions. *"The RMSS Project has been a major resource for us, not merely by providing valuable equipment, as it has here today, but also by sharing with us specialized expertise in municipal management, finance, and service delivery. Building the skills of our employees and helping the City strengthen the organizations that are responsible for service delivery will enable us to better serve our community."*