

Executive Summary of Harar/Jugol Revitalization Program

Harar/Jugol is a fortified historical city in eastern Ethiopia, designated as UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2006 for its unique architectural and cultural significance. The old city of Harar was founded in 7th century and encircled by 16th century Walls and features over 80 mosques, 102 shrines, distinct Harari traditional houses, Harari-Indian mixed houses, historical and commercial buildings.

However, the conservation and preservation of this unique urban landscape had been highly threatened by urbanization, inadequate maintenance, poverty, overcrowding, encroachment and impacts of climate change. In general the old city of Harar/Jugol was in bad and dangerous situation of conservation before launching this program. In this context, the city government of Harar initiated revitalization program in 2021 that aimed to encourage heritage protection through upgrading infrastructure, restoring historical buildings, rehabilitating public spaces and raising awareness about the old city's historical values while empowering the local community to take ownership of their cultural heritage and harness its potential to drive local economic development.

The program aims to transform the deteriorated old city of Harar/Jugol into vibrant hub, sustainable community asset and functional space that serves local residents and visitors while generating tangible economic and social benefits for the local community. Therefore, the main objective of this initiative is improving the habitability of the old city by upgrading infrastructure, restoring traditional houses, adapting historical structures, fostering community identity and boosting economic activity.

The program has been carried out through an integrated approach, public-private partnership, and employed community-driven approach incorporating public engagement to ensure the program addresses local needs and creates sense of ownership. Accordingly the program consists of five complementary components and several sub-components or projects. These are formulating legal framework, upgrading infrastructure, restoring traditional houses and historical buildings, rehabilitation of open areas and public spaces and information, education and communication components. Sub-components and projects are briefly elaborated on the main explanatory document.

Thus the implementation of the program achieved the following results. 19 km's of Harar/Jugol streetscapes are upgraded, focusing on enhancing the alleyways, façades, the landscape and street furniture and 150 traditional residential houses and 25 historical mixed buildings have been restored. 220 commercial buildings and 30 religious buildings restored through this programme. 8 hectares of land developed into green spaces and public plazas with children play grounds. Three gates are renovated and more than 2 km of the wall is restored. Two multi-stakeholders consultation and community workshops were organized. More than 500 local community members participated from planning to implementation of the revitalization programme. It also contributed The Shuwalid Festival to be official inscribed as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity by UNESCO in December, 2023. The number of domestic and international tourists visiting the site increased ten times higher than before the program. Local businesses generated substantial revenue from tourism and also the program stimulated the local economic activity. The program also built a sense of ownership among local residents.

This program has been embarked in collaboration with the federal government and local stakeholders and partners.