American Relief Agency for the Horn of Africa
ARAHA

Strategic Plan
2018-2023

Prepared by Joshua Bernard, Cardina Esparza, Denise Johnson, and Ayana Shakir
University of St. Thomas
Doctorate in Organization Development and Change Management, Cohort 10

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**Mission:**
ARAH strives to alleviate human suffering and build self-reliant communities by providing humanitarian aid and empowering individuals in the Horn of Africa and here at home.

**Vision:**
A stable, sustainable, and thriving Horn of Africa.

**Strategy statement:** Differentiators and source of competitive advantage
A strategy is organization's formula to succeed in a competitive market. It explains how an organization, faced with competition, will achieve superior performance. It is about finding a way to do better than your rivals by being unique and different. So, what makes ARAHA more unique than any other non-profit humanitarian organization?

❖ We chose to focus only on the Horn of Africa region. The area we chose to serve is one of the most devastated regions in the world where the most recent famines come from. This choice not only allowed us to make an impact on the lives of the people there, but also made ARAHA an expert in the region.

❖ During the last 17 years, we have developed a unique experience and the know-how required to maneuver and navigate through the challenges of working in the region and understand the challenges at stake.

❖ ARAHA has talented and dedicated teams on the ground who go out into the field to forge the relationships with communities that make ARAHA programs so successful. We developed networks in place to work effectively and efficiently in order to reach the people who need them the most. This enables ARAHA to tailor projects to best suit the specific context of targeted areas and populations. They are passionate about empowering and sustaining their brothers and sisters in the Horn.

❖ We speak the languages of the region and understand the cultures of the people we serve. Most of ARAHA's board and staff members are originally from the Horn of Africa region. This helps us to be well-connected, well-accepted, and welcomed by local communities more than other peer organizations.

❖ We adhere to the values of transparency and accountability among others. ARAHA has established an impressive record in transparency and accountability. It has been recognized by multiple organizations for its financial health, accountability, and transparency including a four-star rating from Charity Navigator, the premiere charity evaluator, for five consecutive years - ranking ARAHA among the top 8 percent of all U.S. charities. This made ARAHA establish its brand as a trusted and reliable organization.

❖ We deliver projects with low overhead cost. According to its audited financial statements of the last 5 years, an average of 93% of revenue went towards programs and services while 7% went towards fundraising and management expenses.
❖ ARAHA has created diverse funding sources including a strong individual donor’s base who support the organization's mission across the United States. It does not rely on government grants as it is the case for many international organizations.

❖ We apply innovative solutions and the use of technology across our operations including projects, marketing, and fundraising method.

Core values:

**Optimism**
We always maintain hope in a bright future for the Horn of Africa. It fuels our work, energizes our mission, and keeps our staff going strong. Despite the region’s natural and political disasters, widespread poverty, and lack of accessible education, we have seen enough positive outcomes in our time in the Horn--orphans receiving university degrees, herders and farmers recovering from drought, people at all levels of society working for a better tomorrow--to know that we should always be optimistic.

**Empathy**
Empathy is a necessary quality for humanitarian work. It’s how we relate to those in need, and why we feel driven to uplift others. ARAHA’s work is motivated by an understanding that bad circumstances can happen to any of us, and if we happen to be among the fortunate, then we should feel for those who are not, and do everything we can to assist them. Empathy--mercy, compassion, care, understanding--means that we will strive to improve the lives of others by listening to them, providing what they need most, and lending a helping hand to improve their circumstances.

**Empowerment**
A region like the Horn of Africa can never thrive through aid alone. For long-term success, people must have the skills, tools, and resources they need to bring about their own self-improvement. This is why ARAHA strives to empower as many people as possible. Through education, sponsorships, micro-financing, and other programs, we are moving beyond the reactionary provision of emergency aid and instead building people up to be self-reliant and able to achieve their own successes long into the future.

**Resilience**
In a region buffeted by climate change, natural disasters, political upheaval, and chronic poverty, resilience is not an option but a requirement. We maintain the ability to spring back from difficulty and to recover quickly. In the spirit of the people of that region, we are committed to the Horn region no matter what occurs, just like they are.

**Stewardship**
It’s an unfortunate truth that the poorest regions of the world are those that will be most heavily impacted by climate change and environmental disaster. Consequently, any intervention or project in the Horn needs to be conducted while being mindful of the use of resources and sustainability. ARAHA’s climate change program promotes environmentally friendly outcomes with solar lights for schools and homes, and we have made it our mission to ensure that the Horn doesn’t just thrive, it thrives sustainably.

**Transparency & accountability**
Gaining trust--from our donors, our field offices, and the people we serve--is among our top priorities. ARAHA holds itself to a high level of transparency and accountability. With annual audits, annual reports, and publicly available reviews from well-known charity evaluators, we strive to show that we hold ourselves to a high standard of conduct. We hold ourselves accountable for being financially transparent and for carrying out all of our projects with excellence.

**Integrity**
A critical requirement for success is acting with integrity. We have **high ethical standards** in our work, whether that means ensuring that funds are channeled to the correct project streams, projects are completed on time, or people are treated with **dignity**. All of ARAHA’s staff and field members share this standard, and we believe that it shows through in our work.

**Collaboration**
Aiding and empowering the Horn of Africa is a massive undertaking, and no single person or agency can do it alone. Collaboration is necessary for success. ARAHA partners with other nonprofits to carry out large-scale projects, collaborates with governmental offices, and listens to the needs of communities on the ground to make the biggest impact possible. We operate from a collaborative, cooperative mindset, and we are always looking for new ways to work together with others to achieve long-term success.

**Innovation**
To meet all the challenges of an ever-changing present in the Horn of Africa, new ideas and creative solutions need to be implemented. Whether that means marketing using the latest techniques and technology, digging wells with faster machines, or promoting sustainable energy use in homes, ARAHA is constantly looking for new ways to improve lives and empower communities in need.

**ARAHA’s Strategies for 2018-2023**

1. Streamline overall operations and enhance project monitoring and evaluation.
2. Establish effective communication between board and staff and strengthen their capacity
3. Use comprehensive and proactive approaches towards ARAHA’s programs and projects, focusing on having a sustainable impact.
4. Focus on sustainable funding while continuously diversifying sources
5. Expand ARAHA’s presence and strengthen partnerships and networks
6. Enhance ARAHA’s branding and capitalize on marketing techniques
7. Create youth leadership programs in the HofA
8. Activate local programs in Minnesota by exploring the most needed activities
9. Combat climate change and deforestation; be environmentally mindful with all projects

**Strategy 1:** Streamline overall operations and enhance projects monitoring and evaluation

**Goals**

1. Establish corporate values to align with and support mission and vision
2. Create an effective volunteer program
3. Provide resources to field staff such as vehicles, cameras, and other equipment
4. Establish policies regarding security and safety for field staff
5. Enhance the monitoring and evaluation of programs and projects
6. Improve steps for project implementation and focus on efficiency
7. Make results more visible to donors, e.g. develop project management software
8. Establish a long-term budget process (3-5 year budget)
9. Increase effective use of technology across the organization

Strategy 2: Establish effective communication between board and staff and strengthen their capacity

Goals
1. Streamline communication and interaction between the board and staff, e.g. semi-annual meetings with the HQ staff
2. Annual meeting for all HQ and field staff with the field using Skype
3. Establish process and monitoring system to track the progress of the strategic plan goals
4. Establish executive committee and other functional board committees
5. Diversify and recruit more board members from different communities, backgrounds and faiths
6. Provide training for board members and professional training for capacity building of staff
7. Conduct cross-training in case there is a need for emergency backup
8. Develop and share succession plans for all leadership roles

Strategy 3: Use comprehensive and proactive approaches with ARAHA’s programs and projects focusing on sustainable impact

Goals
Expand school lunch programs by allocating some of the food program revenue towards it

Develop solar energy applications for education, improvement of livelihood, and business opportunities

Focus on the agriculture and fishery sectors:
- a. Move toward producing food locally through the revitalization of the farming and livestock sectors
- b. Establish fisheries and provide training to fishermen
- c. Increase irrigation farming
- d. Bring technology to increase production
- e. Use high yield seeds and cattle breeds that tolerate more heat and less water
- f. Provide access to global livestock market

Focus on education and self-reliance among development programs:
- g. Provide access to long distance education for college students through partnering with colleges and universities
- h. Establish portable education for nomadic people as a pilot project
- i. Expand access to higher education for top achievers through scholarships

Establish a community resource center in each country
Launch small business incubators to promote small businesses, support communities, and create chains of supply
Establish vocational and employment training centers in the HofA
Organize trips for volunteers, donors, medics, health professionals, etc. to HofA
Partner with universities, chambers of commerce, and other groups to implement certain strategies
Develop a comprehensive approach to severe drought, famine, flood, and other emergencies:
   j. Each field office to prepare an intervention plan for emergencies
   k. Purchase a large rig machine in every country for borehole wells
   l. Expand water catchment projects: dams, gutters and storage tanks in schools
   m. Provide healthcare and nutrition for mothers and children in affected areas
   n. Destocking & restocking projects

Strategy 4: Focus on sustainable funding while continuously diversifying sources
Goals
   1. Expand partnership with existing businesses for fundraising, e.g. Holy land
   2. Build long term relationships with family foundations
   3. Focus on funding through large and multiple year grants
   4. Build long-term relationships with individual donors and continuous follow up
   5. Increase partnership with other humanitarian organizations
   6. Generate income through investments
   7. Establish an endowment
   8. Increase online fundraising such as social media, google ads, etc.

Strategy 5: Expand ARAHA’s presence and strengthen partnerships and networks
Goals
   1. Coordinate, attend and participate in cluster meetings of NGOs
   2. Share experiences and best practices with other NGOs
   3. Explore the idea of opening a regional HQ in Kenya
   4. Establish a presence in major states such as DC, TX, CA, and NY
   5. Study the possibility of establishing an office in Canada

Strategy 6: Enhance ARAHA’s branding and capitalize on marketing techniques
Goals
   1. Create an ambassador’s program
   2. Diversify outreach to include Fortune 500 companies and other local entities
   3. Engage the young East African-American generation with an understanding of the HoA’s needs and struggles
   4. Expand outreach efforts to religious institutions, schools, universities, and mainstream communities
   5. Promote East African entrepreneurship and partner with local merchants in selling products in the ARAHA marketplace
   6. Increase ARAHA’s presence at local community events
   7. Create a platform to engage celebrities, professionals, volunteers, and donors with the HoA
   8. Create speakers for seminars about the HofA
9. Establish a unified brand - professional look and service, e.g. bags for udhiya, food baskets and a uniform for the field office staff
10. Officially shift our name from American Relief Agency for the Horn of Africa to just ARAHA

**Strategy 7: Create youth leadership programs in the HofA**

**Goals**
1. Partner with colleges and universities to identify top candidates
2. After school leadership workshops and seminars
3. Create leadership curriculum based on local needs
   a. Start these strategies as a pilot program in Shegerab High School

**Strategy 8: Activate local programs in Minnesota by exploring one of the following most needed activities**

**Goals**
1. Refugee and immigrant resettlement program
2. Youth program
3. Resources for newcomers to MN

**Strategy 9: Combat climate change and deforestation; be environmentally mindful with all projects**

**Goals**
1. Incorporate forestation and planting trees into our projects, e.g. a tree for each water well
2. Explore using technologies to convert desert sands to fertile soil
3. Incorporate the initiative of adapting a village for cleaning twice a year, similar to the concept of adapting a highway

**Review & approval:** The board reviewed the final version of the strategic plan and realized that some of the goals in the strategic plan are large in scope and may take longer time to accomplish than the 5 years time-frame. Therefore, the board decided to approve the strategy with special consideration for the goals and sub-goals listed under the strategies below. The board consider the mentioned goals as directions to where ARAHA should move rather than goals specified by the plan’s timeframe:

Strategy #3: Use comprehensive and proactive approaches with ARAHA’s programs and projects focusing on sustainable impact:

3. Focus on the agriculture and fishery sectors:
   A. Move toward producing food locally through the revitalization of the farming and livestock sectors
   B. Establish fisheries and provide training to fishermen
   C. Increase irrigation farming
   D. Bring technology to increase production
   E. Use high yield seeds and cattle breeds that tolerate more heat and less water
F. Provide access to global livestock market

4. Focus on education and self-reliance among development programs:
   A. Provide access to long distance education for college students through partnering with colleges and universities
   B. Establish portable education for nomadic people as a pilot project

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