

LIGHTING UP GALKAYO: SAFETY AND BUSINESS ON THE RISE

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Galkayo has become relatively safe following the 2017 Galkayo Agreement, which established joint security operations and improved relations between its northern (Puntland) and southern (Galmudug) sectors after intense conflict in 2015-2016. This period of relative calm has enabled residents on both sides of the city to recognise and benefit from peace dividends.

Peace dividends are economic gains that emerge after a conflict ends, allowing resources to be redirected toward social services, infrastructure, education and contributing towards overall improved service delivery.

Through the Puntland-Galmudug Peace Initiative – a project funded by the Somalia Stability Fund III (SSF III) and implemented by a consortium led by CARE International - communities from North and South Galkayo came together in May 2025 to identify joint investments that would benefit everyone, regardless of clan affiliation. The consultation aimed to collect community perspectives on the most pressing needs facing the residents of Galkayo. With 40 participants representing neighborhood committees, youth, women, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and other marginalised groups, the session ensured that a diverse cross-section of the community contributed to decision-making.

Each participant cast a single vote for the need they considered most critical. The highest-ranked priority was the rehabilitation of solar-powered streetlights—originally installed in 2017 through SSF II, but later damaged or lost due to conflict, vandalism, and theft. The vote underscored a shared concern about nighttime insecurity.

Until recently, both North and South Galkayo faced frequent nighttime incidents of theft, assault, and harassment. Local businesses were reluctant to operate after sunset, as the solar streetlights—often malfunctioning or missing—were the only reliable source of illumination. Many children also felt unsafe attending evening classes at private schools due to the lack of adequate lighting.

In July 2025 activities began, including the rehabilitation of 201 solar lights in North Galkayo and 228 in South Galkayo, as well as the installation of 23 new solar lights in South Galkayo. Additionally, to prevent vandalism and theft of the new and rehabilitated lights, solar batteries were installed on top of the lights, instead of using the previous ground battery systems.

The installation of solar lights helped to enhance public safety, particularly along the border of the two districts and in the main trading area ('Suuqa-Weyn'), which is shared by the two administrations.



WORKSTREAM 2: CONCILIATION

AT A GLANCE

PARTNER

- CARE International consortium

ACTIVITY

- Peace dividends in Galkayo

LOCATION

- Galkayo North District, Puntland
- Galkayo South District, Galmudug



ARAB ABDIRISAQ AHMED

Chief of Police, Galkayo North

“Compared to May 2025, reported incidents [of crime] have dropped by 80 percent, according to our records. People now feel safer walking or working after dark, and our patrols are more effective because the streets are well-lit.”

Photo credit: Somali Journalists Syndicate



Anod Ali Nur from Galkayo South stands outside her stall, illuminated by the refurbished solar lights.

Meet Anod Ali Nur a 60-year-old mother of three from Galkayo South. She is the breadwinner of the family, managing a stall at which she sells clothes and other home utensils.

“Once the clock struck 6pm, I had my business closed. My children and the children of my neighbours stayed indoors. We all feared the darkness as it contributed to harassment and theft,” says Anod. However, since the solar lights were rehabilitated she feels more secure. “I am now able to make more sales and income due to the fact that I have my business open for extended hours after sunset”, said Anod.

Similarly, Mariam, a businesswoman and mother of five from North Galkayo, has greatly benefited from the renewed street lighting. Mariam used to sell milk late into the night, using a handheld torch to illuminate her workspace. “As a single mother, I had no other choice but to make sure that I paid the bills to ensure my children’s school fees were paid on time. While selling milk, the batteries would die out. I had to renew the batteries of the torch each time, costing me money.” Miriam was left with no option but to work after sunset.

One night she recalls that while she was going to pick up milk from her wholesaler, she was approached by an assailant with a rifle. “I screamed and I was lucky as some people were close by and ran to my rescue, causing the assailant to flee,” says Mariam.

However, thanks to the restored solar lighting, Mariam feels safe enough to continue working into the evening without the use of the torch. She no longer needs to purchase expensive batteries to maintain it. Thanks to these savings, Mariam is now able to send one of her daughters to evening classes at a private school.

“The lights are on as soon as the sun sets and are on till dawn this was not always the case”, says Arab Abdirizak Ahmed, Galkayo North Chief of Police.

Previously the streets of North Galkayo were dark, and many incidents occurred. Since the rehabilitation of the solar lights, there has been a stark decrease in criminal activities, including mobile theft. Compared to May 2025, reported incidents have dropped by 80 percent, according to our records. People now feel safer walking or working after dark, and our patrols are more effective because the streets are well-lit.” His words echo the sense of relief and renewed trust felt across the community.

Similarly, the police Chief of South Galkayo, Ali Hirsi, notes that the solar lights have been highly beneficial for the community. “Before the lights were rehabilitated, people would leave garbage on the streets at night because it was dark and they felt unobserved. The streets are now clean, and there are no longer drug users sitting on the corners. The lights have also contributed to an increase in outdoor businesses, including food vendors and cloth sellers.”

The last activity included handing over to the local government and training the District Councils’ technical teams to ensure the safety and maintenance of the lights. The lights are frequently monitored by community committees in collaboration with the District Council and local police, ensuring that the lights remain secure and functional.

The combined efforts of SSF III, the police force, District Councils and the community committees have transformed Galkayo’s streets, making them safer, cleaner, and more vibrant for residents and businesses alike. For residents like Anod and Mariam, the lights have not only restored a sense of safety, but also revitalised livelihoods.

These investments are the community’s peace dividends: safer streets, longer business hours, more predictable income for business owners, and more children attending evening classes.

Why is this important?

Galkayo is the only city in Somalia shared by two federal member states, making it a vital hub that connects communities and facilitates trade between Galmudug, Puntland, and the neighboring Somali region of Ethiopia. Galkayo and its stability are critical to both Puntland and Galmudug. Supporting joint peace initiatives among these communities fosters inter-clan harmony, strengthens security, and promotes economic exchange

Investing in these peace dividend projects has the practical and concrete effect of incentivising community members to interact and cooperate around shared priorities and public assets that are important to all. The visible results of these solar lights demonstrate how to take “peace agreements on paper” into the reality of longer-term sustainment and what peace truly means in day-to-day lives.

By turning a previous flashpoint city into a place where services are visibly improving on both sides of the divide, the project shows that peaceful collaboration brings jobs, safer movement, and more trade for everyone, not just one clan or one administration. This helps shift local politics away from a zero-sum mindset and anchors the peace agreement in everyday routines and issues that matter to all — walking to school at night, running a stall after dark, or patrolling a well-lit street.