

# Somalia UPDATE



28 October 2008

## Good news from Sanaag

Dear Friends of Sun Fire Cooking

Here's an update on Somalia and our work. Recently Somalia has been in the news for all the wrong reasons; a deteriorating security situation on land and piracy at sea. The reasons for this are complex, but is in part the result of the United States's single minded 'war on terror', which has had adverse consequences for all concerned. Here is a link to columnist Nicolas Kristof's opinion piece in the 26 October, 2008 edition of the New York Times [www.nytimes.com/2008/10/26/opinion/26kristof.html?hp](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/26/opinion/26kristof.html?hp)

Consider the situation in Sanaag District where we work. Sanaag is one of the most neglected areas of Somalia because it lies in territory claimed by the governments of both Somalia and Somaliland. Recently people from outside the district have used it as a base for piracy,

most notoriously in the kidnapping of a German couple later released after ransom payment. Outsiders have also come to cut trees to make charcoal to the detriment of local people.

*Now some not generally known good news.* In June 2008 the people of Sanaag decided to do something about the lawlessness. They raised money from Somalis living in Western Europe and the United States, hired a General in the former Somali army who had local roots and paid for a 300-man security force to help maintain order. Subsequently there has been a huge improvement of security in Sanaag.

Cutting of trees for charcoal production has been banned in Sanaag. Security forces have been ordered to arrest and to destroy illegal charcoal traders' business. All charcoal products are publicly burned and the traders' transport vehicles confiscated.



**Solar Cooking in Sanaag**

Solar cooking is seen more and more as a viable alternative for household cooking. Charcoal is expensive and scarce. The crackdown on illegal charcoal making in Sanaag is partly responsible, but Sanaag is only a small part of Somalia. Trees are becoming scarce everywhere as they fall to the charcoal traders' axes.

More important is a change of attitude. In villages such as Badhan where Sun Fire Cooking has been working for several years there is now a 'critical mass' of households, which are using solar cookers. These households tell their neighbours about the advantages of solar cooking and stimulate demand.



*We put people and  
the environment  
before profit*

## **Charcoal Traffic: our short film travels around the world**

As part of our campaign for attitude and behavior change, we are showing our short film CHARCOAL TRAFFIC [charcoaltraffic.com](http://charcoaltraffic.com) to community groups throughout Sanaag to promote community discussion about the devastating cultural and environmental effects of charcoal production. CHARCOAL TRAFFIC is a short story about two brothers trapped in a cycle of environmental and cultural devastation. We filmed it on location in Somalia near Bosaso, using an all local Somali cast.



To promote international awareness, CHARCOAL TRAFFIC has been accepted at more than twenty international film festivals, including the Global Peace Film Festival in Orlando Florida, the Oakland California International Film Festival, and VideoFest in San Francisco, California where it won BEST SHORT FICTION FILM. CHARCOAL TRAFFIC is available online at [charcoal traffic.com](http://charcoaltraffic.com) [caachi.com](http://caachi.com) and [reframecollection.org/collection.jsp?collection=24](http://reframecollection.org/collection.jsp?collection=24).

*Your DVD of CHARCOAL TRAFFIC has some dynamite stuff in it. The story you tell and the stark scenery you depict will be eye-openers for the Washington DC decision makers. I used to think they were aware of all this stuff but I was wrong. Your visuals will be a real eye-opener.*

Darwin Curtis, Solar Household Energy, Chevy Chase, MD, USA

*Trying to protect your own property in rural Africa against greed, exploitation and manipulation is not easy. Neither was this film to watch. It is very uncomfortable for we who have so much to see those who must scrape by. A story of a family fighting against all odds.*



Comments from Dave's blog who saw CHARCOAL TRAFFIC at the Palm Springs California Short Film Fest

**Email us at**

**[Sunfirecooking@yahoo.com](mailto:Sunfirecooking@yahoo.com)**

**Visit us at**

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**[charcoaltraffic.com](http://charcoaltraffic.com)**