

DIALOGUE FOR PEACE

Somali Programme



Pioneers of Peace

**Advancing the Involvement of Women in
Peace-building in South-Central Somalia**



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Front cover photo: Young girls look towards the future © Ryan Anson/Interpeace

Back cover photo: The facilitator stimulates discussion by asking “How do you find ways to amplify the voices and concerns of women so that everyone will understand – the public, the world [internationals], the administration?” and writes the responses – “Have regular media programmes, Hold meetings where women’s ideas are shared, Organise public rallies to bring people together to support peace and security”

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1. Introduction	6
2. Key Issues.....	8
Impacts of war on women, men and the family structure	8
Women's Roles in War- and Peace-Making.....	10
Reconciliation Conferences and Political Decision-Making	11
3. Stakeholders	13
Benefitting from Peace.....	15
4. Activities	16
Security and Peace-Building in Mogadishu	17
Peace-Building Forums.....	26
Training with Other Partners.....	28
5. Analysis and Lessons Learned	30
6. Conclusions and Recommendations	33
Bibliography and Further Reading.....	34

The Dialogue for Peace

How WSP International and its three partners are working to consolidate peace and support better governance across the Somali region

Rebuilding a country after conflict is about far more than repairing damaged buildings and re-establishing public institutions. Fundamentally, it is about restoring the people's trust and confidence in governance systems and the rule of law, rebuilding relationships at all levels, and providing the population with greater hope for the future. These processes are all critical to the consolidation of peace and security in fragile post-conflict situations. When they are neglected, the threat of conflict re-emerging is very real.

In this sense, state-building and peace-building are potentially contradictory processes – the former requiring the consolidation of governmental authority, the latter involving its moderation through compromise and consensus. The challenge for both national and international peacemakers is to situate reconciliation firmly within the context of state-building, while employing state-building as a platform for the development of mutual trust and lasting reconciliation. In the Somali region, it goes without saying that neither of these processes can be possible without the broad and inclusive engagement of the Somali people.

WSP International – recently renamed the International Peacebuilding Alliance (Interpeace) – launched its Somali Programme in the northeastern part of Somalia known as Puntland in 1996. It subsequently expanded its programme to Somaliland in 1999, and to south-central Somalia in 2000. Working with highly respected local peace-building institutions established with the programme's support – the Puntland Development Research Centre (PDRC) in Garowe, the Academy for Peace and Development (APD) in Hargeysa, and the Center for Research and Dialogue (CRD) in Mogadishu – WSP has employed a highly successful 'Participatory Action Research' methodology to advance and support interlinked processes of peace-building and state formation. WSP's experience in the Somali region over the past decade indicates that the understanding and trust developed through the PAR methodology can help to resolve conflicts directly, while at the same time building consensual approaches to address the social, economic and political issues necessary for a durable peace.

As well as groundbreaking research throughout the Somali region, the Dialogue for Peace programme has provided unique opportunities for the three partners to engage with each other in collaborative studies and shared projects across their borders. In 2004, the CRD and PDRC teams agreed to combine their efforts in a jointly-managed peace-building programme. While managing its component of the Dialogue independently, the APD has continued to collaborate with the other two institutions on key technical and methodological issues. Over the past two years, the three partners have met regularly with WSP's Somali programme team to plan and coordinate their respective activities, as well as with a 'Dialogue Support Group' comprising the programme's donors at the European Commission, UK, USAID, Norway, Italy, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, and Denmark.

The Dialogue's consultative process has involved extensive consultations with all sectors of society, from national-level political and business leaders to local elders and community leaders, youth and women's groups, NGOs and civil society organisations. Its Participatory Action Research has provided for an inclusive, consensus-oriented dialogue led by local actors and facilitated by Somali research teams based at each of the partner institutions. The discussions have been documented in written and video form, and every effort has been made to engage the local media and disseminate the findings as broadly and objectively as possible.

Initial consultations by each partner institution were based upon detailed ‘actor and conflict mapping,’ which enabled the programme to identify local and regional priorities for dialogue, as well as respected leaders to guide and promote the dialogue process. At the Project Group meetings held in November 2004 by PDRC and CRD in Nairobi and by APD in Hargeysa, several areas of focus, or ‘entry points,’ were agreed upon for research and discussion in each area. For APD, the focal areas were: democratisation; decentralisation of governance; and resource-based conflict. The PDRC’s areas of focus were: democratisation; public fund management; consolidation of the Mudug Peace Agreement; and reconciliation. The CRD’s focal areas were: security and stabilisation; the roles of the business sector and civil society in peace-building; and reconciliation.

At the outset of the main ‘consultative phase,’ Working Groups of primary stakeholders were established to guide the work on each focus area and to develop plans of action. The groups’ activities included: information gathering and analysis; the identification of key local, regional and national actors whose views or engagement would be required; consultations through interviews, workshops, informal and formal meetings at local, inter-regional or national levels; and the engagement of resource persons to provide particular expertise on complex issues. Extensive consultations over a period of a year or more were essential to ensure sustained public interest and to raise key issues to the level of political decision-makers. Each of the partners also organised regular forums for public discussion of topical issues of concern, as well as engaging in informal liaison as a means of conflict prevention.

This report forms part of a final series of publications designed to formally ‘package’ the findings of these consultations – both as a record for those involved, and as a formal presentation of findings and recommendations to the national and regional authorities and the broader Somali community. Together with a short documentary film on each of the focal areas, it is also hoped that these publications will provide a practical platform for the sharing of lessons learned during each of these groundbreaking consultations.

In response to requests from different stakeholders, including members of the different governance structures, the Dialogue for Peace also set out to take its ‘research-for-action’ beyond the stage of recommendations to include more material contributions to peace- and state-building. One example was the reduction of tensions in Sool after a high-profile exchange of prisoners between Somaliland and Puntland, following extensive behind-the-scenes mediation supported by the APD and PDRC. To ensure that such practical hands-on support will continue into the next phase of the Dialogue, WSP has also initiated a comprehensive programme of managerial training, technical capacity building, and fundraising support at each of its partner institutions. And of course, it is continuing to provide practical opportunities for the three institutions to meet together and with other like-minded organisations in order to support other initiatives to foster long-term peace for the Somali people.

The current socio-political context in south-central Somalia has been changing rapidly since early 2006. This report represents the situation in that area from early 2004 to early 2006 and the participatory action research conducted by the Center for Research and Dialogue during this period.

Pioneers of Peace

Advancing the Involvement of Women in
Peace-building in South-Central Somalia

1. Introduction

During the conflict mapping undertaken by the Center for Research and Dialogue (CRD) and WSP International in preparation for the Dialogue for Peace in south-central Somalia in 2002-03, the CRD conducted research for a study on 'The Changing Roles of Women'. The study investigated developments in the social, economic and political roles of women in the post-conflict environment, and the challenges and opportunities that these roles present. The findings of this research were duly presented to an inclusive National Project Group (NPG) meeting in Mogadishu on July 3rd-4th 2004, at which the participants identified several priority areas that were seen as critical for further engagement to support peace-building and the anticipated outcomes of the IGAD-led Somali National Reconciliation Conference, which was underway in Kenya at the time. The meeting also reinforced the need to incorporate gender issues into all aspects of the action research of the Dialogue for Peace.



Consultation with elder women's group in a rural setting, February 2002

Between August and November 2004, the WSP and CRD conducted a series of formal and informal consultations on several issues identified during the original NPG discussions. The outcomes of this research, contained in the publication *The Path to Recovery: Building a Sustainable Peace*, identified critical issues and challenges that would have to be addressed during the transitional period of the new government, including social reconciliation and security and stabilisation. Women were identified as having a central role to play in both of these areas, particularly as impartial mobilisers for peace between clans



As well as ensuring women's representation in seminars and workshops in the Dialogue for Peace, institutional support for key women's organisations enhanced their engagement in the process

and communities in conflict. However, based upon past experience, it was considered more effective to consider the various roles of women in all areas of peace-building – rather than isolating them as a separate area for study.

The issues raised in this research were finally presented in the joint DfP Project Group meeting organised by the CRD, the Puntland Development Research Centre (PDRC) and WSP in Nairobi on December 2nd-4th 2004, which was chaired by the newly elected Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG). More than 200 representatives from a broad spectrum of society from south-central Somalia and Puntland participated in this meeting, including members of the nascent Transitional Federal Parliament. Following lengthy discussions, the participants confirmed the role of women as an area meriting special attention, which should be addressed by different stakeholders through the Dialogue for Peace at national, sub-national and local levels. The CRD duly affirmed its commitment to support the full representation of women's groups and prominent activists in the DfP process, including their participation in consultative meetings, workshops and forums.

This paper focuses on some of the most vital and high-profile engagements with women's groups and networks during the most recent stages of the DfP process. However, as has already been documented in the publications *Dialogue Not Guns: Promoting Security and Stabilisation among the Communities of South-Central Somalia* and *A Force for Change: Promoting the Roles of Civil Society and the Private Sector in Peace-Building and Reconciliation in South-Central Somalia* (Interpeace/CRD, 2006), women have played a prominent role in all aspects of the work of the CRD since its earliest days in 2001.

2. Key Issues

Impacts of war on women, men and the family structure

The prolonged civil war and insecurity following the collapse of the Somali state in 1991 have caused immense human suffering and material losses across the south-central regions, leaving physical and emotional scars on all aspects of Somali society. In addition to death and destruction, the violent conflict has resulted in widespread displacement of people both within and beyond the country's borders. Family relationships have been disrupted, traditional social values eroded, and roles and responsibilities within the family have undergone major fundamental changes¹.

During the civil war, massive civilian casualties resulted from 'scorched earth' tactics in some areas and the use of heavy weapons in urban centres. Somali religious and cultural values hold that women and children should specifically be protected and "spared from the spear" (*birimageydo*), together with the sick and elderly, poets, honoured guests, and respected religious and community leaders. Although fighters are expected to observe these norms as reciprocal obligations between clans, during the prolonged insecurity in south-central Somalia, these traditional mechanisms were not sufficient to protect vulnerable groups and violations were committed against the most vulnerable sections of society. (Several examples are recounted in *Somalia, The Untold Story: The War through the Eyes of Somali Women*, 2004).

This disruption of cultural norms coupled with the poor security environment in many parts of south-central Somalia still leaves many girls and women vulnerable to gender-based violence. Meanwhile, men and boys have been compelled to participate – as well as being directly targeted – in clan-related killings, or been forced to seek refuge elsewhere – undermining their traditional roles as protectors and providers of their wives, daughters and other female relatives.

One positive outcome of this period of upheaval has been the establishment of several locally-based human rights organisations to monitor such violations and address incidents of violence against vulnerable members of society. The vulnerability of families to violence has also been a factor in the formation of a growing number of networks of women peace activists (see Section 4).

In Somali society, women are traditionally seen as the backbone of the family, the primary caregiver looking after the household and children, while the man protects and provides for the family and acts as its decision-maker and representative in the community. However, the lengthy civil conflict has eroded these traditional roles, forcing people to seek the protection of their clans – and separating husbands and wives who come from different clans. Men and boys were forced to fight or leave their home areas to seek work to provide income for their families; some, faced with an inability to protect or support their families, even abandon them. The serious stresses placed upon the family system during this period led to an increased number of divorces, women-headed households, and abandoned children (a phenomenon that was rare in Somali society prior to the collapse of the state). There has also been an increase in non-arranged and teenage marriages, as opposed to the traditional practice of arranged marriages, in which both families took an active interest and shared responsibility. The growing incidence of teenage marriages and divorces both have serious implications for the long-term care of Somali children.

¹For a more detailed historical background, see *The Path to Recovery: Building a Sustainable Peace* (CRD/WSP, 2004), 'The Impact of the War on the Family' in *Rebuilding Somaliland: Issues and Possibilities* (APD/WSP, 2005), and 'The Role of Somali Women in Post-Conflict Reconstruction' (draft manuscript, WSP International, 2000).



Girls attending koranic school

Although both customary law (*xeer*) and Islamic law (*shari'a*) emphasise the importance of the family institution and its preservation as the foundation of society, customary law, which is directed towards the collective interest of male clan members, is generally favoured in Somali society in matters of marriage, divorce and inheritance. For example, the terms for maintenance and child support under *shari'a* are frequently ignored in favour of customary law. While *shari'a* family law provides a better balance for women and dependants, women are frequently unaware of their rights or do not have the means to access them. Although all children are expected to attend Koranic school, pupils generally learn by rote and are not necessarily literate. Women are therefore dependent on the interpretations of *shari'a* according to their local Qaadi or Sheikh, who dispenses judgement. More often, cases will anyway be dealt with by male family members according to customary law. The poor support provided for families without a father present has contributed to one of the most visible outcomes of the impact of prolonged insecurity – the increase in impoverished women-headed households in which women have both to support the household and their children's welfare.

The well-documented emergence of women as the primary economic providers in the post-war period is not limited to women-headed households. Many married women have also become the main source of income for their households due to high unemployment among men. Generally, men are unwilling or unable to engage in low income opportunities, such as petty trade in local markets. Male unemployment is also compounded by the widespread chewing of khat, a mildly intoxicating plant. While prior to the civil war, this was predominantly a habit of northern Somalia (and traditionally practiced only once a week), it is now widespread in the south-central regions as well. Regular khat chewing certainly places an additional strain on family budgets and priorities (with an annual cost to the family equivalent to the school fees of five children). Research in Somaliland indicates that, although one feature of khat chewing is "self-medication" for the trauma of war, it can also exacerbate the incidence of psychotic disorders (see, for example, *Khat Use as a Risk Factor for Psychotic Disorders*, Vivo/GTZ 2002).



Many women have to provide for their families through small scale trade: selling vegetables at a local market

A variety of studies have found that, across Somalia, women now run 80% of petty trade and small businesses, as well as running their own households. It is sometimes argued that this dramatic socio-economic shift demonstrates an enhanced position for women – although there is little evidence that this has translated into changes either in their economic status or their decision-making powers outside the family. Instead, women's increased involvement in trade appears to be a reflection of economic necessity. In most cases, women lack investment

capital, own few assets, and earn a subsistence income to support their families through work in harsh conditions and an insecure environment. In south-central Somalia, there are relatively few women owners of wholesale businesses or major corporations, and very few major Somali companies have a woman on their boards. Somalia's de facto commercial capital of Dubai requires that all Somali businesswomen have a male business partner. Across Somalia, men continue to dominate in the key areas of financial credit and money transfers, the import-export trade (including livestock and khat), and information technology.

The challenges that Somali women face in the economic sphere are exacerbated by poor access to education. Half as many women as men can read and write (adult literacy rates: men 25%, women 13%) and school attendance by girls falls off dramatically from age nine onwards, with secondary school enrolment extremely low among girls in south-central Somalia (see CRD/WSP's *The Path to Recovery*). Although women express keen interest in adult education and several women's groups and Islamic charities support women's education projects, the daily demands to provide material as well as emotional care for the family mean that most women have little time or energy to spare for such projects – let alone collective action to address the underlying causes of their circumstances.

Women's Roles in War- and Peace-Making

Somali women have a unique traditional role in peacemaking because their linkages to both the clan of their birth and the clan of their marriage enable them to cross clan lines in ways that men cannot. In addition, women normally have strong relationships with the clan of their mothers and maternal relatives as well as those of their fathers, and they usually sustain both networks after they are married. By contrast, a man is identified by his father's clan and his social responsibilities are connected predominantly to this clan. Women's cross-cutting clan identity and broader clan affiliations have enabled them to play crucial roles in promoting reconciliation, and there are many examples of women using their influence across clan lines to advocate for warring factions to stop fighting and engage their opponents in dialogue. On occasion, groups of women from both sides of a conflict have shamed the men into stopping fighting by threatening to "go naked" (i.e. uncover their heads).

As women are not neutral or passive bystanders, there are also many examples of women urging their men to fight and defend the family, the community and the clan, or contributing to conflicts by mobilising funds and militias, feeding and tending to combatants, gathering information, and even, in a minority of cases, taking up arms. Women have also incited violence against other women and perpetuated inter-clan divisions and conflicts.

Nevertheless, Somali women are often credited with giving greater priority to peace and security than men, who are seen as coming to the negotiating table “from the battlefield” – while women are more likely to come from the home.

Women’s involvement in the peace campaign began soon after the outbreak of the civil war in the early 1990s, when women’s groups, umbrella organisations and individuals organised peace rallies and lobbied political leaders to diffuse tensions and curb violence between clans and between armed faction leaders in Mogadishu. Often these women were successful because they were seen as neutral and disinterested mediators who were using their influence and relations as mothers, sisters, daughters and wives of the fighting men, and because they were seen as addressing the immediate needs of the community.

As well as organising public demonstrations and lobbying and mediating behind the scenes for peaceful resolutions to the conflict, women also intervened in different ways to meet the basic needs of those suffering the consequences of the war. During the great famine of 1991-92, for example, women saved the lives of many civilians by knocking on doors and delivering food to households when, faced with almost certain starvation, many families chose to die with dignity rather than beg for food and locked themselves in their homes.

Throughout the civil war in south-central Somalia, women have drawn on their ability to engage across clan lines to set up a series of grassroots initiatives through which they have been able to reduce tensions and promote opportunities for peaceful negotiation. This has included freeing hostages from armed kidnappers, clearing armed checkpoints, and helping to create neighbourhood watch schemes to improve local security (see Section 4).

Reconciliation Conferences and Political Decision-Making

Somali women’s political activism dates back to their indispensable role in advocating for political independence during the colonial era, through a robust women’s independence movement working closely with the Somali Youth League, the largest nationalist organisation in the country. After independence, the women’s movement faded, although the ‘scientific socialism’ of Siad Barre brought significant socio-political benefits for women in access to education and employment, as well as the right to vote.

Although women have played critical roles in lobbying and mediating for peace and make a dominant economic contribution to supporting the family, this has not translated into an enhanced role in formal reconciliation processes and political decision-making. Of the 14 reconciliation conferences designed to restore peace in Somalia, women were accepted as official delegates only at the last two: the Arta Conference in 2000 and the IGAD-led National Reconciliation Conference in 2002-04. Before these conferences, Somali women had never participated formally in any of the reconciliation meetings or conferences, with their roles limited to go-betweens for opposing political factions.

Women’s political involvement in the Djibouti-sponsored Arta Conference represented a dramatic shift, with women taking a lead role in resolving local conflicts, mobilising grassroots support, promoting human rights,

and advocating for public social services. At one stage, when the process hit a political impasse, women adopted their traditional mediation role, with the support of religious leaders, to successfully facilitate resolution of differences between the opposing groups. Their contribution, supported by lobbying from civil society for a specific allocation for women as the “sixth clan”, was recognised with 25 seats (out of 245) reserved for women in the legislative councils of the Transitional National Government. However, the women MPs were nominated by men and disappointed many by following clan-based interests rather than a common agenda for women.

Nevertheless, a precedent had been set. Although there was substantially less representation by women at the IGAD-led conference in Kenya, with only 21 women representatives and 34 officially registered women delegates out of a total of more than 600, the women delegates did succeed in lobbying for and achieving an allocation of parliamentary seats. Article 29 in the Transitional Federal Charter allocated women 12% of seats in the new federal parliament (33 of 275 seats). In fact, only 8% of seats (22) were given to women and one ministerial and three deputy ministerial posts in the 94-minister TFG cabinet. Like the experience of the Arta process, the women MPs were nominated by men and to date have not acted collectively on a common platform for women.

The challenges for women in playing a full part in political decision-making processes may be seen as relating to both traditional and religious values. While the ambiguity of women’s clan loyalties may be an asset in peace mediation during conflict, when it comes to political decision-making, women are marginalised and are likely to continue to be substantially excluded as long as the clan system dominates the political arena. In terms of religious values, there are a variety of views. In 1997, religious leaders in Somaliland ruled that women were not prevented by anything in the *Qur’an* or *shari’a* law from political participation on an equal basis with men. However, other interpretations of Islam may exclude women from leadership and decision-making positions.



Informal discussions between CRD researchers and a member of one of the leading women’s networks

3. Stakeholders

Over the past decade and a half, in the absence of a functional government, an active civil society has emerged to provide some of the important public services previously supplied by the state. Across south-central Somalia, local women's groups and umbrella organisations have become increasingly involved in providing a wide range of essential services, from health and education to public awareness, advocacy for marginalised groups, women's empowerment, and the promotion of peace. Some women's organisations are also engaged in awareness-raising and advocacy to increase women's participation in public affairs. Most of these organisations are based in urban centres – particularly Mogadishu, where they have gained a high profile and widespread support.



Two generations of women engaged in a discussion on peace building in Mogadishu

The success of these organisations is, however, frequently tempered by accusations that they are imposing external values or simply generating income for their own staff. However, a significant number of organisations and networks have gained local recognition for their vision for a better society and a peaceful end to the violence and lawlessness – and their dedication to the sheer hard work that this entails. The work of some of these organisations and networks is described in more detail below.

Somali women's groups also face the twin challenges of limited educational opportunities and economic resources, as well as the 'factionalisation' that is a salient feature of Somali society and hampers efforts to develop common institutional platforms. Nevertheless, several organisations have managed to establish active coalitions and networks, and to attract funding and support from a wide range of sources. In 1996, the Coalition for Grassroots Women's Organisations (COGWO) was established to unite the efforts of 20 different women's NGOs based in Mogadishu. By 2006, the number of NGOs under the COGWO umbrella had risen to 30. COGWO empowers its members and other women through training, awareness raising

and advocacy for women's rights and peace-building, as well as supporting the prevention of domestic violence, documenting cases, and providing services to its victims. COGWO also took a lead role in the establishment of a series of highly effective neighbourhood watch schemes to provide local-level security in Mogadishu. COGWO's work in mobilising community support for peace-building currently involves more than 750 women throughout Benadir, and it also supports broader initiatives through collaboration with the women's umbrella, We Are Women Activists (WAWA), in Puntland and the Nagaad women's network in Somaliland.

Another example of a dynamic women's network is HINNA, or the Haweenka Horseedka Nabadda (Women Pioneers for Peace and Life), a loose coalition formed by 60 women as a pressure group for peace in 2003, which now comprises over 100 women's groups and activists based in Mogadishu. Some HINNA members had previously taken up arms to fight but became engaged as highly effective "peace pioneers", organising high-profile peace campaigns and lobbying faction leaders to defuse tensions at critical periods during Mogadishu's recent history. The coalition is a self-sustained initiative between women using their influence as mothers, sisters, daughters and wives, and has contributed to a number of notable achievements, including the end to several inter-clan skirmishes, the release of dozens of people taken hostage by armed gangs, the



A number of women's organisations are supporting the provision of basic social services while others are engaged in promoting peace and advocacy for increased participation by women in public affairs

construction of a school for IDPs, and the reopening of the famous Benadir Hospital for Mothers and Children, which had been occupied by armed militia since the outbreak of the civil war. HINNA activists have also played a prominent role in the establishment of Mogadishu's neighbourhood watch schemes.

The success of organised women's groups in the capital is echoed by women's groups in other parts of the country,

such as by IIDA and AYUB, two women's organisations based in Marka (with branches in Mogadishu and Lower Shabelle respectively), which provide basic education and skills training for women and day care for orphans and the children of working mothers. The Mogadishu-based Somali Women Entrepreneurs Group provides training, financial support and leadership skills to women in business through a network of branches in Middle and Lower Shabelle, Hiran, Kismayo and Galgaduud.

Among the achievements of women's groups in support of peace-building in south-central Somalia, several initiatives stand out:

- A group of women attempted to counteract the spread of guns by contacting the spouses of militia members and urging them to convert their husbands into peace-builders;
- Mogadishu women challenged civil society to play a more proactive role in promoting peace after male-dominated organisations failed to make progress. Their actions included crossing lines demarcated by warring factions to advocate for peace and persuading militiamen to dismantle roadblocks on some of the city's main highways;
- In Merka, a local women's development organisation launched a demobilisation project, offering education and alternative income opportunities for a number of teenage boys who were serving in local militias;

- A women's group joined forces with a youth-for-peace group to persuade militiamen to stop fighting in various conflict 'hotspots', such as Medina district in Mogadishu. Beyond convincing their peers, the youths were reported to have made a significant impact in changing the attitudes of many older community members;
- In 10 of Mogadishu's 16 districts, women actively championed the creation of neighbourhood watch schemes to protect communities from incidents of theft, kidnapping and other crimes, resulting in significantly reduced rates of rapes and kidnappings from 2003 onwards
- Women's groups continue to play a 'fire-fighting' role to avert armed conflict as well as providing practical and moral support to reconciliation process in different areas of south-central Somalia, including South Mudug and Galgaduud through 2006.

Benefitting from Peace

Because civil society organisations, including women's groups and networks, are working on peace-building initiatives with communities on the ground, they understand better than most faction leaders and political elites the true cost of the conflict to ordinary people – and what Somalis in general stand to gain from peace. The resolution of conflict and the consolidation of peace would help such organisations with their work in a number of ways:

- It would allow group members freer movement within communities, both to organise broader networks and to reach out to those who need help, without fear of retribution or attack by faction leaders and their militias;
- It would enhance opportunities to gain broader public support for peace, which remains difficult to do while the threat of violent conflict continues;
- It would help organisations attract more consistent funding and support, both locally and abroad, in an environment in which funders are naturally reluctant to spend money without clear signs of progress. Broader-based funding could in turn enhance opportunities for greater collaboration between such organisations;
- Those media outlets that may contribute to the conflict by disseminating partisan reports would be less inclined to do so if the clans were working together to promote peace;
- Civil society groups attempting to restart public services disrupted by conflict, such as healthcare, education, transport and water supplies, could do so with more confidence that their efforts will not be undermined or destroyed by a resurgence of conflict.



Public mobilisation in support of Peace Day, Mogadishu, September 2004

4. Activities

The involvement and active participation of women in both local and national peace-building initiatives is vitally important to the Dialogue for Peace process. Using the WSP-forged PAR methodology, the Center for Research and Dialogue has established strong relationships with several prominent women's groups and engaged hundreds of women in the DfP, both as participants and community leaders. The joint CRD/PDRC National Project Group included 16% of women in its core membership (23 out of 140 members), and women comprised 25% of the CRD's working group members. Women and their organisations were invited to all CRD activities, including workshops, seminars, public forums and training programmes. In many cases, women were selected as facilitators and group leaders, which went a long way to promote their skills and confidence in the peace-building process.

Recognising the marginalised position of many women in Somali society and the unique potential of their contribution, the Center also provided specific support to several organisations and individual women leaders through consultations and training in strategic planning, organisational skills, and conflict management and mediation techniques. This direct engagement with women's groups was clearly justified by their dynamic contributions and wholehearted commitment to the Dialogue for Peace, which saw visible representation by women throughout the process.

Striking a Gender Balance

While the CRD recognised the central role that women should play in promoting peace and reconciliation, and the need to build their capacities and skills to "make their voices heard", it also recognised the need to unify their voices with men through their participation in gender-balanced processes. From the outset of the Dialogue, the Center sought not only to support women's organisations but to involve them in forums and negotiations that brought them into direct contact with male politicians and community leaders – and thus to ensure that the women's viewpoint was not only heard, but pushed to the front of the political agenda.



Women and men participating in a workshop on federalism, Jowhar, May 2005

In all of its peace-building events and consultations, training and other technical programmes, the CRD continues to ensure that a significant proportion of the places are reserved for local women's groups and women activists – both to elevate their capacities in core peace-building disciplines, and to propagate networks of cooperation and trust between their organisations and more traditionally male-focused sectors and groups.

Using Film and the Media to Empower Women

Since its establishment in 2000, the CRD's Audio-Visual Unit (AVU) has produced a range of short documentary films portraying the realities of everyday life and the challenges and opportunities faced by urban and rural communities in the south-central regions. These films have been successfully used to stimulate and inform discussions in workshops and meetings, to promote the exchange of information between different parts of the country, and to update members of the Diaspora and the international community. The oral nature of Somali society combined with low literacy rates mean that films can be a particularly dynamic way of communicating new ideas and research findings. Various Somali and international organisations have commissioned the CRD's AVU to produce films on specific topics or to present one of their films to help mobilise and sensitise participants at specific events.

In line with the CRD's commitment to supporting the empowerment of women, its AVU has developed a number of films focusing specifically on the challenges faced by women. These include: *Labo-xilley* ('The Dual Responsibilities of Somali Women'); *Dawrarka Isbedelaya ee Haweenka Soomaaliyeed* ('The Changing Roles of Somali Women'); *Against Violence Against Women and Justice Denied*, made with NOVIB to expose the problems encountered by women in the judicial system; *Xil-qaad* ('Shouldering the Responsibility') and *The Role of Women in Politics*, made with COGWO; *Empowering Somali Girls and Female Teachers for Education*, made with SAACID and NOVIB; and a film on *Youth Peace-Building*, made with UNICEF.

In this largely oral society, radio is a particularly potent means of communicating messages and public information. The CRD has established close ties with all of the major south-central radio stations and often provides all or part of the proceedings of its workshops and public forums for broadcast on these stations. As will be seen, such prominent dissemination can have powerful and immediate results.

Security and Peace-Building in Mogadishu

The CRD's work in capacity-building for peace began in early 2003 with support for efforts to address the serious problem of kidnapping faced by the citizens of Mogadishu. The community-based initiatives that evolved from this beginning, with technical support and guidance from the CRD, are described below, as they set the scene for the process that followed during the main phase of the Dialogue for Peace.

Kidnapping Forum, January 2003

Once a tactic used almost exclusively against expatriates, kidnapping had by the early 2000s begun increasingly to target local Somalis. The victims were nearly always people perceived to be able to pay a ransom: successful businessmen, staff of international organisations, or locals who had just sold a piece of land or a house, and were known to be in possession of large sums of cash. Poorer people could also be vulnerable, if it was known that they received regular remittances from abroad, as were people embroiled in business disputes. And someone defaulting on a payment or a loan reimbursement might experience the kidnap of a family member – taken as a way of 'reminding' them to pay up.

By late 2002, an average of five people were being kidnapped in Mogadishu each week, according to records kept by local human rights organisations. In response to the growing fear generated by this wave of kidnappings, the CRD organised a public forum to discuss the problem, which attracted a broad range of local leaders, police officers, and members of the Islamic Courts, as well as leading women's groups and civil society organisations. The forum was also well attended by local journalists, who disseminated the proceedings broadly through the newspapers and radio stations, which continued the debate in their columns and programmes. The public attention generated by the forum gave further impetus to the efforts of civic leaders, including a number of prominent women, to put pressure on those behind the kidnappings to release hostages. On several well-publicised occasions, women mobilised to surround locations where hostages were being held in order to force their captors to release them.

The kidnapping forum was directly credited with a dramatic reduction in kidnapping incidents in Mogadishu, which had fallen dramatically by mid-2004. From the high rates of kidnapping in late 2002, only 46 cases were reported in the capital between July 2004 and July 2005, and just 17 between July 2005 and July 2006, according to the Dr. Ismael Jumale Human Rights Organisation. The success of this groundbreaking initiative to mobilise public solidarity for peaceful resolutions of local insecurity gave civic groups – and women's groups in particular – increased confidence in their capacity to tackle crime and insecurity in their immediate environment.

The Arrival of Neighbourhood Watch Schemes, 2003

The idea of establishing community-based networks to oversee and enforce security in crime-prone neighbourhoods of Mogadishu was first put forward by an elder from Bulo Xuubey, Medina District, during a forum organised by the CRD with women's groups and district authorities in 2002. During the early part of 2003, the idea was taken up by COGWO, with technical guidance from the CRD. The neighbourhood watch concept was further developed during a six-month training programme which began in July with support from the National Endowment for Democracy and focused on providing practical training in modern techniques of conflict resolution, peace-building and advocacy.

Between July and December, a week-long training session was held each month for members of the women's organisations, together with district commissioners, human rights and youth activists, religious leaders and militia leaders. The programme also used documentary films to sensitise participants on the gender dimension of insecurity in the capital, including physical and sexual abuses suffered by girls and women. In the latter half of 2003, COGWO began mobilising grassroots support through a "peace army" of over 750 women peace activists who had been involved in the training. From January 2004, the CRD and COGWO collaborated with other civic organisations to provide training in community policing to support the establishment of 13 neighbourhood watch schemes across 10 districts of Mogadishu. The formation of these initial 13 networks provided the foundation for an extensive community-based security structure that would radically improve 'street-level' security in the city and continues to provide a vital 'watch and report' service in at least 10 of the city's districts. The unexpected success of the early neighbourhood watch schemes encouraged other civic actors, including HINNA, to join the process.

The Birth of HINNA, April-May 2003

At the request of 60 local women activists, the CRD organised a capacity-building forum in May 2003 to support the recent formation of a pressure group for improving security and peace in Mogadishu – the beginning of the dynamic women's network that would become known as HINNA. The forum, which included training and discussions on a wide variety of conflict management and resolution techniques, was seen as crucial for both the women and the wider community, which was suffering from the effects

of deteriorating security and increasing crime in the city. The 60 women were joined at the forum by local politicians, businesswomen, other activists, elders and religious leaders, who lent their support to the new women's pressure group dedicated to persuading Mogadishu's faction leaders to abandon their armed dominance of the city in favour of a workable Benadir administration.

Subsequently the women moved into action and exerted heavy pressure on the faction leaders, who ultimately agreed to engage in a process towards formation of a regional administration. A committee comprising representatives of the local factions was formed to explore the way forward for establishing a regional government. Although the committee made some progress, it was suspended in late 2003 due to the engagement of faction leaders in the ongoing IGAD-led National Reconciliation Conference in Nairobi.



Women's networks and pressure groups have been playing a critical role in addressing lawlessness in Mogadishu

Conflict Resolution Training for Neighbourhood Watch Networks, March 2004

In March 2004, the CRD held a training workshop on conflict resolution and peace-building for 60 participants involved in Mogadishu's nascent neighbourhood watch schemes. The trainees – community leaders, neighbourhood watch leaders, and members of women's groups – were accompanied by District Commissioners from each of the city's 16 districts. As a result of the workshop, several neighbourhood watch groups were expanded, improving the security situation in many parts of the city. The workshop provided an impartial venue for the different stakeholders to jointly develop a common platform and action plan for improving the security situation in Mogadishu – an approach that set the scene for future community-driven security initiatives.

Training of District Commissioners, 2004-05

In September 2004, COGWO, with technical support from the CRD, launched a five-month programme to provide security-related training to members of Benadir's 16 district administrations in their respective districts. The training helped to increase public awareness on security-related issues and local peace-

building initiatives across Mogadishu, as well as further strengthening and expanding the roles of the emerging neighbourhood watch schemes.

In its 2005-06 annual report, the Dr. Ismael Jumale Human Rights Organisation reported a widespread decline in the incidence of rapes and kidnappings across the capital – both attributed to the success of the neighbourhood watch schemes and ongoing administration training.

The Mogadishu Security and Stabilisation Plan, 2005

Ideas for improving the overall security of Mogadishu and putting in place a viable administration had been under discussion in different quarters for some time, including during a forum organised by the CRD on January 13th 2005 with leaders of the neighbourhood watch networks, businessmen, women's groups and other civic activists (see *A Force for Change: Promoting the Roles of Civil Society and the Private Sector in Peace-Building and Reconciliation in South-Central Somalia*, CRD/Interpeace, 2006). The involvement of those engaged in the neighbourhood watch networks and local and women's leaders played important roles in this process as the experience gained in community-based initiatives enabled them to make practical inputs and their credibility at the grassroots meant they were uniquely placed to mobilise public support to overcome insecurity across the city.

After a workshop held in Marka in April 2005, at which 75 political, civic and women's leaders from all over south-central Somalia discussed proposals to establish a regional civic security network, support grew for the drafting of a consensual 'Security and Stabilisation Plan' to guide security-related developments in Mogadishu. The following month, the CRD helped to organise a high-profile workshop for some of the key players involved in Mogadishu's security, including – for the first time – several members of the Transitional Federal Parliament, together with leaders of the neighbourhood watch networks and district officials. On the first day of the workshop, the Center showed the 55 participants a documentary film outlining the level and magnitude of the security challenges facing south-central Somalia. The gathering subsequently drew



Discussion at the Marka workshop on formation of a regional civic security network, April 2005

up a number of specific recommendations for the city authorities relating to the importance of political reconciliation and consensus-building as platforms for disarmament and the importance of engaging the public in the process.

The Mogadishu Forum, June 2005

These various meetings and workshops set the scene for the high-profile Mogadishu Forum, which was held on June 6th 2005 under the title “*Nagu raagtaye, yaan loo kala harin*” (“It’s too late to wait, we must stand together”). This major consultative meeting on efforts to pacify Mogadishu was widely welcomed and supported by civil society groups across the capital. The CRD was one of the principal conveners of the forum, which brought together local politicians, opinion-makers, civil society groups and women’s networks to build consensus, seek political and popular support, and mobilise new resources for a comprehensive Mogadishu Security and Stabilisation Plan (MSSP).

Chaired by the Parliamentary Speaker, Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden, the meeting was attended by 72 invited participants, including some of the most prominent opinion-makers and deal-brokers of Mogadishu. The day-long forum was the first gathering of its kind, at which senior politicians, faction leaders, civic activists, women’s networks and businessmen sat together to discuss the long-term security of their city. Many of those present had not met one another for more than 15 years and considerable efforts had to be exerted to bring them all together.



Members of some of the women’s groups which played a crucial role in enabling the Mogadishu Forum to take place – and in implementing some of its most challenging resolutions, June 2005

The meeting reached a number of groundbreaking decisions, including agreement to clear all of the roadblocks in and around Mogadishu with immediate effect, to develop realistic, integrated and detailed plans for the MSSP, and to include all relevant stakeholders in the development of the initiative through comprehensive public awareness-raising. At the forum’s conclusion, the MSSP was formally endorsed and a joint statement issued to both the local and international communities by the politicians and civil society groups present (see Annex). Critically, the meeting was broadcast live on several local radio stations, providing a powerful tool that generated widespread public support for the initiative.

The very next day, with the support of the civic movement, all of the checkpoints in the city were dismantled or circumvented. At some, local women’s groups led efforts to persuade the militias to stand down – haranguing and even stoning those who refused to leave. Over the following days, civic groups redirected traffic from roads where checkpoints had been re-erected, in order that no money could be collected and the checkpoints would prove redundant. Removal of the checkpoints not only improved the free movement of people and goods across the city, but was a major symbolic step forward and a moral boost for the entire civic movement of Mogadishu.

The decision of senior political leaders to support the dismantling of checkpoints that had provided one of their key sources of revenue, and to move their militias and heavy weapons out of the city, was interpreted as a significant step forward in improving the city’s security. Although similar declarations had been made – and broken – in the past, the MSSP was seen as a bold new initiative, as it had been instigated not only by

the political factions but a broader group that included their colleagues in the government, civil society, the business sector, and the wider community. As a result of the June 6th forum, the decisions reached, and the public ownership that they generated, new opportunities opened up to address the security challenges of Mogadishu in a collective way.

Women's groups, empowered by their joint initiatives over the past two years, played a vital role in the process, providing shelter, food and civic education for militia members in the camps, as well as mobilising support for the MSSP from the business sector. Women received building materials from construction companies to make shelters in the camps, collected cash from the telecommunications networks and other companies



Civic actors participating in a follow-up workshop on security issues after the Mogadishu Forum, June 2005

to finance the effort, and visited warehouses to collect food for the militias – sometimes refusing to leave until they had been given provisions. Women with connections to the faction leaders exerted pressure for their support for the process, on occasion shaming them into compliance. Equally important was the moral support they provided to individual militia members, who they visited every day in the camps, gaining their confidence and encouraging them to keep their

sights set on a civilian future. A CRD film on the impact of the war on the family and society was also shown at the camps, reinforcing the shared sense of solidarity in working towards a better future. Overall the role played by women was paramount in maintaining the momentum of the Mogadishu stabilisation process and in demonstrating the feasibility and importance of an alternative way forward for the city.

Following the Mogadishu Forum, the CRD continued to provide technical assistance to the various parties involved in the process. The civic movement, with women's networks prominent among them, lobbied for the development of a blueprint for a regional Benadir administration. However, in the absence of political progress to resolve the differences within the TFG over the following six months, neither a local administration nor an organised police force could be established – and progress was largely put on hold.

“Earlier it was easy to raise contributory funds for the MSSP, but nowadays it has become very difficult to convince businessmen to make financial contributions without any clear roadmap to end the current political stalemate and to establish a regional administration, through which internal and external support can be channelled...”

Benadir business leader, August 2003

The assassination of the CRD director, Abdulkadir Yahya, at his home in Mogadishu on July 11th 2005 also had a huge impact on the morale of the city's civic movement and compromised its ability to sustain advocacy in support of a long-term stabilisation plan. Although security dynamics in the city have changed dramatically following the ousting of armed faction leaders in May-June 2006 and subsequent events, many members of the public continue to believe that the Mogadishu Security and Stabilisation Plan could be successfully adapted to manage long-term security developments in the city. (For more details, see the CRD/Interpeace publications, *Dialogue Not Guns: Promoting Security and Stabilisation in South-Central Somalia* and *A Force for Change: Promoting the Roles of Civil Society and the Private Sector in Peace-Building and Reconciliation in South-Central Somalia*).

Strengthening the Role of Women's Groups in Peace-Building, September 2005

Since emerging as one of Mogadishu's most active and influential women's groups, HINNA has maintained a strong relationship with the CRD, whose technical support and facilitation has contributed to building the organisational, networking and awareness-raising skills of its members. In September 2005, the Center hosted a three-day workshop for 40 of the organisation's most prominent members, including the chair, vice-chair and representatives from each of the Benadir districts. Journalists from the major Benadir and Shabelle radio stations, Somali websites and daily newspapers also attended the event, which focussed on enhancing skills in peace-building, advocacy, and working with the media. Specific discussions were held to review HINNA's past performance, identify areas for improvement, and agree on means of achieving the members' organisational aspirations. In terms of achievements, the women highlighted their contributions to the neighbourhood watch scheme, public awareness-raising campaigns, and the reopening of the Benadir Mothers' and Children's hospital, all of which had encouraged women to involve themselves in public life. For the future, they identified an urgent need to unite their efforts and to mobilise not only women but other sectors of society in the consolidation of security and peace.

Advocacy in Action: The Reopening of the Benadir Mothers' and Children's Hospital

Understandably, many Somali women activists involved in issues relating to peace also become engaged in activism for the improved provision of social services, particularly healthcare and non-formal education. One of the most effective local initiatives was the reopening of the Benadir Mothers' and Children's Hospital through the concerted efforts of HINNA on July 17th 2004. Prior to the collapse of the state in 1991, this hospital was the largest government hospital offering mother and child healthcare. During the civil war, however, the hospital was occupied by armed militias and remained closed for many years.

HINNA's members recognised the importance of the hospital to local women, both practically and symbolically, and, having sought and received encouragement and financial support from the CRD, they began to approach local political, business and religious leaders and elders. They impressed on them the urgent need for the services provided by the hospital. Speaking about their approach, one HINNA member stated: "We used different strategies. Sometimes we begged them as mothers, sisters and wives; other times, we tried to educate them, telling them the importance of the hospital to women and children. In a few cases, we used strong words, while providing them with financial incentives."

After a long and arduous process, the women managed to convince the occupying militia to vacate the premises and the hospital was reopened. The women then persuaded local doctors to visit the hospital once a day, offering their services free of charge. The hospital is now functioning, serving some of the most vulnerable of Mogadishu's women and children, although it faces major financial problems and lack of sustainable partnerships with donor agencies.



Peace in Mudug and Galgaduud

The critical roles of women in promoting and sustaining initiatives towards conflict resolution, stabilisation and peacemaking in Mogadishu have also been apparent in other local conflict situations across the south-central regions. A striking example is provided by the vital – but largely invisible – role that women have played in supporting the resolution of the seemingly intractable conflict between clans in Mudug and Galgaduud.

With the increase in violent conflicts between the Sa'ad and Saleebaan sub-clans in South Mudug and Galgaduud during 2005, and at the request of the TFG leadership, as well as local community and political leaders, the CRD and PDRC made the conflict a specific focus of its peace-building activities under the Dialogue for Peace. Following a series of groundbreaking meetings and workshops between local elders and militia leaders, a five-day workshop was held in South Galkayo from April 19th-23rd 2006,



A nomadic woman describes what she has lost through the violent conflict in her area of Hobyo, central regions, 2006

which brought together over 60 leaders from the rival militias to study conflict resolution, negotiation and management techniques. According to militia and community leaders, the training had an immediate and positive impact on security in the region, with a notable reduction in confrontations and revenge killings between the two sub-clans.

After extensive consultations over the next two months, two mini-conferences followed, in Bandiraley and Elhur, through which peace accords were reached to address several immediate concerns between the two communities in conflict. Recognising the importance of disseminating the outcomes of these crucial agreements in the remote settlements of this vast territory, a group of senior elders, opinion-makers and businessmen from Mogadishu formed a 'Peace Caravan' and travelled over 200 kilometres from the Indian Ocean to the Ethiopian border, passing through many villages to brief communities on the achievements of the conferences.



Lunch at a tea shop in the rural areas, south Mudug, 2006

Local women played a significant role during this process, mobilising their communities and local militias in particular to work with elders in resolving localised conflicts and ending 'revenge attacks'. The women also collected goats to provide meat and milk to sustain the reconciliation meetings and the passage of the peace caravan in more remote areas. The following statement of a woman from Gawan village in Hobyo, who approached the CRD team during the Elhur mini-conference,

provides a vivid illustration of the role that women play in supporting the resolution of armed conflict – and of the frustrations that they often encounter.

“Men are the sole decision-makers. They meet, discuss and reach peace deals, but they do not inform the community well enough on what they have agreed. Women and the youth are the true way in for either peace or conflict and their influence is paramount. The women can stimulate the militia to put down the gun and reconcile, as the militia are their sons. Meetings should be organised for women and the youth from the two clans to share their insights and consider their future development rather than giving priority only to men. Women and the youth are the ones who need to know about the ways to end the conflict and the outcomes of the agreements reached, so that they can mobilise to support the peace and join the advocacy for peace in the places most prone to conflict.”

This woman’s advocacy for the clear inclusion of women and young people in the peace process is especially significant in view of the fact that she is speaking from the perspective of a traditional nomadic setting – yet firmly echoing the views of educated women often regarded as part of Somalia’s ‘urban elite’.

Women in Mogadishu also played a background role in supporting the resolution of the conflict in Mudug and Galgaduud. Briefings and consultations with civic and business leaders in Mogadishu, Nairobi and Galkayo had laid the foundations for reconciliation and were critical in sustaining the process. These meetings helped to dispel rumours and foster support for the reconciliation process on the ground. A briefing session in Mogadishu in late May for over 50 people from the two communities in conflict, including women’s leaders, elders, businesspeople and civil society groups, recognised the critical role played by the business community in both escalating and de-escalating the conflict. The business representatives pledged to commit



Nomadic women building their houses

a further \$20,000 to the peace process, to send a delegation of business groups and civil society members to the region, and to address the tendency of some local media channels to stir inter-clan rivalries. As well as co-funding the peace caravans, business representatives from both clans provided financial support to elders in their efforts to mitigate the conflict.

The positive effects were soon apparent in Mudug and Galgaduud, where large delegations began to

converge during May 2006 in support of the peace process. Investments in South Mudug by members of the Diaspora and the business community began the long-awaited reconstruction of primary schools and infrastructure – and reinforced local confidence in the prospects for peace. Although the process was temporarily suspended in September due to the changing political dynamics in south-central Somalia, the reconciliation already achieved between the two communities has held and efforts continue to complete the process with a final conference to address outstanding issues. More information about efforts to support reconciliation in Mudug and Galgaduud are available in the publications, *Dialogue Not Guns* (CRD/ Interpeace, 2006) and *Peace at the Crossroads: Consolidation of the Mudug Peace Agreement* (PDRC/ Interpeace, 2006).

Peace-Building Forums

Since they were launched in 2002, the CRD's public forums have become a central and regular feature of its peace-building programme, providing a channel for all sectors of society to meet on 'neutral ground' to discuss current issues affecting their lives. The forums have proved a powerful tool for stimulating and uniting pressure on issues of public concern, and their discussions often feature in the local media – and inspire further debate on local radio and television programmes. The CRD continues to organise regular forums in Mogadishu, as well as at its branch offices in Beletweyne, Baidoa and Kismayo. Some of the best-known forums – including the Kidnapping Forum and the famous Mogadishu Forum – have already been referred to above. A number of other forums on issues of particular concern to women are described below.

Forum on Women in Politics, Mogadishu, January 2003

After the collapse of the state, the role of women in politics became a hotly contested issue in Somali society. Following the launch of the IGAD-led Somali National Reconciliation Conference in Kenya in late 2002,



The forum on women's role in politics recommended the adoption of policies to promote women's integration into political and administrative structures, Mogadishu, January 2003

this forum provided a timely opportunity for a wide-ranging discussion on the importance of women's participation in the peace process and political reconstruction – and the challenges faced by women in playing their full part. Attended by more than 50 participants, the forum made several recommendations on improving women's participation at the national conference (which were subsequently shared with its delegates), increasing the allocation of seats for women in parliament, and promoting women's integration in other political and administrative structures.

Forum on Women's Roles in Reconciliation, Kismayo, November 2005

Since the collapse of the state, resource-rich Lower Juba has been one of the most insecure regions of south-central Somalia. Among the most active peacemakers in the regional capital of Kismayo have been a handful of women's groups, which have been highly visible in the organisation of peace rallies and exchange visits between formerly hostile communities. In 2005, CRD researchers were approached by several women's organisations who had heard of the support provided to women's groups in Mogadishu in strategic planning and conflict management training. After receiving requests for similar help, a forum was organised in collaboration with one of the most prominent local groups, WAMO (Women and Development Organisation). The participants included 35 members of WAMO, 12 from civic organisations such as the Kismayo Peace and Development Organisation, Kanava Youth and Juba Net, as well as the deputy chairman of the Juba Valley Alliance (JVA), the District Commissioner of Kismayo, and a well-known local businessman. The meeting offered a neutral forum for the women to discuss reconciliation issues, and to identify ways in which the CRD could help to empower Kismayo's women in future.

The participants discussed the main opportunities and challenges for genuine and inclusive reconciliation in Lower Juba, and the unique potential for women's groups to raise public awareness and influence local authorities in reconciliation activities. Several challenges were raised, including the poor organisational

capacity and funding constraints of local women's groups, which insecurity had deprived of much-needed capacity-building and financial assistance, as well as their isolation from other women's groups around the country. The forum set itself a number of goals for the immediate future, including training on organisational development, financial systems and basic business skills, a strategy to engage and raise funds from the business community, and greater networking and experience-sharing with other women's groups beyond the



Earning a living through sewing at the local market

borders of Lower Juba. The event was the first of its kind to open up public dialogue and create an atmosphere of rapprochement among women's networks in Kismayo.

“Before there was no communication between us as women. Although we are still fragmented, we have begun to reconcile as a group of women.”

Hawa Ugas, leader, Kismayo women's group

Forum for Women for Sustainable Peace, Hiran, March 2006

On March 16th 2006, the CRD's branch office in Beletweyne hosted a public forum on the role of women in the region. Unlike other regions, Hiran has enjoyed relative peace for over a decade, and this forum was designed to ensure the sustainability of its peace. As the first event of its kind in the region, the forum was well-attended by both men and women from different social and professional backgrounds.

Among the most keenly discussed issues were public roles for women, and potential conflicts that these could raise with Somali and Islamic culture. The participants agreed that Somali women play a crucial role in peace-building, conflict prevention and 'fire-fighting', through their skills and experience in mobilising the public, pressuring political leaders, and advocating for the rights of vulnerable and marginalised groups. As a male participant noted: "Women are the first line of defence in conflict prevention." However, a local



Young girls tend to their goats in the rural areas, with traditional milk containers in the foreground

woman voiced the concerns of many when she commented: "Without education we fall short of our natural abilities." At the forum's conclusion, the participants called for greater support and training for women in the region to enable them to contribute more effectively to conflict prevention and lasting peace. With strategic support, local women will be empowered to overcome prevailing social divisions, reduce the risk of a recurrence of violence, and consolidate the peace in Hiran.

Forum to Engage the Diaspora in Dubai, May 2006

The Somali Diaspora in Dubai dates back to the 1970s and is now a thriving business community, with particular interests in telecommunications and remittances. The CRD's engagement with the Diaspora primarily involves updating them on developments within Somalia, through its research findings and thematic documentary films, and encouraging their involvement in the reconstruction effort. Although many in the Diaspora have experienced great challenges in their host countries, over time they have benefited from better educational and economic opportunities – particularly Somali women, who have generally been able to achieve far higher qualifications and career advancement than would have been available to them in Somalia. While some of these women have returned to establish businesses in Somalia, others continue to send remittances to their relatives back home.

The May 2006 forum explored a variety of issues affecting the Diaspora in Dubai, including ways in which the economic and social progress of Somali women could be used to inspire greater opportunities and empowerment for women back home. The participants also considered various proposals for linking and supporting the Somali business community in Dubai, including the establishment of professional and social networks, as well as a locally-based Somali business council.

Training with Other Partners

Promoting the Role of Women through Leadership Training and Local Governance – with UN-Habitat, May-October 2004

In any country emerging from a protracted conflict, the development of local leadership and governance skills is vital to local peace-building, reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts. Conflict resolution, participatory planning and decision-making, and the promotion of good governance require technical skills and effective leadership – not only for emerging administrations, but also for community-based organisations and local NGOs.

The Good Local Governance and Leadership Training Programme was one of the parallel projects implemented by the CRD in partnership with the UN's Programme for Human Settlements (UN-Habitat). Between May and October 2004, six training workshops were held with the first two workshops focusing on the development of local leadership and management skills, the second two on gender-balanced research, while the last two provided follow-up and consolidation in terms of leadership and management. The workshops also sought to promote awareness of the needs of marginalised groups, including women and minorities, as part of a process to support local initiatives in dialogue, peace-building and security.

Training of Youth as Peace Leaders – with UNICEF, late 2004 and early 2005

Most young people in Somalia have known conflict and poverty their entire lives. Many Somali children never set foot in a school or enjoy the experience of a normal childhood. Illiterate or semi-literate, they lack the skills to earn a living and, as a result, go through life without the prospect of a future to look forward to. Many are displaced or have witnessed brutal violence against other young people. In spite of the overwhelming odds against them, however, young Somalis have often demonstrated remarkable resilience and resolve to survive. With adequate support, guidance and vocational training, they can become a social foundation for building peace and the lives of their communities.

In late 2004 and early 2005, the CRD partnered with UNICEF to conduct a series of training workshops for 125 youngsters from south-central Somalia, Puntland and Somaliland. The focus was on conflict management skills to help the participants prevent and resolve potential incidents of conflict, as well as

basic counselling skills to assist other young people in their communities. The goal of the programme was to help the participants develop their capacity for future leadership positions. At the end of the programme, the brightest and most competent participants were selected for a special 'training of trainers' workshop, to enable them to take their newfound skills back to their peers in their communities.

Participatory Action Research Training for Women – with COGWO and UNIFEM, August 2004

A two-week training seminar was conducted with COGWO, in partnership with UNIFEM, to upgrade the professional skills of 25 women researchers from local advocacy organisations, including COGWO, Save Somali Women and Children (SSWC), and other women's groups. The programme covered research methodology, data collection and report writing. At the end of the training, the participants carried out a research study on one of three focus areas: women's rights in the justice system; the prevention of violence against women; and access of women to education. The training provided an opportunity for these professional researchers to revive skills that, in almost all cases, had lain dormant for over a decade – and they reported a sense of empowerment and renewed confidence as a result of the process.

Judiciary Training for Women – with COGWO and UNIFEM, August 2004

Following the dissolution of the judicial system with the collapse of the Somali state in 1991, members of society have been exposed to physical abuses, robbery and exploitation, without the means to redress them. The traditional clan system, which offers some protection, generally leaves women and minority groups vulnerable – and is less functional in the urban centres, particularly in Mogadishu. Furthermore, women and minority groups are those least likely to be aware of their legal rights within any of the three judicial systems – *shari'a*, customary or secular law.

In collaboration with COGWO, the CRD organised a two-week training session for 25 women court clerks, police officers, custodial corps members, human rights and civic activists, with five observers from local universities and women's business groups. Three legal experts provided the training, which highlighted key issues affecting women's access to justice within each of the three legal systems. During the training, the women participated in simulated court proceedings, which provided them with dozens of examples of neglected legal rights. As one participant commented: "An opportunity like this gives me the courage to stand up and learn more, in order to defend our rights in front of the law."

Women's Policy Priorities in the Joint Needs Assessment – with COGWO, February 2006

The CRD, in collaboration with COGWO, organised a two-day Joint Needs Assessment (JNA) consultative workshop for women in Mogadishu in February 2006, attended by 25 women selected from civil society organisations, professional associations, and the city's business community. The dual aims of the workshop were to afford women from Mogadishu an opportunity to identify key gender-related priorities for consideration during the JNA, while increasing their levels of political awareness. As part of the workshop, the participants were charged with developing results-based matrices of their key priority issues for the JNA, together with strategies for achieving them. The outcomes were presented at the Somali Gender Expert Group Meeting hosted by UNIFEM and IGAD later that month, which brought together women experts from south-central Somalia and Puntland, together with members of the TFG, IGAD, international NGOs and UN representatives, to mainstream gender issues into the JNA and to promote women's participation in peace-building and state reconstruction. Key recommendations included: introduction of gender disaggregated data in all sectors; quotas for women in the civil service and other public institutions; training in the judicial system on women's rights; measures to address gender-based violence and support for those affected; and improved access to social services for women and children.

5. Analysis and Lessons Learned

The prolonged insecurity in south-central Somalia has exacted a huge toll on the Somali people and their family structures – the key foundation of Somali society. Traditional family roles have had to adapt to the demands of rapidly changing circumstances and, in a great number of cases, women have had to work to provide for their families while also fulfilling more traditional caregiving roles.

Despite these challenges, women have continued to engage in their traditional peacemaking roles through behind-the-scenes mediation, mobilisation of local communities for peace, and the provision of practical and financial support for inter-clan reconciliation processes. While women can equally mobilise for war, the indications are that – in the face of unprecedented insecurity and devastating prospects for the future of their children – they are increasingly taking the lead in promoting dialogue and a peaceful resolution to the Somali crisis.

Furthermore, experiences over the past four years demonstrate that women are also going far beyond their traditional roles to initiate innovative new approaches and community-based processes to address incidents of crime and insecurity, as well as the needs of the most marginalised groups in society.

The remarkable – and yet largely unrecognised – success of the women’s initiative to establish neighbourhood watch networks to reduce local insecurity in Mogadishu deserves wider attention both within Somalia and beyond. The impact of the early public forum on kidnapping in 2003 in sowing the seeds for the mobilisation of the city’s communities to tackle neighbourhood crime demonstrates the power of community-based initiatives. Local women’s networks built upon these successes, taking advantage of the absence of Mogadishu’s faction leaders while they attended the National Reconciliation Conference in Kenya to promote community-level solutions to the lawlessness that had plagued their city for over 15 years. Through their tireless work and commitment, they gained the respect of their communities, as well as the trust of the young militia members who they specifically targeted with material and moral support.

The efforts of several courageous women’s groups and activists in the capital provided a critical contribution to the early stages of the Mogadishu Stabilisation and Security Plan – particularly in pressuring militia leaders to disband their checkpoints and encourage young militiamen to move to encampments outside the city. As one of the men engaged in the process said at the time: “If women are involved, the process will be sustained.” The role played by women was paramount in, firstly, producing the conditions in which this ambitious process could take place, and, secondly, maintaining the momentum over the coming months. Although the security dynamics in Mogadishu changed radically during 2006, important lessons can be learned about the power of community-based initiatives in promoting security and peace in the capital.

Women’s community mobilisation has not only been directed towards security issues in Mogadishu but has also addressed the needs of the most vulnerable for basic social services. The reopening of the famous Benadir Mothers and Children’s hospital in 2004 through the efforts of a women’s pressure group is a striking example of advocacy in action – and demonstrates the high priority women give to mother and child healthcare.

The creative efforts of women’s networks in Mogadishu have also been echoed in local communities outside the capital. In Kismayo and Beletweyne, for example, women’s groups have played similar roles in mediating between clans in conflict and mobilising public support for peaceful resolution of local crises. Facing similar challenges in unifying their efforts and establishing a common platform beyond factionalisation and

competition, several groups approached the CRD to provide support in strategic planning and networking similar to that provided for groups in Mogadishu. These encouraging efforts to strengthen collaboration and find a common voice to articulate the priorities of women are essential if women are to retain and consolidate the ground they have gained as the political situation evolves.

While attention has generally been focused on the urban centres, it was apparent in Hiran that rural women play an equally important role in ‘fire-fighting’, with one male observer describing them as “the first line of defence in conflict prevention”. The reconciliation process in Mudug and Galgaduud during 2006 provided further insights into the commitment of rural nomadic women in supporting the peaceful resolution of prolonged inter-clan conflicts in their communities. The benefits of including women and young people in decision-making forums were eloquently described by a nomadic woman in Hobyo, who noted their influence in advocating for peace among local leaders and militia members, their ability to mobilise public support for decisions reached in peace agreements, and their insights into the development needs of their communities.

Women’s fuller engagement in decision-making processes relates to another pressing need that has emerged through the Dialogue for Peace: the need of women’s groups for help in building their institutions and for education and training. The individual frustrations and collective loss to the nation were summed up by a woman at the Hiran forum, who said: “Without education, we will fall short of our natural abilities.” The enthusiasm of the women who have participated in the DfP workshops and training exercises has demonstrated a keen appetite for learning, in everything from conflict-resolution skills to management and strategic planning, reporting, fundraising, networking, and public relations. This readiness to learn was echoed by the impact of the seminar on women’s access to justice, which provided practical insights into an area that has a direct influence on women’s lives. The need for educational and vocational support also directly relates to women’s emerging role as economic providers for their families.

It has already been well documented that girls and women have lost the educational gains made in the 1970s and ’80s under the Barre regime, when many women were trained and employed as professional clerks, teachers, nurses and veterinarians. Currently few girls are educated beyond the age of nine, and opportunities for adult education are scarce and frequently inaccessible to women (whether or not they are also the primary provider for their families). Educational opportunities of relevance to women’s daily lives have the potential to lift households out of impoverishment, enable women to better articulate their needs and access their rights, and contribute to the rebuilding of the country – not only through their own inputs but also through educational support to their children.

It is also abundantly clear that better access to education, skills training and employment is essential not only for girls and women but for boys and men. High male unemployment impacts upon the family through increased economic demands on women and undermines men’s identities in their traditional role as providers. It is critical that communities as a whole are supported in developing their local economies and employment opportunities in order to be able to reabsorb local militiamen as they disarm. The traumas of the past 16 years have exacted a heavy toll on the entire population and, as has been amply demonstrated by the initiatives described in this report, the community-based approach clearly provides the most resilient vehicle for rebuilding Somali society.

Women’s considerable contribution in mobilising community-based initiatives for peace over the past few years is at last becoming more widely recognised. What emerges consistently is that women’s involvement in peace-building needs to be reflected in broader representation in political decision-making processes. Interestingly, the arguments made for this are strikingly similar to the reasoning that guided the adoption of a national policy to empower women by another country emerging from conflict. The Government of Rwanda

identified women's full representation in decision-making processes at national and local levels as a critical measure for reducing the risk of a return to violent conflict in that country because:

- Women can be effective allies for [government] reconciliation processes and as vehicles for social cohesion;
- Women's involvement in decision-making enhances their political legitimacy within the broader community;
- Women's inclusion in public institutions contributes to the protection of women's rights and economic interests (as they are the basis of the micro-economy);
- Women's participation in decision-making can mobilise popular support for political decisions and, through their role in children's upbringing, influence future generations.

These principles were reiterated in a speech by the Rwandan President, Paul Kagame, in 2003. As a result of this government policy, Rwanda has the highest percentage of women representation in local and national government in the world.

While Somali women's innovative contributions to peace have highlighted their indispensable role, the challenges for them to gain fuller representation in decision-making forums remain formidable within the current clan-based phase of political development. As long as women representatives are nominated by men – and agreed quotas remain unmet – they are likely to continue to be politically marginalised. Nevertheless, the public campaigns that they have succeeded in mobilising in recent years have increased their involvement and visibility in different facets of public life and indicate the potential for translating this into better political representation of women's priorities on behalf of broader society.



Members of some of Mogadishu's leading women's networks engaged in strategic planning

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Among the most significant recommendations made by the different workshops and consultative meetings during the Dialogue for Peace to strengthen the peace-building roles of Somali women were:

- Providing institutional support to key women's organisations and activities to enable them to consolidate and extend the contributions they are already making in the resolution of violent conflict and the consolidation of peace; to support them in defining a shared analysis and common agenda; and to promote solidarity between different women's networks;
- Providing organisational support to ensure the full participation of women's networks in community-based security initiatives and the inclusion of women's representatives in security institutions;
- Providing organisational and advocacy support to promote women's representation in local and national decision-making processes;
- Continuing to advocate for women's full representation in local governance structures and development initiatives;
- Supporting further education and action-based research on gender-related issues, such as women's and children's access to health, women's access to justice, domestic violence, and the effects of war trauma, and ensuring their dissemination to a broad and gender-balanced audience; and
- Providing educational opportunities in practical skills of relevance to women's daily lives, as well as flexible school hours to enable girls to continue their education beyond the age of nine.

In addition, Interpeace and its partners can enhance its programme by:

- Expanding the engagement of women in all facets of the Dialogue for Peace, providing additional support wherever necessary to ensure that women are able to make a full contribution to programme activities; and
- Extending opportunities for 'cross-fertilisation' within the Dialogue for Peace and with other programmes in the region through Interpeace's regional office, including training and research opportunities for both women and men.

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Family outside their home in Middle Shabelle Region

Annex: Joint Statement on the Mogadishu Security and Stabilisation Plan

Mogadishu Security and Stabilisation Initiative

Mogadishu, Somalia

June 6, 2005

1. Members from both the Transitional Federal Parliament and the Federal Government of Somalia in Mogadishu and former presidents, and members from the Somali civil society organisations, have held a critical Mogadishu Security and Stabilisation meeting on June 6, 2005 at Shaamo Hotel. The meeting was chaired by H.E. Mr. Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden, Speaker of the Somali Federal Parliament.
2. The undersigned members have participated in this critical meeting (see below).
3. This meeting is a follow-up of the ongoing Mogadishu Security and Stabilisation activities undertaken by members of both federal legislative and executive institutions, in partnership with the civil society organisations. The intended goals of this meeting include:
 - Discussion, assessment and endorsement of the ongoing Mogadishu Security and Stabilisation activities, while at the same time engaging in the removal of all forms of roadblocks inside and outside Mogadishu;
 - The meeting aims to become the launching pad, within the framework of the TFP/TFG, for a much wider national reconciliation effort in Mogadishu and throughout Somalia;
 - The meeting aims to lead to the creation of a neutral political space that bridges the existing gap between members of the Transitional Federal Institutions of Somalia.
4. The Participants
 - Noted with satisfaction the progress achieved thus far with regard to the ongoing Mogadishu Security and Stabilisation activities;
 - Further identified concrete suggestions on the ongoing Mogadishu Security and Stabilisation activities and agreed to collectively support the successes achieved thus far;
 - Urged the leaders of this ongoing process to accelerate the cantonment of heavy weapons and the demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration of armed militia, and noted the imperative role that would be played by the restoration of national security forces;
 - Highlighted the need for the participation of key civil institutions in the implementation of the Mogadishu Security and Stabilisation Initiative, including: business groups, the Islamic Sharia Courts, civil society organisations, traditional elders and religious leaders;
 - Reiterated the need for an environment of mutual understanding and tolerance in resolving the political dispute between members of the Transitional Federal Institutions;

- Expressed their commitment to the realisation of the Mogadishu Security and Stabilisation Plan;
 - Acknowledged the need for the immediate removal of roadblocks across the city as a basis for the successful pacification of Mogadishu;
 - Expressed their deepest concern over continuing obstructions to the Mogadishu Security and Stabilisation Plan, not only as setbacks to the stabilisation of Mogadishu, but to the whole of Somalia;
 - Requested targeted assistance from the international community to support the ongoing Security and Stabilisation efforts in Mogadishu;
 - Emphasised the need for ongoing efforts to be taken over by the relevant Government institutions within the framework of the TFG, while the goodwill and inputs of other stakeholders are fully utilised;
 - Expressed their appreciation of the selfless efforts undertaken by the Center for Research and Dialogue (CRD) in the preparation and arrangement of this critical meeting.
5. A more detailed report on the proceedings of this meeting will be made available to all participants and other interested parties. The full report will also be made available on the CRD website: www.crdsomalia.org.

This statement was witnessed by the following participants in Mogadishu on June 6, 2005:

N°	Name	Institution	Title
1.	H.E. Ali Mahdi Mohamed	Statesman	Former President
2.	H.E. Abdulkasim Salad Hassan	Statesman	Former President
3.	H.E. Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden	TFG	Speaker
4.	Mohamud Jama – Sifir	TFG	Deputy PM
5.	Muse Sudi Yalahow	TFG	Minister
6.	Mohamed Qanyare Afrah	TFG	Minister
7.	Abdi Hashi	TFG	Minister
8.	Botan Isse Alin	TFG	Minister
9.	Mohamed Jama – Furu	TFG	Minister
10.	Mohamud Salat	TFG	Minister
11.	Abdulkadir Sh. Mohamed	TFG	MP
12.	Mohamed Abdi Yusuf	TFG	MP
13.	Hussien Arale Addan	TFG	MP
14.	Abdullahi Adan Ahmed	TFG	MP
15.	Tamal Hassan Ismail	TFG	MP
16.	Sulaiman Olad	TFG	MP
17.	Ahmed Omar Jeas	TFG	MP
18.	Abdiwali Ibrahim	TFG	MP
19.	Hirsi Adan Rooble	TFG	MP
20.	Abbas Mohamed Duale	TFG	MP
21.	Yusuf Mire Seeraar	TFG	MP
22.	Mohamed Hussien Adow	TFG	MP
23.	Hasan Dhimbil Warsame	TFG	MP
24.	Hassan Burale Mohamed	TFG	MP
25.	Ahmed Mohamed S.	TFG	MP

26.	Mohamed Mo'alim Abdirahman	TFG	MP
27.	Mohamed Hassan D.	TFG	MP
28.	Jama Ali Jama	TFG	MP
29.	Ahmed Dirie Mohamed	TFG	MP
30.	Mohamed Sh. Gabiow	TFG	MP
31.	Sheikh Ahmed Ali Osman	Religious group	Member
32.	Sheikh Nuur Barud	Religious group	Member
33.	Sh. Yusuf Mohamed – Indha'adde	Lower Shabeelle	Governor
34.	Hussien Bod	Politician	Fm. Deputy PM
35.	Ibrahim Omar Shawey	Politician	Politician
36.	Gen. Mohamed Said Hersi Morgan	Politician	Politician
37.	Mohamed Farah Jimale	Politician	Politician
38.	Abdi Farah Jama	Politician	Politician
39.	Mohamed Omar Wayel	Politician	Politician
40.	Abdi Hassan Awale	Business group	Member
41.	Said Ahmed	Business group	Member
42.	Abdullaahi Isse Abtidon	Business group	Member
43.	Ali Abdi Shire	Business group	Member
44.	Sheikh Soomow	Business group	Member
45.	Omar Mohamed Hober	Business group	Member
46.	Salad Osman Roble	Business group	Member
47.	Nasro Weheliye	Business group	Member
48.	Mohamud Abdikarin Ali gabayre	Business group	Member
49.	Husein Abdi Mohamed	Civil society	Member
50.	Abdulkadir M. Nur –ENO	Civil society	Member
51.	Abdulkadir Adan	Civil society	Member
52.	Gen. Jama M. Qalib	Civil society	Member
53.	Abukar Sh. Yusuf	Civil society	Member
54.	Bashir Mohamed A.	Civil society	Member
55.	Abdulkadir Ibrahim Abkow	Civil society	Member
56.	Farah Sheikh Abdulkadir	Civil society	Member
57.	Mohamed Nur Ga'al	Civil society	Member
58.	Abdulkadir Sheikh Ibrahim	Civil society	Member
59.	Mohamed Osman Toto	Civil society	Member
60.	Ali Iman Sharkame	Civil society	Member
61.	Abdirahman Badiyow	Civil society	Member
62.	Col. Abdullaahi Goffow	Civil society	Member
63.	Sharifo Addow	Civil society	Member
64.	Asha Sha'ur	Civil society	Member
65.	Halima Mohamed	Civil society	Member
66.	Hakima Mohamud Abdi	Civil society	Member
67.	Zahro Ibrahim Guled	Civil society	Member
68.	Halima Mohamud Afrah	Civil society	Member
69.	Bint Ali Olow	Civil society	Member
70.	Halimo Geedi	Civil society	Member
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39