MAKING THE DIFFERENCE?

What works in response to crises and security threats – The debate continues.

THE SEARCH FOR PEACE: LESSONS FROM SOMALI-LED PEACE PROCESSES 1991–2007

INTRODUCTION: AN ALTERNATIVE HISTORY OF THE SOMALI REGION

Repairing fractured social relationships, restoring people's confidence in the rule of law and governance, and providing a vision for the future – these are some of the principal features of the numerous peace processes initiated and managed by Somali communities over the past two decades. Little known beyond their immediate context, these 'homegrown' local and regional reconciliation initiatives have been the means through which communities have managed security, developed systems of governance and facilitated trade and economic activity. While the Somali region[1] is most commonly sensationalised as the ultimate 'failed state' and, more recently, the lawless haven of pirates, analysis of the peace dynamics within and between Somali communities reveals a different history. Over 90 local peace meetings have taken place since the collapse of the state in 1991 in south-central Somalia alone, many of which have provided the basis for local stability, peace and development, while in Somaliland and Puntland, extended local and regional reconciliation processes enabled the establishment of relatively peaceful and stable politics.

These internal Somali-led processes demonstrate both a demand for security, law and order, and a capacity among Somali communities, in the absence of a state, to control and manage violent conflict through negotiated consensus-based approaches. Locally organised reconciliation meetings have also provided the basis for the emergence of different forms of local governance, including: remnants of district administrations dating back to the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) era in the early 1990s; local and regional administrations created by powerful faction leaders, which levied taxes and provided some security but no services; community-based structures formed through consultative processes by clan elders, religious leaders and other local stakeholders; clan-based Islamic courts; and 'neighbourhood watches' in Mogadishu formed through social mobilisation by women and civic activists in alliance with business leaders, local media, and other key stakeholders.[2] Business entrepreneurs also emerged to challenge the warlords and protect their business interests and, in the absence of government, to fill some gaps in delivery of basic services.

DICHOTOMY BETWEEN SOMALI-LED PEACE PROCESSES AND INTERNATIONALLY SPONSORED INITIATIVES

Although, to date, local peace processes in south-central Somalia have not led to regional or inter-regional polities, as in Somaliland and Puntland, a number of them have been remarkably successful in enabling people to reduce conflict and rebuild their lives. These fundamental achievements at local level have been largely overlooked, primarily due to the preoccupation of international policy makers with the reconstruction of the Somali state and the establishment of a national government that can address both the internal and external consequences of state collapse.

Dr. Pat Johnson is Senior Programme Officer with the Interpeace Somali Programme. This article is based on the peace mapping study of the Somali region, which was conceived and developed by Mark Bradbury and Interpeace, with participatory action research undertaken by Interpeace's partner institutions, supported by Abdirahman Raghe of Interpeace, with additional inputs from Professor Ken Menkhaus and other experts. It was made possible through the generous contributions of the Somali community stakeholders in sharing their unique experiences as well as historical documentation – and financial support from six donors.

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1 The term 'the Somali region' refers to Somaliland, Puntland and south-central Somalia
2 Center for Research and Dialogue (CRD), Interpeace (2006), *'Pioneers of Peace' Advancing the Involvement of Women in Peacebuilding in South-Central Somalia* (in the series 'Dialogue for Peace'), available at http://www.interpeace.org.

A Peace Mapping Study in the Somali Region

Somali researchers from the Academy for Peace and Development (APD) in Somaliland, the Puntland Development Research Center (PDRC) and the Center for Research and Dialogue (CRD) in south-central Somalia carried out the peace mapping study using Interpeace's participatory action research methodology.[3] From January 2007, over 400 people participated directly through interviews and focus group discussions, many of whom had been directly involved in or witnessed the peace processes. Three working groups, in Somaliland, Puntland and south-central Somalia respectively, comprising knowledgeable individuals – such as professionals, religious leaders, elders, representatives of civic organisations and women's groups – guided the research. The three research teams compiled inventories of peace meetings and developed a historical overview of peace initiatives in their respective areas; undertook selected case studies before preparing the final peer review of the studies; and produced five films to accompany the research. Written documentation on the meetings and copies of signed peace agreements were collected and many interviews were recorded on tape and film. This now comprises a historical archive as a resource for those involved, namely national and regional authorities, the broader Somali community and international policy makers.

While the internal aspect concerns the ordering of society within the boundaries of the state, the external dimension relates to the need for Somalis to have a voice in international affairs, which has been lacking for two decades, and the perceived threat that the lack of government poses to international and regional security through, among other things, piracy, jihadism, international migration or disease. But the focus on re-establishing a national government ignores the potentially contradictory processes of statebuilding and peacebuilding; the former requiring the consolidation of authority, the latter involving its moderation through compromise and consensus. The repeated failure of international diplomacy to secure an end to the conflict in south-central Somalia and the relative success of local Somali-led reconciliation processes to reduce levels of violence in some areas of the Somali region at different times during the post-collapse period points to a dichotomy between the two types of initiative.

In order to explore this and to enhance current approaches and capacities for peacemaking in the Somali region and beyond, Interpeace and its Somali partner institutions undertook a peace mapping study, which sought to address the following key questions: why have international diplomatic initiatives in the Somali region been unable to establish a functional government

and revive a state? How do Somali communities deal with their need for security and governance in the absence of a state? Why have local Somali-led peacebuilding processes in the Somali region proven more sustainable than internationally sponsored efforts towards national reconciliation?

The richness of Somali peacemaking and the complexity of the context are amply illustrated by the case studies of the internal Somali-led processes, providing a practical platform for sharing lessons. Some of the critical features of Somali-led peace processes relate to fundamental aspects of peacemaking and reflect a depth and breadth that is lacking in internationally sponsored initiatives in the Somali context[4]:

- Thorough consultation before beginning the process, including agreement on the agenda;
- Respected and authoritative leadership and mediation;
- Representation from a range of stakeholders to ensure inclusiveness, legitimacy of the process and credibility of its outcome;
- Committees with expertise to assist in the multiple levels of a peace process;
- Financial and in-kind investment by stakeholder communities;
- Prioritisation of public safety and a consensus-based approach to security management;

- An incremental approach – process rather than product oriented;
- Agreement on ways to address reparation and oversee implementation of accords and sanctions against 'spoilers';
- Public outreach before, during and after the process and dissemination of accords to ensure transparency, public understanding, acceptance and ratification of the outcomes.

The primary limitations of internal Somali-led peace processes are:

- Traditional mechanisms are better suited to conflict resolution than conflict prevention – a key factor in recurrence of conflict is delayed payment of *diya* (compensation); recent accords often include a timeframe for payments to address this;
- Limited effectiveness in addressing serious imbalances of power, for example for unarmed groups or those whose territory is occupied by other groups;
- Women, minorities and displaced people are under-represented in decision-making forums;
- Restorative justice supports social reconciliation through collective responsibility but militates against individual responsibility – several recent local accords tackle this by specifying violations will be addressed through application of *sharia* (rather than payment of *diya*) but issues relating to the 'culture of impunity'

3 Academy for Peace and Development (APD), Center for Research and Dialogue (CRD), Puntland Development and Research Center (PDRC), Interpeace (2008), *The Search for Peace: a peace mapping study of the Somali region,* volumes I–V, available at http://www.interpeace.org.
4 For further details, see The Search for Peace (2009), referenced above in note 3, and the ACCORD publication (forthcoming 2009), *Conciliation Resources* in collaboration with Interpeace.

remain contentious in both local and internationally sponsored processes (the latter often involving individuals that many regard as war criminals);

- Local processes are heavily influenced by factors beyond the control of the local communities, whether political manoeuvring by their elite, external sponsors of local conflict (including the diaspora), or dynamics emerging from national level peace conferences.

Some of these elements are illustrated in the summary of one of the case studies.

THE MUDUG–GALGADUD PEACE INITIATIVE, 2005–2007

Resolution of the seemingly intractable conflict in the central regions of Mudug and Galgadud between the Sa'ad and Saleman (sub-clans of the Habr Gedir/ Hawiye clan family) required a complex peace process involving consultations in Mogadishu, Nairobi and beyond as well as intensive engagement with the communities on the ground over a sustained period. The protracted nature of the conflict, failure of earlier initiatives, the numbers of interest groups outside the immediate territory and serious breaches of the traditional rules of engagement in clan fighting all indicated that exceptional sensitivity, patience and attention would be required for effective reconciliation.

The burden of war, central regions, 2006 © CRD

From 2004, almost 18 months of violence between these two nomadic communities killed over 300 people, displaced hundreds of others, and destroyed valuable property. Road blocks manned by clan militia impeded a key trade route, impacting the economy as far away as Burao. Heavy weapons and sophisticated satellite telecommunications were used in the conflict, which was fuelled by the 'remote control' influence of power struggles between factional and economic elites in Mogadishu. Their involvement –and that of the diaspora– was therefore required for its resolution. In 2004, a peace initiative in Mogadishu had ended in disaster when clan militia killed prominent elders from the peace mission to the area. This and other breaches of *birmageydo* had increased bitterness and distrust between the communities.

The next attempt at resolution followed extensive consultations in Mogadishu and Nairobi, culminating in a meeting in early 2006 of senior officials from the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in Galkayo, including political and business figures representing the interests of the different clans in the area. This indicated a supportive political context for the new initiative, enabled agreement on the overall approach, and was manifested practically when the political leadership of the two parties in conflict briefed clan militia in the frontline areas, a significant step forward. Implementation of a cessation of hostilities, disengagement of militia, dismantling of roadblocks, and establishment of joint monitoring committees were successfully achieved, with immediate benefits in terms of security and trade.

The second stage was to prepare the ground at community level through broad-based consultations with community members, who indicated a shared concern that early engagement with the militiamen was essential. Following delicate negotiations, a group of over 60 militia leaders from the two sides met together in south Galkayo, an immensely challenging exercise for the

5 The study was conceived and coordinated by Mark Bradbury with support from Abdirahman Raghe, Pat Johnson, Ulf Terlinden, Mohamed Hassan, Michael Walls, Rita Glavitza, Dr Justin Willis (British Institute in Eastern Africa) and Andy Carl (Conciliation Resources).
6 The InterGovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) brings together the seven countries in the Horn of Africa - Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda.

A particularly damaging effect of the civil war has been widespread violations of the xeer (customary law) that protected vulnerable groups (Birmageydo), undermining this important function of traditional governance and resulting in the deaths of those normally considered safe from harm. Historically, 'Birmageydo' referred to a prohibition on cutting down highly valued trees because of the fruit, traditional medicine or shade they provided for people and livestock. It also covered protection of livestock used by the family for transport or milk for the children. During periods of social conflict, the term gained a wider meaning to encompass social groups who according to xeer are to be 'spared from the spear': traditional and religious leaders, women, children (Mato), the elderly and sick, those on peace missions (Ergo), guests (Magan), travellers (Socoto) and in-laws (Xidid).[7] Birmageydo has its roots in Islam, which prohibits the killing of these vulnerable groups caught in wars, as well as the cutting of trees and slaughter of animals without purposeful meaning.

host community, who bore responsibility for ensuring their security, as well as the militia themselves. The six-day meeting included training in conflict management skills as well as sensitisation and was one of the most memorable features of the process, the communities subsequently identifying the meeting as critical to its ultimate success. Several of the militia leaders became strong peace advocates, pressuring and challenging their elders to reach agreement.

Militia leaders meet for conflict management training, Galkayo, April 2006 © CRD

Meanwhile, informal briefings in Mogadishu and Nairobi helped mobilise support and large delegations arrived in the area to support the process. Because of the vast geographic area and its poor infrastructure, and in order to build public confidence in the process, two 'mini-conferences' were held in key locations, reaching local peace accords on shared use of pastoral resources in the disputed areas, the return of displaced people and

transitional security arrangements including the establishment of local joint security committees to monitor the cessation of hostilities and sanction any violations. 'Peace caravans' of elders from the two communities travelled together to settlements throughout the area from the Indian Ocean to the Ethiopian border to brief people on the accords and update them on the proposed way forward.

The process was to culminate in a large conference but, due to fluctuating political-security dynamics in mid 2006, the process was suspended for nearly six months. The Islamic Courts Union (ICU) emerged and established its administration at Adado, while south Mudug came under the influence of the TFG, backed by Ethiopian and Puntland forces. Nevertheless, the reconciliation process held, demonstrating the communities' commitment to resolution. By late 2006, the political-security environment had undergone further shifts and relative stability in the area enabled the communities to re-focus on the reconciliation process. Extensive mobilisation locally, but also in Mogadishu, Nairobi and the diaspora (Stockholm, Oslo, London and The Hague) confirmed a collective commitment to the process and to funding, in the form of in-kind contributions by the communities, complemented by funding from business groups, the diaspora and donors, managed locally by the CRD.[8]

The true spirit of reconciliation – members of the two communities are reunited after the mini-conferences, June 2006 © CRD

The final reconciliation conference was convened in Adado in February 2007, a year after the process had begun. A pressure group of influential women from the two communities played an invaluable role, exerting public pressure on the elders at a critical juncture by offering to pay outstanding diya. Neighbouring clans witnessed the final agreement, adding weight to its conclusion, which makes special provision for diya for the deaths of the Birmageydo in order to uphold this important aspect of Somali customary law. The joint security committees were sustained and made rapid responses on several occasions to successfully defuse increased tensions in different rural areas, and the diaspora supported the establishment of schools in south Mudug and a hospital and radio station in south Galkayo.

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7 Aorma, Abdulkhadir (2005), 'Soyaalka Soomaaliya, Dhaqankii Dhulka Hooyo', Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, pp.130–131.

8 This case study illustrates the role that civil society organisations can play as a catalyst for a peace process and in its design and management: CRD was able to play that role because it was viewed as impartial and identified staff with credibility and expertise from the lineages of the parties in conflict. Support was provided as a 'spin-off' from Phase II of the Dialogue for Peace programme (Interpeace and its three partner institutions). The donors' flexibility during the six-month suspension of the process was appreciated.

Key factors in the success of the process were:

- Commitment to resolution by national political and business figures from the two constituencies:
  Their agreement was critical to end support for and funding of the cycle of violence. After officially launching the initiative, they delegated implementation to local stakeholders and enabled the process to be managed at community level.
- The timing was ripe – war fatigue:
  The two communities as well as sponsors and mobilisers of the conflict had exhausted their resources and commitment to fight over territory they had previously shared peacefully.
- Inclusive and participatory approach:
  The consultative, inclusive nature of the process enabled collective communal responsibility and dynamic engagement by stakeholders who would not normally figure in traditional conflict resolution, including the sensitised militia leaders and women's groups, and the diaspora.
- Effective implementation of peace accords and joint security mechanisms:
  The commitment and sincerity of key elders and prominent individuals was demonstrated in their oversight of the implementation of the outcomes and the effectiveness of the joint security committees and rapid response teams.
- Experienced facilitation and conflict management:
  Community members identified the professional expertise of the CRD team as

contributing to the successful resolution, including their early engagement of militia leaders and extensive shuttle diplomacy. The legitimacy and authenticity of the final peace agreement derived from broad public participation as well as the moral authority of the traditional social institutions.
- Wide dissemination of the peace accords through peace caravans, use of local media and Somali websites, and regular briefings:
  Timely updates on the process were critical in ensuring both the local communities and influential stakeholders remained actively engaged and were able to contribute to the restoration of peace.

The Sa'ad chair and a Saleman elder embrace at the successful conclusion of the Adado conference, February 2007 © CRD

MANAGING SECURITY

This case study provides a valuable example of effective transitional security arrangements at community level in challenging circumstances. A clear and pressing objective of every internal Somali-led peace process studied was ending violence and

enhancing public security. The mechanisms employed included: the use of neutral disengagement forces to separate opposing militia; creation of buffer zones and green lines between warring parties; exchange of prisoners; agreements on freedom of movement and rights of return and residence; control over the public display of weapons; sanctions to prevent further killings; and joint mechanisms for responsibility for providing public security. Instead of physical disarmament, often weapons were put at the service of the local authorities with an implicit understanding that communities could withdraw these if agreements were violated –thereby generating sufficient confidence to sustain the peace accord.

The Somali commitment to consensus in peacemaking processes is reflected in commitments to joint responsibility and management of ceasefires and security. In these respects, internal Somali-led peace processes manifest a degree of sophistication, coherent attention and pragmatism that has not yet been evident in internationally sponsored efforts in the Somali context. To date, the UN-sponsored Joint Security Agreement of November 2008 has been the first serious attempt in successive national initiatives to address the critical question of security sector governance during the transitional phase through a negotiated 'joint security' approach. Failure to address transitional security arrangements undermines commitment to the ceasefire, leaves peace processes hostage to armed factions, and prevents

progress towards stabilisation (with each faction maintaining its military capacity as a guarantee against an eventual monopoly of force by the 'winner'). Furthermore, transitional statebuilding arrangements are not a substitute for reconciliation: this remains critically important in the context of Somali culture where acknowledging past wrongs and making reparations for them lies at the heart of traditional peacemaking.

The challenge for both national and international peacemakers is to situate reconciliation firmly within the context of statebuilding while employing statebuilding as a platform for the development of mutual trust and lasting reconciliation. Neither peacebuilding nor statebuilding can be effective in the Somali region without the broad and inclusive engagement of the Somali people.