

Somali Programme Overview

Today the Somali region is most commonly sensationalised as the ultimate ‘failed state’. This description obscures the richness of the peace dynamics within and between Somali communities throughout the region: Somali-led initiatives have succeeded in establishing viable political and administrative arrangements to manage conflict as the basis for durable security and rule of law in both Somaliland and Puntland. In many areas Somali entrepreneurship from inside or outside the Somali region has also revitalised the economy.

Interpeace launched its Somali programme in the north-eastern part of the Somali region, known as Puntland, back in 1996. The programme was extended to Somaliland in 1999 and South-Central Somalia in 2000. Interpeace assisted in the establishment of **Puntland Development Research Center (PDRC)** in Garowe (Puntland), the **Academy for Peace and Development (APD)** in Hargeysa (Somaliland) and the **Center for Research and Dialogue (CRD)** in Mogadishu, which have each developed into respected institutions.

Interpeace worked with the teams to advance and support interlinked and incremental processes of peace building and state formation using Participatory Action Research (PAR). In conjunction with the three Somali partners, Interpeace launched its latest region-wide initiative, ‘**The Pillars of Peace**’ Programme, in 2009. This consensus-oriented, integrated approach to peacebuilding draws upon Interpeace and its partners’ experience in the region, which has demonstrated that dialogue can be translated into action with a high degree of local ownership. With this come the associated sustainability, resilience and relevance of the communities involved. This initiative also provides a peacebuilding approach as the basis for support to state building processes, such as democratization, with the aim of strengthening peacebuilding capacity amongst Somalis in general, and of civic leadership, women and youth in particular.

Other elements of the Interpeace Somali programmes include the successful **film-making (audio-visual) units, gender main-streaming, and pilot “seed support”** to two minority organisations. The programme has also had the flexibility to support “spin-off activities” that add value as practical responses to evolving situations beyond those envisaged in the project documents. These include targeted cultural events, “sports for peace” with the youth, and “fire-fighting” activities in the region and beyond to facilitate conflict resolution, pass messages of peace, and alert the diaspora to the risks of supporting social conflicts inside Somalia. The programme has also been able to support the efforts of other organizations and the community through large-scale civil society gatherings including Entebbe I and II (the Mombassa conference), town hall meetings with the diaspora, etc.

Backed with strong financial systems and successful (unqualified) audits over the years, Interpeace has been able to send an unequivocal message to both its partner institutions and the donors supporting its programmes that Interpeace sees financial management as a critical component of the peacebuilding process. Through building the capacities of the finance teams, the consolidated

financial report for Interpeace and its partners is now undertaken in accordance with the International Finance Reporting Standards (IFRS), which has considerably higher compliance requirements for an INGO.

Interpeace's work is strengthened by direct collaboration through programme donor support meetings and the **Donor Steering Committee for Democratization (DSC)**. The latter undertook unprecedented collective engagement throughout the delayed process of the presidential elections in Somaliland 2009/2010 to support the successful election in June 2010 and subsequent peaceful transfer of power.

Sharing the experience and outcomes of the Somali partners' peace- and statebuilding work over the years at the Nairobi and regional level and with the UN and donors at capitals in Europe and North America has enabled Interpeace and its partners to make significant contributions at policy and strategy levels as well as providing an effective platform for constructive engagement with the Somali diaspora. The dissemination of the Peace Mapping study in 2009-10 is a good example, together with collaboration with Accord and others, as a way of shedding light on the complex crisis of the Somali region and the ways forward.

The Pillars of Peace programme in progress in Somaliland, Puntland and South Central Somalia includes a focus on the following:-

- **Democratization**
- **Decentralization**
- **Social Reconciliation, Security and Rule of Law**
- **Civil Society**

The work is being undertaken by local steering committees comprising a cross-section of stakeholders to facilitate the process and provide practical inputs with the support and oversight of the Somali partners in collaboration with a spectrum of official implementers.

Interpeace is also working with Somali partners such as the **National Electoral Commission (NEC)** of Somaliland and the newly established **Puntland Electoral Commission (PEC)** through a democratization programme. In Somaliland this is supporting the second cycle of elections under a multi-party system, where the second cycle of elections is in progress. This will start with the opening of the Political Associations, followed by the Local Councils elections in 2012. On 31st July 2011 the Somaliland elected House of Parliament approved Law No. 14 for opening the Associations. The three Associations that win the majority of the votes will qualify as the political parties for a decade to come. The three political parties will vie for the parliament and presidential elections next. In Puntland, the programme is supporting the constitution that is already ratified by the parliament and awaiting public endorsement through a constituent assembly (already planned). The new PEC completed their first introduction workshop on 28th July 2011 in Nairobi, resulting in an action plan of four months for the next steps in the democratization process.