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Peace in Puntland: Mapping the Progress

Democratization, Decentralization, and Security and Rule of Law



Pillars of Peace
Somali Programme

Garowe, November 2015

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Acronyms

ALGAPL	Association of Local Government Authorities of Puntland State
CRRC	Conflict Resolution and Ratification Committee
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DfP	Dialogue for Peace
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGS	Federal Government of Somalia
HoR	House of Representatives
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
KII	Key Informant Interviews
MAVU	Mobile Audio-Visual Unit
MOCFAD	Ministry of Constitution, Federal Affairs and Democratization
MOI	Ministry of Interior
MOS	Ministry of Security
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PDRC	Puntland Development Research Center
PMPF	Puntland Marine Police Force
PoP	Pillars of Peace
PSM	Puntland Stakeholders Meeting
SC	Steering Committee
SfP	Search for Peace
SRoL	Security and Rule of Law
SSC	Sool, Sanaag and Cayn
SSF	Somalia Stability Fund
TPEC	Transitional Puntland Electoral Commission
UNSOM	United Nations Office for Somalia
WSPI	War-Torn Societies Project International

Foreword

This report is the product of a yearlong research on the challenges, opportunities and prospects of democratization, decentralization and security and rule of law in Puntland. It was implemented under the Pillars of Peace (PoP II) programme through the joint efforts of PDRC and Interpeace, who have been partners in supporting peace-and-statebuilding processes in the Somali region over the years.

The research engaged 389 people through key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FDGs) in eleven districts from nine locations within Puntland. An additional 140 people were also engaged in the Puntland Stakeholders' Meeting (PSM) held in Garowe on 3-5 February 2015 to validate the research findings. PDRC and Interpeace are thankful to all the people that took part in the research and for their invaluable and meaningful contributions.

I Background

The Puntland Development Research Center (PDRC) is a non-governmental organization based in Garowe, with a satellite office in Galkayo. PDRC was established in November 1999 by the War-Torn Societies Project International (WSPI), which operated in Puntland from 1997-99. PDRC remains a partner in peacebuilding of WSPI's successor organization, Interpeace.

The mission of the organization is to participate, as actor and beneficiary, in peacebuilding and the reconstruction of Somalia; and to contribute to the creation of a democratic system of government, economic and social development, and respect of human rights for all, based on equality of citizens.

PDRC has become a prominent and esteemed peacebuilding institution in Puntland, an area in northeastern Somalia that continues to recover from the aftermath of the Somali civil war (which erupted in 1991), as well as the subsequent sectarian and criminal violence.

Over the past 16 years PDRC has become a neutral space for dialogue and reconciliation, primarily through ambitious core programs carried out in cooperation with Interpeace.

A characteristic feature of PDRC's broad-based

participatory approach has been to work with all segments of Puntland society, placing a particular emphasis on including groups that are often overlooked or under-represented in decision-making processes, namely women, youth, and socially-segregated communities. By engaging these groups in important conversations, PDRC seeks to ensure that the processes and institutions necessary for a strong society and well-functioning government are truly reflective of Puntland's popular, cross-clan interests.

PDRC fosters community dialogue and stakeholder engagement in a variety of ways, from individual interactions to convening large public forums and conferences, as well as carrying out a number of training programs, awareness-raising activities and civic education for the public, in partnership with government authorities, other local actors, and international organizations. It utilizes audio-visual tools as a core approach to sharing information and broadening debate within the community.

PDRC employs participatory action research (PAR), a methodology that embodies the principles of strengthening local capacities, promoting genuine inclusivity, and pursuing consensus-based decision-making at all levels. The essence of PAR is to reach consensual solutions to key challenges faced by society as identified by concerned stakeholders. Such solutions are based on the inclusion and gen-

une participation of all sectors of society (i.e. engaging both horizontally with a cross-section of the community and vertically from the grass-roots to the political elite). This approach fosters community-based ownership of research and decision-making in both its design and management. With adaptations over the years, this methodology has been a key foundation of the peacebuilding work pursued by Interpeace and PDRC.

PDRC has undertaken a series of dialogue-based research projects to shed light on pressing issues facing Puntland society and to develop action and policy-oriented recommendations to address these issues.

The vision of the “Dialogue for Peace” project is to advance and underpin processes of peace and state building in Somalia through inclusive, research-based, consensus-oriented consultations and actions.

The Dialogue for Peace (DfP) program, implemented between 2004 and 2008, laid the foundation for a viable space for dialogues in Somalia, which had been devastated by prolonged civil strife. By gathering stakeholders around tables and under trees, the objective of these dialogues was to discuss issues of common interest and to solve pressing conflicts, in part by enabling stakeholders to identify the root causes of their problems. Such forums created much-needed opportunities to rebuild trust and confidence and to establish a basis for sustainable statehood and governance. Publications resulting from this research included *Funding the Future*, a study on how public funds could be better utilized for greater social service delivery, as well as key policy documents including *The 1993 Mudug Region Peace Agreement: Peacebuilding at the Crossroads and Roots for Good Governance*, a roadmap for the evolving

Puntland democratization process.

The Search for Peace (SfP) study was a result of the DfP program, and comprised a comprehensive mapping of conflicts and their respective mediation processes, highlighting priority areas and possible solutions from past experiences and practices. The output of this study was *The Puntland Experience: A Bottom Up Approach to Peace and Statebuilding*¹. The SfP study not only researched local issues, but also thoroughly examined Somalia-wide issues, such as appraising the successive national reconciliation efforts and their outcomes.

The vision of the Pillars of Peace is to build upon more than a decade’s experience of peacebuilding and support for institution building in order to continue to advance and underpin the consolidation of peace throughout the Somali region through consensus-oriented, integrated approaches to state building and peacebuilding.

The Pillars of Peace program build on more than 15 years’ experience of PDRC and Interpeace, its long-time partner in peace- and statebuilding. PDRC, through successive peacebuilding programs, has fostered a culture of dialogue, inclusiveness, and consultation across a wide spectrum of communities and authorities. These programs have been built upon consensus-seeking, integration, representation, and ample local ownership.

The first phase of the Pillars of Peace program commenced in early 2009 and concluded at the end of 2012. The second phase began with comprehensive research process mapping the

¹ Puntland Development and Research Center (PDRC). “The Puntland Experience: A Bottom-up Approach to Peace and State Building.” *The Search for Peace: Somalia Program*, in collaboration with Interpeace, 26 July 2011.

challenges, opportunities, and prospects for the security and rule of law, democratization, and decentralization pillars. The outcome of this exercise was presented to a Puntland Stakeholders Meeting held in February 2015. The following notes embody and capture the outcomes of the mapping exercise as well as additional information gathered after the Puntland Stakeholders Meeting.

Following the adoption of mapping tools and strategies, the three pillar teams visited 11 districts carefully selected by size, location, and social, economic, and political relevance. During the mapping the teams reached out to leading community elders, religious leaders, civil society organizations, representatives of marginalized communities, internally displaced people, prominent politicians and intellectuals, and representatives of the international community. In each of the visited locations the teams not only carried out interviews and FGDs, but also screened documentary films highlighting the achievements of the first phase of the PoP program and delivering traditional peace and civic education messages.

1.1 Brief Project Context

Since the first phase of the PoP program, the Puntland context has seen significant evolution, particularly in the political arena.

On 8 January 2014, Puntland emerged from a major political, social, and security impasse, caused by the stalling of the democratization process. This occurred on 14 July 2013, when President Abdurahman Sheikh Mohamed (Farooole) suspended the scheduled local council elections (due to occur the next day) because of violent flare-ups in several parts of Puntland. This prompted a return to the “hybrid” system of political transition, a mixed traditional and democratic approach based in large part on se-

A comprehensive consultative pillars mapping exercise underlined the relevance of these challenges, and validated the selection of these priority issues with key stakeholders, gathering preliminary input as to how these issues may be addressed. Further validation came during the first Puntland Stakeholders Meeting (PSM)² in 2010. Findings were published in a note entitled *Mapping the Foundations of Peace*. Following the first PSM, PDRC entered into an implementation phase, seeking to put the recommendations of the research and validation into action.

The first phase of Pillars of Peace program, detailed above, provided the basis for a second round of research that forms the foundation for this report and for the second phase of the program.

² Puntland Development and Research Center (PDRC). “Puntland Note: Mapping the Foundations of Peace Challenges to Security and Rule of Law, Democratisation Process and Devolution of Power to Local Authorities.” *Pillars of Peace: Somalia Program*, in collaboration with Interpeace, 27 May 2014.

lection rather than popular election. This was the fourth time the hybrid system was used since Puntland was established in 1998.

In November 2013, traditional elders began the selection of new members of the House of Representatives (HoR), which was officially dissolved on 31 October. The process plunged into crisis, resulting from divergent political visions and interests between the then-administration and the highly disenfranchised opposition. The incumbent president, Farooole, had nominated a Conflict Resolution and Ratification Committee (CRRC) to resolve disputes over the selection of the new HoR members. Soon after its

nomination, the majority of other presidential contenders rejected the committee, noting irregularities in the appointment process and selection of commissioners. Intense political and security consultations involving traditional and religious leaders, politicians, civil society organizations (CSOs) and the international community began in all major towns and at all levels. Most of these consultations were interactive and intended to defuse the prevailing political disputes and deteriorating security conditions.

On 31 December 2013, the fourth Puntland HoR was inaugurated. The new House included more incoming Members of Parliament (MPs) than veterans from the previous parliament, although only two female members were selected. All stakeholders, including the then presidential candidates, accepted the new HoR. On 8 January 2014, the MPs cast their votes to elect a new president for the coming five years. Despite being the fiercest political contest Puntland has seen, the process was peaceful, and Abdiweli Mohamed Ali (Gaas), who won by only a narrow margin, was inaugurated. The international community and Puntland diaspora hailed the peaceful nature of the transition.

Under the new administration, security has generally improved, although notable attacks have taken place in the Golis Mountain region and Garowe. Stability still faces challenges from an unfolding federal system and border disputes over North Mudug. Major development projects have commenced, but the provision of basic services has only marginally improved. The construction of the Midigar Bridge³ has been implemented, the construction of Bossaso International Airport is underway, and many other projects are in the pipeline. However, the

dangerous mass migration (tahriib) of youth to Europe and to the Gulf States, across the Libyan and Sudanese deserts and the Gulf of Aden, still continues due to severe unemployment. Discordance between revenue collection targets and actual public expenditure has strained the government's ability to cope with Puntland's overall economic burden. Despite the fact that the government has launched important financial reforms, such as the introduction of inland revenue collection, there are acute shortcomings in the payment of salaries to the security forces and civil servants. Even when salaries are paid, they are often inadequate to cover the living expenses of government employees and their families.

High public expectations for the new administration to resume the stalled democratization process, the undertaking of a meaningful decentralization of authority to the local level, and the holding of a reconciliation conference for Puntland communities still remain the top agenda items in any political debate. With the assistance of PDRC, the government has, however, re-instated a number of previously dissolved local councils. Councils were also established in a number of newly-designated districts, including Harfo, Uffain, Ballidhidin, and Baargal. PDRC conducted induction trainings for several local councils following direct requests from the government and local councils. Both the newly-established and re-instated local councils suffer from issues of inclusivity. Although young mayors were elected in Jarriban, Harfo, Badhan, Uffain, and Ballidhidin, the representation of youth, women, and marginalized groups remains low.

In March 2014, PDRC and Interpeace conducted a participatory poll to examine prospects for the democratization process. The main objective of this poll was to gauge public perceptions on and support for the resumption of the halted democratization process, and what this would entail from the government as well

³ Midigar is a bridge on the tarmac road, about 45 km north of the capital Garowe, connecting to the northern towns of Gardo and Bossaso. The bridge was destroyed by a cyclone in late 2013. The project cost over \$1 million, and was funded through a self-help scheme with locally generated resources.

as civil society. An overwhelming majority of respondents, about 86 percent, urged the government to establish the second Transitional Puntland Electoral Commission (TPEC II) as soon as possible to prepare for the upcoming elections and confirm the leadership's commitment towards the continuation of the democ-

ratization process. The polling also highlighted popular perceptions about key issues facing the democratization process and provided quantitative, verifiable, and immediate public opinion information to facilitate communication between the public and decision-makers, as well as public awareness-raising.

1.2 Pillars of Peace: Phase II

PDRC initiated the PoP Phase II mapping exercise from May to June 2014. This consisted of preliminary focus group discussions (FGDs) with a wide spectrum of experts to fine-tune the questionnaire and interview material. This was followed, in September and October, by a more comprehensive mapping exercise covering eleven districts in all nine regions of Puntland. Eleven districts from these nine regions were selected according to their category (A, B or C, in accordance with Law # 7 of 2005), geographical distance, and region. An overall number of 389 people took part in key informant interviews (KIIs) and FGDs.

The main purpose of the mapping was to establish the challenges, opportunities and possible focus areas for the democratization, decentralization, and security and rule of law pillars. This provided an opportunity for PDRC to reconnect with communities across Puntland, explain what PDRC is currently working on, and find out how their perceptions and situations have changed since the previous mapping exercise in 2009. This also allowed PDRC to report back on the accomplishments of Pillars of Peace I. The research teams met with stakeholders such as community elders, youth, women, civil society organizations, and socially segregated and disadvantaged groups, conducting interviews, FGDs, and specialized panel discussions on specific topics.

The detailed findings of the mapping will be

thoroughly elaborated in the following chapters. In brief, the findings indicated considerable programmatic successes in local peacebuilding but continued challenges relating to capacity. The main challenges to democratization were deemed to be the chronic difficulty of transitioning from a clan-based to a democratic system, the lack of expertise and professionalism among political parties, misperceptions regarding the composition and role of political parties, and the lack of political or social reconciliation. With respect to the decentralization of power to local authorities, the main challenges identified included the chronic low participation of the public, the multiplication of districts and un-demarcated district borders, limited local government revenues, and low institutional capacities. In terms of security and social reconciliation, the challenges identified included low institutional capacity (especially for the judiciary and security sectors), the flow of illegal weapons, poor public/police relations, persistent religious extremism, and protracted sub-clan conflicts.

Many challenges are “cross-cutting” for all three pillars, including district border disputes, religious extremism, insufficient political reconciliation among communities, and low capacities of government institutions.

The mapping exercise culminated in a second PSM that gathered more than 140 participants representing local communities, authorities,

and members of the international community to discuss the key findings, analyze the implications of the research, validate identified challenges and opportunities by prioritizing and ranking them, and agree on recommendations for programming.

At the PSM, PDRC research teams presented their community-based research, and also screened documentary films related to each pillar in order to authenticate the findings of the mapping exercise. Following three days of discussions on the presented challenges and prospects, key challenges to be addressed for each thematic area were validated and prioritized. The PSM also adopted selection criteria for three steering committees that would oversee the implementation of pillar activities

with the facilitation of PDRC and Interpeace research teams, thereby transferring ownership of the process to the stakeholders. In conjunction with PDRC, the steering committees would agree on “entry points” – specific challenges and proposed approaches to solve them – which they would pursue during the implementation phase.

In order to further highlight the process and findings, PDRC has developed this pillar note, which highlights the challenges and opportunities identified in the mapping exercise, priorities as identified by the PSM, prospects for addressing these priority issues, and key questions that need to be answered by the government, civil society, and the wider Puntland community in order to reach solutions.

2 Security and Rule of Law

2.1 Introduction

Over the past sixteen years, Puntland has enjoyed relative peace and stability despite on-going insecurity and political transition in central and southern Somalia. This can be attributed, at least in part, to the relatively homogenic clan composition of the Puntland population, the dedication of its public and traditional elders to peace, and the relentless efforts of successive governments to sustain peace and security across the state. Yet, despite these efforts, Puntland has experienced fragmenting politics and security, which has adversely affected its political and social cohesion in various ways. Security threats – including, among others, unprecedented sea piracy off its coast, persistent inter-clan conflicts and violent religious extremism (Al Shabaab) – all pose an acute menace to Puntland's stability.

As noted during the second pillar mapping exercise, there are other critical challenges that also hamper the Puntland security sector which include an ineffective police force, low capacity for intelligence-gathering and investigation, public possession of weapons, loose social cohesion, inadequate rule of law and a weak justice system. These factors are considered to be

the main impediments to sustainable peace and rule of law in Puntland.

Despite these challenges, Puntland has made significant headway in countering the Al Shabaab insurgency in the Galgala Mountains, with considerable progress made towards uprooting piracy (through joint community and government efforts). The establishment of the Puntland Marine Police Force (PMPF) and the enactment of anti-piracy and anti-terror laws during President Faroole's tenure were important milestones. Police stations and posts were built in Garowe, Bossaso, Eyl and Bayla – an initiative that is on-going. Contemporary prisons were also built in Garowe and Gardo. The central investigation department offices in Garowe were reconstructed and capacity-building programs targeted the police and other security forces, with hundreds sent to Ethiopia and Djibouti for further training. Various clan conflicts have also been brought to an end. Unlike his predecessors, Faroole's era was also characterized by limited, but vicious confrontations with Somaliland, despite the on-going dispute over control of Sool, Sanaag and Cayn (SSC) regions.

Within the PoP program, the purpose of the security and rule of law pillar is to strategically contribute to the reduction of conflict and consolidation of peace in Puntland. It does so through provision of policy and programmatic support to the relevant government institutions as well as through technical hands-on and logistical facilitation of peacebuilding efforts throughout Puntland.

As a result, during the first phase of the PoP program (2009-2012), modest progress was made in addressing key concerns of the security pillar, in conjunction with the pillar steering committee and other key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Security and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration. The holding of numerous policy dialogues and consultation workshops in Puntland's main towns contributed to the development of clear policy guidelines for the security sector.

The pillar also facilitated several reconciliation and peace-making processes in 2011 and 2012, including: the Armo reconciliation pro-

cess between Osman Mohamud (Majeerteen) and Dubeys (Warsengeli); the Igdhays reconciliation process between Ali Saleban and Ali Jibrahil (both Majeerteen sub-clans); and the Rako reconciliation process between Ugaar Saleban and Ali Saleban. Most recently, in conjunction with the PDRC Mobile Audio-Visual Unit (MAVU), the security pillar successfully facilitated the settlement of a long-standing feud between two brotherly communities in Xero-Jaale village, 51 km west of Galkayo. With the exception of the Rako conflict, which flared up again in 2014, the majority of these peace processes have endured.

Expanding on these achievements, and in preparation for the implementation phase of PoP II, this note chronicles the challenges to the Puntland security and judicial sectors and outlines opportunities for improvement. Finally, it also includes analysis on the prospects and key questions to prompt the much-needed discourse on countering the immediate challenges to Puntland security and stability.

2.2 Challenges to Security Sector

2.2.1 Low Institutional Capacities

Chronic institutional capacity deficiencies and the absence of clear policy

Since the establishment of Puntland in 1998, institutional challenges have beleaguered the security sector, affecting the entire security apparatus and other law enforcement institutions. This sector is characterized by a work force that is poorly trained, disciplined, equipped and remunerated; worn-out or non-existent infrastructure; and the absence of a vision, mission and program of action.

Most of the districts visited during the map-

ping had neither an adequate number of police nor the necessary security infrastructure and amenities, and the police that are stationed in the visited districts operate either in run-down premises or co-locate with other government institutions. The matter is further exacerbated by the lack of clear-cut regulations or procedures to govern the security sector.

*"There are no clear-cut policies and procedures that regulate our security sector; we usually resort to ad hoc means, let's finish the 'jabhad/faction style' way of governance."
- Muse Ali Jama, politician in Gardo*

According to government records, around 30

percent of the government budget is spent on security⁴. Yet, the perception is that little of this actually trickles down to the security personnel on the ground, and that security is proving to be less effective in tackling the multiplicity of security concerns. The police force receives neither fair and timely remuneration nor healthcare and other benefits. The conditions are extremely bad in remote and hard-to-access areas. Inadequate or infrequent pay for policemen cause demoralisation and leads to a troubled relationship between the security apparatus and local communities.

“A soldier who receives seventy dollars a month – and sometimes doesn’t receive (any salary at all) – cannot fully commit to uphold peace and security.” - Gen. Mohiyadin Ahmed Muse, Deputy Chief of Police

Part of the security officials interviewed mentioned that following enlistment, they were not provided with any firearms or ammunition, but were instead asked to bring their own guns and arrange for their own ammunition. Lack of such provisions, as well as training, prevents the formation of a strong sense of allegiance to the rule of law or government authority.

“Our region consists of four districts/towns and over sixty rural villages – and only 36 policemen are assigned to maintain security in this vast area. Sometimes I am stuck when a security incident happens and I cannot find any fuel. We buy shackles out of our pocket, use our own computers to write correspondence and plead with Golis to print for us.” - Col. Jama Mohamed Gabaydhe, Divisional Commander of Haylaan

Some of the mapping participants felt that inappropriate use of security funds and absence of accountability measures also undermines se-

curity maintenance efforts. This is seen particularly with the prioritisation of pay to members of armed clan militia who provide protection and security to the senior government officials including the members of parliament. This was best depicted by a prominent elder in Bossaso, Mursal Mohamoud Abdi, who ironically stated:

“Fifty ministers and over 60 MPs are escorted by their tribal militiamen at the expense of public security.”

A particularly interesting, but discouraging, finding was the sense of vulnerability these soldiers felt in the absence of government oversight or accountability. It was clear that the individual soldier still relies on clan protection and fears incidents of retaliation.

“We refrain from taking action against culprits because the government is reluctant to accept liability for our actions while on duty and I don’t want to engage my family/clan in war. We need protection in the first place.” - Ahmed Osman, Deputy Division Commander of Mudug

Another overarching challenge elucidated by this research was the weakness of the command structure and intelligence gathering – that are both major contributors to prevailing police ineffectiveness.

2.2.2 Proliferation of Arms

Divided society and easily accessible arms make local conflicts more lethal

Since the breakdown of Siyad Barre’s regime in 1991 and the subsequent collapse of the Somali army, the possession of arms and heavy weapons among civilians has increased. Arms have proliferated across Puntland and have fuelled violent conflict between Somali communities, as well as sea piracy, destruction of property,

⁴ See “2013 Budget,” Ministry of Finance Report, January 2013.

terrorist activities, kidnapping, and rape. Easy access to weapons has been fundamental to the on-going insecurity and political instability in the Somali region, including Puntland. The be-

low table⁵ indicates the reported criminal incidents by category from 2011 to 2014:

⁵ PDRC Interview, Office of the Attorney General of Puntland

Incident	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rape	174	32	131	157
Murder	257	301	176	124
Drug related crimes	58	57	323	347
Robbery and theft	1745	409	1052	1902
Death toll of clan conflicts	163	100	454	643
Total	2397	899	2136	3173

Table 1: Reported criminal incidents

There is continued smuggling of firearms and ammunition into Somalia/Puntland, where they are sold on the open market. The estimated total number of guns (both licit and illicit) held by civilians in Somalia is between 550,000⁶ and 750,000⁷, with only 14,000 of these guns duly registered.

Despite efforts of Puntland’s government to shoulder the overall responsibility of security and engender a safe environment for its citizens, overall lack of confidence in the security sector motivates people to retain arms for self-defence or clan interests. The majority of the security mapping participants believe that the government should first provide protection to all citizens and then pursue disarmament and demobilization programs.

This would provide the foundation for a more effective voluntary disarmament exercise.

“We are all at risk and due to the absence of political and social commitment to undertake disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation programs, and illegal arms will always pose a significant threat to our security.” – Abdirashid Ali Sajin, Deputy Mayor of Bocame

Initial studies⁸ reveal that the number of civilian arms in Puntland exceeds the number of arms held by the government. In the border areas of Mudug and Cayn, communities possess large numbers of weapons in order to repel possible threats from southern Mudug and Somaliland respectively. This security dilemma prohibits the disarmament of one group without that of the other.

“No one can overrule an armed society;

⁶ Lyngé, Karina (2009), “High Presence of and Easy Access to Small Arms,” Community Safety and Small Arms in Somaliland: Analysis and Recommendations. Somaliland: Danish Demining Group, 1 September. (Q2099).

⁷ Karp, Aaron (2007), “Completing the Count: Civilian firearms.” Small Arms Survey 2007: Guns and the City (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 27 August. (Q5).

⁸ World Bank, in collaboration with PDRC. “Conflict in Somalia: Drivers and Dynamics.” January, 2005.

even the policeman cannot dare to confront an armed militiaman who counts on impunity from his clan.” – Ahmed Hassan Jama, Became Police Commissioner

While dependence on weapons by the civilian population remains strong, there is mounting aversion to weapons throughout Puntland, with clan elders playing a pivotal role in controlling the nature of conflicts by keeping clan arms in stockpiles, although these tend not to be secured or well-guarded.

2.2.3 Public and Police Relations

Prevailing distance between police and community members

The security service is not widely decentralized across Puntland, and police personnel are mostly centred in main towns. This allows people to seek refuge among their clans in areas where the police has no presence. Even in large towns, participants reported police ineffectiveness – for instance, that police often take bribes and release criminals in the town of Galkayo. Another practice alienating the public is the lack of professionalism or privacy that often leads to the exposure of citizens who cooperate with the security agencies. The combination of these factors has resulted in widespread distrust between the police and the public, further compounded by the lack of adequate information sharing between the public and police.

The study revealed limited cooperation and suspicion between the public and security organs throughout the visited districts. Participants indicated that most people refrain from cooperating with the police and other security agencies due to the perception that police will be unresponsive, or fearing retaliation from perpetrators in the event of police leaks.

“One day, I and a group of women citizens

arrested a suspect and handed him over to the police, then the investigating police officers took a bribe and freed the suspect. I saw the freed suspect days later and he shouted that I will pay a high price (for my action) – that is why I hold a pistol.” – Dhudi Yusuf, Chairlady of Mudug Women’s Association

The majority of security officials interviewed during the study mentioned that police face difficulties in detaining culprits due to poor public awareness and understanding of the rule of law. The perpetrators are often supported by their parents, close kin and clan elders, who, in some cases, will resort to violent means to set them free.

In the visited districts, elders and businesspeople often provide backstopping support to police in maintaining peace and order. The police fully rely on local communities to enforce the law in remote localities. This also applies at the state level, where the Puntland government often depends on the traditional elders, religious leaders and business community in resolving social conflicts. Despite being formal allies in maintaining security, however, the role of elders, sheikhs and the business community is not fully institutionalized and integrated into the prevailing security and peace-making structures. Some critics say that successive Puntland governments were unwilling to empower the traditional elders, fearing that they would challenge the government.

“Our role – as elders – is to sustain peace, we get nothing in return and yet we are committed to fulfil what seems to be a life-time job for all of us.” – Adan Warsame Osman, traditional elder in Galdogob

2.2.4 Religious Extremism

Poverty, high unemployment and lack of youth

development programs alienate young Somalis. The biggest security hazard is posed by the continued resilience of the Al-Qaida-affiliated group, Al Shabaab. Their ideological dedication to universal jihad and ability to indoctrinate young Somalis and engage them in terrorist actions suggest that they will continue to pose a threat to the security and stability of Puntland and the region for the foreseeable future.

According to the FGD participants, poverty and lack of employment were the main drivers of insecurity, alienating youth and raising discontent in Puntland. As the UNDP Somalia Human Development Report 2012 indicates, 82 percent of Somalis are considered to be poor, with 73 percent living on less than two dollars, while the youth unemployment rate exceeds 67 percent. For unoccupied young people in search of a living and avenues for influence in society, joining an extremist group or criminal network can be rewarding.

Apart from government troops killed in battle, Al Shabaab has assassinated dozens of prominent personalities including sheikhs, business-people, legal professionals, media persons and government officials in the towns of Bossaso, Garowe and Galkayo since 2009. The Puntland Defence Forces (PDF) have been engaging in sporadic battles with Al Shabaab militants in Galgala, making significant headway and squeezing extremists into difficult terrain along the Golis Mountains. Parallel to this, there have been regular security sweeps in Puntland's major towns, successful in detaining Al Shabaab operatives and sentencing through the Puntland Martial Court.

The assassination of Al Shabaab leader Ahmed Abdi Godane on 1 September 2014 in a coordinated U.S. drone attack near Baraawe town and the surrender of Mohamed Said Atom, the leader of Al Shabaab in the Galgala Mountains, to the Somali Federal Government on 7 June 2014, also struck an important blow against the

group's capacity.

Public perception of Al Shabaab was adversely affected by the assassination of the two most prominent religious leaders in Puntland, Dr. Ahmed Haji Abdirahman and Sheikh Abdikadir Nur Farah, in 2012 and 2013 respectively. This contributed to a widespread public awakening and backlash against Al Shabaab. Coupled with government offensives against the group, the environment in Puntland has not been conducive to its presence. Nevertheless, increasing pressure on Al Shabaab from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the Somalia National Army (SNA) – and their loss of control over major urban strongholds in southern and central Somalia – has pushed the group further northward, with terrorist operatives establishing an increasing presence in Puntland's main towns. Thus, while it is estimated that Al Shabaab has been weakened, it cannot be discounted and remains a formidable threat.

2.2.5 Regional / Intra-Regional Border Issues

Uncontrolled borders facilitate infiltration of external threats into Puntland

Puntland shares a long border with the central regions of Somalia, the eastern part of Ethiopia, and Somaliland. Due to weak border security, illegal arms flow freely, terrorist elements sneak into Puntland, and drug and human smugglers operate largely unnoticed. The issue of porous borders was raised and heatedly debated in FGDs held in Galkayo, Buhodle and Badhan.

As a divided city at the crossroads between Puntland and southern and central Somalia, Galkayo remains a particularly conflict-prone town, characterized by clan fighting and frequent security lapses (including the infiltration of piracy networks). During the civil war, the city experienced bloody confrontations be-

tween north and south Mudug communities that claimed hundreds of lives. This long-standing feud can easily escalate into fierce bloodshed due to the absence of effective security cooperation between Puntland and Galmudug and the lack of genuine reconciliation between these communities. Current disputes over the border demarcation in relation to the formation of Galmudug interim administration will certainly bring these latent tensions to the fore.

“Unlike other regions of Puntland, Mudug requires special attention from the government and possibly ‘a special status’ of security arrangements.” – Osman Barre Khalaf, businessman in Galkayo

The dispute between Puntland and Somaliland over the control of Sool, Sanaag and Cayn regions has become increasingly tense since the election of President Abdiweli Gaas and continues to threaten the already fragile peace and security in these areas. Heightened mobilization and military posturing by Puntland and Somaliland, with both seeking to strengthen their respective control over the areas, continues to exacerbate tensions. Communities in Buhodle and Badhan feel that the Somaliland incursion into the disputed regions has expansionist motives. The emergence of the self-declared Khatumo State in August 2012 also prompted another layer of dispute over statebuilding agendas in these regions with the three administrations (Puntland, Somaliland and Khatumo) vying for control.

Equally problematic is the lack of clearly demarcated boundaries between Puntland districts and regions. Their number has drastically increased – up from 20 districts in 1991 to the current total of 43 districts, which are dispersed over nine regions in Puntland. FGD participants argued that successive Puntland administrations redrew district boundaries and regions to buy support, without pursuing a clear strategy or following defined eligibili-

ty criteria or regulations. This has resulted in fierce contention between the old and new districts over jurisdiction. For instance, Gumbah, a new district situated in the recently established region of Gardafu, conflicts with its mother district, Bargaal, over the control of Binna, a small seaport that lies eight kilometres south of Bargaal.

“The lack of district demarcations and the resultant conflict between new and old districts is truly a social time bomb, and only the Puntland government shall be exclusively responsible for any conflict that erupts between Bargaal and Gumbah.” – Omar Said Sharmake, traditional elder in Bargaal

2.2.6 Illegal Fishing and Possible Implications

At the roots of piracy

The Puntland districts along the coast are currently experiencing an upsurge in illegal fishing off their shoreline. Residents in Bosaso, Bargaal and Eyl stress that foreign companies – namely, Iranian and Korean trawlers – are illegally plundering Puntland’s fishing stocks, while severely devastating the marine environment and overfishing certain species that are now vulnerable to extinction.

“They trespass and fish in our territorial waters, threatening the lives of the few fishermen who risk going fishing by shooting them and crashing into their boats. They also destroy the marine ecosystem by using internationally banned drag nets and sonar systems. Since they swiftly deliver their catches to the global and regional markets, they paralyze our fishing industry.” – Abdirizak Osman Ali, fishery expert in Bossaso

Many of the FGD participants indicate a lack of trust in the foreign naval forces patrolling the

Somali waters (particularly along the north-eastern borders). The perception is that they operate under the pretext of counter-piracy, but are not taking concrete actions to crack down on illegal fishing, instead covering up illegal trawling. According to the perception of the coastal communities, both international and Somali actors are involved in the ongoing illegal fishing, whereby a number of these vessels are escorted by Somali brokers.

“The Puntland Marine Police Force is stationed here (in Eyl) and they are not fulfilling their task. We got fed up with the illegal fishing vessels, they are terminating our lives and we have nowhere to go. If the government and the intentional community do not take immediate action against illegal fishers we shall be compelled to take our arms and fight back.” – Abdikhadar Ahmed Mohamed, fisherman in Eyl

2.3 Challenges to Puntland Judicial and Legal Sector

2.3.1 Key Institutional Deficiencies

Under-resourced and -skilled sector serving an unaware society

The Puntland justice system faces serious operational incapacity, which adversely affects its performance and credibility. The Puntland legal sector is characterized by ineffective policies, legal and operational frameworks; poorly trained and remunerated personnel; inadequate facilities with deficient infrastructure; and an absence of genuine reform initiatives. There are only 23 first instance district courts operating in the 43 districts of Puntland, with 8 appeal courts in each of the provincial capitals except Alula, the provincial city of the recently established region of Gardafui. Of the 23 district courts, only five⁹ operate in court owned buildings. The majority of courts in the visited districts operate in run-down or rented premises whilst local judges often receive insufficient remuneration and live under constant fear of reprisals from those they have sentenced who are unwilling to accept judgment. Eight high-ranking judicial officers, five prosecutors and three judges have been assassinated in the past five years, mainly in Galkayo and Bossaso. The resulting sense of insecurity and

overall job dissatisfaction contribute to high turnover that, in turn, affects capacity-building of the sector.¹⁰

“Only injustice causes insecurity; we stand for justice and yet we lack protection and do not receive enough salary; we also lack office equipment and furniture and since we operate in single-roomed, rented offices with no security guard we usually carry the court stamp with us.” – Abdelkadir Ahmed Ismail, Judge in Badhan

Under-equipped and demoralized police – not to mention inadequate local jail and transport infrastructure – inhibit the effective delivery of justice to citizens. There are only four prisons in Puntland, which are located in Garowe, Galkayo, Gardo and Bosaso. Due to prison shortages, many convicts are kept in police stations under unclear custody arrangements. Poor investigation and forensic capacities and clan influence also lead to biased court decisions. FGD and KII participants expressed perceptions of unethical practices such as bribes, clan bias and impunity of officials, calling into question the autonomy and integrity of the formal justice system.

⁹ Garowe, Gardo, Galkayo, Bossaso and Burtinle.

¹⁰ PDRC Interview, Office of the Chief Justice, Puntland.

2.3.2 Formal versus Traditional Justice

Traditional justice: efficient and accessible, though formally under-recognized

One overarching structural problem centers on the coexistence of three legal systems; secular, Islamic Sharia and Somali traditional Xeer and the absence of harmonized laws and clearly defined working relations between the three. This gives rise to inconsistency and uncertainty regarding access to formal legal system — especially for rural and nomadic people, who only have access to sharia and customary laws. A majority of security mapping participants, including the judicial staff, suggest that the two later systems fill a void by the secular justice system that is not fully decentralized or accepted by most people.

“Sharia and customary law are even accessible to the poor and they deliver justice promptly and efficiently.” – Abdirashid Salad, lawyer, Galkayo

Many FGD participants felt that the formal ju-

dicial system lacks credibility and is inefficient – seen as foreign, excessively bureaucratic, and unable to effectively enforce the law. Thus, by default, the majority of participants indicated they would resort to the traditional or sharia system of justice. Inadequate awareness or sensitization on national justice systems and rule of law has left the majority of people in Puntland unequipped to make an informed decision about how justice would be best served.

Some participants of the FGDs said they have faith only in customary and sharia law and see courts as outlandish entities that pursue Italian coded laws. This is due to the perception that the current Somali/Puntland penal code was adopted during the colonial era, despite the amendments made by former Somali governments, and hence does not easily apply to the Puntland context or Islamic religion.

“People go to court only when there is a ‘gar cadaawo’, or prolonged enmity between disputing groups, even though they have no faith in it.” – Buraale Mahad Magan, traditional elder, Buhodle

2.4 Challenges to Social Reconciliation

2.4.1 Recurrence of Resource-Based Conflicts

Scarce resources, armed communities and lack of vibrant policies for peacebuilding

Recurrent clan conflict constitutes a major threat to Puntland security and stability. It impedes the present and future security of the state and undermines the prevailing, but fragile, peace. The large human and material costs of recurrent conflicts have led to increased social disintegration and displacement. Despite government and NGO/CSO efforts to explore durable solutions for the recurrence of clan

conflicts, there are still multiple longstanding, unresolved conflicts that persist within Puntland – that often have a root in resource-based conflict and perceptions of injustice. These include:

- The “Adaadda conflict” between two neighbouring communities in western Burtinle district over the sharing of resources (water and pasture) and the establishment of new settlements (berkedes);
- The conflict between the Rako and Xumbays communities, which has claimed more than 60 lives thus far, with multiple reconciliation attempts proving ineffective;

- The Taleex conflict between two sub-lineages of the Nur Ahmed sub-clan of Dhulbahante (based on recurrent revenge killings);
- The Xero-Jaale conflict driven by revenge killings (with the two poor minority clans often unable to muster the prescribed compensation required by *xeer*, Somali customary law);
- The Isku-shuban district in Bari region has also undergone communal clashes between charcoal traders and opposing local pastoralists.

Pastoral communities frequently compete over the sharing of natural resources. Tensions are particularly high during dry seasons (summer and winter) at which point many nomadic communities move in search of water and pasture. While many existing clan disputes result from such resource-based movement, others are clearly politically or economically driven. The establishment of new settlements, excavation of reservoirs on grazing land, land grabbing in urban centers and the charcoal trade cause violent conflicts among communities. The absence of clear resource and land management policies and regulatory frameworks, as well as the weak capacity of law enforcement institutions, also contribute to the perpetuation of disputes over natural resources.

2.4.2 Loose Communal Cohesion

Lack of government outreach and alienation of many peripheral communities

The absence of effective government outreach and development plans to engage marginalized and peripheral communities has substantially contributed to the deterioration of Puntland's social cohesion. Communities in Sool, Sanaag,

and Cayn are divided along political allegiances to Puntland, Khaatumo and Somaliland. The tripartite conflict between the administrations sometimes escalates into violent confrontations, disrupting the peaceful cohabitation between neighbouring communities and also exacerbating social divisions. In addition, communities in peripheral districts have substantial grievances and discontentment resulting from the government's poor delivery of services. They feel that the government has left them in limbo, deliberately ignoring their development priorities.

An increasingly underestimated link is the role of traditional elders – the last resort in resolving fatal communal conflicts and political stand-offs. Throughout Somali history, elders have played a pivotal role in upholding social cohesion, mitigating clan conflicts and transforming violence into harmony. Despite this, the role of the traditional authority – though declining in recent years – still remains under-recognized. According to the viewpoints of study participants, elders are considered to be forces for peace and yet their involvement in peace and reconciliation processes is not fully institutionalized, or supported by national political elites. Unlike in Somaliland, where the elders are formally institutionalized within the government's bicameral system, in Puntland, the role of elders is informal, and often bypassed by the government. Yet, as the participants confirmed, the role of the elders is critical to the peaceful resolution of clan conflict.

“Personally, I don’t receive (any money) and we aren’t in need of the 30 USD that the Ministry of Interior provides to the elders, it is humiliating. We need more strategic support from the government.” – Mursal Mohamoud Abdi, traditional elder, Bossaso

2.5 Exploring Social Reconciliation Prospects in Puntland

Critical progress has been made in statebuilding – including decentralised governance – since the inception of Puntland in 1998. Yet, Puntland faces on-going, destabilizing security threats (including religious insurgency, widespread possession of arms, persistent clan conflicts, loose social cohesion and deteriorating tensions with Galmudug, as well as strained relations with FGS and Somaliland). Issues of institutional incapacity – ranging from an ineffective police force and a defunct judicial system, to the lack of adequate support provided to the elders (in local dispute resolution) – leaves Puntland vulnerable to the destabilizing effects of conflict.

Successive Puntland administrations have made multiple promises to undertake genuine security and political reforms in order to address the aforesaid challenges. However, these pledges have resulted in little state security reform. Nevertheless, there are considerable opportunities that could contribute to the improvement of the security conditions if the current government seeks to harness them consciously. These include, among others, the on-going security and judicial reform processes, the mounting public vigilance and aversion towards weapons; growing public demand for democratic rule of law; public awareness about the negative effects of religious militancy and sea piracy; and the international community's willingness to support the government's security efforts and its overall reform agenda.

While religious leaders can play an effective role in combating piracy and terrorism, perhaps more important is capitalizing on the role played by traditional elders in maintaining peace and security by incorporating elders in national processes. Participants also recommended that the government employ Puntland's state television as a tool for public outreach, awareness raising and engagement.

The Puntland Grand Reconciliation Conference, whose initial phase was held in August 2015 and subsequent three phases upcoming, is expected to address the long-standing resentments of discontented communities, as well as to reinforce Puntland communities' cohesion and unity. Restoration of full-fledged relations with the FGS and fortification of the existing security cooperation with Galmudug and Somaliland would underpin the Puntland government's efforts to mend peace and security as well as contribute to regional security and stability.

2.5.1 Prospects for Security

PDRC's security and rule of law pillar mapping conducted in late 2014 was not an end to itself, rather it was the beginning of a long process meant to examine the drivers of insecurity in Puntland and to outline the ways to address them in coordination with key stakeholders. To this end, PDRC conducted a three-day stakeholder meeting in early February 2015 with the participation of 150 delegates representing the government, civil society, international community and prominent figures of the Puntland public. The findings of the second mapping of the PoP program were presented to the participants of the second PSM with the objective of allowing them to discuss these issues extensively and validate the outcomes of the study.

Another primary objective of the PSM was to prioritize the challenges to security, decentralization and democratization in Puntland with the aim of identifying actionable solutions that are adapted to the current context. Following interactive and vigorous deliberations on the identified challenges to Puntland security, rule of law and social reconciliation on the third day of the PSM, the participants unanimously

authenticated the outcomes of the security study, and made the following ranking of the challenges:

1. Weak capacity of security and judicial organs
2. Uncontrolled borders and disputed territories
3. Poor public and police relations
4. Terrorism (primarily Al Shabaab in the Galgala mountains)
5. Illegal fishing (particularly emphasized by coastal stakeholders)
6. Resource-based clan conflicts

The above list ranks all security challenges, identified during the pillar mapping study, by importance (to the key stakeholders). Participants left out “public possession of arms” from the list as they believed it requires first significant strides in the above areas – for instance, free flow of arms is a by-product of lax security (lack of popular confidence in security) and porous borders. The successful completion of the PSM was followed by a rapid context scanning aimed at exploring the prospects for the prioritized challenges, and possible avenues for change. The motive behind this exercise was to identify the government’s short and long-term plans for addressing the aforesaid security challenges as well as possible synergies and overlaps between international and local partners’ work and the government’s interventions. Thus, this process aimed to outline the current programs of key actors in order to better highlight gaps and opportunities.

With respect to this, PDRC’s security pillar research team conducted a series of interviews with officials from various government institutions and their partner agencies to study on-going and planned efforts to address the challenges prioritized during the second PSM. The outcomes of this exercise are elaborated in the following section, which envisages possible areas of work and focus for the security

pillar of PDRC. While it may not prove possible to take up efforts in every single area, the security pillar will be guided in selecting their focus areas based on prioritization from the PSM (and ongoing engagement with these actors); guidance from a “security and rule of law steering committee” made up of influential individuals and experts on these issues; and further analysis from PDRC about where its expertise can be most useful and add the most value.

Strengthening Puntland’s security and judicial systems

Puntland has invested heavily in its military and security apparatus. In 2013, the security sector received 31 percent of the state budget, while the social and economic sectors received 10% or less. Yet, enormous challenges still threaten the peace and stability of Puntland. The absence of conscious security policies and regulatory frameworks, weak security structures and preparedness, and low capacity of security forces remain major obstacles in this regard. A burning issue that demands the government’s immediate attention is the extremely low and frequently delayed payment of salaries for the security forces.

Notwithstanding the above, there are ongoing endeavours led by the government with the support of international partners to further strengthen the capacity of police and other security forces. Under the leadership of President Gaas, the current government of Puntland has embarked on multi-sector reform processes meant to enhance institutional performance and the integrity of security and judicial sectors, as well as improve fiscal and civil service sectors of government.

With support from UNSOM, the the Ministry of Security, Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration in conjunction with the presi-

dency, has commissioned a thorough security reform beginning with the vetting and re-enrolment of all Puntland forces. This exercise is meant to ensure eligibility of all security forces and to eliminate hundreds, if not thousands, of ghost soldiers from the government's security payroll. Through the use of a biometric system, the majority of the police force and a considerable number of the paramilitary forces (Darvish) and custodial corps were vetted and re-registered to serve in their respective institutions. In line with the reform process, the government plans to revisit the remuneration policies of government forces and to introduce a welfare scheme for security forces to boost morale. Government security officials envisage drastic improvements in the working conditions once the reform process is fully realized. However, the current reform initiative is not the first of its kind and its success will largely depend on commitment and continued support from the sitting government.

The 2015 plans of the Ministry of Security, Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration also indicate that 11 model police stations should be built by UNDP and the Somalia Stability Fund (SSF) in the districts of Harfo, Jarriban, Dangorayo, Iskushuban, Qandala, Lasqoray, Gardo, Eyl, Galkayo, Bayla and Godob. Furthermore, 16 police posts are to be erected in Garowe, Galkayo, Bossaso, Badhan, Eyl and Gardo to expand the coverage and accessibility of security services in Puntland's major towns. With the financial help of UNDP, the Ministry of Security, Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration is currently sponsoring 25 undergraduates to study law at Puntland State University in Garowe. The Ministry of Security, Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration will also be sending 50 officers to participate in training on coast guarding in Djibouti and another 85 officers to receive training on intelligence and investigation procedures in Ethiopia.

With the support of UNSOM, the Ministry of Security, Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration has recently initiated a strategic planning process, the aim of which is to define priority areas for the security sector and then to devise an intervention strategy for the next few years. Further capacity support from UNSOM could include the establishment of a strategic planning unit within the Ministry. With the advent of the New Deal, there are also prospects for earmarking significant funds to respond to security needs and capacity-building at federal and state levels.

In terms of the judiciary, proposed initiatives are fewer. The current government has initiated a reform process meant to reinforce the effectiveness of the judicial system, but the pace of reform is slow. UNDP is backing a "mobile courts" project and providing some capacity support to the Puntland judiciary and Ministry of Justice.

Key questions must be considered when evaluating the institutional challenges facing the Puntland security and judicial sectors:

- Is there a need for a security policy to complement the strategy currently under development? If so, what is the best approach to develop such a policy to ensure it is effective and broadly supported?
- What is the best way to help the security sector take a more forward looking, holistic, strategic approach to security?
- How can a common vision for security – shared by government, security sector personnel, and citizens – be fostered in Puntland? What monitoring and evaluation systems are needed to ensure the efficiency of Puntland's security and judicial sectors? Is there a need to review current government spending on security? How can the available resources be strategically optimized and accounted for? How can effective civic and parliamentary oversight of the security sec-

tor be achieved?

Defining district borders

The participants of the security study pointed to two major issues relating to borders: uncontrolled, insecure and disputed state borders, and an ever-growing number of districts and regions within Puntland that are not clearly demarcated. Given the shortage of financial resources and security personnel, Puntland struggles to secure its vast borders with Somaliland and southern Somalia. Internally, the lack of district demarcation poses critical challenges for Puntland security, decentralization and democratization processes, as identified by mapping and PSM participants, amplifying inter-district conflicts and conflict between communities.

The Puntland constitution neither clearly outlines the necessity for delimiting district and regional boundaries, nor does it envisage the establishment of a boundaries commission. It only implies that a special law shall determine the number, name and boundaries of the districts¹¹.

Regardless of constitutional ambiguity, the yet-to-be-approved decentralization policy of Puntland envisioned the formation of the boundaries demarcation commission in 2014, though this is still to be established. Despite the delay, the Puntland Ministry of Interior says it plans to fast-track the establishment of the first boundaries commission, pending availability of funding from Somalia Stability Fund (SSF). In regard to district proliferation and border issues, the following questions need to be critically reflected on:

- How can cross-border security cooperation between Puntland and its neighbours

be further improved and supported?

- How can border demarcation mitigate politically motivated land-based conflicts between communities and districts?

Enhancing public and police cooperation

Hostile and ineffective practices on the part of the security forces and the low public understanding of the law has resulted in prevailing mistrust and weak cooperation between Puntland police and the general public. Several attempts have been made by the government, local and international NGOs in the past decade to bridge this divide, but progress has been slow. This is attributed, in large part, to inefficient strategies and the government's inability to adequately channel international assistance towards security. However, there are ongoing efforts supported by UNSOM, UNDP and Danish Demining Group (DDG) in Garowe, Gardo, Bossaso and Eyl to institute sustainable cooperation mechanisms and linkages of mutual trust between communities and the police forces.

DDG in cooperation with the Ministry of Security, Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration and local authorities in selected districts (namely Garowe, Eyl and Gardo) is currently spearheading a community-to-police dialogue and trust-building program that aims to lay the foundations for durable and viable structures that uphold peace and security in the target districts, and are supported fully by the community. The initiative also involves establishment of community safety committees at district and village levels whose role is to facilitate dialogue between the public and police and create avenues for better understanding and cooperation between them. The committees are also entrusted to facilitate the development of security action plans that reflect local community priorities at the national level. Results include the implementation of

¹¹ Article 123 of the Puntland Constitution.

street lighting projects in Garowe and Gardo to improve security and public safety, and the construction of police posts in Eyl and Garowe to increase accessibility to security services.

The following questions should be addressed to ensure trust and enhanced cooperation between the Puntland police and general public:

- What policies, structures and avenues are needed to facilitate communication, build confidence and reinforce the cooperation between public and security forces?
- What privacy and disciplinary measures need to be put in place to ensure proper police conduct?
- How can public understanding of the rule of law and participation in security be achieved? What mechanisms are needed to further involve women and youth in building peace and maintaining security?

Combating religious militancy

The presence of Al Shabaab in the mountainous hideouts of Galgala has been a source of real threat to Puntland security and stability over the past eight years. Security gains have been documented since October 2014, after Puntland waged the largest offensive against AS strongholds in the region. This offensive continued until early 2015 with Puntland forces making significant advances, liberating large areas held by Al Shabaab and subsequently establishing permanent garrisons. Notable defections of Al Shabaab insurgents, taking advantage of the extended amnesty offered by the Puntland president, were also documented. Though grave losses were inflicted on Al Shabaab, the offensive was halted indefinitely for unknown reasons. It is possible that Al Shabaab fighters will take advantage of this policy gap to regroup (as southern precedent indicates). Security sweeps and mass detention of terror suspects in Puntland's major towns

continue to report successes.

The Puntland government states that it regards combating terrorism as a top priority that requires both top-down and bottom-up programs. The Ministry of Security, Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration plans to intensify its offensive against AS and undertake awareness-raising and mobilization campaigns to sensitize the general public on the dangers of AS. With UNSOM support, the Ministry also plans to build rehabilitation and correction facilities for terror convicts. In a good faith measure to joint counter-terror efforts, Puntland has offered 3000 soldiers to building the Somali National Army (SNA) as a step towards the formation of an inclusive and competent fighting force against the AS insurgency and other security threats¹².

The Ministry of Security, Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration also intends to cooperate with the Ministry of Education on the integration of peace education into all curricula to instill a culture of non-violence. In 2012, the PDRC research team composed a civic education guide for secondary school students. The toolkit was intended to help secondary school teachers facilitate discussions on issues of civic importance e.g. security and rule of law, peace, and democratization. Helping youth to think critically about the many cultural and religious synergies with peace and good governance – and their own role as a citizen – can be a useful technique towards fostering positive citizenship and countering extremist influence. The civic education guide can provide a valuable resource in this regard.

Serious questions remain about how to combat Al Shabaab and how to prevent Puntland citizens, particularly youth, from becoming involved in religious extremism:

¹² See "Joint communiqué," Puntland and Federal Government of Somalia, April 2015.

- How has the current government strategy to defeat Al Shabaab changed in light of the influx of Al Shabaab fighters in the Galgala Mountains? Is it sufficient, and does it include adequate community-based mobilization against Al Shabaab? What role can the public, particularly religious groups, play in combating Al Shabaab and other forms of terror?
- Will the planned integration of Puntland forces into the SNA bring about greater cooperation and intelligence sharing or prioritise security-first approaches at the expense of grassroots engagement?
- Is lack of economic opportunity really the main driver for youth to become involved in extremist activities? Are there other factors as well? How can youth be positively engaged to reduce the risk of radicalization?

Countering illegal fishing

Despite noted downturns in pirate activities, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing remains a key concern that continues to pose a great threat to Puntland's marine resources, as well as crippling the nascent fishery industry of the state. In June 2014, President Gaas called upon the international community to help eradicate this practice, pledging all Puntland forces to unite to combat this crime. In a parallel effort to secure Somalia's territorial sea limit, exclusive economic zone and continental shelf, President Hassan Sheikh of the FGS sent a Puntland-supported proclamation to the International Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in July 2014. This was intended to dispel controversies over Somalia's territorial waters and pave the way for a later review of Somalia's Law No. 37 on the Territorial Sea and Ports of 10 September 1972. In a related effort, the Puntland Ministry of Ports and Marine Resources is currently reviewing the state's fishing law of 2006 to include stiff measures against illegal fishers.

In addition to improving legal frameworks for regulating activity, the government pledges to fully operationalize the PMPF to counter illegal trawlers, but will require surveillance support in this regard. According to the Ministry of Ports and Marine Resources, financial pressures and the UN imposed arms embargo on Somalia are disadvantaging its efforts to equip coast guards. Nonetheless, it also intends to launch a large-scale awareness-raising campaign to demobilize fishermen who have taken up arms to protect their interests, and work with coastal communities to counter illegal fishing and crack down on the Puntland nationals who help facilitate the practice.

Given that on-going illegal fishing could fuel the resurgence of piracy if the adequate security measures are not taken, the following questions are to be raised:

- How does the current review of the Puntland Fishing Law of 2006 plan to counter the depletion of Puntland marine resources? Is it sufficient? Will the government be able to enforce the key tenets proposed in the review of the 2006 fishing law?
- What is the scale and scope of the current illegal fishing problem? How has it changed? What measures are in place to ensure piracy does not resurface? Is the government ready to address the concerns of communities affected by illegal fishing?
- What role does the international navy patrolling off the Puntland coast play in countering illegal fishing, and cooperating with domestic judicial systems? Can the role of international patrollers be better aligned with protecting Puntland's interests? What steps will be necessary to raise community awareness and involvement in such efforts?

Addressing communal conflicts

As emphasized during the security pillar map-

ping exercise, the recurrence of intra- and inter-clan conflicts poses a significant threat to Puntland security and stability. There are numerous unresolved communal conflicts in and around Puntland – mainly in Bari and Sool regions, as well as cross-border conflicts between the south and north Mudug communities and between Cayn community and Somaliland. In order to address these issues, the Puntland MOI, which is mandated to address clan conflicts, plans to commission a conflict mapping study throughout Puntland and envisages the institutionalization of the role of elders in reconciliation and peace-building. The initiative would involve establishment of an autonomous structure for select elders to support mitigation of clan conflicts and maintenance of peace. Scarce pastoral and water resources in rural areas and the absence of resource-sharing mechanisms often lead to communal clashes. However, the Somalia Stability Fund (SSF), a subsidiary body of the New Deal, is funding the drilling of water boreholes in areas¹³ prone to resource-based conflict. Additionally, SSF soon plans to undertake a mapping study on resource-based conflicts in Puntland and states that it is willing to invest in livelihood and economic development projects to address poverty and unemployment, perceived as major drivers of insecurity. SSF has also expressed openness to supporting the government's stabilization and peacebuilding initiatives in years to come.

While exploring the conflict cycles in Puntland, it is important to seek answers to the following questions:

- What legal and regulatory frameworks are needed for managing natural resources, particularly land, pasture and water? What proactive strategies can be taken by the government and international actors

to prevent the recurrence of clan and resource-based conflicts?

- What enforcement mechanisms are needed to sustain peace processes that are frequently broken? How can the role of elders and sheikhs be further strengthened and institutionalized to help prevent and resolve clan-based conflicts?
- How can a culture of non-violence, peaceful coexistence and constructive dialogue be instilled in the communities of Puntland and its neighbouring Somali communities? What role can women and youth play in preventing and resolving conflict?

Controlling arms in public hands

Possession of firearms is common in Puntland, with a substantial proportion of the public possessing weapons. Many communities retain large stockpiles for defence against possible threats, although they are not always well-guarded or maintained. The proliferation of arms in the region costs the nation dearly, as they are increasingly used in inter-clan conflicts, as well as criminal activities. According to information obtained from the Puntland Attorney General's Office, 767 persons were killed in 2014 either in clan conflict or targeted shootings.

Despite people's growing aversion towards the possession of weapons, widespread public disarmament does not seem feasible, at least in the near future. Over the past decade, the MOS & DDR implemented a pilot project to register firearms owned by the public, which would legalize their possession and also establish a system to track them. Yet, this initiative has not been successful, and the public continues to circumvent (for reasons that requires further research).

In 2014, the Ministry of Security, Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration, in con-

¹³ Rako, Xariiro, Dhudhub, Ceelbuh of Nugaal, and Towfiq.

junction with DDG, launched a new undertaking aimed primarily at controlling small arms and light weapons (SALW). A joint technical committee – comprising officials from MOS & DDR, the Puntland police and civil society – was tasked to lead the process. This started with the review and expansion of Puntland's Public Order Law No. 1 of 5 January 2000 to establish legal foundations for the process, which should also include elaboration of certain provisions criminalizing the trade and illegal possession of firearms. The amended law is expected to be tabled at the parliamentary session scheduled in June 2015 for further review and approval.

Key questions remain:

- In cases where disarmament is not possible, what other measures can be taken to limit the use of firearms? What incentives might persuade people to give up their weapons?
- Keeping in mind the links between clan conflict and gun violence, would better mechanisms for preventing and addressing clan conflict lead to a reduction in arms stockpiling by clans?
- How can the rule of law be further strengthened and the culture of impunity minimized?

Description of Participants	Quantity	Percentage
Regional & District Admins	10	8.5
Security Institutions	15	12.7
Judiciary	12	10.2
Elders	16	13.6
Youth Groups	15	12.7
Women Groups	15	12.7
Businesspeople	6	5.1
Socially Segregated/Minority	7	5.9
Professionals	22	18.6
Total	118	100.0

Table 2: Participants disaggregated by group

Participants by Gender	Quantity	Percentage
Male	86	72.9
Female	32	27.1
Total	118	100.0

Table 3: Participants disaggregated by gender

3 Democratization

3.1 Introduction

Upon its establishment in 1998, the founders of Puntland State pledged to carry out a transition from a clan-based political system to a democratic multiparty system through free and fair elections. However, promises of democratization and multiparty politics still remain largely unfulfilled due to multiple political and social challenges that have forced successive administrations to fall back upon old systems of clan-based politics and clan rotation schemes. These challenges have been varied in nature and substance. The first PoP mapping exercise, carried out in 2009, revealed little knowledge of, and thus confidence in, democracy among the population. The survey identified four main challenges facing the democratization process in Puntland:

- Diverging public perceptions and understanding of democracy
- Ongoing political reliance on the clan
- Political uncertainties in the greater Somali context
- Lack of commitment to reforming institutions.

Despite these overarching challenges Puntland has made some progress towards democratization in recent years. It has carried out intensive public awareness-raising campaigns through civic education. The steering com-

mittee for the PoP democratization pillar programmed these campaigns by organizing public forums, disseminating messages, and screening documentary films. Other key developments included Parliament's approval of the Electoral Commission Law, Political Parties Law, and Election Law, the establishment of the Transitional Puntland Electoral Commission (TPEC) in July 2011, the adoption of the Puntland State Constitution in April 2012, and the emergence of a number of (still largely nascent) political associations in late 2012.

The establishment of TPEC was a major step forward for Puntland's democratization process. It marked a new era for the institutionalization of the process after almost a decade and a half of an ad hoc approach. Soon after its establishment, TPEC managed to hastily register a number of political associations, announce the date of the Puntland local council elections on 15 July 2013, and facilitate an intensive civic education campaign. PDRC and other local and international NGOs substantially supported TPEC in this endeavour. However, the local council elections were suspended on 14 July 2013 after an outbreak of violence in several locations – a major setback to Puntland's democratization.

Resuming the democratization process will

require serious commitment, proficient preparation, and clear cooperation by all actors involved, including the authorities, the electoral commission, the political associations, civil society, and the public at large. In the meantime, the government has returned to the old clan-based scheme of selection for members of the House of Representatives, who in turn elect the top leadership of the government.

On 8 January 2014, the current administration came to power through this process, following tough competition between the incumbent (Farooole) and other prominent politicians. One of the main campaign promises made by now-President Gaas was to fulfil the promise of a “one-person-one vote” election during his term in office. Initial attempts have been made to meet this pledge, including the establishment of a new Ministry for Constitution, Federalism, and Democratization intended to

advance Puntland’s political development.

Following the postponement of local council elections, PDRC and Interpeace undertook a number of activities toward the resumption of elections. They conducted a comprehensive participatory polling exercise that confirmed that the majority of citizens want to see a resumption of the democratization process, and would like elections to be held as early as possible. The second PoP mapping exercise, conducted from August to November 2014, indicated some positive improvements, but also identified a number of obstacles to the full realisation of the democratization process. These included difficulties in transitioning from a clan-based system to a democratic system, weak government commitments and capacities, and above all challenges to overall security and stability.

3.2 Challenges to the Democratization Process

3.2.1 Transitioning from the Clan System to Multi-Party Politics

The clan system is peculiar to Somali society and politics. Clan loyalty supersedes formal loyalties to government and to other institutions. The centrality of clan is reflected in all aspects of life and deeply permeates the political sphere. The political influence of this age-old system constitutes a significant handicap to moving ahead with democratization in Puntland and in Somalia as a whole.

“The clan system is, so far, fully intermingled into the politics of Puntland. The question is how to disentangle its influence from the democratization process.”- Muktar Ahmed Farah, Buhodle

Stakeholders involved in the mapping repeat-

edly discussed the issue of clan dominance and its influence on Puntland’s society and political landscape. Speaking on the importance of clans, one participant compared clan loyalty to life insurance. Given its central role in Somali life, it is clear that it will not be easy to move away from the clan system.

“Miracles are needed to uproot clannism from the soul and the mind of the Somali people.” - Ali Abdi Jibriil, Baran

Some interviewees and participants in the mapping exercise believed that clannism sparked the civil war that disintegrated the Somali state, while others indicated that it was actually the war that “unchained the demons of clannism.” Many participants, however, viewed the struggle for clan supremacy as both the reason for the state’s collapse and for the increasing



President Abdiweli kicks off a peace match for youth at Goldogob.



Bargaal local council members elect the town's mayor.



Security official elaborates on the need for additional support during the Goldogob mapping exercise.



Participants of the Puntland Stakeholders Meeting follow a presentation by the Audio-Visual Unit.



A young student smiles in Galkayo.



Brother of slain victim of revenge killing at Herojalle.



Elders mediate Rako conflict in presence of government security forces.

fragmentation of the state during its reconstruction.

Many stakeholders agreed that clannism and the corrosive effects of clan politics will continue to pose considerable obstacles to the advancement of the democratization process. They pointed out the extent to which clan interests exert an influence on critical areas, including voter registration, district demarcation, elections, allocation of seats, nominations for leading positions in political parties, and distribution of positions within important government institutions.

Stakeholders engaged in the mapping provided a clear picture of how clan influence is deeply intertwined with the structure and conduct of public affairs in Puntland. The organization of the Puntland state is based on the clan system. Seats in Parliament, ministerial portfolios, and positions in public administration as well as local district councils are all allocated according to clan patronage.

Participants both within and outside the government agreed that the clan system would not easily disappear from the social and political fabric, even with the introduction of a multi-party system and elections. The conditions for its existence and the forces that keep it alive are still strong enough to challenge the emergence of a view of the individual as a citizen rather than a clansperson, which is crucial to the democratic mindset. The clan system also largely marginalizes and excludes women and youth from political discourse, at odds with democratic ideals. Throughout the duration of this exercise, women, youth, and minorities repeatedly voiced their dissatisfaction with the clan system.

"We don't know what we did wrong to be discriminated against. If democracy will bring justice we will be ready to support it."

- Keyfi Ali Ismail, councillor and minority clan

member, Galdogob

Some interviewees believed that only a long-lasting campaign of civic education and socioeconomic development could overpower the dominance of the clan system. Reduced clan dominance, particularly in affairs of state, and the emergence of political parties as the primary form of political organization, are both essential to the transition from clan power-sharing to elective democratic governance.

3.2.2 Frail Commitments and Capacity

Institutional challenges are tangible and substantial. Some are inherited from previous administrations while others have become more apparent of late – weak governmental commitment, poor planning and inexperience, and attachment of political power to clan patronage. According to the stakeholders, inherited challenges include a lack of civil service reform and poor social service delivery, which hinder public administration and the implementation of government policies.

Some of these challenges are facets of Puntland's political environment, which is characterised by a lack of organized pressure on the government and an absence of credible leadership and political maturity.

"Broadly speaking, the leaders of Puntland are responsible for the impasse in the democratization process due to one of the following reasons: they benefit from the existence of the clan system or they are incapable of or lack the needed leadership qualities to tackle the problem. Some sectors of the public (traditional, religious, etc.) carry part of that responsibility as well." – Elmi Ali Guled, politician, Galkayo

Those consulted in the mapping exercise wanted to give the new administration the benefit of

the doubt regarding its capacity and willingness to discharge its promise of bringing democracy to Puntland. The stakeholders were in a mode of “wait and see.”

Government institutions are tasked with tackling many challenges facing the resumption of the democratization process – public disarmament, border demarcation, voter registration, voter education/information, and political reconciliation are just a few.

The issue of Puntland’s borders with its neighbours, Somaliland and Galmudug, has become a particularly thorny matter for the new administration – not least with the emergence of federal member states. In reference to this issue, women’s group leader Hawo Mohammed of Galkayo said that

“All of Puntland’s borders are not under Puntland State control. How is it possible to have elections in border areas which are out of the control of Puntland authorities?”

Ali Egal of Galkayo spoke out on the people’s trust in the leadership:

“Even though the people are prepared for democracy, they suspect that the leaders are not committed at all to the democratization process, because they fear losing their grip on power.”

Traditional elder Yassin Abdisamad of Galkayo criticised the lack of institutionalisation of clan elders in Puntland State: “As a clan elder, I don’t have a defined role in Puntland’s constitutional institutions, so I have the right to exercise the traditional rights bestowed upon me by my clan to select representatives to the Parliament.” By referring to the absence of an upper house for traditional elders in Puntland, as there is in Somaliland, he indicates that such an institution could provide a greater check on the executive and ensure, at least to a certain

extent, clan representation.

The urgency of dealing with challenges hindering the resumption of the democratization process was suggested by the majority of stakeholders contacted in the mapping exercise. They called upon institutional leaders to shoulder the great responsibility of removing, without further delay, these challenges.

3.2.3 Widespread and Easy Public Access to Weapons

Participants in the democratization mapping exercise were troubled by the fact that clans are armed, and concerned that violent confrontations and anti-election protests could erupt in the lead-up to elections. The people interviewed believe that one of the main reasons behind the suspension of the 2013 local elections was the fear of an outbreak of violence due to widespread public possession of weapons.

“A major challenge to the democratization of Puntland, and particularly to free and fair elections, is the lack of disarmament of the public.”— Abdinassir Serar, businessman, Bossaso

They were also concerned that discontented communities and disengaged political and traditional leaders might mobilize their constituencies to take up arms and confront the electoral process. The easy accessibility of arms is exacerbated by the poor capacity of security forces to curb potential threats.

Another source of potential danger is the lack of clearly marked district boundaries. Without demarcation, communities might fight over the delineation of constituencies and polling stations to secure political power.

Grievances resulting from the stalled elector-

al process of 2013 might also arouse unforeseen opposition to the process. Interviewees also viewed the Al Shabaab insurgency as a significant threat to democratization and the participation of citizens in electoral and voting processes. Respondents clearly believed

that the government could secure the electoral process only by introducing robust security arrangements while pursuing inclusive and credible approaches throughout the electoral process.

3.3 Obstacles for Elections

3.3.1 Low Public Awareness

The participants in the mapping exercise, while discussing challenges and opportunities for promoting democratization, recognised the need for a full-fledged awareness-raising campaign on the principles and practices of democracy, which is largely unfamiliar to the broader public. There exist some misconceptions, as well as hostility from some religious interest groups that need to be mediated. Stakeholders are conscious of the fact that the transition from a clan system to a democratic one requires concerted efforts towards mitigating the influence of clannism over politics.

Due to widespread illiteracy resulting from the prevalent nomadic lifestyle in Puntland, there is little knowledge of the notions and principles of democracy, political parties, elections, or good governance. Participants in the mapping referred to this unfamiliarity with political parties and elections as a hindrance to the democratic process.

“I welcome the democratization of Puntland, but I want to know more about it.”
- Kadijo Abdi Mohamed, Bossaso

“I know what the clan system can do for me, but I do not understand about democracy. I cannot compare them.” – Said Mohamed Hersi, Dhahar

Few Puntlanders have any electoral experi-

ence. The majority of the population, especially the youth, needs to be educated on how to take part in electoral processes. There is a need for wide-reaching voter education/information processes.

“The majority of the public, except for a few old people, have no familiarity with elections.” – Nuro Mohamed Ahmed, female youth activist, Galdogob

3.3.2 Lack of a Constitutional Court

The absence of a constitutional court from the election process raised serious disputes between the former TPEC and the political associations over how electoral controversies or procedural issues would be settled during the election process. Former political association leaders Said Farah Mohamed (UDAD) and Lul Jama (WADAJIR) stressed the importance of the Constitutional Court in conducting free and fair elections.

“The Constitutional Court should be in place to perform the role of arbitrator among the three branches of the state when they are in conflict, and to resolve electoral disputes.” - Ali Haji Abdulle, politician

3.3.3 Lack of Regional and District Boundary Demarcation

Boundary demarcation is a critical issue for elections because they, in theory, take place at the district level. It is impossible to allocate seats and polling stations, in accordance with the constitution, when districts are not marked with clear and distinct borders. When Puntland was established in 1998, there were only 20 recognised districts with clearly defined boundaries; now the number of districts stands at 43. In stakeholders' estimation, undefined regional and district boundaries – as well as the lack of a population census – are serious problems that can prompt territorial disputes between clans.

“The proliferation of districts is very confusing and dangerous. For example, a district like Iskushuban has been divided into 5 other districts.” – Ali Haji Abdulle, politician, Garowe

3.3.4 Lack of Voter Registration and Voter ID Cards

The number of potential voters should be publicly estimated (in the event that a census is not possible) to avoid electoral fraud and malpractice and to allocate seats fairly according to districts. Voter ID cards are also important to know who is eligible to vote, as required by the constitution.

“Before elections, there must be clear distinctions between citizens, IDPs, and foreigners. That is possible only with voter registration and ID cards.” – Saynab Sheikh Osman, women's group leader, Galkayo

“Without voter registration and voter ID the election is unconstitutional.” – Abdiweli M Ali (Gaas), KAALO, youth-peer organization leader

3.3.5 Limited Financial Resources

Electoral processes are costly, especially when starting from scratch. Activities like district demarcation, voter registration, production of voting materials, and ensuring a safe environment for the process and the voters all require considerable financial resources and technical know-how. These, however, are limited in the case of Puntland.

“The two most critical issues in successfully carrying out the democratization process are the commitment of the government and the availability of financial resources.”
- Asha Gelle, Galkayo

3.3.6 Nascent Political Parties

Mapping participants were aware of how critical the formation of genuine political parties is in a society dominated by clan allegiance, and voiced their concerns about the current state of political parties. Asho Abdikarim Hirsi of Eyl indicated his preference for “a political party that is inclusive, and promotes peace and progress with a vision of equality and justice.” Ahmed Jama Abdille of Galkayo approves of “a party with a good political program and good leaders,” while Samiira Jama Mohamed of Bossaso favours “a party that combats clannism and corruption.”

Interviewees endorsed similar criteria for the existence of political parties in Puntland and believed that none of the six political associations that were registered to compete in Puntland's July 2013 local elections satisfied the criteria given above. They said that those political associations had limited connections with Puntland constituencies.

“The political parties were not based on constituencies or membership; they also had no discernible programs from each oth-

er, and the leaders seemed to have sprung from a vacuum.” - Hirsi Musse Hirsi, diaspora, Gardo

The mapping exercise identified a number of opportunities that could contribute to the resumption and evolution of the democratization process in Puntland.

3.4 Exploring Democratization Prospects in Puntland

3.4.1 Popular Support

There is widespread public support for democratization among stakeholders and the general public, who have embraced the ideas and principles of democracy on the condition that basic Islamic and Somali values are respected.

Over the past few years, there has been significant improvement in public awareness on democracy. People are now more receptive to the democratization process and the ideals and principles of democracy.

“A short time ago the word democracy used to be associated with blasphemy or an offence to religion. Today it is the political system we are striving for.” – Omar Aden Abulle, Councillor of Galdogob

A part of these attitudinal changes is attributed to various actors' involvement in public awareness-raising campaigns in the lead-up to the attempted elections: civil society organizations, government, and domestic and international NGOs.

During the most recent electoral process in January 2014, the people of Puntland had a short-lived glimpse of a democratic, multiparty system of governance. Puntlanders were exposed to the concepts of democratization, political associations, and different levels of elections, which will make it considerably more difficult for the government not to address some of these key popular concerns.

Political parties are indispensable building

blocks of democracy. Genuine political parties integrate different segments of the public among their supporters, particularly those excluded from the political process. They also serve as a check on power, and exercise control over the government's activities in order to ensure good governance, transparency, and accountability in the conduct of public affairs. However, establishing viable political parties that are able to accomplish these objectives is not easy, as proven by Somalia's past experiences and recent events in Puntland.

3.4.2 General Government Commitment

The stakeholders interviewed in the mapping exercise were aware of how critical the formation of genuine political parties with clear ideological platforms is in a society dominated by clan allegiances.

Interviewees were asked, “What opportunities are available to successfully resume the democratization process?” Overall, with the new government in place, respondents showed confidence regarding the resumption of the democratization process.

“The current government has only to correct the mistakes made by the previous administration and take advantage of the time available.” – Hawo Abdi Jama, Diaspora, Galkayo

“The new government has useful lessons to learn from the past experience, sufficient

time, and a public ready to resume the democratization process.” – Ahmed Kalif Abdulle (Galdogob)

Mapping participants felt that the new administration promised a better chance for expediting and accomplishing the democratization process. In their estimation, a great deal of insight and practical experience was gleaned from the stalled electoral process of 2013 and would inform government decision-making in the next round.

A good indication of the government’s commitment to the resumption of the democratization process was the creation of the Ministry for Constitution, Federal Affairs, and Democratization. The fact that the appointed Minister was a woman, according to some stakeholders, was an even better indication of renewed commitment.

The Ministry’s mandate was to oversee and coordinate, with other relevant institutions, activities designed to move forward and bring about the democratization process. The Ministry would also lead the drive for democratization in Puntland by initiating the development of the necessary legal framework, enhancing public awareness, ensuring democratic processes, engaging and supporting local and international institutions, and building public confidence.

“The new president is a knowledgeable person and has a good record of leadership. I have no doubt that he will succeed.”- Mohamed Abdullahi Farah, Galkayo

“A woman Minister for the democratization process will help persuade more women to become involved in the process.” - Nuro Mohamed Ahmed, Female youth activist, Galdogob

3.4.3 Public Expectations on the Benefits of Democracy

Following government pledges to resume the democratization process, public expectations were high. Puntlanders are weary of mistrust-fuelled clan politics and see popular elections as a way to curtail political marginalisation, particularly for women, youth, and minorities. These groups see democratization and elections as avenues for increasing active participation in the political process and influence the decision-making process. The stakeholders consulted in the mapping reiterated time and again that women, youth, and minorities will benefit from democratization.

Though significant institutional and political reforms are still needed before citizens, through political parties, are able to openly criticize the government and freely express their concerns and opinions on matters of public interest, some mapping exercise participants seemed to take pleasure in imagining the freedom they would enjoy after the advent of democracy. During elections it is possible for such high expectations to conflict with reality on the ground, which could jeopardize Puntland’s peace and political stability.

Despite still-optimistic public expectations, at the time of publication and contrary to the government’s promises, the democratization process had not yet resumed. The Ministry of Constitution, Federal Affairs, and Democratization has focused mainly on establishing itself rather than on pursuing concrete steps towards the resumption of the democratization process.

3.4.4 Sufficient Time

The interviewees were convinced that limited time for preparations (in part a result of political turmoil) was one of the critical factors

that contributed to the failure of the previously attempted electoral process. According to the findings of a poll PDRC conducted in March 2014, 91% of respondents were in favor of the resumption of the democratization process within the first six months of the current government's term.¹⁴

"The time factor is favourable to the resumption of the democratization process if the process restarts early and without further delays." - Eid Mohamed Mohamud, student, Bossaso

Pushing ahead with voter registration, district demarcation, civic and voter education, and the establishment of political parties takes con-

siderable time, and requires adequate preparation. This means that the necessary laws need to be passed, and contracts signed in good time. These activities were highlighted by participants as the most necessary, although difficult, priorities for moving ahead with democratization.

At the time of the mapping in late 2014, participants felt that the current administration had at its disposal sufficient time for the resumption of the democratization process and to focus on crucial issues, including the early nomination of an electoral commission, tackling challenges facing the democratization process, and defining the roles and responsibilities of the government, civil society, and political associations in the resumption of the democratization process. However, the resumption of the democratization process has been slower than anticipated.

¹⁴ Puntland Development and Research Center (PDRC), "Participatory Poll on Prospects of Democratization in Puntland," Garowe, 10 September 2014.

3.5 Key Entry Points for Democracy Promotion

Following the conduct of the second mapping exercise, PDRC convened a three-day stakeholders meeting from 3-5 February 2015 to present the findings of the mapping study. The meeting brought together 150 participants representing the government, civil society, and local and international NGOs.

Participants vigorously discussed challenges to democratization in Puntland and agreed upon a list of priority challenges. Based on the views of the participants, the following are key challenges that could derail Puntland's forthcoming democratization process:

1. Prevalent social and political divides between communities in Puntland
2. Low public awareness and understanding of democratization and electoral processes
3. Lack of clearly demarcated boundaries between Puntland's districts and regions

4. Absence of voter identification and registration mechanisms
5. The flow of arms and security threats
6. Absence of a functioning Constitutional Court.

Alleviating these challenges will require concrete and timely actions before the current government's term of office expires in 2019. Nonetheless, the PDRC democratization pillar team, in search of possible entry points and prospects for engagement with the challenges prioritized at the PSM, has conducted further consultations with relevant government authorities and other stakeholders. The object of this exercise was to address the challenges prioritized at the PSM and also to look into areas where the democratization pillar can build upon the planned efforts of the government and other stakeholders.

The subsequent section of this report chronicles the outcomes of the consultations along with the anticipated entry points for the democratization pillar and implementing partners. The final choice of entry points will be determined by a “democratization pillar steering committee” made up of influential individuals, decision-makers, opinion-shapers, change agents, and experts, in conjunction with PDRC. The steering committee selection of pillar focus themes will be guided by the PSM’s prioritization and PDRC’s analysis of where its expertise can add the most value.

3.5.1 Reinvigorating Community Cohesion

Puntland has faced adverse social and political changes in the past few years. The formation of anti-government secessionist movements (including the self-proclaimed state of Kha-tumo) and a rapid degradation of the role of traditional elders have indicated a loosening of communal cohesion. These are all attributed to the recurrence of resource-based conflicts, marginalization of peripheral communities, and political controversies provoked by the 2013 electoral process and subsequent presidential elections of 2014.

According to the views of participants in the democratization pillar mapping, before Puntland’s environment becomes conducive to rigorous democratization, genuine social and political reconciliation processes must be spearheaded, including the participation of political elites and traditional elders as well as other interest groups. Such reconciliation processes will inevitably lessen the prevalent social and political divides, which in turn will pave the way for democratization.

President Gaas has repeatedly vowed to conduct a national dialogue process to reinforce Puntland’s social and political unity, and address the discontentment of political and traditional

leaders and their communities, to lay the foundation for inclusive democratization processes. Preparations for a “Puntland Grand Consultation Conference” are currently underway, led by President Gaas, with the technical facilitation of government-appointed oversight and steering committees and secretariats. More than 250 participants from different constituencies and regions of Puntland are expected to come together almost 17 years after the formation of Puntland State to hold consultations. The following questions are expected to arise:

- What has changed of the fundamental objectives and principles upon which Puntland was based at its formation in 1998?
- Do the elders still enjoy the same influence and power they had at Puntland’s formation?
- Assuming the conference comes up with recommendations, what guarantees are there for effective implementation of its anticipated outcomes?
- What are the prospects for the conference to deliver recommendations on the resumption of the democratization process in Puntland?

3.5.2 Intensifying Civic and Voter Education

According to an opinion poll conducted by PDRC in March 2014, which surveyed 1,525 respondents across Puntland, low public awareness and understanding of electoral processes emerged as the second most threatening challenge to the forthcoming democratization process. Most Puntlanders lack electoral experience and have little understanding of their basic rights and responsibilities, especially those that live in rural and hard-to-reach areas with little access to information. However, civic and voter education are believed to be the best approaches to galvanizing political participation while also increasing voter participation.

In the 2013 electoral process, significant strides were made to educate the general public on their civic rights and responsibilities and electoral processes. However, voter education and information activities were mostly centered in the major towns. Poor outreach and loose cooperation and coordination mechanisms on the part of civil society organizations also weakened their role in awareness-raising efforts and the overall electoral process.

Notwithstanding the above, the Ministry of Constitution, Federal Affairs and Democratization envisions expanding outreach to 21 districts throughout 2015, to ensure that civic education messages get to the grass-roots level. According to ministry officials, their efforts are usually impaired by the lack of adequate financial resources. Nonetheless, there is strong interest on the part of the international community in supporting active approaches to civic and voter education.

PDRC has ample experience and expertise in spearheading civic and voter education programs and can add substantial value in this area. PDRC's democratization pillar, in conjunction with PDRC's Mobile Audio-Visual Unit (MAVU), envisages substantively contributing to the programming and implementation of civic and voter education and information endeavors once the transitional electoral commission is re-instituted. The pillar also seeks to prompt better approaches to coordination and cooperation among key stakeholders in the process.

The following questions should be explored regarding civic and voter education:

- To what extent did previous public awareness efforts raise the level of civic and voter education in Puntland?
- The democratization process is a very expensive exercise that Puntland cannot implement alone. Is there an appetite for

broader contribution and participation in implementing the democratization process, including outreach campaigns on civic and voter education throughout Puntland?

- What is the role of civil society organizations in this regard?
- What is the best approach for better coordination and cooperation among the actors in the democratization process?

3.5.3 Demarcating Districts in Puntland

The increase in the number of Puntland districts and regions in the past decade has created multi-dimensional challenges to security, decentralization, and democratization processes. At the time of writing in early 2015, there were 43 districts forming the nine regions of Puntland, most of which have no demarcated boundaries. As a matter of fact, the absence of distinct constituencies threw the 2013 electoral process into a dilemma over which of the then 37 districts would be qualified to become electoral districts and how many seats each would have in parliament.

The severity of this challenge still persists despite the Ministry of Interior's efforts to establish a boundaries and demarcation commission.¹⁵ There is little hope of carrying out a nationwide boundary demarcation in the near future, due to lack of government resources and an absence of the expertise, know-how, and awareness needed to implement such a vast exercise. Future government efforts should include a consensus-based formula to identify polling stations in districts, to legitimize the electoral process at the local level until legal steps can be taken.

The following questions need to be explored

¹⁵ According to the Puntland Decentralization Roadmap, the boundaries commission was supposed to be established in March 2014.

with regard to district demarcation:

- What challenges could hinder the resumption of the democratization process in the absence of a demarcation of regional and district boundaries in Puntland?
- How can the Puntland government limit the number of electoral districts?

3.5.4 Identifying and Registering Voters

In its 17 years of existence, Puntland has never undertaken any census or population estimation, nor has it registered its citizens of voting age. The absence of citizen identification mechanisms and voter registration has always been a contentious issue, resulting in a longstanding stalemate, which led some associations to boycott the 2013 election process.

Their concerns arose around possibilities of multiple voting and potential fraud and manipulation of the election results by the then administration. Another concern was, and still is, that Puntland hosts a large number of internally displaced people (IDPs) and migrants from southern Somalia and Ethiopia who could be exploited to vote in favor of certain political associations. Globally, voter registration is believed to be an important safeguard for legitimate elections. It facilitates the identification of eligible voters and curbs instances of multiple voting.

According to the Ministry of Interior, the government will soon initiate a civil registration process, the aim of which is to document Puntland citizens and grant them citizen ID cards. The decision of whether to roll out voter registration will rest with the forthcoming electoral commission, subject to the approval of Parliament. It is envisaged that future political associations will have a say over whether voter registration is to be conducted or not. The democratization pillar will provide back-

stopping support to the future electoral commission in addressing issues of paramount importance for elections.

The lack of voter registration was one of the critical issues that hindered the democratization process in 2013. To avoid repeating the same mistakes, Puntland must conduct voter registration well before the next elections.

The following questions will need to be explored regarding voter registration:

- Bearing in mind that it is a costly process, can Puntland afford to conduct voter registration?
- What strategies can be employed to ensure a credible voter registration process?
- Should voter registration be prioritized ahead of civic registration?

3.5.5 Providing Security

According to international standards, the success of an election is measured by certain indicators, including how peacefully it was conducted. Ensuring security during an electoral process is critical to guaranteeing citizens' participation and buy-in to the electoral process. The violent anti-election uprisings that erupted on the eve of the planned 2013 local elections led to the suspension of the election process. Puntland's security institutions are weak, while security conditions remain volatile. Communities across Puntland are heavily armed and grievances about poor government outreach and the delivery of social services fuel further insecurity in the border regions.

However, the biggest threats to the democratization process emanate from Al Shabaab, and from communities who might feel marginalized from the political process and vulnerable to more radical ideals. Disengaged political and traditional leaders might also seek shortcom-

ings within the electoral process to justify their opposition and thus mobilize their constituencies against the process.

Poorly delineated electoral districts and polling stations pose considerable dangers to the advancement of the democratization process, and may lead to inter-communal conflicts. The capacity of security forces in policing elections and providing security to all communities is perceived to be extremely low.

Ahead of the resumption of the democratization process, the Government of Puntland should come up with a clear-cut strategy for sustaining peace and security that does not result in any further election delays.

The following questions should be explored regarding electoral security:

- Can the Puntland government take action to regulate arms in the hands of the public?
- How can Puntland set up and implement an electoral security plan?
- Does Puntland have enough trained police to secure regional and district election offices and polling stations?

3.5.6 Instituting the Constitutional Court

The Puntland Constitution mandates the establishment of a constitutional court whose responsibilities include preserving public liberties and personal rights stipulated in the constitution. According to the deputies¹⁶ of the speaker of the Puntland parliament, President Gaas has commissioned an evolving judicial reform

program that will involve a review of the state constitution to address possible contradictions and imprecisions. According to these respondents, the establishment of the Constitutional Court will be a key aspect of this reform process.

In a related issue, officials from the Ministry of Constitution, Federal Affairs and Democratization met during the prospects mapping stated that they worked with the Ministry of Justice to draft a special law that sets out the structure and powers of the Constitutional Court. This law was planned to be tabled at the parliamentary session scheduled for June 2015.

The current constitution does not clearly define which of the constitutionally recognized courts is responsible for adjudicating electoral disputes. It only recognizes the Supreme Court as the highest tribunal of the state and vests it with substantial powers including the announcement of election results. Due to this loophole, some government officials downplay the importance of this court in the election process. However, the formation of the Constitutional Court is believed to be a government prerogative and key tenet of the democratization pillar.

The following questions arise in relation to the Constitutional Court:

- How can it be ensured that a constitutional court is in place, with a mandate that is supported by all actors?
- Will the powers of the constitutional court regarding electoral disputes be clarified?
- What is the appropriate role for the constitutional court with regard to elections?

¹⁶ Cabdihamid Sh. Cabdisalaam and Hussein Yasin Dirie.

Category	Quantity	Percentage
Business	12	9.24
Councillors	8	6.15
Elders/Religious Leaders	16	12.3
Media	1	0.8
Professional	22	16.9
Women Groups	16	12.3
Youth	18	13.85
CSOs	4	3.07
Minority	10	7.7
District Authority	8	6.15
Diaspora	2	1.54
Intellectuals/Politicians	13	10
Total	130	100

Table 4: Participants disaggregated by group

4 Decentralization

4.1 Introduction

Puntland's decentralization process is more than a decade old and has a vision of "... establishing the local government level for improved good governance and service delivery through participatory, accountable, and transparent local government and to effectively utilize the limited resources available at the central and local government levels" (Puntland Decentralization Policy). The decentralized system of governance, while still nascent, provides a valuable alternative to the highly centralized rule that contributed to state collapse and ongoing political instability. Following independence in 1960, a brief period of democracy was followed by a military dictatorship that lasted until the outbreak of the civil war in 1991. As a result, Somali people have little experience with public ownership and local participation in governance affairs.

In recent years, progress has been made towards establishing a federal system of governance that includes devolved local governments. Devolved power to local governments is a critical component of decentralization – the focus must be placed on improving administrative structures with the potential to mobilize local actors for community-based initiatives.

The Puntland Minister of Interior, Local Government and Rural Development has spear-

headed efforts to establish local councils and implement key laws and policies such as the Local Council Law and an official decentralization policy. However, much remains to be done to empower local governments to assume greater responsibility in implementing the decentralization process. Greater commitment from the state government, especially in strengthening the capacity of local governments and promoting public participation, is needed.

Decentralization remains a critical component of peace and statebuilding in Puntland because:

- It will bring governance closer to the people, and promote increased public participation in decision-making processes. It is, therefore, imperative to ensure that the public is involved in the process from the start, so that the results reflect and address the needs of the people.
- Decentralization promotes democracy and participation at the local level, enabling more people to engage. Decentralization is also beneficial for rural development as it brings decision-makers closer to the people who best know what challenges they are facing and what is needed to address them.
- It will enhance development efforts by improving the opportunities for the public to influence priorities at the local level to ad-

dress the most pertinent needs of communities.

- Bringing decision-making closer to local communities could strengthen the influence of women, youth and other marginalized groups whose voices are often absent from political processes.

PDRC, together with its partner Interpeace, supports peace and statebuilding in Puntland through promoting local ownership and broad-based participation. Decentralization has been part of the work in the PoP program since 2008.

During the first comprehensive mapping exercise in 2010 the following key challenges, to the decentralization process in Puntland, were identified:

- Inappropriate and undemocratic local council selection processes;
- Insignificant public participation;
- Institutional limitations (internal disputes within local governments, lack of account-

ability and transparency of local revenue spending and limited local governments' infrastructure);

- Poor relationship between the state and local governments.

To assess the current status of the decentralization process in Puntland, PDRC conducted a mapping exercise for the second phase of the PoP program with the objective of highlighting the major challenges, opportunities and focus themes for future interventions in support of decentralization. From May to June of 2014, the mapping exercise consisted of an in-depth desk review followed by FGDs with decentralization experts and representatives from the different regions of Puntland. This was followed by a more comprehensive qualitative research exercise covering 11 out of 43 districts in Puntland conducted throughout September and November 2014. The districts were selected according to the categories A, B and C, and geographical and regional balance: 51 individual interviews were held along with 13 FGDs gathering a total of 90 people.

4.2 Decentralization Milestones

Transfer of power from the central authority to local administrations through the establishment of local councils is enshrined in the 1998 Constitution of Puntland and other legal and policy frameworks, such as the Local Council Law and the recently adopted Puntland Decentralization Policy. In spite of these positive developments, including the formation of district councils, the process is still impeded by significant difficulties. The challenges facing district councils are similar regardless of the district's category. Smaller districts in categories B and C are at a disadvantage compared to larger districts in category A due to their comparatively lower capacity to overcome these challenges.

The Government of Puntland has mandated the Ministry of Interior, Local Government and Rural Development to support decentralization and local governance in Puntland. The key decentralization priorities for the current Puntland administration (2014-2016) include governance, security, justice, and economic foundations, including improved revenue collection and public financial management. According to the document outlining the Government of Puntland's priorities for the period 2014-2016, the priority in decentralization is to "... strengthen local authority and deliver decentralized services by promoting good governance principles and empowering local communities to constructively monitor deci-

sion-making at the local level.”

When assessing the progress of decentralization in Puntland, and planning how to best support this process, it is important to understand why decentralization has not yet been fully implemented and why the fiscal, administrative and political powers have not yet devolved effectively to the local governments. The following are some of the most important achievements and setbacks in the decentralization process:

- Local Council Law No. 7 was passed by Parliament and endorsed by the President of Puntland on 23 September 2003. The law activates the constitutional provisions and provides the primary framework guiding the work of local governments in Puntland. The two main challenges that the law faces are its implementation and legal interpretation among local governments and the public. There is also a need to harmonize existing laws on local governance and decentralized service delivery in order to fill gaps and address challenges.
 - Two years after the Local Council Law was passed, the process of establishing local councils started. At that time, Puntland had 37 official districts. The Ministry of Interior established 25 district councils while 12 districts had only executive committees. In 2010, of the 25 established district councils, only one district council remained functional, while 24 had been dissolved or were deemed non-functional.
 - Currently, Puntland has 43 districts, 23 of
- which have local councils. Meanwhile, 20 out of the 43 districts have executive committees proposed by the Ministry of Interior and nominated by the president. The executive committee comprises a mayor, a deputy mayor and a district secretary.
 - Despite the public’s dissatisfaction with the aborted local council elections in 2013, it was a lesson learned in terms of how and what was needed before the next attempt at holding local elections. The new Puntland government led by President Gaas, has promised to accelerate the democratization process in Puntland, this includes pushing forward with local council elections.
 - A champion’s office under the leadership of the Vice-President of Puntland was established in 2013 to lead the decentralization process. The office coordinates efforts of the Inter-Ministerial Committee of Local Government and plays an active role in support of decentralization in Puntland.
 - The decentralization policy for Puntland was approved on 10 July 2014. It is now being disseminated to stakeholders before the implementation starts.
 - Some ministries, with support of the UN Joint Programme on Local Governance (JPLG), had piloted the decentralization of service delivery including health, education, environment and water in several districts belonging to categories A and B. Given the low capacity of local governments, service delivery and most local government responsibilities remain the responsibility of the central government of Puntland with support from the private sector, NGOs and

4.3 Challenges to Decentralization in Puntland

the international community. The majority of districts in Puntland are not yet equipped with the necessary human or financial resources to assume greater responsibility; and

the Government of Puntland does not have the capacity to provide the support necessary to speed up the process. Development partners such as JPLG are providing support to the de-

centralization process – particularly for grade A and B districts in Puntland, strengthening the capacity of those districts to assume greater responsibilities. Yet, the targeted support by JPLG to certain districts has also contributed towards creating a gap between JPLG-districts and non-JPLG districts – a gap which needs to be bridged to reduce tensions and improve service delivery equitably across all districts. Below are the challenges that need to be addressed in order for local governments to assume greater responsibilities as part of the decentralization process.

4.3.1 Lack of Institutional Capacity (administrative, fiscal and human)

The core challenges identified in the local government institutions include lack of administrative and fiscal transfer capacity, incomplete local government departments without the necessary legal provisions, offices and equipment, or experienced staff.

Restructuring local government departments for better efficiency, establishing administrative legal procedures at district level and developing district authorities fiscally and administratively are all required to improve the capacity of local governments. Technical assistance in the form of advice, training, supervision and apprenticeship will help improve efficiency and effectiveness, as well as strengthen local governments' capacity to assume their legally-constituted responsibilities of delivering services to the community.

Administrative Capacity

Puntland has transferred responsibilities for services, planning, management, and allocation of resources to municipalities that elect their own mayor and councils. While some powers have been devolved, the capacity to successfully administer these responsibilities remains

insufficient to fulfill these tasks at the local government level.

In spite of the institutional challenges outlined above, the districts supported by JPLG have acquired the capacity to assume many of the responsibilities assigned to them by the applicable legal frameworks, but there are concerns that certain ministries at the state level are reluctant to transfer their responsibilities to the district level.

“You find that the services that used to be delivered by the district administration are instead being delivered by the state government. In most districts, and in particular the JPLG supported districts, the legal frameworks, local councils with committees, the structures, and the district plans are functional, I agree that the district’s capacity depends on its category and the available infrastructures but I do believe that grade A and B districts have the capacity to perform their duties.” – Awil Mohamoud, consultant, Gardo District

Fiscal Capacity

Most districts have not been allocated the needed financial resources to provide the necessary basic services, or attract sufficient and competent staff. The systems for inter-governmental transfers from the state level to the local level lack efficiency, and consist of monthly fiscal transfers towards development and security to the four major districts Bossaso, Galkayo, Gardo and Garowe. While local governments can rely on this initial transfer, many smaller districts see little of this revenue. With little revenue generating capacity, these districts face severe challenges when trying to meet their responsibilities or when responding to emergencies. Their informal tax and other revenue collection systems remain inadequate, partly because the public is generally averse to contributing to taxes while not receiving the

expected level of service. The recently adopted decentralization policy of Puntland stipulates: “Fiscal decentralization provides the framework for the allocation of financial resources to local government and includes the fiscal relationship between the central and local governments” (Decentralization policy, p. 23).

It is clear that the fiscal relationship between the state and local levels of government needs to be improved and that the local governments need to improve their independent, local revenue collection capacity. This will, in turn, positively impact public recognition for the legitimacy of the local government and tax compliance among them.

Human Resource Capacity

Articles 19 to 27 of the Local Council Law and articles 125 to 127 of the Puntland Constitution define the roles and responsibilities of local government, as well as local councils. Due to a generally low level of public understanding of the regulations that guide the appointment of local councils, the process is often influenced by clan power-sharing agreements that contradict and violate local council selection processes articulated in the local council law. Local council and municipality staff need capacity-building to successfully carry out their duties and responsibilities in accordance with the legal framework.

Another challenge is that clan representatives and elders are not inclined to select candidates based on their knowledge and experience of local governance, but rather on their clan affiliation or personal connections. In the local councils, it is therefore possible to find university graduates, as well as people with only primary school education and people who are illiterate. It is difficult, in turn, to facilitate cooperation among people from such diverse educational and professional backgrounds.

“When we employ people with capability and knowledge we can expect good work, but now look at the human resource we have!”- Ahmed Deeq, journalist, Dhahar

The difficulty of finding qualified individuals to work for local governments is a key challenge to the emergence of an effective decentralized system of governance in Puntland. Providing capacity strengthening trainings for existing district councils and induction trainings for newly-established ones, combined with more in-depth follow-up trainings for councilors, is of key importance to the implementation of the decentralization policy in Puntland.

“The challenge in Puntland is that the councils do not have the capacity to make enforceable decisions. If for example, the council finds me incapable of fulfilling my leadership responsibilities in the district, then, the councils should be able to impeach me without fear of repercussions.”- Yacquub Mahamed, Deputy Mayor of Galkayo

4.3.2 Low Citizen Participation

“We the mayors should start transferring responsibilities to other members of the district administration including the secretary, district council departments, village committees and so on, but if we adopt everything like the central government does, good governance may become impossible to achieve in Puntland. In Galkayo the current council’s strategy of participation is to accept that the community has the ownership of clarifying what is to be done, and the administration facilitates this.” - Yacquub Mahamed, Deputy Mayor of Galkayo

Citizen empowerment and participation are key elements of decentralization and local gov-

ernance. Decentralization brings the government closer to the people by transferring power to local authorities that are better placed to address the challenges faced by local communities. In most regions and districts of Puntland covered in the mapping exercise, the community is not able to effectively influence the decisions of their government which undermines the effectiveness and legitimacy of the local governments. It is important to include the empowerment of all citizens in efforts to build and strengthen local governments. This could bring forth democratic institutions and development.

To gauge citizen participation, the mapping exercise asked respondents representing the public, “Do you participate in local council decisions in your district? How? If not, why not?” Most of the responses suggested that participation existed largely in informal ways, for instance in emergencies, influential community people – including elders, businesses and village committees – convened to address the situation. Although structured participation is largely absent, districts with local councils manage to organize the district into villages and established village committees in both urban and rural settings.

The interaction between local governments and civil society is key to pressuring the government to support the decentralization process. Civil society plays an important role in the community and has provided essential contributions to development in Puntland. Despite these contributions, there is still a lack of understanding among local governments and civil society actors on their specific roles, responsibilities and how they could complement each other.

“For effective decentralization to take place, there is a need for mass education and sensitization that could enable people to grasp the meaning of governance. Next there is a

need to equip local officials with the tools for delivering the required public services. If a governance structure is established lacking a police component, logistics, and the limited capacities and collaboration of the available government institutions, in a situation where wrongdoers cannot be referred to court, or to custodial facilities, I do not think there can be any governance without the complete and collaborative functioning of all governmental institutions. That is the only viable path for decentralization.” – Hassan Farah, Mayor of Galdogob

With focus on how public participation in local decision-making processes can be improved, the mapping provided the following insights:

- Clan-based selection of local council members contributes to less citizen participation and lack of accountability in Puntland.

“A person selected on a clan basis (into public office) cannot be fair because of allegiance to the elder and his/her clan.” – Hawo Yusuf, Women’s Activist, Galkayo

- Limited availability of public spaces has had a negative effect on public participation in decision-making processes. The availability of such public space is important for encouraging cooperation between the local councils and the public, and strengthening the influence of locally-owned decision-making processes. The principle of public participation in local governance is emphasized in the Puntland Decentralization Policy: “Ensuring that village councils are engaged in prioritization and planning of development activities in their own area, and these are forwarded to the council for possible inclusion in the overall district plan and publishing district council plans and presenting these to the citizens through a public hearing process.”
- The influence of clan in politics means that

men tend to be over-represented in political offices. Despite marginal improvements in youth representation in local government, women and minority groups remain significantly under-represented. Women, youth and marginalized groups in Somali community have limited opportunities to serve their communities in public life. Their political participation is hindered by cultural and institutional barriers, presenting them with few opportunities to serve in political positions at the local, state and national levels in Puntland. Addressing this imbalance remains pivotal to the legitimacy of governance on the local level.

“Until we determine democratic elections, women and minority groups cannot obtain their political rights” – Hawo Yusuf, women activist, Galkayo.

- As a consequence of the legacy of the unitary system of governance in Somalia and the ensuing civil war, there is a lack of understanding of democratic principles and the concept of decentralization. Broad civic education campaigns will be necessary to address this need to improve public understanding.

“Other than starting a new system with a policy, the public should receive strong awareness campaigns. We heard that the decentralization policy was adopted but we observed that public understanding of what this means is missing.” – Mohamed Mahad, Rector of Bossaso University

4.3.3 Limited Financial Resources

“Labo qaawani isma qaado - Two destitute persons do not help each other”

In addition to receiving internal transfers from the central government, local governments are

also mandated to collect revenue from several other sources, including taxes (property tax, sales and gross receipt tax, individual income tax, etc.), and other revenues such as public contribution, contributions from Diaspora communities and support from the international community.

The objective of the decentralization process is to transfer functions and resources to local governance. Yet, in Puntland, the revenue base at the central level is low to begin with – limited to custom duties from Bossaso port and Galkayo airport, which cannot cover the basic ordinary expenditure of administration. At the local level, most governments still face significant challenges related to revenue generation. Thus, it goes without saying that there is a need for budgetary reform to increase revenue generating power at both central and local levels.

The current administration emphasizes revenue and public financial management reforms as indicated in the 2014-2016 priorities:

“The ability to raise, prioritize, and manage resources and deliver services is critical in Puntland. Therefore, the state will lead the setting of frameworks that coordinate equitable service delivery and resource management such as building a transparent system of public financial management” (Puntland priorities 2014 – 2016).

The government is committed to identifying challenges faced by local governments in collecting revenues. As part of the mapping exercise, respondents were asked how local governments’ resources could be increased through tax collection. The following are the identified areas where revenue collection can be improved.

Natural resource utilization

“We are an impoverished people living in a rich country, we need resources and educated people to help us benefit from our natural resources.” – President Abdiweli Gaas

Most of the districts in Puntland are rich in natural resources. The main sources of livelihood are currently pastoralism and fisheries – the latter which is potentially very lucrative, but not adequately supported due to the limited capacity of coastal districts in Puntland. Of all the coastal districts, only Bossaso district has a small commercial port, which remains the biggest source of government revenue in Puntland. Developing the fishing capacity of Puntland holds great potential for increased income generation. Although the presence of maritime pirates in Puntland territory have decreased, as mentioned previously, illegal fishing in Puntland’s waters remains a key challenge.

“There would be no begging, and we would not have had to stretch out our palms to beg, had we managed to exploit our vast natural resources. The coastline has been abandoned; everyone is in the mainland pursuing the little left in towns by the tarmac highways. If we only could rear our livestock and practice our fisheries, we would become a destination for global economic migration, but now the world is tired of our begging and so are our stretched out palms.” – Yasin Abdi Samed, Elder, Galkayo

The mapping also established that the two other key resources of Puntland, livestock and agriculture also remain underdeveloped, and would benefit from income generation in Puntland both at the national and local levels.

4.3.4 Revenue Generation Capacities

Collecting revenues requires human resources

and financial infrastructure. The low administrative capacity of most local governments in Puntland is a serious impediment to their capacity to collect revenues from accessible sources. In addition to the institutional challenges, there is also a gap between local governments and the public based on mistrust.

“Revenues are collected through government power... it can be a challenge if the taxpayers have not received local government budgets. Accountability and transparency is important for revenue but still there should be government power for those who refuse to pay taxes.” – Hassan Farah, Mayor of Galdogob

In most districts, the district council lacks the tools and knowledge to properly fulfill its responsibilities – feeding popular mistrust that negatively affects the public’s willingness to contribute to taxes, further widening the gap between local governments and their constituents. A two-pronged approach focusing on building the capability of local governments to collect taxes and deliver services, as well as improving the relationship between local governments and the public would contribute towards improved revenue collection.

“When revenue is something in a person’s pocket, you need wisdom, cunning, and force to collect it. The fining of tax defaulters and collection of other fines, for instance littering is vital source of revenue. To generate it, you need force not persuasion; people should fear the laws, policies and the consequence of not paying tax; however, there has to be a symbol of fear.” – Mohamed Said Issa, Mayor of Gardo

4.3.5 Transparency and Accountability

Local government’s lack of accountability is a key factor that affects the public’s willingness

to pay taxes to the local government. The mapping exercise asked respondents, “How can we increase accountability of local councils to the people?” Most responses indicated that the key solution would be improving citizen access to information, which would, in turn, ameliorate council-constituent relations – increasing confidence in and public pressure on ensuring the accountability of local governments. Targeted interventions are necessary to increase the public’s understanding of their rights and responsibilities, as well as local governments’ responsibilities towards the communities.

Transparency in local government budgeting would certainly contribute to enhanced trust, and indicate the local governments’ efficient management of resources and revenues, and to increase the opportunities for public participation in decision-making at the local level.

4.3.6 Public Service Delivery

When the public pays taxes and other fees, they expect the government to provide services. Taxpaying citizens want to see something in return for their money, like clean streets, support in establishing businesses, healthcare, education and clean water. Most of these services are currently provided by the private sector or non-governmental organizations in Puntland, not by the government. As a result, there is little motivation for constituents to pay taxes. Major services provided by local governments are mainly sanitation, security, and in some districts land management. Many respondents indicated that if their local governments provided more services, their willingness to pay taxes would increase.

“The government has to initiate necessary steps for public indoctrination along with a tangible display of service delivery to the public. The government needs to visit schools, provide education to those who

cannot afford it and also to build roads; only then will the public be motivated to participate and contribute to the national revenue. This will generate extra revenue leading to better service delivery thus improving the standards of” – Hawo Yusuf, women activist, Galkayo

4.3.7 Multiplication of Districts: Implications and Possible Consequences

When Puntland was established, it consisted of 21 administrative districts in five regions. Today that number has risen to 43 districts in nine regions. This increase in the number of district has had a significant impact on communities, district development, and economy and has led to questions of efficiency.

“This place was allocated the status of a region before it even attained the status of district in Puntland. The place does not even have a jail or prison for holding criminals but Puntland went ahead and named district. Now they are giving us directives for establishing council and elect mayor, how should we do it?” – Jasin Jama, Businessman, Dhahar

The boundaries of Puntland’s new districts have not been properly demarcated. The new districts have been established mainly based on clan distribution, driven by the government to carve out local pockets of support. The competition for jurisdiction between neighboring authorities has fuelled clan-based disputes in some districts. The government has not been able to manage this new development effectively although there have been attempts to curtail the proliferation of districts by establishing eligibility criteria that focuses on the viability of the proposed entity.

“Due to the growing progress towards democratic elections in Puntland, clans are rushing to establish their own constituencies. If

they do not do so, they believe they will miss out on political representation.” – Bile Qabowsade, politician, Bossaso

Instead of encouraging the proliferation of clan-based districts, the government of Puntland and other relevant stakeholders should focus on developing already existing districts to support the cultivation of local democracy.

The mapping exercise indicated that it was crucial for the government to establish clear criteria for district formation; and that districts should be given different reform agendas dependent on the political, social and economic profile of the district. For instance, Iskushuban district of Bari region was one of the largest districts in Somalia. Nowadays, Iskushuban has

The implications of ambiguous district boundaries in Puntland

(A Case study of Bargaal and Gumbah districts)

Bargal and Gumbah districts are both under the jurisdiction of Guardafui region – the ninth newly formed region in Puntland State. Guardafui is a former constituency of Bari region. Both President Adde Muse and President Faroole granted administrative autonomy to the new districts. Yet, the ambiguous district boundaries resulted in heightened competition between the two districts authorities, particularly in Ras Bina – a viable tax-base area for revenue from fisheries, located 7 km from Bargal and 52 km from Gumbah. While Ras Bina is geographically closer to Bargaal, the clans that inhabit Ras Bina are closer to those in Gumbah district. This presented a jurisdictional dilemma resulting in clan skirmishes over tax collection. The competition for control of Ras

Bina claimed two lives, and multiple casualties. In addition to causing the suspension of tax collection in the area, the clashes have divided the once unified clans and have initiated a cycle of revenge killings.

been divided into six districts (Bargal, Gumbah, Ufayn, Armo, Rako and Iskushuban). None of these districts have an officially known area of jurisdiction, thus undermining their viability as functioning authorities, as well as increasing the risk for conflict between neighboring communities over borders.

4.3.8 Central and Local Authorities Relations

Although the current government has started outreach visits, many people in the more remote parts of Puntland still criticize what they perceive as the government’s indifferent approach to supporting local governance in the peripheral regions. Public knowledge about the respective roles of the state and local governments is limited. Similarly, the capacity of local councils to represent and build the community capacity remains insufficient. The active support of the state government to the district level is fundamental in order to better define the roles of central versus local governments and to enable local governments to assume their legally-stipulated responsibilities.

For instance, the Ministry of Interior should support budgetary planning and allocation, the drafting and implementation of local regulations, and general development of districts. The Ministry of Interior is also expected to guide and support local councils, to oversee and coach them in their new roles in order to build their capacity. However, the government

has proven unable to provide such support. For example, during the mapping exercise, PDRC met with a local council (which was established four months ahead of the PoP II mapping) that was yet to receive vital information such as the Local Council Law and the Puntland Decentralization Policy.

“Why is it that they established us and abandoned us? The councils were expecting intergovernmental transfer, capacity building, coaching, and so on from the Ministry of Interior.” – Hasan Farah, councilor, Badhan

The uncoordinated manner in which decentralization is pursued in Puntland is a major challenge affecting the relationship between the state and local governments. Efforts by different stakeholders, such as the central government, international agencies and non-governmental organizations, need to be coordinated to enhance sustainability and impact.

The district authorities are not informed by aid coordination in Puntland. According to the stakeholders, international and local organizations collaborate only with the line ministries, who coordinate interventions, and not directly with the districts which can identify the basic needs of their respective districts and villages. A recommendation suggests that coordination should begin from local to the central levels of government.

The Ministry of Interior is responsible for harmonizing the decentralization system and enforcing policy at state and local levels, in coordination with the Vice President (as the champion of decentralization). However, the limited coordination between these two, as well as with local government, has caused program-poor development, duplication of efforts, inequity of resource allocation and the lack of better implementation strategies and ownership.

4.4 Exploring Decentralization Prospects in Puntland

During PoP Phase II, progress was noted, and key opportunities were highlighted by participants that demonstrate good foundations for moving ahead with implementing decentralization:

Improved popular understanding: The public’s understanding of decentralization has improved since the creation of Puntland State in 1998. While the local council selection processes were among one of the major challenges identified during the first phase of PoP, the most recent mapping exercise saw positive changes in terms of local ownership of the process. Yet, participants still noted continued frustration with inadequate resource allocation or service delivery.

Renewed government commitment to dual-track democratization and decentralization processes: The current Puntland administration has pledged to reform and accelerate the decentralization process. This has been demonstrated, at least in part, by appointing the Vice President as the champion of decentralization. Promoting both democratization and decentralization processes in a comprehensive and interlinked manner will be key to improving effectiveness and efficiency of democratically-elected local governments.

Adopted legal frameworks: Following the adoption of essential laws and policies, such as the Local Council Law and the Puntland Decentralization Policy, there is a need to shift the focus toward implementation and harmonization. An

important element of the implementation is to raise awareness among stakeholders and members of the public, especially on the benefits of implementing decentralization.

Increasingly qualified human resource capacity:

The number of qualified candidates for positions within the local government is promising given the increase in university graduates, with universities providing an important institutional platform for launching civic education. These efforts could be streamlined with the media for mass outreach. “Remember a time when literate were every few, today we have thousands of young educated people returning with

experiences from over the world. We need to utilize the human capital they present us. They are the biggest hope we have.” – Bile Qabowsade, politician, Bossaso

Establishment of the Association of Local Government Authorities of Puntland State (ALGAPL): ALGAPL was established in 2012 and reviewed in 2013. It provides a platform for local governments to interact with each other, coordinate efforts and to speak with one voice. While its membership only consists of the districts in which JPLG is currently working, the membership base is expected to widen to also include other districts.

4.5 Key Entry Points for Decentralization in Puntland

On 4 February 2015, the decentralization pillar of PDRC presented the findings of the mapping exercise at the second PSM in Garowe. The meeting aimed to discuss, validate and prioritize the outcomes of the mapping exercise. Below is the list of the primary challenges, identified by participants and validated at the PSM meeting, as hindering Puntland’s decentralization process:

1. Poor local government institutional capacity (including administrative, fiscal and human resource);
2. Low public participation;
3. Limited financial resources;
4. Proliferation of districts and lack of clear border demarcation;
5. Loose intergovernmental relations between central and local government.

Following the PSM, PDRC carried out consultations with relevant government institutions and other decentralization actors to prioritize these challenges. This exercise was intended to guide further intervention to support the de-

centralization process in Puntland. The findings are below, and expand upon results from the mapping exercise.

4.5.1 Building Local Government Capacities

Despite the multi-dimensional challenges that local governments face in Puntland, there are numerous initiatives currently underway to strengthen local governments to fulfill their mandates. The Ministry of Interior is in the process of bolstering the internal and regulatory systems of local governments (including for local government employment). A fiscal decentralization strategy and municipal finance policy are also currently being drafted. Further discussions are underway on forming a local government training institute, harmonizing existing legal and policy frameworks and rolling out JPLG interventions in three more districts namely Burtinle, Galdogob and Qandala, thus raising the number of participating districts to ten.

According to officials, the Ministry of Interior – in conjunction with the Vice-President’s office (as the champion of decentralization) – will carry out grassroots level awareness-raising to disseminate the decentralization policy, to ensure the optimal and timely implementation of the decentralization reform agenda. According to the roadmap, Ministry of Interior and sector ministries will also advise the prevailing local development fund and service delivery models to enable JPLG participating districts to deliver basic services to their communities. MOI will also pursue a comprehensive capacity enhancement strategy to address capacity gaps within local governments with a special focus on those districts with established local councils.

PDRC has provided capacity-building programs by delivery training on good governance, public participation, and education on laws and policies to district council and municipal staff in Puntland. In 2014 alone, PDRC trained seven of the newly-established local councils with plans to expand similar trainings in other districts. Key questions going forward regard what needs to be done to practically implement the decentralization policy within the existing legal framework to achieve Puntland’s vision towards more effective decentralized governance? Furthermore, how can the government along with civil society actors such as PDRC support the capacity-building efforts of local councils, and what level of coordination should occur?

4.5.2 Fostering Public Participation in Local Affairs

Efforts are currently underway to increase public participation in issue of local importance. According to plans, the Ministry of Interior will undertake community engagement and consultation processes in Burtinle, Galdogob and Qandala and will also launch a campaign to car-

ry out the recently approved decentralization policy. The Ministry of Interior plans to solidify public participation in local decision-making and development by adopting the existing public engagement guideline and pertinent tools to ensure that communities are involved in planning, budgeting and prioritization processes at local level. With the support of UNICEF, the Ministry of Interior has introduced a new model “community score cards” as part of an overall local government barometer meant to gauge public perception and satisfaction towards local government performance and delivery in Puntland. The model will be tested in a number of JPLG participating districts.

PDRC, through the decentralization pillar and the the Mobile Audio Visual Unit is contributing to promoting community participation through forums, debates and film screenings to foster good relations between community and councils mainly in the non-JPLG districts, bringing some fruits of decentralization to those districts currently not benefitting from larger-scale capacity building programs.

A key aspect to be addressed, in conjunction with promoting public participation, is what mechanisms should be adopted to enable women, youth and marginalized groups to actively participate in decision-making processes at local government level.

4.5.3 Addressing Proliferation of Districts

The Puntland government commissioned a baseline survey in 2013 to assess viability of districts, as well as more generally, population density and revenue potential. Despite the ever-growing concern of the population towards the multiplication of districts, progress towards addressing these issues has been slow. Neither the assessment nor the decentralization policy roadmap (that clearly stipulates the formation of boundary demarcation commission by March

2014), were acted upon due to the absence of expertise and funding. The Ministry of Interior has recently submitted a proposal to the Somalia Stability Fund (SSF) to help support Puntland government in border demarcation. Yet, with the advent of a federal electoral and boundary commission in Mogadishu (which Puntland denounced as unconstitutional), it is unlikely that the international community will back such a proposal. To find solutions to district demarcation challenges, the below questions must be carefully considered:

- What rules and regulations does the government need to abide by in the nomination of a new district or region?
- Is it too late for the government to review the criteria on which current districts are based, with the aim of addressing the negative implications of undefined/disputed district borders and of the proliferation of districts?

4.5.4 Enhancing Local Revenue Generating Capacities

The Ministry of Interior, in conjunction with the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), has recently embraced a local revenue mobilization initiative to support two districts in Puntland with the aim to build district capacities in revenue generation and administration. With the support of JPLG, the Ministry of Interior is also formulating a municipal finance policy meant to improve public finance management at district level. The establishment of Geographic Information System (GIS) and Billing Information System (BIM) and the introduction of business licensing process in various districts of Puntland have also yielded fruit with districts generating more revenues. Equally, the Ministry of Finance is using its intergovernmental fiscal transfer systems to boost poorly-performing districts and to invest in community priorities in a number of

districts. The following are some key questions that must be considered when addressing limited financial resources:

- What revenue frameworks are required to strengthen local government income generation capacities to insure better utilization of the local resources while securing inter-governmental transfer?
- How can the various revenue activities be better regulated at local, state and federal levels?

4.5.5 Reinforcing Inter-Governmental Linkages

The establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Decentralization in 2009 and the nomination of the Vice President as the champion for all decentralization reforms and processes in 2012 were meant to strengthen the cooperation, coordination and information-sharing between central and local governments. The formation of ALGAPL in 2013 was intended to further strengthen the relationship, cooperation and exchange between local governments, as well as to play a key role in advocacy and oversight on local government issues. In addition, the Ministry of Interior intends to follow up with the outcomes of the recently-held decentralization forum – where all governors, mayors and municipal secretaries participated – and will convene periodic forums for decentralization actors to ensure effective linkage of cooperation, knowledge and information sharing. This key question must be considered when addressing intergovernmental relations:

- In addition to the existing efforts undertaken by the different stakeholders for local and central government coordination, what other efforts can contribute to more effective cooperation?

Category	Quantity	Percentage
Business	18	12.76
Councillors	22	15.6
Elders	12	8.5
Mayor	11	8
Media	3	2.12
Professional	8	5.6
V. Committees	7	5
Women	17	12
Youth	12	8.5
NGO	1	0.7
Minority	3	2.12
District Authority	15	10.6
Intellectuals	12	8.5
Total	141	100

Table 5: Participants disaggregated by group

5 Conclusion

PDRC's activities related to the thematic areas of the Pillars of Peace program have informed trainings for local councils, community-based reconciliation initiatives, and town-hall style meetings, providing key platforms for dialogue and necessary capacity-building support. However, following the completion of the mapping and validation phase of PoP II, as elaborated in the preceding note, PDRC will enter a new phase of implementation dedicated to addressing specific challenges identified.

PDRC will draw on the inputs of stakeholders – both the problems they perceived and the solutions they proposed – to arrive at “entry points” for action. In doing so, it will work integrally with steering committees comprised of influential individuals with particular expertise related to the three pillar themes. These decision-makers, opinion-shapers, change agents, and experts in their fields will help guide implementation and ensure buy-in for the solutions pursued.

The mapping exercise and the subsequent validation of research carried out at the PSM indicate that there are serious and unrelenting challenges to peace and stability in Puntland. These problems vary in nature, extent, and substance and will require careful attention when searching for lasting solutions. In relation to security and rule of law, participants of the PSM found the weak capacity of security and ju-

dicial organs, uncontrolled borders and disputed territories, poor public and police relations, terrorism, illegal fishing, and resource-based clan conflicts as particularly pressing issues that require immediate attention from international and domestic actors. However, the mapping exercise also found cause for optimism – including ongoing government security and judicial reform processes, commitment from the international community to support these endeavors, mounting public vigilance and opposition against extremism and sea piracy, and an increasing aversion towards weapons stockpiles. Additionally, it is apparent that traditional and religious leaders play an important role in combating piracy and terrorism and in maintaining peace, and there is a potential to build on this.

PDRC's research found that the majority of participants see security and rule of law as the key sectors for bringing greater stabilization and progress. The participants in the mapping exercise repeatedly emphasized the need for a secure and conducive environment as the foundation for social, economic and political development. Therefore, improving security and stability and ensuring the prevalence of rule of law are of utmost importance for democratization and decentralization processes as a whole.

The mapping exercise also revealed a number

of overlapping challenges to Puntland's political transformation at the local and state levels. Inadequate institutional capacity and continued reliance on clan politics hamper decentralization efforts and the institutionalization of a fully democratic system of governance in Puntland. In addition, low public awareness and understanding of democratization and electoral processes, the lack of clear boundaries between Puntland's districts and regions, the absence of voter identification and registration mechanisms, and the absence of a Constitutional Court provide further obstacles to the full realization of the democratic process. Yet, such slow progress has further accelerated public demand for pushing ahead with the democratization process. Finally, the new administration has expressed support for a resumption of the democratization process, and should it relaunch this process in earnest very soon, there is still sufficient time to make strides before President Gaas' term in office ends. Lessons learned from the suspension of the 2013 local council elections should be applied to future democratization efforts.

Key challenges related to decentralization include: poor institutional capacities (related to the administrative, fiscal, and human capacity of local government); low public participation; limited financial resources; multiplication of

districts and lack of border demarcation; and insufficient coordination between central and local authorities. At the same time, there are many trends that bode well for increased institutionalization and capacity of decentralized governance structures. As in the case of democratization at the state level, one very crucial trend is ever-greater public ownership of, and confidence in, the decentralization process. Others include the establishment of the office of the Vice-President (as the champion of decentralization), the adoption of legal frameworks for decentralization, and a rise in the number of qualified candidates to take on local government positions.

It is clear that there must be concerted efforts at all levels to overcome the many challenges that Puntland still faces in advancing security and social reconciliation, decentralization, and democratization in Puntland, as well as to build on positive trends that are also apparent. It will be crucial for communities, civil society, government at all levels, and the international community to work together to achieve this. While much work remains, PDRC's research reveals progress and ongoing commitment (from government as well as local communities) to achieving these goals – positive indications that leave Puntland in good stead to push ahead with these reforms.

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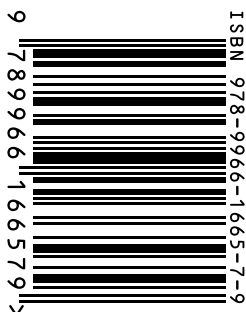
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