

Post-Conflict Peace Building in the Horn of Africa

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Presentation

Education and Peace-building: The Contribution of the UN in Somalia

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What young people in Somalia want

An opinion poll conducted among Somali children and young people tells us that two-thirds of the children believe that elections are a 'very effective' means to improve the state of things in the country. Though none of the children had ever themselves experienced an election, it is notable that the majority supported a democratic electoral process.

And here is an extraordinary statistic: over 50% of the Somali population is under 18 years of age.

That figure alone says much about where we should be looking in Somalia for ideas, future development and investment opportunities.

In the UNICEF-supported youth poll conducted in May 2006¹, Somali young people listed education among the top issues about which they are most concerned: the need for more schools and an improvement in educational standards.

In a country that has not known peace, nor had a stable government for over 16 years, these young people cited among their hopes for the future, good governance, less delinquency and violence, better education, a better economic situation, and less poverty.

Education was also identified as the top priority in a 2006 survey of 7000 people conducted by the UN and stakeholders as part of the Somalia Joint Needs Assessment.

¹ The youth poll was initiated by UNICEF in partnership with the Africa Child Policy Forum. The first of its kind in Somalia, the poll was conducted in May 2006 and sampled 531 children (286 boys and 245 girls) aged between 9 and 17 years old in four key urban and rural locations (Merca, Beletweyne, Bossaso and Hargeisa).

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Therefore, to fulfill the rights of young people and to meet the aspirations of the majority of Somalis, where better to start than by supporting an education system that contributes to the peace-building process?

| The power of education – to divide or unite

Schools (whether formal or non-formal) are a powerful socializing force to transmit values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. In communities, schools are often the focus of activities and participation; and teachers are community leaders as well as educators.

In this regard, every education system has the potential either to exacerbate or to mitigate the conditions that contribute to violent conflicts. It can segregate and divide children or unite and promote 'civic citizens.'

As a source of power and income in societies, education can create access to jobs and political participation. Conversely, inequalities in access to education can lead to inequities in income, employment, nutrition, health and political position. These inequalities, in themselves can be a source of violent conflict.

In a country divided, this puts the onus on its educational system to promote peace and reconciliation.

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| Education's role in peace-building

| Education is fundamental to peace-building.

1. It has the capacity to deliver knowledge on human rights, gender issues, to build skills in communication, problem-solving, teamwork and cooperation; and to encourage mutual respect.
2. No other intervention demonstrates, for each and every family, that there is added value in having a government in place: it can bring children into school.
3. Education has a comparative advantage among the social services, in that it also demonstrates quick impact and value for money. It is also an entry point to improve service delivery and local governance.
4. During the recent years of chaos in Somalia, community-driven and community-based development, supported by the Diaspora, has been the single most important instrument to increase school enrolment.
5. At the same time, community-driven development and education service delivery can demonstrate a turn around in the reconstruction and peace-building process: building peace 'from the bottom up'.

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| The Peace School in Galkayo

In North-East Somalia (in the semi-autonomous state of 'Puntland') UNICEF is interacting with communities, and demonstrating that this 'bottom up' principle works.

After seventeen years of inter-clan and political enmity between communities of the north and south of Galkayo, the situation is changing as a result of a 'Peace School'.

Starting in September 2007, the Galkayo Peace School will hold the key to future reconciliation. It will draw its students, teachers and administrative body (the Community Education Committee) from rival areas in equal measure: 50% from the north and 50% from the south.

Together the communities of north and south have acquired land, provided labour and construction materials and will contribute stipends for the teachers for a school that will no longer reinforce the notions of 'them' and 'us.'

UNICEF, with donor support, will contribute a teacher training, textbooks and teaching and recreational materials all centred on an enhanced primary school curriculum which includes peace education and life skills.

The school will be complemented with water and sanitation facilities, a clinic and health education programme, a feeding centre and a community hall.

By working with the community to develop an integrated package of education and social services, the Galkayo Peace School is strengthening a weakened social system, encouraging social reconciliation and preventing conflict.

| Education in a fragile state

Schools and education systems in fragile states are debilitated by conflict, leaving them weakened, damaged, and under-resourced just when communities, governments and international agencies expect them to play a role in simultaneously rebuilding and transforming themselves and the societies they serve.

However, when Somalia - for years a neglected country - suddenly reappeared as a priority on the international agenda (for example, in the Security Council and the media) it was as in the context of the 'war on terror' and an 'Islamist takeover.' Security and governance were the focus of attention. There was very little news on social service issues and education.

Even today, in the present reconstruction and state rebuilding process, education is considered an 'add on': something which will come when the reconciliation process is on track and when government institutions are in place.

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But state-building and reconstruction can *only* occur when the foundations are secure – and education is a *critical* foundation.

| How the UN is supporting education

As a result of 16 years without government and central education institutions and years of poor education provision, education indicators are extremely low in Somalia – among the lowest in the world!

Somalia still has a school enrolment rate of only 28%.² Only about 14% of primary school teachers are female.

Enrolment rates of children from nomadic communities are worse. It is estimated that less than 1% of children from nomadic families have access to formal education.

Although Somali authorities, the UN and NGOs have given increased attention to education in recent years, improvements have been small but it is important also that as a result of this investment an additional 200,000 children came to school in the last 4 years. And there is a well-documented “peace dividend” in Somaliland and Puntland. When authorities started paying salaries to a small number of teachers, enrolments rates rose to 40% in Somaliland and 36% in Puntland. In South Central Somalia enrolment rates remained at 22%.

All of this does not take away the enormous challenges facing education in Somalia. Aside from low enrolment, issues still to be addressed include the quality of education, the qualification of teachers and the level of government funding.

No matter what the political progress in Somalia, it is unlikely that the country will achieve the international education targets established in the Millennium Development Goals

For out-of-school youth, UNICEF continues to support engagement and capacity building for youth groups and networks. Leadership training has facilitated young people’s participation in their communities and improved their relationships.

The development of youth policies in Puntland and Somaliland have also allowed them to take an active role in their communities, encouraging them to work with adults for a safe, healthy and productive future and preparing them for responsible adulthood.

For the UN, education is a priority: especially for the peace building process. For this reason, UNICEF is also in the process of developing a programme to support Quranic schools. These schools provide education to between 70% and 80% of Somali children. Our areas of intervention include support for teachers through training and the

² According to the UNICEF Primary School Survey 2006, enrolment for boys is 34% and for girls, 22%.

upgrading of skills, the provision of learning materials and improvements to learning environments.

The UN's aim is to move from reaction to prevention: to move away from short term humanitarian interventions in order to rebuild institutions and systems. With state-building as the central objective, the UN will focus on capacity building not as a by-product, but as a goal in itself. We aim to support technical experts within the Ministry of Education to sustain the process of organizational and structural reform; and to support local institutions to deliver training.

| Other UN support to Somalia

To ensure better coordination between agencies, the UN has developed one country programme for Somalia. Our priorities are set out in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), a five-year national plan for Somalia, which was produced after a Joint Needs Assessment (JNA) process carried out in the past two years by the UN, the World Bank and Somali partners.

The RDP is built around three core 'pillars' – three overall goals:

- Deepening peace, improving security and establishing good governance
- Investing in people through improved social services in education and health
- Creating an enabling environment for private sector-led growth to expand employment and reduce poverty

Three main themes cut across the goals:

- Peace-building, reconciliation and conflict prevention
- Capacity building and institutional development
- Gender and human rights

For the next two years the UN has developed a Transition Plan (UNTP) based on the RDP. All UN programmes for Somalia will aim to support Somalis in building a durable peace and beginning reconstruction and development. The UN will structure its work around five overall strategic outcomes.

The UNTP outcomes are as follows:

- Key federal, Somaliland and Puntland institutions administer and manage core government functions more effectively (Central governance).
- Local governance contributes to peace and equitable priority service delivery – primary education and health - in selected locations.
- Improved security and protection under the law for all Somalis.
- Children, youth and vulnerable groups have increased and more equitable access to quality education and health services.
- Vulnerable and marginalized group have improved sustainable food security and economic opportunities.

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As indicated in the RDP and the UNTP, education is at the same time a *goal* (primary education for all Somalis) and an *instrument* for peace building, reconstruction and the development of local government.

Conclusion

For the international community and the UN to succeed in promoting peace in Somalia, it is essential to understand Somali communities, not just as victims of a 'failed' state, but as people who have been able to develop alternative systems for peace and service delivery.

The UN aims to maximise the resilience and resourcefulness of the Somali people by engaging with authorities and communities - including young people - to develop education systems that deliver peace-education and are themselves, systems of conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and reconciliation.

Engaging with children and young people of all clans while they are in school, will not only encourage peace-building but discourage disaffection.

State-building will fail in Somalia if the international community chooses to focus on its own priorities rather than those articulated by the people it intends to serve.

The Somali people have clearly identified '**education for all**' as their priority. If the international community genuinely wants to engage with Somalia, then it must regard education as the foundation for peace and reconstruction.

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