



## Learning Summary

### Livelihood support and peacebuilding in Somalia

This learning summary highlights the main successes, challenges and lessons learned during a 'Livelihood Support and Peacebuilding' project conducted in Kismayo, Somalia, in the regional state of Jubaland. The work was supported by Peace Direct and implemented by our local partner the Social life and Agricultural Development Organisation (SADO) between December 2014 and December 2017. This learning summary is based on an independent evaluation conducted at the end of the project, and findings from internal monitoring by SADO, to assess the impact, efficiency and sustainability of the project, and to present lessons learned.

Two decades of protracted armed conflict in Somalia have had significant repercussions on the country, weakening institutions and state structures and exacerbating poverty and youth unemployment. With limited options for education and employment, young people remain potential recruits to various armed militia groups, including Al-Shabaab, Al-Qaeda affiliated extremist groups, and ISIS.

The Jubaland region has been one of the worst affected by the conflict in Somalia; with power struggles between clans and Al-Shabaab controlling Kismayo until 2012. Within this unpredictable and fast-moving context, SADO works to support local peacebuilding efforts in Kismayo, helping to build livelihoods, reduce poverty, and to help people from across clan divides find common ground.

The project, funded by the European Union, aimed to support vulnerable women and young people to learn life skills such as good citizenship and non-violence, and become peace promoters in their communities. To do this SADO provided vocational training, grants and job placements to women and young people. They also supported young people to develop their own income-generating activities, giving out business grants, providing business management training, and setting up a revolving loan fund.

## Key successes:

- When asked about the project's contribution to reducing violence in the area, 93% of community members consulted felt that the project has contributed to peace in Kismayo.
- 500 young people in Kismayo received vocational skills training.
- An additional 501 young people received small business grants, with 93% of those interviewed reporting the grants have improved their living conditions.
- 67% of those interviewed said that the grants received helped them to generate more income or establish a sustainable income.
- Among those who participated in student job placements, 44% found permanent employment by the end of the project.

“ I could not feed my children. I was looking for an opportunity for skills training, so that I could improve my life and the lives of my children.”  
Female project participant,  
36 years old.



“ Unlike before the training, now we know the rights and duties required from us. As citizens we have rights but we are also responsible for our actions and we have a duty to protect others to enjoy their rights too.”  
Anonymous project participant.



participants to build cordial working relationships with government agencies, traditional clan leaders and chiefs from different sections of Kismayo.

## Impact

- **Youth participation in peacebuilding:** ‘Young Peace Promoters’ who implemented their own peacebuilding initiatives as part of the project are all still active peacebuilders in their communities. They organise themselves regularly in order to influence governance systems which favour certain groups, paving the way for more youth participation in social and political life in the future.
- **Improved status in the community:** 94% of vocational training participants said that it had improved their social standing and status in the community, and that skills and knowledge gained had enhanced their ‘community recognition’. Status is particularly important in communities where strong hierarchies exist.
- **Important relationships improved:** The evaluation revealed that the capacity building training given by SADO to civil society organisations had enabled

- **Empowerment:** Through their improved economic status and training opportunities, participants said their self-confidence and autonomy had increased. All involved unanimously agreed that the project has provided opportunities that mean young people will experience a brighter future.
- **Reducing the pull of militias:** All vocational trainees interviewed reported that they would no longer consider joining militias due to the economic opportunities obtained during the project, reducing the pull of militias such as Al-Shabaab among young people.

## Evaluation of efficiency and effectiveness

- **Increased income:** 83% of business management trainees went on to find employment. In addition, six months after the completion of activities, the increase in income for participants averaged at 224%.



86%

of women and young people said their self-confidence had increased



“ I attended the training and it was helpful because it taught me how to start a business and manage it through book keeping...Now my life is better than before. This time, I can sustain my business without worrying.”  
**Female ex-combatant and project participant, 27 years old,**

- **Job security:** All of the participants who started their own businesses described feeling a sense of job security and stability. Among the vocational trainees, more than twice as many women than men started a business, increasing job security for many female heads of household.
- **Becoming a 'citizen':** 73% of young people who received training on civic education reported having a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities as citizens, an increase from 11% prior to the training. This lays the foundation for increased youth participation in social and political life in Somalia's future.
- **Youth access to the job market:** SADO worked closely with government institutions, hospitals, universities, and the private and public sectors to secure job placements for 125 students. 55 of these young people went on to secure permanent employment, and an additional 47 were taken on in a temporary capacity.

also had emotional and cognitive ramifications; affecting participants' ability to fully engage in feedback and conversations around the impact of the work.

- **Limited impact of civic education:** Although knowledge, understanding and awareness of civic duties and rights increased significantly through the training, to ensure sustained impact on citizen identities and state-building, training must be extended and expanded to reach more people and embed attitudinal changes already achieved.
- **Working with authorities:** Government institutions in Somalia continue to develop, as do their ways of working and interacting with communities and civil society, making coordination difficult at times. Additional problems arise from the country's clan-based power struggles. Navigating a multitude of interests (of government, civil society and of different clans) proved challenging for SADO in the selection of participants and for independent decision-making.

## Challenges

- **Inexperienced vocational trainers:** Many enthusiastic past trainees were kept on as trainers for future cohorts. However, despite this creating job opportunities and sustaining project momentum, their lack of experience as instructors meant the quality of training lacked consistency.
- **The human impact of conflict:** The effects of conflict on the citizens of Kismayo were visible. Continuous displacement in communities led to poor retention of project participants and cohort groups, creating difficulties in progress monitoring. The trauma suffered

## Reflections from Peace Direct

It is difficult to prove causation between livelihoods support and reduction of militia recruitment. However, this work and its evaluation suggest that sustainable work opportunities in a context like Kismayo do address a driving factor of youth recruitment into militias. In order to have a significant peacebuilding impact, it is important that training is part of a broader approach to providing sustainable alternatives, which includes developing an understanding of non-violence, and rights and responsibilities as citizens.

Peace Direct recognises that a conflict-sensitive approach to peacebuilding is crucial. During the evaluation it became clear



that deep-seated trauma caused by conflict had affected the cognitive and emotional behaviour of participants, limiting their ability and willingness to engage openly in discussions to a considerable extent. This highlighted the need for a focus on social and psychological care, alongside other activities. Taking into account the specific traumas experienced by communities and peacebuilders alike will allow us to improve our activities, better evaluate our impact, and provide holistic support, empowering communities to build their own peace.

## Reflections from SADO

Our most important reflection has been on the use of 'participatory monitoring' throughout this project. Regular meetings were held to discuss the status of the project, and, challenges and lessons learned. An implementation committee was formed that included village elders, project managers, religious leaders, and a 'village relief committee'. The meetings provided key insights and perspectives on participant selection and helped to identify employment gaps, possible locations for vocational centres, and which skills to focus on teaching.

They also enabled us to include and represent the community from the launch to the end of the project.

This approach has gone a long way to ensuring that we are accountable to the local communities with whom we work, giving the community a voice during the project, as well as a space for them to share their opinions or feedback on project activities and planning. This approach has also helped to build community acceptance of the project and activities through a sense of local ownership. It will be important to continue this moving forward.

Whilst all community members were invited to participate in livelihood activities, those in economic need were more likely to put themselves forward to participate. Whilst providing support to those in vulnerable situations, it is important to focus on inclusivity and representation in all projects in order to scale up the impact of the project across the whole community. We will continue our work to support local organisations to develop inclusive and representative projects that collect a variety of viewpoints and perspectives, to ensure that community rifts are overcome and tensions are not exacerbated.



## Recommendations and considerations

These recommendations are for those considering carrying out or supporting similar work or activities.

- Set up advisory committees or community working groups to ensure a closed loop feedback mechanism and strengthen the relationship between local organisations and the community, to ensure local ownership and accountability.
- Strengthen working relationships with local governments and stakeholders through specific forums or engaging with specific departments on relevant issues.
- Invest in more training in citizenship, social reconciliation and human rights, that can contribute to state-building and the creation of citizen identities in the long term. Include innovative resources such as radio or visual media to reach a wider audience.
- Ensure that adequate avenues are available for trainees who have graduated by conducting a thorough market analysis, providing job placements, or through teacher training that will allow former trainees to share their skills and experience with future cohorts and continue their involvement in the project.
- Engage with the private sector and support companies to progress towards more favourable conditions for workers.