



OBJECTIVE 3 ASSESSMENT - PUNTLAND

STRENGTHENING SOMALI GOVERNANCE

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ACRONYMS

ARDO	Aragti Relief and Development Organization
CDCH	Center for Dialogue, Civic Education, and Human Rights
HIRDA	Himilo Relief and Development Agency
MAP	Media Association of Puntland
NUSOJ	National Union of Somali Journalists
OCVP	Observatory for Peace and Violent Prevention
PDRC	Puntland Development Research Center
PHRN	Peace and Human Rights Network
PWLA	Puntland Women Lawyers Association
PUNSAA	Puntland Non-State Actors Association
TASS	Tadamun Social Society
SFS	Somali Family Services
SNOW	Somali National Women Organization
SOCENSA	Somalia-South Central Non-state Actors
SORADI	Social Research and Development Institute
SWDC	Somali Women Development Centre
SWLA	Somali Women's Lawyer Association
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Overview of SSG Project

The Strengthening Somali Governance (SSG) Project is designed to support the development of more effective and accountable Somali government institutions. SSG activities will include support for developing the capacity of governance institutions that are ready for, and in need of, assistance. The activities will be designed to improve the reach of government; systematize opportunities for representation and inclusion of citizen interests in the political process; increase the legitimacy of government institutions and representative bodies; and support women's empowerment and leadership. SSG focuses on three overarching objectives, which are designed to:

- 1) improve the legislative, representative, and oversight functions of the deliberative bodies;
- 2) improve the ability of targeted government institutions to carry out essential functions;
- and
- 3) increase citizen awareness of and engagement in government decision-making.

B. Objective Three Assessment

This assessment report focuses on SSG Objective 3, which strives to increase citizen awareness of and engagement in government decision-making. This assessment was conducted in January and February 2015 with the purpose of understanding the current situation in which Puntland CSOs and media operate; to gauge the level of understanding of citizens around constitutional rights and responsibilities; and provide initial recommendations for activity-level interventions in support of SSG's Objective 3 goal. The assessment team was led by Ryan Smith and composed of SSG Objective 3 team leader Hamdi Abdulahi, media specialist Hibak Kalfan, and civil society specialist Abdi-fatah Ahmed. Gender specialist Cara George provided remote assistance and input during the course of the assessment.

There are clear overlapping activities between the three objectives and this report will refer to activities identified in Objective 1 and 2 Assessment Reports and the subsequent Activity Scope of Work (ASOW) where needed. Information gathered on this assessment provides an overview of the status and capacity of civil society and media in all three working regions. The assessment focused primarily on interviewing civil society and media organizations in Puntland. Government institutions were not engaged as this information was collected under the assessments for Objectives 1 and 2.

II. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Across Puntland, civil society is still adjusting to its role in creating public awareness and advocating policy changes to government on behalf of stakeholders. Civil society has limited capacity outside of a few organizations to engage effectively in policy debates beyond position papers and basic consultations with officials. Efforts have been made to build coalitions and associations, however, civil society is still largely fragmented. There is little coordination among organizations, especially with implementation or planning of activities.

Both government and civil society acknowledge the lack of awareness among the public on issues of basic governance. Somalis are politically active and are generally very aware of how to engage government at the local level or through traditional governance systems. Both civil society and media are critical actors in educating citizens and holding government accountable to the aspirations of their constituents.

Puntland has a mixed media landscape, with a number of radio and television stations, targeting its rural and urban audience, and funded and influenced by its diaspora.

The development of civil society and media is not only important but it is an area where significant successes can be made. This report provides an overview of the sector and a series of challenges, opportunities, and potential activities available to SSG in each.

III. METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

The team utilized a variety of methods to gather data from targeted civil society and media organizations including a literature review, key informant interviews, an advocacy assessment, and limited focus group discussions. Over the course of the assessment, each member of the assessment team traveled to the targeted region to meet directly with civil society organizations, media, and government entities with public outreach responsibilities.

Literature review – The team conducted a review of key documents related to civil society and media including their legal status in each of the target regions as well as strategic plans from various government entities on their view on the role of civil society in their respective spheres of governance. In gathering evidence on the current media landscape with a primary focus on access to information, civic awareness and the role of media in governance, the team focused on media reports produced since 2012 by organizations such as BBC Media Action, the AU/UN Information Support Team, Internews and the InfoAsAid Media and Telecoms Landscape Guide-Somalia 2014.

Key informant interviews – Key informant interviews were used as the primary method for gathering information from media organizations and government entities. Many questions used for media organizations were pulled from the advocacy assessment tool described below to determine their engagement or interest in advocacy efforts with the government. With many influential members of media and civil society including directors, ministers, and chairman, being men, the assessment team ensured inclusiveness by consulting women-focused journalist and legal associations, youth empowerment organizations, and civil society organizations focused on women’s right issues. Meetings with government officials focused on its view of the role of civil society and media in policy formulation and citizen engagement in government decision making.

Interviews were conducted with representatives from the national/regional/local governments, media associations, media outlets, and media development organizations. Each entity was selected based on its influence on media’s role in governance in Puntland. Because several influential media support organizations are based in Nairobi, the media specialist met with several organizations working in Puntland as part of the media assessment.

Focus group discussions – Due to a lack of information about the public awareness of governance

issues in Puntland, the team elected to hold a series of focus group discussions. Discussions were held with two groups comprised of elders, youth, and women (12 and 11 participants respectively). Questions centered around six areas: 1) knowledge of one's rights and duties as a citizen, 2) determining the level of political activism for a particular policy, 3) view of government-citizen communication, 4) specific governance issues of concern, 5) knowledge of government priorities, and 6) awareness of major government policies.

IV. MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN PUNTLAND

A. Overview

The assessment team was able to meet with key government ministries, the Speaker of Parliament, a mix of large, established NGOs along with newly created organizations, and groups of individual citizens. Both government and civil society understand the important role each play in the development of Puntland and both recognize the need to have established avenues for dialogue. Puntland has a handful of civil society organizations with deep policy analysis and civic discourse expertise, but this is not evident outside of these organizations. Government is also very inexperienced and lack resources to tackle a large volume of tasks at once. Parliament has established procedures to receive public input into law formulation but has not seen much public interest. There is a wide array of private and public radio and television stations but content and programming development are challenges for all but a few. There is little media influence in policy formulation outside of a few radio programs focusing on policy debates. Brief descriptions of each organization and its observations of the current situation for civil society and media are outlined below.

Civil Society Organizations

Puntland Development Research Centre (PDRC) – PDRC is one of the oldest and most respected civil society organizations in Puntland. It was highly involved as an initial peace broker in the late 1990s and then supported the efforts to build the state of Puntland in the last decade. It has worked very closely with government and views its role as bringing the government and civil society closer together for the goal of building the state. The organization noted that both civil society and the government have limited capacities so it is important that both sides receive support to grow together. Both sides need each other in order for the state to develop.

Puntland Non-State Actors Forum (PUNSAA) – As the umbrella organization for all civil society in Puntland, PUNSAA plays a facilitation role to encourage dialogue between civil society and government. It holds policy discussions with government and civil society to support public input into policy formulation. PUNSAA believe civil society needs capacity building and general support for how to better engage with government. Civic education is imperative as the public lacks an understanding of its role in government and its rights.

Tadamun Social Society (TASS) – TASS is exclusively focused on educating the youth through the operation of its 22 schools across Puntland. It operates independent from government and has little interaction with government at the policy formulation stage. It does engage with Ministry of Education officials on findings related to education.

SOMAFAL Relief Development Organization – SOMAFAL conducts activities supporting education and empowerment of women. It maintains professional relationships with the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs but it does not engage government at the policy-making level outside of lobbying the Ministry to prioritize certain women’s issues. It believes more education about women’s rights is needed and it supports any awareness campaigns in this sector.

Puntland Women Lawyer Association – PWLA is a new organization established by female lawyers to give legal aid to victims of gender-based violence. They have not engaged much with other civil society organizations and do not actively advocate with the government at the policy- making level. They do plan to grow into this role as they get better established.

Somali Family Services (SFS) – SFS is a well-established civil society organization that conducts activities aimed at strengthening the democratic process in Puntland. It is highly active in meeting with policy makers and holding dialogues between government and civil society on key policy topics. It started a community radio station, Sahan Radio, as a ‘watchdog’ so the public would be better aware of the activities of the government. It strives to build the awareness of the public on general civic issues but it also brings government to the people to express their views on important topics. The organization feels civil society is critical to Puntland’s development but it must expand and deepen its role to play its intended role.

Media

Media Association of Puntland (MAP) – As the primary media association in Puntland, MAP plays a large role in building the capacity of journalists and interfacing with the government on media policy issues. MAP worked closely with parliament on the bill but the bill passed without many of the changes for which MAP had advocated, particularly the removal of a government-led Media Council. MAP provides limited training to journalists with support from INGOs and has facilitated discussions amongst media organizations about how to build the media sector in Puntland.

Puntland Television and Radio – While its radio station is not currently functioning, PLTV is a functioning government-sponsored station that seeks to inform viewers about current events. It produces some local content but has limited capacity. It received external support from INGOs and donors for content and programming. It broadcasts throughout Somalia as well as England, Australia and many other countries with large diaspora.

Government

Puntland House of Representative (Parliament) – Puntland’s Parliament prides itself on being more open and transparent than its counterpart in Mogadishu. It incorporates public consultations, including civil society, into its policy drafting process. The speaker believes public interest in government is low as evidenced by the lack of input it receives in policy making. He also noted that the capacity of civil society is limited in the areas of policy analysis. There needs to be a stronger relationship between civil society and Parliament.

Ministry of Constitution, Democratization and Federalism – The ministry is only a year old and has

largely been focused on building its administrative policies, hiring staff, and negotiating MOUs with the Somalia Federal Government. Led by a former civil society leader, the ministry views civic education of the public as a critical priority for its programming.

Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation – MoPIC is responsible for the overall development planning process for the government which includes facilitating regular priority sector working groups to ensure its plans are moving forward. It is also responsible for registering all civil society organizations working in Puntland. The ministry is focused on the implementation of the state’s development plan and views civil society as key implementers.

Ministry of Women and Family Affairs – The ministry is focused on women’s empowerment and protection under the gender-based violence law. It is the only ministry with female leadership at all levels (minister, deputy minister, director, etc.). It plays a strong coordination role with civil society organizations working on women’s rights issues. And, it views civil society as a critical partner in its activities. A good working relationship is established between civil society and the ministry but both sides could use more capacity support.

Ministry of Labour, Youth and Sports – The ministry manages two portfolios – labor, and youth and sports – with a director general managing the activities for each. The engagement and empowerment of youth is a top policy priority for the state and is driven by the youth policy, which is well formulated but poorly implemented to date. The ministry relies on civil society organizations to implement the activities. It hopes to be able to bring Puntland’s nine youth organizations into a ‘youth parliament’ organization in the future, which would better ensure the voice of youth in the government. Youth are eager to be engaged, but they lack awareness of their role and the role of the government.

B. Findings

Puntland’s challenges are unique given that much of the government is only a few years old, civil society has played a significant role in the development of the state over the past decade, and the media’s freedom and effectiveness is trending downward. Several ministries are still focusing on building their own administrative policies and hiring staff. Civil society is transitioning from its role in peace building to policy making. Media feels its ability to operate freely is inhibited by government policy. General findings are listed below, followed by the results of the CSO advocacy assessment, a gap analysis, and potential activities.

- **Access** – Access to policy makers is not an issue as civil society organizations and members of the general public proclaimed it was relatively easy to meet with a law maker. Similarly, nearly all claimed it was much more difficult to influence policy decisions despite the easy access. Access to information about the government’s priorities is relatively well understood by large portions of the citizenry.
- **Interaction between civil society and government is frequent, but ineffective** – Both government and civil society value the role each play in policy making and actively meet to discuss policy. However, the government feels civil society lacks the ability to engage in complex policy debates due to inexperience and few legal resources. Many of the interviewees from civil society acknowledges that it does not have the full complement of tools to properly influence policy debate

beyond establishing positions on a policy.

- **Youth are active and informed; women are not** – Youth (primarily male) are particularly politically active and engaged in Puntland. In roundtable discussions, youth were able to list government priorities and had well-established opinions about government policy. Women, on the other hand, showed nearly no understanding of the current governance structure or knowledge of major policy debates. However, there was interest in engaging more in policy debates especially among younger women. Youth received their information from the media, but used debates amongst their peers to organize personal opinions.
- **Media focuses on information dissemination, not commentary** – Media does an adequate job updating the public on the government happenings and political issues. It was clear that civil society and the public rely on media for basic information, but it was equally clear that media plays no constructive role in shaping policy debates. Journalists have limited capacity and are not equipped to function in a complex policy environment, nor does the public trust them in this role.