



OBJECTIVE 3 ASSESSMENT - SOMALILAND

STRENGTHENING SOMALI GOVERNANCE

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ACRONYMS

APD	Academy for Peace and Development
HIRDA	Himilo Relief and Development Agency
HoE	House of Elders (Somaliland)
HoR	House of Representatives (Somaliland)
NAGAAD	Women's Network in Somaliland
NEC	National Electoral Commission (Somaliland)
PHRN	Peace and Human Rights Network
TASS	Tadamun Social Society
SOLJA	Somaliland Journalists Association
SONYO	Somaliland National Youth Organization
SORADI	Social Research and Development Institute
SONSAF	Somaliland Non-state Actor Forum
SOLLA	Somaliland Lawyers 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 Somaliland 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 report has also provided an initial set of potential activities from which to support the ASOW for Objective 3. The assessment focused primarily on interviewing civil society and media organizations in Somaliland. Government institutions were not engaged as this information was collected under the assessments for Objectives 1 and 2.

II. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Across Somaliland, 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. Somalilanders 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.

The media landscape in Somaliland is vastly diverse, with radio, television and/or print, websites or social media as the primary source of information depending on the location.

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 Somaliland. Because several influential media support organizations are based in Nairobi, the media specialist met with several organizations working in Somaliland as part of the media assessment.

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

Somaliland, 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.

A. Overview

In Somaliland, the team selected and met with representatives of government, civil society, media, and donors that play a role in advocacy or citizen engagement in governance. The team chose a mix of meetings in both the legislative and executive branches as well as the government's most active public service commission. Discussions centered on government policy regarding the role of civil society in decision-making and gauging the importance among government officials of the role of civil society in policy formulation. Somaliland has a growing civil society, but there is limited depth and effectiveness amongst all but the largest and most active organizations based in Hargeisa. The team met with some of the most active organizations while also attempting to meet with a handful of smaller organizations in order to get a sense of the challenges across different organizations. The team also engaged in two focus group discussions with a mix of elders, youth, and women to determine the level of awareness about government policy making. Media is dominated by the lone radio station and a fairly large number of television and newspaper outlets, and journalists are often affiliated with multiple outlets. The team sought meetings with a cross-section of private media houses, the public radio station, and the two primary journalist associations to better understand the role of media in advocacy and citizen awareness. Brief descriptions of each of the organizations are found below. Brief descriptions of each organization and its observations of the current situation for civil society and media are outlined below.

Civil Society Organizations

Somaliland Non-state Actor Forum (SONSAF) – As an umbrella organization with more than 40 members, SONSAF strives to promote governance and accountability by facilitating dialogue between government and the public. It has five working groups organized around:

1. democratization
2. environment
3. state and peace building
4. government service delivery
5. New Deal implementation

Through these working groups, it creates position papers and attempts to hold policy dialogues between its members and relevant government bodies. It was described by many as the primary civil society organization working on advocacy issues. SONSAF acknowledged that civil society is highly fragmented in Somaliland but that several policy issues (environmental protection, women's quota, etc.) had brought like-minded organizations together to advocate as a coalition.

Social Research and Development Institute (SORADI) – Utilizing a network of local chapters, SORADI primarily develops policy papers and advocates policy changes to government through SONSAF's policy dialogue mechanism. SORADI is attempting to move beyond position papers and better establish itself as a real player in policy formulation. SORADI believes there is very little policy analysis depth in Somaliland

and therefore civil society has not yet been able to add a lot of value to policy discussions with the government. This will need to improve if civil society wants to better influence policy.

NAGAAD Network – NAGAAD is a well-regarded civil society organization and is generally referred to as the region’s premier women’s rights organization. With a goal to press for the advancement of women’s economic, social, and political status in Somaliland, it operates a regional network of 46 member organizations. It is the lead civil society organization advocating for a policy for a 10 percent quota for women in Parliament and a gender-based violence policy that would add protections for abused women. NAGAAD’s biggest challenge is that it has significant support for these policies but it has been unable to get Parliament to pass either bill. NAGAAD noted that one issue seems to be that MPs are willing to support a bill or policy change, but it is difficult to get an MP to champion a bill or policy change.

Observatory for Peace and Violence Prevention (OCVP) – Established with support from UNDP, OCVP conducts intensive research and public perception surveys on the security situation across all three regions. It strives to create evidence-based policy changes to the security sector. It has been a main player in the drafting of the ‘peacebuilding policy’. The policy was adopted in 2012 but there have been no clear action plans and implementation since its inception. The organization noted that access to policy makers is not a challenge; it is getting a policy maker to lead a policy change that is the main issue.

Academy for Peace and Development (APD) – APD is a research institute that works in five areas: 1) democratization and elections, 2) local governance, 3) conflict management, 4) economic dialogue, and 5) security sector reform. The organization does not advocate for policy changes. Instead, it provides research on a particular topic to the government officials responsible for a specific policy design to help inform the process. They believe the only route to achieve policy change in Somaliland is to establish a formal partnership with a government entity on which there is an agreement to work on a specific policy issue. Under this agreement, APD provides data and technical support to the government at their request. The government uses the data to develop the policy that best works for Somaliland. This process ensures the government is the champion of the policy. APD’s successful approach in working with government should be used as an example to build off of as SSG develops similar activities.

Center for Dialogue, Civic Education, and Human Rights (CDCH) – Established by lawyers, CDCH provides advisory services to government and civil society on law making and policy writing. It has helped NAGAAD write the gender bill and it wrote a bill focused on how the House of Guurti could better incorporate the input of the traditional elder system. In both cases, the bills have not been passed, as there is no champion for the bills inside the government. CDCH is a rare example of an organization that has the ability to draft policies useful to the government, but lacks the ability to bring a coalition of organizations or stakeholders together to influence policy makers.

Somaliland National Youth Organization (SONYO) – Similar to NAGAAD and women’s rights, SONYO is the leading youth advocacy organization in Somaliland. SONYO has 54 member organizations and holds a general assembly every two years, which determines the work of organization. They receive funding from several donors and the government donated land on which to build a large and impressive building as a way to highlight the importance of youth in the region. Through an elaborate advocacy campaign, SONYO was responsible for the minimum age for those running for local council seats. The process reminded them that their size and access were not as important as being organized and knowing how to influence policy making at every step. SONYO’s experience in bringing about a policy change is a useful example for SSG as it provides an example of how an organization was able to organize stakeholders to influence policy makers.

Candlelight for Environment and Education – Candlelight is an environmental advocacy organization that is credited with leading the ‘Green Caucus’ process, which was a series of facilitated dialogues between civil society and government around an environmental protection bill. Candlelight supported the bill’s sponsor, the Ministry of Livestock, Environment, and Pastoral Development in shepherding the bill from beginning to end. For SSG, the ‘Green Caucus’ model is one that could be replicated for other policy efforts.

University of Hargeisa, Faculty of Law – The Faculty believes it can play the role of mediator between civil society and government as it has the ability to draft laws for the government and educate civil society on law making. The public has little knowledge about how to insert itself in the debate on policy formulation. The Dean of the Faculty was recently appointed a member of the Law Reform Commission, which is responsible for reviewing all laws and policy to ensure their constitutionality.

Media

Somaliland Journalists Association (SOLJA) – SOLJA is a member-based journalism association for practicing journalists in Somaliland. It has an elected Board and is actively recruiting an Executive Director to manage the daily operations of the organization. The only criteria for joining the association is to hold a high-school diploma and to have received some form of journalism training. It seeks to train journalists and advocate for a more open media policy. Ministry of Information is now providing accreditation of journalists but SOLJA is working to take over this responsibility from the government.

Women in Journalism Association (WIJA) – Established in 2006 with support from CARE, WIJA focuses on advocating for women journalists in Somaliland and produces a bi-weekly newspaper. There are not many female journalists in Somaliland and most are presenters more than journalists. WIJA provides training to female journalists and seeks to diversify the roles of women in media.

Radio Hargeisa – The station is the only radio station allowed to operate in Somaliland and is managed through the Ministry of Information. Its journalists are poorly trained and content is largely entertainment based. News of the government is cleared through the Ministry. Its civic awareness activities are centered on elections where it will provide a block of time to each candidate to discuss his platform.

Free Press Unlimited – As a Dutch media development organization, it focuses on journalism training, audience research, and content production. FPU provides a 2-3 month training to journalists on basic journalism techniques and offer on-the-job training after finishing the course. The organization stated that most journalists lack capacity and many of them need further training. Journalists have little role in policy formulation or advocacy.

BBC Media Action – It provides equipment, training, and content support to three radio stations, including Radio Hargeisa. It observed that journalists are poorly trained and few have any ethics training. Additionally, media in Somaliland have little involvement civil education.

Kow Media Corporation (KMC) – KMC is primarily a communications and content producer for civic education campaigns for government, civil society, and donors. They have created TV programs, conducted road shows, and produced documentaries. They provide training as a service to journalists but it is mainly vocational training on how to work equipment and edit content.

Government

Somaliland Parliament, House of Guurti (Upper House) – The role of the 82-member House is primarily to debate and approve legislation that has been formulated by the House of Representatives and/or from the executive branch. The House does not have a formal policy for public consultations and operates with the belief that public consultation should have been conducted before policy comes to it for debate.

Somaliland Parliament, House of Representatives (Lower House) – The Lower House also does not have formal guidelines for public debate or input in policy making. However, there have been recent examples where MPs have engaged with the public in various forums on specific proposed legislation. The Lower House views public input with more importance than the Upper House, but it is still struggling with the appropriate avenues for doing so. It has recently drafted terms of reference for a civic education campaign and regional Parliamentary Constituency Offices so the public will better understand its role. It is also receiving assistance from UNDP to build a media hall where MPs can hold press conferences to better inform the public of its work and role.

Ministry of Planning and Development – The ministry plays a large role in public outreach with regards to generating the government’s National Development Plan (2012-2016). The process adopted by the ministry to develop the Plan involved various intensive consultations with the government ministries, agencies, regional representatives, civil society organizations, and international community representatives.

Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Tourism – Ministry is responsible for implementing the Somaliland National Youth Policy created in 2006. However, nearly all activities are managed through the Somaliland National Youth Organization (see below) or other donor-funded INGOs. Ministry strongly recommended meeting with SONYO to better understand the issues facing youth and their engagement in government decision making.

Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs – Ministry is often called the ‘gender ministry’ as much of its work focuses on women’s rights and other representation issues. It coordinates closely with NAGAAD (see below) and views civil society and donors as critical players in the advancement of gender-related policies. It works closely with the President’s office to push for the enactment of a 10 percent quota for women in Parliament. Ministry chairs both an intra-government coordination committee and an international partners meeting to ensure the government’s gender agenda (supported by the international community) is implemented.

National Human Rights Commission – Similar to MOLSA, the NHRC is an active partner with civil society and has conducted a nation-wide civic education campaign to increase awareness of human rights. The public is interested in its role in decision-making but all awareness rising should be kept basic as there is still a significant portion of the population that does not fully understand their role or rights.

B. Findings

Government does not have established guidelines or structures to gather public input on policy, civil society has little capacity to support policy making outside of a few organizations with analytical and research capacity, and local media plays almost no constructive role at all in facilitating public dialogue. The level of awareness is low amongst the public on their role in decision making and the role of the government, civil society, and media. Lack of capacity and resources are significant hindrances for all sides – government, civil society, and media – in their ability to productively engage each other. Below, several themes are

highlighted followed by the results of the CSO advocacy assessment, a gap analysis, and potential activities.

- **Access** – There is no lack of access to policy makers. Nearly every organization claimed the ability to identify and secure meetings with relevant law makers. However, the ability of organizations outside the government to access specific information (e.g., budget data, draft bills) was limited. It was unclear where to even go to find certain types of information. There is also confusion amongst government agencies on which agency is responsible for disseminating certain types of information.
- **Little formal interaction between civil society and policy makers** – While access to individual policy makers is relatively easy on an informal basis, there are very few forums or avenues for official interaction between government and civil society on policy formulation. While organizations like SONSAP has made progress in coalescing the position of civil society around specific topics, it has struggled to effectively engage government in a way to influence policy to a significant degree. Parliament has no formal guideline for soliciting input on policy from the public and lamented that they often receive input via informal channels after bills were beyond the drafting stage. Ministries were more active in meeting with civil society on specific policy questions, but it is still largely informal. The ‘Green Caucus’ was cited by both government officials and civil society as the most successful example of both sides engaging on the formation of an environmental protection law. But, many claimed the less political nature of the subject matter was the actual reason the process worked well.
- **Lack of capacity and resources on all sides** – Outside of a few organizations, civil society has very little capacity to research complex policy ideas, conduct in-depth analysis, or support legal drafting. This severely limits its effectiveness when engaging with government as these are areas of need for the government as well. Government, primarily Parliament, lacks similar capacity and most often relies on ministries to provide this work as ministries have more access to legal assistance through a network of advisors. However, all lack the knowledge and skills of how to properly engage each other for official policy dialogue sessions.
- **Public awareness of governance is low** – Citizens are generally unaware of their role in decision making in Somaliland’s current governance structure. This understanding is worse outside of Hargeisa. Both government and civil society recognize the need to have more politically aware citizenry but it is also a daunting challenge given the historical lack of a similar governance structure. Government does not yet have a civics curriculum in the educational system.
- **Media is ineffective in advocacy role** – Media plays almost no role in facilitating public debate on policy in Somaliland. Multiple contacts used the phrase, ‘media is just a microphone’ to describe the role of media. Journalists do not have the capacity, and oftentimes the interest, to dig into a policy issue and present it to the public. Two organizations who provided examples of advocacy successes for their organizations utilized media to broadcast or print the content the organizations produced. They did not trust the media to write about a topic independently and worried that a poorly constructed story would harm their advocacy efforts. Media stories are more of a commodity than they are a service as most journalists are paid by the organizations (government, civil society, private sector, etc.) to run a particular story, not report on a topic.