

PC-AAA-761

war-torn societies project in

Somalia



WSP



PSIS

The WSP Dissemination Phase

This publication is one component of a wider exercise of not only evaluating the first four years of the War-torn Societies Project, but also of sharing this evaluation and the lessons learned during the project with a wide variety of interested audiences. The lessons have been compiled into a set of core reports that analyse the WSP experience in the four countries in which it was piloted, document WSP's operational experience at field and headquarters levels, and draw conclusions on the project overall.

The War-torn Societies Project: the first four years

(an overview of the WSP experience and lessons learned)

WSP in Eritrea (an account of the project in Eritrea)

WSP in Guatemala (an account of the project in Guatemala)

WSP in Mozambique (an account of the project in Mozambique)

WSP in Somalia

(an account of the ongoing project in Northeast Somalia)

WSP in practice (an account of WSP's operational experience)

In addition to the reports, three companion volumes are being published in collaboration with WSP successor bodies and/or regional publishers in the countries in which WSP has completed its pilot work.

Post-conflict Eritrea: prospects for reconstruction and development

published in association with The Red Sea Press

From conflict to dialogue: the WSP Guatemala way (English) and

Del conflicto al dialogo: el WSP en Guatemala (Spanish)

published in association with FLACSO

(Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales Sede Guatemala)

Rebuilding through dialogue: the Mozambican way (English) and

Reconstruindo pelo dialogo: o caminho de Moçambique (Portuguese)

published in association with CEDE

(Mozambican Centre for the Study of Democracy and Development)

Copies of the reports and details of how to order the co-published books are available from

WSP Info/UNRISD

Palais des Nations

1211 Geneva 10

Switzerland

Or on the WSP web site at <http://www.unrisd.org/wsp/>

© UNRISD/PSIS 1998

***WSP in Somalia* was prepared by Martin Doornbos with contributions by Matt Bryden, and edited by Richard Koser and June Kane**

The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNRISD/PSIS or WSP concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or its authorities or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Table of Contents

Abbreviations	4
The War-torn Societies Project	
How WSP began	5
What s new in the WSP approach	7
Assessing the WSP experience	11
Somalia	
Background	15
Launching WSP Somalia	18
Staffing and preparations for research	20
Implementation establishment	
Regional Notes and Project Groups	22
Moving from regional to zonal	27
External actor, internal process	30
Capacity and expectations	34
Potential limitations	36
Concluding observations	37
Annex 1 Chronology of events	40
Annex 2 WSP Somali Programme staff & Zonal Working Group members	43

Abbreviations

CCU	Central Coordination Unit of WSP
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PAR	Participatory action-research
PSIS	Programme for Strategic and International Security Studies
SACB	Somali Aid Coordination Body
SAG	Senior Advisory Group to WSP
SSDF	Somali Salvation Democratic Front
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDOS	United Nations Development Office for Somalia
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children s Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNOSOM	United Nations Operation in Somalia
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WSP	War-torn Societies Project

The War-torn Societies Project

How WSP began

The War-torn Societies Project (WSP) a collaborative project of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) and the Programme for Strategic and International Security Studies (PSIS) of the Geneva Graduate Institute of International Studies, was launched in June 1994. Its first aim was to help clarify policy options in societies that are emerging from major social and political conflict.

In the aftermath of the Cold War there had been a dramatic rise in the number of instances of profound internal strife in countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. Invariably these had momentous implications for the structures of societies in these countries and posed major challenges for those providing immediate relief and aiding longer-term rehabilitation, be it social, economic or political. UNRISD, the United Nations research institute devoted to social development, saw a responsibility to explore what and how social science could contribute to post-conflict rebuilding. In 1993, therefore, UNRISD convened a preliminary workshop devoted to that question.

Within UNRISD itself, interest in the issue had grown out of a number of earlier projects on political violence and on ethnic conflict, and more directly from projects on the return of refugees and on Cambodia. On the PSIS side, work on these questions had included formulating a new strategy for Swiss humanitarian aid and assessing UNDP work in conflict and disaster situations. The experience of these agencies, and of others involved in the delivery of aid, was discussed at a brainstorming seminar held in Cartigny, Switzerland, in 1994 that brought together for the first time in such a form, representatives from war-torn societies and some of the major actors in international assistance. At Cartigny, these shared interests in post-conflict rebuilding laid the foundation for a concrete plan of joint action that would link research and policy. The War-torn Societies Project was born.

The essential premise of WSP was that post-conflict rehabilitation typically involves a whole range of actors – internal and external – but that it is often hampered by these actors' lack of understanding of how some of the basic issues and priorities involved in rehabilitation interact. This lack of understanding was seen to be compounded by insufficient exchange of information on the various actors' policy agendas and last but not least by the limitations and inflexibility of some of the external actors' own terms of reference.

In the aftermath of the Cold War, there had been a dramatic rise in the number of instances of profound internal strife in countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America

With these initial assessments of some of the hurdles in view WSP undertook to initiate in selected war-torn societies action-research projects that would facilitate jointly sponsored research activities into priority areas for social and economic reconstruction, and to promote policy dialogue and synchronisation among the main actors involved. Research and policy action were seen as potentially interrelated in several ways: research would help identify priorities for policy involvement and adjustment while also mapping out what programmes various actors were already engaged in, actors in turn might not only respond to research findings, but call for new areas of enquiry collectively steering research into new or more directions. In the process, it was expected that there would be value in promoting and facilitating dialogue about research priorities and findings, as well as about their respective policy agendas, among different actors: government agencies and other national actors, multilateral and bilateral aid agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The WSP approach was laid down in a Project Document accepted as a basis for action at the 1994 Cartigny seminar. The document outlined a number of crucial steps that were to be followed and elements that were to be included in each

country project. In terms of organizational structure and staffing, this involved choosing a national Country Project Coordinator/Director, necessarily a consensus figure, who would have overall responsibility for the project and for liaising with key government and external actors, forming a Project Group comprising representatives of the main internal and external actors involved in post-conflict rebuilding, that would assume collective ownership of the project: recruiting a Research Coordinator and other core researchers, and providing for administrative support staff and logistic support.

The first task for the core research team was to prepare a Country Note, a substantive paper discussing the key social, economic and political conditions and requirements of the country in the post-conflict situation

Operationally, the first task for the core research team was to prepare a Country Note, a substantive paper discussing the key social, economic and political conditions and requirements of the country in the post-conflict situation, paying due attention to how various issues were connected. The Country Note was to be prepared on the basis of both existing data and research and broad consultation with main internal and external actors. It would serve as a basis for discussion in the Project Group and for selecting usually not more than five key themes or Entry Points for research that could highlight policy issues in which different actors would be engaged.

For each of these themes a Working Group was then to be constituted, made up of representatives of the different actors with a particular interest or involvement in the policy area concerned. Members of these Working Groups would interact with the relevant researcher(s), and by implication with each other on the question of

which issues would be given priority and how, and would generally give direction to the research and feedback on the basis of its preliminary findings. In the conduct of the research activities and in Working Group deliberations, a special effort was to be made to ensure a meaningful 'policy mix' as well as actor mix. WSP projects were expected to last approximately eighteen months, a period considered both necessary and sufficient to initiate a process that might eventually become self-sustaining. Throughout the life of the projects, a Central Coordination Unit (CCU) in Geneva would closely monitor the research activities, provide backstopping where necessary and arrange for logistic support.

Based on this general framework, WSP was launched in Eritrea in June 1995, in Mozambique in July 1995, in Guatemala in August 1996, and in Somalia – after a prolonged preparatory period – in January 1997. The Eritrean project ended with a final workshop in December 1996. Its life was officially extended until May 1997 to allow for the preparation of a successor arrangement, and then again to the end of October that year when WSP Eritrea was officially closed. In June 1997 it was decided to extend the project in Mozambique to the end of that year to allow for more effective dissemination of the research findings and further consideration of possible successor arrangements. Subsequently the transition phase was extended to the end of April 1998, at which time WSP Mozambique was closed. The Guatemala project had its final workshop in March 1998 and was formally brought to a close the following month. As WSP itself approached its intended closing phase in December 1998, plans were in place to extend the Somali project to additional locations, including Somaliland, and thus to extend its life beyond the close of the wider pilot project.

What's new in the WSP approach

There are various possible ways of looking at the WSP experience and judging where it fits into the research/policy nexus. It can be considered according to its potential as a venue for policy dialogue. It can be defined by its capacity to generate policy-relevant research data, or can be judged by its comparative advantages as a tool for identifying and solving problems. Each of these approaches will highlight a particular aspect of what in most WSP countries was a complex set of processes and interactions, involving researchers, policy-makers and other interested parties.

Each of these approaches, by implication, also adds to our general thinking on the possible links between research and policy. Such links occur in many forms in different contexts, though quite often they have been obscured by a lack of adequate feedback mechanisms. It is common, for example, to say that sound policy preparation requires reliable research back-up (and feedback), although the understanding of what the exact connection is and how it can be assured is constantly being redefined. WSP has come to represent one significant effort towards understanding the research/policy connection, specifically in contexts where post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation are on the agenda.

One interesting way of looking at the WSP experience – at least in part – and of understanding its rationale and objectives is to consider it in the context of the development of participatory approaches towards problem-oriented and problem-solving social research. Some of WSP's roots in fact can be traced back to innovative forms of participatory action-research (PAR) that became quite prominent in the late 1960s and 1970s. At that time they were developed particularly for application in micro-contexts such as small rural communities (Stiefel/Wolfe, 1994). Anthropologists and other researchers would associate themselves with, say, small groups of peasant farmers and in extensive discussion and dialogue with them, would try to identify the needs and aspirations of local communities and help them think through how members of the community could themselves contribute to achieving these. Understanding and raising awareness of the key problems social groups were facing, including alternative ways of overcoming them, were key concepts guiding this new approach.

On the research side, the problem-orientation and participatory dimensions of this new approach stood in stark contrast to 'classical' anthropological research, in which researchers would make painstaking efforts to observe and accurately record social interactions within the community they studied, while basically trying to stay outside those processes themselves. On the policy side, the basic assumption of this new participatory approach was that it might allow for sounder ways of identifying needs and problem-solving options than would be provided by solutions and programmes devised elsewhere and simply handed down to passive recipients.

Both the problem-orientation and the participatory dimensions demanded entirely new and different roles and skills on the part of the researcher. Observation and analysis were by no means to be superseded but would have a more preparatory and supportive role, and beyond that the researcher would also act as a facilitator providing a venue (at least symbolically) and guiding the interaction and collective thinking among participants in the project.

Instead of striving for scientific objectivity (which at roughly the same time came under heavy fire as ultimately unattainable anyway), researchers were expected to be able to develop a basic sense of empathy and identification with the local community's self-examination and search for ways of improving their condition. This new role posed its own professional requirements and codes of conduct, which in due course would become the subject of a good deal of discussion and elaboration.

PAR was first developed in the 1960s and 1970s in Latin America and other so-called Third World regions in the wake of liberation theology and as a supplement to conventional research methods. It soon gained a place in the repertoire of social science research strategies and methodologies, although the somewhat exaggerated expectations that initially accompanied it were in due course moderated to more realistic proportions. Elements of PAR can since then be recognised in various kinds of problem-solving strategies.

WSP methodology was directly derived from some of the basic ideas and experiences of PAR, largely through the initiative of the WSP Director, who had been a prime mover in the use of PAR in UNRISD, in particular as Director of UNRISD's Popular Participation Programme. From these early experiences, in particular the stress on the common recognition of issues and policy priorities, on dialogue to better appreciate different actors' perspectives and on the empowerment of local actors to participate in decisions affecting their future, came the general direction of the methodology to be used in the project.

What makes WSP methodology different and unique, however, is that it represents a quantum leap from a research methodology designed to be implemented at the micro level to implementation at the macro level, addressing broad national issues and involving a variety of actors, internal and external, who play key roles at the macro level.

In WSP, the participants are representatives of major agencies rather than a community of peasant farmers. The facilitators are a WSP Country Project Coordinator/Director with a research team rather than an individual researcher and while PAR researchers were generally (though not necessarily) outsiders, WSP researchers are invariably insiders widely recognized as interested parties in the process.

There is a further difference. Micro-level PAR not only addressed itself to the local level, but also sought to empower local participants like small farmers in their dealings with powerful agents such as landlords or the state. In confrontational situations, its own role was thus essentially conflictual. In contrast, WSP methodology in its efforts to create bridges for dialogue and communication is basically consensual.

The underlying assumptions of WSP methodology are that, particularly in post-conflict situations, there is an acute need for broad-based dialogue and communication for sound information and the sharing of it on the requirements and priorities for reconstruction.

Post-conflict situations are potentially characterized by a lack of clarity, confusion and/or overlap as to which actors – government branches, private organizations, international agencies – are doing what and what policy responses they are developing to immediate and long-term needs. Also, there is usually little open space, if any, for regular communication among key actors in the field. WSP's premise therefore is that mapping key issues and key policy initiatives through jointly initiated research and using the results as a basis for dialogue towards an improved understanding of different policy approaches and possible coordination, may help fill important gaps.

What makes WSP methodology different and unique is that it represents a quantum leap from a research methodology designed to be implemented at the micro level to implementation at the macro level.

Does it? The answers to that can only be given with confidence when the various WSP pilot projects have all been completed and more fully analysed. Nonetheless, a few striking experiences already stand out.

In the first two countries where WSP projects were launched – Eritrea and Mozambique – the dynamics of the projects worked out quite differently, as might have been expected in different contexts. In both countries, however, participants reflecting on their involvement in WSP Working Groups singled out the element of dialogue as having been of most significance in helping them better understand different actors, positions and policies. Representatives of NGOs or multilateral agencies, for example, reported that it was through WSP that they had come to better appreciate the rationale of government policies, while participants from government or political organizations observed that WSP had provided a much needed venue for sharing some of their policy thinking with other actors engaged in reconstruction efforts. Beyond this, almost all quarters said that involvement in WSP had been a shared learning experience, and in a number of instances had helped to indicate attainable solutions to common issues.

A similar appreciation emerges from the WSP experience in Guatemala, where the project created a much needed democratic forum for all actors – particularly local and national actors – to meet and search together for a better understanding of common challenges of post-war rebuilding, and to search for new solutions.

In terms of providing a venue for creative dialogue and generating a sense of common orientation from the initial country experiences, it appears that WSP may indeed have succeeded in transposing some basic elements of PAR from the micro to the macro context.

But if this seems to hold significant promise for national and international engagement in reconstruction efforts, there are limits to the WSP model of participatory problem-oriented research. Again, the particular context in which WSP-type action-research is undertaken is of crucial importance in determining both the needs and the possible scope for its engagement.

In this connection, it will be useful to recall one basic assumption underlying the WSP concept: that PAR at the macro level will be especially relevant in those post-conflict situations where it is unclear which actors are pursuing what policy objectives, and where there is a clear need to arrive at broader consensus. In many post-conflict situations, the government wants to retain overall command of the policy process and is determined to keep the initiative in setting out strategies for national reconstruction. In such situations, it is likely that participatory policy research that seems to go beyond dialogue would be seen to infringe on this Dialogue, as such may still be seen as useful and even of potential service to the

The particular context in which WSP-type action-research is undertaken is of crucial importance in determining both the needs and the possible scope for its engagement.

government in office, but the government will be more likely to ensure that policy dialogue it did not initiate itself does not encroach on the (re-)setting of national policy priorities

In fact, there is potential ambivalence in government responses to the WSP approach. WSP's role in facilitating dialogue among different actors (among whom there are possibly some former rivals) is likely to be seen as valuable, and it is not unlikely that governments might seek to make use of the venue WSP offers as an additional forum to get their messages across. At the same time, though, there is likely to be concern that the policy dialogue that ensues might follow an entirely autonomous course and engender new policy. Though the concerns are delicate and may not always be explicit, they are genuine and need to be recognised by all parties. In principle though, WSP's particular approach to action-research can potentially make a strategic contribution to rethinking key issues in post-conflict reconstruction, in tandem with and in support of government efforts in parallel directions.

Assessing the WSP experience

From its inception, WSP attracted wide international interest. Donor agencies in particular showed a keen interest in its potential, and gave it their initial support. Many different actors asked what lessons WSP might produce and speculated on what difference it might make in a number of contexts. There were at times high expectations of WSP's possible role. Donor representatives and other observers, for example, were from the outset interested to learn whether the project has 'impact', though without specifying what this might mean. If a true assessment of the role, potential and 'impact' of WSP is to be made, it is important first to ask what expectations are reasonable.

The aims of WSP itself bear repeating:

WSP is a pilot project that aims to make a contribution towards post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building through an innovative approach and methodology that brings relevant internal and external actors together around a number of key policy themes of common interest

WSP thus aims to achieve better insights into basic problem areas, to promote improved coordination of rehabilitation and development efforts, and to de-politicize divisive issues, thus indirectly contributing to reconciliation.

These objectives evolved in the course of the project, with key focuses changing subtly from one phase to the next. From the beginning WSP pursued multiple objectives that were not always clearly defined: priorities changed or progressed as the project moved through different stages. Thus at the 1994 Cartigny seminar WSP was conceived essentially as a response to the frustration of the international community over its all too apparent failures, and the ultimate objective was to assist the international community to perform better. Initially, WSP projects in the pilot countries were seen primarily as a tool to reach that objective.

Once WSP country projects had been initiated in the selected countries, however assistance to rebuilding processes in these countries naturally enough became an overriding objective. The change in orientation this signified was profound but perhaps not immediately visible, as external actors kept an active interest in WSP, though now to better understand how their own programmes would relate to national policies.

As stock is taken of WSP's efforts to improve insights into basic problem areas and promote relevant dialogue among a larger field of actors, there is also an enhanced interest in trying to ascertain to what extent some of the lessons learned may be generalized to other post-conflict situations, and possibly to international development assistance more broadly.

At the point at which WSP's 'impact' is assessed, a number of other factors need to be taken into consideration. For example, WSP's contributions to post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation are more likely to be indirect than direct in nature. Accordingly, the impact of WSP is more likely to refer to how well it succeeded in creating a means of facilitation, in contributing to improved communication and understanding, possibly in helping create a new view of or changed climate for policy dialogue (likely to need longer to assess), and not necessarily to any concrete shifts in policy. Again, actors might well adjust their policy agendas in the light of deliberations in a WSP context, but it has not been an objective of WSP as such to steer or influence policy in any particular direction. In principle the 'impact' of WSP should thus not be judged by whether or not it has done this.

It is also important to remember that WSP is essentially a pilot project, experimenting with a previously untried approach to policy-oriented PAR. This has two important implications: the first is that the first phase of WSP is in many ways a means of testing the WSP package, the instrument or methodology itself, the second is that WSP 1994-1998 is a first try-out in a variety of different post-conflict situations.

Questions may still be unanswered, therefore, on how ready the methodology is for application elsewhere, or whether it should first be further adjusted. By implication, any assessment should also take into account whether what is being measured is the potential of a project approach that is to be further developed, or a methodology that can now be fully assessed in terms of its performance.

It is perhaps even more important to remember that, during the pilot phase WSP projects have been operating under conditions that may not necessarily be present in the future. In particular, the close monitoring and logistic support from the CCU in Geneva, and the high level of support from donors, may not be available beyond the pilot phase.

When drawing lessons from the experience so far and assessing its relevance and validity for application elsewhere, therefore, we also have to consider how the

blueprint for WSP projects is likely to fare without these forms of support. Is it conceivable that a WSP package could be composed in a form that could be employed relatively easily without much external assistance?

The first stage in the assessment of all four WSP country projects was to develop a set of tentative guidelines and questions. This was used not as an exhaustive check-list but as an indicative framework in which the assessment might be used to draw lessons, particularly since from the beginning WSP had been seen not as a static product but as an interaction between research and policy deliberation, and between different sets of actors.

As the 'lessons learned' focus is central to the whole exercise, it is useful to spell out more explicitly what is meant by 'lessons' and to ask "lessons for whom and from what?"

Clearly, in the case of a project like WSP, which operates at different levels, insights and lessons drawn from the activities differ from one actor to another. Lessons are likely to be relevant to different bodies at different times and for different reasons. At least three different levels can be distinguished in the context of WSP, all with their own distinctive value but also significantly related.

Firstly, lessons learned in the context of the empirical research conducted in one of the WSP country projects, or through the confrontation of policy assumptions with substantive research results from the field, lie at the core of what WSP is about. In other words, fresh research evidence may prove to be relevant to key policy actors. The lessons concerned do not necessarily represent scientific discoveries or breakthroughs (that was not why the research was undertaken to begin with), but interesting findings of wider relevance should not be *a priori* excluded.

The key point is that research evidence about actual conditions may represent an important additional resource for policy actors (whether or not this was strictly called for by the actors concerned) and therefore can represent relevant 'lessons learned' at that particular level. But to offer the same lessons at other, for example international levels and thus presume their wider validity might not serve much purpose, and could even be counter-productive if these lessons had been long recognised in other contexts or were to be found in more general theoretical literature. It is obviously important, therefore, to keep in mind the likely relevance of lessons to particular levels of actors.

Secondly, lessons learned in the conduct of organizing and monitoring WSP projects – largely relating to methodological matters rather than to substantive findings – concern a different but equally crucial resource to operational actors. This is particularly true of the experience and insights gained in the process of setting up successive WSP projects in different country contexts and from keeping track of subsequent actions and initiatives. Lessons learned here might include those arising from both successes and failures, and might arise in response to unanticipated turns in the course of WSP projects. In either case the lessons learned are largely a function of learning by doing or 'self-teaching'.

Lessons of this kind thus concern the adequacy of WSP as an 'instrument' that is being tested and possibly improved during its pilot phase. Naturally, the dimensions that might come up for attention and scrutiny in this connection are as varied as the WSP enterprise as a whole: logistics, project preparation, training, action-research interconnections, and not least the question of the desirable extent of local autonomy vis-a-vis CCU guidance.

Thirdly, lessons learned from the introduction of WSP in different contexts relate to the processes of interaction between various categories of actors involved in WSP in different country situations. They refer particularly to the kind of processes and relationships that emerge at the macro level in different situations, between government and external actors for example, and provide answers to the question of how and why WSP prompted such different response patterns. By implication, the lessons learned here might advance our understanding of the kind of social and political contexts in which WSP has a greater chance of making a useful contribution and might give some insight into the extent to which WSP might be replicated in different contexts.

It will be clear that there are likely to be important links among these three categories of potential lessons, and the actions and interactions underlying them. We might expect, for example, that actions determining lessons learned within the second category (interventions at the level of the WSP package introduced) would indirectly have an impact on the kind of lessons forthcoming in the first category: the more substantive and communicative dimensions of WSP. These in turn are likely to have an important bearing on the way WSP is perceived and positioned within the wider macro political context, thus contributing to lessons in the third category. While *a priori* these various links might seem obvious, by their very nature they are not easy to identify and analyse.

Lessons of wider relevance can also be drawn: for example, although WSP-based lessons are derived from, and in turn initially applicable to international assistance in post-conflict situations, some of them may have relevance to development assistance more generally. This is because the performance of international assistance actors in rebuilding war-torn societies often reveals problems and patterns that are of a general nature but that become more visible in the extreme conditions pertaining in a post-conflict situation.

The WSP Somali Programme continues its work. By September 1998, WSP was entering its second major research phase in Northeast Somalia. Research was only beginning in Somaliland. Any assessment of the approach and achievements of the WSP Somali Programme is thus necessarily provisional, and must refer mainly to the first crucial phases of the project.

Somalia

Background

As WSP progressed in Eritrea, Mozambique and Guatemala, and initial lessons began to be learned, several of the project's bilateral and multilateral partner agencies with programmes in Somalia, notably UNDP, suggested that WSP might play a role in that country and urged the CCU to explore this possibility. WSP staff had also felt for some time that Somalia represented precisely the kind of post-conflict situation in which WSP might play a positive role. It would also allow the methodology tried and tested in three very different country contexts to be tried again in an entirely new and challenging arena, one where armed conflict is not clearly over and could resume at any time. The CCU in Geneva consequently decided, in late 1995, to explore the possibilities of setting up WSP in Somalia.

It is not surprising that there was strong external interest in WSP playing a role in Somalia. After several failed external interventions in the Somali conflict, United Nations agencies in particular had been anxious to try and find positive ways to collaborate in rebuilding and developing the country. The scope for formal or official approaches had largely ceased to exist following the disintegration of the Somalia state and the disappearance of a government interlocutor, so there was naturally a keen interest in projects that might be able to open informal routes towards establishing collaborative relationships.

To appreciate the specific decisions and indeed differences that underpinned WSP's launch in Somalia, it is important to understand the context in which WSP began operations, first in Northeast Somalia. Three factors made this case exceptional: (i) the absence of a functioning government structure; (ii) the fragmentation of Somalia into clan-based territories and, for the northeast, unresolved relations with the rest of the former Somali state; and (iii) the legacy of problematic contacts with external agencies, notably United Nations agencies.

After the collapse of the Siyaad Barre regime in 1991, interventions in the conflict by external actors had not led to peace or stability. Intense competition for power led instead to a full-fledged civil war between several factions, which soon spread across most of the country. This generalized strife ended by fracturing Somalia's post-colonial political framework into several clan-based territorial entities, some of them ruled by warlords. Normal government functions largely ceased. The problem of how international actors should relate to a geo-political entity that had no sovereignty and therefore no status in a world of nation-states became increasingly important as international intervention grew.

Was it just coincidence that Somalia was the first country post-Cold War to collapse as a territorial entity and a functioning mode of government, or was there some kind of internal logic to the process? The answer is important for the future,

because it may shed some light on how governmental institutions will need to adapt to Somali social conditions

In hindsight it can be argued that Somalia's disintegration was not coincidence. In comparison to other countries in Africa, Somalia's experience with state formation had been relatively limited. Large parts of the country, especially in the north, had long enjoyed a benign neglect during colonial times. Somalia's experience of state formation in preparation of independence in 1960 had been short and hasty. As a result, colonial and post-colonial state structures seem to have become less ingrained into the Somali social fabric than in most other African contexts.

The modern state apparatus retained a culturally distinct, if not alien, quality in relation to the basic and ongoing forms of social organization in Somalia. When Siyaad Barre's regime increasingly made use of the repressive powers invested in the centralized government, this only underscored the sense of alienation between the state and society.

When eventually the regime was overthrown, the state structures which had been so closely equated with the monopoly over the means of violence could all the

more easily be thrown aside. Since then, no aspirant to leadership has been able to gain a monopoly over the use of force which a state needs to function, and the legitimacy of central state structures as the only framework in which societies can function has been called into question. Non-state forms of political interaction and exercise of power, characteristic of the pre-colonial period, consequently continue to dominate, in contrast to most post-war situations, where historically legitimized state structures provided a ready-made basis onto which new political frameworks could be grafted.

Colonial and post-colonial state structures seem to have become less ingrained into the Somali social fabric than in most African contexts

While Somalis do not always see central state structures as important, there is still great demand for some of the functions that a government traditionally carries out. The restoration of law and order to underpin public safety is one of the most commonly voiced needs. There is also ample grassroots recognition that traders need some minimum of regulation, that urban building activities require a basic plan, and that the provision of social services needs to be coordinated. Other common state functions 'missed' by Somalis are the issuing of recognized travel documents, the establishment and regulation of financial institutions, a framework for international investment, and access to international assistance. Nevertheless, efforts to build a state are likely again to encounter formidable obstacles and will certainly require extraordinary patience, diplomacy and sensitivity to local needs and preoccupations. One key question will be whether modern administrative and government structures can be devised that are

consistent with ongoing social divisions, particularly those based on kinship, and at the same time relevant to the occupational pursuits of the large numbers of Somalis who continue to live a pastoral life. Such structures and institutions would have to be able to co-exist with clan-based organizational frameworks without seeking to replace them or be absorbed by them.

In addition to the specific Somali view of the appropriateness of a conventional state framework, WSP also had to take account of a second result of the disintegration of the former Somalia: the proliferation of clan-based entities, each with its own militia. Whether the country will remain fragmented is impossible to predict. Regional initiatives at mediation and reconciliation, led successively by Kenya, Ethiopia and Egypt, were essentially oriented towards re-establishing a Somali state of some kind. For some time it was presumed that rebuilding as such could not begin until a unified Somalia of one sort or another was in place. Increasingly, however, as the prospects of an internationally-led reconciliation remained dim, the conviction grew that there was no point in waiting for general reunification and that rebuilding should begin at the zonal level.

In the northeast, this position is reinforced by additional considerations. The three administrative regions that make up the northeast — Bari, Nugal and North Mudug — have shared relative political tranquillity since 1991. Demographically the area is fairly homogeneous and most of the population belong to the Majeerteen, the dominant Daarood sub-clan. Economically there are complementarities, with the predominant economic activity being the trade in livestock, focused on the port of Boosaaso, as well as the production and export of frankincense and fisheries.

Finally, the three regions, frustrated by the failure of the leadership of the Somali Salvation Democratic Front to establish functional administrative structures in the northeast, began calling for the establishment of a northeastern state framework based on popular participation and constitutional principles. The SSDF had won popularity by defending the northeast against an attack in 1991 and 1992 by the United Somali Congress led by General Ayyid, and by defeating a radical Islamist group which made a brief attempt to seize the port of Boosaaso in 1992. However, their public support began to fade after the movement split into rival factions in 1994 and, by late 1997, popular support had moved in favour of a northeastern state of Puntland.

In July 1998, after almost three months of deliberations, a community conference of the three regions of Northeast Somalia, together with some representatives from the neighbouring areas of Sanaag and Sool, declared the formation of a Puntland State as a sub-unit of a future federal Somalia. Despite widespread popular support, the new government faces internal opposition, and the legitimacy of its claims in Sanaag and Sool is disputed by neighbouring Somaliland, within whose pre-colonial borders the two regions lie. The establishment of a Puntland State will undoubtedly have ramifications for the work of WSP in this region, although by September 1998 the nature of this was not clear.

WSP must also be aware of the legacy of problematic relations between Somalis and international organizations, and the latter's limited presence in Somalia. The misgivings and distrust are the legacy of ambiguous large-scale aid programmes in the 1970s and 1980s. They increased dramatically following the UNOSOM operations (1992-1995) when attempts at humanitarian intervention in a situation of man-made famine became hopelessly entangled in the internal conflict. As a result, international agencies and NGOs have since then essentially run their Somalia operations from Nairobi. Some of the misgivings in the northeast about international assistance, however, stemmed from a feeling of being abandoned by international agencies after the collapse of Somalia's centralized state.

From the beginning, therefore, it was obvious that Somalia would offer WSP not only different challenges but particularly complex ones. The breakdown of state institutions during civil war is by no means unique to Somalia, but the degree and scope of the disintegration of the former Somali Republic was probably without parallel. No single actor – or group of actors – had proved capable of imposing its logic on the post-war situation, yet consensus among the various players had remained equally elusive. As in most post-conflict situations, many urgent problems competed for the attention and energies of the various actors and stood

in the way of collective understanding or response.

Additionally, Somalia represented a special kind of challenge to the WSP methodology. For a project seeking to contribute to post-conflict rebuilding in war-torn societies through PAR and to further develop a methodology applicable in diverse social and political contexts, a situation like that in Somalia represented a formidable, perhaps decisive testing ground. If the WSP approach could be shown to have relevance and applicability in the face of these new challenges, its potential significance would be far-reaching.

From the beginning, it was obvious that Somalia would offer WSP not only different challenges but particularly complex ones

Launching WSP Somalia

The complex situation in Somalia required extensive and extended preparatory work before WSP research activity might begin. Sustained observation and assessment of the situation started in March 1996 with a visit to Nairobi by WSP Director Matthias Stiefel and SAG member Ambassador Mohamed Sahnoun. The main purpose of this visit was to establish whether or not WSP activities could take place in Somalia or some parts of it and, if so, to explore possible approaches.

Stiefel and Sahnoun held extensive and separate meetings with representatives of numerous factions and interest groups from different parts of the country and with representatives of the international community in Nairobi. They aimed to identify areas of stability where conflict had subsided, where rebuilding had essentially begun and where, as a result, WSP might play a useful role.

They also hoped, during this visit to convince all the relevant groups and factions that a sub-national beginning was a necessary forerunner to a wider, all-Somali project and not indicative of favour or legitimization of one region or faction. Nor did it exclude a national project at a later stage covering the whole Somali region.

The decision to launch WSP first in Northeast Somalia, to be followed by a project in the new republic of Somaliland in the northwest initiated in July 1998, was to a large extent determined by the relative stability prevailing in both regions. In other parts of the former Somalia the continued tension and fighting between clan-based factions would not provide the right climate for WSP operations. Moreover, Somalia's fragmentation continued to have important effects on the prospects for rebuilding in the northeast, and for the role expected of WSP in that process.

The decision to launch a WSP country project in Somalia, however, was qualified by two major amendments to the approach adopted in earlier country projects: firstly, because of ongoing divisiveness in the country itself and in the absence of most of the key external actors from Somalia, it was decided to establish a support office on neutral ground in Nairobi. In due course this office was expected to serve and coordinate project activities in several regions of Somalia. It did, however, add an intermediate tier between the CCU in Geneva and operations on the ground.

Secondly, beginning WSP activities at a sub-national level would deviate from the standard model of WSP action-research activities at a country-wide national level. However, the relative tranquillity of the northeast did mean that WSP's essentially post-conflict approach remained relevant.

Beginning WSP activities at a sub-national level would deviate from the standard model of WSP action-research activities at a country-wide, national level.

It was only after this extended consultation process towards the end of 1996 that WSP decided to accept the challenge of a Somali programme, and the decision was taken to start a first WSP project in the northern regions of Bari, Nugal and Mudug. At that point, the WSP Director accompanied by future Somalia Programme Coordinator Matt Bryden, visited Northeast Somalia to determine the viability of, and to prepare the ground for possible WSP activities in that area.

The mission was well received by the political, traditional and administrative leadership in the northeast for a number of reasons. Advance information about the mission and its terms of reference had been conveyed through a number of channels (notably through the Somali Red Crescent Society). The mission coincided with a period of intense activity by the leadership in the northeast to emerge from isolation and improve relations with the international aid community. Additionally, a number of respected northerners had helped to

promote the work of the mission in advance and this opened doors. Finally signals that WSP was ready to start its activities in Northeast Somalia immediately also played a part in ensuring a generally positive response to the mission.

Staffing and preparations for research

Despite the SSDF's nominal leadership in Northeast Somalia, the movement's internal divisions and weak administrative structure meant that WSP largely determined for itself how it would become established in the northeast region and initiate working relationships with relevant groups and individuals.

WSP chose a cautious, step-by-step approach. The first step was to establish a coordinating office in Nairobi, close to the network of agencies engaged in Somalia but working from outside the country. This would allow it to keep in close contact with these various agencies, collect up-to-date information on their plans and projects for Somalia, get support for its own plans and at times receive logistical support for project activities it would be initiating in the northeast. Over time, it was hoped that WSP's research offices in the northeast might become more self-sufficient.

Despite the SSDF's nominal leadership in Northeast Somalia, internal divisions and weak administrative structure meant that WSP largely determined for itself how it would become established.

At the time of establishing the Nairobi office, Matt Bryden, a Canadian national with a long-standing research and action involvement in the Somali region and with family ties into the Somali social context, was appointed as Programme Coordinator of the WSP Somali Programme. He was expected to provide general guidance for the project activities planned for the northeast, explore the possibility of extending the project into other regions, and liaise with the international agencies operating from Nairobi.

In Nairobi, the Coordinator was joined by a Research Associate, Ahmed Yusuf Farah, a senior Somali researcher with a background in social anthropology whose tasks would include the preparation and training of the Somali researchers and providing documentary support for the research team inside Somalia. Since no documentation or reference sources in Somalia survived the civil war, collecting the relevant background literature became the responsibility of the Nairobi support office.

From early 1997, the Research Associate began gathering books, magazines, reviews and other relevant literature on the reconstruction of war-torn societies. Much of the material was sent from WSP Geneva, and the remainder came from the documentation unit of the United Nations Development Office for Somalia (UNDOS). In mid-1997, the UNDOS documentation unit chose to relocate to the WSP premises in Nairobi, signalling a growing partnership. In practice, the

regular dissemination of documents from Nairobi to three regional offices some 750 kilometres apart has proved to be a formidable logistical challenge and various information technology alternatives continue to be explored to facilitate the task

The Nairobi office also has a small but efficient administrative unit. It is envisaged that over time management of the field activities will become autonomous, allowing the Nairobi office to be scaled down. From the outset, the project in Somaliland will be established as an institutionally independent local research organization, with much less dependence on the WSP office in Nairobi.

Recruiting within the northeast itself was difficult. One qualified researcher was needed to carry out research in each of the three northeast regions (Bari, Nugal and Mudug) and a zonal coordinator was to be recruited for the northeast project as a whole. In a politically highly charged situation, the zonal coordinator in particular would have to enjoy broad acceptance and be able to act with sensitivity. The zonal coordinator would also bear most responsibility for preparing the political ground for the project and seeing it through any impasse. The other researchers similarly had to be acceptable to the local population to be able to function effectively, while it would be good if as a team they offered a range of background expertise and also represented the main social and political identities within the northeast.

There were few suitable candidates for the positions. Indeed one of the key problems facing Somalia as a whole is the loss of qualified people who fled to the Middle East, Europe and North America during the conflict. Given these conditions, it required optimism and a sound network of contacts to begin recruiting with any expectation of success.

During one of the preliminary reconnaissance missions in 1996, WSP staff from Geneva and Nairobi had identified Adam Jama Buxi as a potential candidate for the role of Zonal Coordinator. Adam Buxi had a professional career as a banker, businessman and consultant in the early years of independent Somalia. Following the collapse of the government, he had returned from exile in Canada to try and make a contribution to the rebuilding of his home area, and had recently completed a term as Regional Development Commissioner in Mudug.

One of Adam Buxi's strengths was that he saw himself as a community mobilizer rather than primarily in research terms. With notable communication skills and an eye for significant detail, combined with an entry into key SSDF circles, Adam Buxi had a unique combination of skills. His profile as a consensus figure was confirmed by different factions within the SSDF, who endorsed his selection and agreed to work with him.

The researchers recruited to work in each of the three regions of the northeast were recruited in the knowledge that the public would be closely monitoring the whole process. The selection process was geared towards candidates who had their home within the region and who would be accepted locally.

For all three positions a transparent recruitment procedure was adopted the positions were announced and described in the local newspapers or news sheets and dates were set at which interested candidates would be interviewed

Interviews were then held with all local candidates taking a full day in each locality to meet up to a dozen candidates The interviews were conducted by Adam Buxi, Matt Bryden and WSP Head of Operations Oto Denes and in each case took place in the presence of a representative of the local administration

By inviting a representative of the regional authorities to participate in the selection process, WSP was able to use the recruitment process to build a basis for cooperation with the SSDF and local administrations, the main political actors in Northeast Somalia It also avoided the problems over staff recruitment faced by many external actors in Somalia An additional by-product of the recruitment process was the local curiosity and interest in WSP which was generated

The research team formed at the end of this process consisted of Ahmed Abbas Ahmed (Bari region), a former economics lecturer at the University of Mogadishu and more recently involved in NGO activities Abdulgaffar Haji M Abdulle (Nugal region) a university graduate in business management, and Abdissalam A Farah (Mudug region) who had a background in NGO activities In addition to their mix of specializations, the three researchers represented different though overlapping social networks Additionally, with Adam Buxi, the team reflected a useful balance of different orientations within the northeast and the SSDF

The recruitment process followed in Somalia was quite different to the processes followed in the three earlier WSP country projects Other aspects of WSP methodology also had to be adapted for the Somali case instead of a Country Note, for example, which in Eritrea, Guatemala and Mozambique had been the first tangible step in the research undertaking in Northeast Somalia it was decided first to produce a Regional Note, then a Zonal Note both of these an indication of the bottom-up approach to research The Regional Note would outline the main constraints and potential for reconstruction and development within the regions from which the researchers were recruited On the basis of the three Regional Notes, and in recognition of common points that emerged from these, a Zonal Note would then be drafted for the whole of Northeast Somalia

Implementation: establishment, Regional Notes and Project Groups

The most difficult problem encountered during the first phase of the project – a difficulty partially resolved through the Puntland conference – was the absence of well-defined government interlocutors Since the disintegration of government and the diffusion of power and authority, political leadership in Northeast Somalia, as in other parts of Somalia, had been contested by a variety of entities Several clan elders and interest groups each with their own interests and agendas, were vying for control The SSDF, despite enjoying relative political

hegemony, had been beset by factional infighting over the leadership. Some traditional elders contested the SSDF's leadership, and the nominal regional administrations formed in the aftermath of the government's collapse were handicapped by a lack of effective authority and by internal dissent.

WSP's aim from the beginning was to not become identified with any of these fractious and competing interests, but to be accepted by all. To be closely identified with any particular group would probably spell the failure of the project. In order to achieve this, the team tried from the outset to make different groups and factions understand the methodology and objectives of the project, and ensure that they actively supported and participated in WSP's consultative process. This meant convincing all sides not to use WSP as a platform to promote their own interests, but to use it positively as a space for dialogue and consensus. Constant contact with all levels and types of authority (including regional, interregional, political, traditional and administrative) and with various civic groups in order to explain the WSP methodology, aims and neutrality was essential from the beginning. Controversy had to be avoided and a solid neutral profile for the project and research staff had to be established. The team worked constantly to allay fears that WSP was biased towards one group or another, while at the same time promoting the usefulness and importance of the work of the project for everyone concerned.

Visits by WSP staff from Nairobi and Geneva helped to promote WSP's image as a neutral international exercise, disinterested and detached from the internal political dynamics of the northeast. These visits provided the opportunity for public and private meetings and for renewal of commitments from the leadership. Over time, WSP succeeded in achieving a reasonable level of acceptance by all tiers of local authority in the northeast and became an autonomous force in the rebuilding process.

The attempt at building the project from the regional level up to the zonal level was another feature of the distinctive approach WSP adopted in Northeast Somalia. From the beginning, the WSP team sought to clarify the project's aims with the political leadership, local administration and traditional elders in all three regions and to ensure that the project would get support from each of them.

The political limitations of this approach were exposed almost immediately in Mudug – a politically and socially divided region despite a ceasefire between the principal factions in May 1993. Following a first round of consultations in the town of Galkaayo with representatives from both north and south which secured the agreement of all groups to participate in a common WSP exercise, a series of

WSP's aim from the beginning was to not become identified with any fractious and competing interests, but to be accepted by all.

violent incidents escalated tensions in the community and severely restricted further discourse between the two sides. Unable to bridge the divide, WSP was unavoidably confined to North Mudug.

WSP staff took some nine months in 1997 to familiarize people with the project and to put in place the necessary research infrastructure. Responses were generally quite positive, so much so that the local administrations in the three regional headquarters of Galkaavo, Garoowe and Boosaaso offered accommodation free of charge. WSP accepted and in turn refurbished the quarters, putting in pumps and generators that would also serve the regional administrations. The decision to work in public settings rather than secure compounds like most international agencies was an important gesture of trust in the process of confidence-building. Additionally, locating WSP among the community was important symbolically, as a means of encouraging local players to take responsibility for the project.

The three researchers also needed time to familiarize themselves with the project's working methods. WSP colleagues from Nairobi and Geneva helped to train them, including helping them to promote confidence in the project in a social environment unused to the kind of enquiries the project would make.

The decision to work in public settings rather than secure compounds like most international agencies was an important gesture of trust in the process of confidence-building.

The bottom-up approach allowed the researchers to examine and document key issues in social, economic and political development at the local and regional levels with much greater detail than would otherwise have been the case. The researchers collected information through interviews with local residents and developed a picture of conditions and constraints within the region which the inhabitants recognized as their own. Secondary sources were later consulted as necessary. The Regional Notes which the researchers prepared for Bari, Nugal and North

Mudug contained useful up-to-date information and insights on local conditions that would be extremely difficult to obtain any other way.

This process of consultation and participatory research extended over several stages, with the researchers preparing first drafts on the basis of initial rounds of dialogue, followed by discussion and revision in subsequent meetings with interested members of the community. These community representatives began to constitute spontaneous Working Groups which later formed the core of the respective Regional Project Groups.

These results had an important positive effect on the researchers themselves. When they began the first phase of the interactive research, the researchers had been uncertain how local people would receive them. Local researchers on local issues were a novelty in the area.

Within the communities there was curiosity, mixed with a fair dose of scepticism, about the new endeavour. It was not long before the strong Somali oral tradition provided WSP with nicknames. The project was first received as 'UNOSOM V', in other words the new incarnation of high-profile United Nations involvement in Somalia. When it turned out that WSP followed a low-key approach (and had not much to offer in material terms), this was replaced by the disparaging *suga yar* (invisible dust) and then by the more sinister *impuriyaalalda calaamiga* (foreign imperialism). Finally the project became known by the more neutral label *war-doon* (instead of 'war-torn') which means 'seeking the news'.

Not surprisingly, the team initially had some difficulty explaining their mission, since they did not come with aid to distribute, their empty-handedness caused initial puzzlement among local people. Once they began to grasp that WSP's role was to help them clarify the options and priorities they faced in rebuilding, reactions changed to recognition and respect which in turn gave an important boost to the researchers' self-confidence.

Initial enthusiasm for the WSP exercise did not entirely stem from, nor was it matched by a clear understanding and appreciation of what WSP intended to achieve. To many, the idea of research as an instrument for political, social and economic rebuilding was new and vague. Some thought WSP's insistence that it was not an implementing agency was just a tactical ploy. Even members of the more enlightened leadership who could appreciate the value of research could not understand the logic of its timing, and felt that what was needed in Northeast Somalia was action and more action, not research.

The project became known by the more neutral label 'war-doon' (instead of 'war-torn'), which means 'seeking the news'

The WSP team faced other hurdles in completing the first phase of the research. The researchers needed time and training to understand the interactive methodology of the project, their research skills had been unused during years of inactivity in the civil war and needed to be refreshed. Local and external actors in the northeast had difficulty understanding WSP as a collective exercise rather than a conventional aid project, and the absence of a genuine culture of cooperation between external actors and Somalis complicated the prospects for interactive research. Additionally the pressure imposed by the deadline set for the submission of draft Regional Notes in August 1997 also limited the interaction between the researchers and external actors who were often detached and suspicious of local actors and institutions.

Among international actors support and understanding for WSP at the global level – and to a lesser extent in Nairobi – did not easily filter down to field staff. Instead, it was clear from the start of WSP activities that representatives of the international assistance agencies operating in the northeast were unfamiliar, and

in many cases uncomfortable with the idea of the project. The most common initial reaction of the agencies was to welcome with polite scepticism WSP's intent to carry out a research programme in a country with no government, no institutions of governance and no established institutions of any kind.

Among local communities, in contrast, there was a growing awareness that the researchers aimed to articulate local perceptions of current issues, and this resulted in appreciation and support for their efforts.

After several rounds of revision, draft Regional Notes for the three regions were produced for discussion, comment and approval at Regional Project Group meetings in Galkaayo, Garowe and Boosaaso in March 1998. These meetings were also to select Entry Points for further in-depth research on specific policy issues and priorities. At these meetings, each of them attended by between 25 and 30 participants, the sense of local ownership of the project was shown by the strong arguments in favour of the adoption of one Entry Point or another. Significantly, there were discussions among community members about vital issues that concerned them all. The choices were felt to be important as they might determine in which fields follow-up action would be initiated.

In a situation where effectively there was no state to rebuild, questions of where to start naturally commanded great attention.

The lively discussions in the Regional Project Group meetings highlighted some fundamental questions about rebuilding. In a situation where effectively there was no state to rebuild, questions of where to start naturally commanded great attention. The Regional Project Groups discussed, for example, whether it was more important to ensure basic security, or to establish a framework for social and economic development, or to begin key development activities, from which security might grow indirectly. How should security itself be understood – as human security in terms of personal and collective well-being and care, as one of the few women representatives at the meetings

suggested, or as physical security, to be given concrete expression through the recruitment of effective police forces capable of handling issues of law and order?

There was debate on whether security could be established without an agreed legal framework and a body of legal instruments on which to base it. The issue of taxation also arose: while security forces and other administrative personnel must be paid from local tax receipts, how could taxes be raised without having instruments of law and order in place? While these issues are the common currency of classroom debate, it is extremely rare to find them debated in real life.

A further striking feature of the discussions of the Regional Notes and Entry Points was that participants showed a keen sense of awareness of the implications for the future these issues represented.

Above and beyond their application for research, the process of preparing the Regional Notes, identifying the Entry Points and forming the Regional Project Groups was undertaken in a collective spirit of consensus-building although external actors were less engaged than originally anticipated

The distribution of the Notes contributed substantially to WSP's neutral image. They helped make WSP's aims and objectives more transparent, and showed that any perceived political bias in the WSP team was not included in the research products

Moving from regional to zonal

When the Regional Project Groups expressed their unanimous wish to work together, the team decided to move WSP activity to the zonal level. The first step was to create a Zonal Project Group with equal representation from the three regional groupings. The second step was for the WSP research team to draft a Zonal Note, which built on and incorporated many elements of the three Regional Notes. The Zonal Note highlighted concerns shared by the three regions. In building from the regional to the zonal level, WSP created its database and network for action-research in Northeast Somalia

Closely connected to this, a certain shift of emphasis became evident. Since the issues which the three regions had highlighted through the Regional Notes were similar and there was overlap in the Entry Points chosen, it became possible and meaningful for the WSP team to begin treating the regional input as foundations on which a zonal project could be built. The regional focus with which WSP had begun in the northeast was replaced by a primary focus on the northeast as a zone though still with a substantial part of the data-gathering activity towards common zonal themes carried out at the regional level. Accordingly the researchers were asked to trade in their regional assignments to work on one of the Entry Point themes in the northeastern zone as a whole

At around the same time the political terrain in the northeast shifted. When WSP started working in Northeast Somalia, local outlooks on political rebuilding strategies had begun to shift away from the idea that political reconciliation should first occur at the level of the former state of Somalia and that this process would shape local institutions. Following the frustrating Soderre peace process hosted by Ethiopia from late 1996 until late 1997 and the Egyptian-led reconciliation strategy which faltered in mid-1998 the conviction grew that the northeast should first put its own house in order. As this idea gained momentum particularly among leading SSDF circles WSP came to be seen as a potential resource and possible ally in planning and preparing policy. By the time formal discussions began for the establishment of Puntland WSP's Regional and Zonal Notes had become common points of reference

Following three regional meetings held to discuss the final drafts of Regional Notes for Bari Nugal and North Mudug the first Zonal Project Group meeting was

scheduled for Boosaaso on 15 March 1998. This became a major event for WSP and the northeast generally. Surpassing all expectations, the meeting was attended by more than a hundred people, including representatives from several multilateral agencies based in Nairobi (UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNIFEM and others), a delegation from the Swedish Government agency staff based in Boosaaso itself (UNCTAD, UNOPS, WFP, Habitat), leaders of the SSDF, clan elders and traditional authorities, representatives of women's groups, and 30 delegates from the three northeast regions themselves. An event of this size in the northeast was rare and apparently demanded high-level security precautions, so the event was guarded by several dozen SSDF militia on semi-alert.

The Zonal Project Group meeting was important symbolically as well as operationally. For representational balance, it was formally opened by Boqor Abdullahi Muse, the nominal traditional leader in the northeast, and closed by Col. Abdillahi Yusuf Ahmed, the first chairman of the SSDF, who referred to himself as a warlord in search of peace. Both welcomed the involvement of WSP in the northeast and expressed high expectations of its role and future contributions. Col. Abdillahi quoted the chicken and egg relationship between security and law enforcement, and the urgent need for effective disarmament as a step towards recreating basic security. Anticipating the establishment of a new government for the northeast within the next few months, he stressed how this would need to translate WSP's research results into action.

The formal agenda included a review of the work done at the regional level and of the commonalities that were emerging. On these issues, the draft Zonal Note provided ample material for reflection. The agenda also called for the selection of Entry Points, now at the zonal level, which could build on priorities that had been expressed at the Regional Project Group meetings. However, as had happened at the regional level, but with even more passion, the choice of Entry Points engendered fierce debate. Possible Entry Points had been classed in three main groups, broadly comprising social development, economic rebuilding and political institutions, and within each rubric one or at most two Entry Points were to be chosen.

The first three areas selected for research were basic institutions of government, the role of different actors in social service delivery, and social integration. The fourth choice was between economic infrastructure development and the pastoral economy, a key theme for research under economic rebuilding. Numerous arguments in favour of both were made, with representatives from Nugal, the main traditional livestock raising region, coming out strongly and consistently in favour of research and action on the infrastructural aspects of economic recovery, while the Bari and Mudug delegates focused more on the diversification of economic activities, including the pastoral economy, fisheries and frankincense.

Positions remained so rigid that in the end the matter was referred to a special *ad hoc* committee in an attempt to resolve the deadlock.

Even that solution proved to be difficult and the *ad hoc* committee passed on the dilemma to the WSP team. The team reformulated the Entry Points taking into account the evolution of the political environment with the creation of Puntland, and the need for WSP to provide necessary assistance to the new authorities while maintaining its distance and autonomy. In a special training seminar, it was decided that the Entry Point on *Basic institutions of the government* would be refocused to become *Basic institutions for governance at local level*, that the *Social integration* Entry Point should focus and start research on problems related to the demobilization and integration of different militias under the title *Implications of the Puntland conference for social integration*, that the Entry Point *Role of different actors in provision of social services* should become *Opportunities for the improvement of essential services* and that, in the light of the Puntland conference, the four proposed themes for the Entry point on the economy should be grouped under the title *Transformation towards a regulated economy*.

These proposals were presented to the Working Group in a discussion paper for a final decision. The intense interest shown in the choice of the Entry Points clearly showed the high expectations by which WSP's main research phase was to be accompanied.

In two other respects the March 1998 Zonal Project Group meeting echoed the process seen at the regional level. One was the perception of ownership, a special and at times sensitive question in all WSP country projects. In Northeast Somalia, several delegates at the meeting stressed that WSP, in contrast to many externally-devised projects was 'one of us'. They meant that it started by working with and within the community, and allowed its direction and priorities to be determined locally, rather than resulting from externally-derived conceptions, humanitarian or otherwise. The second and related point was tabled by Mohamed Abshir Waldo, executive secretary of the SSDF Executive Committee. This was the proposition that WSP, in view of its background research on conditions in the northeast, would be a natural partner for the government in formulating policies in various fields. He suggested a permanent partnership.

It was evident that the WSP team in Northeast Somalia had been successfully integrated into the local political scene. In fact it had become a much demanded partner especially by the SSDF and other local actors considering institutional arrangements and policy choices for Northeast Somalia. The WSP team made efforts to adjust the timing of WSP activities such as the Regional and Zonal Project Group meetings, so that they would not clash with key preparatory meetings for the Constitutional Conference that took place in May and June 1998 since the

In Northeast Somalia, several delegates at the meeting stressed that WSP, in contrast to many externally-devised projects, was 'one of us'

Regional and Zonal Project Groups included many people who would also take part in the constitutional process. While the WSP team sought to support this process, it nonetheless adhered to its own agenda and retained its autonomy of operations. At times it required a delicate touch to balance these different priorities.

After the zonal meeting and in preparation for the Constitutional Conference, the WSP team was asked by the SSDF to draft a discussion paper on *The social and economic development of Puntland State: an agenda for the future*. The team accepted this task, using the project's Regional Notes and Zonal Note as a basis. The document was intended to help the proposed Puntland State administration for Northeast Somalia to develop a preliminary agenda for social and economic reconstruction. The paper highlighted priorities for social reconstruction that had been identified in the initial WSP research, namely key issues of social integration and the provision of social services on an equitable basis. It discussed the need for further diversification of the productive sectors and the sustainable exploitation of natural resources, and paid specific attention to infrastructure development. It also identified basic issues of resource mobilization and resource constraints that would need to be confronted. Much of the research done in the preparatory phases of WSP thus grew in value and became the basis for an agenda of policy choices.

External actor, internal process

The frequent comment by Somalis that WSP was 'one of us' meant more than that WSP was taking a community-based approach. Field staff of multilateral agencies kept a polite distance from WSP before and during the Zonal Project Group meeting. In general, interaction between external and local actors, which had been so prominent a feature of WSP in Eritrea and Mozambique, did not become a key element in Northeast Somalia in the early stages.

It was a challenge to the WSP team to persuade agency representatives to look beyond their sectoral mandates and consider their roles within the wider context of political, social and economic reconstruction in Northeast Somalia. During the preliminary research phase, researchers had to overcome a general reluctance on the part of aid agencies to share information, and fears that WSP might set itself up as some sort of monitoring agent of multilateral action.

WSP in the northeast came to be identified with the mobilization of local groups in the common interest of social, economic and political rebuilding, a process in which local field staff of external agencies play little or no part. In that respect, the phrase 'one of us' unwittingly expressed the mistrust, inequality and frustration that has characterized the relationship between internal and external actors in the area. The problem has been exacerbated by the rigid interpretation of institutional mandates, frequent turnover of international staff and a sense of partnership that rarely extends beyond the treatment of local actors as sub-contractors for agency projects.

The relative silence of international actors based in the region has caused disappointment and concern for WSP staff because it seems to run counter to the idea that gave life to WSP external/internal actor interaction in the service of rehabilitation and development. But it is important to understand why this has occurred and, in any case, while the relative absence so far of the external presence makes the Somali project different from the other WSP projects, it does not follow that it should therefore be less valuable.

It should be remembered that the Somali context differs from other WSP country situations and that this influences the extent of external actors' involvement. One difference is that most of the people working for external agencies in Northeast Somalia are technical operational staff with very specific assignments such as port management, the airport or specific health projects. This is unlike the situation in, say Mozambique or Eritrea, where country-wide representatives of FAO, the World Bank and other agencies found WSP discussions on broad policy alternatives stimulating learning exercises to which they themselves could also make meaningful contributions.

In Somalia there is less obvious need or reason for external actors, most of whom are based in Boosaaso, to engage in policy-oriented dialogue with other agencies and with local participants. Nor would locally-based agency staff be in a position to change this practice: decisions would need to be taken at the level of their various headquarters, or at least in Nairobi. In principle, participation of technical officers in policy discussions would require substantial reversals of policy and organization on the part of some major agencies.

Another factor is the absence of a logical principal interlocutor to whom external agencies can present their programmes, and of an incentive to expose them to public scrutiny. Instead, agencies tend to create their own small world of interaction. In other situations – notably in Eritrea but also in Mozambique, external/internal interactions became a prominent feature of WSP partly because most or all of the external agencies felt they had problems of communication with the central national government, and vice-versa. In Somalia this problem, by definition, does not exist.

This state of affairs is not very satisfying however and has led external agencies to adopt unilateral strategies that are giving some cause for concern. The WSP Somalia team in its report to WSP's comparative workshop in Addis Ababa in March 1998 described the situation in the following terms:

In Somalia the insistence of international actors – diplomats, donors and aid agencies – on the identification of valid interlocutors has proved not only fruitless but often destabilizing. In the absence of accepted public institutions

The relative silence of international actors based in the region has caused disappointment and concern for WSP

privileged contacts between an external actor and any internal interlocutor are perceived to represent selective empowerment, and can exacerbate existing rivalry leading to tension and conflict. While the value of engaging diverse representatives of the community is not in dispute, international actions are often underpinned with conveniently vague references to civil society and frequently turn out to be counterproductive producing gatekeepers who monopolize and distort external contacts with the community.

Conceivably this situation may change once efforts to re-establish a government framework in Northeast Somalia gain some ground in turn providing a clearer point of reference and orientation for external agencies. In the meantime, WSP has helped to create a context in which different Somali groups – various factions within the SSDF, modernists and traditionalists, and others – have come together for meaningful discussion of issues of post-conflict reconstruction.

In the first Zonal Project Group meeting, for example a number of Somali participants described WSP as a northeastern institution, not an external actor. A senior figure in one of the administrations argued that WSP differed from international programmes because ‘the international community thinks that a

failed state also means a failed people, and that they have not only a duty to help us but a right to think for us’. Although such comments include an element of rhetoric they also imply that WSP’s efforts to develop local ownership of the process have been successful.

WSP has also started to develop a local capacity for independent research and analysis. While WSP does not aim nor claim, to compete with other, professional research organizations, its research products demonstrate that WSP can make an original and useful contribution to the understanding of both internal and external actors. Symbolically, the re-emergence of competent Somali

leadership in research and analysis represents an important return of the ownership of reconstruction activity to Somali hands.

WSP’s emphasis on informal, democratic consultation conforms closely to post-war Somali society, where public debate and decision-making on most issues take a similar form (political decision-making remains an important exception). Consultations initiated by WSP in Northeast Somalia have proved immediately recognizable to Somali participants, engaging their interest and active participation. At the same time, the introduction of a forum where public issues are discussed openly, transparently and critically represents a break from the kind of centralized and authoritarian leadership which characterized the former military regime and the fighting factions that superseded it.

The re-emergence of competent Somali leadership in research and analysis represents an important return of the ownership of reconstruction activity to Somali hands

WSP has helped to level the playing field between national and international actors. Since centres of documentation within Somalia were destroyed, external actors have much better access to information than Somalis, and this gives them an element of authority – and therefore power – over those who lack such knowledge. By sharing information equitably and providing a mechanism for the exchange of acquired knowledge and expertise, WSP can help to encourage dialogue based on shared knowledge of the facts.

WSP has also unintentionally democratized dialogue on reconstruction by identifying complex and cross-sectoral Entry Points in the Regional and Zonal Project Group meetings. None of the Entry Points relates directly to a specific aid issue, project or programme, so no single aid agency enjoys clear superiority over the others, either in terms of expertise or resources. Participants are thus challenged to demonstrate their value through their understanding of the issues rather than through the goods (such as jobs, contracts and equipment) that they happen to represent. This has helped to mitigate the inherently unequal donor/recipient relationship that pervades much dialogue on reconstruction.

These examples suggest that PAR, which is a delicate strategy of intervention even in normal conditions, needs to be adapted to each specific case. It may be more successful if it is employed to address one problematic relationship at a time, rather than several at once.

If circumstances tend to invite a phased induction of WSP activities and engagement in broader patterns of reconstruction efforts, with external actors coming in only when a basic framework for local interaction exists, this should be seen as an interesting variant to WSP's mobilization agenda. Nevertheless, the active participation of external actors is an important pillar supporting WSP, and remains an ultimate goal of the project.

Another key element in WSP's transformation from external actor to internal process is the degree to which participation and duration have helped to confer legitimacy on the dialogue. Many of the issues discussed in WSP fora have been analysed, studied and discussed in other fora, usually within the context of a given aid programme. Such meetings are often *ad hoc* events serving to endorse the plan or product of an international aid agency, or to introduce an element of community participation in externally-driven activities. By encouraging people to define priorities through an integrated analysis of the situation – without introducing an external agenda – and by sustaining the dialogue over time, WSP has helped to shape a discourse rooted in the concerns and aspirations of the people of the northeast and not simply based on the shaky foundation of a promise of aid resources.

That the research agenda should be driven by the Project Groups further legitimizes WSP by providing an answer to the common question of why WSP should conduct research at all – an important factor, given the fatigue of Somalis with evaluations, assessments and other types of research. The idea that local actors are researching themselves and their partners is an exciting innovation.

The project has also attempted to build a bridge between Somalia and the Nairobi-based aid community. Within Somalia, the project's participatory consultations are intended to open a new window for external actors on the genuine issues and concerns of their Somali partners. In Nairobi, WSP retains membership in both the Somali Aid Coordination Body (SACB) and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), and has contributed position papers to help agencies adopt common strategies for action within Somalia.

Capacity and expectations

WSP has raised high expectations in Northeast Somalia. If too much is expected of a small team of local researchers, however, there is a risk that such expectations might turn into disillusionment and frustration on all sides. WSP's ability to meet expectations implies several constraints that need to be kept in mind as the project continues.

One is the inclination of local groups to expect WSP to provide guidance to the action-research process, rather than the other way around. This was illustrated in the response to the deadlock over the choice of a fourth zonal Entry Point.

The Zonal Project Group and the *ad hoc* committee set up to deal with the question were inclined to leave the matter for the WSP team to decide. This suggests that the research team will have to continually emphasize WSP's basic participatory approach to action-research activities.

Other expectations are more difficult to handle. Possibly the most important is the persistent belief, despite WSP's repeated statements that it has come empty-handed, that research will be followed by concrete action of one kind or another, and that the choice of research themes will thus determine in which areas action can be expected.

Many people are openly contemptuous of 'just more research' and 'papers that will end up on shelves somewhere' and do not see the intangible but vital processes of priority-setting and policy planning as 'action', 'product' or 'results'

There is no doubt that many participants in the WSP process understand the potential of the exercise, but there is also much to suggest that the commitment of many participants is sustained primarily by the promise of action, not by an appreciation of other, less tangible benefits. This partly explains the intensity with which some of these choices have been debated.

Expectations of WSP are therefore high, particularly in terms of a final 'product' with the corollary that dialogue for its own sake – even structured, scientific and systematic dialogue – is of little value. Many people are openly contemptuous of 'just more research' and 'papers that will end up on shelves somewhere' and do not see the intangible but vital processes of priority-setting and policy planning as 'action', 'product' or 'results'.

Evidently, research for its own sake is not a very credible proposition in the three northeastern regions – a premise that by and large WSP itself shares. Instead, research and action are expected to be intimately related. However, action needs to be more fully understood, explained and debated, including the question of whose action can be expected at what point. The idea that responsibility for action might fall upon the participants in WSP rather than upon WSP itself seems to be one of the hardest to communicate. Possibly this becomes clearer during the analysis and evaluation phase, when participants in the process begin to review their own strategies in light of their WSP experience. But it might also fall to WSP to help participants better define the conceptual links between research and action.

One such link is the principle that it is the national or local leadership that is ultimately responsible for the reconstruction process. While political leaders routinely express their support for external efforts at reconstruction, their involvement tends to be limited to providing security and a political space in which others should function. Rarely, if ever, has the Somali leadership articulated a clear, realistic social agenda. In Northeast Somalia, WSP has already begun to attract the attention and efforts of the northeast's political actors. Through the regional and zonal meetings, however, a number of known political figures began to involve themselves in the issues. Although it is too early to tell whether their involvement can be sustained, the enlistment of political will in direct support of reconstruction efforts, and even to establish recovery as an issue on the political agenda, will prove a key element in the pace and direction of reconstruction.

Perhaps even more important is the extent to which community representatives who are debating and adopting policy priorities are willing and able to accept the burdens of implementing decisions taken. If this proves difficult, as it may, then advocating particular measures may either emphasize the need to reinstate government functions or else foster an (almost surely mistaken) expectation that international agencies will be prepared to take up the tasks at hand. Either way, it is important to clarify what role WSP could and should play in this implementation process.

Once concrete policy recommendations emerge from WSP's work, a functioning executive body is needed to successfully implement them. If that body is not fully functioning, or is weak (as is the case at present in Northeast Somalia), then WSP might be pressured into accepting an implementation role itself. This would clearly be inappropriate for WSP, since it might mean effectively becoming a substitute for a governmental body. The dilemma is clear: WSP will need a governmental counterpart to play a meaningful role in the reconstruction process, yet it cannot

WSP will need a governmental counterpart to play a meaningful role in the reconstruction process, yet it cannot be nor can it be seen to be part of such a body, as that would compromise the neutral identity on which its usefulness rests

be nor can it be seen to be part of such a body as that would compromise its neutral identity on which its usefulness rests. In the past this has meant struggling to find ways to be of service to the constitutional conference while avoiding entanglement in the politics surrounding the conference and resulting administration. For this reason, WSP has declined any technical advisory role. But how is this path to be navigated in the future?

Accepting a more direct role in policy formulation would mean adding a distinct new dimension to WSP's activities, and in the process modifying or potentially eclipsing the original agenda. In the first three WSP country projects, WSP provided neutral ground to which it invited interested parties for dialogue and policy interaction. WSP's expanded role in Northeast Somalia and its possible contributions towards defining a Puntland policy framework would imply a significant redefinition of WSP's 'neutral space'.

Clear answers to the dilemma are likely to emerge only on the ground. In terms of its own policy, WSP will have to remain steadfast in its efforts to establish and maintain neutrality. This means, first of all, having no agenda other than advancing a better understanding of the issues at stake and facilitating productive discussion among key rebuilding actors. The moment the project is seen as pursuing its own political agenda or that of one particular actor (such as the Puntland government), it will be much less useful.

This might imply limits to the effectiveness of WSP in Somali contexts, where key governmental counterparts might not be available to follow up WSP recommendations. On the other hand, a clear statement of the limits of WSP's mandate while identifying gaps in implementation might help the responsible bodies to formulate their own plans of action.

Potential limitations

While there is ample reason to highlight WSP's achievements in Northeast Somalia/Puntland and its potential contributions to the emergence of a political and economic framework, it is important not to lose sight of some potential limits of the processes in which it is involved. The shift of focus from the regional to the zonal level may limit the space for participation. Broad-based deliberations on the complex issues of post-war reconstruction at the local level have added a degree of reality and legitimacy to the discourse that could not be attained through a more conventional, centralized methodology that may result from a shift of focus to the zonal level.

However, even the present local level approach has not entirely managed to capture the full scope of Northeast Somalia. Indeed the WSP team has drawn attention to the fact that the project draws heavily on urban men and on the male population in general. A number of more specific social groups have also been absent, notably internally displaced people, militia and occupational castes. The gender bias is an inevitable reflection of gender inequalities in Somali society.

While women had gained considerable independence of action during periods of conflict, they run the risk of having to surrender this in post-conflict society

Redressing the gender bias will be a formidable challenge. Few women have participated in the Regional and Zonal Project Groups, but their contributions to discussion have generally been substantive. Artificially increasing the number of women in WSP fora would probably antagonize male participants and encourage tokenism. Instead, WSP has engaged a woman researcher, through a collaborative arrangement with UNIFEM, to ensure that the views of women are adequately represented in the research, and to explore appropriate ways to engage women more directly in the consultative process.

WSP's urban bias is also apparent in the cadres involved in preparations for a Puntland state, and implies serious limits to the transformation processes afoot in the northeast. Among the participants of WSP's regional and zonal meetings, many had held administrative or political offices in the former state system and many may see involvement in WSP and the Puntland preparations as a means of regaining such roles. The essentially fragile state of Somalia was strongly urban-based and urban-oriented. However, the Somali population is still one of the most rural in the world.

Today, population estimates indicate a pastoralist majority in Northeast Somalia. Somali pastoralists have a strong tradition of self-sufficiency and political autonomy, though during the years of pervasive strife they paid heavy tolls. The re-emergence of divisions between an urban-based state framework and a non-urban pastoral majority with its own codes and political concerns, is a danger to be avoided. WSP's contributions to Puntland's post-conflict reconstruction will be more meaningful if it can help redress the gender and urban biases it has already signalled.

WSP's contributions to Puntland's post-conflict reconstruction will be more meaningful if it can help redress the gender and urban biases it has already signalled

Concluding observations

WSP in Northeast Somalia has achieved a remarkable entry into a context that many consider problematic and difficult to work in. It has succeeded in securing a meaningful operational base by adapting the WSP approach to local conditions. One key has been the adoption of a decentralized, bottom-up approach that allows links to be forged and confidence to be built.

WSP was also fortunate in the coincidence of political developments when it arrived in the northeast. The movement for the creation of a Puntland State gained momentum just as WSP finished its preliminary policy-oriented research, and WSP became a partner in great demand in the preparations. WSP's role as an ally and resource to help in the crucial transitions depended on its successful entry into the

local context. At the same time, its achievement in establishing itself might not have had the same impact without the coincidence of political developments.

The key question WSP faces now in Northeast Somalia is whether it will be able to live up to expectations. The prospects for a meaningful role for WSP are good, but the high profile it has gained also implies a risk of disillusionment if the expected products cannot be delivered. It is important to make sure that relevant groups are effectively informed about what they can and cannot expect. WSP could and should provide assistance to all actors in the rebuilding process, underlining its neutrality, independence and inclusiveness. It could not become either a technical commission of the Puntland conference and government, nor be directly involved in policy decisions on rebuilding and development issues.

Beyond its promising beginnings in the northeast, WSP's future involvement in Somalia involves the answers to two principal questions. One concerns the conditions under which WSP projects could be initiated elsewhere in the region. In principle, WSP is interested in initiating further projects in the Somali region if and as conditions allow. A separate project has been launched in Somaliland, along somewhat different lines from activities in the northeast. Generally, the northeast

experience itself is likely to set important examples and make other regions receptive to hosting WSP-type projects. It will be important to retain the focus on post-conflict rebuilding which has been WSP's strength, conflict resolution would require quite different skills and approaches.

The second question is what should happen in Northeast Somalia once WSP's project cycle has been completed. The cycle is normally fairly short, consisting of preliminary research resulting in a Country Note (in the northeast case, in Regional and Zonal Notes), then the selection of Entry Points leading into the main research phase and an assessment of the experience. The Northeast

Somali cycle of political activities, currently focused on the emergence of Puntland State, however, is much longer and may require input from a WSP-type project over a longer period.

While successor arrangements for WSP as an organizing framework are being explored in late 1998/early 1999, therefore, the new arrangement will have to consider how and what kind of follow up project activities are possible in the northeast.

The contributions of the WSP Somali Programme to overall thinking about the WSP methodology and experience are as important as its impact in Northeast Somalia itself. The Somalia project has experimented with alternative approaches, tested the elasticity of some standard components of the methodology and its

It will be important to retain the focus on post-conflict rebuilding which has been WSP's strength, conflict resolution would require quite different skills and approaches

implementation and added to the range of approaches consistent with WSP's basic objectives and thinking. Openness to differences in political context and willingness to make radical adjustments to the methodology to accommodate these have been crucial in allowing WSP Somalia to make its contribution to the wider debate about rebuilding war-torn societies.

Annex 1: Chronology of events

Preparation phase

May 1995 - December 1996 (20 months)

May and November 1995

Initial strategy meetings are held by CCU staff and SAG members which

- evaluate the suitability of the Somali environment for WSP activity
- indicate clearly that the project should try to become active in Somalia

March 1996

A preparatory mission is undertaken by the WSP Director and an SAG member to explore the nature of a possible WSP project in Somalia. This involves discussions with main Somali and external assistance actors

June 1996

The WSP Head of Operations undertakes a follow-up visit to obtain additional information on security considerations, communications capacities and possible office facilities. A strategy is agreed upon to initiate the WSP Somali Programme at selected sub-regional and local levels that are stable and ready for the project, beginning in the northeast, with a view to eventually extending to the northwest and other sub-regions.

October 1996

A preparatory visit is conducted by the WSP Director to seek the advice of Somali specialists and to discuss prospective participation by main external actors. The WSP Director and the future Programme Coordinator visit Bari, Nugal and Mudug regions in Northeast Somalia to

- assess local conditions: is the situation suitable for WSP, can the project make a useful contribution?
- establish contact with local authorities and discuss with them the idea of initiating a WSP project
- identify facilities and resource people

Following this mission, the decision is taken to move ahead with the project.

November 1996

Administrative and technical issues such as office space, communications facilities and security, are explored. Steps are taken to identify potential researchers and the necessary organizational structure.

December 1996

The institutional arrangements for establishing WSP in the three regions of the northeast are agreed upon. The Programme Coordinator and Research Associate

are engaged and a small office is established in Nairobi, initially on the premises of UNDP Somalia. This office serves to

- coordinate activities among the regional researchers
- provide technical and material support
- help prepare future WSP projects in other Somali sub-regions
- link to Geneva

First research phase January 1997 - March 1998 (15 months)

January 1997

The WSP Somali Programme is officially launched, with regional offices in Boosaso, Garowe and Galkaayo. A Northeast Somalia Zonal Project Coordinator is hired to coordinate activities.

February-March 1997

A mission by the WSP Head of Operations is undertaken during which

- administrative and office arrangements are finalized
- regional researchers are recruited in consultation with regional administrations
- an initial research training and orientation session is held to clarify the practical implementation of the project

Between March and July, functioning offices are established in the three regions of the northeast.

July 1997

A mission is conducted by the WSP Project Officer to

- support the Nairobi staff in their efforts to provide training to researchers in Northeast Somalia on WSP methodology
- discuss the project's progress and upcoming activities with collaborators in Somalia
- enhance the visibility of WSP in Somalia

August 1997

The three Regional Notes are drafted after intensive interaction with internal and some external actors. Although the drafts are quite different, the proposed research areas in each region are almost identical, focusing on security, governance and economic development.

October 1997

A mission comprising the WSP Director and the Programme Coordinator visits Addis Ababa, Djibouti and Somaliland to explore the prospects for a regional WSP successor body in Addis Ababa. Initial contact is also made with the authorities in the northwest (Somaliland) as to the eventual extension of WSP into the region.

December 1997

The draft Regional Notes are edited and reworked in Nairobi and Geneva. The Zonal Note is drafted.

January 1998

The Programme Coordinator visits Somaliland as a follow-up to initial visits towards the establishment of WSP operations in Somaliland. Discussions are held with a wide range of internal actors on the eventual structure and organization of a research entity to be fashioned along the lines of WSP.

January - February 1998

Informal consultations on the revised draft Regional Notes take place in the three regions of the northeast. A series of group discussions is held in each region, focusing on the three major themes of the Regional Notes: political, economic and social reconstruction. The meetings begin to articulate key issues – or Entry Points – essential to post-war rebuilding.

March 1998

The first Regional Project Group meetings take place in Galkaayo, Garowe and Boosaaso. At the meetings, the respective Regional Notes are approved and preliminary Entry Points for further research are identified. In mid-March, the northeast's first Zonal Project Group meeting is held. The discussion focuses on selecting Entry Points for interactive research that are common to all three regions. These meetings are attended by the WSP Project Officer and Senior Researcher. Further training on WSP methodology is also carried out.

July 1998

WSP is formally launched in Somaliland.

Second research phase**August 1998 –****August 1998**

A workshop is held in Garowe to clarify the implementation of the research agenda in the second research phase. The Programme Coordinator and WSP Head of Operations attend.

Annex II: WSP Somali Programme staff and Zonal Working Group members

Project Staff

Programme Coordinator	Matt Bryden
Deputy Coordinator for Administration	Abdirahman Osman Raghe
Programme Research Associate	Ahmed Yusuf Farah
Office staff	Hoda Hassan Kanyare (to January 1998) Meymona Abdi (from August 1997) Ayan Sheikh-Salah (from November 1997)

Northeast Somalia

Zonal Project Coordinator	Adam Buxi
Researchers	Abdisalam Ali Farah (Mudug region) Abdigafar Haji Mohamed Abdulle (Nugal region) Ahmed Abbas Ahmed (Bari region)

Somaliland (Northwest Somalia)

Zonal Project Coordinator	Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan (from 1 August 1998)
---------------------------	--

Northeast Somalia Zonal Working Group members (from September 1998)

Political rebuilding

Ali Haji Abdulle, former Governor of Nugal
Dahir Issa Ali, Governor of Nugal
Abdulkadir Osman Issa Deputy Governor of Nugal
Abdulkadir Hassan Egag Director General, Ministry of Justice, Puntland Administration
Noor-Salad Ali Musse, Chief of Police, Nugal
Mohamud Islan Abdulle, Traditional Elder, North Mudug
Ali Mohamud Ahmed Governor of North Mudug
Hussein Jama Yabaq, Director of Security, North Mudug
Ahmed Aden Dheere, former Mayor, North Mudug
Osman Yusuf Haraare, Member North Mudug Administration
Hassan Ugas Yassin, Traditional Elder, Bari
Mussa Haji Said Governor of Bari
Yusuf Moallim Director General Ministry of Interior
Ali Farah Warfaa Eyl District Commissioner
Mohamud Mohamed Haji, Qardho District Commissioner
DIAKONIA
North Mudug Women s NGO
Life and Peace Institute

CARE International
UNOPS
EU
WFP

Social Integration

Osman M Samantar-Fatigue, former Military General (Bari)
Mohamud Sh Hamud, former SSDF member (Nugal)
Said Aden Dıgsı -Waayeel, Nugal Journalist
Mohamud Said Gumbe, Regional Development Officer, Nugal
Ahmed Abbas, Businessman (Nugal)
Mohamed Ali Abdıgır, Writer (North Mudug)
Mohamud Islaa Abdulle, Traditional Elder (North Mudug)
Hussein Jama Yabaq, Director of Security North Mudug Administration
Abdullahı Alı Mire Head of Militia, North Mudug
Ahmed Aden Dhere, former Mayor, North Mudug
Mohamed Abshır Yeeg, Businessman, North Mudug
Local Bari NGO
Local Bari NGO for returnees
Local Nugal NGO
DIAKONIA
Somalı Red Crescent Society
UNHCR

Economic rebuilding

M Y Weırah, former Minister of Finance, Bari
Qassım Alı Jama, Director of local Money Exchange-Amal (Bari)
Abdullahı Nakrumah former Frankincense Trade Director (Bari)
Omar-Sıddıq Abdullah, Chairman of Boosaaso Chamber of Commerce
Abdınassır H Mohamed, former Chairman of Nugal Legislative Council
Alı Hajı Abdulle, former Governor of Nugal
Abdissalam Warsame, Veterınarian (Nugal)
Mohamed Abdulkadıř, Businessman (Nugal)
Abdı-said Alı Suryan, District Commissioner of Jırriban (North Mudug)
Abdıřzak Burgal, Businessman (North Mudug)
Mohamed Abshır Yeeg, Businessman (North Mudug)
Anab Hassan Jama, Activist on women issues and local politics (North Mudug)
Local Nugal NGO
WFP
UNDOS
UNOPS
UNA
EU

Social services

Mohamed Aynab, Director of Education Bari

Dr Mussa Qaybdud, Medical Doctor (Bari)

Abdulkadir Khalif, Veterinarian (Bari)

Khalif Nur Ali, Water Engineer (Bari)

Ali Abdurahman Mohamed, Director of Education, Nugal

Mohamud Yusuf Ali, Businessman (Nugal)

Abdissalam Warsame Bowne, Veterinarian (Nugal)

Mohamud Sh Hamud, former SSDF member (Nugal)

Dr Ahmed Hassan Osman, Medical Doctor (Nugal)

Mohamed A Kulmiye, Engineer (North Mudug)

Dr Bashir Ali Bihi, Medical Doctor (North Mudug)

Dr Abdullahi Hersi-Jesare, Medical Doctor (North Mudug)

Abdirahman Ali Daqarre, Director of Education, North Mudug

Somali Red Crescent Society

UNICEF

WHO

UNESCO

Medecins sans frontieres – Holland

Notes