

# **UNDERSTANDING LOCAL PEACE AGREEMENTS AND CONFLICT PREVENTION:**

## **Case Studies on Liberia, Nicaragua and Somalia**

Ariun Enkhsaikhan, Lodoë Gyatso, Michael Vandergriff

Report of the Center for International Human Rights (CIHR)  
John Jay College of Criminal Justice

submitted to

The Bureau of Conflict Stabilization Operations (CPO)

Office of Analysis, Planning, Programming, and Learning (APPL)  
U.S. Department of State

August 2017



## Preface

This report was written by Ariun Enkhsaikhan, Lodee Gyatso and Michael Vandergriff who worked as Research Assistants at the Center for International Human Rights (CIHR) during the 2016-2017 academic year. The main findings of this report were presented at the Bureau of Conflict Stabilization Operations (CPO), U.S. Department of State, on July 14, 2017. I would like to thank Caroline Corcoran from CPO for her assistance throughout this project and Jennifer Marron also from CPO for making all the necessary arrangements for our team's presentation at the State Department.

Prof. George Andreopoulos  
Director, CIHR  
August 2017

# Introduction

After the end of the Cold War, the indicators for measuring international peace and security have undergone drastic changes. With fewer instances of interstate armed conflict, issues such as human rights, rule of law, public health and environmental degradation emerged on the security agenda. Increasing focus was paid to intrastate conflict which posed threats to international peace and security. Civil war disturbed regional stability, created mass displacement, toppled democracies, and festered humanitarian crises. As the international community interfered in what was traditionally considered a nation's 'domestic' affairs, funds were funneled into international and national development programs. These programs stayed, however, at the international and national levels, unable to effectively trickle down to local levels. Efforts were needed from the ground-up to bridge the gap between the national and local.

This research, conducted under the auspices of the Center for International Human Rights as part of the Diplomacy Lab project of the United States Department of State, examines three case studies of local peace initiatives in conflict and post-conflict environments. The case studies—Liberia, Nicaragua, and Somalia—offer insights into different variables at the local level that influence national-level peace. The research found that the common factor that invites local peacebuilding initiatives is an absence of coherent or effective national leadership. In such cases, as demonstrated in all three case studies, a *non-traditional* actor steps in to fill the leadership vacuum in local communities. Each case study in this research varies along the following factors: the type of *non-traditional* actor; the process by which this actor assumed the local leadership position; and the reach of the peacebuilding initiatives.

The case study on Liberia focuses on the emergence of women as peace activists in a male-dominated society. During the Liberian Civil War, men were forced to bear arms or to flee to escape engagement in such activities. This resulted in women holding roles that were traditionally prescribed to men and their breaking free from their marginalization. Women, discovering agency in a time of conflict, sparked a culture of organization, which they subsequently used to apply pressure on warring factions to cease hostilities. Absent their activism, their voices would have been missing from the negotiating table, and the patriarchy from whence they came would have been left unaltered. Their peace activism rewrote gender norms in Liberian society, where some years after the civil war, the first female head of state in Africa would be elected. The women activists worked to ensure that local communities assumed ownership of peace. Most significantly, they forced all walks of life to strive beyond dropping arms and instead urged them to strive for greater prosperity, stability, and security.

The case study on Nicaragua exhibits a stark contrast between local-level ownership of the peace agreement in northern and central Nicaragua and southern Nicaragua. Local Peace Commissions were created by the National Reconciliation Commission with the intention to enforce the peace agreement. In the South, the Local Peace Commissions engaged local religious leaders, who focused on communal dialogue and capacity building. They further negotiated conflict-free zones and served as mediators between the government and the contras. In North and Central Nicaragua, where the region suffered more from displacement, the Local Peace Commissions were considered by the locals as an external force, having been appointed by the Organization of American States. Although the commissions were spearheaded by local church leaders, the commissions had less grassroots support than the South. The commissions were unsustainable

and failed to inspire local peacebuilding. The comparison between the two regions of Nicaragua accentuates the importance of local ownership of peace initiatives.

In the case of Somalia, the failure of the Transitional Federal Government—the interim government established during conflict and amidst disputed leadership—gave rise to community-appointed central leadership. This included the Islamic Courts Union, which quickly gained popularity in the majority-Muslim country, as well as non-state armed groups. Such community-initiated groups proved successful in the short-term when its small-scale operations provided little opportunity for tribal identity clashes. As the reach of these groups expanded, they grew fragile with identity-based factions growing increasingly hostile towards one another. The Islamic Courts Union eventually collapsed, induced by in-fighting. Their success remained limited to local communities, and had little to no effect on national-level peace.

All three of the selected case studies can be defined as pivotal states—states that are central to developments in their respective regions and can affect, in a consequential way, international peace and security. Civil conflict in Liberia proved to have spillover effects in its neighboring countries, threatening the stability of the West African region. Civil conflict in Nicaragua threatened the fragile peace in its region, located in the United States' own backyard. Civil conflict in Somalia sent a ripple of instability throughout the Horn of Africa, and the displacement caused by fighting poses a transnational threat—a threat over which successive US administrations have expressed deep concern.

This research was conducted through desktop research and content analysis of secondary sources. The research and conclusions thereof can be further strengthened through primary research in the communities discussed in the case studies. In all cases, because local communities are not beholden to regular reporting—as are national and international organizations, that are required to maintain records—the information on local communities and peace initiatives was limited.

# Case Study: Liberia

## Women in Local Peacebuilding

*Ariun Enkhsaikhan \**

### **Background**

#### *Americo-Liberian Relations*

The modern history and development of Liberia is inextricably linked to the United States. Established by the American Colonisation Society in 1847 (Bauer, 2009), the West African nation was colonized by freed American slaves and ruled by Americo-Liberians until a violent coup d'état in 1980 led by indigenous Liberian Samuel Doe (Ellis, 1995). Despite Doe's notoriety for his ties to corruption and human rights violations, Liberia was poised as the most strategic US partner in West Africa during the Cold War, and accordingly received the greatest per capita aid from the US in sub-Saharan Africa between 1980 and 1988 (Sesay, 1996). Towards the end of the 1980s, Doe's misrule drove the nation into bankruptcy. After failed attempts by US financial experts to salvage the Liberian economy (Sesay, 1996) and the waning of the Cold War, there remained little incentive for continued US aid.

The detrimental effects of slashing US aid to Liberia were not contained within the sphere of the Liberian economy; as civil war brewed in Liberia in 1989, the US government refused Doe's appeals for military support, with President George Bush "declaring that Liberia was not worth the life of a single US marine." (Ellis, 1995, p.168). The US settled for indirect support to the Liberian cause by contributing towards the stabilization efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), specifically to the economic union's military force, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). The contribution of the US to ECOMOG remained minimal, with an average per annum US \$10 million to fund the military presence compared to the total \$500 million in aid given to Liberia between 1980 and 1988 (Sesay, 1996).

#### *First Liberian Civil War (1989-1997)*

In 1990, US-educated Charles Taylor overthrew the Doe government, an unsurprising coup amidst civil unrest over Doe's poor human rights record, economic mismanagement, and longstanding suspicions of corruption (Ellis, 1995). An outbreak of civil war, following the change in government, sent a ripple of instability throughout the West African region. The transnational impact of the civil conflict provoked an international response. Under pressure from the international community for a change in leadership, elections took place in 1997 and Taylor was officially elected president (Bauer, 2009). A rushed, externally induced democratic election left little time to question whether the country had sufficiently checked off the basic requirements for democratic rule. The premature elections placed Taylor as the "only candidate with access to sufficient funds" (Bauer, 2009, p.196) and the only presidential candidate who had sufficient time to gain recognition among the public.

---

\* Ariun Enkhsaikhan is a Communications Associate at Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights. She was a Research Assistant for the Center for International Human Rights from August 2016 until her graduation from John Jay College of Criminal Justice in May 2017. She graduated with a B.A. in International Criminal Justice.

### *Second Liberian Civil War (1999-2003)*

Taylor's government showed little signs of improvement from that of Doe's. Following a brief moment of fragile peace pursuant to Taylor's inauguration, civil war resurged in Liberia in 1999. Conflict raged until the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Accra, Ghana on 18 August 2003 (Hayner, 2007), when warring factions were pressured by, among others, women's civil society networks for an immediate cessation of hostilities. Charles Taylor resigned, arms were put to rest, and the Second Liberian Civil War officially came to an end.

The CPA was upheld by all warring sides, a development that posed a stark contrast between it and its fourteen<sup>1</sup> predecessors that had failed since 1989 (Hayner, 2007). This case study highlights one of many elements that could have contributed to the success of the CPA and to the failure of its predecessors: the integral role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes. Women peace activists in Liberia painstakingly thrust themselves into all stages of the process. Although their activism was initially met with resistance from traditional actors in the peacebuilding process—government officials and representatives from international organizations, both typically-male dominated spheres—their importance was soon recognized.

### **Women in Peacebuilding Processes**

As the “bearers of cultural identity” (Fritz et al., 2011, p.2), women are often the prime target during armed conflict. They are affected by conflict both disproportionately and uniquely, and, as such, require a reconstructive response that takes special and careful consideration for their needs. Men account for the overwhelming majority of the human costs of conflict, both in terms of death and injuries, whereas women bear the brunt of the indirect effects of armed conflict. A study by Plümper & Neumayer, (2006) argues that indirect and long-term consequences generated by conflict—ranging from loss of access to food, shelter, and medical services to an increase in domestic violence and aggression towards women—ultimately “are stronger than the direct effects” (p.724). Such consequences tend to linger long after a conflict is resolved and, despite the absence of warfare, “violence women experience in wartime increases when the fighting dies down” (Fuest, 2008, p.202).

During the post-conflict period, research suggests that peacebuilding efforts led by men and women differ due to a definitional discrepancy of the concept of peace (ActionAid, Womankind & IDS, 2012). Men in Liberian communities gear towards what father of peace studies Johan Galtung terms ‘negative peace’—that is measuring peace through the absence of conflict. Women, conversely, tend towards ‘positive peace,’ which stretches the boundaries of peace to include “freedom to live the lives they [choose]” (ActionAid, Womankind & IDS, 2012, p.29). Gender theorist J. Ann Tickner, explaining the feminist perspective of peace, asserts that “comprehensive security cannot be achieved until gender relations of domination and subordination are eliminated” (1992, p.13). According to this theory, men, experiencing primarily the direct consequences of war, may consider the surrender of arms as the turning point towards peace; women—enduring the increase in gender violence following a period of conflict, heightened by a collapse in basic public infrastructure, health systems, and a general sense of instability—would seek to secure greater provisions for peace.

This distinction between the definitions of *peace* is pivotal in determining whether the objective in peacebuilding is to build peace or to end conflict. Thus an emphasis on negative

---

<sup>1</sup> The exact number of attempted peace agreements during the period 1989-2003 vary between 12-14 across different accounts.

peace—ending conflict—would incline towards a peacebuilding process in which the primary actors are members of the warring parties, who tend to be male. An emphasis on positive peace, then, would strive to include in the peace process representatives that reflect the diversity of citizens (Independent Commission on Multilateralism, 2016), which would invariably include more female representation. The operational definition of *peace* shapes the road towards it, and thus the presence of women in peacebuilding processes is crucial to create the balance between positive and negative peace. Communal women’s groups in Liberia sought to strike this balance, posing women not merely as resolvers of conflict but also as builders of peace.

The notion of women as agents of peace, not merely victims or potential threats to peace, was not novel. Only a few years prior in 2000, the United Nations Security Council had adopted resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, calling for “increased representation of women at all decision-making levels...for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict” (UN Security Council, 2000). The resolution urged member states to put in place policy provisions for greater women’s participation in peacebuilding processes, but it had not yet been implemented in Liberia by the time the civil war came to an end.

Liberian women’s civil society networks, in addition to leading the effort to mainstream gender perspectives throughout the CPA negotiations, catalyzed the signing of the peace agreement and played a vital role in its implementation. In the peacebuilding process, women’s cultural identity allowed them to serve as trusted mediators and liaisons between the government, warring factions, the civilian population, and the international presence (Moran & Pitcher, 2004)—a feat particularly useful during a time when fragility, confusion, and distrust ran high. The women cemented their roles as effective and much-needed peacebuilders and played a prominent role in the foundation of lasting Liberian peace.

This case study will focus primarily on the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET), the most notable and internationally recognized women’s network that was active during the Liberian Civil War. WIPNET’s activities have been relatively well-documented both by members of the network as well as international observers, although its efforts during and after the war have been documented almost exclusively in qualitative measures. The accounts of WIPNET cited in this research report have been sourced from members of WIPNET (Gbowee, 2009), academic studies on the Liberian Civil War (Bauer, 2009; Fuest, 2008), international organizations analyzing the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (ActionAid, Womankind & IDS, 2008), as well as Liberian government agencies tasked to promote 1325 through a National Action Plan (Liberian Ministry of Gender Development, 2009).

As discussed in further detail below, members of WIPNET are not representative of all Liberian women but only of those who have, to a certain degree, an education and organizational background. However, considering that the voices of all Liberian women were stifled and marginalized prior to WIPNET’s efforts, the Network’s experience is used in this study to reflect the activation of once-marginalized communities.

#### *Women Peacebuilders: Pre-CPA Initiatives*

The work of WIPNET long preceded the negotiations of the CPA in 2003, but its first great milestone was recognized at that time in Accra, Ghana. During the negotiations, WIPNET arranged for 200 Liberian women, including activists from Liberia and Liberian refugees in Ghana, to block the entrances of the conference hall and “[to demand] that the leaders of the warring factions sign the peace agreement to put an end to the hostility” (Gbowee, 2009, p.51). According to some witnesses, some women went as far as to prevent delegates from using the

bathroom (Hayner, 2007). The activists, with a ceasefire at the forefront of their agenda, called on relatives of rebel leaders to join their network and to make pleas during the negotiations. The women successfully leveraged personal sentiment to their—and Liberia’s—advantage.

### *Women Peacebuilders: Post-CPA Initiatives*

Following the signing of the CPA, women activists worked towards ensuring that implementation efforts would actively incorporate all women, particularly those most vulnerable to marginalization. For instance, in September 2003, WIPNET partnered with a civil society organization to hold a two-day meeting in Monrovia, bringing together women leaders across Liberia to “sensitize [them] to the need for continuous action” to implement the CPA (Gbowee, 2009). This meeting allowed the contents of the CPA’s formal, bureaucratic language to be *translated* to be made digestible to women of local communities. By reaching out to traditionally overlooked communities, WIPNET’s efforts and others of the like installed, among local communities and women, a sense of ownership of the Liberian peace process.

The women activists of Liberia did not limit themselves to promoting solely women’s rights. In the initial stages of the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process, women willingly engaged themselves in the “reconciliation and reabsorption of young-male ex-combatants through apology and acceptance back into the community” (Moran & Pitcher, 2004, p.509). This initiative proved particularly useful to the efforts of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL); the ex-combatants were more willing to give up their arms either through the women activists or directly to the UN troops, while the women activists were present (Gbowee, 2009). During this time, the women activists, trusted both by ex-combatants and the international presence in the country, often served as liaison and improved coordination between two otherwise-siloed parties.

The women activists in Liberia held a unique role in their communities, being viewed as the more *approachable* influencers. A 2012 report quotes a member of the Kenya-based Catholic Justice & Peace Commission saying, “Women build peace among themselves. They mediate and solve disputes at the community level. Most men solve conflicts at ‘chief’ level” (ActionAid, Womankind & IDS, p.43). The perception that men seek resolution or peace from those above their ranks may lead community members to suppose that men would be unwilling to engage with those below their ranks. Because of this illusory barrier, women, being more accessible to all members of their community, adopt a prominent role in local-level peacemaking and peacebuilding.

To the extent that men in local communities adopted a ‘negative peace’ approach to conflict resolution—that is focusing on resolving disputes solely between the disputing parties—the peacebuilding process would be limited to resolutions on individual, ad hoc basis. Women in local communities, then, with a sense of ‘positive peace’ would veer away from vertical peacebuilding. Their efforts would focus on creating and promoting a broader sense of peace that extends beyond the immediate parties to the conflict.

### **Women in Post-Conflict Electoral Processes**

Throughout the 2003 negotiations in Accra, the possibility arose of a Liberian female head of state. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf—former Liberian Finance Minister and one of the founding members of the National Patriotic Front party—had been suggested as interim head of state but was quickly dismissed. Johnson Sirleaf had been vocal about accountability measures for war

crimes, and thus her instatement, the faction representatives believed, would have “[led] to further fighting” (Hayner, 2007, p.13) in protest of the potential prosecution of faction leaders.

Liberia held its first post-conflict presidential elections in October 2005, in which out of twenty-two presidential candidates, two were women (Bauer, 2009). A week before voter registration was scheduled to close, statistics showed low participation among women, particularly among market women. In response, WIPNET, in partnership with other women-led civil society organizations, launched an all-woman campaign to mobilize women and to register them to vote. Their initiative, with the support of 200 women activists, included “[providing] transportation, childcare, and supervision of market stalls to allow women the means and peace of mind” (Bekoe & Parajon, 2007) while registering to vote.

By the time voter registration ended, the campaign had registered an additional 7,425 individuals (Gbowee, 2009), and more women had registered than men (Fuest, 2008, p.215). After two election rounds, Johnson Sirleaf was officially elected as President of Liberia and the first female head of state in Africa. Women also held twice as many seats in Liberia’s lower house than they had just eight years prior (Bauer, 2009).

While several factors contributed to the victory of Johnson Sirleaf, and while it is unlikely that all last-minute registered voters voted in favor of the ultimate victor, the women peacebuilders were clearly a contributing factor. They initiated a culture of political participation among an otherwise politically unengaged community. Women were noted as being “confident and outspoken about their rights, their desire for change, and their contribution to peacebuilding” (ActionAid, Womankind & IDS, p.61). Soon after, the burden of ensuring women’s inclusivity in peacebuilding shifted from women peacebuilders themselves onto the Liberian government.

### **Liberian National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325**

In 2007, the Ministry of Gender and Development of Liberia initiated consultations to develop a Liberian National Action Plan (LNAP) for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The consultations adopted a bottom-up approach (Liberian Ministry of Gender and Development, 2009), making sure to amplify the voices furthest from the discussion. Participants included representatives from government agencies, local NGOs, media institutions, interfaith institutions, community-based organizations, and more (Liberian Ministry of Gender and Development, 2009, p.8). The LNAP, released in 2009, outlined the implementation procedure of Resolution 1325 in Liberia for the period of 2009-2013.

Lessons learned from women’s role in the Liberian Civil War influenced the forging of the action plan. The LNAP underlined the importance of women’s inclusion in “economic reconstruction, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), and security sector reform (SSR) processes” (p.7). In Resolution 1325, DDR is mentioned only as far as to flag the need to take into consideration “the different needs of female and male ex-combatants” (UN Security Council, 2000). The discrepancy between the appeals of the resolution and the provisions of LNAP—namely that the LNAP went above and beyond the demands of Resolution 1325—suggests that the Liberian women peacebuilders’ proven utility in DDR solidified the national call for women’s involvement in DDR.

### **Limitations**

WIPNET and other women’s civil society groups certainly altered the political culture in Liberia. It must be noted, however, that the women involved in these networks do not necessarily

represent women of all backgrounds. While their activities have targeted socially and economically disadvantaged populations, the women who spearheaded the peacebuilding activities are engaged politically, are educated, and are accustomed to operating in urban environments. The struggles facing women in rural areas are distinct from those in urban areas. This distinction emphasizes that the peacebuilding activities discussed in this study are carried out on a local level but are by no means locally initiated. WIPNET and other networks of the like demonstrate the influence that civil society groups can have on national-level peace, but it does not exhibit how peacebuilding efforts that originate from local efforts can translate into national peace and stability.

Considering that an increasing number of women are politically versed and involved, it is likely that local peacebuilding projects—in the sense that the activities are instigated in local communities by and for locals—are active. The difficulty in exploring the success of such local peacebuilding is the dearth of documentation and reporting. Representatives of Liberian communities in rural areas have expressed a sense of “disconnect between their community and national decision-making processes” (ActionAid, Womankind & IDS, p.47) primarily due to a lack of access to information and resources. This suggests that as information struggles to travel from national to local, so does it struggle to travel from local to national. The reports referenced in this study cite some examples of communal peacebuilding but do not provide sufficient information to measure the impact thereof. Without specific details about the actors involved or the communities they impact, it is not possible to outline a firm link between local and national peace.

### **Looking Ahead: Sustainability of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement**

The developments of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) over the years reflect the great strides that Liberia has made since its unsteady transition into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Amidst the humanitarian crisis in Liberia, the UN Security Council deployed a 15,000-strong military contingent in 2003 with the express mandate to support the implementation of the CPA. This entailed providing assistance to the humanitarian and human rights efforts for the scourged civilian population; supporting the ceasefire agreement; and assisting the transitional Liberian government in reforming the security sector (UN Security Council, 2003).

The latest UN Security Council resolution concerning UNMIL—adopted in December 2016—extends UNMIL’s mandate for a final period until 30 March 2018, taking into consideration Liberia’s upcoming presidential and legislative elections. The handover of national security considerations from the peacekeepers to the national forces progressed slowly but steadily, ultimately concluding on 30 June 2016 (UN Security Council, 2016). Leading up to the mission’s final term limit, its military personnel is capped at 434, leaving less than 3% of the original size of the deployment. This reduction in numbers encapsulates Liberia’s ever-growing strength not only of its security sector but also of its sustained peace, stability, and democracy.

The sustainability of women’s participation in politics, however, will soon be put to test in the upcoming general elections on 10 October 2017. As stated, there is a dearth of sufficient data to gauge the national impact of local peacebuilding. The lead up to the general elections in Liberia is the prime moment to observe and record communal-level peacebuilding activities that are otherwise overlooked. Documenting these initiatives can further reinforce Liberia as a model for women’s activism in sub-Saharan African and beyond.

# Case Study: Nicaragua

## Local Civil Society in Peacebuilding

*Lodoe Gyatso\**

### **The Beginning of the Nicaraguan Civil War**

The civil war in Nicaragua erupted in the aftermath of the overthrow of the authoritarian government of Anastasio Somoza by the Sandinista National Liberation Front. During this period, the country faced widespread poverty and a severely declining economy. In such a time of unrest, the contras armed up and rose against the government of the Sandinistas to begin the contra war. The Sandinistas managed to democratically hold a presidential election in 1984 despite all the unrests in Nicaragua. From the beginning of the 1980s, the contras started attacking the Sandinista government in the war that cost the lives of 31,000 Nicaraguans (Odendaal, 2010). While the contras had been carrying out attacks in the name of bringing “real democracy,” the Sandinistas had been gathering military and financial support to bring down the contras. The lack of proper and speedy enforcement of the agricultural reforms promised by the government, large scale confiscation of agro-based lands, and the mandatory service in the country’s armed forces forced many people from the indigenous and peasant community to arm themselves and join the contras in their fight against the government. In the next 10 years, violence continued to spread across the country; this violence led to the urgent calls for the launching of a peace process that would involve local and regional leaders.

During this period, there have been various efforts led by local and regional partners within the Latin American community to start the peace process. The most significant peace accord was introduced by the Costa Rican President Oscar Arias called the 1987 Esquipulas Peace Accord. This regional peace initiative began a series of summits that later served as the vehicle for successful negotiations throughout the region (MacFarlane & Weiss, 1994). This peace accord has set a precedent in various Latin American countries to follow a similar structure of peace agreements in the conflicted region. In Nicaragua it has led to the creation of various commissions and initiatives of the government to strategically implement the peace accord. Such efforts have had significant impact in arranging the ceasefire of 1988 which allowed the contras to settle into their own separate zones, creating 23 self-governing development zones where they ran their own affairs (Odendall, 2010, p.29). In the process of enforcing the provisions of the agreement, local peace commissions helped the community in promoting dialogue between the government and the contras. There has been an increase in assistance for stabilization efforts from the religious organizations in the process of ensuring peace through mediation, dialogue and human rights verification. The Organization of the American States (OAS) has also contributed towards the peace process through protection, demobilization and repatriation of the contras. It is imperative to note that the nature of local and regional actors’ involvement has greatly shaped the local ownership and the legitimacy of the peace process throughout Nicaragua.

---

\* Lodoe Gyatso is a NGO representative to the United Nations for Peacemaking Initiative and a Research Assistant for the Center for International Human Rights. He is a recent graduate of John Jay College of Criminal Justice with a B.A. in International Criminal Justice, where he founded the student organization, Students Without Borders.

### **Local Peace Commissions and the Contribution to Peace**

In the enforcement of the Esquipulas Agreement, President Daniel Ortega proposed to establish the National Reconciliation Commission with the task of creating a strong internal structure for the enforcement of the peace agreement that comprised of a comprehensive network of local and region-specific peace commissions (Lederach, 1997). The establishment of the National Reconciliation Commission has played a critical role in building the Local Peace Commissions. These Local Peace Commissions were strategically placed in different regions of Nicaragua to advance dialogue and mediation among the warring parties while ensuring demobilization and repatriation of the contras. The establishment of the Local Peace Commissions across different regions was tailored to the needs and the challenges of each specific region in which they operated. Previously there had been 28 Local Peace Commissions in the South; towards the end of the war in Nicaragua, there were 60 commissions (Paul, 1997). The differences among the local and external actors involved have contributed significantly towards shaping the characteristics and impacts of the peace process in the North and South of Nicaragua.

In the context of the peace process in the North and Central Nicaragua, there has been a heavy involvement of external actors. In 1989, the Organization of American States (OAS) introduced the International Support and Verification Commission (CIAV/OAS) in Nicaragua. The initial mandate of the CIAV/OAS was to ensure an oversight of the repatriation, demobilization, and resettlement of contras and their families (Odendaal, 2010). The peace process in the South of Nicaragua was mainly led by the local peace commissions comprised mostly of local religious leaders who had been actively engaged in the process of dialogue. In a typical local peace commission, there were five members: a member of the opposition party, an evangelical church delegate, a catholic delegate, a member of the Nicaraguan Red Cross and a representative of the government (Mouly, 2013). The peace commissions have played a critical role in ensuring continuous communication and mediation efforts. The Local Peace Commissions and the Mission of the Organization of American States have both shaped the peace process in Nicaragua with varying results.

### **Southern Nicaragua and Local Church Leaders**

In the South of Nicaragua, the most active actors in the field were the religious leaders who consistently led the initiative to continue the communications between the contras and the Sandinista government. The leaders' involvement with a local religious character has been able to embrace a unique aspect of neutrality in the process. To the contras, they were perceived as leaders from their local community with no ties to or connections with the government. Such peace commissions have also contributed towards advancing the networks of information exchange, personal contacts and stable communication between the two parties. The two main religious representatives were the evangelical pastors and the catholic delegates who had begun their involvement from the early stages of the peace process. When they embarked on this journey, they were able to negotiate "conflict-free zones" by inviting the local residents in creating small commissions which began community-led dialogues between the contras and the Sandinista government (Odendaal, 2010, p. 29). The Evangelical Council of Churches (CEPAD) had been engaged in the process by leading the dispute mediation until the last days of the peace process. In cooperation with the Moravian church, CEPAD has worked to reintegrate the indigenous political group called Yatama into civic life, while also assisting the mission of OAS in the process of disarming the contras.

In the Southern region across Nicaragua, there were various initiatives of the Local Peace Commission primarily led by local church leaders that transformed various sectors of the Nicaraguan society. In places where there was no rule of law, they have assisted the local community in capacity-building programs that enabled them to establish authority and a respect for law and order. In the beginning stage of the conflict in Nicaragua, the local people in places such like Nueva Guinea faced the consequence of the conflict in their own local towns. They were faced with daily armed violence, enforced disappearances, abductions, and robberies by the contras. The local community leaders came together and initiated measures to protect their own people from this violence (Mouly, 2013). It is in this period that the first and most successful peace commission surfaced from the South central village of Nueva Guinea which was later assisted in the effort to come to terms with the contras by the Council of Evangelical Church Delegates. It offers us a clear understanding that the initial peace process in the South began from the local community leaders denouncing violence and leading the peace work with a “bottom-up” architecture.

The local peace commissions have often advocated for the end of human rights violations to protect their civilians, while assisting the military and contras in prisoner exchange initiatives. They have been crucial in organizing various local actions including the candle light vigils and marches for peace. These various local initiatives have contributed greatly towards creating an environment conducive to peace negotiations between the warring parties. The local peace commission in Nueva Guinea was one example where the Local Peace Commissions were able to advance the good offices between the government and the contras. These developments were crucial in achieving the Peace Accord signed between the Southern Contra Front and the national government of Nicaragua in 1990 (Vickers, 1995). Subsequently, the local peace commissions were also tasked with the supervision of the disarmament of contra combatants, the promotion of respect for the demobilized contras, and more prisoner exchanges; in the process, they emerged as the guarantor in this peace process.

The local peace commissions in the South were tasked with the responsibility of upholding the mission of “documenting and investigating human rights violations, advocating on behalf of victims and providing authorities with information” (Kauffman, 1994, p. 9). Despite their responsibilities on documenting and investigating the human rights violations, the peace commissions had long served as mediator and had consistently highlighted the importance of conflict resolution and prevention. As a result, they have greatly contributed towards enhancing capacity building and ensuring respect and adherence to the institutional practice and procedure. In addition to the involvement of the church leaders, there was increasing involvement of women and the youth population who adopted a prominent role in the local peace commissions. Women leaders played an important role in resolving cases related to gender-based violence (Mouly, 2013).

The Local Peace Commissions were also similarly engaged in assisting communities where there were no judiciary, roads for transportation, police and health care. They were entrusted by the community with overseeing the stability of these factions of Nicaragua and they managed to be an instrumental force in maintaining law and order. Meanwhile, they have enhanced coordination and cooperation with the municipal authorities, the judges and the police in places where there was already a presence of the state. According to an analyst, “the role of religious leaders in this tense period was pivotal because of their perceived legitimacy” (Mouly, 2013, p. 51). While working to promote these aspects of the peace process, the local peace commission also worked to obtain equal socio-economic opportunities for the people who were

marginalized throughout the course of the crisis. The United States Agency for International Development has noted that the religious leaders have mediated conflicts between the contras and the government, while introducing new disarmament agreements, overseeing electoral processes, and monitoring human rights abuses (Kumar, 1999). With the involvement of the religious leaders in this local peace commission, they were able to have an impact on the national level by negotiating a well-established truce between the contras and the Nicaraguan government. As Mouly (2013) has emphasized, “local peace initiatives are important to ensure ownership of peacebuilding processes and contribute to their sustainability” (p. 49). The peace process in the South of Nicaragua has acquired a strong local ownership component that positively contributed towards the sustainability of peace.

### **North and Central Nicaragua and the Mandates of OAS**

The peace process in North and Central Nicaragua was different from the process in the South. More than any other region in the country, North and Central Nicaragua was adversely affected by the consequences of the armed conflict and an increasing number of people fled as refugees. Towards the end of the war in Nicaragua, there were more than “500,000 people forced to leave from their house while rendering 400,000 displaced internally” (Odendaal, 2010, p.30). The OAS launched the mission of International Support and Verification Commission (CIAV/OAS) to disarm and repatriate contras. In their mandate, they were given the responsibility to ensure protection for more than 22,000 disarmed combatants and resettled contras. Along with the demobilization efforts, OAS along with the United Nations assisted in the democratic electoral process that put President Violeta Chamorro in power (Kiernan, 1990). In addition, they worked with the Supreme Electoral Council to distribute local identification cards so that the people in the marginalized communities could vote. Most of their efforts included resettlement of the contras and their families. With the successful peace agreement established between the government of Nicaragua and the contras in Nueva Guinea 1990, the local peace commissions were tasked to demobilize the contras in the region. Thousands of contras were not able to stand by the peace agreement and took their arms and went to seek refuge in the mountains of North and Central Nicaragua. It took numerous efforts for the government to strategically tackle this development. Due to the failure of reintegration into the community, the OAS launched this important mission to verify the demobilization and repatriation of the contras to ensure their swift and safe return to civilian life. In enforcing these mandates, they were assisted by CEPAD and the Catholic Church delegates in ensuring safe negotiations for the demobilization processes. At the end of the OAS mandates, local church leaders took over the peace building efforts. In moving beyond their appointed tasks, the CIAV/OAS was able to negotiate more than 30 agreements with the contras (Odendaal, 2010).

The CIAV/OAS worked with the local peace bodies to ensure that they continued to uphold their responsibilities to monitor human rights works and the peacebuilding efforts. Before the expiration of the CIAV/OAS mandates in Nicaragua, they placed a continuous emphasis on the role of the local peace commissions in the South to ensure conflict resolution, mediation, verification tasks and the defense of human rights as their priorities in this peace process. In order to enhance its local engagement with the community, the CIAV/OAS worked with the local peasant organizations to lead the efforts for local ownership. Though the CIAV/OAS engaged in a continued effort to incorporate the local actors into their process, their involvement was often viewed as an intervention from an external agent without a strong grassroots support. The outsider status often undermined efforts in securing local support and acceptance of their

involvement. This dynamic has affected the legitimacy of the peace process in North and Central Nicaragua.

### **Limitations and Challenges of the Peace Process**

The involvement of the local peace commission in Nicaragua played many critical roles in the country's transition to peace. Though these commissions have played an imperative role in the peace process, they were primarily established under the National Reconciliation Commission by the national government. In that sense, the commission was not entirely a locally grown initiative but a body that was imposed from the top level. Yet, with the introduction of the local peace commissions, they were able to encourage the local leaders to engage in achieving peace. This initiative did enhance the role of local leaders from the various communities and their contributions did filter up to the national level through successful peace negotiations.

In the North, many viewed OAS as an outside force intervening in an internal matter of Nicaragua. It is imperative to note that the CIAV/OAS operations in the North have made a crucial contribution towards the demobilization efforts, human rights verifications, and resettlement of contras and families, but have not enhanced the local communities' capacities in peacemaking. Since they were following the mandates of the OAS and enforcing the mandates with little involvement of the local population, they were not able to achieve popular support for the peace process. While the peace processes led by the religious delegates in the South of Nicaragua have proven to be effective, the process in the North was not able to acquire the same level of credibility and local support as the church delegates in the South. Therefore, ensuring sustainability and local ownership of peace in the North and Central Nicaragua has been rendered more difficult than in the South.

The government of Nicaragua has given the authority to the local peace commissions to initiate the peace processes across the country, and the involvement of religious leaders has made a significant difference in the outcome of the process. In a Christian majority country like Nicaragua, Church representatives were able to lead the peace process as 'neutral' actors. The leadership of the local religious representatives in the conflict zones has fostered an environment conducive to peace negotiations and mediation efforts. This atmosphere allowed the locals to gain trust and confidence in the works of the church leaders. This process has greatly contributed towards the strengthened local ownership of the process. Being perceived as a neutral and impartial partner at the negotiating table and elsewhere on the field working to assist the local population, they were able to gain credibility and legitimacy in the process.

### **Conclusion**

The findings have showcased the contribution of local civil society actors in the Nicaraguan peace process. In many cases of countries transitioning to peace, there has been a heavy involvement of international actors imposing certain mandates to guarantee peace. Though the involvement of international actors in peace processes does contribute to their transition to peace, there are certain critical factors like the role of local civil society actors that are frequently overlooked. The importance of engaging local civil society actors in peace processes is pivotal in ensuring a swift and sustainable transition to peace. In the context of Nicaragua, one can clearly identify the outcome of the involvement of internal local actors in the South and the external actors in the North. Due to the increased involvement of the local peace commissions led mostly by local church delegates, they were able to conduct negotiations, mediations, and establish peace agreements between the contras and the state with a great deal of legitimacy. Their local

character carried a sense of impartiality that others in the North did not possess. Such level of impartiality has allowed church leaders to open a cooperative and receptive space towards the initiation of dialogue and mediation. In addition to that they have been instrumental in ensuring legitimacy, training, and resources for the tasks that the commissions have carried out. As the local leaders of their communities, they were able to garner broader support and assistance from the locals in their attempts to bring peace. By fostering such an environment, they have strengthened the legitimacy of the peace process in the South of Nicaragua. This development has made a positive contribution towards the ownership and success of the peace process. The North and Central of Nicaragua, on the other hand, did not witness a similar outcome due to the 'outsider status' of OAS. This situation has affected the delivery of peace in the North and Central part of the country, where individual contras rearmed themselves after their mandates ended. The case of Nicaragua has highlighted the differences that involvement of local actors can make in the sustainability of peace and the strengthening of peace processes.

# Case Study: Somalia

## Clan-Based Leadership in Peacebuilding

*Michael Vandergriff\**

### **Background**

#### *Social Categorization: Historical Clan-Divisions*

For centuries, Somalis have lived under decentralized, clan-based political systems, practicing what has been coined a “pastoral democracy.” Each Somali community is broadly classified into the major clan-families: the Hawiye, Darod, Isaaq, Dir, the Rahanweyn bloc and the Issa-Gadabursi bloc, with each being further divided into clans, sub-clans, sub-sub-clans and so on (Adam, 1992).

#### *Transition from Colonial occupation to civilian rule*

Somalia was created by a merger of two former colonial territories: British Somaliland in the north and its larger and more populous neighbor Italian Somaliland. The United Kingdom established a protectorate in British Somaliland in 1886. Italian Somaliland originated in 1889, when Italy concluded agreements with local rulers, who placed their territories under Italian protection. Italy’s occupation of the region was subsequently extended along the coast and inland, and Italian control was completed in 1927. During the Second World War, British Somaliland was conquered temporarily by Italian troops, but in 1941 it was recaptured by a British counter-offensive, which drove Italian troops from Eritrea, Italian Somaliland and Ethiopia. A British military administration was subsequently established in British and Italian Somaliland, and British Somaliland reverted to civilian rule in 1948 (Simanowitz, 2005).

Under the provisions of the post-war peace treaty of February 1947, Italy renounced all rights to Italian Somaliland. In December 1950, the pre-war colony became the United Nations Trust Territory of Somalia, with Italy returning as the administering power for a 10-year transitional period leading up to independence in 1960. The territory’s first democratically supported general election was held in March 1959 (Europa World, 2017).

#### *Military Coup and Dictatorship*

Following the assassination of the democratically elected President Abdirashid Ali Shermarke in 1969, a military junta was established by Muhammad Siad Barre, who ruled over Somalia for 21 years. Barre’s regime abolished the country’s constitution and implemented a policy of “scientific socialism.” This new political structure sought to unify clan divisions by strengthening nationalism among Somalia’s ethnically diverse population, as well as by nationalizing access to land, water, banks, and other components crucial to economic stimulation (Kimenyi, Mbaku & Moyo, 2010). The creation of a socialist state earned Barre the support of the Soviet Union which continued to provide military and economic aid to Somalia throughout the 1970’s (Kimenyi, Mbaku & Moyo, 2010). Barre’s socialist policies failed to stimulate economic growth, instead contributing to Somalia’s steady economic decline. Most of the resources accumulated by Barre’s regime were directed towards funding failed military

---

\* Michael Vandergriff is a Research Assistant and the Interim Assistant to the Director at the Center for International Human Rights. Michael graduated from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in May 2017 with a B.A. in International Criminal Justice and a minor in Human Rights.

excursions to annex the Ogaden territory from Ethiopia (1977-78). A majority of Somalis became dependent on the aid received from the Soviet Union, which ceased as a result of the Ogaden war when Barre lost the support of the Soviet Union in favor of Ethiopia. As a result of Somalia's defeat in the Ogaden war, as well as growing destitution among the Somali population, opposition movements began to form in an attempt to oust Barre from power (Ahmed, & Reginald, 1999). In retaliation, Barre's regime became increasingly more repressive, a development that led to the discontent of many Somali clans. By the late 1980s, numerous groups had risen against Barre, including the Somali National Movement, the United Somali Congress, the Somali Patriotic Movement, and the Somali Salvation Democratic Movement. In 1991, Barre was deposed and the central government collapsed, plunging Somalia into a civil war between warlords and clans vying for power (Loubser, & Solomon, 2014).

In the ensuing civil war (1991-Present), the humanitarian situation within Somalia worsened and attempts at establishing a centralized government continued to fail. In 2000, various warlords agreed on the formation of an interim government, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), under the leadership of Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed. While the TFG received recognition from both the international community and regional powers as the official government of Somalia, the TFG was extremely vulnerable and ineffective due to internal dissent among officials and warlords, as well as to its failure to gather much support from the population (Riches & Pamowski, 2016). In 2006, the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) was able to achieve what the TFG had failed to do, and brought the majority of the country under its rule through sharia law (Anzalone, 2010). Sharia law is an important component within Somalian society, embedded within the cultural and religious identity of many Somalis. The ICU's implementation of an Islamic State failed with the intervention of Ethiopian troops which proceeded to restore authority to the TFG (Mwangi, 2010). However, following the collapse of the ICU, the TFG began to face opposition from Islamic insurgents, including the radical group Al-Shabaab, which took control of southern Somalia (Riches & Pamowski, 2016). This rise in insurgencies forced Kenyan and Ethiopian troops to once again intervene on behalf of the TFG in order to prevent its collapse (Hesse, 2016). In 2012, the TFG's mandate expired and was replaced by the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), which included an elected president and a parliament representing the various ethnic groups and tribes encompassing Somalia.

While there has been success in restoring some form of nominal governance and international recognition of a central authority, the FGS lacks substantial capacities to extend its governance beyond Mogadishu. The prime factors adversely affecting the government's attempts at reform and state-building are (1) the on-going engagements with the Al-Shabaab insurgency movement (Anzalone, 2014); (2) the inability of the government to ensure security due to the lack of basic institutions (Mwangi, 2010); and (3) the failure to achieve consensus among regional leaders and local elders (Abubakar, 2016).

### **The Success of Local Actors in Maintaining Stability: Where Non-State Armed Groups Succeeded and the Transitional Federal Government Failed**

While the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia and its successor, the Federal Government of Somalia, have had limited success in establishing a functioning government at the federal level, non-state armed groups (NSAGs) have managed to restore basic administrative functions by pursuing a "bottom-up" approach.

The ongoing civil war, as well as the high levels of insecurity within the country, has created a desperate situation and an urgent need to ensure a modicum of stability. The approach

to stabilization in Somalia seems to necessitate community-driven processes as opposed to highly politicized “top-down” stabilization efforts that have so far proven unsuccessful. Building safety at the community level needs to place the needs of the population at the center while limiting the promotion of a political agenda. This may even mean engaging with NSAGs in cases where they have some legitimacy among the population and have proven willing to adhere to international standards of humanitarian law (Coning, 2013).

Where NSAGs form local administrations, they become one of the duty bearers towards the population, including internally displaced people (IDPs). And when these administrations are viewed as legitimate among the population, they become potentially important partners. In the town of South Galkayo, north of Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, a NSAG called Ahlu-Sunna Wal-Jamaa is in control. Here, in contrast to its experience of trying to facilitate safe returns for IDPs to Mogadishu, the Danish Demining Group (DDG) has had a positive experience not only of obtaining access but also of engaging in partnership with both the communities and the self-appointed administration (Hartkorn, 2011). The partnership between the DDG and Ahlu-Sunna Wal-Jamaa is uniquely successful due to the make-up of the NSAG, which is founded on clan structure, as opposed to religious doctrine like Al-Shabaab (Kimenyi, Mbaku & Moyo, 2010).

The collaboration between DDG and the Ahlu-Sunna Wal-Jamaa promoted community safety projects within South Galkayo to address the security needs of the population through cross-community engagement. The aims of these projects were not only to improve the communities’ immediate security situation but also to strengthen their capacity to resist being drawn into conflict. The community-driven projects within South Galkayo dealt primarily with reducing accidents related to small-arms and light weapons, and equipping the population with the necessary tools for addressing clan and communal conflict. The concern for accidents related to firearms was addressed by (a) installing safe storage devices and clearing unexploded ordnance, and (b) providing education to the target communities on the risks of mines and training in firearm safety (Hartkorn, 2011).

The community safety projects that sought to reduce clan and communal violence focused on providing the target communities with the capacity to manage conflicts and resolve disputes peacefully. Crimes of rape, theft, assault and robbery were of particular concern to the population within South Galkayo. Such crimes not only affect the safety of the population but can also threaten the stability of the community. Without a means of addressing such crimes peacefully, these grievances have the potential to degenerate into revenge-killings, which can create or exacerbate tensions between communities, families, or clans. Although Ahlu-Sunna Wal-Jamaa has already employed 325 new police officers within South Galkayo, 38% of households reported they would rather go to clan leaders concerning crimes as opposed to police (Hartkorn, 2011). DDG has responded to the communities’ mistrust of police by establishing community-based policing committees which function to strengthen the relationship between communities and police officers. In addition, DDG has developed initiatives to educate police officers on human rights principles (Hartkorn, 2011).

The ICU, while ultimately falling to the extremist factions and militant wings within the group itself, managed to stabilize a region which had long been bereft with conflict and violence. The Islamic court system is based on a variety of religious traditions and political perceptions. Its structures and operations are simple, which make them popular among the locals. A typical court has three main elements: a shura (council), a chairman and a military commander. The shura includes respected political, traditional, business and religious leaders from the clan. The chairman is appointed by the shura and the military commander is in turn appointed by the

chairman, subject to the shura's approval. The court's resources are usually derived from a combination of private contributions and taxation of various business and militia activities (Mwangi, 2010).

In 2006, the ICU defeated the warlords who had been in control of Mogadishu. They restored peace for the first time in 15 years, an achievement that the warlords and the TFG had been unable to accomplish. The Somalis initially welcomed the ICU because of its new peace and security measures. In addition, the ICU was also initially supported by business leaders weary of paying taxes to the warlords and for whom business boomed until a more radical wing took over the ICU. Although the courts initially reflected the many different strains of Somali political Islam, extremist elements gradually began to exert more control (Mwangi, 2010).

The ICU was able to unite and establish a structured local government where the people of Somalia were secure and not constantly threatened by warlords vying for control. The ICU provided basic government services to the population residing under their control, such as the removal of unnecessary roadblocks, the removal of garbage that posed an environmental threat to the city, and the reopening and rehabilitation of Mogadishu's main airport and seaport. Other government services included the removal of squatters from government buildings, curbing illegal land grabs, the provision of militias for policing duties, and opening special courts to deal with the numerous claims for the restitution of property (Mwangi, 2010). It was initiatives of this nature that provided a normalized and sustainable structure of government and elicited popular support from the local population and institutions. The reason for the implementation of these practical actions by the ICU was to bring an alternative means of governance to Somalia through sharia law, which has been a traditional feature of Somali society. In the absence of a functional government, a combination of various militia faction leaders, businessmen, clan elders and community leaders have worked with religious leaders from within their sub-clans to establish these courts with the aim of improving local security conditions. This was a decisive shift away from the clan-based factional politics that had characterized the country in the past (Mwangi, 2010). The restoration of security and basic services has had a tremendous impact on generating popular support and increased criticism from the TFG.

A majority of the groups which backed the ICU were in fact not extremists nor sanctioned the use of violence to generate legitimacy from the population. The larger Islamist groups, such as Jama'at al-Tabligh and the Salafiyya Jadiida, were more concerned with active missionary-work, an important facet in Somali society. The smaller groups such as the Harakat al-Islah and Majma' 'Ulimadda Islaamka ee Soomaaliya, were politically active, seeking to influence the development of the Somali state through engagement and the dissemination of Muslim values (International Crisis Group, 2010). The vast majority of the clans and factions comprising the ICU were opposed to ideological extremism and sought to incorporate a social structure which adhered to the principal tenants of the Muslim faith that advocated peace.

### **The Success of Local Actors: Somaliland**

The clan community-style government established in Somaliland following the 1993 Borama Conference is another example of sustainable local governance that has shown success where national peacebuilding initiatives have failed. In the absence of a national government, the various clans and people of Somaliland established a quasi-government structure that has utilized clan identities within the region to establish a coalition and promote stability.

Somaliland has profited from a unity conferred by its comparatively homogeneous population, modest disparities in personal wealth, widespread fear of the south, and a lack of

outside interference that might have undermined the accountability that has been exhibited by its leaders. This cohesiveness, which distinguishes Somaliland from both Somalia and most other African states, has combined with the enduring strength of traditional institutions of self-governance to mold a unique form of democracy (Kaplan, 2008). Somaliland's government style is a combination of both tribal and democratic institutions which make it quite unique.

Somaliland has managed to fuse Western-style institutions of government with its own traditional forms of social and political organization. Its bi-cameral parliament reflects this fusion of traditional and modern, with the Senate consisting of traditional elders and the House of Representatives consisting of elected representatives. However, with its history of tribalism and internecine fighting, the key challenge for Somaliland's new parliament is to try to replace clan-based politics with party politics. For its first twelve years, Somaliland had no political parties but instead followed more traditional clan-based forms of political organization.

The various clans of Somaliland have successfully demobilized former fighters, formed national defense and security services, and resettled more than one million refugees and IDPs (Pham, 2010). There has also been significant success in establishing independent newspapers, radio stations, local nongovernmental organizations, and other civic organizations which reinforce the independence of the region (Jhazbhay, 2008).

Clan elders have played an integral part in maintaining the regional administration and protecting its legitimacy in the eyes of the people. Elders have intervened to calm political crises, negotiated resource sharing and power rotation arrangements, and maintained at least some degree of control over clan militia (Menkhaus, 2014). Clan elders have utilized the position of power they hold in Somaliland to temper radicalization by mediating clashes of customs and traditions of Islam when they intersect with modern aspects of nationalism (Pham, 2010). The result of having an organic relationship between Somali culture and tradition and Islam assures a stabilizing, rather than disruptive, role for religion in the dynamic interplay of religion and politics. A promising formula for successful state-building in Somalia is some form of a *mediated state* in which the central government relies on partnerships with a diverse range of local intermediaries and rival sources of authority (Menkhaus, 2006). Sources of authority that generate support at the local level, such as clan-based power structures, provide core functions such as public security, justice systems, and conflict management in much of the country. The local political structures' ability to alleviate the anarchy and chaos that afflict local communities is crucial to understanding why such institutions generate legitimacy. Local governing structures manage to fill the power-vacuum left by a weak central government and can successfully undertake state-related functions. The central government should supplement local governance structures in order to acquire legitimacy and utilize successful grass-roots movements as building blocks for a sustainable national government (Menkhaus, 2006).

## **Key Conclusions**

While there has been success in community-driven stabilization, successful peacebuilding initiatives in Somalia highlight how regional actors have managed to establish legitimacy and security despite the failure of "top-down" initiatives.

The absence of inclusive state institutions represents the largest impediment to nation-building in Somalia. It is imperative that a Somali state be built around the inclusion and integration of traditional Somali identities. Over the years, various movements have emerged within Somali society that created opposition between Islam and clan-based identities. Both represent well-entrenched forms of identity politics in Somali society and will be crucial for

building nationalist sentiment that resonates with the majority of citizens and holds continuing relevancy beyond the spheres of politics and international conflict (Greene, 2011, p.36).

The various peacebuilding efforts which have emerged in Somalia have not successfully gone beyond the regional or local level due to the deeply entrenched clan and religious identities which do little to promote nationalism or unity. The Islamic Courts Union and various other non-state armed groups have successfully established peace at the regional and local level by providing communities with security, access to basic services, and legal mechanisms to resolve grievances. These quasi-governments have had considerable success acquiring legitimacy from the local populations due to the failure of top-down approaches like the Transitional Federal Government to rectify the lawlessness and chaos that emerged as a result of the on-going civil war.

Both the clan-based political systems dominant throughout Somaliland and the non-state-armed groups in Somalia have facilitated stability as a result of a non-existent central government. These local governing institutions exhibit different characteristics in terms of ideology, governance style, and legal systems; yet developed as a response to the failed materialization of a central authority.

### **Limitations**

The increased fragmentation of Somalia and the ongoing attempts to integrate clan identities and religious identities within the social and political framework of a viable governing structure have undermined peacebuilding efforts at the local level. The failure to reconcile the various identities under a federal or national apparatus is crucial to understanding why peacebuilding initiatives that develop at the local level do not translate to the national and vice versa. However, the Somali experience lends credence to the idea that state-building can materialize via a process of partnerships with local political structures.

The lack of documentation and information is the greatest obstacle in terms of conducting a comprehensive analysis of Somalia. Much of the necessary data pertaining to the success of local peacebuilding initiatives comes from the agreements between the various Shia courts, official documentation of the Islamic Courts Union's various rulings, and agreements between clans to unify local governing institutions. Unfortunately, this data, which is imperative for conducting a thorough analysis to assess local peace initiatives, is inaccessible without the necessary resources to conduct field research.

## Conclusion

This study critically examined the cases of Liberia, Nicaragua and Somalia. Some of the main similarities and variations identified in the study are briefly summarized below.

In the case of Liberia, women have substantiated the peace process by building a solid communal structure at the local level through the concept of “positive peace”, which promotes inclusion and active engagement of a variety of stakeholders representative of the diverse population. In Liberia, these stakeholders were women who took on the role of resolving conflicts, as well as building peace. The Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) was responsible for engaging Liberian women, who had been previously marginalized by the patriarchal structure of Liberian society, during and after the Liberian civil war. WIPNET helped to facilitate women as conflict mediators, peacebuilders, and activists; allowing women to fill the power vacuum left by men whilst the civil war continued to rage on.

In the case of Nicaragua, the divergent approaches to peace-building in Nicaragua highlight the importance of ownership legitimacy in providing a sustainable peace-building effort. In North and Central Nicaragua, the involvement of international actors in peace processes did not experience much success in securing a peaceful transition for local communities. The ‘outsider status’ of the Organization of American States (OAS) and the lack of local ownership were contributing factors to the failure to ensure a sustainable peace.

In Southern Nicaragua, the increased involvement of local communities—the local peace commissions lead by church delegates—were able to conduct negotiations, mediations, and establish peace agreements between the contras and the state with a great deal of legitimacy. This sense of legitimacy and local ownership has facilitated a sustainable peacebuilding effort. The local characteristics of the peace-building efforts have carried a sense of impartiality that others in the North did not possess. Such level of impartiality has allowed church leaders to open a cooperative and receptive space towards the initiation of dialogue and mediation.

The case of Somalia shows the success in community-driven stabilization and successful peacebuilding initiatives that has been achieved by regional actors. These actors and institutions at the regional level have acquired legitimacy and provided security as a result of the failure of “top-down” initiatives. Both the clan-based political systems dominant throughout Somaliland and the non-state armed groups (NSAG) in Somalia have played a role in ensuring stability in the absence of central government. These local governing institutions exhibit variation in ideology, structure, and function; yet they have developed as a response to the failed materialization of a central authority.

While partnership between actors at the local level may not be ideal, it may be useful in case of weak state-structures as building blocks for strengthening state capacity. The creation of a “mediated state” may be a viable solution where the central government relies on partnerships with a diverse range of local intermediaries and rival sources of authority that generate support at the local level.

### **Similarities and Variations**

Among the three studies encapsulated in this report, there are a number of similarities and variations found between the cases. In all three cases, the actors involved in facilitating peace at the local level acquired legitimacy as a result of a weak or non-existent central government.

While all cases share a common element in filling a power vacuum, the actors involved in leading peace-building efforts varied greatly. In Liberia, the major drivers of peace, among other

factors, were women. Liberian women played important roles as negotiators, peace-builders, and mediators during and after the civil war. Women also had to force their way into the peace process through forms of social and political activism, something not shared by actors in the case of Nicaragua and Somalia.

In Nicaragua, peacebuilding initiatives at the local level were led by local religious leaders and church officials. In Somalia, the main drivers of peace were clan based Non-State Armed Groups and tribal leaders. In both cases, these actors did not face marginalization or disenfranchisement, but already attained legitimate authority from the local population.

The cases of Nicaragua and Somalia also share regional variation in their development of peace processes. In Nicaragua, a “top-down” approach to peacebuilding was applied to the northern and central regions, while separately, a bottoms-up approach manifested in the south. In northern Somalia (Somaliland), a merger between traditional clan-based politics and westernized democratic institutions emerged. In southern Somalia, various non-state armed groups have successfully promoted stability and rectified informal local governments.

### **Why does a study of local peace agreements matter?**

This study can contribute to the reevaluation of the concept of peace. Peacebuilding efforts at the local level introduce narratives and nuances that are often overlooked when looking exclusively at national and international peacebuilding. Moving beyond defining peace through merely the absence of conflict, the local helps reconceptualize peace, bringing into the picture everyday life. It can create a space for communities to discuss and decide how to conduct their lives and generate a more holistic understanding of the needs of those at the local level. Ultimately, *peace*, however it is defined, is not merely a string of policies but rather is an alteration of daily life. As such, a focus on local communities and the peace therein can inform and nurture national-level initiatives.

The entry point for international/ top-down initiatives may be to view local and non-state actors as legitimate. By providing a space for actors at the local level to address grievances, instability, and security issues, the top-down approach can use the stability created at the local level as a foundation for developing legitimacy and cohesive state capacity at the national level.

Although peacebuilding at the local level has the potential to create enduring stability, local initiatives cannot be canonized. The local can also be a source of oppression, violence, and marginalization, which makes its stability a tool for conflict prevention. It is thus important for the international to remain engaged in order to support those national and local entities seeking adherence to international norms and standards.

## References

- Abubakar, A. M. (2016). The patterns of state rebuilding and federalism in Somalia. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 10(6), 89-95.
- ActionAid, Womankind, & IDS. (2012). From the ground up: women's role in local peacebuilding in Afghanistan, Liberia, Nepal, Pakistan and Sierra Leone. Retrieved from <http://www.actionaid.org/publications/ground-womens-role-local-peacebuilding-afghanistan-liberia-nepal-pakistan-and-sierra-le>
- Adam, H. (1992). Somalia: Militarism, Warlordism or Democracy? *Review of African Political Economy*, (54), 11-26.
- Ahmed, I. I., & Reginald, H. G. (1999). The heritage of war and state collapse in somalia and somaliland: Local-level effects, external interventions and reconstruction. *Third World Quarterly*, 20(1), 113-127.
- Anzalone, C. (2014). The rise and decline of al-Shabab in Somalia. *Turkish Review*, 4(4), 386-395.
- Bauer, J. (2009). Women and the 2005 election in Liberia. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 47(2), 193-211.
- Bekoe, D., & Parajon, C. (2007). Women's Role in Liberia's Reconstruction. *United States Institute of Peace*. Retrieved from <https://www.usip.org/publications/2007/05/womens-role-liberias-reconstruction>
- Bruton, B. (2009). In the Quicksands of Somalia. *Foreign Affairs*, 88(6), 79-94.
- Coning, C. (2013). Understanding Peacebuilding as Essentially Local. *Stability : International Journal of Security and Development*, 2(1), Art. 6.
- Ellis, S. (1995). Liberia 1989-1994: A Study of Ethnic and Spiritual Violence. *African Affairs*, 94(375), 165-197).
- Europa World (2017). Contemporary Political History (Somalia), Europa World. London, Routledge. John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Retrieved from <http://www.europaworld.com/entry/so.is.4>
- Fritz, J. M., Doering, S., & Gumru, F. B. (2011). Women, Peace, Security, and the National Action Plans. *Journal of Applied Social Science*, 5(1), 1-23.
- Fuest, V. (2008). 'This is the time to get in front': Changing Roles and Opportunities for Women in Liberia. *African Affairs*, 107(427), 201-224.
- Gbowee, L. (2009). Effecting Change through Women's Activism in Liberia. *IDS Bulletin*, 40(2), 50-53.
- Greene, A. (2011). Re-thinking Somali National Identity: Nationalism, State Formation and Peacebuilding in Somalia. *Somalia: Creating Space for Fresh Approaches to Peacebuilding*. Uppsala: Life & Peace Institute.
- Hartkorn, S., & Pedersen, K. L. (2011). Community-led stabilisation in Somalia. *Forced Migration Review*, 1(37), 25-27.
- Hayner, P. (2007). Negotiating peace in Liberia: Preserving the possibility for justice. *Henry Dunant Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue*.
- Hesse, B. (2016). Two Generations, Two Interventions in One of the World's Most-Failed States: The United States, Kenya and Ethiopia in Somalia. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 51(5), 573-593.

- Independent Commission on Multilateralism. (2016). Women, Peace, and Security. *International Peace Institute*. Retrieved from <https://www.ipinst.org/2016/10/icm-policy-paper-women-peace-and-security>
- International Crisis Group. (2006). Somalia's Islamists, Africa Report 100, 12 December 2005, 19; ICG, Can the Somali crisis be contained? Africa Report 116, 10 August 2006; 9.
- Jhazbhay, I. (2008). Somaliland's post-war reconstruction: Rubble to rebuilding. *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies - Multi-, Inter- and Transdisciplinarity*, 3(1), 59-93.
- Kaplan, S. (2008). The Remarkable Story of Somaliland. *Journal of Democracy*, 19(3), 143-157.
- Kauffman, C. (1994). Reflecting on Nicaragua. *Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution*, 6(2), 9-10.
- Kiernan, J. (1990). Nicaragua: The Road to Reintegration. *Americas*, 42(4). p58.
- Kimenyi, M. S., Mbaku, J. M., & Moyo, N. (2010). Reconstituting Africa's failed states: The case of Somalia. *Social Research*, 77(4), 1339-1366.
- Kumar, K. (1999). Promoting social reconciliation in post-conflict societies, *USAID*, (40).
- Lederach (1997). *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. US Institute of Peace, Washington DC.
- Liberian Ministry of Gender and Development. (2009). The Liberia National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Resolution 1325.
- Loubser, H., & Solomon, H. (2014). Responding to state failure in Somalia. *Africa Review*, 1-17.
- MacFarlane, N., & T. Weiss (1994). The United Nations, Regional Organizations and Human Security: Building Theory in Central America. *Third World Quarterly*, 15(2), 277-295.
- Menkhaus, K. (2014). Aid and Institution-Building in Fragile States: Findings from Comparative Cases: State Failure, State-Building, and Prospects for a "Functional Failed State" in Somalia. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 656, 154-173
- Menkhaus, K. (2006). Governance without Government in Somalia: Spoilers, State Building, and the Politics of Coping. *International Security*, 31(3), 74-106.
- Moran, M. H., & Pitcher, M. A. (2004). The 'basket case' and the 'poster child': explaining the end of the civil conflicts in Liberia and Mozambique. *Third World Quarterly*, 25(3), 501-509.
- Mouly, C. (2013). The Nicaraguan Peace Commissions: A Sustainable Bottom-Up Peace Infrastructure, *International Peacekeeping*, 20(1), 48-66.
- Mwangi, O. G. (2010). The Union of Islamic Courts and security governance in Somalia. *African Security Review*, 19(1), 88-94.
- Odendaal, A. (2010). An Architecture for Building Peace at Local Level: A Comprehensive Studies of Local Peace Committees, UNDP.
- Paul, J. (1997). Risky business: Peace commissions in Nicaragua. *Christian Century*, 114(27), 860-863.
- Pham, J. P. (2010). The Somali solution to the Somali crisis. *Africa Policy Journal*, 6, 71-84.
- Plümper, T., & Neumayer, E. (2006). The Unequal Burden of War: The Effect of Armed Conflict on the Gender Gap in Life Expectancy. *International Organization*, 60(3), 723-754.
- Riches, C., & Palmowski, J. Somalia. (2016). In *A Dictionary of Contemporary World History*. Oxford University Press.

- Sesay, M. A. (1996). Civil war and collective intervention in Liberia. *Review of African Political Economy*, 23(67), 35-52.
- Simanowitz, S. (2005). Democracy comes of age in Somaliland. *Contemporary Review*, 287(1679), 335.
- Tickner, J. A. (1992). *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- UN Security Council, 4213<sup>th</sup> meeting. *Resolution 1325 (2000)*. (S/RES/1325). 31 October 2000.
- UN Security Council, 4830<sup>th</sup> meeting. *Resolution 1509 (2003)*. (S/RES/1509). 19 September 2003.
- UN Security Council, 7851<sup>th</sup> meeting, *Resolution 2333 (2016)*. (S/RES/2333). 23 December 2016.
- Vickers, G. (1995). Keeping the Peace: The History and Challenges of the Accords. *Harvard International Review*, 17(2), 20-25.