

Listening to Somali civil society voices

Saferworld recommendations for the May 2013 London Conference on Somalia

On 7 May 2013 the Federal Government of Somalia and the UK Government will co-host a second international conference in London on Somalia. The voices of Somali civil society have been largely absent from discussions on peace and statebuilding, undermining the local buy-in needed for progress towards peace and stability. Ahead of the conference, Saferworld and our partner organisations conducted consultations with a range of non-state and civil society representatives to discuss the themes of the conference and make recommendations to the Somali authorities and the international community on priority concerns. Saferworld endorses many of the recommendations and concerns outlined in the resulting consultation briefing *Civil Society Voices*¹; this briefing outlines Saferworld's overall recommendations.

To bring some of the voices of Somalis to this conversation, consultations about the conference themes were carried out in two areas of Somalia by platforms of non-state actors supported by Saferworld: in Puntland by the Puntland Non-State Actors Association (PUNSAA) and in southern and central Somalia by the Somalia Southern and Central Non-State Actors platform (SOSCENSA).

The following analysis complements and builds on the consultation briefing and highlights recommendations on peacebuilding and statebuilding, security, justice and sexual and gender-based violence.

Key overall recommendations

Saferworld makes three overarching recommendations for the London conference:

1) Support civil society and public participation. The Somali authorities and international community need to ensure that civil society and the public are able to participate in discussions and decision-making on peace and statebuilding.

2) Build trust between groups, including between the centre and the regions. A serious trust deficit exists between groups, including between clans and between the Federal government and regional authorities. All actors in Somalia need to do more to build cooperation and promote reconciliation between groups.

3) Continue support to the regions, bottom-up statebuilding, and peace processes. Actors engaged in Somalia must continue to offer support to the regions, and support bottom-up statebuilding and peacebuilding processes.

Political Progress: Peacebuilding and statebuilding

Consultation participants showed concern at poor relations between the regions and the Federal Government, and the de-prioritisation of national reconciliation. Saferworld notes that an approach emphasising the centre risks creating programmes that are inappropriate to respond to regional differences and could risk further conflict.

Recommendations:

- The Federal Government should prioritise reconciliation and publicly set out its plans for how it intends to conduct this process.
- Civil society and the public must be consulted in meaningful ways on statebuilding, reconciliation and reestablishment of governance structures. This should include specific outreach to traditionally marginalised groups including women, youth and minority clans.
- The international community must remain mindful that areas of Somali territory have different political administrations, needs and requirements, and reinforce commitments to support these.

Security

Security remains a primary concern for most people. Cooperation between the centre and the regions on security remains weak. Al-Shabaab continues to

¹ Saferworld, *Civil Society Voices: Recommendations for the May 2013 London Conference on Somalia* (2013), www.saferworld.org.uk/SomaliaLondon2013

control much of the country and clan-based militias persist. Much work needs to be done in order to integrate individuals into the national armed forces or the police. The lack of monitoring and public reporting of allegations of abuse by all parties to the conflict continues to cause concern.

Recommendations:

- The Federal Government and regional authorities should establish an independent oversight body to monitor the police and armed forces.
- The police and military should establish Codes of Conduct for their personnel and professional standards units to ensure that officers act in accordance with the law.
- Donors to the Somali Armed Forces should require the implementation of the action plan agreed with the United Nations on ending the recruitment and use of child soldiers and all personnel to be integrated into the armed forces should be vetted, including for allegations of abuse. Allegations should be investigated and any personnel suspected of abuse should not be integrated into the armed forces until investigations take place.
- Donors to the African Union and AMISOM should require that command and control structures within AMISOM ensure respect for international humanitarian law and investigate abuses.
- The new UN mission should develop a Protection of Civilians strategy and should have a strong human rights monitoring, documenting and public reporting mandate to address impunity at the hands of all parties to the conflict.

Judiciary

Consultation participants felt that the formal judiciary remained weak and absent from many areas of the country, and that most people continued to rely on traditional legal systems.

Recommendations:

- Federal and regional authorities should implement the recommendations following the national judicial reform conference in April 2013, including developing a strategy for the expansion of the judiciary into all areas of the country.
- Federal and regional authorities should introduce more mobile courts to increase access to the formal justice system in remote areas.
- Federal court structures provided for under the Provisional Constitution should be established and adequately staffed and resourced. It should be recognised that both

formal and traditional systems of justice have a potentially valuable role to play.

- The international community should support civil society in providing legal aid services across the country.

Sexual and Gender Based Violence

Widespread sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is a major concern for Somalis, and the G8 Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict has promised support for addressing this.

Recommendations:

- All security and justice sector support from the international community should be gender sensitive and take specific measures to tackle SGBV.
- The federal and regional authorities should work with civil society to better record statistics on the number of reports of SGBV made to the police, traditional elders, NGOs, and other bodies.
- Regional and federal authorities should ensure existing laws criminalising SGBV are applied and update the criminal codes to ensure the criminalisation of all forms of sexual and gender-based violence.
- Civil society should organise and coordinate on public awareness campaigns to sensitise communities – particularly men – on the effect of SGBV and increase outreach efforts, including to remote or rural areas.

Conclusion

If the Somali authorities and international community are to be effective in helping to build a more stable and resilient society, they must understand and meet the needs of the people themselves. Transparency, accountability and adherence to international human rights and humanitarian law, as well as gender sensitive security and justice reform, will be essential in tackling impunity and setting the building blocks for peace.

About Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with local people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe that everyone should be able to lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from insecurity and violent conflict.

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