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THE POTENTIAL OF CONFLICT-SENSITIVE EDUCATION APPROACHES IN FRAGILE COUNTRIES: THE CASE OF CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK REFORM AND YOUTH CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN SOMALIA

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Education is a basic human right, as well as a precondition for peace, prosperity and justice to return to Somali citizens on a lasting basis.

—Cassanelli and Abdikadir 2008, 91

ABSTRACT

How can education services in fragile and conflict-affected settings sustain education results and help break the cyclical patterns of conflict that lead to massive reversals in development, including in education? This field note presents the case of the review of the curriculum framework in Somalia, a UNICEF-supported education intervention that intentionally engaged with the drivers of conflict. The note outlines how this mainstream education intervention, which has a widened focus on building youths' civic participation, can help to build a capacity for peace at various levels (individual, group, and policy) in terms of substance and process. It also provides emerging results, limitations, and observations about the intervention. The field note concludes by offering some reflections on inclusive and relevant service delivery as a critical part of peace- and state-building in fragile settings.

INTRODUCTION

Between 2000 and 2015, unprecedented progress was made in improving access to primary education across the world under the aegis of the Millennium Development Goals, as reflected in enrollment rates. Nevertheless, on the eve of the declaration of the 2015-2030 Sustainable Development Goals, 57 million children were still out of primary school, 50 percent of them living in fragile, conflict-affected areas. To achieve the objective that all these girls and boys complete a free, equitable, and quality primary education that leads to relevant and effective learning outcomes, education systems and policies will need to be able to adapt and respond within such contexts.

Somalia provides a powerful example of a context of conflict and protracted fragility, as defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2006). Key indicators of fragility include ongoing violence and a legacy of conflict; weak rule of law; a lack of effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions; poor economic inclusion and stability; and high exposure to shocks and stresses (climate-related, economic, social, and environmental). The population in these fragile settings tends to be very young: the median age in 2013 was 21 years, compared to the global median of 30. This is also the case in Somalia (United Nations Population Fund 2014).

How can we ensure that international development assistance in fragile and conflict-affected settings is able to break the cyclical pattern of conflict that leads to massive development reversals in countries such as Somalia, and support the achievement of sustainable results for children?

This field note describes how UNICEF engaged in a review of the primary school curriculum in Somalia with the aim of addressing factors that drive and perpetuate conflict in that nation. The curriculum review was based on a wide participatory process facilitated by youth, rather than on a narrowly conceived "technical" education intervention. In the context of an education system historically characterized by social exclusion, inequity, and underinvestment, young women and men from different districts and regions of Somalia took an active role in a key aspect of education policy-making. They demonstrated constructive citizenship and an ability to contribute to a more inclusive and relevant education for Somali children. This youth-facilitated consultation process and its relevance for peacebuilding through education interventions is the focus of this field note.

The first part of the field note, which follows a description of the methodology, analyzes the relation between the state of the education system and the nature of the Somali state throughout its slow disintegration, eventual collapse, and subsequent efforts to rebuild. The second part outlines the intervention itself: its design, rationale, and implementation. The third part considers emerging results, observations, and limitations. The fourth and final part offers some reflections on how to deliver education services in fragile settings.

METHODOLOGY

The program discussed in this field note was part of UNICEF's 2012-2016 Peacebuilding Education and Advocacy (PBEA) program, an initiative active in 14 countries that were working to improve the conflict sensitivity of their education programs and their relevance for peacebuilding. The PBEA program sought to learn how education programs should be designed and implemented so as not to cause or worsen conflict, and how such programs could actively contribute to building peace by addressing factors that cause violent conflict. The program's desired outcomes included building a compendium of case studies, good practices, evidence, and reflections to inform future education program development.

Both authors of this field note were involved in the implementation of the youth-facilitated consultation, albeit in different roles. Renders, the PBEA program manager for UNICEF Somalia, led the program design and provided training and continuous technical support to the implementing partner, with a focus on conflict-sensitive education programming and peacebuilding in conflict settings. She also provided overall technical and financial management oversight. Knezevic, the education and peacebuilding specialist at the UNICEF Regional Office for East and Southern Africa, or ESARO, provided quality assurance for the PBEA interventions in the ESARO region, including Somalia. He also supported data analysis, activity evaluations, and case studies and research conducted in countries across in the region.

The field note was conceptualized as a reflective exercise that discusses the intervention in the larger context of state-building. It was informed by an extensive literature review, with a focus on education, peacebuilding, and state-building in Somalia. The discussion includes specific field-level results and observations drawn from a case study led by Knezevic, which was partially facilitated by an external consultant and conducted independently by country-level PBEA program management in Somalia.

Fieldwork for this case study was conducted during two visits to the cities of Bosaso and Galkayo in Somalia's Puntland State, which took place during one week in September 2014. The data-gathering methods included conducting qualitative semi-structured interviews and structured remote interviews using guided-questioning techniques; analysis of quantitative survey data; and analysis of secondary documents, including program reports from the implementing partner and PBEA annual reports. Approximately 30 individuals participated in the case study, including local Somali youth and PBEA's implementing partner staff. Additional data analysis included reviews of internal implementation reports from implementation partners and youth facilitators' field diaries.

Education and Peace-/State-Building in Somalia

Scholarly publications on education in Somalia are scarce; however, those that exist are all univocal about the fact that the education sector in the country has not benefited from the commitment of funding or good governance it deserves and desperately needs—not only since the Somali state collapsed in 1991 as a result of the civil war, but also before.

Below we outline a clear correlation between the nature of the Somali state and the state of education in the country. For most of its recent history, access to quality, relevant, inclusive, and conflict-sensitive education has been severely constrained. This has taken a heavy toll on Somali children's access to education and their learning outcomes, and has limited the chance for an inclusive, representative, and legitimate form of state governance to emerge.

Education in Somalia up to the Civil War

Before Somalia became independent in 1960, different forms of education were practiced in the regions that would become Somalia. Abdi (1998) points out that, although far from perfect, traditional systems of learning and socialization equipped children with what they needed to survive and thrive in their environment: education—albeit informal—was a social endeavor that was owned by and relevant to communities' values and needs (329; Abdinoor 2008, 44). In the late nineteenth century, two other forms of knowledge acquisition had started to take root. Sufi religious orders known as *tariqa* had started to spread currents of Islamic thought from Arab lands. At the same time, new forms of Western secular knowledge were starting to emerge throughout the Somali lands (Cassanelli and Abdikadir 2008, 92).

The advent of colonial administration (British in the north, Italian in the south) introduced formal Western schooling to the Somalis. It had only limited ambition in both purpose and scope: it was primarily aimed at training people to fill the lower ranks of the colonial administrative apparatus. At the time of Somali independence, the British protectorate in the north had only 2,339 students enrolled in primary school; in the southern regions the Italian Trusteeship Administration, under UN oversight, had expanded the number of learners to 16,000 (Cassanelli and Abdikadir 2008, 94).

In the discourse of the Somali nationalist liberation movements and government at the time of independence, education featured prominently as the nation's avenue to socioeconomic advancement (Abdi 1998, 233). This said, nothing much changed initially in terms of expanding access to education, as the fledgling government quickly fell prey to stark intra-elite competition for the power and resources associated with state control. The political actors competed along clan lines (Renders 2012).

In 1969, a military coup ended civilian rule and ushered in an era of Somali socialism under General Siyad Barre. In the first decade under military rule, notable progress was made in education, including the development of an official script for the Somali language in 1972 and two major literacy campaigns—an urban campaign in 1973 and a similar effort as part of the Rural Development Campaign in 1974. The government nationalized all existing schools and expanded education coverage, and also made education compulsory—and free—for children between six and fourteen years old. School enrollment had risen sharply by the mid-1970s, and the literacy rate went from 5 percent to 55 percent in a short period of time (Laitin and Samatar 1987).

However, the drive for development through education was quickly abandoned and replaced by other priorities. The Ogaden War with Ethiopia in 1977-1978, which occurred against a backdrop of Cold War superpower rivalry in the region, dramatically depleted public resources. It proved to be the starting point of a long period of gradual state disintegration. The Barre regime's circle of actors, who had power and control over resources, became smaller and smaller, with politics and power struggles once more waged along clan lines (Renders 2012). Corruption and violence flourished, which affected access to and quality of all social services, including education. The budget for education remained woefully inadequate, reaching an all-time low by 1985. Teachers started leaving en masse to pursue better opportunities at home and abroad.

The gross enrollment ratio for 4- to 23-year-olds was 14 percent in 1980; by 1988 it had dropped to 7 percent (UNESCO 1991). The all-encompassing violence of the 1991-1993 civil war finished off whatever was left in Somalia in terms of an education system or infrastructure. As warlords who commanded faction militia viciously competed for power and control over economic assets, the schools and all other infrastructure were completely destroyed, particularly in the south-central region of Somalia. With the exception of Somaliland, which struggled to maintain some level of education services, Somalia's children virtually went without formal schooling for two years (Williams and Cummings 2015, 423).

The civil war period also painfully brought to the fore the fact that young people in Somalia had become instruments of power struggles in which they had little stake. While young women were all but invisible, scores of young men were recruited into the warlord-led clan militia that would become a destabilizing factor for years to come (Mohamed-Abdi 2001-2002). The extreme violence meted out by the clan militia, and armed young men in general, instilled fear in the population and resulted in a negative image of youth in Somali society (War-torn Societies Project 1998, 20).

Somali Education in a Context of Statelessness

Throughout 1993, the level of violence in Somalia started to subside. Although the militia and warlords continued their struggle over physical resources and spheres of influence, fighting was no longer constant or ubiquitous. Under the auspices of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM I; later UNOSOM II), the international troops of the Unified Task Force (known as UNITAF) were deployed to oversee (and later enforce) a ceasefire, to create conditions that would allow humanitarian aid to be delivered, and, ultimately, to begin reconstructing the Somali state. The endeavor, however, was not a success, nor were many subsequent attempts to restore order from above. During that time, a number of Somali educators had launched small educational projects with assistance from a few NGOs and international agencies (notably UNICEF and UNESCO). However, in the absence of a national authority to oversee educational planning and given the limited capacity of local actors to mobilize the resources and expertise needed, most of what was built up collapsed immediately after UNOSOM II withdrew in 1995 (Cassanelli and Abdikadir 2008, 105).

In Somalia's south-central region, and to a large extent in Puntland and Somaliland, what remained active were largely Arab charities, private-sector initiatives, and initiatives steered by individual communities. However, this community

participation required some time to take shape, as parents still expected the state to take responsibility for their children's formal education, despite the military regime's abysmal level of achievement (Abdinoor 2008, 50). As the prospect of a state apparatus taking shape remained obviously distant, parents and communities started to take part in school administration, to take an interest in what was taught in the schools, and to contribute financially to their children's education. Community involvement was only possible, however, where people trusted the education their children were receiving and did not have fears about the child's religion or culture (52).

Notable progress was made over the years in Somaliland, the northwestern region of Somalia that had declared independence in 1991, and in Puntland State, which had become a political entity (although not independent) in 1998. Both benefitted from relative peace, greater security, and emerging administrations that were gradually rebuilding their education services. Some support from international agencies and NGOs had also started flowing in. In the central and southern regions, the situation was more unsettled politically and militarily, and therefore more difficult. Nevertheless, private initiatives flourished. Although they were overwhelmingly located in urban areas such as Mogadishu, schools that had been set up locally started to come together under so-called education umbrellas, many of which were funded by Arab foundations and other interests. Somalia's Formal Private Education Network, which was formed in 1999, implemented a common curriculum and examination system for its 150 member schools (Cassanelli and Abdikadir 2008, 107).

From the end of the 1990s, when the generalized violence that had characterized the 1991-1993 civil war had subsided, some gains were made, despite the limited support the education sector received from the international community. The 2005-2007 UNICEF primary school survey found a gross enrollment rate of 27.9 percent (21.1 percent for girls; UNICEF 2006). It should be emphasized, however, that rates in the southern and central regions were much lower, especially outside the urban areas, with a gross enrollment rate below 20 percent and a net rate of about 7 percent (Ministry of Education and Higher Education 2015). This demonstrates the ongoing negative impact that conflict, insecurity, and weak governance in the south-central region had on children's education. Despite the fact that education umbrellas such as the Formal Private Education Network helped to some extent to fill the gap caused by the absence of an effective and legitimate government, education in Somalia remained disjointed and inequitable and suffered from compromised access and quality. As pointed out by the Mogadishu-based Heritage Institute of Policy Studies in its 2015 assessment of

educational challenges in Somalia, one key cause of this state of education was the large number of different education curricula used across schools—the study mentions ten (Hussein 2015).

State-Building and the Education Sector in Somalia

As noted above, by 2000, the northern regions of Somalia that had imploded in 1991 had evolved toward a fairly stable political arrangement: in both Somaliland and Puntland State, peace deals between local clans and their militia were followed by a process in which fledgling state administrations gradually emerged (Renders 2012). Having become stronger and more established over time, both Somaliland (which has held several general elections since 1997) and Puntland saw expanding administrative systems. Their respective political arrangements reflected the inclusion of major clans, which was a prerequisite for the popular legitimacy of these local states. However, this did not automatically translate into effective or accountable governance. Their administrative system and control functions systems such as parliamentary oversight remained weak, and budgets were limited, including for education. As a result of the improved stability, however, international agencies started rebuilding the education systems, although to a limited extent.

Conversely, the central and southern regions remained locked in a situation of de facto statelessness for much longer. Transitional governments (the first one was established in 2000 and was known as the Arta government) failed to establish a meaningful degree of influence or control over any portion of territory. In 2007, a UN-mandated African Union Peacekeeping force known as AMISOM commenced a military campaign in response to the rise of the Islamic militia group Harakaat al-Shabaab al Mujahidiin (HSM). In 2012, Somalia adopted a new federal constitution, formed a new parliament, and selected a president under the auspices of a newly established Federal Government of Somalia (FGS). However, the situation in Somalia remained fragile. The political instability was marked by inter-clan conflict and the continued presence of HSM, which obstructed the government's ability to assert its authority and deliver services across its territory (United Nations Security Council 2014).

In 2013, in response to this fragile context, the UN, major donors, and the FGS engaged in the New Deal process and adopted its instruments to frame policy. A compact was agreed to by the national and international stakeholders, who were guided by the principles of the New Deal. They established a single overall framework for advancing peacebuilding, state-building, and development over

a three-year period (2014-2016).[1] International partners committed to support implementation of the New Deal compact around the five peacebuilding and state-building goals: inclusive politics, security, justice, economic foundations, and revenue and basic services. The "basic services" pillar of the compact outlined how basic services needed to contribute to state-building, as increasing access to services (including education) in combination with transparent and accountable public finance systems would help increase trust in Somalia's public institutions. This in turn would enhance the government's legitimacy (Federal Republic of Somalia 2013).

Fronted by the FGS under the New Deal compact, the programs of the international agencies and NGOs started to re-engage with the country's education systems and policies—not only in Somaliland and Puntland State but at the federal level—which in practice covered the central and southern regions.

One major focus of this effort was curriculum framework reform, which was identified as a necessary step in addressing education access and quality across the country. The larger context of conflict, however, could not be ignored, as an education curriculum can itself be a source of conflict, due to contested content or the way it is taught (Smith 2010). Given that three education ministries were operating completely independently—the federal, Puntland, and Somaliland ministries—the curriculum had to be flexible to avoid conflict and "portable" to ensure that any diplomas and certificates issued were compatible across the country.

Curriculum Framework Reform as an Inroad to Peacebuilding

How can education programming address the factors that drive fragility and conflict? Until quite recently, this question was not asked. Novelli, Lopes Cardozo, and Smith (2015) point to the influence and prominence of a "security-first" agenda in Somalia. In this approach to peacebuilding, the first priority is to stop the fighting and then establish democracy—for example, by holding elections. The assumption is that foreign investment will follow and will create economic growth, which will then benefit the entire population through increased wealth and improved services. However, without addressing the factors that led to the conflict in the first place—marginalization, exclusion, inequity—there is a real

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1   The New Deal was signed at the fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness held on November 30, 2011, in Busan, Korea. Somalia is one of the signatories. Through the New Deal, development partners commit to support nationally owned and led development plans and provide more effective aid in fragile situations. Governments and development partners commit to pursuing the five peacebuilding and state-building goals.

possibility that such state "reconstruction" will in fact contain the seeds of renewed conflict.

At the same time, education practitioners typically have a predominantly reductionist and "technical" view of education that either takes peacebuilding for granted ("people will be smarter and richer, so they will be less inclined to start conflicts or wars") or is equated with peace education—that is, changing people's minds and behavior one by one. However, without addressing structural weaknesses within the education sector—governance, access, quality—education will not necessarily contribute to peace. In fact, unintentionally replicating patterns of exclusion through education can help to perpetuate a conflict or even spark a new one (Bush and Saltarelli 2000; Davies 2004; Smith and Vaux 2003).

Novelli et al. (2015) respond to this by taking the position that sustainable peacebuilding is based on societal transformation. They argue that the social sectors, including education, can play a crucial role in this transformation through four remedies, which they call the four Rs: redistribution, recognition, representation, and reconciliation. Redistribution refers to the need to address the unequal distribution of educational resources and lack of equal educational opportunities. Recognition entails respecting differences and dealing with status inequalities that socially or culturally exclude people based on ethnic, linguistic, racial, gender, or other identities. Representation refers to the imperative to ensure participation, while reconciliation points to remedies aimed at dealing with the past and restoring trust—horizontally, between groups, and vertically—between group members and authorities.

In Somalia, UNICEF sought to adopt the concept of education as an inroad for social transformation and sustainable peacebuilding. Its global PBEA program covered 14 countries directly and dozens more indirectly across East Asia and the Pacific, South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, Eastern and Southern Africa, and West and Central Africa. PBEA interventions aimed to strengthen education policies and peacebuilding practices across four areas: increased inclusion of education in peacebuilding and conflict-reduction policies; increased institutional capacity to support conflict-sensitive education; increased capacity of children, parents, teachers, and other duty bearers to prevent, reduce, and cope with conflict and promote peace; and increased access to quality and relevant conflict-sensitive education that contributes to peace. The following section outlines the program's involvement in the process of curriculum reform in Somalia.

Drivers of Fragility and Conflict in Somalia

Any intervention that aims to deal with drivers of fragility, including conflict, must be designed in accordance with the specific context in which it will be implemented. UNICEF commissioned the Post-war Reconstruction and Development Unit at the University of York to implement a conflict, peace, and situation analysis, which involved a wide cross-section of the population. The analysis was to explore the links between education and conflict, as well as the different issues, actors, and dynamics involved in Somaliland, Puntland State, and the central and southern regions of Somalia. Its aim was to ensure that education interventions were designed to address the drivers of fragility and conflict and contribute to peacebuilding, rather than inadvertently contributing to the sorts of pressures described by Novelli et al. (2015).

UNICEF proceeded to design its education intervention to engage with three key drivers, as voiced by the communities involved in the research (Barakat et al. 2014):

1. The economic, political, and social marginalization of youth resulted in their unemployment, recruitment into armed groups, emigration, involvement in crime, and a general loss of hope. What was first a Somali economy controlled by a limited number of political actors further declined into several war economies in which youth could easily be forced into coping strategies that put them at risk. Options for constructive civic and social participation were limited, especially for young people.

2. A loss of positive traditional values and the emergence of a culture of violence reflected that traditional ways of governing relations between groups and between individuals (e.g., regarding the sharing of natural resources, mutual assistance systems, conflict-management systems) were under severe pressure.

3. Weak education-sector management and governance systems reflected broader governance challenges. Few Somali children had access to education (girls in particular), and the infrastructure, learning materials, and teachers were underfunded. In the absence of effective government structures, the education system was dramatically underdeveloped, which in turn amplified the economic marginalization of youth and reproduced the political economy dynamics that underpinned drivers of fragility and conflict.

These drivers are interlinked and highlight the system of exclusion and inequities that have come to underlie education, governance of the education sector, and overall governance in the Somali context.

PROGRAM DESIGN

How could those striving to improve education in Somalia engage with identified conflict drivers, using the curriculum framework review as a point of entry? Curriculum framework reforms were planned in the three constituencies—the central and southern regions, Puntland State, and Somaliland—supported in part by the European Commission through the Somali-Wide Education Synergies program; all were about to start or were in their first phase in 2013. Technical assistance for the curriculum reform was provided by the international NGO, Africa Educational Trust (AET).

While curriculum reform usually is a process that involves a range of education professionals and ministry of education (MoE) staff, the PBEA program introduced a consultative component. The consultation was to involve a wide range of stakeholders and be facilitated by young women and men. Stakeholders included parents, youth both in and out of school, women's groups, local business owners, local elders and religious leaders, disabled people, local teachers and head teachers, local authorities, and NGOs. At the same time, urban and rural livelihood groups—pastoralists, agro-pastoralists, coastal communities, and urban dwellers—were represented. The consultations were held across the country in order to reach people from the different clans and sub-clans. UNICEF and AET teamed up and set a goal of promoting education that would be responsive to local and national needs and aspirations. It would be locally owned, and the curriculum framework would ensure that it was academically portable and transferable by creating a unified, competency-based curriculum. As Smith points out (2010), a competency-based curriculum moves the focus away from contested histories and ideology, and thus eliminates the curriculum as a source of conflict. Moreover, the curriculum reform process was designed to address the specific conflict drivers and issues related to state-building. It was informed by lessons related to promoting inclusive and participatory governance systems that support bottom-up state-building processes, and thus helped to address the legacies of authoritarian or top-down regimes.[2]

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2   For example, see Chopra (1999, 2002) and United Nations Development Programme (1997). On regime types, see Goodin and Klingemann (1996) and Kaveli Holsti (1997).

The process aimed to create positive change at the individual level for the participants and at a broader sociopolitical level:

- Young men and women facilitating the community consultations were to be equipped with the necessary technical skills and the capacity to work together in a constructive way, and to appreciate diversity and different viewpoints. This would enhance both their employability and their potential as advocates for nonviolent ways to deal with conflict in their communities.

- These young men and women would contribute to a national education policy-making process, and be seen doing so by their communities, the wider public, and the government. This was done to enhance the young people's sense of constructive citizenship and—in wider society and vis-à-vis the government—the notion that young people can contribute something constructive and valuable to decision-making processes and thus must be involved.

- Consultative community dialogues that informed national curriculum frameworks were held to help strengthen state-society relations by empowering local communities and giving them voice in a national decision-making process that directly affected their households.

- Seeking inputs from a wide range of stakeholders would result in a curriculum that reflected the needs of these stakeholders, one they could relate to, which would make it more relevant and less likely to reinforce inequity and exclusion.

AET and UNICEF embarked on an intensive advocacy process vis-à-vis Somalia's education ministries and other education stakeholders in order to show the value of a more extended, more inclusive process that would promote a quality, relevant, and inclusive education. Once initial reluctance had been overcome, the ministries committed to the way forward.

Youth-Led Consultations to Inform the Curriculum Framework Reform

Facilitated by an international curriculum expert who collaborated with the AET team, the consultations sought input from the participants as to which competencies and values learners should acquire in primary school. The process did not engage explicitly with participants' different views about these competencies and values,

focusing instead on what connected people through their engagement with the curriculum that their children could use to prepare for adult life.

In a first round of consultations, the wide range of participants was asked to contribute their ideas about what positive values, competencies, skills, and knowledge should go into the future curriculum and form the basis of what educated Somalis would learn in generations to come. The intervention was designed to help curriculum writers at the MoE incorporate feedback from the groups into the draft curriculum framework, and they incorporated the data collected in their work. A draft was then presented to the stakeholder groups, and a second round of consultation helped validate the draft curriculum framework. The consultation involved 248 young people (96 women and 152 men) as facilitators, with a total of 5,863 respondents participating in two rounds of consultation in communities across Somalia.

Selection of Youth Facilitators

Three sets of criteria were used to select the youth who participated in the community consultations: literacy, location, and acceptability. Adherence to these criteria was determined by local MoE officials and leaders of the communities in which the consultations were to occur.

Youth facilitators were first required to have reading and writing skills, as the assignment involved reading documents and recording their discussions as community members. This meant in effect that university students, secondary school graduates, or secondary school students in their final year were selected to participate.

Location was also critical in choosing participants, as the project sought to cover all geographic areas of the regions concerned. Youth facilitators were recruited to help gain access to and facilitate a level of trust in communities that might be reluctant to participate without local facilitators. The goal of reaching all areas was not achieved, due to security risks in some rural areas controlled by HSM.

The final criterion was that the youth selected were acceptable to the local communities. This was achieved by involving community leaders in the selection process. This criterion facilitated trust while also helping to navigate local cultural barriers and clan dynamics, which ensured that communities would participate constructively in the consultation process.

To the extent possible, the youth participants came from the communities where the consultations took place, and thus were seen not as outsiders but as local sons and daughters who had an appreciation for the local environment and their community's sensitivities.

Training Youth to Lead Community Consultations

Following the selection of the youth participants and the development and piloting of data-collection tools, the first batch of youth (56 percent males and 44 percent females) was trained jointly by AET and representatives of the MoE. The youth were introduced to the program's rationale and then trained in interview techniques, ethics, and data recording. This "trainer-of-trainers" method was expected to allow AET to reach and train youth in the remote areas of the three sub-national entities of Somalia where direct access was more difficult for an international NGO. The rationale behind the training was to provide youth facilitators with the competencies necessary to conduct curriculum consultations, particularly the ability to plan and use data-collection tools. This entailed their acquiring skills in planning, cooperation, coordination, representation, decision-making, and problem-solving, all of which they could use during the consultations and also in their everyday lives.

Consultations and Drafting the Framework

The community-level consultations began in early August 2014 in Puntland State and the south-central region of Somalia. In preparing a first draft of the curriculum framework, the writers on the technical committees used input from the public consultations. To ensure a clear connection between the consultations and the draft frameworks, the process was supported by the international curriculum expert who had facilitated the consultations. Upon completion of the first draft, the youth involved in the first round of consultations were trained again, this time to enable them to share the draft with their communities and to receive the communities' feedback. They were equipped with skills to validate the consultation findings and report on key education themes (access and retention, relevance, teaching and learning environment, teacher education and development, school governance, and stakeholder roles). The training included developing skills to make presentations, do group work, facilitate, and solve problems. It involved rehearsals—an approach that gave the participants a "real-life" experience to prepare them for managing complex situations in the field. The curriculum framework writers employed the new data to finalize the final drafts, which were presented at public meetings in the capitals of Somaliland and Puntland State,

and in Mogadishu, the federal capital. Some youth facilitators were present and the event was covered widely in the local media.

Challenges That Had to Be Overcome

As would be expected in a context like Somalia, the youth-led curriculum consultations encountered a number of challenges that are worth reviewing briefly.

Enabling an Inclusive Community-Based Approach

Writing the revised curriculum framework based on the wide-ranging consultations was a multi-stakeholder endeavor, and it came with considerable transaction costs in terms of getting stakeholders on board and coordinating among them. The setup required a high degree of flexibility in the implementation schedule. For example, timelines were repeatedly adapted to accommodate the different MoE priorities in the various implementation zones. However, even when this caused delays, it was deemed necessary in order to foster increased government ownership of the process, which required engaging the critical stakeholders in all stages of the implementation.

Security and Logistics

The consultation process encountered a host of security and logistics issues due to the prevalent situation in Somalia. Some areas with considerable HSM activity or ongoing AMISOM military operations, mainly the southern regions, could not be accessed. Sometimes access was complicated by the simple lack of regular transport to distant areas. Reaching these remote areas made the consultation more inclusive, thus the transportation challenge was willingly taken on.

Interacting with Religious Authorities

In a number of cases, community religious leaders stated initially that issues related to values belonged to their domain of authority, not that of the curriculum framework. Evidence drawn from the youth facilitators' field journals indicates that, for the most part, the young people were able to overcome such resistance through dialogue. They noted further that the community consultations reviewed curriculum matters that did not concern religion directly, and that the religious leaders, as key figures in society, were invited to express their views on all curriculum issues.

Conflict Sensitivity

The youth facilitators impressed upon the communities that the consultation represented an inclusive, impartial contribution to developing an appropriate education that would benefit all. The aim of the consultation was to look for what connected people rather than for what divided them. By supporting such sincere consultation, the PBEA program managed to steer clear of a "hearts and minds" approach, where one group must be convinced to join the position of the group that reaches out. Rather than seeking to change people's opinions, positions, or convictions, the process looked for common ground.

EMERGING RESULTS, OBSERVATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

Results

The intervention addressed conflict drivers at different levels in order to achieve and sustain a positive impact. Changes were envisaged at both the individual and structural level, as those made only at the individual level without links to the sociopolitical level would not be able to influence conflict drivers. Moreover, peacebuilding interventions that fail to engage with the key actors who have the power to change things—for better or worse—are likely to have a negligible impact. This is well illustrated by the Reflecting on Peace Practice matrix seen in Figure 1 (CDA 2009, 11).

Figure 1: The "Reflecting on Peace Practice" Matrix
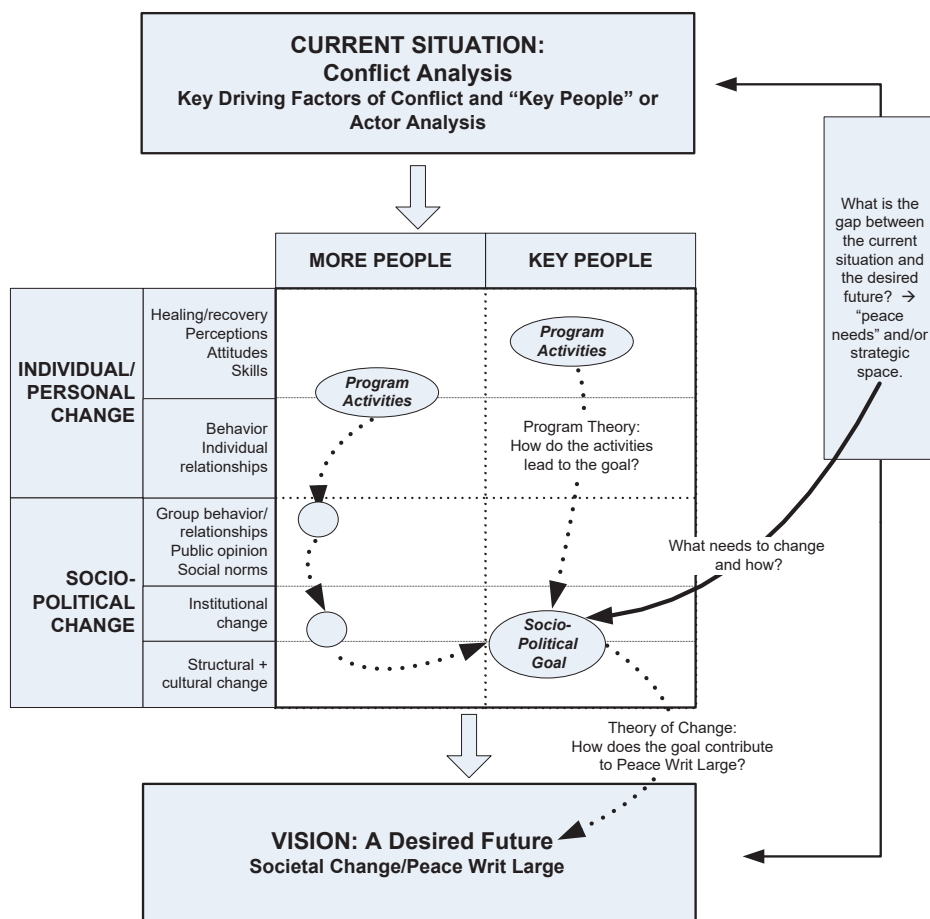
SOURCE: CDA (2009)

Anecdotal evidence collected for the qualitative case study that was based on field observations and participant feedback (Knezevic and Smith 2015) is described below.

Changes at the Individual Level: Skills, Behavior, Relationships

The youth applied a range of soft skills—patience, tolerance, commitment, and drive—with considerable success. The extent to which they increased their management and leadership competencies is best demonstrated by the fact that they successfully implemented their consultations with community members

in often challenging environments. Another clear achievement is their ability to help the youth who participated as facilitators to develop agency, which will help prepare them for constructive leadership roles in society. The consultations often brought together community members with very different views, and the youth-led discussions helped the participants find common understanding and accept differing views.

Sociopolitical Change: Public Opinion and Social Norms

The notion of a consultative process led by youth—and the youth facilitators themselves—were welcomed by the communities. Youth facilitators, both men and women, were met with a high level of collaboration from their interlocutors. Including youth in a social and governmental decision-making processes reflects a degree of willingness on the part of community leaders (including religious leaders) and local authorities to allow young people to inhabit this space. This success can be built on in subsequent education policy processes.

Institutional Change: Governance Reform

Interviews conducted following the activity and subsequent discussions with participants indicated that MoE officials who participated in the pilot—although initially reluctant—eventually became more supportive and provided support to ensure that the youth facilitators were able to take up their role. Education officials also incorporated findings from the youth-led consultations in the national education curriculum framework, which means that the peacebuilding process applied via the youth-led community consultations offered many traditionally excluded groups an opportunity to contribute to a national development process. This was the first time most community members had such an opportunity. While the intervention was primarily geared toward issues related to youth alienation and related risks of violence, the broader community participation it engendered should not be understated.

Many of the communities where consultations took place experience high rates of deprivation and vulnerability across a range of indicators. The curriculum review process introduced an approach that has the potential to address historic legacies of authoritarian national governments and top-down governance systems, which are often implicated in the failure of the Somali state in 1991 and the chronic conflict and fragility that have dominated the country since then. The nature of the consultations appears to have given communities a sense of ownership of the curriculum frameworks, which balance sub-national regional dynamics by

focusing on broadly acceptable competencies that can be used across the entire country.

Structural Change

The youth-led consultations contributed to a more relevant curriculum, a term that is often misunderstood, even though it is a critical component of educational frameworks that promote social inclusion and equity (Epstein 2010). In this regard, effective "relevance strategies" aim to address curriculum issues that exclude "people from the labour market and alienate particular groups . . . from the broader society" (6). Consulting with 5,863 Somalis from very different socioeconomic backgrounds enabled a diverse range of livelihood groups to offer their views on how the national curriculum framework could be strengthened to support future generations of Somali children and adolescents—not just a small group but a large and diverse one.

REFLECTIONS ON EDUCATION AND PEACE-/STATE-BUILDING IN SOMALIA

Can education as a social service contribute to sustainable peacebuilding? Novelli et al. (2015) believe it can—provided that education engages with issues of social justice reflected in the four Rs: redistribution, recognition, representation, and reconciliation. This includes restoring horizontal trust among groups and vertical trust between group members and authorities.

The PBEA's engagement with curriculum framework reform in Somalia aimed to address these issues of social justice throughout the intervention, as described above. Limitations of course remain, as the process was not perfect; for one thing, not all areas could be reached. The new curriculum framework alone will not address the persistently low gross enrollment rates, which are caused by a range of factors that impede access to education. Further interventions in the wider education sector will be needed to improve access. Moreover, one consultative policy process led by young people will not create a sustainable shift in the political modus operandi that helps to maintain a status quo of exclusion and inequity.

However, the PBEA program has shown that superseding the narrow technical view of education with issues of social justice is possible. Stakeholders in the intervention have embraced this aspect of the PBEA program, which can be expanded to other education interventions.

The intervention was able to engage with conflict drivers in the process of addressing education policy. Arguably, it is not only possible for education interventions to engage with conflict drivers—it is necessary. In a context of fragility, like that in Somalia, education outcomes are consistently undermined by the fallout from conflict, ongoing and renewed. If education interventions are designed without taking into account and engaging with the context in which they are implemented, they likely will undermine their own efforts.

The international community has not yet fully come to terms with this fact, or with the role social services play in building sustainable peace. Notably, the New Deal document and the Compact for Somalia (and, consequently, the UN Integrated Strategic Framework that supported their implementation) ostensibly still view access to services largely as a peace dividend that will become available to the population once peace and security have been established. According to this approach, access to social services in these areas will in turn contribute to the legitimacy of the government.

However, as has become clear from this case study, social services, including education, may have a larger and more critical role to play in dealing with factors of fragility and in building sustainable peace. Therefore, it is necessary to take on the challenge of assessing and re-evaluating current education responses in fragile contexts. If the kind of extended education responses that are often prevalent in long-term emergency contexts are adapted to address conflict drivers and factors of fragility, they will stand a better chance of achieving sustainable results that are not reversed by recurrent cycles of conflict.

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