

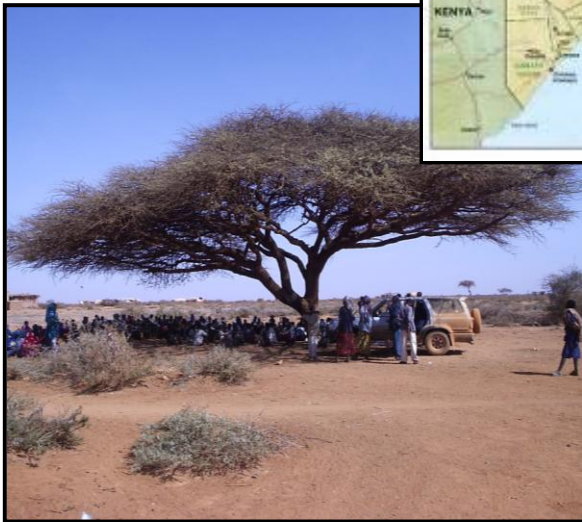


Danish Refugee Council



DDG
Mine Action

Concept Paper Community Safety in North West Somalia (Somaliland)



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Table of Contents

Summary	1
1. Background of DRC and DDG.....	1
2. Problem Analysis.....	2
3. Program design and activities	3
4. Potential Benefits and Outputs	5
5. Complementarities with other initiatives	6

Abbreviations

CSP	Community Safety Plan
DDG	Danish Demining Group
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
EOD	Explosive Ordnance Disposal
ERW	Explosive Remnants of War
IDP	Internally Displaced People
MRE	Mine Risk Education
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons

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Summary

Somaliland has enjoyed relative stability and prosperity since 1997 which has allowed the central government to increasingly develop and extend its competencies, including improved rule of law.

However, communities and clan groups continue to compete fiercely for increasingly scarce resources and the region still suffers from an excess of uncontrolled arms and ammunition which all too often exacerbates the seriousness of low level disagreements. Furthermore, urban areas are facing increasing problems with gangs and spill over effects from the security crisis in South Central Somalia, and the inherent distrust towards the police remaining among many community members often results in crimes and violations not being handled through official channels.

Danish Refugee Council and Danish Demining Group (DRC/DDG) has developed a concept of community safety which strives to enhance communities' safety and security through local peace building and armed violence reduction initiatives such as the removal and destruction of mines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW), promotion of basic conflict management skills, support to local conflict resolution practices, improved self-regulation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and trust building between communities and police.

The program addresses the root causes and negative impacts of armed violence and reduces the demand for SALW. Furthermore, it increases the impact of other humanitarian and development interventions working for a sustainable social and economic development and increased food security.

1. Background of DRC and DDG

The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) is a private, humanitarian organisation covering all aspects of the refugee cause. The aim of the organisation is to protect refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) against persecution and to promote durable solutions. The assistance consists of relief and other humanitarian aid, rehabilitation, support to return and repatriation as well as contributions to the promotion of durable solutions. Furthermore, DRC have profound experience in enhancing local peace building and the respect for human rights by promoting local conflict resolving processes in various cultural contexts.

The Danish Demining Group (DDG) is a section within DRC and has more than 10 years of experience in humanitarian mine action, including landmine clearance, explosive ordnance disposal (EOD), mine risk education (MRE), victim assistance, stockpile destruction, survey and data collection and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR). The aim of the organisation is to facilitate a safe return for refugees and IDPs by creating an environment which is as far as possible free of mines, other explosive remnants of war and small arms.

DRC and DDG have been operating in Somaliland since 1998 and 1999 respectively in the areas of integrated community-based rehabilitation, short term humanitarian interventions, improvement of governance through collaboration with traditional clan leaders, advocacy for human rights and clearance of mines and other explosive remnants of war.

Recognizing the need to address the causes and impacts of instability, conflicts and violence in order to create the pre-conditions for durable returns and sustainable development within Somaliland both organizations have extended their activities into the wider sphere of community safety. Thus, DRC has been working with conflict resolution and management since 2003 and community based policing (CBP) since 2006, while DDG in April 2008 began implementation of a community safety enhancement program aimed at counteracting the negative consequences of the widespread proliferation of uncontrolled SALW in Somaliland.

DDG also has a program in Mogadishu while DRC has programs in both Puntland and South Central Somalia, i.e. Mogadishu and Hiiran regions.

2. Problem Analysis

Following the collapse of the Somali state in the early 1990s, the past two decades in Somalia have been characterised by large scale conflict resulting in significant displacement of populations, erosion of the rule of law, a massive proliferation of SALW, the widespread use of landmines and the build up of armament and ammunition stockpiles. In parallel with the fall of the Siad Barre regime in 1991, the Northwest region of the country declared itself independent as the Republic of Somaliland, establishing the framework of an administration and shaping a constitution. Inter-clan rivalries beset the region for some time, but since 1997 Somaliland has enjoyed a considerable degree of peace, stability and prosperity and big steps towards the re-establishment of law and order and functioning institutions that are, nevertheless, still fragile, have been made.



In the situation of institutional collapse, the security and protection of rights throughout Somaliland has largely been handled by clan structures on the basis of their customary law. Although, these structures have managed to maintain relative peace and lead the population towards institutional reconstruction, this does not necessarily translate into a lessened amount of conflicts at community level where resource based (clan) conflicts are everyday occurrences. Furthermore, the traditional system has its intrinsic limitations as, for example, large parts of the population do not enjoy effective clan protection.

The police, who should gradually recover their role of guarantor of law and order, hand in hand with the institutional reconstruction, are often still looked at with mistrust by the local population, influenced by the attitude of the previous Siad Barre regime when the police were a tool of the regime spying on citizens. Thus, security and protection of rights throughout Somaliland is still largely handled through clan structures and/or imposition of self-justice.

Furthermore, Somaliland still suffers from an excess of uncontrolled arms and ammunition which is easily accessible to the majority of the Somaliland society, including criminals, urban gangs, those who lack basic competence in safe firearms-handling skills, and groups such as children who often also lack a proper responsible attitude towards firearms.¹ This in turn helps to sustain a culture in which weapons use is seen as normal and legitimate, and may often result in the use of excessive force by one individual or group against another or the death or serious injury of innocents who become the victims of accidental shootings. Though no official data exists, the ingrained culture of weapons ownership, carriage and use undoubtedly contributes to increased insecurity both within the household and between communities and clan groups that continue to compete fiercely for scarce resources.

Finally, the security crisis in South Central Somalia has escalated into a wider conflict which has not only consumed much of South and Central Somalia, but may also threaten the stability of Somaliland with an increasing influx of displaced people, further proliferation of SALW and a spill over of political terrorist attacks.

¹ A 2007 DDG Community Attitudes Survey of approximately 1'800 household members found that at least 80% of the households in Somaliland own minimum one firearm.

3. Program design and activities

Based on the above problem analysis, DRC and DDG has developed a concept for enhancing community safety through local peace building and armed violence reduction initiatives such as the removal and destruction of mines and ERW, promotion of basic conflict management skills, support to local conflict resolution practices, improved self-regulation of SALW and trust building between communities and police.

As personal and community protection remains of the highest priority within the vacuum created by the lack of strong rule of law and state policing, and as ownership and use of weapons is deeply engrained in the Somali culture, DRC and DDG set about designing a grass-root community-driven program that respects individuals' and communities' perceived right to self-protection and need to maintain ownership and control over their firearms. Thus, the program aims not to disarm Somalilanders, but to facilitate and promote improved SALW management at community level. It aims not to impose security solutions on communities, but to improve the understanding and collaboration between the communities and the institutions which they themselves find can help enhance their safety.

The activities are as follows:

Community Safety Plans

After the implementation of a thorough participatory baseline study in the target areas, a community safety plan (CSP) process is initiated. Through a participatory community driven process, DRC/DDG helps communities assess their safety situation, define and prioritise their safety related needs and identify their own resources as well as external resources to address these needs.



The CSP process results in an actual community safety plan which will be funded by DRC/DDG but handed over to communities for further action. Based on this plan DRC and DDG will identify the safety needs which fall within their mandates and make an action plan for addressing these needs (see below).

The CSP also serves as a guiding tool for other actors, including the government, UNDP and other INGO's working with community safety.

Outreach/Advocacy Activities

Workshops are held with community elders and other prominent community members resulting in a signed declaration of support about the importance of a reduction of armed violence and crime, cooperation with the police, safe handling and storage of firearms, registration of firearms and handover and destruction of ERW, excess ammunition and SALW. The aim is for the community leaders to subsequently actively advocate these messages to the people in their community.

Firearms Safety Education

Practical firearms safety education will be provided to communities to encourage adoption of safe behavior when handling firearms so that accidents created by "negligent and accidental discharge" are reduced. The education will further help to directly promote firearms safe behavior and foster a wider ethos of responsibility which is one of the ultimate long term aims of any SALW process. The education messages will be tailored both to firearm owners and to vulnerable groups such as children and other dependants.



Provision of Safe Storage Devices for Firearms



Safe storage devices for firearms to be used in the household will be provided to firearms owners and DDG/DRC will follow up with the requisite support in terms of installation, safe use and management of these facilities.

The use of these devices will help to reduce firearms theft and thus restrict access for criminals. Furthermore, it will remove immediate access to firearms from those who lack the responsibility and the technical skills to handle them in a safe manner (e.g. children) and it will help to reduce spontaneous assaults/killings by creating a physical and time barrier between a would-be assailant and his victim. Perhaps, most importantly, it will introduce a systematic and safe firearms-management regime into communities.

Conflict Management Education

Conflict management education will be provided to community members, with a special focus on youth and firearm owners, with the aim of providing them with basic skills to settle minor conflicts in a constructive and peaceful manner rather than turning to the use of violence and SALW. Training of trainers in the community will be provided to ensure sustainability.

Ammunition Disposal

ERW which has either been abandoned or is in formal or private storage will be removed and destroyed. In the longer term DDG/DRC might also develop the capacity to remove and destroy any ammunition and SALW which communities feel are excess to their requirements.² This physical removal of the remnants of war will have a positive effect by reducing both the numbers and seriousness of ERW and SALW related accidents.



Mine Risk Education

Mine Risk Education will be provided to community members of all ages, genders and socioeconomic groups with the aim of teaching them safe behaviour in potentially contaminated areas.

Community Based Policing



With the aim of enhancing mutual trust, dialogue and cooperation between the communities and the police urban communities will be assisted via the establishment of community based policing mechanisms. Thus, sub-committees under existing community management committees will be capacity build to facilitate a better relationship between the community and the police and provided with training in human rights, sexual and gender-based violence sensitivity, conflict resolution, communication, community mobilisation and fundraising.

The committees will include representatives from women, youth, elders and other stakeholders.

² NB: No SALW will be destroyed without an agreement with relevant authorities

Support to conflict resolution

Support is given to local initiatives for peace and conflict resolution by working with traditional clan-based structures in the areas of traditional law, conflict resolution and human rights promotion. The aim is to promote values, policies and capacities among the traditional leadership which safeguard individual's rights and protection and contribute to the peaceful handling of conflicts.



Furthermore, community protection initiatives that help provide conflict mediation possibilities for vulnerable groups such as IDP's who do not normally have access to traditional clan protection mechanisms, can be initiated.

4. Potential Benefits and Outputs

The program addresses the root causes and negative impacts of insecurity and armed violence and reduces the demand for SALW. Thus, it creates the pre-conditions for durable returns and sustainable development within Somaliland. More specifically the program aims at obtaining the following benefits and outputs:

Increased activity from community members to counteract safety problems

Community members themselves are in one of the best positions to enhance safety and security in their community. Through the active engagement in the analysis, planning, visioning and implementation of the program community members will obtain the necessary understanding and capacity to begin playing a more active role with regards to enhancing their own safety situation. The community safety plan which is made and owned by the communities serves as a tool for them to plan their own activities as well as to engage other institutions in their work towards creating a safer environment.

Improved conflict management capacity

This component directly addresses the already existing component of support to conflict resolution by being able to provide a stronger linkage to the communities and particularly the youth and fire arm owners. Through the provision of basic life skills and non-violent conflict resolution and mediation skills it is possible to link the conflict resolution element to a conflict prevention element. Improved capacity to deal with conflicts in a non-violent manner has direct impact to the community's safety and security concerns and provides a healthy environment for further development of the community.

Prevention of spontaneous killings and assaults

Spontaneous killings and assaults as well as revenge killings are common throughout Somaliland. Because firearm owners often do not have anywhere safe to store their firearms, they are obliged to keep them on their person³. Thus, in the heat of an argument a firearms-related killing can easily result. Therefore, if safe storage is provided and basic conflict management skills promoted, spontaneous killings and assaults hopefully will be reduced and as a result broader inter-clan "blood feuds" and revenge killings are also likely to decline.

Decrease in the number of ERW and firearms related accidents

The removal of ERW will have a positive effect on reducing both the numbers and seriousness of ERW related accidents. Furthermore, the safe storage of firearms will restrict access to firearms for those who lack either the responsibility or technical skills to handle them in a safe manner and the safety education will improve people's behaviour in terms of observing basic safety precautions when

³ App. 10% of respondents in DDG's 2007 community attitudes survey reported that they usually carry their firearms on them

handling firearms, thus effecting an immediate reduction in accidents and injuries caused by “negligent or accidental discharge”.⁴

Protection from firearms theft

One of the main items of value within a Somaliland household is a firearm, and common weapons such as the AK-47 rifle can be sold through the black market for as much as \$250. The theft rate of firearms is therefore relatively high⁵ and has, for example, been linked to an increased gun culture within the urban youth of Somaliland. The proper storage of firearms in a secure clamp or box will help to reduce firearms thefts from households and in doing so help to limit access to weapons by criminal elements, urban gangs etc. and thus indirectly effect a reduction in levels of criminality.

Enhanced trust and cooperation between the police and target communities

In conflict affected populations – or those that are recovering from conflict – such as Somaliland there is a heightened level of mistrust to the previous structures of power, such as for example the police force. Furthermore, additional problems with the police as well as incidents relating to illegal detentions, wrongful accusations, etc do not foment an environment in which communities’ or their members would report crimes to the police force.

Through the implementation of community based policing the issue of trust building is addressed by providing a middle link between the community and the police that is able to act as buffer but also that is accountable to the community, providing them with a direct way of dealing with wrong-doings by the police or within the community. Community based policing provides the basis on which the community can get closer to the police and through better coordination mechanisms also work with the police in crime prevention and crime solving.

As the police and the community get closer and are able to cooperate the trust between them improves as it also allows the police to access more resources through community mobilisation.

5. Complementarities with other initiatives

Both DRC and DDG already have very well established networks of caseload communities throughout Somaliland as well as strong ties with the government in Hargeisa, district authorities and traditional leaders.

UNDP Somalia’s Rule of Law & Security program has adopted a community approach much like the DRC/DDG one, with a focus on community security, armed violence prevention and DDR preparedness. They also provide support to local government authorities with regards to institutional strengthening of the law enforcement and judicial system, including capacity building of police, development of firearms legislation, set up of systems for licensing and registration of SALW etc. The program is conceived to be complementary with these activities and collaboration under a joint framework is already being established.

Furthermore, the program can supplement the recently initiated religious and traditional leaders’ peace initiative to provide spaces for dialogue on peace both in urban and rural settings implemented by DRC in partnership with Finn Church Aid and International Horn University.

Finally, discussions and/or collaboration has been established with Small Arms Survey, SaferWorld and Geneva Call and both DRC and DDG have extensive collaboration with prominent local NGOs working with peace building, conflict resolution and community security initiatives.

⁴ 5% of respondents in DDG’s 2007 community attitudes survey reported a domestic weapons-related accident

⁵ 9% of respondents in DDG’s 2007 community attitudes survey indicated that a theft of one of their firearms had occurred

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