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Exploring The Role Of Community Innovation And Peacebuilding In Karaan District, Somalia.

Mr. Dahir Barre Mohamed

Corresponding Email: mohamed.dahir@studmc.kiu.ac.ug
College: Humanities and Social Science
Title: Social Worker

Abstract: *This paper explores the role of community innovation and peacebuilding in Karaan District, Banadir Region, Somalia. Since the collapse of the central government of Somalia in 1991has experienced prolonged conflict characterized by political fragmentation, clan tensions, weak government, and insecurity in the capital city of Somalia. Although the national and international peace programs have been used in the quest to stabilize the situation, the mechanisms at the grassroots have continued to be the focus in preventing and controlling local conflicts. The paper will analyse the impacts of locally produced solutions, dialogue space, and creative community-based practices on the peacebuilding process in the district. A descriptive research design is used, and data were collected from 70 respondents, including women, youth, elders, and business actors, through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The results indicate that community-based efforts, i.e., youth forums, women-led mediation networks, awareness campaigns, and local monitoring networks, are influential in preventing the conflict, increasing inclusion, and social cohesion. The findings show a mutual relationship between community innovation and peacebuilding. Conflict prevention can be more legitimate, responsive and sustainable when it is locally owned. The research concludes that the resilience and sustainability of building any peace in Karaan District as well as in other urban settings in Somalia, will be important through empowering the grassroots actors, institutionalization of the community-based mechanisms, and encouraging youth and women innovators.*

Keywords: *Community innovation, Peacebuilding, Youth, Women, Elders, Somalia.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past thirty years, Somalia has been facing political disintegration, lack of security, and poor governing systems. After the state collapsed in 1991, the conflicts changed their nature when, instead of a centralized political struggle, a localized clan struggle, militia mobilization, and urban control struggles became dominant (Brinkerhoff, 2007). Karaan District, like in Mogadishu, is affected by a series of tensions which have constantly occurred in urban districts like Karaan District in matters of land ownership, youth unemployment, political rivalry and poor provision of public services. Despite the efforts by federal and international peace programs in attempts to stabilize the situation, the grassroots mechanisms continue to play the key role in preventing conflicts.

According to scholars, sustainable peace should not be externally imposed, but it should be born out of local ownership (Lederach, 1997). The local-level innovation, locally produced solutions to social and security issues, is a very important but understudied aspect of district-level peacebuilding. Peacebuilding in Somalia defines the long-term measures and procedures that are designed to avert the recurrence of the violent conflict, reestablishing social confidence, replenishing the institutions of governance, and achieving sustainable stability. Since the demise of the central government in 1991, Somalia has been in an extended conflict that has been dominated by clan violence, political disintegration, extremism, and weak states. In this regard, peacebuilding has transformed into a formal (state and international-based) and informal (community-driven) process.

In addition, community innovation facilitates early prevention of conflicts. Sustainable peacebuilding pays more attention to preventing instead of responding (Lederach, 1997). Communities in Somalia that would create local monitoring schemes, mediation training curricula, and awareness programs would be in a better position to detect and deal with tensions before they lead to violence. Such community-driven actions strengthen the community and minimize its dependence on outside intervention. According to Brinkerhoff (2007), the strength of post conflict governance is enhanced, whereby the local institutions are capable of handling the disputes on their own. Peacebuilding in Somalia involves reaching settlements among clans, enhancing governance, the rule of law, Economic recovery, and social cohesion.

This study seeks to determine the effect of community awareness on peace-building outcomes in Gubadley District, Somalia.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The available literature reviewed was picked from books, journals, conference presentations, and institutional reports. The part reviews the concepts of the community innovations, peacebuilding and how the community innovation correlates with the peacebuilding in Karaan district Somalia.

2.1 CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY INNOVATION IN SOMALIA

The social structure of Somalia has a history of relying on the elders of the clan, religious figures, and the customary law (xeer) in Somalia. Nevertheless, urbanization and transformation of generations entail adaptation processes that incorporate both ancient and modern communication channels. Although the roles of local mediation are acknowledged, the existing bodies of literature pay little attention to innovation-based peacebuilding at the district level, particularly in Karaan.

The meaning of the word innovation was quite different in the past. Generally, innovation is differentiated from creativity through the manner in which it focuses on putting the creativity into practice within an economic environment. Based on the literature, Amabile and Pratt 2016 draw the line between creativity (the generation of new and useful ideas by an individual or a small team of people working together) and innovation (the effective execution of creative ideas by an organization) (Teresa Pratt, Michael G. 2016).

Innovation used to mean something very different in the past. Overall, innovation and creativity are differentiated by the fact that the former focuses on applying creative ideas in a market environment. Based on the literature, Amabile and Pratt (2016) differentiate creativeness (the generation of new and useful ideas by an individual / a small group of people working collectively) and innovation (the effective application of creative ideas in an organization) (Teresa Pratt, Michael G. 2016).

Innovation is actually the practical application of ideas, which leads to the introduction of a new good or service or the provision of goods or services. There are other definitions; one of the similarities in the definition is emphasis on newness, enhancement, and diffusion of ideas or technologies. Maintenance of innovation is the refinement of a service or product according to the existing requirements of the existing customers (e.g., faster microprocessors, flat screen televisions (Clayton and Overdorf, Michael 2000).

The location of youth in society will have an implication on the ability to serve as leaders, as well as the potential of that youth in peacebuilding. The conflict between the young and the old has been among the most important aspects of inter-generational changes with regard to power, resources, and people. Innovation gives you more opportunities to respond to changes and find new opportunities. It can also contribute to developing a competitive advantage since you get to create superior products and services for your customers.

2.2 CONCEPT OF PEACE BUILDING IN SOMALIA

In modern society, peacebuilding is also used to refer to the maintenance and security of the economic and cultural structures of a society and its people. Cultural protection and cultural assets are thus getting a growing duty not only nationally but internationally as well. The protection of cultural heritage and, hence, peace building is taken care of by the United Nations, UNESCO and Blue Shield International (Rapport, A.1992).

Peacebuilding and peace-negotiating agents have the potential to give the necessary security that facilitates peace negotiations to take place. The role that the youth have traditionally played in the peace-building processes is limited despite the fact that they are usually left to take care of the basic needs of their families following the incident of the violent conflict. They particularly tend to be unrepresented or underrepresented in negotiations, political decision-making, high-level policymaking, and top judicial posts. Barnett et al. classify peace building in three dimensions in the aftermath of conflict as stabilizing the post-conflict zone, reestablishment of the state institutions, and social and economic problems. Youth and Peace are very vital in the contemporary world. The world has numerous youth peace builders who are also engaged in the peace building in their respective countries. Amid Hajid of Uganda and Victoria of Nigeria are examples of people working to help in peacebuilding in their respective location (Barre Mohasmed, 2026).

Peace is a fruit of sustained and long-term peace-building efforts by communities, governments, civil society, businesses, international organizations, and intergovernmental bodies. While peace building involves using non-violent actions to stop, reduce, or prevent immediate violence, this is never enough in itself, as violence can all too readily recur. Peacebuilding, therefore, encompasses longer-term initiatives that contribute to resilience, making conflicts less likely in the future, and strengthening people's and societies' ability to handle those that do without resorting to violence.

The general definition of peacebuilding is considered to be those measures that are taken to treat the background factors of conflict and avoid the occurrence of violence (United Nations, 2012).

In comparison to peacemaking, which is about negotiating a ceasefire or peacekeeping that is about stabilizing the security, peacebuilding is about long-term transformation.

The country of Somalia did not have a central authority after 1991. Reconciliation conferences (including the establishment of the Transitional Federal Government in 2004) formed the basis of early peace attempts. This was followed by the formation of the Federal Government of Somalia in 2012.

2.3 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COMMUNITY INNOVATION AND PEACE-BUILDING

Community innovation is very important in enhancing peacebuilding activities in Somalia, where social cohesion has been destroyed due to prolonged conflict, inter-clan tensions, and poor structures of governance since 1991. Community innovation and peacebuilding are associated with a direct and strengthening relationship. Community innovation brings new and locally-grown methods of conflict resolution, dialogue, and cooperation, which help to attain sustainable peace on a grassroots level.

Community-based innovation supports peacebuilding by increasing inclusive participation. The customary law (xeer) of the Somali has traditionally been governed by the elders of the clan through official conflict resolution mechanisms. These systems are still important to the culture, but studies have shown that sustainable peace involves the meaningful involvement of women, youth and civil society players (Lederach, 1997; United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2022). New community setups like local peace committees, youth dialogue forums, and women mediation projects are used to increase the broadening of representation in the decision-making processes. These advantages of inclusive participation are that it increases the legitimacy of the participation, it builds the confidence of the divided parties, and it increases the sustainability of peace agreements (Putnam, 2000).

Ina addition, community innovation enhances social cohesion. The level of trust, collaboration and identity in a given society is social cohesion. The unity of a people tends to be broken in vulnerable environments due to fragmentation along clan lines, resource allocation and political marginalization. Locally based projects like shared community development projects, joint natural resource management projects and organized inter-clan dialogues promote cooperation and restore interpersonal reliability. The social capital theory holds that networks of trust and reciprocity are essential in resolving collective problems and conflict reduction (Putnam, 2000). Thus, novel community activities that facilitate interclan interaction are a direct way of ensuring peaceful coexistence.

Institutional resilience is also promoted through community innovation. Communities achieve adaptive capacities, designed to address the recurrent conflicts, by formulating situational solutions to common conflicts, which include land conflicts, political contestations, or competition over scarce resources of a nation, and as such, the adaptive capacities can be utilized even at times when the political environment is uncertain regarding the nation. According to UNDP (2022), the connection between grassroots and larger systems of governance makes peacebuilding initiatives more effective. Peacebuilding is owned locally and maintained by institutions when local innovation is consistent with district or national forms.

In Conclusion, the community innovation and peacebuilding in Karaan District, Somalia, have a mutually reinforcing relationship. Inclusion, social cohesion, early conflict prevention, and long-term resilience are all benefits of community innovation. These informally-led initiatives are supplementary to formal peacebuilding activities and help a lot in realizing sustainable peace. Since Somalia is still undergoing state-building efforts, enabling communities to innovate is an important approach towards gaining more stability and ensuring that the outbreak of conflict is avoided later.

3. METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study employed a descriptive research design, which was suitable for the effect of community awareness and peacebuilding outcomes in Karaan District, Banadir Region, Somalia. The study population consists of the residents of Karaan District, which includes Youth, Women, Elders, and Business Actors. The study was conducted in the Karaan District, Somalia.

Karaan District is one of the northern administrative districts of Mogadishu, located in the Benadir Regional Administration of Somalia. Karaan is a reflection on the socio-political changes that have taken place in the wider Mogadishu city since the fall of the central government in 1991. The district presents a unique context for studying community resilience, urban government and grassroots peacebuilding initiatives.

The sample size of this study involved 70 respondents from Karaan District in Mogadishu, Somalia. The Slovens formula used to calculate the sample size was based on the 85% at confidence level and a 7% margin of error. There were no previous data regarding

Community awareness in the district, which led to the use of a population proportion of 50%. The data were collected through Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This part presents findings and discussion of the study on the role of community innovation and peacebuilding in Karaan District, Mogadishu, Somalia. It emphasizes an overview of the findings of interviews and focus group discussions with Women, Youth, Elders, and Business Actors, showing the importance of locally-led efforts in preventing conflicts, including people, and ensuring social cohesion.

4.1 Findings

The study established that community innovation is significant in enhancing peacebuilding in the Karaan District, Mogadishu, Somalia. The reactions of youth, women, elders, and business actors revealed that the initiatives organized locally are more receptive to the daily conflicts, like land conflicts, political conflicts, unemployment, and even issues related to services. Participants observed that inclusive structures, youth forums, women-led mediation groups, and community peace committees have enhanced participation beyond the traditional elder-based system.

The results also show that community awareness campaigns and local monitoring networks as well as mediation training, can prevent conflicts before they become serious. It was found that youth participation was increasing, albeit in unofficial decision-making. All in all, those hybrid solutions that integrate traditional to contemporary approaches were perceived to be effective in responding to the city's problems.

4.1 Discussion

The findings indicate that the relationship of community innovation and peacebuilding is close in Karaan District. Local-led efforts promote inclusivity, development of trust, and social cohesion. Community-owned conflict resolution makes the peace endeavor more sustainable and less reliant on actors. The paper also indicates that long-term stability would be enhanced by intensification of youth involvement and community-based institutionalization mechanisms. The integration of traditional mediation and novel approaches is an effective way to achieve sustainable peace and community stability in urban Somali environments.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that community innovation can be critical in enhancing the process of peacebuilding in the Karaan District, Banadir Region, Somalia. Local-led efforts in terms of inclusive dialogue forums, youth and women empowerment, awareness campaigns, and mixed mediation strategies have also helped to calm the situation and enhance societal solidarity. The results indicate that the community ownership of the conflict prevention and resolution enhances the responsiveness, legitimacy, and sustainability of peacebuilding. As much as the traditional systems of elders still hold the key in the city, it is important to incorporate new and inclusive systems to improve efficiency in dealing with the new challenges in city life. In Somalia, peacebuilding initiatives should focus on innovation at the grassroots and national institutions restructuring. In general, community innovation has become the basis of stability and resilience in the Karaan district over the long term.

5.2 Recommendations

1. **Capacity Building amidst Youth and Women Innovators:** There should be targeted training programs to empower the youth and women in their innovation, mediation, leadership, and conflict resolution strategies to enhance their meaningful contributions in the process of peacebuilding.
2. **Funding of local peace efforts:** The government institutions and development partners need to be able to provide financial resources towards support of locally based peacebuilding efforts to ensure their sustainability and success.
3. **Recognition of Community-Led Peace Mechanisms by the Institutions:** District and regional governments need to recognize and institutionalize the community-led peace mechanisms into official governance systems to create more legitimacy, coordination, and sustainability of the mechanisms.

4. **Institutional Recognition:** Peace mechanisms that are community-based need to be institutionalized and endorsed at the district and regional levels to enhance their legitimacy and sustainability.
5. **Youth and Women Empowerment:** Capacity-building activities need to be extended to have more youth and women participate in mediation and leadership, and decision-making.
6. **Creation of Online Early Warning Systems**: The district management must implement e-based early warning and tracking mechanisms to identify the onset of conflicts and act early enough before the situation can worsen.
7. **Help Local Innovation:** Financial and technical assistance is to be offered to local peace groups to increase their effectiveness and sustainability.

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