



Somali Family Services



2010 Annual Report



Contact's Address: 25290-794761

Project Contact's E-Mail: abdurashid.ali@ussfs.org; somalifamily@yahoo.com

"Building bridges for a better Somalia"

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Glossary

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT	Information Communication Technology
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
SFS	Somali Family Services
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
US	United States (of America)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Foreword

“SFS over the years has worked to develop overlapping programmes that strengthen one another conceptually through interlocking relationships. The vision and capacity of implementation shown by SFS makes it one of our effective partners,” Eric Robinson, National Endowment for Democracy (US).

This sentiment by our partner literally captures our style of working. It is the same spirit of sheer hard work, creating partnerships and linkages with individuals, local and international organisations, governments, CSOs and the media among others for the benefit of Somalia in general and specifically Puntland that we guided us throughout 2010. Led by our core values: integrity, innovation, effectiveness and responsiveness, inclusiveness and engagement and empowerment; SFS did its best in the year to deliver on its mandate and to the satisfaction of the Somali people.

We recorded varied fortunes in the year under review-successes and also encountered challenges along the way. But the year has been momentous and we can proudly say we helped put many a smiles on the faces of Somali community in and out of this Horn of Africa country. This, however was not our own making alone, no, we worked with partners and the very ordinary people at the grassroots.

We at SFS particularly are indebted to among others, our partners, who availed the much needed material and financial resources that we employed at the project level. Our sincere gratitude goes to Diakonia-Sweden, NED and UNDP for thier support over the years.

Similarly, we applaud the Puntland government, CSOs inside Somalia and the media as well as the communities that have tirelessly worked with us in 2010 to ensure our projects not only were seen but also left an indelible mark on the ordinary Puntland peoples.

As our way of giving thanks, we pledge to continue our unwavering commitment to promoting the dignity of the Somali people based on the principles of human rights, social justice, democracy, capacity building and development, and sustainable livelihoods. We will also endeavour to encourage the exploration of new ideas and developing workable approaches to benefit entire Somali communities. We will and encourage others to enable the utilisation of resources in a considered, appropriate and transparent manner for maximum and timely benefit of the intended or target populations. It is our undertaking too that we will continue embracing impartiality and diversity; standing in solidarity with partners, local and Diaspora Somali communities and acting to improve lives while at the same time uniting with national and international communities to build an equitable and sustainable future for Somalia.

We in turn welcome the continued warm and robust partnerships we have had in 2010 to 2011 and beyond. It is through this kind of working together that the Somali people will in turn benefit more and reap the maximum out individual and collective sweat.

To you all, I say thanks very much for your contribution of any kind. We welcome your feedback on our activities and in the spirit of transparency and openness, promise to engage you more in our service delivery in the coming year. God bless you all.

Abdirashid Ali, Executive director, SFS.

Executive Summary:

The year 2010 saw the implementation of several projects by SFS as detailed in this report. It is a compilation of the democratic governance and civic education for Puntland project funded by Diakonia, Sweden. The project was designed to have several forums that were tailored to strengthen the linkage between civil society movement and government by creating a dialogue platform. It was a consequence of this that the parties who included the media and other stakeholders to engage in discussions that could lead to producing an effective, efficient, just and progressive democratic nation. And by dialogue, SFS means allowing future leaders to take control of their nation by sharing their vision of Somalia.

This report covers in detail the forums held and which inculcated dialogue between government and other stakeholders which is seen as a major boost towards democratisation of specifically Puntland and Somalia in general. It details how such forums had participants familiarise with the ICT tools to boost their knowledge base and skills. It also facilitated sharing of information, their participation in governance and decision making affairs, previously unheard of. Suffice it to say that this was made possible by SFS in the organisation of the “get together” forums.

The report further outlines the specific project started by SFS in the year targeting the youth and girls. The youths were targeted for their vulnerability to the vagaries of nature, more so in the wake of an economic meltdown that has seen jobs plummet and leaving them idle. The youths were accorded life skills that put them on a better footing when it came to negotiation for life’s options. And like the young women and girls, they were also exposed to governance and leadership skills to enable them partake of decision-making in Puntland.

Also under scrutiny is the capacity development at SFS and for opportunities availed them and international staff who were accorded internship at SFS. The twinning programmes between SFS and international institutions and that organised by SFS for other organisations is highlighted, outlining the networking programme by SFS. The programme confer skills and knowledge all which go a long way towards increasing individual capacities and for the good of a future Somalia.

The report concludes by offering an assessment of programming, including achievements, challenges, and recommendations for improvement. This section offers in a nutshell reason for the replication of the 2010 projects at SFS.

Chapter 1: Background

Following the collapse of the central government in 1991, Somalia slid into a wave of uncontrolled internal conflicts characterised by inter and intra-ethnic/clan wars which in turn eroded the rule of law and thinned the democratic space. Several attempts to bring a semblance of order have faltered miserably with the Horn of Africa country sliding into cyclic bloodletting and destruction. The once cohesive Somali society has been fragmented, infrastructure ripped apart, the political system turned chaotic while thousands have either been killed or injured and many more displaced, either internally or externally.

The establishment of the autonomous state of Puntland was a triumph in rebuilding state administration, redrawing a political structure and an attempt to re-establish the rule of law and self-governance of a people in a failed Somalia. With it came hope and a semblance of state security but since then, been characterised with uncertainties- faltering political structures and unstable economic development. The challenges are mainly due to the many shortcomings in the central government, lacking the varied capacities and (financial and qualified human) resources.

In turn, the civil society movement and non-governmental organisations have crept in to fill the big void left by the deficiencies and inadequacies of the central Puntland government. With this, mistrust has reigned in with an incapacitated government feeling that its legitimacy and authority are threatened or undermined by even the well-meaning non-governmental or civil society movement. This has been heightened by the often predictable failures bordering on misrule or bad governance which has only emboldened the CSOs working to bring change in Puntland.

In line with its mandate to address societal challenges, the Somali Family Services (SFS), a non-profit charitable organisation locally registered with the Ministry of Planning and Internal Cooperation (MoPIC) and Local Government in Garowe, Puntland has stepped in to among others, open dialogue between the government and its people. This is aimed at building a coherent society and consensus between all players involved in the pursuit for progress and development of the larger Somalia and specifically Puntland.

Founded in 2003, SFS is tax exempt from (US) federal income taxes under Section 501(C) (3) and is also registered with US Agency for International Development (USAID) as a private voluntary organization. While it has operation offices in Garowe and a liaison office in Bossaso, a regional coordinating office in Nairobi, Kenya, the organisation has administrative headquarters in Minnesota, US. Its mission is to support all Somali families and people by creating access to resources and opportunities and promoting greater community awareness and advocacy for the Somali Diaspora. SFS is committed to enhancing positive community development towards a peaceful coexistence, global acceptance and a world community that is both responsible and productive.

Through a committed board, strong leadership, solid consultants and staff, SFS has made tremendous progress and greatly improved on its programming as it matures through a strong web of relationships and experiences. In Puntland in particular and generally in Somalia, SFS supports programming in: democracy and governance; youth empowerment, literacy and skills training, and; human rights, gender, HIV/AIDS and environmental issues. The organisation works hand in hand with Diakonia – Sweden, National Endowment for Democracy, UNDP, UNFPA, Books for Africa, Counterpart International, UNICEF, and the World Movement for Democracy.

In the year under review, and in order to increase the impact of constructive programming, promote innovation, and facilitate growth, SFS held a series of civic engagement activities that created linkages between CSOs, media and the government to promote social coexistence, cohesion, and nation-building. The aim of these activities were to increase the capacity of the Puntland government, CSOs, media and local religious and secular leaders in order to create sustainable institutions and mechanisms for engaging citizens in nascent democracy-building and education processes in Puntland.

The intervention through the Democratic Governance and Civic Education project was designed to reduce the mistrust between civil society organizations and the government through improved communication. The objectives were to create a space for positive interaction between government and civil society to have dialogues and consultations on the pertinent issues affecting the region while broadening public participation in government and to strengthen the mutual accountability of civil society and the government to each other and to the public.

Chapter 2: Community Empowerment

In the year 2010, SFS held a series of civic engagement forums under the Democratic Governance and Civic Education project. Each of the three-day forums had participants drawn from government, media, CSOs, community representatives and was designed to be as consultative and open as possible to encourage free and independent dialogue. The themes covered included good governance, clean environment, democracy, civic education, gender equality, equity, resource sharing, and human rights. Appropriate and relevant topics were identified under each of these themes.

2.1 The Forums

SFS hosted the forums in 2010 to help stakeholders identify pressing issues deemed destructive to the process of peace and state building. In each forum, SFS expert facilitator led participants into drawing up action plans and in the identification of the implementation plan and who would play what role in the implementation. Importantly, SFS stressed the importance of stakeholders in sharing the knowledge or information acquired from the forums with communities. Follow-up advocacy-through mobilization and sensitizations campaigns- formal and informal gatherings such as meetings, seminars and workshops were encouraged. This in turn placed the role of nation building in the hands of the communities so socialized as they were expected to shore up support and modifications of the action plans drawn up at the forums.

In the forums, SFS adopted the Neighbourhood College Concept, a concept that promotes social change and is designed to help individuals learn more about local governance, democratic processes, rights and responsibilities, and encourages them to participate in democracy building. The approach taken to implement the forums was to assess how CSOs and government communicated when dealing with conflict resolution or problem solving. SFS chose this approach on the understanding that conflict resolution or problem solving were both sensitive and energy demanding.

The first such workshop to promote civilian-government interaction was held in Galkacyo, and involved a training of speakers for the actual concept, and included work on conflict reconciliation and mediation for the organizations and government of North and South Galkacyo. A major outcome of the gathering was that it drew up a “Galkacyo 2020” action plan that set out the roadmap to democratisation and governance in the region for the next decade.

The “Strengthening and enhancing civil society and the Puntland Government on a Path of Nation Building” workshop was held at the Puntland Library and Resource Centre in Garowe. It focused on linking and bridging the civil society and the government in a mutually beneficial relationship that promoted a stable Somali state. Elsewhere, the fourth forum, held in Garowe was designed to position participants to work toward peace and state building while assessing and analysing conflict and the mistrust between government and CSOs. It further dwelt on the day-to-day issues on governance, democracy, rights etc at the community level. Importantly, the forum engaged government and CSOs to discuss the various challenges, problems and draw up solutions.

Meanwhile, in a major outcome of the 2010 forum, SFS plans to enhance continued Neighbourhood Colleges among different organisations and areas of the government. The plans drawn out during the year in review's forums propose hosting similar gatherings based on the concept in Karkaar and Sool, and using the lessons learned from previous workshops to address better the civilian-government knowledge gaps.

2.2 Promoting democracy and good governance

During the year under review, SFS drummed up support for a new and people driven constitution. SFS supported the establishment of good central and local governance through initiatives at the local, regional, and national levels—inclusive of transitional bodies. Consequently, during the above mentioned forums, SFS opened dialogue for the drafting of a new Puntland constitution. It proposed a system and which it actually set in motion, in which a group of experts would form into a committee that would in turn collate views from the country. For equity, members of the committee, SFS proposed-borrowing on international success stories- would also comprise representatives of various (special) interest groups- youth, children, women, disabled, the marginalised etc. The process though government led, would incorporate as partners, CSOs while funding would be sought from international partners.

Throughout the year, SFS therefore engaged government, media, CSOs and other stakeholders in discussions at every opportunity on the promotion of the rule of law, promotion of various freedoms- individual and community to choose. In the latter, SFS emphasised on elections rather than appointments of community representatives in local government and national legislature. At the forums and various workshops SFS organised or coordinated, experts on governance and democracy were invited to give talks, lectures and which kicked off debates on the future of Puntland. Such experts included human rights experts, lawyers, MPs and mayors. Various NGO experts were also invited.

For the promotion of democracy and governance, SFS outlined the need to have independent structures such as regional and national parliament (legislature), a judiciary that would borrow on community structures on justice systems in Somalia and intertwine it with national and international realities. Of urgency, SFS insisted, was the availability of locals with capacities for various undertakings and governance structures. SFS in particular engaged training institutions such as universities to tailor-make their course for relevance in rebuilding Somalia.

And in conjunction with the UNDP, SFS launched the State-Society Building project that culminated in three forums, each running for three days in Garowe. Through the forums, civil society, government, community elders, and youth leaders were educated on the importance of government and good governance, the perils of blind clan loyalty, the significant of affirmative action, and the benefits of charity. Like other aforementioned forums, the building project aimed at closing the communication gap between civil society, government and community in order to achieve government, civil society, and community engaging one another to explain their roles in peace and state building and the means to accomplish the same. A total of 120 people were reached this way including government and UNDP officials, religious leaders, women groups, youth leaders, neighbourhood committee chairs, businesses owners, and media personnel.

2.2 Human Rights

Following the incessant conflicts in Somalia, the democratic space as earlier noted has been eroded considerably. And with this, the human rights scenario has fared from bad to worse. Human rights violations are rife, at the community and national levels. Individual rights, community rights have been violated without redress. In 2010, SFS took it as a responsibility to reverse the trend.

At the cultural level, the Somali community has trodden on especially the rights of children-especially girls by enforcing female genital mutilation in the guise of a rite of passage for the young girls. But with FGM, the girls have suffered the consequences-health and lifetime mental anguish. Girls too have been denied the right to schooling and for the few who make it to school, completion is an anathema. Often, girls are kept off school in favour of early marriages.

Other rights discussed include the right to a fair trial, right to political representation and choosing leadership, the right to health, food and shelter. SFS organised trainings for gender and human rights experts who in turn went on to communities and trained them on diverse occasions in 2010 on preservations of such rights. Also discussed and proposed at the community level was the need to preserve the right to property, resource sharing and environmental protection for the good of the entire country. Communities were encouraged to identify collective resources such as minerals and land in order to put in place mechanisms for the collective protection and exploitation.

To correct this state of affairs, SFS launched a rigorous sensitisation campaign, inviting government and CSOs as well as individuals to the Puntland Library Resource Centre for sessions on human rights. Open and frank discussions were encouraged with the aim of reversing the trend in FGM and high dropout and extinguishing early girl-child marriages. The campaign gatherings were either formal or informal while visitors to the Centre were encouraged to read from the "human rights corner" as well. (The section has numerous materials on human rights.)

And owing to the IDP problem in Somalia, SFS further organised IDPs into visiting the Centre for capacity building sessions with human rights monitors from SFS. Ideally, the entire population of DP community could not be reached, but their representatives were organised into groups for such basic training on human rights. They were then encouraged to organise similar sessions at the community levels to sensitise communities on human rights.

At the climax of the human rights formal forums, SFS hosted 12 NGOs based in Garowe to partake of a meeting at the Centre. The meeting's main goal was to have the civil societies within Puntland region of Somalia produce report(s) that reflect on the achievement, best practices, challenges and constraints of human rights in the region. The consultant expressed the importance of having Somalia to return from its hiatus on submitting human rights reports to the international human rights depository since 1994. SFS took the initiative to lead the Universal Period Review (UPR) project and assured of its commitment to collaborate and support other NGOs to produce joint or individual reports. Later on before the close of the year, SFS completely and successfully submitted the UPR report to Geneva, Switzerland.

2.3 Project outcomes and impacts

During the year, efforts by SFS towards community empowerment paid recognisable dividends such as strengthened positive interactions between civil society and government. This helped reduced suspicions and mutual mistrust while at the same time it strengthened the mutual accountability of civil society and the government to the public. There was also renewed vigour for consultations between government and CSOs, giving way to peaceful coexistence, participatory approaches to development and nation building and accountability in government operations.

In the 2010 period, SFS therefore helped in the creation of a group of future leaders through the democratic governance and civic education project; leaders who saw the need to rid Somalia of militias, human rights abusers etc. This encouraged dialogues and mediation efforts between clans at the same time assisting government to curb insecurity in Puntland.

Youths- and specifically 30 young women (aged 18-22) were formally trained to take on increasing responsibility in communities through active participation in decision making. (see Girls leadership) Generally, the masses in Somalia were offered through the SFS initiative, dialogue meetings that promoted legitimacy and voice through participation and consensus orientation.

The entire process further promoted accountability and transparency in leadership, governance and management of public affairs that encouraged fairness – equity and the rule of law as well as the protection of various individual and collective rights-protection of children, gender equity etc.

Chapter 3: Girls and youths emancipation

3.1 Girls and leadership

SFS attaches a lot of importance on the emancipation of girls and women. In 2010, SFS engaged selected girls in training for leadership roles. This was based on evidence pointing out the traditional marginalisation of females in all spheres of development in Somalia. The females are underrepresented in all sectors, be it in school, at public and private employment and in local and national governance structures and even religion. Consequently, this implies that a whole population is denied opportunities to participate in decision-making processes, leaving this important role to men.

Females are relegated to third class citizens, and traditionally assigned demeaning social status that do not allow them to lead. Here are there to be seen rather than to be heard, a very sorry state of affairs. Until all girls have access to these opportunities, SFS believes conditions necessary for sustainable development in Somalia will go unfulfilled. It is important for the future of Somalia that girls and young women grow to become leaders in their families, communities and increasingly in the workplace.

SFS adopted the leadership programme upon successful funding from Diakonia, Sweden. The project sought to develop leadership abilities in girls and young women to ensure that they would be change-makers in Puntland, specifically. It had girls brought together and trained on various leadership skills. AS in the democracy and governance forums, the girls were taken through the same content and challenged to take up leadership in community and national issues through participation, involvement and also seeking elective positions without fear of intimidation by their male counterparts.

The girl's leadership cycle project in which at least 120 girls were reached in the year under review focused on moving from the idea of an individual leader to a more participatory and inclusive approach with a focus on commitment to changing communities, neighbourhoods and the world at large. This empowering approach encouraged young women to take on (up) increasing responsibility, involve self in designing and implementing activities and exploring how they could make impacts on local and national issues. The leadership project provided the girls with an opportunity to make contact with people in the community who are not aware of the girls' leadership cycle.

The leadership cycle approach advocated for young women to become active participants and learners with a focus on the positive skills, attitudes, and behaviours centred on civic involvement and personal goal setting. Leadership development, a necessary component of positive youth development, represents an important shift regarding the way adults view, work with, and help young people achieve their potential. Instead of seeking to help youth by intervening after problems have occurred or by trying to prevent negative behaviour, the leadership cycle was proactive and focused on preparing girls for the future.

By being involved in decision-making, the girls can now discover the values of working together to achieve common objectives, listening to others and paying attention to other peoples' opinions in order to achieve a consensus, sharing skills and efforts in team work to share achievements together instead of seeking self-promotion. These values are essential for building an inclusive society.

The girl beneficiaries of the leadership cycle training were trained to become change agents in their society. They were tasked with among others, to act as human rights defenders, child protection

advocates and to influence change on discriminating and socially demeaning actions such as FGM, early marriages and lack of education for girls.

SFS further linked the leadership trainees to various focal points, such as on SGBV, FGM, child abuse etc whom they could liaise with to raise and preserve the whole protection fabric.

3.2 Youths empowerment

Youths in Somalia have often been neglected and rarely are they recognized or offered any opportunities in nation building. Like the women, youths have important aspects of their lives decided by rather a generation that barely appreciates the rapidly changing environment in which this section of the community is growing up in.

In a non-formal study, SFS found that a majority of the youths in Somalia are wasting away. Upon leaving school, they are not seizing chances in formal employment or in college. The opportunities are limited owing to the economic nature of households and the world as well. Consequently, the youths have often been lured into negative activities- such as delinquency, joining militias and actively participating in inter and intra clan conflicts. The threats is so vivid with some having been promised incentives if they joined criminal activities such as piracy and international terrorist groups. The threat of drug abuse is also real as is the chances of joining criminal gangs.

To correct this sorry state of affairs, SFS in the year 2010 drew up socialisation activities in which youths would be mobilised and taught life skills. It created the Puntland Y-Peer Network designed to help youths to learn important skills and change negative attitudes toward taking care of their mental and physical health and social wellbeing free of peer influences.

The Y-Peer Network raised the capacity of youths to implement peer education programmes in society, especially those focusing on promoting good social behaviour, leadership and safe sexual behaviour among adolescents. Often, SFS organised to have expert role models who mentored the youths during the mobilisation and advocacy seminars and workshops. The Network leaders were also exposed to vigorous leadership opportunities through invitations to various SFS-organised forums and representation in community and national structures.

In particular, youths were introduced into the ICT world through capacity development at the Puntland Centre in Garowe. SFS exposed the youths to opportunities locally and internationally and which were available through the utilisation of ICT tools. At least 180 youths were linked up to post-secondary school opportunities, such as colleges and employment.

Chapter 4: Centre for dialogue and information exchange

The Puntland Library and Resource Centre is the first public library and resource centre located in the area and offers the community reading facilities, internet connectivity, a conference hall, a small coffee shop, photocopy services and stationary supplies. The Centre's purpose is to provide an innovative solution to reform and to strengthen the effectiveness of CSO throughout Puntland by providing the use of the facility and resources for capacity building and knowledge and technology transfer.

In 2010, the Centre lived to its purpose, working throughout the year to improve the collaboration between CSOs and the Puntland public sector (government) for the promotion of good governance and at the same time provide a top-level and secure location for workshops and other meetings. A total of 24 forums- seminars, workshops and conferences were held at the Centre. On one such event in 2010, SFS hosted at the Puntland Library and Resource Centre the Governor of Nugal, the Mayor of Garowe and government ministers who met with the local civil society to discuss ways to curb insecurity in Puntland. This was made possible by the assistance from Diakonia- Sweden. (See forums under Democracy and Governance chapter)

The Library and its programs focus on civil society capacity building, establishing itself as an information repository for Somalia- and Puntland-related documents and as a safe, quality space for students and community members to read and conduct research. The Library's key area of focus is to encourage dialogue and an understanding of roles between the civil society sector and the agencies of the Puntland.

In the books section, SFS received more than 30,000 books donated to the Centre. This was made possible through a partnership with Books for Africa, Counterpart International and UNICEF. The book aid helped SFS to achieve its mission to increase literacy and skill building in Puntland.

Replete with borrowing and reading, SFS engaged in an open-door policy, availing the service throughout the year. A total of 3,024 people accessed the Library over the course in the first 6 months--956 women and 2,168 men. And alarmed by the low women and girls' turnout, SFS kicked off a sensitisation campaign to encourage higher uptake of its services by the women and girls. Overall, by year end, 4593 people had visited the library to read; 1406 were women while 3287 were men. 18 different institutions also received books and educational materials from SFS in the same period.

The Library with its extensive network of internet, cell phones and related technologies served as the ICT hub for Puntland throughout 2010. The technologies are well known for their effect on social, economic and political institutions worldwide, particularly in new and emerging democracies. And the ICT Hub lived up to this expectation in the year under review, allowing users to promptly and efficiently interact through email, collect, exchange and internalise tonnes of information available on the world wide web.

On average, the ICT centre had between 40 and 50 civil society members and government individuals using the available technology per day. Well trained staff guided them through carefully thought out tutorials on democracy and governance using the ICT technology. Ordinary people, civil society members and activists, government officials, local and international NGO personnel interacted freely during such tutorials and other times. Interestingly, people of all walks of life-the young and the old,

male and female, Somali and non-Somali shared facilities, catapulting the ICT centre to a socialisation and networking avenue.

Besides the “mixed” tutorials, SFS organised parties of school children, college graduates, youths, group or organisational members for capacity building tutorials on ICT- lessons included but not limited to, internet use, email communication, accessing websites, social networking etc.

In the year, the ICT centre trained 25 government officials on software about data collection. In total, over 12,500 people used the internet services at the Centre.

Chapter 5: Capacity development

5.1 Staff development

In the year 2010, SFS brought on board three Somali from the Diaspora to design a working system for its staff at the offices and the Puntland Library and Resource Centre. The staff- 20 in total were trained on the job as well as through seminar arrangement on among others, report and proposal writing, bookkeeping, management, accounting and audit procedures. They were further taken through sessions in teamwork, importance of training, professional ethics, hygiene and work routine and communication.

And using the internet tools at the Centre, the staff were exposed to self-taught modules in which they interacted with at their own free times. SFS also had its staff attend seminars and workshops in Puntland as well as out of the country, to represent SFS as well as to gain skills at such gatherings.

Still, many more SFS staff were offered opportunities to attend leadership and skills training organised by their employer.

Activity in 2010	No. of SFS beneficiaries
On the job training (by Diaspora team)	20
Leadership	20
Skills training	20
Seminars and workshops (in Puntland)	20
Seminars and workshops (out of Puntland)	4

5.2 International networking

In 2010, SFS became a member of an international coalition addressing issues of immediate concern to the Somali community. It became a member of and participated in the World Movement for Democracy Conference in Jakarta, Indonesia, where more than 450 organisations from over 110 countries come together to address overcoming challenges to democracy.

SFS also established a relationship with Georgetown University in Washington, DC (US) and its School of Foreign Service, one of the top graduate programs in international relations in the world. One of the immediate benefits to this collaboration was the sending of two graduate students from the school to SFS as technical advisors in 2010, collaborating on grants and project, and establishing contacts in Washington and Nairobi, Kenya. This relationship benefitted SFS by increasing its exposure and technical capacity while the graduate students gained immensely from field work in Somalia and Nairobi. SFS is keen to continue with/sustain this collaboration in the future.

At another level, SFS facilitated the linking up between Garowe Teachers Education College in Puntland and the US' Metropolitan State University as sister institutions. This created a greater exchange of experiences and resources between the two. Similarly, SFS developed in the year, a linkage between Puntland Library and Resource Center and St. Paul Public Libraries (US) resulting in resource and knowledge exchange and greater connection between the communities. Such "twining" are expected to enable the institutions to facilitate staff exchange which in turn will expose

beneficiary members to capacity or gaining of knowledge and skills for better performance at work. Different cultural experiences will be an added advantage.

In an effort to link Puntland and the Puntland Diaspora, SFS co-hosted a conference in Minnesota, US at which H.E Abdi Hassan Jimale (PhD), Somalia State Minister of the Presidency for Democratization Process and Federal Affairs was the keynote speaker. Over 200 Somali Diaspora in Minnesota participated; the minister briefed and presented the new Puntland constitution, current democratic processes and progress towards stability.

Elsewhere, Abdurashid Ali, Executive Director of Somali Family Services, held multiple forums and functions in Minnesota in order to brief the Diaspora and others on the current situation in Puntland and the work of SFS. The director participated in forums on issues of displacement, violence and peace in failing states. The forums were organized by the United States Institute of Peace in Washington, DC. SFS is registered with USAID, the Somalia Support Secretariat and the Somali NGO Consortium, in order to increase its international presence. The latter two are based in Nairobi, and are in contact with many of the international organizations and funding partners there.

5.3 Hamline MBA Field project

In the year under review, US-based Hamline University chose SFS to be the topical subject for the School of Business Field Project. Six Masters in Business Administration students completed their six month research to develop a 3-year plan to supplement SFS' International Program Strategic Plan (2009) and to primarily focus on increasing the non-profit's marketing and development capabilities. The Plan will secondarily support enhancements to the SFS' institutional management support structure including technology (website and communication), financial (accounting receivables and reporting) and human resource management systems.

5.4 Website improvement

SFS' quest to continually improving communications with board of directors, stakeholders, funders and supporters revamped its website in 2010, creating new information and knowledge management through its very interactive www.ussfs.org site.

Chapter 6: Achievements, Challenges, recommendations and conclusion

6.1 Achievements

In the various forums, at least more than a third of the participants were female. This is a positive step in the wake of the widespread marginalisation of women and girls in Somalia. Others who participated or gained immensely from the Puntland resource centre included government and Diakonia-Sweden officials, religious leaders, women associations, youth leaders, neighbourhood committee members/representatives, businesses people, and media outlets.

Sensitive issues has been presented and debated in a free and open setting without fear of victimisation by authorities. This included topical subjects as leadership, governance, democracy, human rights etc. The presence of the media-local and international FM stations and TV was a big boost in that it helped spread the messages to the national (Puntland) audience. Further, SFS boasts f a rich social media base- it has YouTube, Facebook and Tweeter to reach even a wider and bigger audiences online. Over 500 people are member of SFS/PLRC facebook team!

It was instructive too that the Puntland government, MPs, CSOs and city councils welcomed the civic education initiative and actually sent in representatives to various forums. This strengthened different segments of civil society in order to better work as partners to advance human dignity. It was also an opportunity when most effective ways were sought and identified in which NGOs could articulate their positions with the government in order to influence policy and address the need for improved services.

While the civic education programmes were designed to objectively track and evaluate progress over time, they also promoted and enhanced the collective efforts of NGOs, civil society, the international community, the private sector and the government to strengthen systems that work towards achieving democracy and rule of law.

6.2 Challenges

At the start of the project, some and many of the grassroots organisations were a little indifferent to the inclusion of government in the forms. They detested the official authority claiming it barely represented them. Similarly, the government was initially lethargic to the inclusion of CSOs on claims they undermines government's efforts in nation building.

And owing to the conservative society and strong cultural and religious beliefs of the Somali, it was not easy for some participants to accommodate what was considered divergent or leaning away from the central beliefs. For example, the very patriarchal society had the men opposing certain freedoms for the womenfolk. Such barriers were not easy to surmount but required a lot of patience to push across.

In as much as the resource Centre is a melting point of ideas and opportunities, the centre can at times be repulsive, owing to the high security arrangement to secure the venue. Some of those

visiting felt uncomfortable in the year when body searches were conducted. But this being the reality that Somalia is facing threat from blood mongers, a number have welcomed and understood the reasons why SFS engages in this practice.

SFS has had financial constraints—has many projects waiting for donors. SFS has the capacity to enact and successfully complete these projects, but is frustrated by a lack of willingness on many donors to venture into Somalia, or to trust Somali NGOs.

6.3 Recommendations

Owing to the success of the forums in the democratisation process in Somalia, it is imperative that they should be sustained and replicated across the entire Puntland. It therefore behoves of the funding partners (Diakonia-Sweden) to continue funding the same and consider additional funding for wider coverage across Somalia.

More Somali in the Diaspora should be brought on board the nation building. The government should therefore engage them more and launch a networking mechanism with this vital segment of the community of the nation of Somalia.

Similar networking and partnerships between government and CSOs and the international community and the Somali in and out of Somalia should be encouraged and supported. More forums should be held, more training for leadership, governance, democracy, human rights, ICT skills and knowledge etc.

6.4 Conclusion

Though an apparent pariah nation, Somalia is a case that can be turned around; albeit slowly and patiently and with much consideration. Programmes to change Somalia should be supported and sustained. Efforts should not be dismissed for their taking long, for the road towards recovery of Somalia is long, winding and bumpy. But the beauty of it is that it can be done, however slow. Change is inevitable in Somalia and must be harnessed and supported. The elusive peace is possible to achieve too, through proper or democratic governance structures.