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Brief Field Report

**SYMPOSIUM ON DIALOGUE, RECONCILIATION AND CONFLICT
TRANSFORMATION AT INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES,
UNIVERSITY OF HARGEISA, SOMALI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, EAST AFRICA
UNIVERSITY, AND MOGADISHU UNIVERSITY, SOMALIA,**

JANUARY-FEBRUARY-July -August, 2016

Organizations involved:

- a) ILAYSNABAD: Dialogue & Development Initiative (IDDI)
- b) Somali Youth Peace Project (SYPP), Australia;
- c) Global Reconciliation, Australia;
- d) Somali National University (SNU),
- e) Mogadishu University;
- f) Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS) University of Hargeisa (UoH), in Hargeisa,
Somaliland, Somalia,
- g) East Africa University (EAU), Bosaso, Puntland, Somalia
- h) and Bosaso City Council, Puntland, Somalia.



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Ilaysnabad: Dialogue & Development Initiative (IDDI), Somali Youth Peace Project (SYPP) and Global Reconciliation organized four high profile symposiums on conflict transformation, and peace capacity building through dialogue, reconciliation, Somali poetry, proverbs, and religious perspectives. Each training continued for five days except the training at Mogadishu University that continued for 4 days. These were held in partnership with IPCS, UoH, EAU, SNU, and MU, Bosaso. Two additional workshops were held. The first one was a follow up training for participants from the previous training in 2015 at Mogadishu University, in Mogadishu. The second was for councilors from the Bosaso City Council, Puntland, Somalia.

The training in 2016 involved 109 young women and men as participants and was composed of 16 from IPCS, UoH, Hargeisa, 30 from EAU, Bosaso, 34 from SNU, Mogadishu, and 29 from MU, Bosaso. In addition to that, 20 participants from Mogadishu University in Mogadishu city who benefited from 2015 training were also given a half day advanced training. Furthermore, 10 councilors from Bosaso city council participated in a half day training at the Bosaso's Mayor's office.

The training restored participants' sense of hope, confidence and trust through purposeful workshops focused on self-change, positive dialogue, building healthy relationships, community spirit, social solidarity, non-violent communication and conflict transformation. Furthermore, sessions on a culture of harmony, positive social engagement and negotiation skills among young future trainers on peace living in a fragile state of Somalia were discussed.

The main objectives of the symposium included transforming perceptions and behaviors of young participants in constructive ways through personal transformation, meaningful dialogue, and guided interactions among participants themselves and with the facilitators. Similarly,

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objectives included building capacity of young participants to understand the root causes of Somali social ills that will enable them identify and create relevant solutions.

ACHIEVEMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS PERSPECTIVES

According to the information gleaned from the participants, the symposium was useful, effective and unique of its kind. Benefits gained from training workshops which were expressed by participants included: steps for conflict transformation starting from ones' own self, family, neighborhood, city, and nation to global levels. Additionally, participants acknowledged that they learnt from the training values and views necessary for solving conflicts such as individual transformation, building healthy relationships, empathy, love, respect, social justice, tolerance, acceptance and accommodation. Some participants also mentioned that the style of interaction used during the training, participation and learning by doing, were useful. The two facilitators were also seen as positive role models. In patriarchal society it is rare to see a husband and wife working together as a team. The followings are some quotations from participants:

“What makes unique this training is that compassion, empathy and promoting love and respect can help in resolving problems. I really enjoyed and learnt modern conflict resolution theories together with Islamic perspectives in solving personal and social problems. I will be a good ambassador for this training and will share the knowledge I gained with others who did not get a chance to attend” (a young man from UoH).

“What I learnt includes that conflict transformation starts with oneself, then family, then neighbors, then suburbs, then city, then nation and so on. I liked the way you integrated peace building models with Quran and our Prophet's teachings. This touched my personal life” (a young man from UoH).

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“It is said that charity begins at home, so I learnt that peace starts at home...I learnt that not calling people with negative nicknames promotes peace, harmony and love. I learnt that peace is a pre-condition for development, employment, and eradicating poverty. With peace, you can fully enjoy your life” (a young woman from UoH).

“I learnt that transforming heart positively is where peace building starts” (a young man from UoH).

“This training affected my life and touched my feeling and mind. It is the first time I felt I am participating and expressing my views in a group discussion. It was a great opportunity to meet with couple of Somali background who dedicated themselves in building peace in their own country. That affected me deeply and provided me positive role model. Honestly speaking, we haven’t seen diaspora Somalis who shared with us their sincere experience, knowledge, and time before Yusuf and Khadijo. Additionally, it was indeed a good opportunity for me to know all these wonderful participant faces and names. You [participants] will remain in my heart from now on because we have become like one family” (young woman from UoH).

“This is the program that Somalis need for building peace and reconciliation. For me, it was its first kind of training I have ever attended. It is applicable to Somali reality” (young man from UoH).

“I have changed a lot. Now, I am not the person who I was four days ago. If someone could enter into my heart s/he will realize how much I have changed...I can’t express my feelings in words. I feel like I am receiving PhD today which is the highest degree” (a young woman from SNU).

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“Our people need such program and we need many people to be trained in order to pass to the community” (a young man from EAU)

“This was one of the best training I have attended in my life. I have participated in many peace-building and community conflict facilitation training but this one sharpened my mind and touched my heart. Now, I can explain and analyze issues leading to conflict and violence and find relevant ways of how to understand, prevent, reduce and transform conflict” (a young man from MU).

“It was a training which I felt that my mind needed a lot. For instance I learnt how to make good relationships with others and how to constructively respond if someone treats me negatively and also how to compromise and share something with others” (a young woman from MU).

As a way forward, participants from these different universities established their own platforms which will enable them promote the culture of peace, dialogue and reconciliation within Somali society. For instance, participants from UoH Hargeisa formed a platform named Nabad iyo Naruuro (Peace and Passion) led by a young woman named Sahra Samawada (Sahra peace-maker) as MU team established a platform called Qoys Nabad (Peace Family). Participants from EAU also named a contact group consisting of 3 participants.

All participants from these different universities agreed to share what they learnt from the symposium with others who did not get an opportunity to attend. At the conclusion, participants discussed the best way to develop future strategic plans on dialogue, and peace capacity building among young Somalis. On a practical level, participants indicated their intention to organize further peace training and workshops in the future in partnership with the Somali Youth Peace Project, Global Reconciliation and their respective universities.



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The Training was facilitated by Dr Yusuf Sheikh Omar, and Dr Khadijo Mohamed Osman representing Global Reconciliation and Somali Youth Peace Project. At closing remarks, presidents of UoH, SNU, EAU and the Director of MU branch in Bosaso addressed participants urging them to share what they've gained during the Symposium with their colleagues, their neighborhoods and the Somali society at large.

Acknowledgment

We are grateful to the Somali community in Melbourne, Global Reconciliation and Dr Sue Enis who were our main sponsors. We are appreciative of organizations involved in organizing these training workshops including Global Reconciliation, University of Hargeisa in Hargeisa, Somali National University in Mogadishu, Mogadishu University, branch in Bosaso and East Africa University in Bosaso. We are also grateful to Professor Dianne Bretherton for her mentorship and guidance.

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Some images from the training



Graduation ceremony at University Hargeisa



From the left, Khadijo, Yusuf, President of University of Hargeisa Dr Mohamud, Vice-President Professor Sied, and the Director of Peace Institute and Conflict Studies Nasir.

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Graduation ceremony at East Africa University



A group discussion at East Africa University



A group discussion at East Africa University



During graduation at Mogadishu University, Bosaso branch

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During graduation ceremony at Mogadishu University, Bosaso.



Training for councilors of Bosaso city at the office of Bosaso Mayor.



SNU students working teams

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