

Climate Change Exposes the Limitations of the State-Centred Approach to Peace Building in Somalia



*By Ms Tamara Naidoo**

25 February 2015

Somalia, due to perennial instability, has had a long history of international peacebuilding experiments that in turn, almost set the tone for global peace-building discourse and practise. ¹ Despite the successive and concentrated interventions, sustainable peace remains elusive in Somalia. This paper identifies state-centrism and the failure to translate the growing understanding of the link between climate change and conflict into peace-building practice as one of the challenges to establishing sustainable peace in Somalia.

Increasingly, the nexus between conflict and climate change is being documented and understood. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has projected that by 2020, due to climate change, between 75 and 250 million people in Africa will be exposed to severe environmental challenges including water stress and the reduction of rain-fed agriculture of up to 50%.² It is therefore not surprising that the “United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) Report on Displaced People of the East and Horn of Africa” situates climate change within the human security debate.³ The report indicates that refugees have personally noticed discernible shifts in weather patterns that have affected farming and livestock husbandry in their homelands over the past 15 years and have attributed resource shortages, from their inability to adapt, as fuelling conflict. In particular, aid agencies such as Oxfam and those of the United Nations, have recognised that the Somali government’s lack of capacity in comparison to other states in the region lessens the ability of its citizens to protect themselves against adverse climate change effects and further limits the reach of humanitarian aid to all Somali people.⁴

The gender dimensions of climate change are glaring. In Somalia, climate change and variability threatens the livelihood of 60% of the country’s population who are dependent on the pastoral lifestyle⁵, 50 to 60% of which is believed to be female-headed house-holds.⁶ Despite the fact that pastoralism contributes 40% to the GDP and is central to the informal livelihoods of many⁷, international peace-building seems unable to recognise the importance of the organic organisations as they focus on building state capability and legitimacy in the failed state.⁸ Subsequently, pastoralism is regarded as an archaic practice and land from the Somali pastoralist communities is sequestered.⁹ Whilst facing discrimination politically as a pastoralist and within society being in a submissive role, women are increasingly burdened in providing for the family due to the effects of climate change on household materials they source from the environment.¹⁰

Although women are tasked by society to manage the natural environment in their daily chores, they are still not able to contribute to national adaptation strategies due to their status as woman; nor are they able to inform themselves on what information is available, resulting in a most vulnerable position in the climate change debate.¹¹ State-centric development and peace building has thus led to male-orientated state formation, unable to reward women for their contribution to social cohesion and food security.

In addition, state-centric agricultural bias promotes the expansion of settled crop cultivation and large-scale farming in pastoralist regions in spite of its incompatibility with arid and semi-arid lands as well as the adverse effects of climate change.¹² The conflict, political instability and harshness of the climatic conditions in parts of Somalia have prompted the large-scale collapse of state institutions, undermining formal agricultural productivity in Somalia.¹³ This is consistent with emerging narratives of famine, aid dependence and crop failure in farms.¹⁴ In comparison, small-scale NGO activity such as *Xoojinta Nabada* (strengthening peace) in

Somalia and in the region have identified as vital women's knowledge in adaptation strategies of food security and the larger connection between sustainable resource management and how it contributes to reducing conflict.¹⁵ Many more examples of successful pastoralist projects are located in Sudan and acknowledge the precarious relationship between environmental and human stresses that pastoralists can uniquely balance.¹⁶

The United Nations as champion of human rights promotes the understanding that human rights represent a certain social arrangement that guarantees the needs of the powerless.¹⁷ The introduction of the human rights regime through rights-based approaches (RBA) of peace-building has had a bumpy passage in the Somali terrain and shows how the concept of conflict sensitivity is flawed in its ability to find a corrective standard in the implementation of these programmes. After all, the corrective standard that emerges from RBA depends on which human rights out of the vast list have been prioritised.¹⁸ Even though RBA is accepted by peace-builders to address human rights violations and reduce conflict, the prioritisation of certain "human rights", and which institutions are built to what goal, exposes the complex ethical and practical choices that international actors make, even if in consultation with local leaders who of course hold their own biases from social, political and economic standing.¹⁹

This said, the prospect of sustainable peace suffers as the establishment of indigenous capacities for peace management and conflict resolution are interrupted in the case of the pastoralists. The existing social infrastructure is seen as a hindrance to the development of Somalia and results in a further case of marginalization for African women.²⁰ Ultimately, human rights scholars are unable to perceive an alternative to the state in peace-building.²¹ This leads to a paradox – the Somali government as the location of violence and instability is tasked with addressing violence and instability.²² In the end the Somali government has to completely depend upon external support even though local resources can exist, in this case through pastoralism. Somalia could gain from more inclusive development that protects a lifestyle suited to the environment while also empowering pastoral women in particular to combat the effects of climate change in peace-building initiatives.



**Tamara Naidoo is a Research Intern at SALO and an MPhil Student, Multi-disciplinary Human Rights, University of Pretoria*

The Dialogue Online, is an online extension of SALO's national, regional and international consensus-building dialogues (typically workshops, seminars and small meetings) on Peace and Security, Development, SA Foreign Policy, Gender (including LGBTI rights), Natural Resource Governance, Human Rights and the rights of migrant communities through *weekly written articles and/or commentary*. It is a channel through which critical issues raised during dialogue events are synthesised and shared with wider audiences. By taking the dialogue 'online', the conversation is enabled to continue beyond the limits of space and time and to a wider audience.

Since SALO's central focus is peace and security, *Dialogue Online* articles focus primarily on this theme, but drawing attention to the nexuses with development, natural resource governance, human rights and gender, mediation, environment and climate change. Preference is towards articles that speak to international development and peace building policy and practice, raise awareness about conflict situations and the gender dimensions thereof and provoke fresh thinking and policy debate. Contributions are drawn from SALO's pool of experts, peace building and development practitioners, activists, academics, former and current diplomats and workshop participants.

Please note that the articles represent views of respective contributors and do not necessarily reflect SALO's view or position.

Interested contributors are welcome to email articles of 750 to 1000 words in length to info@salo.org.za for consideration.

¹ See Clarke, W. and Herbst, J. (eds) (1997) Learning from Somalia - The lessons of armed humanitarian intervention

² Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Summary for Policymakers.2007. *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* 7-22.

³Afifi T, Govil, R Sakdapolrak P & Warner, K. 2012 *Climate Change, Vulnerability and Human Mobility: Perspectives of Refugees from the East and Horn of Africa* . Institute for Environment and Human Security:United Nations University 12-13

⁴ Straziuso.J. 2013. *Somalia famine partially blamed on climate change in new study*. Huffington Post .

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/15/somalia-famine-climate-change_n_2883088.html. (last accessed:1 January 2015)

⁵ World Bank. 2014. *Political economy and forced displacement: Guidance and Lessons from 9 Country Case Studies*. Available: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2014/06/203246/political-economy-forced-displacement-guidance-lessons-nine-countries-case-studies/> (last accessed: 1 January 2015)

⁶ World Bank. 2014. *Political economy and forced displacement: Guidance and Lessons from 9 Country Case Studies*. Available: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2014/06/203246/political-economy-forced-displacement-guidance-lessons-nine-countries-case-studies/> (last accessed: 1 January 2015)

⁷ World Bank. 2014. *Political economy and forced displacement: Guidance and Lessons from 9 Country Case Studies*. Available: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2014/06/203246/political-economy-forced-displacement-guidance-lessons-nine-countries-case-studies/> (last accessed: 1 January 2015)

⁸ Hearn, S and Zimmerman,T. *A Window of Opportunity for Somalia: Will External Actors' Peacebuilding Frameworks Help or Hinder the Effort?* 2014. Centre on international Cooperation: New York University 2-20

⁹ See the discussions contained in Hatfield, R. and Davies, J.2006. *Global Review of the Economics of Pastoralism*, Nairobi, International Union for Conservation and Nature

¹⁰ Kipuri N & Ridgewell A.2008. *A Double Bind: The Exclusion of Pastoralist Women in the East and Horn of Africa*. Minority Rights Group International

¹¹ Kipuri N & Ridgewell A.2008. *A Double Bind: The Exclusion of Pastoralist Women in the East and Horn of Africa*. Minority Rights Group International

- ¹² Kipuri N & Ridgewell A.2008. *A Double Bind: The Exclusion of Pastoralist Women in the East and Horn of Africa*. Minority Rights Group International
- ¹³ International Centre for Trade and Development. 2011. *Horn of Africa Drought, Food Crisis: Agricultural Trade Policies Questioned*. Available: <http://www.ictsd.org/bridges-news/bridges/news/horn-of-africa-drought-food-crisis-agricultural-trade-policies-questioned>. (Last accessed: 9 February 2015)
- ¹⁴ Somalia Report. 2011. *Al-Shabaab seizes farms in Middle Shabelle*. Available: http://www.somaliareport.com/index.php/post/1614/Al-Shabaab_Seizes_Farms_in_Middle_Shabelle (last accessed: 9 February 2015)
- ¹⁵ CARE Insights. 2013. *Xoojinta Nabada (Strengthening Peace) in Somalia*. Available: <http://insights.careinternational.org.uk/our-work/conflict/peacebuilding/xoojinta-nabada-strengthening-peace-in-somalia>. (last accessed 9 February 2015)
- ¹⁶ Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. 2009. *Connecting Biodiversity and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaption: Report of the Second Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Biodiversity and Climate Change*. CBD Technical Series No. 41 8-71
- ¹⁷ Shue,H.1996. *Basic rights: Subsistence, Affluence, and U.S. Foreign Policy*, Princeton University Press:USA
- ¹⁸ Uvin,P. 2009. Rights-based Approaches in Post Conflict Countries: Can and Should it Be Done? in *'Rights based approaches and Humanitarian Interventions in Conflict Situations'*.(eds) K Carroll, R Goldwyn, M Lagu. London: Action Aid International and CARE UK 16-22
- ¹⁹ Uvin,P. 2009. Rights-based Approaches in Post Conflict Countries: Can and Should it Be Done? in *'Rights based approaches and Humanitarian Interventions in Conflict Situations'*.(eds) K Carroll, R Goldwyn, M Lagu. London: Action Aid International and CARE UK 16-22
- ²⁰ See definition of peace-building. Galtung, J. 1976. Three approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking, Peacebuilding in *Peace, War and Defense: Essays in Peace Research*, Vol II (Copenhagen: Christian Ejlers, 1976), 297-298.
- ²¹ Hutton.L. *Internal and external dilemmas of peacebuilding in Africa*. (2014) Institute for Security Studies. (Paper 250 January). 1-10
- ²² Menzies, D & Ruru, J. 2011. Indigenous Peoples Rights to Landscape in Aotearoa in *The Right to Landscape: Contesting Landscape and Human Rights*. (Eds) Egoz,S Makhzoumi , J and Pungetti,G .UK: Ashgate Publishing 141-152

SALO would like to thank

(in alphabetical order) the European Union; Irish Aid and the Embassy of Ireland, Pretoria; the Royal Norwegian Embassy, Pretoria; the Olof Palme International Centre; the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA); the Southern Africa Trust and UK aid for the ongoing support of our Policy Dialogue series

