

The stabilisation of Somalia begins in the villages

International efforts in the so-called fragile states are changing. From being characterised by a line of single components, the debate is now focused on joined intervention and an integrated approach to create safety and development. For the Danish Demining Group and the Danish Refugee Council, stabilisation begins with creating safety in the villages of Somalia.

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The international community's engagement in fragile states have, for a long period, been characterised by fragmented efforts - efforts consisting of many and very different initiatives, with each of these carrying an ambition to contribute to peace and development in the country. Now, this tendency is changing and today, the broad common denominator is cooperation and stabilisation. If the complex assignment of stabilising fragile states is to succeed, it is imperative that the effort is based on an integrated approach, where initiatives are joined to supplement each other and thereby create a synergy effect.

In Somalia, the Danish Refugee Council is increasingly working with a multi-faceted effort. Several stabilisation efforts are now being integrated in Somalia through the work of the Danish Refugee Council's demining unit, the Danish Demining Group (DDG). The objective is to address local dilemmas of safety and development issues, maintaining the country fragile and representing a threat to its own people, and to the international community.

In the last decade, Somalia has primarily been connected with Islamic extremism, terror, ties with al-Qaeda and pirates in the Gulf of Aden - symptoms of numerous underlying problems. These are the problem that the international community should address to transform Somalia into a society void of terrorism and piracy.

Safety and development - two aspects of stabilisation

The debate about coordinating efforts with focus on safety and development originated from, among others, the 2006 Geneva Declaration about *Armed Violence and Development*. The declaration has so far been signed by 107 nations, and topics the relation between safety and development as each others prerequisites. In a simplified manner, one could argue that as long a uncertainty dominates, a fragile society fails to evolve, and if a society fails to evolve, it fails to produce safety.

The stabilisation discourse is still spreading. Both nations and international organisations are in demand of integrated programmes from the NGOs, who they want to work on several relevant topics to secure stability. This was the case in the 2010 edition of *The UK Government's Strategic Defence and Security Review*. Furthermore, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and The Netherlands are nations who also advocate a comprehensive approach involving integrated safety and development initiatives, which was reflected in the newly published Somalia Strategy from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

A need for new efforts

During the last twenty years, Somalia has been without a government with any real authority. For two decades, the population has endured a war-like situation. Somali factions have fought for power, and international and regional actors have tried with military intervention - all efforts that have had little or no success.

Somalia and its people are now in need of a wide range of help. A help that is not only aimed at improving the safety of the population and building a larger capacity of local and national institutions, but also facing humanitarian needs.

Community Safety

To help the local communities in Somalia in the best possible way, the Danish Refugee Council has started integrating two of the organisation's programmes. This being the *Community-driven Recovery and Development (CDRD)* programme, a development programme with local participation, and the Danish Demining Group's *Community Safety (CS)* programme. Through this integration of the programmes, the Danish Refugee Council addresses factors that spawns insecurity, and thereby hinders development, while drawing on expertise in safety and humanitarian development.

This integration means that the Danish Demining Group, with its *Community Safety programme*, will spearhead projects focusing on reducing threats against the safety of the population. This could concretely be about unexploded ammunition, armed violence, internal conflicts or the lack of a functioning police. The objective of this is to strengthen the society's capacity to take personal responsibility to improve its own security. The means could be teaching conflict resolution and safety handling of weapons, and also to support cooperation between communities and police.

The evaluation points to an effect

The work has been fruitful. In a comprehensive evaluation, three out of four respondents says, that the programme has indeed reduced conflict in their villages. Fear of weapons and landmine accidents was reduced by 70 percent, and after the implementation of the programme there is an increase of 65 percent of people who say that they do not experience any security problems.

Local effort

The Danish Refugee Council works with community development, by focusing on improving living conditions through three initiatives.

First of all, receiving societies should be empowered with the necessary capacity to decide and define their needs, and decide how the process should be undertaken. In addition, they have to provide the society with the necessary social and economical infrastructure, and the project has to promote local democracy and build a capacity for autonomy and sustainability.

Both the safety and the development projects must be adapted to the actual local situation. This means that the Somali do not receive a standardized product, but a project organised according to local wishes and needs.

Sustainability

The programmes are based on principles of local ownership, "do-no-harm" and sustainability. With aid from the Danish Refugee Council and the Danish Demining Group, the community must develop an action plan for their own village, for both safety and development. This will help creating a sense of ownership of the activities that they themselves should manage in the future.

By defining problems and solutions themselves, the local population obtain a genuine interest in actively solving them. The objective goes even further, and leaves communities able to continue their work with safety and development, after the project ends.

Possibilities and challenges

An integrated approach to stabilisation and development creates possibilities, that the fragmented

approach lacks, however it also leaves new challenges. The main challenge is to strike a balance between initiatives focusing on development and those focusing on safety. Which aspect to be prioritized, and at what time, depends on the specific context and it also requires a firm foundation and understanding of local conditions.

The integrated approach will create a greater need for coordination. The opportunities and the potential with an integrated approach are extensive, and there is no doubt that this approach could prove vital in augmenting the fragile states of the world.

Progress in Somalia

However, neither strategy papers nor glossy words will make Somalia a stable country to live in. What is needed is a locally based approach to stabilization and capacity building to complement the effort being made at national level.

It is imperative that the Somali population is actively involved in the process to give them a feeling of ownership in campaign for safety and development. This way there is a better chance, for the work to continue also when the international organisations are no longer there. Through local ownership and strengthened knowledge will give the sustainability of the stabilization effort better terms.

Based on a well-planned integration of efforts it is certainly possible to make local communities able to improve their own future safety and development, and in the end this will ultimately benefit Somalia as a whole.

Safety and development initiatives can complement each other to create a synergy that will make the international community's involvement in Somalia more effective. The news that international actors and donors in particular, advocate an integrated approach is promising, as efforts of the civil organisations in local communities are recognized in addition to the intergovernmental and inter-ministerial initiatives. This will undoubtedly make the future brighter for Somalia as well as for other fragile states.

Read more:

<http://www.drc.dk>

<http://www.danishdemininggroup.dk/about-armed-violence-reduction/community-safety-interventions/>

<http://somcdrd.org/home/>