

**Evaluation of the War-Torn Societies Project
In Puntland, Somalia**

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Given WSP's unique, experimental nature, evaluation and assessment are an important part of the project. Hence WSP developed at the outset a detailed set of evaluation guidelines for its country projects. Project evaluation was visualized as a two-step process. Evaluation I was to focus on project impact and effectiveness, to be carried out by WSP working group members in country, with support from the WSP national team. Evaluation II was intended as an assessment of "methodology, organizational set-up, administration, and operational functioning" to be carried out by an external consultant.

Detailed guidelines and "lead questions" for both these evaluations are published in *War-Torn Societies Project in Practice* (1999), Annex 4, and served as the terms of reference for this evaluation.

This assessment was originally envisioned as "Evaluation II." However, the WSP team in Geneva and Nairobi requested that the terms of reference be expanded to include exploration of project impact and effectiveness in Puntland, and to allow for broader reflection on the WSP approach in the Somali context. This document reflects that expanded terms of reference.

The fieldwork portion of this evaluation was conducted between January 3-22, 2000, with time split evenly between Nairobi and Puntland, and one day of meetings with the WSP team in Geneva. In Puntland, the evaluator traveled to the three regional capitals, Bosaso, Garowe, and Galkayo to conduct interviews. A total of 29 individuals were interviewed in Puntland and 27 in Nairobi and Geneva.

This evaluation was carried out by an external reviewer; it reflects only his analysis, not necessarily those of WSP or any of the individuals interviewed. Any mistakes of fact, interpretation, or omission are his responsibility alone.

WSP-Puntland -- A Short Chronology¹

WSP's involvement in Somalia dates back to May 1995, when Somalia was first considered as a possible site for WSP activity. After a lengthy period of exploration and discussion with local actors, WSP decided in October 1996 to move forward with the project in the Northeast of Somalia, in the regions of Bari, Nugal, and Mudug. By December 1996, a WSP office in Nairobi was established, led by a Programme Coordinator, Mr. Matt Bryden, and a Research Associate, Dr. Ahmed Yusuf Farah. The decision to begin work in only a part of rather than the whole of the country was a departure from past WSP practices, but was justified on the grounds that most of Somalia was either still plagued by high levels of insecurity and even warfare (most of southern Somalia) or was experiencing notable political tensions (Somaliland), and was thus not at that moment conducive for WSP operations. The intent was to expand WSP operations to those areas at a later date, so that the WSP project in the three northeast regions was presented to the Somali community as a first stage of a multi-phased project.

Goals

WSP's work is premised on the argument that post-conflict rehabilitation in the post Cold War era has met with limited success in part because of poor understanding of basic issues and priorities, by inadequate exchange of ideas and information, and by inflexibility on the part of some external actors. The overarching objective of the WSP in northeast Somalia was thus to promote better understanding of basic post-conflict rehabilitation issues and priorities among the major players – civil society leaders, local authorities, and external actors. To that end, several general goals of the project in the northeast were identified:

- to “identify, in collaboration with Somalis, factors essential to the longer-term rebuilding and development process, both within selected sub-regions and for Somalia as a whole;”
- to “promote a better understanding for post-conflict rebuilding issues in a country without a central government by looking more closely into individual, group, and community initiatives and coping mechanisms, their outcomes, and obstacles faced;”
- to “promote constructive interaction and better understanding between internal and external actors in order to consolidate and strengthen the process of stabilization and rebuilding;”
- to “encourage supra-regional collaboration and reconstruction by opening new venues for dialogue and reconciliation and presenting viable solutions to actual problems.” (Kane 1999: 54).

¹This section is provided for the benefit of readers who are not familiar with the WSP's work in Somalia. For a much more detailed chronology, see Doornbos (1998).

These general goals were to be met via a variety of discrete tasks, including the holding of workshops to promote dialogue between (and within) the three major actors (civil society, local authorities, and external actors); initiation of and support to action-research projects into priority areas for economic and social reconstruction; and development of local research capacity. The project objectives therefore included both somewhat intangible “process” goals – improved communication and partnership between the major players in rehabilitation, broadened local dialogue, and strengthened role of local communities in development prioritization – and more measurable and tangible “products” – policy research papers which map key issues, convening of workshops, and a handover of the participatory action-research project to a national research institute.

Phase I

The first research phase began in January 1997 and lasted fifteen months. A Northeast Somalia Zonal Project Coordinator, Mr. Adam Bihi, was hired. A decision was made to establish three regional offices rather than a single zonal office, in part to defuse potential regional rivalries over perceived project benefits. Likewise, the national research team was hired along regional lines, with one researcher chosen per region. These individuals -- Mr. Ahmed Abbas Ahmed (Bari region), Mr. Abdigafar Haji Mohamed Abdulle (Nugal region), and Mr. Abdisalam Ali Farah (Mudug region) were selected in consultation with local authorities. Because the three regions of Northeast Somalia correspond roughly to the three major sub-clan divisions within the Mijerteen clan, this regional division of labor was also important in establishing WSP’s intent to remain unbiased and balanced in the internal politics of the Northeast.

These regional researchers were provided with a training and orientation session on participatory action-research, and then embarked on the first operational phase of the project, the drafting of the Regional Notes. By August, first drafts of the Regional Notes were produced, and by December 1997 the Regional Notes were edited and reworked in Nairobi and Geneva. The revised Regional Notes were then presented for discussion and approval at Regional Project Group meetings in Bari, Nugal, and Mudug in March 1998. The Regional Project Groups, the members of which were selected and recruited by the national regional researchers and the zonal project coordinator, also identified Entry Points, or specific priority policy issue areas, for the WSP research team to pursue for in-depth research.

While the project team was not entirely satisfied with all aspects of its work, this first phase of the project achieved nearly all of its objectives. Among its achievements:

- the establishment of the project and recruitment of researchers were deftly handled, successfully sidestepping the many political landmines which plague project start-up in the Somali context;
- a very high quality WSP team was recruited and put in place in Nairobi and the Northeast, giving the project broad credibility and respect, and affording the team a deep knowledge of the country;
- the Regional Notes were produced with only some delays, despite logistical challenges in the field;
- the Regional Project Groups quickly assumed a strong sense of ownership over the WSP

research process, and identified common Entry Points in all three regions.

Several concerns were, however, raised by the team at the end of this first phase. Among the frustrations, setbacks, or problems to be remedied included:

- political divisions in Mudug region, pitting the Haber Gedir clan of south Mudug and the mainly Mijerteen clan of north Mudug, led WSP to abandon work in south Mudug and work only in north Mudug;
- the research skills of the regional researchers were weaker than had been anticipated. The initial training session proved far too short, and had to be supplemented with additional workshops. The participatory action-research methodology was new and not easily adapted; researchers tended to fall back on classical research methods;
- logistical constraints, especially the fact that the project had only one vehicle, prevented the researchers from consulting residents in rural districts away from the three regional capitals;
- the quality of the first drafts of the Regional Notes was uneven and in some cases poor, requiring significant editorial work and revision in Nairobi. This set the project back by several months;
- rural and female voices were believed to have been under-represented in the Regional Project Groups and in the Regional Notes;
- the initial response of external actors to the project was disappointing; international agencies in the field were often reluctant to cooperate with national researchers, and were generally not active in the Regional Project Groups.

Phase II

The second phase of the project began in March 1998 and lasted until February 1999. In this phase of the project, the three Regional Project Groups expressed a wish to work together at the zonal (Northeast) level. A single Zonal Project Group was thus formed, and a Zonal Note was drafted by WSP-Nairobi. Using the Zonal Note as a point of departure, the Zonal Project Group met in March 1998. This was a major event, with over one hundred individuals participating, including representatives from external donors and aid agencies. The Zonal Project Group identified four broad Entry Point themes on which to base WSP sectoral research and workshops. No agreement could be reached on the nature of the economic entry point, as a split arose between advocates of the pastoral economy (representing interior communities) and economic infrastructure (representing the commercial urban sector). The WSP team was asked to resolve the matter. Eventually, the WSP team suggested several modifications of the Entry Points, leading to these themes: *Basic Institutions for Governance at the Local Level*; *Implications of the Puntland Conference for Social Integration*; *Opportunities for the Improvement of Essential Services*; and *Transformation towards a Regulated Economy*.

The second phase of the project coincided with important political changes within the Northeast region of Somalia, wherein residents of Bari, Nugal, and North Mudug began a process culminating in the declaration of a (non-secessionist) state of Puntland. The Constitutional Conference, held in May and June 1998, completely absorbed the energies and attention of local social and political leaders, and the WSP staff itself was drawn into the

process, providing logistical and secretarial support to the delegation. As a result, WSP's own work was delayed and suspended for nearly six months. By September, WSP regrouped following the conclusion of the Constitutional Conference and began an very intensive phase of work. Discussion papers for 13 sectoral workshops were quickly drawn up, sometimes with the assistance of local "Resources Persons" hired for short periods; sectoral workshops were convened in a wide variety of locations, including some rural locations, between October and December 1998; and final reports and recommendations from each of the workshops were drafted, to feed into four Entry Point reports as the culmination of this phase of the project. All this activity took place in a changed political environment, in which a fledgling "Puntland" administration now claimed authority over all of the Northeast zone. This political change presented both an opportunity and challenge to WSP, which sought to adjust its program to reflect the fact that a standing transregional authority was now in place.

The second phase of the project was again marked both by successes and frustrations. Among the notable successes of this part of the project included the following:

- WSP's ability to adapt to the rapidly changing political context of the Northeast allowed it to play an important and constructive role assisting the Constitutional Conference. This adaptability gave WSP a unique opportunity to maintain and enhance its relevance to the rebuilding efforts of a war-torn society rather than becoming marginalized;
- despite severe logistical constraints, WSP was able to organize and hold 13 sectoral workshops in a wide range of different locations, including some very remote towns, providing for greater rural-urban balance in the process;
- the sectoral workshops were in general of a high quality, producing timely and useful policy papers which have since played an important role in the new administration;
- the workshops energized civil society in Puntland; they catalyzed an unprecedented level of civic discourse and activity;
- persistent diplomatic work with the new Puntland administration succeeded in overcoming suspicions and even overt administration hostility towards the workshops, which were seen as undermining its authority. This tension could easily have led to the complete suspension of the project had the project not benefited from the skillful diplomacy of its top staff.

Among the chief frustrations and setbacks experienced in phase two:

- The long delay brought about by the Constitutional Conference put the project far behind schedule, and forced WSP to accelerate its workshops, leading to a very crowded and stressful agenda in October and November 1998;
- the quality of the research and writing on draft Entry Points by the national team was again uneven, with some work of poor quality and other work months late. This placed much of the burden of writing and rewriting drafts of the Sectoral papers either on the resource persons or on the research associate and zonal coordinator. Eventually, the contracts of national research team members were not extended prior to their completion of the assignments, which generated some ill will on their part toward the project;
- an attempt to convene a separate workshop on gender issues led to an unfortunate political confrontation, in which the WSP external consultant was temporarily arrested through the efforts of al-Ittihad and other groups in Puntland, which rejected the wording

- of the draft gender discussion paper. Though arguably the gender paper and workshop had positive impact locally, this incident was a setback for WSP;
- external actors were again generally inactive in the second phase of the project.

Transition Phase

Since February 1999, the WSP-Puntland project has entered a transitional phase. The main operational objective in this phase has been to shift the research capacity WSP helped to foster to a local Puntland research institute. A Puntland Development and Research Council (PDRC) was established in 1999, temporarily housed in the WSP-Garowe office, with Mr. Abdullahi Abdulle Osman “Shuka” serving as interim director. At the time of this writing, the PDRC is still in a building phase; it has not yet begun to renovate the compound provided to it by the Puntland government, has not yet selected a director of research, and has not yet become operational. The original expectation that the trained national research team would form the core of this NGO has not been met, due in part to that team’s uneven performance in the earlier phases of the project. This means that whoever conducts the research in the PDRC will either not possess the skills in participatory action research imparted by WSP training, or will require additional training. WSP is providing some temporary support to the PDRC as it establishes itself, but few observers are confident that the PDRC will survive and become operational as a self-sustaining research body. If this occurs, it will constitute a disappointment for WSP, but not a failure.

Though conclusions about WSP’s long-term impact cannot yet be drawn, the transitional phase of the Puntland project does offer clues about the longer-term impact of WSP in the region. WSP’s written research products, especially the Entry Points papers, have served as important baseline documents in Puntland Parliamentary debates and administrative policies, suggesting that the project’s immediate impact on public policy has been real and beneficial. Among international agencies, renewed emphasis is being placed on consultations with local communities, a trend which suggests WSP may have had more long-term impact with external actors than originally believed. And civil society leaders in Puntland strongly concur that the WSP process enlivened and empowered the “third sector” in the region, providing them with greater information and improving the network of civil society leaders in Puntland. On the other hand, no follow-up sectoral meetings have been locally initiated since WSP began phasing out; and the Puntland government has in recent months issued sharp edicts prohibiting “unofficial” meetings in Puntland, evidence that WSP was not able to convince the administration that increased dialogue and civil society involvement is a source of strength for, rather than a threat to, local governance.

WSP in the Somali Context

An accurate evaluation of the WSP in Puntland must establish a proper frame of reference. Specifically, one has to account for the particular constraints faced in the Somali context in order to fully appreciate both the setbacks and successes of the Puntland initiative; evaluating the project in a vacuum would only produce badly distorted conclusions. The point of departure for establishing a “Somali context” is the assertion that Somalia constitutes one of the most challenging environments in the world for international rehabilitation and development projects; it is widely regarded as having one of the highest failure rates in the world. Why this is so, and what it means for the evaluation of WSP’s work, is briefly summarized below.

The Societal Context

A cardinal tenet of WSP’s work elsewhere has been the importance of the role of civil society in giving voice to local communities in rehabilitation priorities. Yet civil society – defined here as “volitional, organized, collective participation in the public space between individuals and the state” – is extremely weak in Somalia, a fact which is often misunderstood by those who presume that clannism is a reflection of and a component of civil society. In fact, clannism is antithetical to civil society, inasmuch as lineage identity is (with few exceptions) not “volitional.” As one text on civil society argues, the Middle East “has a rich set of institutions and nonstate actors that mediate between public and private space, but they generally exist in the non-democratic context of the mosque, family, or clan”(Gerner and Schrodt 1999: 93). Associational life and voluntary organizational activities are very weak in Somalia, and are generally overwhelmed by the current prominence of lineage politics. At this point in time, Somalia is not the most fertile soil on which to scatter the seeds of civil society renewal; progress in building societal support for and involvement in the kinds of processes envisioned by WSP must be measured realistically. The fact that no new associational or other citizens groups were formed following the WSP work on the northeast is not at all surprising when viewed in this context.

The Somali societal context is also important in order to properly assess WSP’s relationship with the local population. Somalia in the Cold War era received a higher level of foreign aid per capita than any other country save Israel; the Somali state was literally run on external assistance, and collapsed soon after that aid was withdrawn. Somalia earned a reputation as a “graveyard” of failed foreign assistance projects. Both the sheer quantity of aid and the politicized and poorly-conceived quality of external assistance during the 1960-1990 period left an indelible mark on Somali society and its response to foreign aid agencies. The type of external assistance during the UNOSOM only exacerbated a widespread cynicism and opportunistic approach by many in Somalia toward aid projects. Local populations were rarely convinced that NGO and UN projects were (a) really dedicated to helping them, (b) genuinely interested in local participation in prioritization of needs, and (c) likely to stay any longer than a few years. Short-term logic and strategies thus tended to prevail in relations with external actors.

WSP was, in sum, proposing to shift public practices and attitudes about development

and aid in a fairly poisoned environment. To its credit, WSP was able to overcome most local skepticism toward its unusual mission. But the troubles it did face – ranging from locals participating in workshops only for the small per diems paid, to the challenge of convincing the PDRC that it would not be subsidized indefinitely by WSP – were typical and largely unavoidable by-products of a political culture of dependence and opportunism fostered by decades of ill-conceived foreign aid in Somalia.

Political Context

Unlike any of the other WSP project sites, Somalia is unique in having no formal state authority. This context of complete state collapse poses a wide range of problems especially for projects which are, like WSP, aspiring to promote capacity-building in local governance. External actors must cope with long-running disputes about who constitutes a legitimate representative of the community, and who has the mandate to manage different aspects of public life. In the particular context of Puntland, this political context was simplified greatly by the fact that community leaders did effectively control militia elements by the time WSP arrived at the scene, thereby removing one of the most problematic and disruptive aspects of state collapse. But it was still a political environment featuring a very high level of factionalism — including sub-clan rivalries, personal leadership rivalries, rivalry between traditional elders and political figures, and Islamists contesting the leadership of both clan elders and factional leaders. The Puntland political context was also greatly complicated by the fact that regional politics was transformed over the course of the WSP presence in the Northeast. WSP, like other external players, had to work with a “moving target” politically, a fledgling trans-regional administration which insisted on control over public policy without possessing any capacity to provide public services, and which felt easily threatened by efforts to convene and engage civil society representatives. The fact that the new Puntland Administration was composed mainly of ex-military officers and supporters of President Abdullahi Yusuf, while the opposition tended to be intellectuals and professionals (and hence the most visible members of “civil society”) placed WSP in a very difficult position, since it appeared to be helping organize the opposition in its workshops. Neutrality in this context was virtually impossible to maintain. This was by no means an easy political context for WSP.

International Context

One of WSP’s principle goals was to draw external actors into greater dialogue and partnership with local communities, and to reshape the way external aid agencies work with local partners. The fact that aid agencies often adopted an attitude of ambivalence, indifference, and even hostility to WSP-Puntland has been observed by WSP in other documents and will be the subject of discussion below. But again, this issue must be placed in context. In this instance, it is crucial to understand that the period of WSP activity in Puntland – 1996-1999 – coincided with a very difficult and dysfunctional period within the aid community working in Somalia. Relationships between the UN and the EC-Somalia Unit (the major donor in Somalia) were extremely poor; power struggles and personality clashes within the SACB (Somalia Aid Coordination Body) were also endemic; and rivalries within the UN agencies themselves were fierce. All this was fueled by dramatically shrinking pools of foreign aid for Somalia and a fundamental lack of consensus about how to channel assistance into a zone of state collapse. Prospects for inter-agency cooperation were thus virtually non-existent. WSP could hardly have

stepped into an environment less conducive for the purpose of encouraging reflection, self-criticism, and innovation in international rehabilitation aid. Thankfully, this period has passed and working relations between external aid agencies have recently improved. But WSP's own self-criticism of its inability to reach international aid agencies effectively must be tempered in light of the unusual circumstances it found itself in.

Likewise, the international context is important to consider when utilizing the observations and critiques of WSP by other international actors. In an environment of such rancor and backbiting, international agencies are often quick to level harsh, sometimes even vindictive and unwarranted, criticism of one another. As a result, external evaluations must take great care in weighing the validity of criticism gathered in interviews with representatives of other external agencies. In my judgement, some external criticism gathered by this evaluation appeared to be thoughtful and insightful, but other criticisms were clearly unreliable reflections of personal or institutional rivalries.

The WSP Context

Finally, the unusual nature of WSP itself constitutes a "context" worth acknowledging explicitly. Because the programme team in Somalia and Nairobi is quite small, it is very difficult to separate evaluation of the project from evaluation of key individuals. Two individuals in particular — Programme Coordinator Matt Bryden and Zonal Project Coordinator Adam Bihi — are widely viewed as the dominant figures in the project and are credited with responsibility for most of the project's success. But that also implies that criticisms of the project tend to become personalized. Because of the untimely death of Adam Bihi in 1999, Somali interviewees exhibited a marked preference to show respect for the deceased by not voicing any critical observations which could be construed as criticism of Adam Bihi.

Organization and Administration

Staffing and Terms of Reference

Overall, the staffing of the WSP-Northeast Somalia project was one of its chief sources of strength. Recruitment was especially successful at the highest levels of the project. The project managed to recruit several of the top figures in each category it sought. The Programme Director position was filled by one of the leading international specialists on Somalia, Mr. Matt Bryden, who brought not only extensive knowledge of Somalia but also excellent writing and analytic skills, and a commitment to the Somali people that is perhaps unmatched among his expatriate peers. The fact that he is widely respected and sought after in the international community for advice on Somali matters gave the WSP project instant credibility and visibility in certain external actors arenas. Dr. Ahmed Yusuf Farah assumed the role of Programme Research Associate; he, like Bryden, enjoys widespread respect as one of the leading Somali social scientists, and further enhanced the credibility and capacity of the project. Adam Bihi, a popular, charismatic, and respected political figure in the Northeast, agreed to take on the position of zonal project coordinator. Until his tragic death in July 1999, he played an instrumental diplomatic role in steering the project past the many political shoals threatening to shipwreck it, served as an invaluable community mobilizer, and brought to the project a high level of credibility and energy at the zonal level.² There is widespread consensus locally that WSP could not have done better than Bihi for that key position; and many observers feel that WSP would not have been able to work through the turbulent political period following the establishment of Puntland had it not been for Bihi's personal political skills and status inside Puntland. Later in the project, the hiring of Abdirahman Osman Raghe as Deputy Administrator deepened WSP's expertise on Somalia still further; Raghe is a very knowledgeable, experienced, and respected observer of Somali development and political issues.

Collectively, this small core of top-level staff easily matched or exceeded the expertise of any other external agency working in Somalia. It would not be too much of an exaggeration to say that WSP recruited an "all-star" team at this level. It is notable as well that all four of these individuals left positions elsewhere in order to work for WSP despite the fact that they either took a pay cut, left more promising political positions, took a significant career risk, or were willing to be separated from their families for long periods. Thus the project began with a core team that was not only exceptionally strong, but also exceptionally committed to Somalia and WSP's goals. This depth of country knowledge meant that the project was much more politically astute in the field than most other international actors, and made very few political errors of judgement. It also tended to possess a much high level of internal cohesion and support than comparable agencies working in Somalia.

²More extended bios of these individuals and the strengths they brought to the project are found in Doornbos (1998): 20-21.

Hiring decisions at the next level in the project yielded more mixed results. Specifically, the three key positions of national researchers resulted in a team which produced uneven research and mixed levels of commitment to the project. The research products generated by this team tended to be late and in some cases mediocre in quality, putting a substantial burden on the Nairobi office and the zonal project coordinator to revise and rewrite these reports. While two of the three researchers were generally responsible in their duties, a third was grossly negligent, conducting his own business in lieu of committing himself to WSP work.

A number of factors account for this somewhat disappointing recruitment. First, the Northeast zone was not rich with well-qualified researchers. Second, even those with strong credentials (one of the researchers possessed a Ph.D. and had taught at Somali National University, for instance) had not conducted research for many years due to the disruptions of a decade of state collapse. Third, the decision to delimit hiring of zonal researchers along regional lines, with one researcher chosen per region, was wise from a political point of view but came at a cost of opening the search for the three top candidates regardless of regional (and, implicitly sub-clan) affiliation. It is difficult to second-guess this decision, as a hiring process based entirely on merit with no regard for regional and sub-clan balance could easily have derailed the entire project. It is noteworthy, however, that WSP's politically pragmatic hiring decisions in 1997 ended up contradicting one of the very recommendations the WSP workshops generated in 1998 — namely, that “[government] appointments should be made exclusively on merit. . . (WSP,1999b: 31).

The hiring procedures adopted by WSP for both its national researchers and the zonal coordinator (and later for the position of zonal programme administrator) have been widely hailed as a breakthrough in transparent recruitment in the Northeast. WSP is to be commended for openly advertising the positions, and involving a local authority in the interview and hiring decisions. This was an important step not only in building local confidence in the impartiality of the project, but also in setting an example of the kind of practices of openness and collaboration it hoped to encourage in external agencies and local authorities in the Northeast (see Doornbos1998:22).

Nonetheless, in field interviews some criticism was leveled at WSP hiring procedures. In many respects this should come as no surprise, since the allocation of employment is viewed locally as one of the chief benefits of international aid projects; hiring and firing issues invariably dominate local grievances about a project.

First, no women were hired into the field team. This oversight later produced the series of corrective steps which culminated in the gender paper and workshop and its political controversies. The WSP staff itself readily acknowledges that in retrospect they wished they had hired one or more women onto the national research team. This lesson learned appears to have already been incorporated into WSP's project design in Somaliland.

Second, hiring at the Nairobi office was not seen by all as open and transparent, but rather as a closed procedure in which the Programme Coordinator recruited individuals he knew

well. This created some friction with offices within UNDP and a perception in some circles that WSP was a small “club” of confidants of the Programme Coordinator. The fact that some of this criticism stemmed from jealousy of the caliber and reputation of the assembled WSP team or from old personal rivalries does not negate the broader concern that the principle of transparency in recruitment was not consistently applied. In interviews, the Programme Coordinator freely acknowledged that for one or two key positions he opted to hire Somalis he knew well and trusted on the grounds that a close-knit and trusted team within the small WSP office was essential for success, especially given the political sensitivity and short time frame of the project. He also acknowledged that Geneva had given him free rein to make such closed choices. WSP’s unique status within the UN frees it from the tight regulations of UNDP regarding hiring procedures, so the closed nature of hiring in Nairobi was not a violation of policy. Nor was it a reflection of patronage practices, since the team is clearly of very high quality. It was instead simply a matter of expediency and political judgement, and one which, as it happens, served the project well. Still, the paradox is not hard to see. On the one hand, WSP advocates principles of good governance such as open recruitment procedures. Yet it was a closed recruitment process which enabled WSP put together a strong team at the top levels of the project, while the open recruitment process it embraced in the field led to an uneven and less committed research team.

A third criticism of WSP hiring practices held that the project tended to “raid” employees of other agencies, thus disrupting the work of aid agencies and robbing them of staff they had taken pains to train. This was an especially sore point with one NGO, which claimed to have lost two national officers (one in Puntland and one in Somaliland) to WSP. Because WSP employed these individuals as national researchers, it also tended to pay at a higher rate than other agencies, creating an additional source of tension with aid agencies. Investigation of this criticism revealed that the local staff member in question in Puntland was not a full-time employee of the aggrieved NGO; he was, moreover, the least reliable of all the national researchers and hence not a great loss to that NGO. More importantly, though, there is no reason to accept the premise that Somalis should not be free to shop around for better employment, or that international agencies should collude to prevent such “project hopping,” since this is a very common practice among international employees of aid agencies. Thus the criticism that WSP “raided” other NGOs for staff is not tenable.

However, the related complaint — that WSP pays its national officers more than national officers in other external agencies — is a matter of concern. Aid agencies in Somalia have devoted considerable energies to standardizing local wages so as to minimize potentially explosive conflicts over the issue. WSP should look closely at this matter before it expands its work into other parts of Somalia. If it does opt to work on a different payscale than other agencies, it needs to take appropriate efforts to explain and justify that policy, and weigh it against the negative fallout that can ensue.

The fact that WSP hired away one key individual – Adam Bihi – from a position in the Muduq Region Administration is also a legitimate concern. It is not clear that draining local administrations of one or more of their most promising and influential leaders is an appropriate practice for a project designed to strengthen local capacity. Some observers, including local “friends of the project” expressed ambivalence about this practice, noting that on the one hand

Adam Bihi's presence was crucial to WSP's success, but that WSP's gain was Muduq region's loss. Hiring away of key local authorities should in principle be avoided, though each should be decided on a case-by-case basis and the relative costs and benefits to the community at large should be carefully considered.

A fourth set of criticisms leveled at WSP recruitment practices focused on the particular issue of gender and the hiring of a consultant to lead a gender workshop. This criticism tended to come from the Somali community in the Northeast zone, and even from within the WSP staff, not from external Nairobi observers. In its initial hiring, WSP opted to hire a zonal team of four males — one zonal project coordinator and three regional researchers. Subsequently, female participants in the WSP workshops as well as external observers voiced some concern at the absence of a female on the WSP team. Once a decision was reached to conduct a separate gender workshop and discussion paper (discussed in detail below), WSP hired a Somali Canadian woman, Ms. Faiza Warsame, who was available as a stipended intern. This individual was well-qualified educationally but considered by some inside Puntland to be young, inexperienced, and most importantly not closely familiar with Somali culture, having left Somalia as a child. When the gender discussion paper and workshop subsequently ran into a very serious political crisis in Puntland, including the temporary imprisonment of the consultant, more than one local observer contended that WSP erred in hiring someone with relatively little experience for such a difficult task as a gender workshop. Some of these critics held that had WSP employed a senior, respected female from within Puntland itself, the troubles it encountered could have been avoided.

It is certainly true that the “gender workshop incident” was the only serious diplomatic failure WSP experienced in three years of work in Puntland; indeed, it threatened to undermine the entire body of work WSP had achieved up to that point. To the extent that recruitment may have played a role in that incident, it merits close scrutiny.

WSP's decision to take on Ms. Warsame as a consultant apparently came after its attempts to identify a qualified female researcher within Puntland failed. According to the programme coordinator, trained and qualified females in Puntland were scarce, and those present were already employed with an aid agency. Thus WSP chose to expand its search to the diaspora. What is puzzling about this decision is the fact that no open recruitment in Puntland was attempted (one presumes that the mixed results with the three male researchers dampened enthusiasm for that approach), and that WSP, which had both before and since hired away Somalis from international agencies, was in this instance reluctant to do so. The other unusual aspect of this search was that it did not appear to possess the same level of scrutiny of other hires into the Nairobi office. The fact that Ms. Warsame was available on a Canadian government internship may have been viewed as a “windfall” to WSP, which took up the opportunity to add her to the staff and handle the gender workshop without further exploration of other candidates. This particular hiring was thus uncharacteristically casual by WSP standards. Technically, though, the hire was actually the acceptance of an intern; the selection of interns is never subject to the same procedures as normal hiring.

The issue, then, is whether or not it was prudent to place one of the most sensitive

workshops and discussion papers in the hands of an intern. On the one hand, Warsame possessed excellent educational credentials, including an M.A.; she was not a typical intern, and clearly earned the measure of trust WSP conferred on her. Still, she was not nearly as experienced as the other diaspora members brought into the Nairobi office, did not come into WSP with prior training in WSP's methodology, and had no work experience inside Somalia. It is thus somewhat surprising that WSP gave her sole responsibility for the gender workshop and draft discussion paper on the topic. It is not at all surprising that she was unable to foresee or avoid the political trouble which her draft discussion paper was to spark — nor should she have been expected to. In retrospect, WSP would have made best use of Ms. Warsame's many skills by pairing her with a senior project member with more experience inside Somalia and with longer experience with WSP's approach. That might have enabled WSP to navigate the many political shoals of that particular workshop while benefiting from the energy and analytic skills Ms. Warsame brought to the organization.

Another aspect of WSP's recruitment procedures worth noting is the use of "resource persons" for many of the 13 workshops held between October and December 1998. These individuals were hired at short notice and for short contracts to assist and in some cases lead the sectoral workshops. This sometimes included drafting the discussion papers for the workshop as well. Their services were needed in part because the research team, which had been hired along regional lines, lacked the expertise to handle some of the specific sectors at issue. For instance, a physician was asked to serve as a resource person for the health sectoral workshop, and an ex-general was tapped to assist the workshop on demobilization of militia. By necessity, these hires were done without open search - the zonal project coordinator simply identified leaders in each of the sectors based on prior knowledge and in some cases on their work in the zonal working group.

This tactic was very successful, in that it provided WSP with an additional corps of highly qualified workshop leaders to handle the rapid succession of workshops held in late 1998. It was also the only conceivable way to resolve the problem of the researchers lacking requisite expertise in certain sub-fields, and requisite organizational skills to handle the workshops. But it was not without complications. For one thing, the resource persons were not all trained in or even familiar with WSP's participatory model, nor did they share a uniform understanding of what was expected of them. Discussion papers were as a result not comparable; they ranged from full analyses to brief outlines. Second, some of the resource persons felt that too much responsibility for workshops was dumped in their laps at short notice. Third, the fact that these resource persons were experts in their fields sometimes triggered a passive and deferential attitude towards them on the part of workshop participants. In one instance, a former high-ranking education official acknowledged that the draft discussion paper he wrote was adopted by the workshop with almost no changes as a final paper; this more or less defeated the entire purpose of the WSP workshop. In the future, the use of resource persons should be integrated into the project earlier, with perhaps a short training session provided to the resource persons, to maximize the benefits derived from this innovation.

Finally, the issue of the size of the WSP staff merits note. On the one hand, the project appears by the standards of most UN agencies and NGOs to be admirably streamlined. The core

staff, in fact, was so small that the project in many ways was almost indistinguishable from the work of two or three individuals, posing the possible risk of loss of continuity in the wake of a loss of one of these key team members. This was in fact exactly what occurred with the untimely death of Adam Bihi, who had been expected to take over directorship of the PDRC during the transition phase. Yet some observers expressed the opposite concern -- that for a project with such focused, regional operational goals and short-term duration, WSP grew heavy with administrative and support staff. In the field, a small four-person research team was supported by three offices of five employees each, plus (later in the project) a project zonal administrator to assist the project zonal coordinator. The zonal team was in turn supported by the Nairobi office, which included the programme coordinator, deputy coordinator for administration, research associate, three office staff members, and periodic consultants. Include in this mix the WSP Geneva office and total number of personnel involved no longer appears so streamlined. What becomes clear at closer inspection is that a small project such as WSP cannot evade the very burdensome administrative, logistical, and reporting responsibilities that large and small projects alike face in the field. This administrative burden, discussed in more detail below, certainly warranted an expanded support staff.

Training

It is universally agreed inside the WSP Somalia programme, and has already been highlighted in several WSP interim reports, that the WSP-Puntland project would have benefited from more extensive training of the researchers on the intricacies of the participatory action-research (PAR) method. The researchers initially received only a few days of instruction prior to setting out of the first phase of the work, the researching and drafting of the three “regional notes.” Lacking an adequate understanding of what was expected of them, the researchers quickly fell back into “traditional” research techniques, and descriptive rather than analytic drafts. WSP found it necessary to provide supplementary training as a result.

The fact that WSP in Somaliland structured the training program there for nearly a month suggests that the lessons learned from Puntland on training have already been implemented. Still, it is worth highlighting that the principles and practices of PAR are not self-evident to most outsiders to WSP, and require careful and repeated explanation. It is also worth noting that the successor body to WSP in Puntland, the PDRC, does not at this time employ anyone with training in the PAR method, since none of the three researchers is employed there, and since the zonal project coordinator, Adam Bihi, passed away. It is thus not clear that the training provided to the WSP Puntland team will produce the kinds of multiplier effect the WSP hoped for.

The content of the training sessions is worthy of review as well. No training manual exists from the WSP training sessions. From what the researchers recall, the initial session was a useful introduction to WSP’s approach and mandate, and to its previous experiences in other countries. And the second training session was a useful mid-term opportunity to share preliminary findings. But actual training – defined as both the study of and practice on the art and science of participatory action research methods, did not appear to be imparted in these brief sessions. When one considers that trained researchers typically receive whole semester-long courses on field-work methodology before being considered ready to conduct research, the informal sessions WSP provided for its national researchers appears inadequate.

Project Design

The unusual political setting of northeast Somalia forced WSP into crafting a unique project design for its work there. Overall, the customized design for northeast Somalia worked well; in several instances, choices which yielded short-term benefits resurfaced later as constraints.

Regional Approach. The initial decision to structure WSP's work as three separate regional studies and processes was based on the fact that no transregional authority existed in the northeast. While anecdotal evidence suggests that from the outset WSP staff members hoped the regional approach might eventually lead to a trans-regional forum (as it did), that could not be presumed in 1997. The fact that the three regions of the Northeast corresponded roughly to distinct clan identities and economies was further cause to base the project regionally. Thus, each researcher was hired based on his knowledge of and residency in his region; three regional offices were established; and three "regional notes" were the focus of the first eight months of the project. The sensitivity which WSP had toward keeping a careful regional balance (and thereby avoid accusations of regional favoritism) was so great that it did not even establish a home base for its zonal project coordinator; instead, Adam Bihi was a "roaming" coordinator, moving from region to region in the project's sole vehicle. Politically, the regional structure of Phase I of the project was astute. Given the decentralized political situation in 1997, it appeared at that time to be the only feasible option.

Later in the project, though, the shortcomings of this regional structure of the project became apparent. First, the three regional working groups generated entry points which were very similar, suggesting that some sort of transregional approach at the outset might have been more feasible than anyone had foreseen. The regional approach also isolated the three researchers each in their own region. This worked against any kind of group synergy and reduced opportunities to brainstorm. In at least one case, it also made accountability a real problem, since no one knew what anyone else was doing on a day to day basis. It also made it much more difficult to share the project vehicle, stranding the researchers in their respective capitals. It was administratively costly, as each researcher required his own office and staff. It was apparently exhausting and frustrating for the zonal project coordinator, who lacked his own base office. And, because the researchers were chosen mainly on their regional expertise, the research team was not particularly well-suited to adapt to the second phase of the project, one which was defined along sectoral rather than regional lines. Since the sectoral discussion papers and workshops constituted the most valuable and enduring products of the WSP project in Puntland, the disjoint between the expertise of the research team and the task asked of it was costly. The fact that the WSP project in Somaliland has opted to form a team with diverse sectoral expertise and operate the team as a single unit based at a common office suggests that WSP has already reached this same conclusion and, to its credit, implemented this lesson learned.

Nairobi base. The decision to create a coordinating office in Nairobi Kenya for a project in Somalia was undesirable but unavoidable. All other aid agencies operating in Somalia have their country head offices in Nairobi, and since an important part of WSP's mandate is its mission to

external actors, WSP could not opt to keep the project entirely in-country. The division of the overall WSP project in Somalia into three countries — Switzerland, Kenya, and Somalia — led to high transportation expenses, but these were no different from the high logistical expenses faced by other aid agencies operating in Somalia in the 1990s.

The cost incurred by maintenance of the Nairobi office was premised on WSP's need to be physically close to the headquarters of other external actors in order to fulfill its mandate to provide outreach to and service to those agencies. The fact that the WSP-Somalia team as a whole grew increasingly disenchanted with the external actors, and eventually redirected its energies toward a more exclusively localized process inside Puntland, meant that the Nairobi office did not yield a particularly good return on investment; the staff based in Nairobi felt their most important contributions were inside Puntland, not with the external actors in Nairobi. Again, given the dysfunctional nature of the Somalia aid community in the late 1990s, there is little WSP could have done to alter this reality.

Division of labour. The very small corps of project officers meant that little division of labour was possible. The division of labour envisioned in the original project design fused administrative, programming, liaising, reporting, human resource management, fund-raising, and writing responsibilities in the positions of programme coordinator and zonal project coordinator. Over the first year of the project it became clear that the programme coordinator and zonal coordinator simply could not adequately discharge all these responsibilities.

For the programme coordinator, liaising with external actors — the UN, donors, the SACB — was itself nearly a full-time job. Because of his reputation as a leading expert on Somali matters, he was also drawn into more and more secondary “service” activities on committees, task forces, and as informal advisor to external aid agencies. While this role gave WSP high visibility among external actors in Nairobi, it also placed a heavy burden on the programme coordinator, who had still to meet all the other roles assigned to him. Human resource management — especially keeping his team working smoothly together, despite all of the internal tensions endemic within Somalia aid agencies — occupied still more of his time. The many logistical challenges of working in Somalia and Nairobi also ate up enormous amounts of staff time.

Faced with tasks which exceeded the number of hours in a day, he adopted two tactics. First, he worked very long hours with little or no time off. Second, he adopted “triage” toward his work, focusing on tasks he deemed most essential and devoting minimal energy toward the less essential. Over time, as the level of dysfunction within external aid agencies became apparent, one of the tasks which was “triaged” was liaison with aid agencies. Instead, the programme coordinator opted to make best use of his time by servicing the project inside Somalia itself. By the second year of the project, he also won agreement to establish the position of deputy coordinator for administration, in order to reduce the burden of administrative work in the Nairobi office.

Likewise, the zonal project coordinator found himself devoting most of his time to diplomatic and political interventions on behalf of the project, and to social mobilization in

support of the project. When in late 1998 the project entered the intensive phase of convening 13 workshops in different locations within a three month period, logistical and financial tasks were overwhelming. The zonal project coordinator had never expressed strong interest in the administrative aspects of his position even before this phase — he preferred the role of mobilizer, liaison officer, and troubleshooter, tasks at which he excelled. Hence administration in the field tended to be less systematic than would have been preferred in Nairobi. Eventually, WSP resolved this problem by hiring a zonal administrative officer; this allowed the zonal project coordinator to devote his time to programme matters, and was a good move on the part of WSP. In retrospect, the project design should probably have foreseen the need for administrative officers both in Nairobi and in Puntland at the outset.

Project phases and timing. The pace set by project timetables and deadlines fluctuated between periods of intentionally slow and deliberate work, periods of unwanted delays, and phases of often very hurried operations. That the pace of the project began deliberately was due to WSP's strong commitment to wait until the time was right for the local community – and to respect the notion of “anthropological time” it encountered in other countries. That the Puntland project was subject to unintended delays was both due to “force majeure” – namely, the convening of the Puntland Constitutional Convention – and to an inability on the part of the researchers to meet deadlines. That the project was forced to rush through the workshops in Phase II and quickly begin the transition phase was mainly a function of project budgetary restrictions. Ideally, WSP-Puntland would have benefited from a more consistently paced timetable. The fact that the project was ultimately held captive to financially-imposed deadlines and forced to rush some of its most important work is ironic in light of the fact that one of WSP's more common recommendations to external actors is to allow projects to be paced by local time, not time-frames driven by the needs of the external actors. WSP is right when it argues that time-tables should be based on local needs and realities, not those of donors and agencies; but in practice it showed how elusive this objective can be.

The 20 month preparation phase WSP gave to the Northeast project in 1995-96 was extraordinarily deliberate when viewed in the context of other aid projects in Somalia. By all accounts, the preliminary diplomatic and political work conducted in this period, especially WSP's efforts to explain to other Somali regions why it was choosing to enter the Northeast first, was crucial in deflecting criticism that the project was biased in favor the Mijerteen clan, which is the largest clan in the northeast regions. Likewise, quiet efforts to establish lines of communication with a broad range of social and political leaders in the Northeast was essential to maintaining the group's neutrality and acceptability in the Northeast itself. While such slow and careful entry into Somalia is not always possible or even appropriate for all aid agencies, WSP's patient approach and commitment to respect local conditions constitutes a model for external actors, and no doubt helped to prevent or contain political problems later in the life of the project. It is worth adding here that the presence and involvement of Ambassador Mohamoud Sahnoun was critical; Sahnoun is almost certainly the most-trusted international diplomatic figure inside Somalia. His role in meeting factional and civil leaders to explain the WSP project was very shrewd.

The first research phase was supposed to run from January to August 1997, yielding the

three draft regional notes. Instead, the regional notes were not produced and presented to regional project groups until March 1998, a delay of seven months. Project staff explained this delay as a result of a combination of factors – time-consuming tasks of establishing offices in three regions; problems of training, which required retraining of the researchers; limited transportation for the researchers; very limited access to secondary data on the part of the researchers; unwillingness on the part of some international agencies to work with and share data with national (as opposed to expatriate) researchers; suspicions and incomprehension on the part of the local community; and an unwillingness or inability on the part of the researchers to complete their drafts in a timely manner. These are valid excuses for incomplete or flawed data, but not for a seven month delay in the regional notes, which were not all not that long or detailed even after the delay. This delay was ultimately a failure of the research team members to execute their assignments in a timely manner. Due to Adam Bihi's death, it was impossible to get a complete account of the extent to which he attempted to encourage or motivate the team to respect deadlines. There appears to have been a strong commitment on the part of WSP's leadership to give the research team a high level of independence, a reflection of WSP's broader commitment to local ownership and "anthropological time." The trade-off was delay. At this stage in the project, the trade-off seemed warranted.

What the project could not easily sustain, however, was a second delay, yet this is what occurred as the project started to move into the second phase – the sectoral studies based on the zonal "entry points" and related workshops. In this case, the constraint was external, the convening of a constitutional congress in the northeast regions toward the establishment of a Puntland authority. This lengthy process preoccupied all of the political and social leadership of the Northeast from April through July 1998. The researchers argued that it was therefore not feasible to conduct research on the sectoral entry points toward the completion of discussion papers. Moreover, some members of the WSP team itself, especially Adam Bihi, were themselves drawn closely into the Constitutional Congress; the Congress was deemed to be of such great importance that WSP work had to be de facto suspended.

As some WSP interim reports have hinted, in retrospect it is clear that much more research work could have been conducted in April and May of that year, and perhaps even in the midst of the Congress. The convening of so virtually all of the Northeast's political, social, and business elite was an opportunity which the research team did not exploit. As a result, the entire project needed to be revived in August 1998, with funding dwindling and deadlines approaching.

The fact that the second phase of the project was executed in such a short time frame (August – December 1998) was remarkable, especially given the complex and exhausting logistical challenges of convening 13 workshops in a variety of different locations, some of which were remote villages. This deadline was largely met through the efforts of Adam Bihi and his administrative officer, and the work of the many resource persons hired at short notice. Ideally, the workshops would not have been held in such close succession from October through December – this proved to be a strain for civil servants and professionals in the working groups.

The timetable for the transition phase has constituted a source of disagreement between

WSP and local figures. Local leaders, especially stakeholders in the PDRC, feel strongly that WSP needs to provide financial and professional support to the PDRC for a lengthier period of time, in order to give the institution a reasonable period of time to become established and financially self-sufficient. WSP's one-year commitment of support is not seen locally as enough, and is viewed by some as an indication that WSP is "abandoning" its work in Puntland. The fact that WSP happens to be expanding its project in Somaliland reinforces the local perception that WSP is not devoting needed resources and time to Puntland. The fact that WSP is unable to continue support to the PDRC does seem to be almost insuring the PDRC's failure, since it is nowhere near becoming operational, much less self-sufficient. Whether this is due to donor-driven timetables or to WSP's decision not to press harder for funds for the PDRC is not clear. There was, however, a sense in the Nairobi office that the delays encountered in Puntland were simply unjustifiable, and seemed to constitute an effort to extend external funding for its own sake.

Project design within the UN. WSP's unique institutional arrangement – in which it enjoys affiliation with but autonomy from the UN -- is intended "to allow the project to wear a number of different hats" (Kane 1999:19). Kane describes the arrangement as one which enables WSP to "move between the framework of a United Nations body when thus helped the aims of the project, and [enjoy] the independence of an academic research institute when United Nations affiliation seemed to be a hindrance" (ibid).

In Puntland, this intentionally ambiguous, dual identity worked both for and against the project. On the positive side, the ability of the project to present itself to Somalis (both inside and outside of the Northeast) as autonomous from the UN was helpful, as the UN suffered a poor reputation in post-UNOSOM Somalia. In Somalia, a lingering sense of "guilt by association" continues to plague some UN agencies. Its autonomous status also freed WSP up from some (but not all) of the UN's often slow and cumbersome administrative regulations, providing WSP with a certain dexterity to move quickly when the need arose and to slow up when appropriate.

It was hoped that another positive effect of this arrangement would be that WSP could rely on UNOPS to handle its administrative matters, thereby enabling project staff to focus energies on programming priorities. That turned out to be a false assumption; the UNOPS administrative relationship was far from smooth and anything but efficacious.

Negative fall-out from this ambiguous status has tended to occur mainly with the UN family itself. There is a certain resentment on the part of other UN agencies toward WSP's ability to pick and choose when it will and will not be affiliated with the UN; it is seen as opportunistic and insulting by some UN functionaries, who question why a project should be entitled to all the benefits of UN status while making a point of publicly distancing itself from the UN. Tensions have also arisen over the extent to which WSP should or should not be beholden to UN recruiting and other procedural regulations. WSP's vague status within the UN has also fueled (unfounded) suspicions about its real purpose. And, the fact that it is affiliated at all with the UN has meant that WSP has had difficulty escaping from some of the inter-agency turf battles which characterized the UN in 1995-99 in Somalia, where it was occasionally seen as having taken sides in internal UN disputes. All of this did not help WSP's mission to advocate

changes in the practices of international aid agencies.

Overall, evidence from WSP-Puntland suggests that the founders of WSP were correct in their belief that the “ability to wear a number different hats” would serve the project well in the field. But the advantages do not come without some costs. One way to minimize these costs is to use the dual status of the project judiciously and in a low-key manner, not to appear to be exploiting it or to be “jumping ship” whenever UN affiliation is undesirable.

Administration

A major concern about the administration of WSP-Puntland was already noted above – namely, that administrative burdens in Somalia’s uniquely challenging operating environment were much greater than had been foreseen, overwhelming the project officers in the first part of the project and necessitating the hiring of full-time administrative officers both in Nairobi and in Puntland. In retrospect, WSP probably should have established these administrative positions at the outset of the project.

UNOPS and UNDP. Ironically, one of the biggest administrative obstacles was not the Somali operating environment, but the UN bureaucracy. The original project design, in which UNOPS served as a fund-manager for WSP for a 7% overhead charge, turned out to be a bad investment, as UNOPS generated cumbersome administrative and reporting obligations rather than relieving WSP of those burdens, and in the process reduced the project’s response capacity. Some of the obstacles encountered in the OPS relationship were simply a reflection of the inflexible standard operating procedures of large organizations like the UN, but others appeared to be the result of willful obstructionism, either due to personal or institutional rivalries and tensions. Whatever the case, the fund-management arrangement through UNOPS did not serve WSP well.

As a case in point, a simple change in travel plans for this evaluator created almost two days of unnecessary work for the WSP administrative staff, due to contradictory and inflexible travel regulations within OPS and UNDP. Funds to cover the expense of the change in the ticket would not be released by OPS because of an internal disagreement with UNDP over which Nairobi travel agent was to be used. Caught in the middle, WSP staff were forced to devote far too much time resolving such a simple matter. It was not difficult to appreciate the staff’s exasperation with current fund-management arrangements with OPS.

Likewise, the fact that WSP was a recipient of UNDP funding and nominally a “UNDP project” meant that UNDP programme officers assumed oversight of WSP’s work. There, clashes occurred over procedures, especially hiring decisions. From the perspective of UNDP programme officers, WSP’s sense of autonomy from UN procedures was unacceptable, since UNDP would still be held accountable for WSP hiring and budgetary decisions. They insisted that WSP conform to their procedures. This came to a head regarding hiring decisions (see p. 12, above). From WSP’s perspective, UNDP was guilty of double-standards. For most of its own projects, it allowed for a certain flexibility on hiring matters, particularly regarding the need for sensitivity in considering clan identity in the selection of national staff members working in particular areas. But with WSP, it insisted that clan could not be taken into account in hiring. Personal and clan rivalries between UNDP and WSP staff members may have contributed to the

quick deterioration in relations between these two agencies. The fact that the WSP programme coordinator was able to appeal both to the UN Resident Representative and to OPS Geneva to protect WSP's autonomy helped to contain these tensions, but only deepened resentment in some quarters that WSP was allowed to play by "different rules" from everyone else. Once again, much of this kind of distracting and time-consuming intra-agency rivalry was an unavoidable by-product of the dysfunctional nature of the aid community in Somalia at that point in time. WSP was at least able to win most of the battles it was forced to fight, allowing the project to proceed despite the organizational obstacles it faced.

Since WSP had no independent legal status in 1997, it had no choice but to house itself administratively under UNOPS. But now, as WSP establishes its legal identity as an NGO, it need not route its funds through OPS. Presumably WSP will be able to manage its finances itself at a cost considerably lower than the 7% of its budget, and with better levels of responsiveness to project needs.

Administration in the Field. Until the position of zonal project administrative officer was created in Puntland in September 1998, the zonal project coordinator's administrative style tended to be, in the words of several observers, "sloppy" and unsystematic. As was noted above, this was in part due to his own preferences, in part to the overwhelming tasks he faced, and in part to the fact that he possessed no office of his own, creating a uniquely difficult administrative set-up. The result was, by all accounts, a loose system of requesting and reporting on project finances. Improper financial requests by the zonal project coordinator, due to his lack of familiarity with the UN system (not, however, with accounting in general – Adam Bihi was a trained and experienced banker), led to delays by UNOPS in releasing project funds, and hence tensions between OPS and WSP. And the general carelessness on budgetary matters meant that the budget was chronically over-budget in the field.

Importantly, in no interviews was there ever any hint of misuse or embezzlement of project funds; WSP appears to have a strong record of responsible use of funds in the field. Dissatisfaction with administration and accounting in the field stemmed instead from a sense that the zonal project coordinator was bogged down with administrative details and was unable or unwilling to provide adequate accounting reports.

The addition of an administrative officer was intended to improve accounting and reporting from the field. Initially, an office manager was recruited laterally from the OPS (Somali Rehabilitation Programme) office in the Northeast, through which WSP funds were managed locally. His skills were in computer science, not administration, and he soon left the post. An open search and interview process identified an individual with experience inside UNDP, Mr. Salad Dahir, who took up the position of programme administrator by September 1998, in time to assist with the logistical challenges of the series of WSP sectoral workshops. Salad's presence in the field helped to improve budgetary issues and reporting to Nairobi.

Because the WSP offices in Bosasso and Galkayo had already closed by the time of this evaluation, it was not possible to conduct even a cursory investigation of the basic administration of the project. There were, however, several matters of concern. One, despite the fact that the

programme administrator was still on the payroll on WSP (to assist the director of the PDRC), he had after many months still not relocated from Bosasso to Garowe, where the PDRC office was established. This meant that Salad was not readily available to assist the PDRC, and that he was not easily accessible by telecommunications from Nairobi. Indeed, communication and coordination between WSP-Nairobi and WSP-Puntland was difficult throughout the duration of the evaluation. Second, he had placed all of the WSP files and papers in boxes and was storing them in his residence, rather than moving them up to Garowe where they are supposed to form the basis of the documentation unit for the PDRC. This meant that the documents were not available to the PDRC, and that no evaluation of the documentation unit could be conducted.

Administration in Nairobi. Administration of the project in Nairobi appeared to be very effective. The administrative staff is well-qualified and experienced and able to fulfill its work with minimal supervision. The information and filing systems in the Nairobi office were strong as well. The addition of a deputy coordinator for administration helped to reduce the administrative work load on the staff. Any administrative problems faced at the Nairobi level tended to be a reflection of the general logistical challenges of working out of Nairobi, especially with regard to communications.

Intra-project coordination, relations, and backstopping

The intra-project dynamics of WSP-Puntland were remarkable. There was a palpable and impressive sense of common purpose and teamwork at all levels of the WSP-Puntland project. It was impossible not to notice the strong sense of pride each project member had at his or her affiliation with WSP; the fact that WSP managed to recruit what looked to many like an “all-star” team may well have been a source of this pride. While individuals and offices made no effort to hide the fact that they frequently strongly disagreed with one another, these debates took on the air of constructive, frank discussions founded on mutual respect. Throughout the evaluation, WSP members’ evaluation of others’ work was constructively critical, but always reflected an appreciation of the strengths each team member brought to the project. The entire project was relatively free of the internal backbiting which characterizes so many aid agencies working in Somalia. Comments such as “it is true he was always late with assignments, but he was also brilliant,” or “he was exasperating at times to work with, but he was crucial to the success of the project” were typical. It is worth adding here that one of the defining features of the project team is the fact that it was filled with strong personalities, from Geneva to Nairobi to Puntland. This was due in no small measure to the aggressive recruitment efforts to assemble the strongest team possible; the personalities tended to be assertive and confident leaders. Under different circumstances, this mix could have produced counterproductive clashes and power struggles. But to the credit of the entire team, and perhaps especially to a few key individuals, the sparks which flew within the project were used to catalyze the WSP work, not undermine it. The team also clearly valued consensus in its own work as much as it sought to cultivate consensus in its work in Puntland. Numerous examples of lengthy internal consultations to work out differences of opinion or project problems attest to this commitment.

One of the most remarkable aspects of this sense of teamwork within the project was evidenced in interviews with two of the three regional researchers. No secret has been made of

the fact that the project management criticized the tardy and often inadequate quality of the research produced by the research team, and that the field research team's shortcomings have been commonly cited as the cause of any troubles or disappointments WSP has experienced. The project management's lack of confidence in these researchers culminated in their contracts not being extended in early 1999, even though none had completed their post-workshop sectoral reports. While one researcher had long-standing run-ins with the zonal project coordinator, the other two researchers continued to work on their reports despite the termination of their contracts and handed in those reports several months late. These two researchers were both very positive about WSP and the team despite the unfortunate manner in which their work within the project was completed. One even continued to work on a volunteer basis in the PDRC.

Because the project operated at four levels – Geneva, Nairobi, zonal (Northeast or Puntland), and regional (Mudug, Nugal, and Bosasso) – coordination was at times complex. The general pattern of decision-making was founded on the premise that “top-down” decisions should be avoided as much as possible, giving the regional and zonal team members as much autonomy as possible. The expressed view of the programme coordinator was that “the stronger the field team was, the less we supported; the weaker they appeared, the more we stepped in to assist.” In practice, this meant that the Nairobi team tried not to interfere or play a high-profile role in the Northeast. Geneva intervened only when it had to impose decisions which were dictated by donor or financial realities, or when it had a useful role to play in training or in diplomatic assignments. Team members in Puntland were universally positive about the roles played by both Geneva and Nairobi.

The decision to give the local WSP team as much autonomy as possible had a number of impacts. First, it strengthened considerably the sense of “local ownership” of the WSP work in Puntland, both within the WSP team and in the community at large. By all accounts, this constituted one of the great successes of the project, and it is not clear that it could have been achieved had the Nairobi office projected more of the physical presence or greater decision-making power over the project. On the other hand, to the extent that the project fell further and further behind its time-tables, one could argue that the autonomy accorded to the local team robbed the Nairobi office of a certain amount of monitoring and oversight capacity.

In only a few instances were there significant problems in terms of intra-project decision-making, coordination, and back-stopping. First, in the first phase of the project, when regional researchers found that external agencies were unwilling to provide them with the data they needed to write their regional notes, more forceful back-stopping from Nairobi or Geneva might have helped. Alternatively, the Nairobi office might have been more aggressive in providing the regional researchers with the data, reports, and secondary sources they needed by securing them in Nairobi and flying the material in. WSP reports that it attempted to do just this, but found it logistically challenging. There is no reason why this should not have been logistically feasible, though.

Second, decision-making at the zonal level tended to be highly personalized – essentially they were decisions made by Adam Bihi. The research team complained that they were rarely consulted and sometimes not even informed of decisions which ought to have been the result of

group consensus. The personality-driven nature of WSP at the zonal level became painfully clear when the project began to consider a successor body, only to encounter reluctance on the part of Adam Bihi to promote the idea. Eventually WSP had to help create a “Puntland Support Group” of eminent Puntlanders in Nairobi to provide momentum for a successor body (the PDRC).

Finally, an ongoing difference of opinion on priorities was never really resolved between the Geneva office and the rest of the project. This regarded WSP’s mission to external actors, which has been central to the project’s *raison d’etre*. The Geneva office maintained a strong commitment to generating lessons learned about assistance to war-torn societies in order to improve external aid agencies’ work in those communities – in the words of the WSP Director, Matthias Steifel, to “help the international donor community, international organisations, NGOs, local authorities and grass-roots organisations to understand and respond better to the complex challenges of rebuilding war-torn societies” (Kane 1999: 11). But the WSP team in Nairobi and in the field were increasingly of the mindset that the external actors were either of limited relevance or were active obstacles to the initial process of rebuilding and prioritizing needs; that the important work, work which constituted a “first-step” in Somalia, was to allow local communities to come together without the distractions of external actors to find their own voice and heal their own wounds. Geneva was concerned that this approach would marginalize the external actors, the very group which the project had targeted as its principle beneficiary (and which was also the source of project funding). This debate appears never to have been adequately resolved between Geneva and Nairobi.

These few instances of failed coordination or back-stopping should not, however, obscure the fact that the project possessed an admirable and impressive level of teamwork, founded on a strong sense of professionalism and mutual respect within the project.

Dissemination and communication

On few issues were there more contradictory views on WSP’s work than dissemination and communication. The opinions spanned a wide range -- from arguments that WSP excelled at dissemination, to claims that it failed to communicate adequately, to arguments that WSP devoted too much time to dissemination. This evaluation concludes that dissemination within Puntland was good but could have benefited from minor improvements; that dissemination and communication with donors improved over time; and that dissemination and communication with external aid agencies needed more commitment despite the fact that in some instances it would clearly have constituted a lost cause.

Communication within Puntland

Communication and dissemination within Puntland took several forms. The most frequent was oral communication – namely, explanation of the project by WSP team members at meetings and workshops. A second form of communication about the project involved distribution of written reports. Third, WSP attempted to communicate with the Puntland population through radio and cassette. A fourth effort, use of video (as part of the “Visions Project”), was planned but never realized.

WSP devoted considerable energies to communicating its purpose in early stages of the project. Nonetheless, the project initially encountered suspicion locally. This was in no small measure due to the unusual nature of the project; the local population was accustomed to international aid which brought jobs and contracts and which focused either on physical projects or training. WSP's modest expenditures and lack of a clear "product" earned it the nickname of "invisible dust" in the early phases of the project. Even in the WSP workshops, participants initially had difficulty understanding the WSP approach; they were accustomed to and expecting lectures, not participatory, locally-controlled brainstorming sessions. To its credit, WSP eventually earned a strong measure of trust within Puntland, overcoming much of the initial suspicion that greeted it.

Overcoming local confusion about the nature and purpose of the project took time and was mainly accomplished through repeated, patient explanation by the WSP staff. Every workshop and meeting was prefaced with a lengthy explanation of WSP's approach, and WSP team members, especially Adam Bihi, devoted considerable energy to "marketing" the project to an initially skeptical local audience. Eventually, this repetition succeeded in socializing the regular participants into a nuanced understanding of what WSP was hoping to achieve, and earned WSP broad local support beyond the workshop participants. This evaluator was very impressed by the clear and in-depth understanding of WSP's purpose among interviewees who had participated in multiple workshops.

Nonetheless, respondents in Puntland made it clear that WSP's philosophy and objectives were not self-evident, and took considerable time to explain and to comprehend. The WSP research team as well as workshop participants complained that the methodology was too jargonistic and hard to understand in English, and hence difficult to translate into Somali. The fact that the research team itself required repeated training sessions and explanations points to a potential problem in the project design; namely, that it came across to many as too theoretical, academic, and complex, thus hampering communication in the field.

WSP's reliance in the field on personal communication and dissemination was unsuccessful only with a few groups. One such group was al-Ittihad, which has a relatively strong presence in Puntland. Though WSP made a good faith effort to include pro- al-Ittihad community leaders in the workshops, al-Ittihad ultimately rejected the WSP approach. Lines of communication between the two withered following al-Ittihad's decision to attack and derail the WSP gender workshop on the grounds that it was an attack on Islamic values. Al-Ittihad representatives declined to cooperate even for the purpose of this external evaluation; my request for a meeting was turned down.

The other group that WSP had difficulty reaching was the ex-military leadership which emerged as the controlling faction in the new Puntland administration. Though WSP enjoyed support from many mid-level figures within the Puntland administration, the top figures in this administration did not attend WSP workshops, robbing the WSP process of an important opportunity to bring decision-makers together with civil society leaders. Abdullahi Yusuf's circle saw the WSP process as threatening and subversive, especially since it appeared to be organizing opposition to the government and giving voice to complaints and criticisms of the

administration. Consequently, communication broke down with the Puntland authorities at times. It is worth noting that suspicion of the political process WSP set in motion was about the only thing that the Abdullahi Yusuf administration and al-Ittihad shared in common – otherwise they were and remain bitter adversaries.

WSP's written products – the zonal and sectoral reports -- were widely distributed in Puntland. Though Somali society is considered an “oral society” in which written documents play an insignificant role, the reports have been widely circulated (several hundred copies per report were circulated locally). Former WSP staff members report that they are regularly approached by individuals seeking a copy, suggesting that demand for the reports has exceeded available supply. Most Puntland government ministries are said to possess copies of WSP sectoral reports related to their field. Some interviewees complained that the WSP reports in circulation were mostly in English, limiting users to those who are both literate and fluent in English. Some of the WSP documents were still being translated into Somali by the PDRC at the time of this evaluation. Ideally, Somali translations should have been made available earlier. However, it should be noted that a very high percentage of the educated class in Puntland reads English, due to large part to the high proportion of Puntlanders who have joined the diaspora to work abroad at some point in their life. Many and perhaps even most of the literate section of the population can read both Somali and English, hence the delay in distributing Somali translations affected a fairly narrow range of residents.

A bigger concern is WSP's ability to reach the majority of the regional population which is non-literate and not urban. This group would be unable to read the reports in any language, and would not have the opportunity to learn about the project second-hand in urban tea-shops. Radio appeared to be the answer. Understanding that the radio is the most powerful medium in Somalia, WSP sought throughout its project in Puntland to integrate its work with the UNESCO “Radio of Peace” project. WSP met frequently with the Somali staff at UNESCO to discuss WSP's work and to consider ways of weaving WSP's themes and findings into radio broadcasts, including the radio soap operas produced there. This was a promising and innovative approach to reach a much wider audience than workshops and reports could hope to do, but was sidelined by internal and budgetary problems within UNESCO. There was little WSP could do about this unfortunate development. Had the radio programming remained available, it would have provided WSP with much greater capacity to reach a much wider audience both within and beyond Puntland.

As already noted in other WSP documents (WSP 1999a: 57-58), the “Visions Project” – an attempt to tape or videotape conversations with citizens as to their vision of the future, with an eye toward integrating those recordings into WSP deliberations – did not materialize in Puntland. Tapes of workshop discussions were recorded, and proved to be a critical repository of the proceedings when the PC containing most of the social service sectoral report was destroyed in the auto accident which killed Aadm Bihi; the tapes allowed the WSP staff to retrieve lost data and complete the report. But the tapes were not integrated into the overall project.

WSP recognized the need to improve its dissemination capacity once final reports were

being produced. In February 1999, WSP created the position of Communications Officer in order to maximize local communication and dissemination as the workshops produced final reports, and to correct misinformation about WSP. One aspect of this individual's job description was supposed to be production of a WSP local newsletter; but following the death of Adam Bihi, that never materialized.

Communication with donors

Interviews with a number of donor agencies in Nairobi which provide support to WSP yielded a mixed picture regarding communication and dissemination. All these donors expressed satisfaction with WSP's work as a whole and consider WSP-Puntland a success – indeed, even the one major donor which did not fund WSP and which was initially hostile to the project, the EU, had positive assessments of WSP's final work. But each donor had distinct expectations of WSP and different levels of satisfaction with WSP's communication with them. This latter issue is of considerable importance, since one of WSP's stated objectives is to “help the international donor community, international organizations, NGOs, local authorities and grassroots organizations to understand and respond better to the complex challenges of rebuilding war-torn societies” (Kane 1999:11). Regular and adequate communication with donor agencies both in the field (Nairobi level) and at the headquarters level is imperative if lessons are to be learned and integrated into aid strategies and funding prioritization. Good communication with donors was also significant in that the WSP-Puntland office was increasingly expected to contribute to fund-raising efforts to keep the financially-strapped project operative.

Yet initially donors reported that WSP was not especially aggressive in keeping them informed of the project. In the early stages of the WSP-Puntland project, WSP was, in the words of one donor, “always willing to provide answers upon request,” but not proactive in keeping donors informed otherwise. Initially, some of the donors report that they did not sense strong enthusiasm for their presence at WSP workshops, and that they felt that they were more observers than participants in the process, which confused them, since WSP was promoted to them as a mechanism for dialogue between external and internal actors.

Over time, WSP reportedly became much more communicative with donors, adopting a more “service” oriented approach to providing the donors with updates, information, and ideas. One donor official who had originally been concerned with weak communication by WSP reports that as of January 2000, WSP compares favorably with other projects in terms of its communications. As in so many other cases, the WSP team appears to have quickly absorbed lessons learned and adjusted accordingly.

Importantly, though, the donors did not speak with one voice regarding their expectations of WSP. One voiced strong satisfaction with the high quality of the project research documents, which were useful informational tools, but was more interested in the political process WSP was setting in motion in Puntland. For this agency, the quality of WSP's communication with it was of secondary importance. By contrast, other donors were mainly interested in learning from WSP's experience for application elsewhere, including other projects they funded inside Somalia. For WSP, this posed a problem, as it did not wish to be set up as a quasi-evaluative mechanism of other projects (which is precisely what many aid agencies suspected it was

anyway). Some donors, in other words, were hoping that WSP would provide direct feedback on or suggestions to specific aid projects in Somalia, which WSP declined to do; in some instances, this created confusion about WSP's purpose. Still another donor expressed a desire to see WSP's lessons learned captured not only in documents, but also in interactive workshops in Nairobi.

One donor pointed out that one factor frustrating communication with WSP was language – namely, that WSP has developed its own jargon, buzzwords, and acronyms, and that its sometimes complex and opaque concepts were difficult to comprehend. That donor wondered aloud how WSP can explain their concepts and methods to nomads when they can't be grasped by the donors. While WSP should by no means “dumb down” its methodology, the Puntland experience – from villager to donor to external evaluator – suggests that it needs to improve on the clarity and accessibility of its explanations of its methodology and operations.

Finally, some of the donor stakeholders in WSP expressed uncertainty about exactly what was being communicated in the project reports – local consensus about a particular development issue, or WSP's views on that issue. The extent to which WSP's principles, analyses, and preferences seeped into the documents – either directly, in the write-up phase, or indirectly, through WSP's influence over local workshops – was unclear to some of the consumers of the studies. There is evidence that both occurred, a matter which is discussed later in this evaluation.

One major donor, the EU, did not fund WSP, and indeed did not support it at all. Because it is easily the largest donor in Somalia, the EU's ambivalence and even hostility toward the WSP project (depending on which official one spoke to in the EU office) was a setback for WSP's goal of fostering dialogue between the main external and internal actors in Puntland's reconstruction efforts. Some familiar with the EU-Somalia Unit even hinted that European NGOs receiving funding from the EU were advised not to participate in WSP workshops.

The reasons for the EU's initial animosity towards WSP are many, ranging from personal (including issues internal to the EU-Somalia Unit over which WSP had no control) to institutional. Among the institutional factors include the fact that the EU-Somalia Unit's aid delivery and oversight structure is very hierarchical, stove-piped, and anything but consultative, so that WSP's approach was potentially very threatening. The fact that WSP had standing within the UN at a time when the EU and UN were experiencing very poor relations only made matters worse. In retrospect, there is nothing that WSP could have done to win the EU over at that juncture in time. However, it is worth noting that the EU has in recent times become increasingly receptive to adopting WSP consultative methods (see below) and now considers the WSP research documents quite valuable. The lesson is clear – in a sector marked by significant personnel turnover and political shifts, persistence in communication and dissemination to the donor community can pay off, even when it appears fruitless at the time.

A final observation related to donor attitudes towards WSP communication and dissemination is that the more politically and diplomatically active a donor state was inside Somalia, the more value they tended to place on WSP activities solely for the value of the

reporting and research products WSP generated. For these donors, WSP constituted a source of valued intelligence. By contrast, donors focusing mainly on the reconstruction challenge in Somalia valued WSP communication to the extent that it succeeded in informing and improving their development initiatives.

Communication with external aid agencies

WSP's general disappointment with the receptivity of external aid agencies to its Puntland project was not due to a lack of effort to communicate the project to them. As has already been noted, relations between aid agencies working in Somalia during 1997-1999 were so poor that no amount of communication and dissemination could overcome those tensions. WSP made a good faith effort in the initial phases of its project to keep aid agencies informed and involved, inviting all relevant actors to its workshops. When that failed to produce strong interest, WSP increasingly withdrew from external aid agency circles, so that by mid-1998 WSP's communication with aid agencies became quite poor. Finally, in the final phase of the project WSP effectively disseminated the WSP reports to external aid agencies; virtually all aid agencies I interviewed were in possession of WSP documents.

None of the aid agency personnel interviewed for this evaluation expressed a view that WSP did not adequately communicate its work to them. On the contrary, most felt that WSP had done an exceptional job of "marketing" itself, making it a much higher visibility project than their own. This view was sometimes stated with admiration, other times laced with jealousy. With very few exceptions, aid agencies concurred that the WSP documents – especially the sectoral papers – were very valuable to their own work. They reported that the documents have been useful as baseline studies, as a window into the stated needs and priorities of the local population, as points of departure for discussions with the Puntland administration over projects, and as required introductory reading for new personnel.

Those few aid personnel who did not find the WSP documents valuable contended either that they did not have the time to read so many long papers (this tended to be the "we're so busy doing *real* development work" school of thought); or that they did not share WSP's commitment to PAR (viewing WSP as part of yet another "development fad" that would come and go); or that they "already knew" what was in the documents. This was a small minority, however; in general, WSP's research documents were very favorably received by external aid agency personnel. Importantly, those most favorable towards the WSP reports tended to be the most respected, leading figures in the external agencies.

Communication and dissemination to external aid agencies did not just involve providing them with the research documents – it was also meant to draw them into the workshops and dialogue with local administrators and community leaders over rehabilitation priorities. On this score, WSP was disappointed, as aid agency participation tended to be quite low, and when a representative was sent to a workshop, he or she tended to be a lower-ranking national officer. Reasons for this poor participation varied. Some agencies contended that there were too many workshops, taking up far too much time – their top personnel were already overburdened with responsibilities and could not afford to take so much time off to attend meetings. Others felt unwelcome – the proceedings were generally quite critical of conventional development

assistance, and some aid personnel came to view the workshops as extended “gripe sessions” at their expense. The fact that the workshops were held in the Somali language meant foreign aid personnel felt relegated to the role of observer, even though they were provided translators. In general, local populations quickly assumed a strong sense of “ownership” over the proceedings, which may also have made outsiders feel marginalized or unneeded. Still others felt a sense of unease in participating in “launching ceremonies” and workshops which they believed exploited their presence to legitimize a project that they were not entirely in agreement with. This was especially an issue during the time when WSP was perceived as having been very close to and supportive of the creation of the state of Puntland, which not all external actors (or Somalis from other regions) were equally enthused about. Finally, those based in Nairobi argued that the cost and time involved in flying all the way to Puntland for workshops was prohibitive.

It is worth noting however that even if WSP had succeeded to draw aid agency personnel into the workshops more effectively, the pay-off would not necessarily have been great, due to the extraordinarily high rate of international staff turnover in most UN agencies, NGOs, and donor offices.

One aspect of communication with external aid agencies which in retrospect needed more attention was convincing their field offices to cooperate with the WSP team in the collection of data. The national research team had hoped and expected to secure much of their data from major aid agencies, many of which had conducted extensive surveys and studies on different sectors in Puntland. The fact that the national researchers were turned away by most aid agencies was unacceptable. It is well known that aid agencies can be very proprietary regarding their data, for a variety of reasons, some more understandable than others. But in this instance, pressure needed to be brought to bear on those agencies to release studies and data to the project in the field. Instead, the WSP Nairobi office sought to collect the data itself and send it to the field.

Impact Analysis

The overall impact of the WSP-Puntland project was, by most measures and in the eyes of most external observers, very beneficial to virtually all targeted groups. From a cost-benefit perspective, the project -- which was a relatively small and streamlined project -- generally yielded very good returns on the investment donors placed in it.

The impact of the project is, as was noted in the introduction of this evaluation, an ongoing process, making part of this section of the study necessarily speculative. Some of the dividends of the project may not be reaped for years to come. Moreover, as has noted so often, WSP is mainly involved in cultivating and strengthening a, *process* rather than delivering a tangible product. This makes evaluation more qualitative and subjective than would be the case if WSP were in the business for drilling boreholes. Nonetheless, process-oriented projects are not inherently difficult to assess; they simply require different field techniques. Below, project impact is broken down by target group.

Local Impact — Civil Society

There is a broad consensus that WSP had a very positive catalytic effect on civil society in NE. Locally, this impact is viewed as the single greatest success of the project, and for most observers in the region, this development alone made the project a success and a worthwhile investment of time and money. Specifically, interviewees were in broad agreement that the project helped to: (1) create a lasting network of civil society leaders in the region, and introduce leaders from different regions and different sectors to one another; (2) raise local awareness and understanding of the development process and community expectations of local authorities and external actors; (3) help local communities to mobilize to meet their needs; (4) highlight gender issues; (5) empower intellectuals and other elements of civil society; (5) expand local dialogue beyond the elite level; and (7) provide an extended timeframe and a forum conducive for deliberate, critical thinking about the state of affairs in their community and strategies for improving it. Each of these impacts is treated briefly below.


(1) One common observation in Puntland is that WSP's regular rounds of meetings and workshops helped to build lasting networks of civil society leaders in the region. Importantly, the Northeast was at no point since 1991 a place where groups feared to gather and discuss politics and development needs frankly and in the open; repression of open dialogue had not been a factor since the fall of the Barre government in January 1991. In this respect, WSP-Puntland was not creating a new, neutral space for discussion in a war-torn environment such as Guatemala. But in Puntland, other constraints prevented the rise of a network of civil society leaders. One was logistics. The Northeast spans a vast territory, so that a trip from Galkayo to Bososo takes over eight hours by car. Civil society leaders could not easily convene in those circumstances. Second, inter-regional gatherings were expensive, and for many years following the collapse of the Somali state the Northeast was in a state of severe economic stress. Third, the telecommunication system which now makes communication so easy in Puntland was only put in place in the latter half of the 1990s. Fourth, sub-clan identity tended dominate social



interaction as an organizing principle, to the exclusion of other associational life. Finally, civil society itself in the Northeast was initially very weak, a product of decades of repression by the Barre regime and massive out-migration by the Northeast's professional class to North America, Europe, and the Middle East. All that combined to discourage networking on the part of the Northeast's civil society.

WSP provided the logistical and financial support to enable over 500 Puntlanders from three regions and from all sub-clans to meet in its workshops. Many of these civil society leaders attended numerous workshops and got to know each other well over the course of the two years that WSP convened meetings. Interviewees stressed the long-term importance of this new civil society network; they argued that they have since maintained their links to one another, and now had much better capacity to share information and mobilize on matters of concern which transcended clan lines. One businessman's view was typical:

“The disintegration of the state affected not only the economy and social services, but also our mentality. The first thing WSP will be remembered for is that it brought together people of different backgrounds and ages to discuss pressing issues. It gets a positive evaluation for this . . . Its activities coincided with a time that we needed such an opportunity. Somalia had become broken down into fiefdoms, it was very localized disintegration. WSP not only brought people together, it enabled us to travel to areas of the region we'd never seen.”

To the extent that a healthy associational life is a vital element in a democratic polity and an important element in conflict prevention and management, WSP's assistance in the strengthening of a civil society network in Puntland is a significant contribution. One observer noted that the WSP workshops were “an awakening of the people, bringing democracy to us.”

Observers both within and outside WSP expressed some skepticism about this impact, in that very few new professional or other associations  formed in the aftermath of the WSP project. But formalized associations may not be an appropriate or accurate measurement of associational life in Somalia, where informal gatherings and communication are the norm. Even so, one WSP participant noted that several efforts were underway to establish associations – one for women, another a human rights organization, and also a teacher's association, all catalyzed in part by the WSP workshops.

 (2) WSP raised local awareness and understanding of the development process. Interviewees stressed that thirty years of very centralized rule of the Barre regime coupled with decades of top-down development aid meant that local populations had almost no experience contemplating, prioritizing, and operationalising regional development. Nor did they possess a clear understanding of what external aid agencies would and would not do for them. WSP's workshops constituted an important learning experience of this score. Even when WSP workshops were poorly attended by external agencies, the WSP team helped to raise awareness of the fact that aid  nding was likely to remain modest and that local communities would have to take the lead in securing the social services they desired. The workshops also helped to expose many flaws in current development practices, so that aid agencies which were present had an

opportunity to learn of problems. Interviewees state that participants left the workshops with far more sophisticated understanding about the relationship between external agencies, local authorities, and local communities in the pursuit of development and rehabilitation. This was especially important in light of the establishment of the Puntland Administration; the WSP process enabled local communities articulate their own expectations of the new polity. In particular, this brought public scrutiny to bear on Puntland tax revenue collection and distribution.

One skeptical view offered up by some interviewees suggested that the local learning process about external development agencies was real, but not as WSP intended. They argued that local elites in Somalia are keen to discern “new approaches” in international aid simply to increase their odds of gaining access to it, and that WSP was viewed by some as a barometer of the latest foreign aid trends, to be carefully studied. One Somali participant referred to this group as the self-declared “local experts” on new foreign aid “call signs.” It was this group, he contended, which argued that the zonal working group should request a separate gender workshop, because that is what they believed WSP and the donors wanted them to say. To the extent that this is true, WSP was not just raising awareness through the creation of local dialogue; it was being carefully studied itself for indicators of what donors need to hear to release new foreign aid.

(3) WSP’s activities helped to mobilize local communities to address their own rehabilitation priorities. In the past, Northeast residents were accustomed to social services being provided by the state or by aid agencies for free. WSP’s workshops laid out the new fiscal and political realities in a way that brought people to an understanding for the need to mobilize their own resources for needed social services. Interviewees noted that rather than listing their needs and expecting aid agencies to meet them, local communities are now thinking in terms of cost recovery and sustainability,. They pointed in particular to the rise of user fees for schools, which residents had previously refused to pay. Once community leaders were placed in a position in which they had to choose between numerous rehabilitation goals in a context of limited resources, this compelled them to prioritize needs.

(4) WSP highlighted gender issues in Puntland, providing a forum to address a subject which had up to then been largely taboo. Though WSP’s handling of the gender issues workshop was in many respects its most serious operational error (discussed above), leading it into a political confrontation with al-Ittihad and other conservative elements in Puntland, WSP did help to advance a much-needed discussion of gender and development in the region. Female interviewees were most emphatic in their belief that WSP’s role was vitally important on this issue; it opened the door for much greater local sensitivity toward and discussion of the issue. Male interviewees tended to argue that WSP’s handling of the gender workshop was flawed and constituted a setback, but that the emphasis WSP placed on gender was helpful in advancing that debate in local affairs.

(5) WSP empowered intellectuals and other elements of civil society. Interviewees placed great emphasis on the notion that by convening and informing a core of several hundred civil society leaders over a two year period, WSP helped to empower intellectuals and other civil society

groups which had been sidelined and dispirited by years of warlordism and state collapse. Intellectuals – in the Somali context usually meaning anyone holding a secondary or university degree – were the first to respond to the WSP initiative, and quickly came to assume pride of place in the process. Inasmuch as WSP was fostering in-depth discussion and debate over policy issues, it was natural for those citizens in possession of technical skills in business, government, and the sciences to take a lead role. The WSP process raised the stature of the intellectuals and allowed them to assert a more organized voice in public affairs than ever before. Indeed, some argue that WSP (inadvertently or otherwise) catalysed the intellectuals into pursuing the establishment of a Puntland regional administration, a political process which was subsequently captured by ex-military figures.

(6) Though essentially an elite exercise, WSP expanded local dialogue beyond the elite level. Politics and development are normally the domain of a relatively small group of leaders in Somalia, as elsewhere. By holding the workshops in small towns and inviting nomads, fishermen, and other “non-elite” members of society to participate, the WSP team broadened political participation in a significant way. Many interviewees noted this, and while some objected – on the grounds that it lowered the level of expertise in the meeting – others applauded it as an important opportunity for elites to hear the voices of the rank and file. This was seen to be particularly politically salient in terms of exposing Puntland administrators to the voices of average citizens. As one participant (and a member of the Puntland administration) put it, “the WSP workshops were a sort of informal opinion poll and the results were devastating; those who were “holding the stamps” [administration officials] were threatened.” This, needless to say, created problems for WSP with the Puntland authorities (discussed below).

(7) WSP provided an extended timeframe and a forum conducive for deliberate, critical thinking about the state of affairs in the community, and about strategies for improving it. On the surface, this benefit to the community seems superfluous, given the Somali penchant for lengthy gatherings and discussions in tea-shops and over *qat*. But when pressed on this question, interviewees said that the WSP workshops provided an opportunity for focused and detailed discussions that could never be sustained in casual gatherings. It was for them the equivalent of what would be termed a “work retreat” in Western settings: a chance to remove oneself from distractions of the day for two to three days of intensive contemplation of development issues. The opportunity to engage in this extended dialogue was unprecedented and greatly valued by the participants.

If in ten years WSP is credited with having assisted the people of Puntland toward post-war political and economic recovery, it will no doubt be at the level of civil society where the project had the largest impact. Most of what WSP accomplished and facilitated in Puntland involved catalyzing civil society. While some of the impact of this work was immediately visible, the real influence the project had in civil society may not be apparent for years to come.

It should be noted that a range of objections to WSP’s impact on civil society in Puntland were at times raised. Most common was the assertion that WSP’s strong focus on civil society constituted unacceptable interference in internal politics. This was especially sensitive in light of the fact that the main opposition group to the ex-military faction which came to dominate the

Puntland administration was the intellectuals, giving WSP very much the appearance of an external patron of the opposition. Second, some noted that the WSP process, methodology, and subtle advocacy for certain issues was not a reflection of a universal norm but was instead culture-bound, a western concept imposed on a society for which it was not entirely appropriate. Indeed, some skeptics questioned whether the notion of civil society itself is meaningful in the Somali context. As a long-time observer of Somali affairs, I think it is entirely appropriate to question the cultural baggage which can accompany projects such as WSP; however, in this instance most of what WSP sought to facilitate inside Puntland was very much in line with Somali political culture and was very much controlled by the Somali participants themselves. The only notable exception to this was the case of the gender workshop; there, WSP got entangled in the debate over advocacy of universal norms versus respect for local culture, and was widely seen as having crossed the line regarding respect for local culture. As for skepticism over the existence of Somali civil society, it is true that one must not import such a social concept wholesale into another culture such as Somalia, and it is also true that Somalia's civil society is weak relative to most countries. Yet it is very much in existence, and very much a long-term force in the post-war rehabilitation of Somali governance and society. WSP's success in strengthening and empowering civil society groups in Puntland is thus a notable accomplishment.

Local Impact — Puntland Administration

By contrast, WSP's impact on the Puntland Administration was uneven and generally weak. This is in large part due to the fact that the administration which emerged from the constitutional conference was unreceptive. It was not eager to embrace open discussion and broad participation in matters of public policy, and viewed WSP's workshops as direct threats to its legitimacy. Still, despite the sometimes turbulent relations between the administration and WSP in late 1998 and much of 1999, the project did have a positive influence on the administration in several respects.

First, it should be stressed that the conflict between WSP and the new Puntland administration was inevitable; WSP's work was simply antithetical to the government's interests, and the WSP team cannot reasonably be faulted for taking any actions which could be construed as having unnecessarily provoked the Puntland leadership. The main source of conflict was the convening of the workshops themselves, which dealt with social services and other public policy matters the administration deemed its exclusive prerogative. The administration considered even discussions of regional problems a form of criticism and subversion. It also found the concentration of intellectuals and civil society members in WSP's deliberations to be threatening. The most threatening situation of all was the hiring of resource persons by WSP in each sector to assist in its workshops. One local newspaper reviewed WSP's roster of resource persons, compared them to the government ministers, and concluded that WSP's "shadow government" was superior in quality. For the government, this appeared to be a direct provocation. On several occasions the Puntland leadership considered shutting the WSP project down; the WSP team had to go to great lengths to convince the administration not to expel the project, and it is a testimony to the diplomatic skills of the project leadership that WSP was able to see the project through to its conclusion.

Short of expelling WSP, the administration's reaction to WSP's workshops was to treat them as inconsequential by not sending top officials to the proceedings. As it happened, though, the administration included some highly-skilled professionals who were more supportive of WSP's initiative and who attended the workshops. These "sympathizers" were generally regarded as intellectuals whom the government could not do without. Their presence enriched some of the workshops, but was not enough to influence the administration directly.

Instead, the government appears to have been influenced by WSP indirectly, especially through the published sectoral reports. Those reports have become the baseline studies for planning in a number of ministries, serving as a point of departure in administration discussions with donors. This has occurred mainly by default – the administration lacks the capacity and the interest to produce such reports itself, but needs to have such documents in order to proceed with development projects. Discussions with parliamentarians in the Puntland government also revealed that the WSP documents have served as important sources of evidence and argumentation in their sessions as well.

One of the legacies that WSP hoped to bequeath the Puntland community and administration was a local research institute which could institutionalize the strengthened capacity of local communities to conduct research on their reconstruction and development challenges. It would in principle be self-sustaining financially by securing contracts for research from aid agencies or from local interests. This "successor arrangement" was enshrined in the Puntland Development Research Committee, or PDRC. In contrast to past practices, in which such successor bodies were autonomous from state control, in Puntland WSP acceded to a plan which placed the PDRC in a semi-autonomous, affiliated status to the administration. As part of this arrangement, the Puntland government allocated to WSP a compound (an old vehicle repair compound in need of a major clean-up and building campaign).

Not all observers were pleased with the fact that the PDRC was linked to the government; some felt that such a body needed full autonomy as a local NGO. But this concern is probably moot, since early indicators suggest that the PDRC does not appear to have strong prospects for continuation once WSP support for it runs dry. As of January 2000, it was still in the process of searching for a research director and trained staff, and the interim director did not intend to stay on indefinitely. The WSP researchers, who possessed the training and who would have been logical heirs to such positions, had been released from their contracts by WSP and were unlikely candidates. Lacking strong research capacities or immediate prospects to take on external contracts, the PDRC does not appear at all sustainable. Its possible failure is viewed by most observers both inside and outside of WSP as a setback, but not a failure for WSP. To be sure, some institutionalization of a local research capacity developed by WSP would have given the project tangible long-term impact. But conditions are simply not good in Puntland for such an organization to sustain itself, even without the numerous problems encountered by the PDRC. WSP appears to have already learned from this experience by working in Somaliland at the outset through a local research NGO, thereby insuring that a successor body would be in place there.

Impact on External Actors

Project impact on external actors was a stated disappointment for WSP. The conventional wisdom both inside WSP and in the Puntland community was that the external agencies were disinterested. The 1998 WSP interim report had already identified this problem:

“The relative silence of international actors based in the region has caused disappointment and concern for WSP, because it seems to run counter to the idea that gave life to WSP: external/internal actor interaction in the service of rehabilitation and development” (Doornbos1998:31).

Local voices echoed this view throughout the course of this evaluation. While there were numerous aid personnel who were very enthusiastic about WSP, international agencies as a whole were viewed as having infrequently attended WSP workshops, and has having often badmouthed the project privately.

A quick cataloging of the criticism levied by personnel from international development agencies and collected in this evaluation spans a wide spectrum. They included charges that WSP’s participatory approach was really just “window dressing” for preconceived conclusions; that the PAR method is too academic and faddish; that WSP doesn’t “do anything” (ie, isn’t an implementing agency delivering actual services); that their agency didn’t have time to attend so many meetings; that their agency didn’t have the resources to employ such a time-consuming methodology; that WSP was too idealistic and unrealistic in its grass-roots approach; that WSP was not grass-roots enough; that WSP was too close to the Puntland administration; or that WSP was too critical of the Puntland administration. There was, in short, something about WSP to dislike for almost every political preference around, if one was determined to dislike it. And since many of the aid agencies viewed WSP’s main purpose to be convening groups of Somalis together to criticize aid agencies, it is not surprising that they were less than warm to the idea. But this was all very much a reflection of the poisoned relations within the aid community which WSP stepped into in the mid to late 1990s in Somalia, and did not differ substantially from any other pattern of backbiting which NGOs and agencies routinely engaged in during that period.

The fact that WSP’s team essentially gave up on the external aid agencies after a time and focused energy almost exclusively on the internal discussions taking place in Puntland was also seen as a sure sign that this component of the WSP mission had failed.

Yet this evaluation finds that WSP’s conclusion that it did not have an impact on external actors to be premature and overly pessimistic. First, WSP never lost the attention and support of donors, who have followed the project closely and with an eye toward applying lessons learned from Puntland to other aid projects. Indeed, the donor community appears to be the single most conscientious consumer of WSP’s research products and the most interested external party regarding the political impact of WSP’s work in Puntland. Inasmuch as donors have more influence in shaping project design than field officers for international NGOs, this is a very important distinction to draw.

Second, whether it was intended to serve this purpose or not, WSP was perceived by other aid agencies to be a bellweather of donor preferences for aid project design. Though they

may not have been openly enthusiastic during the actual WSP project in Puntland, many aid agencies are now quietly adopting the practice of extensive local consultations on proposed projects, and WSP-style workshops have increasingly become the norm in Puntland. Some skeptics argue that this is just window-dressing, and there may be truth in that, but that fact remains that aid agencies appear to have been paying much closer attention to WSP than was previously believed.

Third, the EU-Somalia Unit, which was hostile to the WSP approach in 1997-98, has also revised its approach to include WSP-like consultations in the field. It was beyond the purview of this evaluation to assess the extent of this shift in practice by the EU, but it was notable that such a shift has in fact occurred and is publicly acknowledged by EU officials.

Part of WSP's quiet success in terms of impact on external actors was due to the quality of the research products it generated, the commitment and quality of its team, and the palpable enthusiasm that so many residents of Puntland had for the project.

Still, there can be no doubt that important opportunities were lost regarding external aid agencies. The failure to engage the external actors in ongoing dialogue with Puntland civil society and administration was a missed opportunity, and the reluctance of the aid agencies to actively support the WSP research hurt the quality of the documents (as discussed below).

One of the most difficult internal debates within WSP had to do with its mission to the external aid actors. On the one hand, the WSP team in Nairobi and Puntland expressed increasingly strong views that efforts to reach the aid agencies bore no fruit and were a waste of time, while a focus on fostering local dialogue inside Somalia was a vital task and perhaps a necessary first step before local communities were in a position to engage in dialogue with the external actors. On the other hand, the Geneva office was more committed to the idea that a central mission of the project remained improving the quality of external assistance, even if that appeared to be an uphill battle. The current proposal to employ a full-time liaison officer in Nairobi to handle relations with and service to external aid agencies is a reflection of this enduring concern.

Assessment of Research Products

Though WSP's main goal is process-oriented, not product, the project did generate a number of important tangible products – namely, a series of reports and studies. Specifically, the collection of reports produced included three regional notes; a zonal (Puntland) note; 13 sectoral workshop discussion papers; and five major “entry point” studies of priority development concerns. Collectively, these studies form the basis of the WSP “library” of participatory action research generated in Puntland, a written legacy of the PAR process and workshops.

In most of WSP's planning and strategic documents, the research products themselves do not assume a central role. Of greater importance than the specific documents is the process by which the documents were produced; the improvement of local capacity to conduct participatory action research; and the improvement of dialogue between external and internal stakeholders in

post-conflict rehabilitation. Yet this evaluation found that many observers – residents of Puntland, external actors, and staff members of WSP itself – placed great emphasis on the research products themselves as a major “output” of the project. Hence this evaluation includes a brief assessment of the documents as stand-alone outputs (apart from their intrinsic value as vehicles for community dialogue).

Regional Notes. Work on the research papers clearly absorbed most of the energies of the project members over the course of the two year project. Though the resulting research products were of generally high quality and are accorded high value by internal and external users, they appear to have commanded a disproportionate amount of energy in comparison to the workshops, which are universally agreed to have been the most important WSP success in Puntland despite having been hurriedly assembled in the final months of 1998. The clearest case of a disjoint between resources expended and impact of output occurred with the three “regional notes.” These three studies are perhaps the weakest in quality of all the WSP documents, reflect the least amount of participatory action research methodology, and have made the least impact, yet they tied up an entire year of the project’s brief lifespan. Their generally weak or uneven quality as drafts forced the Nairobi office to divert much of its attention to revising the reports. Even with the Nairobi’s editorial intervention, the regional notes suffer from a tendency to be more descriptive than analytic, from a notable lack of hard data on such key issues as customs revenues and other points of departure for discussing local development needs and capacities, and from weak to non-existent references to primary sources of necessary data. As a result, they were not able to play the role of an informative “snapshot” of the region on which to base community discussions of rebuilding priorities.

In retrospect, the regional notes were a relatively poor investment of time and resources; the project team and the Puntland community would have been better served by a more abbreviated period committed to this phase of the project.

Zonal Note. The zonal note, by contrast, is viewed as a more important baseline data document, of use to both internal but especially external actors. No comparable document existed until then to survey the northeast regions; the only somewhat redundant research document is one commissioned by UNDOS by Bernhard Helander on local administrative structures (Helander 1998a). The zonal note is based on the data produced by the regional notes, and hence suffers from the same shortage of essential data that weakens the regional notes. However, the zonal note possesses much more persuasive analysis; it does a much better job of providing a “snapshot” of the region on which to base rebuilding priorities. Indeed, it stands as one of the strongest analyses of internal Somali politics and economics produced since 1990. Its political analysis of the Northeast is particularly outstanding. External actors emphasized the value of the zonal note as an aid in their understanding of the Northeast.

There are only two criticisms of note regarding the zonal note. The first is that it was not really the product of a PAR methodology, but was mainly written and edited by the Nairobi office. It did base some of its analysis on the regional notes, which were (in varying degrees) the product of at least some local consultation, but it is clear that “ownership” of the zonal note document is not in the hands of the Puntland researchers or working groups. Second, the zonal

note fails to provide some data which this observer considers essential material on which to base a community discussion of development priority needs and actions. First and foremost, the working groups would have been well-served by access to customs revenue figures, which constitute the main (virtually the only) source of government revenue in Puntland/the Northeast. Knowing the range of an annual government budget would have been a very appropriate point of departure for what could be expected of their own administration in addressing development priority needs. The document would have been of even greater practical use to the workshop participants and would have grounded the workshops in (sobering) reality had that kind of readily available data been included.

It is understood that the WSP team was disappointed with the relative lack of cooperation it encountered from international aid agencies, some of which possessed this kind of hard data. Some of the blame for the shortage of hard data in the reports should be pointed at those agencies. For instance, data on the total amount of external assistance currently provided to the region would also seem to be an obvious core piece of information on which to base discussions, but aid agencies and some major donors refuse to reveal their budgets. These are, it is worth noting, often the same donors stressing the need for transparency in local government.

Workshop Discussion Papers. Workshop discussion papers were produced for each of the thirteen sectoral workshops held. They were intended to serve as a point of departure to catalyze discussion, framing the main issues, identifying the main problems, and outlining lead questions. They were thus not necessarily intended to have lasting value. Because the WSP national research team did not also possess adequate expertise in these sectors, most of the discussion papers were written or co-written by resource persons, residents known as specialists in these sectors.

Overall, these discussion papers served their purpose well; in some cases, exceptionally well. When problems did emerge, they tended to be of several different varieties. The most common problem was uneven quality. Some were brief, three page outlines; others were in-depth documents. The uneven quality of the discussion papers was a function of the fact that resource persons were brought on contract at short notice and without training, and so shared no common set of expectations of their work. In the end, the uneven quality of the discussion papers was not in and of itself a major problem; it simply meant that some workshops were able to more easily start their deliberations than others.

A more serious problem arose in cases wherein the discussion papers were produced by resource persons whose political or professional stature was so great that no one in the working groups felt comfortable challenging the discussion paper. A number of interviewees pointed out several workshops in which resource persons were so influential that participants were intimidated, and tended to passively accept the discussion paper as a virtual final report to be incorporated into one of the Entry Point papers. That, of course, defeated the whole purpose of the workshops and threw into question the level of local “ownership” of those proceedings.

Finally, there were a few instances in which participants perceived the discussion papers to be “leading” the workshops towards conclusions which the WSP team preferred. This is

always a potential danger of discussion papers; by framing the debate and identifying lead questions, they can assume an unintended authority. When the authors are associated with an external aid agency whose preferences are widely viewed by local observers as a bellweather for major donor preferences, this can skew results. That said, this dynamic appeared to be present in only a few of the workshops. In most instances, the workshops were by all accounts very much “locally owned.”

Sectoral “Entry Point” Papers. All interviewees, whether external or internal, concur that the written products with the most political impact and the most long-standing value are the five “Entry Point” Sectoral papers. These papers – *Transformation toward a Regulated Economy; Towards Social Integration of the Militias and Armed Youth; Opportunities for the Improvement of Essential Services – Primary Education, Health, and Water; Building from the Bottom: Basic Institutions of Local Governance; and The Role of Somali Women in post-Conflict Reconstruction* – have had a major impact on internal policy debates in Puntland, and on external actors’ perceptions of local preferences and needs. It is, of course, difficult to disentangle the impact of the papers and the processes which produced the papers. Nonetheless, the papers are outstanding, and to the extent that they reflect the quality of the workshop discussions which produced them, they serve as evidence of the excellence of the workshops as well.

The primary aim of the Entry Point papers is to reflect the findings and consensus that emerged from each of the several workshops which were addressed to that theme. The documents are rich in summaries of important discussions from the workshops. But they go far beyond merely recording the minutes of the meetings – instead, they are very much analytic documents, seeking to pull together the deliberations of the sectoral workshops into a coherent set of themes. They also include much more extensive data collection than was the case with the regional and zonal notes.

The drafting of each Entry Point paper was divided up among the three national researchers, with Adam Bihi taking on the writing of a fourth (the social service paper) and WSP consultant Faisa Warsame drafting the gender paper, the only paper which was not sectoral in nature. Inevitably, individuals writing the draft had a hand in emphasizing some points over others, and interpreting what constituted consensus. The drafts were all approved by the Project Working Group, which was meant to insure that final conclusions reflected the views of Puntland residents, not the WSP team. But concerns were again raised at this stage of the process that the Project Working Group was, to some extent, prone to defer to WSP, so that some external consumers of the reports asked aloud to what extent the reports reflected local views and to what extent were they WSP’s. This concern should not be overstated – in general, the reports appear to be very much a reflection of local perceptions and preferences. The main exception to this rule was the gender study, already discussed above, where all concur that the WSP writer of the draft document understood her role to be one of advocacy, so that the draft document reflected more her views than views expressed in the working group.

The other Entry Point paper which encountered unforeseen problems was the Social Services document. In this instance, the lead author, Adam Bihi, died in a car accident prior to the completion of the document, and his personal computer on which the draft was housed was

destroyed in the crash which took his life. The WSP team in Nairobi was forced to piece together the notes and cassettes from the workshops in order to complete the document. That obviously had an affect on that particular paper.

One of the many strengths of these Entry Point papers is their long shelf life. The priority issues they explore, and the local views they reflect, will be of use for at least another five to ten years, unlike the zonal and regional notes, which are intended as “snapshots” and are relatively perishable as a result. From a broader historical point of view, I believe that these documents will stand among the most important written materials published on Somalia in the 1990s. There are very few comparable documents which provide such a revealing and insightful glimpse into local politics and deliberations in the collapsed state of Somalia.

It was frequently observed by interviewees that the reports themselves tend to be of greater value in Nairobi and among aid agencies than inside Puntland, where the workshops which produced the reports are viewed as having been more influential. For external readers, the papers are an unprecedented window into the deliberations of Puntland community leaders grappling with the multi-dimensional problems facing them; anyone who reads them should come away with a heightened respect for the sophistication and nuanced reasoning of Puntland’s civil leadership.

Broader Observations About the WSP-Puntland Experience

Stepping back from the specific aspects of the WSP project in Puntland, a number of more general observations and lessons learned are worth highlighting. Most of these are reflections on how the Puntland experience compares to the objectives and principles laid down in WSP’s global documents and project statements.

Multiple objectives, multiple visions of WSP. WSP in Puntland had multiple objectives, including (1) improving understanding of post-conflict needs; (2) improving external and internal actor dialogue on those needs; building local capacity to conduct research on their own needs; (3) promoting the participatory action research method as a vehicle for democratizing development and empowering local communities; (4) strengthening the capacity of both local government and civil society to address rebuilding challenges. Some of these objectives are quite distinct from one another. Indeed, in the case of Puntland, the objectives could at times seem to be working at cross-purposes, though this did not need to be the case. Importantly, different actors and individuals tended to gravitate towards the goal or goals they were most interested in.

As a result, observers and participants did not share a common view of what WSP’s most important objectives were. Everyone looked into the WSP “looking glass” and saw something different. At times it seemed that interviewees were discussing separate projects. For instance, some donors stressed the importance of the research documents, while others were interested in the political impact of the process of dialogue that WSP was initiating in Puntland, while still

others emphasized the need for “lessons learned” to help them assess other projects they fund. Even within the WSP team, there were very different visions of the project, giving the project a split personality. In Geneva, the paramount concern was the objective of serving the donor and aid agency community with lessons learned, while in the field the team had an almost exclusive commitment to the “nationalization” of the project and the importance of fostering a local, internal dialogue.

This is not, it should be stressed, necessarily a bad thing. In some ways, the multiple objectives and differences of emphasis produced a healthy, creative tension in the project. But it could at times create confusion and conflict as well.

Neutrality versus advocacy. One aspect of WSP’s work that never appeared clear to participants and observers, and which even produced contradictory responses within the WSP team, was whether WSP was envisioned as a neutral body committed only to produce a “public space” for dialogue, or whether it was an advocacy group. In its global documents, WSP stresses neutrality. “In each country,” notes one such report, “the local team would promote and mediate dialogue among the main actors involved in post-conflict rebuilding, through regular meetings in a neutral forum” (Stiefel 1999:7). Yet the WSP team itself did not view itself as neutral; it was in fact committed to certain principles and practices, and made no apologies about that. The most overt case of advocacy over neutrality occurred with the gender workshop and paper; there, the WSP consultant made it clear that her role was one of advocacy. But others in the team shared similar inclinations.

The problem in this case is with the assertion of neutrality in the global documents, which is in some respects misleading and unachievable. It is certainly true, as WSP contends, that “problems of relationships between people and institutions are compounded by the lack of neutral space in which they can meet and talk” (Stiefel 1999: 14); and WSP’s attempts to create such a space was by all accounts a very important opportunity seized upon by the Puntland community. Yet, as all concurred (both inside and outside the WSP team), the very process WSP set in motion was anything but neutral, and was not in any way perceived as neutral locally. Creating space for broad-based dialogue had real political implications locally, creating winners and losers, benefiting some groups and threatening others. In the case of Puntland, the workshops posed a threat to the Puntland administration and empowered intellectuals and other civil society leaders. Since the main political power struggle at the time pitted ex-military against the civil society and intellectuals, no one in Puntland laboured under the illusion that the WSP project was, or could possibly be, neutral. WSP itself recognizes this reality, when it argues that “in such a context no problem, solution or policy can ever be purely ‘technical’; inevitably they will have an impact on or be perceived in terms of relationships and power” (Stiefel 1999:15).

The challenge for WSP, and by extension for all aid projects, is to balance the conviction that “solutions cannot be imported” with a commitment to certain principles and practices – such as “inclusion, participation, and consultation” -- which they believe are universal. The first step in this balancing act may be to recognize this tension explicitly in project documents rather than to gloss over it.

The fact that this tension is not recognized in WSP's global documents opens WSP up to the charge that it is serving as a sort of democratic "trojan horse" – i.e., selling itself to governments in post-war societies as a neutral exercise when in fact it is intrinsically and intensely political in nature, promotes democratic expansion of political consultation beyond what has occurred before, and opens up the door to political processes which invariably threaten local powers. The fact that local authorities in Puntland initially embraced the project only to resist it later – and the fact that this same pattern of deteriorating relations between WSP and governments occurred in its other projects – is evidence that WSP is either not explaining itself accurately to host governments or that host governments are consistently naïve in their expectations about the process.

The Principle of Consensus. The WSP workshops were premised on the principle of consensus; that is, people with differing views could work out an acceptable compromise in the lengthy WSP consultations, and that the project documents would reflect those consensus views. WSP global documents very much share this view. "By providing a neutral space for dialogue and communication," notes one report, "PAR can generally contribute to building consensus and to promoting a democratic political culture" (Stiefel 1999: 37). For some issues, consensus is both desirable and achievable. But in other cases, the principle is untenable; instead, the metaphor of "choice" is more appropriate. WSP's work in Puntland underscored the point. In a political context with a fairly robust presence of al-Ittihad members, who hold that sharia law is the only legitimate basis for governing, the possibilities for consensus with those holding pluralistic, secular views are remote. Even on more mundane levels, public policy matters ultimately involve difficult choices on where to invest very scarce resources, which is much more likely to produce some winners and losers than a consensus. Obviously, wherever consensus can be achieved and promoted, it should be; but some of WSP's emphasis on consensus gives it an unrealistic air. It may be more appropriate to promote the workshops and consultations as an opportunity to find consensus where possible and to clarify tough choices when consensus is not attainable.

The Issue of Conflict. WSP's experience in Puntland is a useful vehicle for reconsidering the issue of conflict and development aid. For many years, aid agencies simply ignored the potential of their assistance to produce conflict. In recent years, sensitivity to the possibilities for aid to create unintended conflict has increased, culminating in the "do no harm" principle espoused by Mary B. Anderson (1999). WSP articulates these same concerns in its global documents: "Even if external assistance does not carry hidden agendas, it can unwittingly have a divisive, corrupting, or debilitating impact. Worse, it can fuel tensions remaining from the war and contribute to renewed conflict" (Stiefel 1999:20). The implication is that aid should serve to build peace, not produce conflict.

Yet when external aid supports a process of political dialogue over crucial public policy issues, as WSP has done, conflict is inevitable. Public policy choices produce conflict whether the community in question is emerging from years of war or enjoying uninterrupted peace and prosperity. As Lederach (1994) has argued, it is important not to characterize all conflict as bad or harmful; much of it can be essential and creative, under certain circumstances. The key is to insure that it is harnessed for good, not ill. In Puntland, even the open political conflict which

emerged from WSP's gender workshop was construed by some as ultimately a positive development, breaking open a taboo subject and forcing the community to come to terms with it.

But an externally supported process like WSP does have a special obligation to balance its project goals with respect for the 'do no harm' principle articulated by observers who have grappled with the relationship between aid and conflict (Anderson 199*). This is so for a simple reason – because any harm which comes of WSP-generated conflict is likely to be borne by local participants, not WSP. In its global documents, WSP almost entirely ignores the potential for its deliberations to harm local players; instead, it argues for the need to "take risks and learn to manage risk efficiently" (Stiefel 1999: 30). A more explicit recognition of the need to balance risk-taking with respect for the "do no harm" principle would be beneficial both for WSP and the many agencies seeking to learn lessons from its experiences.

Civil Society and Government. One of the great services that WSP has provided to aid agencies in recent years has been to remind them that rebuilding state capacity is central to post-war development. This was an important but, until very recently, revisionist message during a time when international NGOs operating in complex emergencies tended to work exclusively through local NGOs, when international assistance strategies idealized the role of civil society, and when many actors (with good reason) viewed the state as part of the problem rather than part of the solution, an institution to be evaded in the course of assisting local communities, not legitimized and strengthened. WSP's statements on this issue have been clear and compelling, and have helped to restore some balance in our understanding of the interplay between civil society and the state in rebuilding post-war societies. "The state," Stiefel argues, "plays a crucial role and must be strengthened and supported. It should not be weakened by the equally important effort to support and strengthen an emerging civil society. . . Perpetuating a negative image of the state greatly underestimates the crucial role that the state, and only the state, can and must play in the rebuilding process" (Stiefel 1999:19).

And yet, in the case of Puntland, WSP found that working to strengthen state capacity is easier said than done. Initially, no state existed at all, so WSP was free to work with a locally selected group of professionals and community leaders – i.e., civil society members. Then, when those civil society leaders gravitated toward convening a constitutional conference with the aim of establishing a transregional state authority, WSP provided then with a level of support which led some outsiders to charge that WSP had crossed the threshold between "strengthening" state capacity and "creating" it. This was in fact a dangerous moment for WSP, drawing it into a level of direct support to a state-building process far beyond anything envisioned in the project. Later, when the political power struggle over Puntland yielded an administration dominated by ex-military figures with little sympathy towards the civil society leaders with whom WSP had been working so closely, WSP's subsequent workshops gave the appearance of undermining rather than strengthening state capacity. It is ironic that Puntland officials charged WSP of weakening and subverting their authority, given the fact that WSP's own mandate is to try to strengthen governance capacity. WSP ended up traveling full circle in its relationship with the state in Puntland.

WSP's experience highlights a problem which is clearly worthy of more consideration –

namely, the extent to which it is possible to promote both civil society and state capacity at the same time in a post-conflict environment wherein power is very diffused and contested. In such a case, small advantages (legitimacy accrued through links to external actors; patronage, jobs, and contracts accrued via control over access to an external actor) can have a magnified impact on local power struggles. For external actors the dilemma is clear. Support provided to local NGOs and civil society on the grounds that the state is weak creates a self-fulfilling prophecy; but aid to strengthen a state which is predatory or incompetent risks wasting funds and reinforcing destructive political habits. Meanwhile, both state actors and civil society leaders tend to view external aid, and their own political power struggles, as zero-sum, not positive-sum, games. WSP's general documents (WSP 1999; Kane 1999; Steifel 1999) and its reporting on Somalia (Doornbos 1999) all recognize this tension in different ways.

Put another way, we know that a stable and development polity is one which enjoys both a strong and capable state and a strong and vibrant civil society. But in post-conflict societies where both the state and civil society are weak, and where state and civil society are rivals, not partners, how best to strengthen both while also helping to convince them that both are essential to political development? Up to this point, development agencies have not accorded this issue the time and consideration it merits; they either presume the two can be assisted simultaneously with no conflicts, or slip into the role of advocate of either civil society or the state. WSP is in a better position to explore this issue further than any other external project or agency.

Local solutions versus comparative public policy. Throughout the WSP-Puntland experience, great emphasis was placed on allowing local communities the time to come to terms with their own problems and identify their own solutions. WSP's global documents support the view that solutions cannot be imported; as Steifel notes, "Local solutions and responses to rebuilding challenges are often more effective, cheaper, and more sustainable. In addition, they contribute to restoring dignity, confidence, and faith in local capacities to cope" (Stiefel 1999:16). In some ways, this logic is impeccable. Yet a case can also be made that local communities that have survived the uniquely destructive aspects of complex emergencies and state collapse, such as has occurred in Somalia, are sailing in uncharted waters, and it is unreasonable in to ask them to work in isolation. Their traditional mechanisms were never intended to cope with crises of such magnitude; their professional class has no point of reference for dealing with these crises, either. These are fundamentally new challenges both for international agencies and local communities. Yet while the international agencies have the benefit of learning from comparative analysis of numerous cases (including WSP's comparative work), local communities have no such access to comparative studies and lessons learned. It is not clear why they should be expected to reinvent the wheel if other communities have devised innovation for overcoming these rebuilding problems. In other words, the principle of "local solutions to local problems" should be tempered by equal consideration given to lessons learned from other communities in comparable situations – lessons which only external actors may be in a position to know and transmit. This means that in some instances, it may be accurate to conclude that external agencies know things that local communities cannot; that some public policies may constitute top priorities regardless of whether a local community concurs. The process should be one of respectful dialogue between local players – who know their own situation far better than anyone else – and external actors, who bring comparative expertise.

In Puntland, the only local actors who gained any exposure to comparative analysis were the WSP research team, when it attended the WSP meeting in Addis Ababa and learned from the WSP teams from Eritrea, Guatemala, and Mozambique. But few of those cases were comparable to Somalia. By contrast, a UN or NGO team with recent experience in Rwanda, Liberia, or southern Sudan may be in a better position to suggest appropriate courses of action than local communities. Of course, WSP's intention was very much to combine the comparative and technical expertise of external agencies with local expertise on their own unique circumstances; when the external agencies became minor participants, the burden fell almost entirely on local leaders to devise solutions. External actors might be enticed to participate in the future if greater emphasis is placed on the value of what they would bring to the table.

Local ownership of the process. The WSP team and WSP interim reports all place great emphasis on the extent to which the Puntland process became quickly “nationalized” and locals quickly assumed full ownership of the workshops. The worries expressed by WSP have been that this level of localization of the process came at the expense of co-ownership by external actors, who became marginalized. For the Geneva office, this was a source of concern; for the field team, this was a source of some pride, in that very few external projects in Somalia ever enjoyed such intense support and ownership locally.

There is a third interpretation, though, which was articulated both by some Puntland participants and by some external agency representatives in Nairobi and Puntland; namely, that the process was not as nationalized as WSP believed, but that the external actor casting its influence on the process was the WSP itself. This argument held that civil society leaders in Puntland picked up cues from WSP as to what the workshops ought to produce, and, to maximize the possibility of a reward (i.e., release of foreign aid) they “told WSP what it wanted to hear.” One local participant explained it so: “There are some people here who present themselves to the rest of us as experts on the aid agencies. They said that if this is to be successful, for it get funding, we need to request to have a gender theme – that is what WSP wants. The resource persons and others who wanted to improve the image of WSP said that even small project proposals now must mention gender or they won't get funding.”

There is certainly an element of truth to the claim that local populations tend to anticipate what the aid agency (and donors) want to hear, just as students will sometimes provide answers they think the teacher is looking for rather than their own. WSP was not immune to this problem in Puntland, especially since it involved itself in preparatory documents (the discussion papers) which could easily be seen as “leading” the process toward a predetermined conclusion. The zonal report was also mainly drafted by the Nairobi office and had few Puntland fingerprints on it. For the bulk of the workshops and reports, however, the level of local ownership is not in question.

The role of the WSP documents. Aid agency representative interviewed in the course of this evaluation frequently raised an interesting question regarding their consumption of the sectoral “entry point” documents. Specifically, they wondered if these documents were intended to serve as an example of the kind of consultative process WSP hoped and expected aid agencies

would embrace; or if instead the reports substituted for additional consultation, since they so fully captured the public's views of development needs. In practice, aid agencies appear to be splitting the difference, engaging in least perfunctory (and sometimes substantive) workshop-style consultations while also making full use of the WSP documents. But this is a "user" issue which could be clarified by WSP in the future.

Respect and Partnership. One of the most impressive aspects of the WSP-Puntland project was the level of mutual respect accorded between project members and the participants. Interviewees expressed a strong sense of partnership with WSP. It was palpable in interviews, and is very rare in the Somali setting. That had to have played a part in the goodwill which the project enjoyed in the region.

The WSP culture of self-evaluation. As a final note to this section, it is worth emphasizing that WSP possesses a uniquely open and self-critical culture. Most of the shortcomings of the project were quickly pointed out to me by WSP staff themselves, or were already highlighted in WSP interim reports. In some cases, I found WSP's own internal critiques to be unwarranted or too harsh. This stands in dramatic contrast to most aid projects, and insures that WSP will quickly absorb lessons learned from one location to the next. This is readily apparent in the adaptations and adjustments WSP has already made as it opened its work in Somaliland.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The WSP-Puntland project succeeded in most but not all of its objectives. It enjoyed its most important success in catalyzing a dynamic local process of consultation and discussion, especially among intellectuals and civil society leadership. It also produced sectoral reports of very high and enduring quality. It was less successful in drawing the government and external agencies into the dialogues it sponsored, though there is growing evidence that the Puntland administration has subsequently made growing use of the research documents produced, and that external agencies are both using the research reports and moving to adopt the consultative approach WSP advocated. The most unambiguous disappointment has been the failure of the “successor body,” the PDRC, to show signs of survivability and sustainability. But this is in many respects only a disappointment, not a failure.

All indications suggest that the process WSP helped to support in Puntland will constitute a lasting legacy in Puntland. For most observers, the catalyzing of open and informed dialogue on public policy issues stands as the most important of the WSP objectives. Full appreciation of the impact WSP may have had on this score will only be seen in years to come.

While the WSP approach is not without its imperfections, this external evaluator completed the evaluation of WSP-Puntland with a much greater enthusiasm for the approach than he had at the outset. WSP’s methodology will clearly need to be simplified and adapted, but it constitutes a very promising approach in post-conflict areas. Most of its principles are self-evident and compelling, and in practice the project produced a very positive response from local communities. There is every reason to continue to explore and refine this method in other war-torn areas.

The Puntland project yielded a range of specific lessons learned and recommendations at both the theoretical and operational level. Some of these appear in the body of the paper; below, the most important are summarized:

- The successes which WSP achieved were primarily the result of a very strong, talented, and dedicated team. Without such a strong team, it is unlikely the project would have survived the many difficult political challenges it faced in Puntland. Hiring a top-level team is paramount.
- Match the composition of the research team with the types of sectoral expertise WSP expects to need, rather than focusing on regional or ethnic balance. At the same time, anticipate issues such as gender and ethnic minority representation on the research team at the outset so that problematic remedial steps can be avoided. When regional, ethnic, or gender balance cannot be achieved without compromising sectoral expertise, it may be necessary to expand the size of the research team to accommodate both needs.
- Structure the project in ways which maximize collaborative work and accountability on the team.
- Do not allow the early phases of the project, especially the country or regional notes, to delay the more valuable sectoral workshops and reports.

- Provide more training to the national research team, and some short training to resources persons and others brought on for short-term assistance.
- Reach out to international actors early and often, appealing at the individual level if necessary to overcome institutional rivalries or fears. As part of this effort, WSP may want to reduce the attention it devotes to shortcomings in external aid delivery. In general, these shortcomings are now well-known; repeating them in every setting will provide little new knowledge and may well drive off potentially valuable international aid partners.
- Reach out to local authorities early and often, appealing at the individual level if necessary to overcome institutional rivalries or fears. WSP's ability to do this in Puntland was impressive given the magnitude of the political tensions it faced.
- Insure that key data – especially estimates of government revenues and external assistance – is provided to working group members so that their discussions of provision of social services and other public goods are based on firm budgetary grounds. The PAR method is only as good as the information participants have at their disposal – they too are subject to the “garbage in, garbage out” axiom.
- Anticipate heavy administrative burdens and hire administrative officers at the outset, especially in difficult and complex working environments like Somalia.
- Continue to exercise caution in opening new WSP projects in Somalia, to insure that the proper groundwork is done at the outset. WSP-Puntland was an outstanding example of this.
- Keep explanations of the PAR methodology simple and accessible to the non-specialist, and reduce use of jargon.
- To maximize local ownership, avoid as much as possible any action or statement which local participants can construe as “leading” them to conclusions preferred by WSP.
- Do not over-emphasize the importance of the successor body as an indicator of success; in very poor war-torn societies, it may simply not be feasible for such institutions to survive.
- Explore with local communities and external actors how to manage the need simultaneously to strengthen civil society and local government. This could be a major contribution of WSP to aid agencies operating in post-conflict settings if explored more systematically.
- Explore new ways to provide comparative data and examples from one war-torn society to another. Enabling communities to learn from one another is likely to pay off in dividends and avoids the problem of each community having to “reinvent the wheel.”
- While seeking to build consensus whenever possible, focus workshops as well on points where scarce resources and high demands require hard and informed choices to be made, some of which will produce conflict and dissent rather than consensus.
- Continue to cultivate a spirit of mutual respect and partnership between project and local community leaders. Local civic leaders deserve it, and respond positively to it, as WSP has shown so effectively in Puntland.

Individuals Interviewed

In Puntland:

Said Aden Mohamed “Fiirdis,” OTP Puntland Office Director; and WSP workshop participant
Abdulkadir “Waays,” Research Assistant and Communications Officer, WSP-Puntland
Salad Dahir, Programme Administrator, WSP-Puntland
Ali Farah, National Programme Administrator for PERSGA; and WSP workshop participant
Abdullahi Musa Yusuf “Nkrumah,” former Frankincense Trade Director; and WSP Economic
Rebuilding Working Group member
Mohamed Omar Aset, businessman; and WSP workshop participant
Ahmed Abba Ahmed, WSP Researcher (Bari Region)
Yusuf Adami, businessman; and WSP workshop participant
Abdullahi Sheikh, Puntland Office Director, Life and Peace Institute
Abdisalam Ali Farah, WSP Researcher (North Mudug Region)
Abdigafar H. Mahamoud, WSP Researcher (Nugal region)
Abdullahi Abdulle Osman “Shuka” Former Minister of Education (Somalia); WSP Resource
Person for Education; and Interim Director of the PDRC
Ali Mahamed Abdigir, Director of Puntland Ministry of Commerce and Industry; and WSP
workshop participant
Eng. Aidarus Osman Yusuf Ali “Kenadiid,” Sultan; Chairman, Board of Directors, North East
Somalia Highway Authority (NESHA); and WSP workshop participant
Egag Hussein Abukar, NESHA; and WSP workshop participant
Omar Haji Dierie, National Professional Project Personnel, SRP-Bosaso Area Office
Eng. Mohamed Abdi Kulmiye, Clan elder; Vice-Minister of Puntland Public Works and
Transport; and WSP Social Services Working Group member
Francis McCaffrey, Project Coordinator, UNESCO-Nugal Region
Henry Ndede, Education Advisor, UNESCO-Nugal Region
Saida Hersi Egal, Women’s Programme Coordinator, Diakonia-Nugal
Ismail Haji Warsame, Chief of Cabinet, Office of the President
Hawa Aden, Coordinator, Somali Community Development Centre, Galkayo
Asha Gele, Parliamentarian, Galkayo
Mohamed Abdullahi, Educator, Galkayo
Warsame Mohamed Iye, clan elder, Galkayo
Ahmed Aden Dheere, judicial official, Galkayo
Dr. Mohamed Ali Biire, WSP Resource Person; and Director of Galkayo General Hospital
Dr. Said Al-Numeiri, Resident Program Officer, UNICEF-Bosasso
Dr. Seifudin Maloo, Veterinary Program Coordinator, UNA-Bosasso

In Nairobi and Geneva

Randolph Kent, Resident Representative, UNDP-Somalia
Philippe Gourdin, UNCU-Somalia
Dr. Ahmed Fod'aade, President, Somali Red Crescent Society
Mohamed Abshir Waldo, Puntland Support Group member and WSP Resource Person
Michel del Buono, UNDOS
Gian Paolo Aloï, UNDOS
Henrik Jespersson, Danish Embassy/DANIDA
Dr. Ahmed Yusuf Farah, WSP Research Associate
Hussein Sayid Atto, UNDOS
Abdullahi Sheikh Ali, UNDOS
Faiza A. Warsame, WSP-Research Consultant
John Svensson, Life and Peace Institute
Walid Musa, EU-Somalia Unit
Matt Bryden, WSP Programme Coordinator
Ambassador Francesco Sciortino, Italian Special Representative to Somalia
Pat Johnson, FSAU
Ambassador David Stephen, Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia, UNPOS
Caroline Logan, USAID
Remmoldt *****, Somalia Rehabilitation Project, Bosasso
Ali Salad, Senior Programme Officer, UNDP
Abdirahman Osman Raghe, WSP Deputy Coordinator for Administration
Eva Johansson, Swedish International Development Aid (SIDA)
Matthias Steifel, Director of the WSP Transition Programme, Geneva
Agneta Johannsen, WSP *****
Oto Denes, WSP *****
Ambassador Mohamed Sahnoun, WSP *****
Lisa Mbele-Mbong, WSP *****

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