Land and Geospatial Administrators' Professional Training after War – A Case Study of Somalia

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SUMMARY

Behind the African continent's current political crises lies the hidden war for access to and control of landed productive resources. For Somalia's case, this "war" continues and will continue even after the contending factions reach a political settlement, because such resources represent the economic future for whichever regime or regimes that emerge victorious. This war has been characterized by an amorphous evolution of the land tenure system and massive displacement of Somalis from their land. This has left the society deeply at odds over the control, management and use of the landed resources, a situation that needs to be urgently reversed and normalized.

Given that force other than policy has defined legitimacy in resource access and use in Somalia, the transition from war to peace and the maintenance of peace thereafter highly depends on proper Land adjudication and administration and good governance. This can only be achieved by proper professional training of the war victims in aspects of land and spatial administration and management to technically and socially equip them to help their countrymen transit to and maintain peace.

This paper seeks to highlight the current efforts, techniques used and the challenges faced in training Land and spatial administrators after war, drawing from real life experience in Northwest Somalia (Somaliland), a break away state from the greater Somalia.

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1. BACKGROUND

Somalia is located on the east coast of Africa on and north of the Equator and, with Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti, is often referred to as the Horn of Africa. It comprises Italy's former Trust Territory of Somalia and the former British Protectorate of Somaliland (now seeking recognition as an independent state). Has an Area of about 637,657 square Kilometres (USDS 2005).

Since 1991 Somalia has experienced the complete collapse of its central government, death and displacement of at least two million people, and a brutal civil war that has destroyed much of the infrastructure and productive capacity. The international community has made and continues to make frantic efforts to stop the armed conflict. The international community's effort date as early as 1992 when United Nations Operations in Somalia (UNOSOM) was launched to as recent as 2004 when the Kenyan government on behalf of the international community helped the Somalia clan faction's leaders form a government.

The rejection of the Kenyan formed government at home after it spent 8 months in Nairobi and its resolve to settle in the little known Jowhar and not Mogadishu necessitates a reconsideration of the international community's understanding and approach to the resolution of the Somalia crisis. Whereas the affirmation of the explanation that the fragmentation into clans and polities was the major cause of the Somalia crisis couldn't be disputed, some fundamental questions remain unanswered.

Why did a country whose people shared a common language, religion and culture fragment so totally? Why have some regions of the country emerged from conflict, created an enclave of reconstruction and relative peace while some are at the core of conflict? A closer look at Somalia reveals the break of homogeneity of their society and the reason for continued strife in some regions to be scramble for landed resources and the highly amorphous land tenure evolution. The regions that enjoy relative peace are arid and largely occupied by the pastoral clans while the highly volatile regions lie in the most productive region in Somalia.

A close look at land tenure evolution in Somalia reveals a land tenure system that is as stratified as the country's history. It explosively evolved from pre-colonial to colonial to post independence and lastly into civil war.

The pre-colonial land tenure system was characterized by frequent conflicts between the pastoralists and the agricultural communities for water and pasture. During the colonial period the British and Italian colonial administrations recognized the agricultural value of Southern Somalia and in glowingly optimistic reports stressed its potential for a plantation economy

and export crop production. (Craven and Merryann 1989). They later expropriated large tracts of riverine land for banana plantations without compensation for local villagers. In Nothern Somalia the sense of complexity and infinite importance of the question of ownership of land compelled the colonial government in 1931 to issue a statement of land policy requring registration (Kittermaster, 1932). This seriously limited grazing land for the pastoralists and set them against agriculturalists and agropastoralists.

At independence, Somalia had four distinct legal systems; English Common Law, Italian law, Islamic sharia law and Somali customary law. The challenge therefore was to meld this diverse legal inheritance into one legal system, a challenge they never rose to summount resulting into constitutional disorder, conflict and collapse of the different land laws that had been in use in different clans.

Nine years after independence, a military coup brought Siad Barre to power. Its from then that serious ulceration of land tenure,land order, and clan peaceful coexistence occurred. Land and water rights, up to then, objects of contestation at the local level, became embedded in the state policies and programs. The mandatory *land law and title registration of 1975* nationalized all land and required all farmers to apply to the state for 50 years leasehold.Individuals turned back to their clans for protection after their parcels and pastures were expropriated by the state to constitute state farms without compensation.

Land tenure evolution in Somalia calls attention to the significance of land as a source of security and as an object of contention. As it is now, the society is deeply at odds over the control and use of land. Erecting a political framework over such a society without establishing mechanisms to be used by the government in registration of existing rights, solving disputes and establishing a cadastral sytems means that the conditions for renewed strife remain and peaceful productivity will again be subordinated to power politics. For Somalia, a substantial component of the restorative process must consist of introduction of secure tenure, mechanisms of resolution of land conflicts, land allocation, transparent land markets, land use planning and land taxation. However, with a professional generational gap created because of the long civil strife, and the older professional generation in diaspora, lack of human resource remains the biggest challenge. The most reasonable thing is to train young Somalis in land and geospatial administration .

2. CURRENT EFFORTS IN TRAINING LAND AND GEOSPATIAL ADMINISTRATORS IN SOMALIA

When the civil war stopped in 1991 almost all-public learning and training institutions had either been destroyed or seized by the militiamen, whilst some had become graveyards or camps for displaced persons. The war practically wiped out the whole educational system –all the educational materials were destroyed, doors and roofs were taken and the printed material lost.

The rebuilding of the Somalia system of education and institutions has depended upon the humanitarian aid from international Non Governmental Organizations (NGO). There are

several primary, secondary, tertiary colleges and three Universities- Amoud, Hargeisa and Mogadishu. Amoud and Hargeisa are in the self-declared state of Northwest Somalia; Somaliland, whereas Mogadishu is in the militia controlled capital city of the greater Somalia, none of the tertiary colleges is offering geospatial related courses.

Because of security issues in Mogadishu, technically, only two universities in Somalia are functional. All have various faculties/colleges sponsored by different international NGOs. Amoud has four colleges (UoA 2005), none of the four colleges offers training in geospatial sciences. The University of Hargeisa has seven faculties and two institutes (UoH, 2005); one of the institutes, The Institute of Soil and Land Surveying (ISLS) is currently offering a nine-month Diploma in Surveying and GIS. Somaliland Cadastral Surveys an international NGO registered in Somaliland and the United Kingdom established ISLS in 2004 and admitted 54 students in November 2004.

3. CHALLENGES IN TRAINING LAND AND GEOSPATIAL ADMINISTRATORS IN SOMALIA

Conflict has a devastating impact generally on learning and training systems yet these same systems are expected to make a significant contribution to rebuilding a shattered society at the time when they themselves are debilitated by the effects of conflict. In such situations where the numerous demands and expectations on already depressed systems outstrip their capacity and capability to deliver, a focused approach dictates that the challenges being faced be comprehensively addressed.

Training land and geospatial administrators in Somalia faces a wide range of challenges that could be classified as political, economical, institutional, social and technical.

3.1 Political Challenges

The obvious *political challenge* is the lack of a government or the existence of a very weak and donor dependent government that has no education policy in place to facilitate any form of training just after war or assure security of humanitarian staff willing to offer professional training. In post conflict countries like Somalia, one has to content with at least two other political challenges.

First is the unchangeable birthright of every Somali. Every Somali has a guarantee of collective support for life from his or her *Tol*. A *Tol* is a self-contained group of a genealogical lineage with its chosen elders who run the organization (Drysdale 2004). There are thousands of them, protecting the interests of their respective memberships. In Northwest Somalia where there exists a government, clan elders who are ideally the *Tol* representatives constitute the parliament. In constituting any group in class these presentations must be recognized. The author's first attempt to group a class of 54 based on their academic capability turned traumatic when it terribly failed and students demanded that groups be reconstituted as per their whims. In the first attempt, the author grouped students based on their English language skills with each group having students from both extremes to ensure

they depended on each other to understand what was taught in class. An elderly student trailed the author after class and politely but without any elaboration put it that he studies the Somali culture before doing any grouping. The author later learnt that the way out was to silently recognize *Tol*. This resulted in quite unbalanced groups some of course not having any student who could comprehend English let alone expressing him or herself.

Secondly, selecting and training of land administrators and surveyors after a war is a complex political issue. Land, even if it were not the bone of contention suddenly turns into a highly valued marketable commodity after war because usually the institutions that are supposed to regulate the land market are normally not in existence and the focus turns to students undergoing geospatial training. The authority in charge, be it government or "warlords" takes over all the productive land and the urban real estate in order to sustain networks of patronage and support. Needless to say in a country in which war was a result of a scramble for landed resources, politics and any land related issues become synonyms.

3.2 Economical Challenges

Lack of governments and lack of recognition of states where they exist after war means that the countries do not qualify for bilateral aid and leaves them only eligile for humanitarian assistance thus *economicaly* incapacitating them. Fragile security and the lack of substantial funding for long term projects have meant that emergency preparedness and response and not professional training programmes have remained a significant part of international assistance. For instance, ISLS idea though conceived in mid 2003, got started in November 2004 and the institute lacked a professional trainer for five months after it got started.

Geographicaly located in the vast, semi-arid African Savannah with undulating, rock strewn, pinkish soils with a very small portion within its borders lying between the Shebbele and the Jubba river, Somalia's agricultural production cannot sustain its population. Amidst the simmering poverty, parents have to choose between paying fees for their children in training institutions or buying food (primarily exported) for them. The institutions admitting these students end up in financial disasters because more often than not, the local staff have meagre salaries hardly paid on time and are not able to purchase teaching and office material and equipment.

3.3 Institutional Challenges

In a stateless case, the international assistance is not channelled through government institutions but directly to the international and local NGOs. These NGOs normally have varied philosophies and interests and implement very different kinds of development programmes from the vision and mission on which training institutions are normally founded resulting into *institutional challenges*/conflicts. Whereas ISLS was housed in the university of Hargeisa for example, the donor wanted to maintain no contact with the university administration. When the students discovered there were two centres of power; the university and the donor, they refused to pay fees and generally became too indisciplined and could

demand the change of curriculum anytime, refuse to partake ”hard” assignments and practicals.

NGOs sponsoring professional training in institutions are normally interested in making use of those students soon after they graduate. They therefore insist on professional and technical skills (some unorthodox) used by their teams in the field. Universites have their requirements developed and enshrined in the curriculum and examinations and mostly rightly insist on skills and the core subject's principles for theoretical and practical problem solving. Though already in an employer/employee contract (as a technical person in between the donor and university), one has their own conscience and professional ethics to deal with. Students unfortunately decide to be on the donors side because practicals are simple and involve very little reading and they also hope to cultivate a relationship with the prospective employer. The author was for instance overuled by the donor and students and had to use a compass to carry out a topographical survey and not the polar join computation with the calculator because that ”had never been used before in Somalia and was also hard to understand”.

3.4 Social Challenges

Conflict blunts, and subsequently destroy years of hard won economic and *social* development. For Somalia, this was almost not so for they went to war at independence, they therefore have socially evolved under war. The experience and psychological effects of war left them insecure, short tempered and suspicious of all the other clans and strangers. Apart from limiting the much needed interaction between students, important issues like tenure evolution, expropriation by the former governments, issues that must be taught and captured in cadastral studies send emotions high and introduces a lot of tension.

During war women vent for the family as men either hide or battle it out in the field. After war, women are highly protected and rarely send to public places including learning institutions. Women from enlightened families who seek admission in training institutions which more often have domineering men are segregated, highly domineered and are given not much chance in class. This complicates the geospatial trainings which are highly practical and require constant contact with machines and solution of problems.

3.5 Technical and Technological Challenges

Among the main drivers for change in geospatial information science is *technological* development. Unfortunately, being heavily depended on donor aid there are as many varieties of equipment as the donor agencies exist. This complicates the training process for two reasons. First, at this point in time the equipment are highly automated making the teaching of principles of mapping like angle measurement, distance measurement, coordinate computation not be taken seriously and yet given the state of affairs, the student's interaction with these pieces of equipment stops almost immediately the course ends because they cant afford such kinds of equipment on their own. Secondly because of varied manufacturers of the donated equipment, they come with different accuracies an issue that puts strain on accuracies that should be stressed on in post conflict geospatial management classes.

The *technical challenges* include lack of proper academic foundation by students before joining the training institutions. The neglect of primary and secondary education, which is typical of post conflict environments leads to huge numbers enroling in training institutions without the much needed communication, arithmetic and computer skills thus almost necessitating the prolonging of the course duration . In June 2005, the geospatial course run in ISLS had to be extended for an extra 4 months against the wishes of the students and their parents, leading to very poor student attitude and student-trainer relationship.

Top on the list why most countries end up in conflict is the collapse of the constitutional order. If peace is to be maintained the conflicting legal systems must be harmonised. Among the things they are expected to do, geospatial trainees in Somalia's case are suppossed to harmonise and formulate a land policy for their country after training. However, incases where there are multiple legal systems each for the competing militia, land law cannot be taught in the geospatial institutes after conflict without posing danger to the healing process.
Somalis like any other recent victims of war, today; are composed, thoughtful, deligent and resourceful, tomorrow; exitable, highly charged and wanting to be in control even where they have little or no technical ability at all sending the training process into complete confusion. For instance, the authors own personal and job security, he had to accept the curriculum to be changed thrice, the timetable to be modified several times to accommodate a fellow member of staff who needed an interpreter always to communicate with him leave alone expressing himself in a class.

3.6 Other Challenges

Other challenges include the narrowed-view of the geospatial discipline assumed by donors thus narrowing down the curriculum and excluding psychosocial support needed to help the students recover from stress and trauma experienced during conflict. The most affected spatial discipline by the narrow view of the donors is the invaluable interpretation and management tool; GIS. The author's effort to give students a broader understanding of GIS and its usefulness and application in post war situations found no favor with the donor who was seriously convinced there was no more GIS than Arcview 3.2 and so students had to be taken through the Arcview manual word by word by a member of the teaching staff.

4. PROPOSED TRAINING STRATEGY FOR LAND AND GEOSPATIAL ADMINISTRATORS IN SOMALIA

This section focuses not necessarily on the author's experience in tackling the above challenges but gives blanket approaches to solving the challenges, some, thought of long after the author had undergone the experience. Therefore not all solutions to the challenges encountered have been discussed. The training strategy can comprehensively be discussed under the administrative arrangement, curriculum development and the class organization.

4.1 Administrative Arrangements

Administrative arrangements should be well structured, coordinated and protocol created to facilitate the smooth running of the training institutions and to a larger extent the security of the staff (especially the international). To achieve this, first the donor and training institutions should put down these structures and diligently delegate responsibilities. This should however, be done long after the varied philosophies and development programs and interests of donor organizations have been agreeably integrated with the mission and visions of the training institutions.

At the training institution level, administrative student issues and student discipline issues need to be delegated to a person having a deep cultural understanding of the students. However technical and academic issues need to be delegated to international persons to avoid compromising the academic standards through examination cheating and favoritism based on clan.

4.2 Curriculum Development

Curriculum development requires cautious and sequential approach to ensure that whilst the focus is maintained on matters related to transiting and maintaining peace, the global drivers for the ever-evolving geospatial information discipline are not overshadowed.

The curriculum should be developed only after the development agenda of the donor agency has been integrated with the mission and vision of the university. This will allow for proper formulation of the curriculum, regulation of examinations and scheduling of the training.

The curriculum should include psychosocial aspects for purposes of healing past wounds, bridging courses to enable development of foundational knowledge needed to grasp the fundamental principles of the discipline. Needless to name the actual skills, managerial skills, and administrative skills required in the administration and management of geospatial information in post conflict situations.

4.3 Class Organisation

The quality of any trainees' output by institutions highly depends on the student-*class organization*. Though a complex issue in post conflict situations, the best way to teach given the huge numbers, few teachers and a better percentage of students lacking the much needed basic skills in arithmetic, foreign languages and computer skills is by grouping. Grouping should be as democratic as possible though logically crafted rules (possibly crafted with full participation of students) should guide students during the formation of their groups.

The mode of teaching should be purely tutorial to enable students depend on each other, learn to discuss, learn to harmoniously coexist and accommodate each others views. Each theoretical class should be followed by a practical lesson, all closely supervised to avoid incidences of student conflicts during either session.

5. CONCLUSION

The most important form of assistance after war is that that strengthen internal efforts to rebuild a more stable social, political and economic order. For Somalia, the paper has highlighted geospatial education as the crucial need in the restoration process. This paper has also highlighted the real life challenges facing the current efforts in training geospatial administrators. It suggests pragmatic solutions to these challenges ranging from administrative arrangements to the approach to developing the curriculum and finally to the way students should be organized in post conflict situations. The chance of success of geospatial training in Somalia will depend on the integration of the solutions suggested and other counter strategies to realities and complexities that may arise into the training strategy.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

William Kalande holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Surveying from the University of Nairobi (2003). He is an associate member of the Institution of Surveyors of Kenya (AISK). He worked in Kenya for a year with Ramani Communication as a Land Surveyor before he left to practice in Somalia. He was instrumental in the drawing of the curriculum of the Institute of Land, Soil and Water Surveying in the University of Hargeisa- Somaliland where he also worked as a lecturer. He also worked with the Somaliland Cadastral Surveys as a land surveyor, mainly settling land disputes, resettling Somalis returning as refugees and the

Internally Displaced Persons. His research interests are in the land tenure evolution in Africa and the modeling of viable post conflict land policies for the affected African Countries. Currently a Master of Science in Surveying student in the University of Nairobi, he is also working with the Ministry of Lands and Housing as a Surveyor.

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