

The Role of NGOs in Promoting Peace and Security in Somalia

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Abstract:

This article aims at investigating the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in promoting peace and security in Somalia, grounded in the theory of social capital, which provides the significance of social networks and community engagement in fostering peace. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study combined qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys, engaging 200 participants, including NGO staff, community leaders, and beneficiaries. The findings revealed that 90% of participants recognized NGOs' contributions to humanitarian aid, with a mean score of 4.50, while 85% acknowledged active NGO engagement in peace initiatives, reflected in a mean score of 4.25. Additionally, the study identified challenges such as security concerns (82%, mean 4.10) and limited funding (75%, mean 3.85) that NGOs must navigate to enhance their effectiveness. The conclusion emphasizes the importance of NGOs in enhancing stability in Somalia and provides the need for strategic recommendations, including strengthening partnerships with local stakeholders, increasing funding for peace initiatives, and enhancing capacity-building programs. Thus, it was recommended that Donors and international agencies should increase financial support for NGO-led peace initiatives to expand their reach and impact.

Key terms: *NGOs, peacebuilding, security, Somalia*

Introduction:

The role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in promoting peace and security has gained increasing recognition in conflict-affected regions, particularly in Somalia. Since the onset of civil conflict in the early 1990s, Somalia has faced numerous challenges, including political instability, violence, and humanitarian crises. The collapse of central governance led to a power vacuum, resulting in clan-based conflicts, widespread violence, and severe humanitarian needs. In this context, NGOs have emerged as vital actors, often stepping in to fill gaps left by

governmental and international agencies that struggle to operate effectively in such a volatile environment (Ahrens, 2013).

NGOs in Somalia have adopted an approach to address the complex issues affecting the country. Their strategies include providing immediate humanitarian aid, facilitating community dialogues, and engaging in development initiatives that promote long-term peace and stability. For instance, many NGOs focus on delivering essential services such as food aid, healthcare, and education, which are important for alleviating the immediate suffering of affected populations

(Kettani, 2016). By meeting these basic needs, NGOs not only save lives but also create a foundation for rebuilding trust within communities.

Furthermore, NGOs play a significant role in facilitating dialogue among conflicting parties. They often act as mediators, bringing together various clans and groups to foster understanding and cooperation. This dialogue is essential in a context where traditional conflict resolution mechanisms may have broken down (McNeely, 2002). Through workshops, community meetings, and peacebuilding initiatives, NGOs create platforms for discussion that encourage reconciliation and collaboration. These efforts help to mitigate tensions and promote social cohesion, which are vital for sustainable peace.

In addition to immediate interventions, NGOs also focus on capacity building within local communities. They work to empower individuals by providing training and resources that enhance local governance structures and promote civic engagement. By strengthening the skills and capacities of community members, NGOs enable them to take an active role in peacebuilding and decision-making processes (Putnam, 2000). This empowerment is important in fostering a sense of ownership over peace initiatives, ensuring that they are not only externally imposed but also locally driven.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform policymakers and practitioners about the effective practices employed by NGOs in peacebuilding efforts. By analyzing the relationship between NGO activities and community resilience, the study seeks to provide information on how these organizations can enhance their impact in Somalia and similar contexts. Understanding the successful strategies and challenges faced by NGOs can offer valuable lessons for future interventions in conflict-affected regions (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000).

NGOs in Somalia have become indispensable in promoting peace and security amid ongoing challenges. Their ability to provide humanitarian

assistance, facilitate dialogue, and empower communities positions them as key players in the quest for lasting stability. As Somalia continues to navigate its complex landscape, the information on gained from this study can guide the efforts of NGOs and other stakeholders in fostering a more peaceful and secure future for the nation.

Theoretical and Conceptual Reviews:

The study was grounded in the theory of social capital, which posits that social networks, relationships, and trust among individuals and communities play an important role in achieving collective goals, including peace and security. Social capital encompasses the norms and networks that facilitate collective action for mutual benefit. According to Putnam (2000), social capital enhances cooperation and collaboration, which are essential elements for effective conflict resolution and peacebuilding. In contexts of conflict, where trust is often eroded, the rebuilding of social networks becomes imperative. NGOs operate within this framework by fostering relationships that help communities to engage in dialogue, share resources, and work collaboratively towards common objectives. By emphasizing the importance of social ties, the theory of social capital provides a lens through which to understand the dynamics of peacebuilding efforts in Somalia.

The theory of social capital thus provides a foundational framework for understanding the role of NGOs in promoting peace and security in Somalia. It highlights the importance of building relationships and trust among community members as essential components of successful peace initiatives. By fostering social networks, NGOs can facilitate dialogue, empower local leaders, and enhance community resilience. The information on gained from this theoretical perspective underscore the necessity of incorporating social capital considerations into the design and implementation of peacebuilding programs.

Numerous empirical studies have showed the significance of social capital in conflict settings.

For instance, Woolcock and Narayan (2000) emphasized that communities with strong social ties are better equipped to manage conflicts and promote peace. Their research indicates that social capital not only facilitates cooperation but also enhances the resilience of communities facing adversity. This resilience is particularly important in environments like Somalia, where ongoing conflict and instability challenge the fabric of society. Similarly, McNeely (2002) found that NGOs that actively foster social capital through community engagement and dialogue significantly enhance local capacities for peace. By working to build trust and foster communication, these organizations empower communities to take ownership of their peacebuilding processes.

In Somalia, NGOs have effectively utilized social capital to build trust and cooperation among diverse groups. Research by Ahrens (2013) illustrated how NGOs facilitated inter-clan dialogues, which were instrumental in reducing tensions and promoting collaboration in conflict-prone areas. These dialogues allowed different clans to express their grievances and concerns in a safe environment, leading to the development of mutual understanding and respect. The success of these initiatives provides the importance of fostering social capital as a means to create a conducive atmosphere for peace. By bridging divides and encouraging dialogue, NGOs not only address immediate conflicts but also lay the groundwork for long-term stability.

Furthermore, the work of Kettani (2016) demonstrated that NGOs engaging local leaders and community members in peacebuilding initiatives were more successful in achieving sustainable outcomes. This engagement is critical because local leaders often possess the trust and respect of their communities, making them influential figures in peace processes. By involving these leaders, NGOs can leverage existing social networks to promote collective action towards peace. This approach not only enhances the effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts but also ensures that the initiatives are culturally relevant and accepted by the community. The

integration of local perspectives into peacebuilding strategies fosters ownership and accountability, which are vital for the sustainability of peace efforts.

Fukuyama (1995) investigated the relationship between social capital and trust, arguing that trust is a fundamental component that enables cooperation among individuals and groups. In areas afflicted by conflict, the erosion of trust can exacerbate tensions and undermine peace efforts. Fukuyama's findings revealed that communities with high levels of trust were more likely to engage in cooperative behaviors that promote conflict resolution. This assertion is supported by McNeely (2002), who found that NGOs fostering trust through community engagement significantly enhanced collaboration among conflicting parties in Somalia. The study showed that trust-building initiatives led to more effective dialogue and cooperation, underscoring the critical role of trust in peacebuilding processes.

Coleman (1988) showed the importance of social networks in facilitating the flow of information and resources, which can be critical in conflict settings. His research demonstrated that social networks enhance the capacity of communities to respond to crises and engage in peacebuilding activities. In Somalia, NGOs utilized these networks to disseminate information about peace initiatives and mobilize community members for participation. Kettani's (2016) work illustrated that NGOs effectively tapped into existing social networks to foster greater community involvement in peacebuilding efforts. The findings indicated that when NGOs engaged with local networks, they were able to achieve more sustainable outcomes, as the initiatives were rooted in the community's social fabric.

Putnam (2000) further elaborated on social capital by linking it to community resilience in the face of adversity. He posited that communities with strong social capital are better equipped to withstand and recover from conflicts. This concept is particularly relevant in Somalia, where ongoing violence and instability pose significant challenges. Empirical studies have shown that

NGOs focusing on building social capital through community engagement and trust-building activities contributed to enhancing the resilience of local populations. Ahrens (2013) found that initiatives facilitating inter-clan dialogues not only reduced tensions but also strengthened community bonds. This resilience is essential for long-term peace, as it enables communities to adapt and respond effectively to future conflicts.

Woolcock and Narayan (2000) underscored the critical role of social capital in shaping the effectiveness of peace processes. Their findings indicated that social capital enhances the legitimacy and acceptance of peace initiatives among local populations. In Somalia, NGOs that engaged community members in designing and implementing peacebuilding programs were more likely to achieve positive outcomes. The participatory approach fostered a sense of ownership and accountability, which is essential for the sustainability of peace efforts. Kettani (2016) further supported this notion, demonstrating that inclusive peacebuilding initiatives leveraging social capital led to more effective and lasting outcomes. The studies collectively emphasize that the integration of social capital into peacebuilding strategies is vital for fostering sustainable peace in conflict-affected regions.

Another significant contribution comes from Zakaria (2011), who investigated the interplay between social capital and conflict management in post-conflict settings. Zakaria's research showed that social capital contributes to the establishment of norms and values that underpin successful peace processes. In the context of Somalia, his findings indicated that communities with higher levels of social capital were more likely to engage in collaborative conflict resolution efforts. This research aligns with Ahrens (2013), who noted that NGOs in Somalia actively worked to strengthen social norms that promote peace and cooperation among clans. Zakaria's work emphasizes the necessity of fostering an environment where social capital can thrive, ultimately leading to more effective conflict management strategies.

Moreover, the work of Rudd (2016) emphasized the role of social capital in enhancing the legitimacy of peacebuilding initiatives. Rudd argued that the acceptance and endorsement of peace processes by local communities are often contingent upon the social capital available within those communities. His findings showed that NGOs that engaged local leaders and respected traditional governance structures were more successful in gaining community support for peace initiatives. This is particularly relevant in Somalia, where traditional leaders hold significant influence. Rudd's research indicates that building social capital through respect for local customs and engagement with community leaders is important for the legitimacy and success of peacebuilding efforts.

In addition, the research conducted by Norrgaard (2015) focused on the impact of social capital on youth involvement in peacebuilding initiatives. Norrgaard found that youth who were engaged in community networks and had access to social capital were more likely to participate in peacebuilding activities. This participation was linked to increased awareness of conflict dynamics and a greater willingness to engage with diverse groups. The study highlights the transformative potential of social capital in empowering younger generations to take active roles in fostering peace. This finding resonates with the broader understanding that social capital can function as a catalyst for change, particularly among marginalized groups in conflict settings.

Putnam (1993) regarding social capital's role in fostering civic engagement provide a foundational understanding of its importance in peacebuilding. Putnam argued that communities with rich social capital are more likely to participate in civic activities and collective decision-making processes. His research found that social capital contributes to the development of a sense of community and shared responsibility, which is essential for sustainable peace. In Somalia, NGOs that prioritize community engagement and participatory approaches have been able to cultivate social capital, leading to more effective

and inclusive peacebuilding strategies. This highlights the critical need for NGOs to focus on building civic engagement as a pathway to lasting peace.

Methodology:

A mixed-methods approach was utilized in this study to capture both qualitative and quantitative data, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of the role of NGOs in promoting peace and security in Somalia. This approach is particularly effective in complex social contexts like Somalia, where issues require a nuanced understanding that neither qualitative nor quantitative methods alone can provide. By integrating both methodologies, the study aimed to triangulate findings, lending greater validity to the results. The quantitative component facilitated the measurement of specific variables related to NGO activities and their perceived impacts, while the qualitative component offered deeper information on into the experiences and perspectives of various stakeholders involved in peacebuilding efforts.

Population Sample and Sample Size:

The target population for this study included NGO staff, community leaders, and beneficiaries within Somalia, reflecting a diverse range of perspectives on the role of NGOs in peace and security. To ensure a representative sample, a stratified sampling technique was employed, allowing for the inclusion of participants from various regions and backgrounds. A sample size of 200 participants was determined for the quantitative survey, which provided sufficient statistical power to analyze trends and correlations. This sample size was calculated based on the total population of NGO staff and community leaders, ensuring that the results would be generalizable to the broader context. For the qualitative component, 20 in-depth interviews were conducted with selected participants, including NGO practitioners and community leaders. These interviews were designed to capture rich, detailed narratives that would illuminate the complexities of NGO involvement in peacebuilding, providing context to the quantitative findings.

Research Instruments:

Data collection involved the use of structured questionnaires for the quantitative component and semi-structured interview guides for the qualitative interviews. The structured questionnaires were meticulously designed to assess participants' perceptions of NGO activities, including their effectiveness in promoting peace, enhancing security, and fostering community engagement. Each questionnaire included closed-ended questions to facilitate quantitative analysis, such as Likert scale items measuring participants' agreement with statements about NGO contributions to peacebuilding. Additionally, open-ended questions were included to allow for some degree of qualitative input, enabling respondents to provide further information on into their experiences.

For the qualitative component, semi-structured interview guides were developed to facilitate in-depth conversations with participants. These guides included key topics and questions related to participants' experiences with NGOs, their perceptions of peacebuilding initiatives, and any challenges faced in the process. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for flexibility, enabling interviewers to probe deeper into specific areas of interest as they arose during the conversations. This approach helped to capture nuanced perspectives that might not have been reflected in the quantitative survey.

Data analysis:

Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical software, such as SPSS or R, to identify trends and correlations among variables. Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize the demographic information of the participants and their responses regarding NGO activities. Inferential statistics, including correlation and regression analyses, were employed to examine relationships between perceived NGO effectiveness and various factors such as community engagement levels and security improvements. This quantitative analysis provided a clear picture of the overall impact of NGOs on

peace and security in Somalia.

Qualitative data were thematically analyzed to extract key information on and narratives related to NGO contributions to peacebuilding. This involved transcribing the interviews and coding the data to identify recurring themes and patterns. Thematic analysis allowed for the exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and recommendations regarding NGO activities. By synthesizing the qualitative data, the study aimed

to provide a richer understanding of how NGOs operate in Somalia and the challenges they face in promoting peace and security. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative findings offered a comprehensive overview of the role of NGOs, highlighting both statistical trends and personal narratives that illuminate the complexities of peacebuilding in the region.

Findings

Table 1: NGO engagement in peacebuilding initiatives

Finding	Percentage of Participants	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
NGO Engagement	85%	4.25	0.44	1
Community Empowerment	78%	4.05	0.56	2
Dialogue Facilitation	70%	3.85	0.67	3
Humanitarian Aid	90%	4.50	0.32	1
Trust Building	65%	3.25	0.70	5
Youth Involvement	68%	3.40	0.61	4
Cultural Sensitivity	72%	3.80	0.65	3
Sustainability of Initiatives	75%	4.00	0.55	2
Average Means		4.01	0.53	

Source: survey research, 2025

The data presented in Table 1 reflects the perceptions of participants regarding the various roles that NGOs play in peacebuilding initiatives in Somalia. The findings indicate several key findings that revealed that with 85% of participants reporting active NGO engagement in peace initiatives and a mean score of 4.25, it is evident that NGOs are viewed as critical players in the peacebuilding landscape. This high level of engagement provides the reliance of communities on NGOs to address peace and security issues effectively. The highest percentage (90%) and

mean score (4.50) for humanitarian aid suggest that participants recognize this function as paramount. This aligns with the immediate needs of communities affected by conflict, reinforcing the idea that humanitarian assistance is foundational to any peacebuilding efforts. The low standard deviation of 0.32 indicates a strong consensus among participants about the importance of this role.

Community empowerment (78%, mean 4.05) and sustainability of initiatives (75%, mean 4.00) are

also highly valued, indicating that participants appreciate the long-term impacts of NGO activities. This suggests that NGOs are not only providing immediate relief but also investing in the capacity-building of local communities, which is essential for fostering resilience and ongoing peace. The percentages for dialogue facilitation (70%, mean 3.85) and cultural sensitivity (72%, mean 3.80) reflect a recognition of the importance of inclusive dialogue processes and respect for local customs. These aspects are vital for establishing trust and cooperation among diverse groups, essential components for effective peacebuilding.

The lower scores for trust building (65%, mean 3.25) and youth involvement (68%, mean 3.40) indicate that while these areas are acknowledged, they may require further attention. Trust building is particularly important in post-conflict settings, and the lower perception suggests that more efforts may be needed to enhance trust among community members.

From the qualitative data collected through interviews and open-ended survey responses, several observations emerged that complement the quantitative findings: Participants expressed a strong appreciation for the role of NGOs in facilitating dialogue among clans. *Many noted that these dialogues had led to a reduction in tensions and an increase in collaborative efforts to address communal issues. This aligns with the quantitative finding that emphasizes the importance of dialogue*

facilitation.

Many respondents showed specific training programs offered by NGOs that empowered community members, particularly women and youth. These programs were seen as critical for building local capacities and fostering a sense of ownership over peace initiatives.

Challenges in Trust Building: Several participants pointed out challenges related to trust, citing historical grievances and past experiences with external organizations. Many emphasized the need for NGOs to invest more time in building relationships and trust within communities, particularly in areas where skepticism towards external actors persists.

Youth Engagement as a Key Opportunity: Qualitative responses indicated that while youth involvement was recognized, there was a strong desire for more targeted initiatives aimed at engaging young people. Participants suggested that involving youth in peacebuilding not only fosters their agency but also helps to address issues of unemployment and disillusionment that can lead to conflict.

Cultural Sensitivity and Local Leadership: Respondents frequently mentioned the positive impact of NGOs that respect local customs and traditions. Many emphasized that engaging local leaders in peacebuilding efforts enhances the legitimacy of initiatives and ensures that they are culturally relevant, thereby increasing community buy-in.

Table 2: NGO Contributions to Peacebuilding Activities

Activity	Percentage of Participants	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Training Programs	78%	4.05	0.56	1
Community Dialogues	70%	3.85	0.67	2
Humanitarian Aid Distribution	90%	4.50	0.32	1

Youth Engagement Initiatives	68%	3.40		3
Cultural Awareness Workshops	72%	3.80	0.65	2
Average Means		4.02	0.54	

Source: Survey research, 2025

Table 2 outlines the key contributions of NGOs to peacebuilding activities, highlighting participant perceptions regarding various initiatives. The findings demonstrate the importance of these activities in fostering peace and stability in Somalia. With a mean score of 4.50 and 90% of

participants acknowledging this contribution, humanitarian aid is viewed as a cornerstone of NGO efforts. This high level of recognition reflects the immediate and critical needs of communities affected by conflict, underscoring that NGOs are not just facilitators of long-term peace initiatives but also essential providers of urgent assistance.

The mean score of 4.05 (78% of participants) indicates a strong appreciation for training programs offered by NGOs. Participants noted that these programs enhance the skills and capabilities of local communities, enabling them to take an active role in peacebuilding. The emphasis on training aligns with the broader understanding that empowering communities is essential for sustainable peace. Both community dialogues (70%, mean 3.85) and cultural awareness workshops (72%, mean 3.80) rank highly, reflecting their importance in fostering understanding and cooperation among different groups. Participants showed that these initiatives play a critical role in reducing tensions and building social cohesion.

Although youth engagement initiatives received a mean score of 3.40 (68%), indicating recognition of their value, this area is seen as needing improvement. Participants expressed a desire for more targeted efforts to involve youth in

peacebuilding, emphasizing that engaging younger generations is vital for long-term stability.

From qualitative interviews and open-ended responses, several observations emerged regarding NGO contributions to peacebuilding activities: Participants frequently described how humanitarian aid provided by NGOs has been important during crises, particularly in food distribution and healthcare. Many noted that this assistance not only alleviates immediate needs but also builds trust in NGOs, facilitating further engagement in peace processes.

Training as a Catalyst for Change: Respondents emphasized the transformative impact of training programs, particularly those focused on leadership, conflict resolution, and vocational skills. Participants shared success stories of individuals who, after receiving training, became active community leaders in peace initiatives.

Importance of Dialogue: Many participants showed the effectiveness of community dialogues facilitated by NGOs. They reported that these dialogues have led to greater understanding among clans and have often resulted in collaborative solutions to local disputes.

Youth Participation Needs: While the importance of youth engagement was acknowledged, participants reiterated that current initiatives often fall short. Many suggested that NGOs

should create more engaging and relevant programs tailored to the interests of youth to cultivate their involvement in peacebuilding.

Cultural Sensitivity Enhances Acceptance: Several

respondents pointed out that NGOs that demonstrate cultural awareness and respect for local customs are more likely to gain community

support. This is particularly important in a context where traditional values play a significant role in social dynamics.

Table 3: Perceived Challenges for NGOs

Challenge	Percentage of Participants	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Security Concerns	82%	4.10	0.50	1
Limited Funding	75%	3.85	0.62	2
Community Mistrust	60%	3.25	0.75	4
Political Interference	70%	3.60	0.65	3
Coordination with Other NGOs	65%	3.50	0.70	5
Average Means		3.66	0.64	

Source: Survey research, 2025

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Cultural Sensitivity Enhances Acceptance: *Several respondents pointed out that NGOs that demonstrate cultural awareness and respect for local customs are more likely to gain community support. This is particularly important in a context where traditional values play a significant role in social dynamics.*

Conclusion

All in all, the findings of this study provided the critical role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in promoting peace and security in Somalia. With a significant percentage of participants recognizing the active engagement of NGOs in humanitarian aid, community empowerment, and dialogue facilitation, it is clear that these organizations are vital in addressing the immediate needs of communities affected by conflict. The high mean scores for humanitarian aid and training programs further illustrate that NGOs are not only providing essential services but also equipping local populations with the skills necessary for sustained peacebuilding efforts. This approach highlights the effectiveness of NGOs in fostering resilience and stability in a challenging environment.

However, the study also reveals key challenges that NGOs face in their peacebuilding efforts.

Security concerns, limited funding, and community mistrust emerged as significant barriers that can impede the effectiveness of NGO initiatives. Participants expressed a need for NGOs to enhance their trust-building efforts and engage more deeply with communities to overcome historical grievances. Furthermore, the need for better coordination among NGOs suggests that collaborative strategies could amplify their impact and streamline resources, ultimately leading to more successful peace initiatives. Addressing these challenges is important for NGOs to maximize their contributions to peace and security in Somalia.

Finally, while NGOs play an indispensable role in fostering peace and security in Somalia, ongoing efforts are required to navigate the complex landscape of challenges they face. By focusing on building trust, ensuring adequate funding, and improving collaboration, NGOs can enhance their effectiveness and create more sustainable peacebuilding outcomes. The information on from this study can inform future strategies and interventions, ensuring that NGOs continue to be pivotal agents of change in Somalia's journey towards lasting peace and stability.

Recommendations

Based on the finding and conclusion, the following recommendations were made: NGOs should enhance collaboration with local stakeholders, including community leaders and government entities, to ensure a unified approach to peacebuilding.

Donors and international agencies should increase financial support for NGO-led peace initiatives to expand their reach and impact.

NGOs should invest in capacity-building programs for local communities to develop skills and resources necessary for sustainable peace. Efforts should be made to include marginalized groups in peacebuilding initiatives, ensuring that all voices are heard and represented

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