

Somali Initiative for Dialogue and Democracy

Annual Review 2007-8

As Somalis everywhere suffer from the on-going turmoil in our native country, those associated with Somali Initiative for Dialogue and Democracy (SIDD) have been taking steps to pursue its twin objectives of '*the reconciliation and integration of Somali refugees*' and the longer term aim of '*enabling skilled Somalis in the diaspora to return to Somalia and contribute to national reconstruction*'.

In the last year, these included:

- the participation of 18 Somalis in two training courses in Dialogue Facilitation
- a one-day programme with SIDD's International Patron, Ambassador Mohamed Sahnoun, including a morning briefing, an afternoon meeting with members of the Benadiri and Sa'ad communities, and an evening reception to formally launch SIDD
- a one-day meeting and reception for those responsible for Interpeace's Programme in Somalia
- arranging for 30 UK-based Somalis to attend the annual Agenda for Reconciliation conference and other conferences at the Initiatives of Change conference centre in Caux, Switzerland
- a variety of occasions to maintain contact between those who have taken part in previous programmes
- briefing parliamentarians and government departments concerned with Somalia or the Somali community in the UK, including a briefing in Parliament
- discussions with the UNDP QUEST programme and diaspora organisations in other European countries about creating a database of skilled Somalis in UK who would be willing to return to Somalia, when the situation allows, to contribute to reconstruction.

There follows a chronology of events between April 2007 and April 2008, and an appendix containing the texts of the speeches given at the launch of SIDD on 4th May 2007.

The accompanying Annual Accounts show an income of £3,986 which is largely thanks to a grant towards Dialogue Facilitation courses from the Irene Prestwich Trust, donations from Trustees, and contributions towards catering expenses by participants. Substantial unseen support for all the events above has come from Initiatives of Change, a UK charity which has generously provided facilities and helped raise funds which have made much of these activities possible. The Trustees express gratitude to all those who have devoted time and money to the task that SIDD has undertaken, and ask for ideas and help to raise the funds necessary for the expansion of this work.

Finally we must mention our sadness and distress at the sudden and shocking death of Fiona Leggat on 14th June 2008. Fiona has been a dear friend to so many of us, and as a Trustee, the development of SIDD was very close to her heart. She is deeply mourned and our hearts go out to her Kenyan husband, Miheso Musindi Wenceslaus, her parents, Campbell and Claire, and all her family.

Chronology of SIDD developments 2007-2008

2007

- Apr-May Six Somalis take part in Dialogue Facilitation course with non-Somalis (Amb. Alim Mohamed, Amina Adam, Hodan Idan, Mohamed Kilas, Mohamed Yusuf, Hassan Warsame Nur)
- May 4 One-day programme with SIDD International Patron, Amb Mohamed Sahnoun, including morning briefing and consultation; afternoon meeting of members of the Benadiri and Sa'ad communities and evening reception for 100 people to formally launch SIDD (Texts in Appendix 1).
- Jun 12 SIDD team meeting
- Jul 3 SIDD Trustee Meeting
- July 9 One-day preparation meeting for Somalis due to attend international conferences at the Initiatives of Change conference centre in Caux, Switzerland
- Jul/Aug Caux conferences: 5 Somalis attended 'Tools for Change'; 25 Somalis attended the 'Agenda for Reconciliation' conference (Abdullahi Hassan, Mohamed Kila, Zahra Davies, Khadija Sharif, Amina Adam, Damo Abdurahman, Nur Sharif, Aweys Iman, Abdi Gure, Mohamud Gure, Hashim Mohamed, Osman Jama Ali, Dr Ahmed Sharif Abbas, Amina Khaled, Omar Salad, Abdulkadir Ali, Mohamed Adde, Mohamed Alim, Ahmed Sharif-Ali, Mohamed Ibrahim, Kinsi Abdulleh, Fawzia Adam, Ali Jeilani). They presented a workshop on Somalia and the whole delegation contributed to an international Cultural Variety Programme.
- On their return to Britain, they had the unpleasant experience of being questioned by police at City Airport. Sir Jim Lester subsequently wrote to the Minister for Immigration asking for an explanation. The reply he received simply said that individuals' cases could not be discussed.
- Sep 7 Meetings with Jerry McCann and Abdirahman Raghe of Interpeace and evening reception.
- Oct 11 Osman Jama Ali, Dr Ahmed Sharif Abbas and Abdi Afrah Gure participated in a meeting with Kaltun Hassan, head of the UNDP programme, QUESTS (Qualified Expatriate Somali Technical Support) at the Department for International Development. Osman Jama outlined his vision for the return of skilled Somali expatriates to Somalia to contribute to national reconstruction and reconciliation when the security situation allows. He reported on the courses in Dialogue Facilitation that SIDD has been organising, and emphasised that everyone involved in such a scheme should receive training in cultural sensitivity and awareness of processes of reconciliation
- Oct 19 Chris Mullin MP requested further copies of SIDD Annual Review 2006-7 to send to DfID and FCO
- Oct 23 SIDD Trustees meeting
- Nov 3 –Dec 8 Six weekly one-day training sessions in Dialogue Facilitation for 12 selected Somalis from different backgrounds (Participants: Asha Hagi Hashi, Falastin Yassin, Zahra Hassan, Amina Khalid, Amb. Mohamed

- Osman, Amb. Mohamed Sharif, Abdulkadir Bolay, Hashim Mohammed, Hassan Ahmed, Sayid Ahmed Sharif-Ali, Duhul Hussein)
- Dec 9th Death of Gunnar Wieselgren in Stockholm whose work laid the foundations for all SIDD is doing. Gunnar helped two Somalis, Ahmed Egal and Hassan Mohamud reconcile, after which Ahmed Egal felt he should apologise to his former guerrilla commander for his hatred at having been imprisoned by him unjustly. The following year, 1993, he and other Somalis drew up a list of potential peace-makers and he and Gunnar convened a meeting for them in Sweden in January 1994. Osman Jama Ali was one of the participants together with General Abukar Liban, Dr Yusuf O Al-Azhari, Omar Osman and Mrs Anab Hassan. Gunnar insisted on showing the films 'Freedom' and 'For the love of tomorrow'. These were followed by silence and then tearful conversations between people who had been estranged across clan lines.
- Osman Jama Ali and Jim Baynard-Smith travelled to Stockholm for the funeral.
- 2008
- Jan 7 Briefing in Parliament on invitation of Jeremy Corbyn MP
- Evening reception and presentation of Certificates to those who had completed the course in Dialogue Facilitation
- Mar 27 SIDD team meeting and discussion

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