

FAKTA Project

**SOMALIA: FACT-FINDING MISSION TO
MOGADISHU AND NAIROBI, JANUARY 2018**

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Country Information Service
Fact-finding Mission Report



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Introduction

This report has been prepared as part of the European Union's FAKTA project, which has received funding from the EU's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).¹ Two researchers from the Country Information Service of the Finnish Immigration Service (Migri) visited Mogadishu and Nairobi on a fact-finding mission in January 2018. The purpose of the mission was to obtain information about the general conditions in the country and establish a contact network with international and national actors such as international organisations, authorities, non-governmental organisations (NGO) and researchers. In future, this contact network will provide information on the situation in Somalia in support of Migri's decision-making process.

Several international organisations, NGOs and researchers operating in Somalia were interviewed during the mission. For safety reasons, most sources wanted to be interviewed anonymously, without anyone being able to identify them.

Researchers from the Country Information Service interviewed some sources in Mogadishu and others in Nairobi. One source was interviewed from Finland via Skype.

¹Development project for fact finding mission practices on country of origin information.



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Information on the report.

This report written by the Country Information Service of the Finnish Immigration Service has been prepared in accordance with the quality guidelines of the European Union on the analysis of country information and instructions concerning fact finding missions. The report is based on carefully selected sources. The report makes use of interviews conducted during the fact finding mission and, where necessary, has been supplemented with written source material. The amount of the source material used is limited, and the report is not exhaustive. To obtain a comprehensive picture, the report should not be used in decision-making by itself, but together with other sources. If an event, individual or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that such an event never occurred or that the individual or organisation does not exist. The report is based on independent research and analysis by the Country Information Service. The Country Information Service is responsible for the contents of the report. Views and statements presented in the report do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Finnish Immigration Service, and the report is not a judicial evaluation or a political statement.



1. General security circumstances in southern and central Somalia

On the basis of the fact finding mission completed in January 2018, the security situation in the southern and central parts of Somalia has, generally speaking remained unstable. The most serious threat to security is posed by the operations of al-Shabaab.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), conditions in Somalia are generally insecure and the government lacks effective control over many urban and rural areas. People returning to Somalia are therefore entering an unpredictable environment, where they cannot rely on the provision of state services or protection:

”Still, the conditions generally in Somalia are insecure and the government doesn’t have effective control over many urban or rural areas. So it is very much an unknown environment that people are going back, where they are not able to rely on provisions of state services or provision of protection by the state.”²

According to an international development organisation operating in Somalia, the security situation deteriorated in late 2017 and early 2018 compared to the preceding months. The organisation says that al-Shabaab’s activities have become more sophisticated than before. Where it was previously able to use explosive charges of 25 kilograms in a single bomb attack, it can now use explosives weighing more than a tonne. Also, the explosives it uses are more effective than before. The organisation has demonstrated the ability to develop its tactics continuously and adapt to a new operating environment.³ In contrast to the previous source, and international organisation finds that al-Shabaab’s ability to carry out complicated attacks has diminished, although the number of monthly fatalities in individual attacks by the organisation has increased.⁴

In the long term, the security circumstances in Somalia are deemed to have developed in a positive direction. An international organisation operating in Somalia says that the security situation is better than it was three years ago. At that time, al-Shabaab controlled a total of 70% of the area of Southern and Central Somalia. Previously, almost all districts in Southern and Central Somalia were controlled by al-Shabaab. At present, most cities in Southern and Central Somalia have been won back from al-Shabaab. The liberated areas now have either temporary or actual, competent administrations that operate at different degrees of efficiency. It will take years to make the administration function appropriate and provide citizens with the basic services they need.⁵

A car bomb that exploded at KM 5 in Mogadishu in October 2017 was the third most devastating terror attack ever in Africa. More than 500 people died in the attack. The perpetrator has still not been fully ascertained, but most parties consulted think it was probably carried out by al-Shabaab. According to one source, when a suicide attack takes place, it is justifiable to presume that it was made by al-Shabaab.⁶ If this was the work of al-Shabaab, its performance and systematic approach is indicated by the fact that, according to experts, it takes nine months to build a bomb of this magnitude.⁷ Presumably the bomb was intended to detonate in the vicinity of the airport instead of the busy KM 5 intersection. The capital city is the financial centre of the

² UNHCR.

³ International development organisation A.

⁴ International organisation B.

⁵ International organisation B.

⁶ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.

⁷ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances. The same day, only an hour later, another, smaller car bomb went off in another part of the city. The detonated vehicles are presumed to be linked to an al-Shabaab plan according to which one car carrying explosives takes advantage of the chaotic situation caused by the first explosion and penetrates the intended target. The Guardian 23 Oct 2017.



country, and an attack on the airport would have paralysed the whole country. It is possible that, as a consequence of a successful attack, international organisations and the UN would have pulled out of Somalia, civil aviation would have been suspended, and economic activity would have come to a halt.⁸

The premature explosion that claimed the lives of hundreds of the city's residents deeply shocked the inhabitants. The scale of the explosion was absolutely unprecedented. People in Somalia are used to bomb attacks and violence, but this was an exceptional event. Every city resident lost a family member or knows someone who was wounded in the attack. Spontaneous demonstrations were organised in the city as a consequence of this brutal strike.⁹ The explosion seriously undermined the sense of security among the city's residents. Somalis are tough and tenacious, but fear has been uppermost in people's minds since the attack.¹⁰

Violence in Somalia has been due to terrorist activities and criminality, as well as mutual clashes between the country's security forces (the police, the intelligence service NISA¹¹ and the military). The security forces have disputed issues such as control over roadside checkpoints because they are crucial to making a living. The salaries of the security forces often remain unpaid for several months, and pass-through fees collected at checkpoints are a key way of supporting one's family. Anyone who passes through a checkpoint has to pay \$5 - \$15 to the people maintaining it.¹²

All trips outside home in both the capital city and elsewhere in southern and central parts of Somalia must be planned carefully due to security risks. In the capital, people try to avoid hotels and administrative buildings because they may be attacked. Crime is a potential threat in the capital city, but people are still more afraid of attacks by al-Shabaab.¹³

Al-Shabaab maintains a strong ability to control areas outside the capitals of districts controlled by the Somali government and in rural areas.¹⁴ Al-Shabaab is still able to largely control areas around urban centres and the countryside. People's ability to move around, utilise local natural resources, and engage in agriculture and other business outside government-controlled areas is limited. Foodstuffs and building supplies, for example, must mainly be imported from elsewhere, and the enhancement of these areas' economies and development is largely reliant on foreign shipments of money, imports, and humanitarian and development organisations.¹⁵

Thus far, the functions of state governments have mainly focused on the capital cities of the states and their immediate surroundings. These governments have limited ability to control security conditions in the areas in question. It would be more appropriate to refer to "influence over security" rather than control or management.¹⁶ Al-Shabaab controls the Buaale and Jilib districts of the Middle Juba Region, Jamaame in the Lower Jubba Region, and Sablaale in the Lower Shabelle Region. These are areas where al-Shabaab is responsible for administration.¹⁷ The most important roads are also under the organisation's control. In many areas, it has been necessary to transport humanitarian aid by air because travelling along roads is difficult or impossible.¹⁸

⁸ International development organisation A.

⁹ The Guardian 23 Oct 2017.

¹⁰ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; International organisation B.

¹¹ *National Intelligence and Security Agency*.

¹² International development organisation A.

¹³ Somali employee of an international NGO.

¹⁴ UNHCR; International organisation B.

¹⁵ UNHCR.

¹⁶ UNHCR.

¹⁷ International organisation B.

¹⁸ UNHCR.



The fight against al-Shabaab has not progressed as expected.¹⁹ It has been undermined by factors such as the disunity of the Somali government and security forces. The Somali intelligence service NISA is divided into factions, and lacks consistent training and an institution responsible for training. There is a special detachment inside the NISA called the *Alpha* group that has been trained by the Americans. Some NISA soldiers have not received any training, and others are members of armed clans. There have been clashes between different units within the security forces.²⁰

The international community has stepped up its campaign of airstrikes against al-Shabaab. Strikes in the Lower and Middle Shabelle Regions have been effective, with hardly any loss of civilian lives. There have been reports that some al-Shabaab fighters, fearing such strikes, have moved north, to the northern parts of Galmudug and Puntland, which has undermined the security conditions in these areas.²¹

However, the UNHCR states that the organisation does not have a very strong position in the north. It does not have the same support in Somaliland or Puntland as it enjoys in the southern and central parts of the country. Nor does it have the same number of fighters or amount of equipment at its disposal, and the organisation is unable to exercise similar control over these areas. Most fighters in the organisation are in hiding in the mountainous region of Puntland. Thus far, at least, the governments and security forces of Somaliland and Puntland have had sufficient capacity to control urban and rural areas. Al-Shabaab's attacks in these areas have mainly been small, sporadic and targeted. In Puntland, al-Shabaab's strategy has comprised small-scale operations such as assassinations, attacks with hand grenades, and occasional strikes against checkpoints manned by security forces. Its fighters have struck convoys and seized the supplies transported by them. The organisation is unable to collect the same amount of taxes in the Puntland region as in the areas it controls in the southern and central parts of the country. It earns money through fees collected at roadside checkpoints and by selling seized supplies in various markets.²²

The ISIS organisation remains a small group in Somalia, and is not a cause of specific concern at the moment. It is estimated to have 200 fighters, but the precise number is uncertain. ISIS has concentrated its operations on the village of Qandala in Puntland. In 2017, the organisation carried out three attacks in the capital city, but they had little impact.²³ The organisation does not hold a strong position in Southern and Central Somalia at present.²⁴ According to one source, al-Shabaab is denying ISIS the possibility to expand its sphere of influence at the former's expense. Any attempt by ISIS to spread would lead to a confrontation with al-Shabaab.²⁵

In addition to the conflict between the Somali government and al-Shabaab, there are clashes between clans in the country.²⁶ The prolonged drought has intensified competition over dwindling resources (pastures, water) in the Galcayyo area, which has resulted in skirmishes between clans. The militarisation common to border areas has prevented nomads from moving from one area to the next, according to the normal yearly cycle, in search of green grazing land, forcing them to remain in the same area. This has led to tensions between local clans.²⁷

¹⁹ International organisation B.

²⁰ International development organisation A.

²¹ International development organisation A.

²² UNHCR.

²³ International development organisation A.

²⁴ International organisation B.

²⁵ International development organisation A.

²⁶ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.

²⁷ International organisation B.



Despite the continuing instability, the key reasons for migration within the country have been the prolonged drought and poor humanitarian conditions. According to the PRMN²⁸ project by the UNHCR, approximately 70% of all Somalis who had to move within the country in 2017 were primarily displaced due to difficulties arising from the drought. About 30% were displaced due to the insecurity caused by the conflict. Last year, approximately one million people were displaced, making the number of those leaving their home for security reasons approx. 300,000.²⁹

Some migration inside the country is part of the normal urbanisation process related to the modernisation of society.³⁰

However, it is difficult to categorise displaced people on the basis of their reason for displacement, because the factors involved may be intertwined. For example, al-Shabaab may prevent farmers from using a certain road for military reasons, so they cannot sell their products in the local market. People who have lost their livestock or crop due to drought cannot find enough food in the local marketplace, so the only option is to leave their home region. Drought was nevertheless the key individual factor intensifying internal migration within the country in 2017.³¹

The position³² published by the UNHCR in May 2016 on refugees' returns to Southern and Central Somalia remains valid today. According to the organisation, many people inside the country have fled the drought to urban centres, which are deficient in the infrastructure required for helping them. They lack water and other necessary resources. The security forces are unable to provide everyone with protection.³³

Many of those leaving their homes end up in camps for internally displaced people (IDP), and there are now more of these in Somalia than ever. The most unfortunate people and those without the resources to travel have been forced to stay in their home region. Contrary to what is often supposed, many displaced people have been unable to return home, because the conditions in their home region have not improved as hoped. Opportunities for making a living in rural areas have been significantly reduced in many places. No seeds have been sown for many seasons, and there is no harvest to reap in the fields. Many nomads have lost most or even all of their animals during the long drought period. The fear is that more and more people will stay permanently in urban centres and the surrounding camps.³⁴

During the 2011 famine, al-Shabaab limited the number of people leaving areas controlled by the organisation, but there are no similar restrictions at present. Many IDPs have had to leave their homes repeatedly, and they often have hardly any belongings with them except a bucket and blanket or the equivalent.³⁵

The living conditions in IDP camps are extremely poor, offering virtually nothing to IDPs carrying their few belongings with them. The camps are overpopulated, and the services available there are insufficient in terms of both quality and quantity.³⁶ Camp dwellings consist of simple huts with an earthen floor (*buul*), and water management in the camps is deficient. The people in the

²⁸ UNHCR Somalia, Protection and return monitoring network: <https://unhcr.github.io/dataviz-somalia-prmn/index.html>.

²⁹ UNHCR.

³⁰ International organisation A.

³¹ UNHCR.

³² UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), [UNHCR Position on Returns to Southern and Central Somalia \(Update I\), May 2016](#).

³³ UNHCR.

³⁴ International organisation A; International development organisation A.

³⁵ International organisation A.

³⁶ International organisation A.



camps are largely at the mercy of the “gatekeeper”, who owns the land.³⁷ For gatekeepers, IDP camps are a business. People who have settled in camps are charged rent, but they can be evicted if the gatekeeper sells or leases the land to another person.³⁸ In December 2017, for instance, IDP camps with thousands of people outside Mogadishu were destroyed. A total of 24,000 people had to leave their huts and find new places in adjacent camps, where the service capacity had been insufficient to begin with.³⁹

The security conditions in IDP camps are deficient. The breadwinner of many families in the camps is female. The male may have remained in the home region to look after the few belongings left behind. Lack of a male presence makes women and families vulnerable. Sexual violence is commonplace in the camps.⁴⁰ Despite the miserable and insecure conditions, for many people camps are the best or even the only way to survive. Staying in the home region could, in practice, mean death as it may offer even less water, food, health services or education for children. The camps provide at least a theoretical opportunity to obtain these necessities.⁴¹

1.1. Situation in Mogadishu

Al-Shabaab is still able to carry out complex operations requiring lengthy preparations, even in the most closely guarded parts of the centre of the capital city. This shows that the capital city is not under the complete and effective control of the security forces supporting the Somali government.⁴²

The car bombing of October 2017 was a devastating tragedy. Although Somalis are tough and used to continuous security incidents, this attack instilled fear in many inhabitants. All residents carefully plan their movements both within the capital city of Mogadishu, and whenever travelling further out into the countryside from the capital city. People use social networks to keep up to date with the security situation and to avoid unnecessary risks. Local “tuk-tuk” drivers tend to be most familiar with the prevailing security situation and the location of checkpoints along roads. People arriving in Mogadishu from outside the city ascertain the local security situation by using their networks, and identify the hotels in which it is sensible and safe to stay.⁴³

Attacks can occur in any part of Mogadishu, and no one can be certain of their personal safety.⁴⁴ Recurring assassinations and attacks against hotels have caused instability.⁴⁵ Al-Shabaab has struck tea rooms and restaurants patronised by members of the Somali government, or people whom al-Shabaab has deemed too Westernised.⁴⁶ The organisation has assassinated opponents along the Makka al-Mukarama street and on the outskirts of Mogadishu, among other places.⁴⁷ There have been bomb attacks in all parts of the city.⁴⁸

The reasons for, and perpetrators of, security incidents and assassinations are uncertain in some cases. The violence occurring in Mogadishu cannot be explained in simple terms. The reason for an individual attack against a hotel may, for instance, be revenge by al-Shabaab for unpaid taxes

³⁷ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

³⁸ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia; International organisation A.

³⁹ International organisation A.

⁴⁰ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia; Somali women’s organisation; International development organisation A.

⁴¹ International development organisation A.

⁴² UNHCR.

⁴³ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.

⁴⁴ Somali employee of an international NGO.

⁴⁵ International development organisation A.

⁴⁶ UNHCR.

⁴⁷ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.

⁴⁸ International development organisation B.



(*zakat*) by the hotel owner, or the fact that high-profile enemies of the organisation are staying or convening at the hotel. However, the reason may also be competition between businessmen aimed at securing a better market position by eliminating competitors.⁴⁹

Security conditions vary in different districts of Mogadishu. For example, the airport, Villa Somalia and the port are guarded more closely and are therefore among the safer areas of the city. The situation is different on the outer edges of the city and in the northern districts. Because Heliwaa, for instance, is regarded as a dangerous area, no government officials live there.⁵⁰ In addition, they cannot move around the Dayniile or Suuqa Xoolaha areas after sunset without the protection of armed security guards.⁵¹ Elasha Biyaha and areas adjacent to Afgoye are similarly risky areas for government employees.⁵²

The UNHCR reports that al-Shabaab is the key operator at night time in certain areas of Mogadishu. This, according to the UNHCR, shows that the capital city is not under the control of the government.⁵³

A unit called the *Mogadishu Stabilization Force*⁵⁴ began operating in the city in May 2017 to improve the security conditions there. One of its goals was to disarm all groups that are not part of the security forces. However, (clans) groups that have armed themselves due to the general instability have been unwilling to surrender their weapons, which has led to clashes between them and the Stabilization Force. A researcher living in Mogadishu says that disarmament is important, but would require the commitment and participation of all parties. It would also call for a process known as DDR (disarmament, demobilization and reintegration). Clans still bear mutual grudges that need to be processed in order to relieve tension and achieve genuine reconciliation. Only after this would disarmament have any chance of success. Many armed clan groups have been registered as companies in the security sector, in order to bypass the disarmament obligation.⁵⁵

Moving around in the capital city requires passing through roadblocks. The soldiers maintaining them require a fee of \$1 - \$5 from those passing through, depending on their ability to pay.⁵⁶ If the soldiers know that a person passing through has financial resources, they will demand the sum required. In most cases, women, children and the elderly are exempted from paying such fees.⁵⁷ Mogadishu has several checkpoints within the radius of a few kilometres, and the soldiers at all of them may collect fees.⁵⁸ The number of checkpoints varies on a daily basis, depending on what has happened or is about to happen in the city.⁵⁹ One checkpoint may have several soldiers, all of whom must be paid. Government officials must also pay fees at checkpoints maintained by government soldiers. Anyone who questions a demand for payment may have to pay even more than originally requested or, in the worst case, lose their life. Checkpoint fees can be a significant cost. For an official, the sum can amount to several hundred euros per month. City residents also incur costs from the recurring phone calls they must make to obtain updated information about the security situation from friends and relatives.⁶⁰

⁴⁹ International development organisation A.

⁵⁰ Somali employee of an international NGO.

⁵¹ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; International development organisation B.

⁵² Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.

⁵³ UNHCR; International development organisation B.

⁵⁴ Goobjoog News 5 Dec 2017.

⁵⁵ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.

⁵⁶ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.

⁵⁷ Somali employee of an international NGO.

⁵⁸ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.

⁵⁹ Somali employee of an international NGO.

⁶⁰ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.



The role of people returning from the diaspora to Somalia has grown. Many of those returning have been educated abroad, and upon their return they make their competencies available to their former home country. They have professional skills and, in many cases, the capital to establish businesses, such as hotels and restaurants. People returning from the diaspora and their investments have had a significant, stimulating effect on the economy of Somalia. In the long run, this is more important than the support of the international community.⁶¹ Despite the ongoing instability, life in Mogadishu and Kismayo has clearly become more colourful in the last three years.⁶²

1.2. Situation in Jubaland and Kismayo

Al-Shabaab's influence is at its strongest in the Middle Juba Region that is part of Jubaland State. The region is almost completely controlled by the organisation. The sphere of influence of the Jubaland government extends approx. 25-30 kilometres north and north-east of Kismayo. In the west of Kismayo, the distance to a strong al-Shabaab presence is approx. 60 kilometres. The Gedo Region is controlled by the Jubaland government, as is 80% of the Lower Juba Region. Southern parts of Lower Juba - from the south of Kismayo to the Kenyan border - are controlled by al-Shabaab. The organisation also controls the valley of the Jubba River. It is intended that Buale will become the capital city of the Jubaland government, but it is presently controlled by al-Shabaab - as are Jilib and Sakow along the Jubba River.⁶³ The area between the Jubba and Shabelle rivers is important to al-Shabaab due to its fertility, which means good taxation potential from agriculture.⁶⁴

Several security incidents have occurred in Kismayo. During the last year, the city has seen 10 bomb attacks and eight hand grenade attacks, mainly carried out by al-Shabaab. The city has also been the scene of clashes between Jubaland forces. There have been no assassinations in the city, unlike the capital city of Mogadishu.⁶⁵

There are checkpoints along roads in Kismayo, and everyone passing through is required to pay a fee of US\$5-10 at them.⁶⁶

The current government of Jubaland has a strong background in al-Shabaab. President Sheikh Ahmed Madobe of Jubaland is a former leader of the Ras Kamboni organisation, which used to fight against the Somali government alongside al-Shabaab. It is possible that the current government and al-Shabaab are in communication to some extent, and know how to get along with each other. According to some unconfirmed reports, the parties have a mutual agreement to leave one another alone. Possible interaction between the parties has not completely prevented al-Shabaab from carrying out attacks. However, the number of security incidents in Kismayo is lower than in Mogadishu.⁶⁷

⁶¹ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu; International organisation B.

⁶² International organisation B.

⁶³ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

⁶⁴ International organisation B.

⁶⁵ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

⁶⁶ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

⁶⁷ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.



1.3. Possibility to move around in southern and central Somalia

At present, none of the significant transportation routes through Lower and Middle Shabelle are passable, because they are controlled by al-Shabaab. Road transportation is vulnerable to kidnapping and extortion of various kinds. For this reason, the supplies and personnel of UN and AMISOM troops must be transported by air, significantly increasing general operating costs.⁶⁸

Security forces supporting the government of Somalia have tried to take control of and secure the roads that link the capital cities of the districts. They have taken over some roads from al-Shabaab, but the organisation is still able to launch attacks along key roads. In most cases, the centres and surroundings of the largest cities are relatively safe from attacks by al-Shabaab to a radius of approx. 30-40 kilometres, and moving around in those areas is fairly safe. The situation in many towns, such as Jowhar, Dolow, Beledweyne and Baidoa, has improved in comparison to five years ago.⁶⁹

Moving along roads between towns in southern parts of Somalia involves risks, since al-Shabaab is able to control a significant part of the countryside in the region.⁷⁰ Private individuals who can afford to and who must travel within the country's borders travel by air.⁷¹ The country has a relatively comprehensive network of flight routes.⁷² The capital cities of the regions are accessible by air. One-way plane tickets inside the country cost \$100-200, on average.⁷³ A flight from Mogadishu to Baidoa costs approx. \$200.⁷⁴ People without sufficient means must travel by bus, regardless of the risks. The road network may become impossible to use during the rainy season.⁷⁵

Alongside roads there are checkpoints maintained by either the security forces that support the Somali government, or al-Shabaab. Guards at checkpoints demand a certificate of identity and establish the traveller's background and reason for travel. People usually know one another, and individuals who "are not part of the group" stand out and are identified.⁷⁶ Identification is made easier by, for instance, dialects or accents.⁷⁷ Many people returning to Somalia from abroad try to avoid travelling outside cities and towns for safety reasons. They say they can be identified by their accents, style of walking, and better posture. They usually go to cities already inhabited by returning members of the diaspora.⁷⁸

Al-Shabaab has mobile checkpoints in areas it controls, and people passing through them are required to pay a fee. Anyone passing through who refuses to pay can be arrested or killed. The latter is a less frequent occurrence. It is certain, however, that there is no way to pass through without paying a few dollars.⁷⁹ The organisation also demands that women travelling in its area must have a male custodian with them. Any woman travelling without a custodian is interrogated and must explain why she does not have a custodian with her, and return to where she came from.⁸⁰

⁶⁸ International development organisation A.

⁶⁹ International organisation B.

⁷⁰ Representative of an international NGO.

⁷¹ Somali women's organisation.

⁷² International organisation B.

⁷³ Representative of an international NGO; International organisation B.

⁷⁴ Somali women's organisation.

⁷⁵ International organisation B.

⁷⁶ Representative of an international NGO.

⁷⁷ International development organisation B.

⁷⁸ Representative of an international NGO.

⁷⁹ International organisation B.

⁸⁰ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.



In the city of Kismayo, people can move from one place to the next freely, but anything can happen. There are private buses and taxis in the city, but travel always includes risks. People are armed. During the last year, dozens of people have been killed by stray bullets in the Jubaland region, due to violence at roadside checkpoints, and from conflicts over land ownership disputes. Some of the victims have been women. Security forces that support the government of Somalia may clash with one another, and there is always the threat of an attack by al-Shabaab. Being in the wrong place at the wrong time can be a fatal mistake for anyone. Due to the risks, people usually avoid travelling unless they have to, such as when attending the funeral of a family member.⁸¹

1.4. Threat from al-Shabaab

The organisation has been unable to carry out complicated attacks requiring a great deal of planning over the last few months. It may have lost some of its operating capacity, which may also lead to a switch in the organisation's operating strategy towards attacks that are simpler than before. Assassinations of political leaders and key actors have increased since the most recent election, and have been turning into a serious problem.⁸²

At present, monitoring moral behaviour, dress code and length of hair are not a key issue from al-Shabaab's perspective. The organisation prioritises the significant of targets of attacks, and the matters listed above are not at the top of its order of priority. It takes the organisation about three months to monitor the movements of a potential target and 45 days to plan an attack against the subject. For the organisation, people paying taxes as demanded is more important than monitoring their moral behaviour.⁸³

At its checkpoint, al-Shabaab regards young men and women, in particular, with suspicion, as well as anyone assumed to be working for NGOs or the Somalian administration.⁸⁴ This also applies to low-level officials. People who work in the administration or NGOs do not tell others about their workplaces due to this threat. Members of the public mistrust other people, and any member of a group at risk should keep a low profile, rent a house in a safe area, and try to stay indoors for their own safety.⁸⁵

People who belong to a potential risk group cannot move around freely within Somalia, without being prepared for a threat to their personal safety. They must leave work early, plan their movements carefully, constantly vary the routes they use, and prepare for threats with bodyguards.⁸⁶

Ordinary civilians who do not cause problems for anyone and who are not linked to parties or groups regarded as enemies, i.e., do not fit al-Shabaab's enemy profile, are safe and can lead a normal life, generally speaking. They can move anywhere, as long as they pay the taxes demanded by the organisation.⁸⁷ Still, even they have to be on their guard. Mere possession of a smartphone and its discovery at an al-Shabaab checkpoint leads to a serious risk of violence.

⁸¹ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

⁸² International organisation B.

⁸³ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.

⁸⁴ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

⁸⁵ Somali employee of an international NGO.

⁸⁶ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

⁸⁷ International development organisation A; Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.



Even people who do not belong to risk groups should use an older phone model and remove any contact details that possibly increase the risk posed by the phone.⁸⁸

Al-Shabaab can pose a threat to civilians if the organisation has reason to believe that a person is acting in cooperation with the government. In such a case, the individual loses their civilian status in the eyes of the organisation, and the person becomes an enemy and a legitimate target. Sometimes the organisation can make mistakes and hit the wrong target, resulting in civilian casualties. However, the organisation does not regard this as a problem because, in its view, the person is then granted a place in paradise.⁸⁹

When AMISOM and the security forces retreat from a city for some reason, al-Shabaab immediately assumes control of it. This has occurred a few times in different parts of Somalia. When the ruler changes, individuals in key parts of a city or village's administration may be suspected of collaboration with the enemy. In the worst cases, this can lead to executions or other serious legal infringements. Ordinary residents have seldom been subjected to human rights violations. Violence has been used as a deterrent to control the population. The general atmosphere is tinged with fear. People are uncertain and afraid that anything can happen at any time.⁹⁰

In principle, al-Shabaab can eliminate any fighters fleeing its ranks in any part of Somalia. Such events have not been reported often, however, particularly with regard to Puntland and Somaliland. The organisation has good, comprehensive networks and people in many places. It has proven extremely efficient in all of its operations.⁹¹ According to a researcher living in Mogadishu, the organisation is well aware of the military's plans and movements.⁹²

The security situation may change quickly due to the departure of Mukhtar Robow, a former al-Shabaab commander, and 100 fighters from the organisation, and Robow's active campaign against al-Shabaab. This could be a crucial turn of events that convinces more fighters to leave the organisation. It could significantly improve the security situation in Somalia within a few years. It would be important to integrate any former fighters exiting the organisation back into their old communities. This would require support for the local communities in question. Even if this scenario becomes a reality, it will take years to permanently stabilise conditions in the country.⁹³

1.5. Recruitment by al-Shabaab, forced marriages, and financing of operations

Al-Shabaab recruits fighters both voluntarily and by force.⁹⁴ During the period when the Islamic Courts Union was active, 90% of al-Shabaab fighters joined the organisation voluntarily because, at that time, Somalis wanted to fight against the Ethiopian troops in the country.⁹⁵ The situation has changed and the number of volunteers has decreased, but they do still exist.⁹⁶ The Middle Jubba, Lower Jubba and Lower Shabelle Regions have had the highest number of volunteers.⁹⁷

⁸⁸ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

⁸⁹ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.

⁹⁰ UNHCR.

⁹¹ UNHCR.

⁹² Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.

⁹³ International organisation B.

⁹⁴ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; International development organisation A.

⁹⁵ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.

⁹⁶ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; International development organisation A.

⁹⁷ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.



Membership is often the sum of many factors and can involve religious and ideological reasons, but for many it is a pragmatic solution based on financial and safety-related factors.⁹⁸ Although many people join al-Shabaab voluntarily, there is often a lack of viable options under the circumstances.⁹⁹ Joining the organisation can be the best of bad alternatives amidst misery and instability for individuals trying to secure the financial and physical wellbeing of themselves and their family members.¹⁰⁰ Some join the organisation to obtain protection against looting by armed groups, or to recover land seized by bandits.¹⁰¹

Membership involves a survival strategy. A few sources have recounted an event where a family tried to optimise its position in insecure circumstances by having one son serve in al-Shabaab, one in the Somali security forces and one in a local, armed clan.¹⁰²

Local clan dynamics can also be a motivation for joining al-Shabaab.¹⁰³ Supporting the organisation may provide a clan with a way of struggling for local power against other clans. With al-Shabaab's help, a clan may be better able to secure the position of its community in a conflict between clans.¹⁰⁴

Money is a key incentive for joining the organisation. Somalia has a high unemployment rate, and the organisation can pay its fighters enough for the rank and file to support their families. The organisation can pay its fighters approx. \$50¹⁰⁵ - \$200¹⁰⁶ per month. They may receive higher wages than soldiers in the security forces. Furthermore, the wages of the police and soldiers in the security forces are often unpaid for months. Soldiers and police officers are unable to support their families and educate their children, so they must earn money in other ways. According to some sources, al-Shabaab also provides its fighters with a kind of insurance, promising to look after the family of a deceased fighter.¹⁰⁷

Al-Shabaab finances its operations and payroll by collecting taxes from private individuals and businesses, and fees at roadside checkpoints in different parts of Somalia. The organisation also levies a tax in the capital city Mogadishu. Its tactics are reminiscent of the way in which the Mafia operates. Anyone unwilling to pay the fees demanded by the organisation may be killed, their business premises may be burned down, or they may be subjected to some other form of violence. In most cases, the organisation issues a few warnings before taking action. It controls a significant share of the charcoal trade and also smuggles ivory. Apparently, it also has foreign financiers that provide financial support.¹⁰⁸

The capital city provides less fertile ground for voluntary recruitment.¹⁰⁹ However, al-Shabaab's recruitment videos can be bought on the Bakaara market. They are well made, and the propaganda appeals to youngsters. The organisation is very deft at evoking young people's experiences of social, political and financial exclusion and explaining who the culprit is. It also tells young people how their problems can be solved. According to a Somali researcher living in Mogadishu, al-Shabaab is good at talking *to* youngsters, whereas the government tends to talk *about* young people.¹¹⁰

⁹⁸ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; International development organisation A.

⁹⁹ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; International development organisation A.

¹⁰⁰ Representative of an international NGO; International development organisation A.

¹⁰¹ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

¹⁰² Representative of an international NGO; International development organisation A.

¹⁰³ International development organisation A; International development organisation B; UNHCR.

¹⁰⁴ International development organisation A; UNHCR.

¹⁰⁵ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.

¹⁰⁶ International development organisation A.

¹⁰⁷ International development organisation A.

¹⁰⁸ International development organisation A.

¹⁰⁹ International development organisation A.

¹¹⁰ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.



Also, the organisation continues to receive support from the diaspora. Some suicide attackers had returned to Somalia from abroad. However, its support in the diaspora is presumably smaller than in Somalia.¹¹¹

Al-Shabaab also has foreign *jihadists*, many of whom have come from Kenya or Arab countries. However, some of them have already left Somalia due to fear of drone attacks and strikes by Somalia's *Danaab* special forces.¹¹²

Al-Shabaab continues to recruit/forcibly enlist minors.¹¹³ This threat of recruitment pertains to both boys and girls.¹¹⁴ The youngest recruits have been eight-year-old children. The organisation forces women and girls living in areas under its influence to marry its fighters.¹¹⁵ There is, however, no indication of forced marriages in the capital city.¹¹⁶ An employee at a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia says that girls have been forced not only to marry al-Shabaab fighters, but also to take part in combat.¹¹⁷

In September 2017, al-Shabaab ran a recruitment campaign targeted at minors in the Bay area. They forced families with more than one child in certain areas to hand over one child to al-Shabaab. This caused several families to flee those areas. At the same time, enhanced recruitment and an increase in the zakat tax caused thousands of families to leave areas controlled by al-Shabaab in southern parts of Galgaduud, and move to Adado and new IDP camps that had sprung up in adjacent areas.¹¹⁸ In October-November 2017, al-Shabaab organised a recruitment campaign for minors in the Lower and Middle Shabelle Regions.¹¹⁹ The organisation also enhanced its recruitment, presence and ideological influence in villages on the Kenyan side of the border in January 2018.¹²⁰

Recruitment often involves ideological and religious propaganda and pressure.¹²¹ Al-Shabaab trains and brainwashes minors as its fighters, turning them into criminals so they find it impossible to leave the organisation. In contrast to rural areas, it has difficulty in finding new fighters to join its ranks in Mogadishu.¹²² In the countryside, the organisation's recruiters can demand that clans, village elders, families, schools or mosques hand over young fighters for training.¹²³

In October 2017, al-Shabaab paid more attention to schools and forced several of them to adopt the organisation's curriculum, which is based on *Sharia law*. Many families took flight because the parents did not want their children to go to these schools and absorb al-Shabaab's ideology. Many teachers who disagreed with the curriculum also ran away.¹²⁴

The organisation may threaten people with financial sanctions during recruitment. For example, it can take nomads' camels as a pledge. When necessary, the organisation may use violence

¹¹¹ International development organisation A.

¹¹² Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.

¹¹³ International organisation B; International development organisation A.

¹¹⁴ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

¹¹⁵ International organisation B; International development organisation A; Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.

¹¹⁶ International development organisation A.

¹¹⁷ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

¹¹⁸ UNHCR.

¹¹⁹ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

¹²⁰ UNHCR.

¹²¹ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; International development organisation A.

¹²² Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.

¹²³ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu; Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

¹²⁴ UNHCR.



against opponents. It has various ways of getting what it needs.¹²⁵ In practice, one cannot say “no” to al-Shabaab. In the worst cases, the punishment for doing so is death.¹²⁶

In areas controlled by the government, such as Kismayo, fear of recruitment, kidnapping, the zakat tax, and forced marriages is smaller than in regions under al-Shabaab’s influence.¹²⁷ This is why many people flee the threat posed by the organisation and its recruitment to areas controlled by the government, which are safer, relatively speaking, but even there security is not guaranteed, because anything can potentially happen.¹²⁸

1.6. Background to the support of al-Shabaab

Conflicts between clans, the poor position of marginal groups, a dysfunctional administration, and lack of services and legal protection are feeding support for al-Shabaab and maintaining the conflict.¹²⁹ Social injustice and insecurity are providing al-Shabaab with an opportunity to present itself as a defender of peace and justice. The organisation opportunistically takes advantage of disputes and conflicts between clans, in order to shore up its own position. Whenever necessary and possible, it manipulates clan dynamics and feeds local instability, because it has better chances of operating in unstable areas. It is more difficult to operate in stable and peaceful regions. Examples of this include Puntland and Somaliland, where basic administrative and institutional structures function to some degree.¹³⁰

Clan dynamics, which include conflicts and power struggles, work to al-Shabaab’s benefit. It has won supporters from local minority groups, to which it has offered the opportunity to increase their relative power.¹³¹ Al-Shabaab has enjoyed its highest support in areas with high membership of marginal groups and a significant degree of social, financial and legal injustice.¹³² According to the UNHCR, al-Shabaab has entered villages where a local minority clan has been subjugated and its rights have been violated by majority clans, promising it greater power through an alliance.¹³³

There are many armed groups operating within Somalia, and joining al-Shabaab can be a way to survive, receive protection from human rights violations by other groups, and secure one’s possessions.¹³⁴ In the Hirshabelle region, for example, there is a long-running feud between the Abgaal clan and the Shiidle Bantu group, which is a minority group. The Shiidle were ejected from their lands around 20 years ago, which still causes conflicts between them and the Hawiye groups. There are similar disputes related to land ownership in many areas around the country.¹³⁵ Minority groups are usually less well armed and able to defend themselves. Al-Shabaab provides them with an opportunity to obtain justice.¹³⁶

In the Jubaland region, local clans believe that the administration and its security forces are controlled by the Darood/Ogaden clan.¹³⁷ Similar developments can, to some extent, be seen in

¹²⁵ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia; International development organisation A.

¹²⁶ UNHCR.

¹²⁷ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

¹²⁸ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia; UNHCR.

¹²⁹ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; International organisation B.

¹³⁰ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.

¹³¹ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; International organisation B.

¹³² Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.

¹³³ UNHCR.

¹³⁴ International development organisation A.

¹³⁵ International organisation B.

¹³⁶ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

¹³⁷ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; International organisation B.



the Hirshabelle State, where subgroups of the Hawiye clan have held a dominant position.¹³⁸ Cooperation with al-Shabaab has given clans in a weaker position the chance to challenge the local clan in power.¹³⁹

Another factor affecting al-Shabaab's success is the dysfunctional nature of the administration in Somalia. If the Somali administrative system performed its duties properly, the population of Somalia would not need to resort to services provided by al-Shabaab.¹⁴⁰ Some areas in the southern and central parts of the country are not controlled by anyone and have no administration whatsoever, let alone services.¹⁴¹ Where services are offered, their quality is undermined by corruption and abuses.¹⁴² Hardly any proper public services are available due to non-existent tax collection and lack of resources for services. The government of Somalia will have a hard time winning the trust of the people without basic services.¹⁴³

The power vacuum left by the Somali government is enabling al-Shabaab to operate and to wield power.¹⁴⁴

"Al-Shabaab survives because of corruption, mismanagement, impunity, injustice and ultimately because of lack of governance, lack of state, rule and law."¹⁴⁵

With regard to legal protection, for instance, al-Shabaab's courts and administration of justice are deemed far superior to the judiciary of the Somali government, which is corrupt and inefficient.¹⁴⁶ There are also serious shortcomings in the country's prison administration. The resources and operating capacity of prisons are deficient. Suspects of crimes must often be released soon after their arrest because resources are inadequate (there is no water or food) for keeping them in custody during the pre-trial investigation, and for completing the legal process appropriately.¹⁴⁷ The judicature of al-Shabaab's courts, on the other hand, is regarded as fair, transparent and effective. That is why many capital city residents travel outside the city, when necessary, to a court of law maintained by the organisation to receive legal protection in different disputes. Al-Shabaab's courts are not the best way of delivering justice, but they are still deemed better than the government's courts of law.¹⁴⁸ Al-Shabaab also enforces its sentences. Ultimately, al-Shabaab has killed individuals who did not act as required by a court decision. Resorting to al-Shabaab's courts has been so commonplace that the government of Somalia has forbidden people from using them, under the threat of punishment.¹⁴⁹

According to a Somali expert on administration and security circumstances, the conflict in Somalia feeds itself: The dysfunctional administration, marginalisation of certain groups, and social injustice are strengthening al-Shabaab's support and functional capacity. The organisation

¹³⁸ International organisation B.

¹³⁹ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.

¹⁴⁰ UNHCR.

¹⁴¹ International development organisation B.

¹⁴² Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia; Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.

¹⁴³ International organisation B.

¹⁴⁴ UNHCR.

¹⁴⁵ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.

¹⁴⁶ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia; International development organisation A; UNHCR.

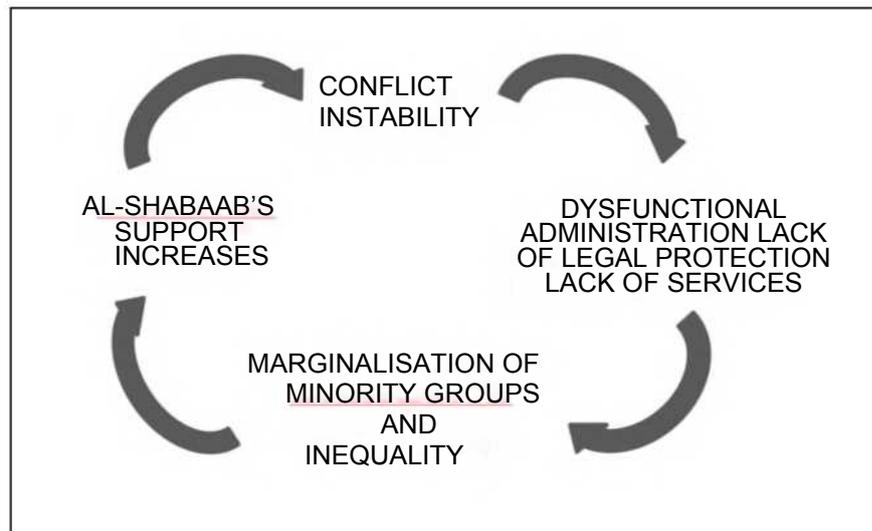
¹⁴⁷ UNHCR.

¹⁴⁸ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia; International development organisation A; UNHCR.

¹⁴⁹ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.



causes more instability, which further undermines the government's capacity and possibility of providing the population with legal protection and other necessary services.¹⁵⁰



Vicious cycle of instability

Reducing support for al-Shabaab and stabilising the situation would require a comprehensive reconciliation process between the different clan groups.¹⁵¹ Mere military seizure of areas from al-Shabaab is not enough; at the same time, there must be intervention in mutual relations between clans and mediation of long-lasting conflicts between them.¹⁵² Furthermore, powerful clans must be able to take various minority groups into consideration at local level and distribute power equally to all groups. The strongest clans cannot assume power unilaterally, because this would enable the existence of opposing powers such as al-Shabaab.¹⁵³ Bantu groups, in particular, should be given more opportunities to participate in political discussions and shaping events. Account should also be taken of equality in this sense in the composition of security forces. They must include representatives of all clans. Otherwise, local residents will intensely mistrust them.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.

¹⁵¹ International organisation B.

¹⁵² Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; International organisation B.

¹⁵³ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.

¹⁵⁴ International organisation B.



2. Political development, and the significance of clans

The process of establishing states for the Federal Republic of Somalia has been completed, and local governments are about to begin operations. Generally speaking, progress has been made in the development of administrative structures and the operations of security authorities. The position of the Federal Republic in relation to member states has diminished, and there have been tensions in the relationships between the Federal Republic and states. At the same time, internal fragmentation has occurred within the governments of both the Federal Republic and the states, and the country's political development has not matched the expectations of citizens.¹⁵⁵

It has been observed that clans with a powerful position within certain states have been consolidating their position. The Ogaden clan has a central role in the government of Jubaland, which has left other groups in a more marginal position. Similar developments have also taken place, to some extent, in the Hirshabelle State, where subgroups of the Hawiye clan have been in a dominant position.¹⁵⁶

Building a credible administration in Somalia is difficult because most of the Somali population has no personal experience of it.¹⁵⁷ They have no practical knowledge of what social justice, freedom and equality mean, or what the establishment of a society constructed on them requires. The current government is clan-based and largely founded on clan quotas and negotiations during which each clan has tried to maximise the number of its own members, in order to promote the interests of its own community. This attitude is depicted by a traditional Somali symbol in which the central government is seen as a milking female camel, and the more of one's own clan members there are milking in the administration, the more one's own community benefits.¹⁵⁸

The significance of clans cannot be overemphasised in Somalia. They are a central part of Somali identity in all of Somalia.¹⁵⁹ In practice, there has been no central government or public services for decades, and the only actor which individuals have been able to trust and receive support from is their own clan.¹⁶⁰ Clan connections and networks enable access to various services and positions of power in society.¹⁶¹ A clan is the operator that helps and which is asked for assistance when necessary, including in relation to security. Citizenship and the related rights are foreign concepts for people in Somalia.¹⁶²

Generally speaking, everyone in Somalia needs the support of their own clan.¹⁶³ The clan offers the possibility of survival and resolving problems related to living in difficult circumstances.¹⁶⁴ In this respect, the clan is a positive force. It is also crucial to the integration process when a person returns to their home country from the diaspora or living as a refugee.¹⁶⁵ Membership of a clan is reciprocal, and every clan member is required to help and support the clan and its members by all means possible.¹⁶⁶ There is a strong and binding spirit of community. It is difficult to make individual choices that are in conflict with the principles and rules adopted by the community. Fear of being excluded from the community represents an extremely serious threat.¹⁶⁷

¹⁵⁵ International organisation B.

¹⁵⁶ International organisation B.

¹⁵⁷ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; International development organisation B.

¹⁵⁸ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.

¹⁵⁹ International development organisation A; International development organisation B; Airi Kähärä.

¹⁶⁰ International development organisation A; International development organisation B.

¹⁶¹ UNHCR.

¹⁶² Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.

¹⁶³ Somali employee of an international NGO.

¹⁶⁴ International development organisation A; Airi Kähärä.

¹⁶⁵ International development organisation B.

¹⁶⁶ International development organisation A.

¹⁶⁷ Airi Kähärä.



In the prevailing culture, the role of clan leaders is socially more important than that of politicians, such as a minister or member of parliament (MP). Every minister and MP is primarily a representative of their own clan and responsible for it. They are responsible for defending the interests of the clan in their work. Clan leaders can turn their clan against the government, if they wish. The clan connection also has a key position in working life. Recruitment for public and private jobs occurs largely on the basis of clan relationships. Persons hiring an employee are deemed to be under a moral obligation to recruit primarily from their own clan. This means that individuals are often not chosen for a job on the basis of their competence and professional skills, but because they belong to the “right” clan. Sometimes, this can mean selecting a candidate with unsuitable competencies who cannot read or write.¹⁶⁸

The current Parliament of Somalia was elected on a clan basis, and all key political institutions are based on the division of clans. The next elections in the country are due to be held in 2020, in accordance with the principle of direct democracy. In this case, everyone entitled to vote can do so for the candidate deemed appropriate, regardless of clan. If this actually happens, it will reduce the significance of clans. However, it is presumed that the prevailing culture will not change quickly and that clans will continue to maintain a strong role in various sectors of society, such as the appointment of officials, getting a job, political organisations, and the distribution of resources.¹⁶⁹

3. Remigration to Somalia, and migration within the country

The Somali economy has relied and continues to rely strongly on agriculture and cattle breeding. Besides these, the energy sector (charcoal) and fishing play an important role. In cities, most people earn their living as independent entrepreneurs in the unofficial sector.¹⁷⁰

In rural areas, maintaining the viability of old sources of livelihood is increasingly more difficult as the environment changes and long, successive periods of drought occur with ever greater frequency. During the latest drought, nomads in some areas lost 80% of their cattle and many pastures turned to desert. Restoring the number of cattle will take years - provided that rainfall is normal and the grazing grounds remain viable.¹⁷¹

Generally speaking, living conditions in the countryside are extremely harsh. Rural areas have a shortage of water, and the road network is non-existent and in poor condition. Very few services are available outside Mogadishu and receiving health care, for instance, often requires travelling long distances. Expectant mothers must frequently travel far to see a midwife, or vice versa. Sometimes, a midwife arrives after the baby has already been born. Cattle breeders cannot obtain veterinary services. The unstable security circumstances make access to services difficult.¹⁷²

People have moved to cities from rural areas that have become increasingly infertile.¹⁷³ The city of Baidoa, for example, has three or four times more inhabitants than before.¹⁷⁴ Since

¹⁶⁸ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu; Representative of an international NGO.

¹⁶⁹ International development organisation A.

¹⁷⁰ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.

¹⁷¹ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu; International organisation A.

¹⁷² Somali researcher living in Mogadishu; Representative of an international NGO.

¹⁷³ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu; International organisation B.

¹⁷⁴ International organisation B.



opportunities for making a living in the countryside have significantly deteriorated, returning to the home region is more difficult than before.¹⁷⁵

This accelerating urbanisation is creating growing socioeconomic problems. People who previously made their living as nomads are forced to settle in unhygienic conditions in IDP camps located in cities, with no services or livelihoods. The risk is that cities and towns turn into ghettos, and that crime and prostitution increases.¹⁷⁶

In general, people living in Somalia have few possibilities to build a life there, so many young people try to leave for Europe, for instance, in hope of a better life. For some, joining al-Shabaab provides an opportunity to earn a living.¹⁷⁷

The composition of clans in cities is transforming due to urbanisation, and this is causing tensions in clan-based power structures. If the country adopts direct elections, including the principle of a general and equal right to vote, as planned, a significant group of Bantus generated by internal migration, for example, may challenge the prevailing clan-based power elite in Mogadishu. This may cause a new conflict in the long term.¹⁷⁸

The consolidation of people in cities has created an increasing number of land disputes. People who have lived in the diaspora and succeeded there have returned to their home region and now claim ownership of lands that used to belong to their immediate or extended family. This has resulted in the eviction of thousands of people living in IDP camps in Mogadishu, for instance. The problem has been exacerbated by the underdeveloped legal framework in general, and regarding land ownership and the protection of property in particular.¹⁷⁹ Conflicts over land disputes will presumably intensify in Mogadishu.¹⁸⁰

Internal migration and remigration from abroad have also been directed at Kismayo. The city's population has grown by 30% in a short period of time. It is estimated that Kismayo has almost 300,000 residents. Internal migration has brought a total of 70,000 new inhabitants to the city. People have moved there from other southern parts of the country to escape the drought, and to flee from al-Shabaab. Many families have wanted to take their children to safety from forced recruitment by al-Shabaab, or to avoid paying taxes demanded by the organisation.¹⁸¹

Population pressure directed at cities in the south has been increased by remigration from abroad. According to some estimates, 80% of the refugees who have returned from Dadaab to Somalia went to live in the Jubaland region, particularly Kismayo.¹⁸² There, some of them ended up in IDP camps. According to the UNHCR, a total of more than 75,000 refugees returned to Somalia from Dadaab between December 2014 and January 2018. A key reason for deciding to return was the threat by Kenyan authorities to close down the camp in Dadaab.¹⁸³

Return migration following the threat to shut down Dadaab came at a bad time, because the Jubaland region was suffering from lack of water and food due to the drought that continued until spring 2018. The quality of potable water is poor because of its high salinity. People must dig deeper than before to obtain pure drinking water. Kismayo has hardly any services available. Its hospitals are in extremely bad condition. The local cholera treatment centre is a facility under the

¹⁷⁵ International organisation A.

¹⁷⁶ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.

¹⁷⁷ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia; International development organisation A.

¹⁷⁸ International organisation B; UNHCR.

¹⁷⁹ UNHCR.

¹⁸⁰ International development organisation A.

¹⁸¹ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

¹⁸² Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia; International organisation B; UNHCR.

¹⁸³ UNHCR.



open sky, where patients lie, cheek by jowl, on old beds, even though they should be isolated. Most schools in the area are private schools that charge a fee, and returnees or local internally displaced persons cannot afford them. Conditions have been further undermined by the increased number of residents and local demand. The number of people entering hospitals has doubled. There are also fewer job opportunities.¹⁸⁴

The high number of returnees has raised housing prices in Kismayo. To facilitate refugees' return from Dadaab, everyone who has returned from the camp has been given \$200 and a special integration allowance to acquire a home, for instance. No similar support has been given to IDPs who have moved from within the country's borders, such as from the Middle Juba region to Kismayo. Such treatment, which has been regarded as unequal, has caused tensions within the population.¹⁸⁵

In 2016, the government of Jubaland twice urged the UNHCR to suspend the voluntary remigration of refugees due to miserable circumstances. The Jubaland government itself did not have sufficient capacity to accept all returnees, and the central government of Somalia was unable to provide support for their reception.¹⁸⁶

Despite the deficient conditions, many refugees want to return to their home country because life in refugee camps is even more difficult. Camp life is an existence without any vision or opportunity for relocation. However, many of the returnees are unable to move to their home region, the Middle Jubba Region, due to the threat posed by al-Shabaab, and as a result they often end up in Kismayo.¹⁸⁷

Many refugees returning from Dadaab are members of the Digil-Mirifle clan or marginal groups, such as Bantus.¹⁸⁸ Members of marginal groups often have weaker support networks in Somalia, which makes returning more difficult than usual. For example, they have more limited possibilities of gaining access to humanitarian aid.¹⁸⁹

At present, the UNHCR does not promote the general remigration of refugees from Dadaab to Somalia. The organisation only supports individual refugees who have made the decision to return. It endeavours to provide enough up-to-date information on local circumstances to possible returnees, so they can make the right decision.¹⁹⁰

The UNHCR has helped approximately 400 Somali refugees move back to the refugee camp in Dadaab, because they had some specific difficulties in Somalia after their return. According to the UNHCR, reasons for return included insecurity, fear of recruitment by al-Shabaab, conflicts between clans, and high living costs for education and other basic services, for instance.¹⁹¹

In addition to remigration by refugees and migration within the country, some people have returned to Kismayo from the diaspora. Those returning from the diaspora usually have dual citizenship, special skills, and a strong support network that helps them to find a job or establish their own business.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁴ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

¹⁸⁵ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

¹⁸⁶ UNHCR; Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

¹⁸⁷ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

¹⁸⁸ International organisation B; International organisation A.

¹⁸⁹ International organisation A; International organisation B.

¹⁹⁰ UNHCR.

¹⁹¹ UNHCR.

¹⁹² Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.



Returning to Somalia is difficult for any person with a Somali background who has no close family members or another social network created through a clan. Personal financial resources compensate for the lack of a network and help people to begin a new life in Somalia, because returnees can live off their assets and acquire paid security and other services.¹⁹³ For people without a network or money, returning to Somalia is difficult, whether they are returning voluntarily or by force. Due to the challenges related to such return, those moving to Somalia of their own volition plan their return for a long time, even several years.¹⁹⁴ Some returnees have established restaurants and hotels.¹⁹⁵

A personal network is important with regard to business activity and employment, for example. Job opportunities are few and far between, and finding a job is very difficult for both locals and people who have resided abroad for a long time. The jobs that are available are largely handed out through clan networks.¹⁹⁶ Establishing a company also requires a clan network and connections opened through it to people in a good social position.¹⁹⁷ The clan network is of great significance everywhere in Somalia, but especially important outside the capital city.¹⁹⁸

The population of the capital city has a heterogenous clan background. A member of any clan can live in Mogadishu and a clan background, as such, does not restrict settlement in the capital city. In practice, coping with life and making a living in the challenging circumstances of the capital city require a functioning network - unless the person has enough assets to pay for necessary services and personal upkeep.¹⁹⁹ All services are subject to a charge, and the general cost is extremely high.²⁰⁰ There are no free public services in practice.²⁰¹ For many households, receiving money from diaspora is a vital resource.²⁰²

In principle, anyone in Mogadishu can start a small-scale business, such as opening a café or setting up a fruit stand. Obtaining official documents and a permit for business operation is relatively easy. In practice, however, being an entrepreneur is difficult since locals primarily buy necessary basic supplies and services from entrepreneurs who belong to their own clan. The capital city has a cosmopolitan clan background, but members of different clans are not in an equal position with regard to business activities or business in general. The city is fragmented into different clans' spheres of influence, and the clan background is relevant in all areas of life. Before long, everyone's clan background becomes clear in daily interaction with other people. For new entrepreneurs arriving in the city from outside, gaining a foothold and customers in the marketplace is difficult due to the intense competition in all business fields. Local police officers can extort people and demand fees, or even prevent an entrepreneur without a support network and connections from doing business. Networks created through the clan connection are important for securing the operating conditions and success of a company.²⁰³

Starting a business is particularly difficult in fields where customers include international organisations of the government of Somalia. Competition for good and profitable customers among Somali businesses is intense, and creating a customer relationship with one requires

¹⁹³ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; Representative of an international NGO; International development organisation B.

¹⁹⁴ International development organisation B.

¹⁹⁵ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.

¹⁹⁶ Representative of an international NGO; International development organisation B; Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.

¹⁹⁷ International development organisation B; Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.

¹⁹⁸ Somali employee of an international NGO; International development organisation A.

¹⁹⁹ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; Representative of an international NGO.

²⁰⁰ Representative of an international NGO; International development organisation B.

²⁰¹ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu; Representative of an international NGO.

²⁰² Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.

²⁰³ Somali employee of an international NGO; Somali researcher living in Mogadishu; International development organisation A; Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.



particularly good contacts and intermediaries working for a fee. The same applies to more significant business operations, such as trade with foreign countries. Some business fields are completely closed to newcomers because of entrepreneurs who have dominated operations within them, in a monopolist position, for years. In addition, entrepreneurs usually have contacts at the highest political level, which they use to protect their business activities from competitors.²⁰⁴

Many people who have moved to Mogadishu from the countryside have been forced to return to areas controlled by al-Shabaab, because they have been unable to settle in the capital city, i.e., find a home and make a living.²⁰⁵

Returning to Somalia is more difficult for women than men, and there are few women among the returnees. A few women have returned after receiving an offer of high office in government. The Minister of Gender in the government of Jubaland, for example, is a diaspora Somali from the United States. Some women have returned to manage land owned by their parents.²⁰⁶

A woman returning to Somalia needs a support network to accept her. In practice, a “network” means a community comprising close family members and led by a male relative.²⁰⁷ In addition to a husband, a woman can be protected by her father or brother.²⁰⁸ Somali women are unlikely to be without or not to know of (male) relatives in Somalia/Somaliland. Families in Somalia are often very large. Because the immediate and extended family are very important, knowing one’s relatives is highly significant.²⁰⁹

Since women are more vulnerable than men, social networks are particularly important for them.²¹⁰ Families headed by an unaccompanied female are more exposed to malnutrition, for example, and women themselves have a higher risk of becoming victims of sexual violence. Due to the challenges related to returning, an unaccompanied woman is unlikely to return to Somalia without a support network that helps her to adapt and become integrated.²¹¹

A network is necessary for managing practical matters, and life without one is difficult for an unaccompanied woman. For instance, it is hard for a woman to rent, sell or buy a house or residence by herself. Landlords usually ask women questions about their clan, and an unaccompanied female tenant can be regarded as a prostitute, making it difficult to find a home.²¹²

An unaccompanied woman living without a husband is exposed to sexual violence because she is deemed to be “fair game”. This pertains to all women, not merely IDPs living at camps.²¹³

²⁰⁴ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.

²⁰⁵ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.

²⁰⁶ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

²⁰⁷ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia; International development organisation A.

²⁰⁸ Airi Kähärä.

²⁰⁹ Airi Kähärä; International development organisation A.

²¹⁰ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.

²¹¹ International organisation A.

²¹² Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia; International development organisation A.

²¹³ Airi Kähärä.



4. Situation of women

4.1. Women in working life

Women play a central role in making a living for their families.²¹⁴ After the civil war, men's roles in families changed and women became the principal breadwinners, generally speaking.²¹⁵ Most men are not in work.²¹⁶ According to one source, a man is the main breadwinner in only 20% of all families.²¹⁷

Women have some cultural constraints regarding employment. They cannot drive a taxi, for example.²¹⁸ They can, however, establish small businesses.²¹⁹ In general, they earn income from small-scale business activity, such as selling items in markets. They sell fuel, milk, meat, fruit, vegetables and khat at markets and on the street.²²⁰ In all, 80-90% of small enterprises are controlled by women.²²¹ Women also work in agriculture and on building sites. However, construction work is one of the least-respected occupations in Somalia, and a woman working at a building site is deemed to be in a desperate position.²²² Somalia has a high unemployment rate, so it can be difficult for a woman to find work of any kind.²²³

If a single mother works outside her home, a relative will look after her children. An extended family member usually acts as the nanny during times when the custodian is prevented from looking after her children, for one reason or another.²²⁴

Men and women do not have an equal position in business in Somalia.²²⁵ Men do not trust women as business partners, instead a woman needs a man to "vouch for her". Any business activity requires a woman to have a personal network that includes men. In addition, women cannot rely on the elders of their own clan without help from a close male relative.²²⁶

There are a few strong women at the top of business life in Somalia, some of whom earn millions.²²⁷ For instance, the largest construction company in Mogadishu is headed by a woman. However, this is the exception to the rule.²²⁸ Women are also involved in the restaurant and hotel business.²²⁹ Neither a woman nor a man can establish a large enterprise or one engaged in foreign trade, for example, without a comprehensive support network and strong clan.²³⁰ A network is not important merely for setting up a business and getting started, but provides necessary support during negotiations that are continuously conducted in the business world dominated by men.²³¹

²¹⁴ International development organisation B.

²¹⁵ Airi Kähärä.

²¹⁶ International development organisation B.

²¹⁷ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.

²¹⁸ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

²¹⁹ Somali women's organisation; Somali employee of an international NGO; International development organisation B.

²²⁰ Somali employee of an international NGO; Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; International development organisation B.

²²¹ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; International development organisation B.

²²² Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

²²³ Somali employee of an international NGO.

²²⁴ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.

²²⁵ International development organisation A.

²²⁶ International development organisation B.

²²⁷ Somali expert on administration and security circumstances; Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.

²²⁸ International development organisation A.

²²⁹ Somali employee of an international NGO.

²³⁰ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu; International organisation A.

²³¹ International development organisation A.



In trading, women are accepted as entrepreneurs who are equal to men. When people want to buy something, they do not care whether the other party is male or female. What is essential is the price and quality of the product or service. A woman's clan background can also influence who one trades with.²³²

In Somaliland, women are able to work and keep the money they earn from the job. When necessary, a religious leader can take a stand on the basis of the Quran and intervene in a spouse's attempt to seize the money earned by a woman.²³³

Women in Somaliland can do practically any work whatsoever and seek positions that interest them, including more demanding professions. They can act as supervisors for men, but winning esteem and respect requires a clear age difference in the woman's favour. Becoming an entrepreneur in a business that needs capital is more difficult, because this requires a network for the arrangement of funding.²³⁴

In Somaliland, people with a higher education look more favourably on women holding a high position in society and acting as managers. Those who are less highly educated usually have more conservative values, making it more difficult to accept women who are in managerial positions and exercise social/political power. Traditionally, women in Somaliland have stayed at home and looked after the family and children, while men have earned a living. When women are gainfully employed, this means, in practice, less demanding duties such as selling *khat* or other items in marketplaces.²³⁵

In Somalia, opportunities to find employment among women who have moved from a rural to an urban area are undermined by their lack of education and professional skills. Women can, however, wash clothes, for instance. Improving their employment opportunities would require education and projects to enhance their skill sets.²³⁶

4.2. Prostitution

Prostitution is taboo in Somalia, and it is extremely difficult for a Somali woman to openly work as a prostitute.²³⁷ It does exist as a phenomenon, and there are "call girls" in the country. In practice, prostitution is covert and is not discussed openly.²³⁸ If other people found out that a woman worked as a prostitute, she would be in serious trouble. Her own community would disapprove of her actions and would exclude her.²³⁹ The stigma due to working as a prostitute would last throughout her life, and she would be unable to marry.²⁴⁰ The same disgrace could extend to her entire clan.²⁴¹ Still, there are prostitutes in the country, and women earning their living in this way are mainly members of minority groups. There is an IDP camp in Kismayo that is known as a "red light district".²⁴² The country also has prostitutes from Ethiopia and Kenya.²⁴³

²³² Somali expert on administration and security circumstances.

²³³ Airi Kähärä.

²³⁴ Airi Kähärä.

²³⁵ Airi Kähärä.

²³⁶ Somali women's organisation.

²³⁷ Somali women's organisation.

²³⁸ International development organisation B; Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.

²³⁹ International development organisation B.

²⁴⁰ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.

²⁴¹ International development organisation B.

²⁴² Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

²⁴³ International development organisation B.



Open prostitution is also impossible in Somaliland. It is practised, but in great secrecy and in closed facilities. Prostitution is regarded as one of the gravest sins, and a person can be killed for it - although there are no reported accounts of this happening. Prostitution is a deadly sin for both men and women.²⁴⁴

According to a report published by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) a few years ago, there were 30 male prostitutes in Hargeisa.²⁴⁵

4.3. Marriage

Due to the vulnerable position of girls and women, marriage is of great significance for a woman. Through marriage, a woman receives protection from her husband and his clan. From this perspective, the difference between a voluntary and a necessary/forced marriage is scarcely perceptible. Women are under intense pressure to marry in order to secure their own position.²⁴⁶

A marriage in Somalia is not necessarily a matter based on free choice between two individuals and founded on love. Marriage is also used to form alliances between families and clans, so immediate and extended families are strongly involved when a person chooses a spouse.²⁴⁷

Marriages between people in different clans are commonplace.²⁴⁸ Somalia has some clans that are looked down on, and parents feel that men/boys and women/girls who belong to them would make a poor spouse for their own son/daughter. Individuals in such despised clans are regarded as second-class citizens, and communities exert strong pressure on their members not to marry a member of such a group. Such attitudes are so negative and discriminatory that children in powerful clans may not even play with children from these groups. In rural areas in particular, a family may abandon a daughter or son who marries a person belonging to a minority group.²⁴⁹ Mixed marriages between individuals in marginal groups and powerful clans are rare.²⁵⁰ They do occur, however, and they are possible at least in Mogadishu, which has a heterogenous clan background and where all clans are represented. It is also the place to where a couple that has married against the parents' will can move. A mixed marriage would be a talking point for a while, but would be accepted sooner or later.²⁵¹

Arranged marriages are less common in Mogadishu, because educated women returning from the diaspora usually object to any arrangements made for them. They want to choose their spouse by themselves, which is atypical among nomad families in rural areas. Generally speaking, arranged marriages are not viewed as a problem among the population, even amongst the younger generations. One party may be unhappy with a marriage arranged by relatives and the spouse, but they usually resign themselves to the situation and the will of their immediate/extended family, as marriage is of greater significance to the community than personal likes.²⁵²

Alongside arranged marriages, Somalia has had a tradition of "*runaway marriages*" based on Islam. In such cases, young people wanting to be together elope sufficiently far away from home to enter into a marriage their parents would not necessarily approve of. After a marriage has been

²⁴⁴ Airi Kähärä.

²⁴⁵ International development organisation B.

²⁴⁶ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

²⁴⁷ International development organisation A.

²⁴⁸ International development organisation B.

²⁴⁹ International development organisation B.

²⁵⁰ International development organisation A; International development organisation B.

²⁵¹ International development organisation B.

²⁵² International development organisation A.



concluded, the parents and families are forced to accept the union. Many couples previously travelled from Mogadishu to Merca to be married according to this tradition. This is currently impossible for security reasons. The culture has changed, and young people may have more of a say in choosing their spouse. According to estimates by a Somali women's organisation, in approximately 80% of all marriages in Somalia the parties were able to choose their partner freely.²⁵³

Girls usually marry at the age of 10-16. The spouse may be a young man, or a male who is clearly older than the girl.²⁵⁴ Marriages between minors are commonplace in rural areas. It is typical of families to agree on their children's future marriages beforehand (engagement). The actual marriage is concluded once the girl reaches puberty.²⁵⁵ Girls are married off young because pregnancy out of wedlock is an extremely negative issue. It is deemed a disgrace to the entire family. A child born due to an extramarital relationship and its mother have a difficult life. In the worst case, a child born out of wedlock and the mother are abandoned by the rest of the extended family.²⁵⁶ Some mothers give away a child born out of wedlock, but some such children end up on the street as orphans.²⁵⁷

4.4. Divorce

Divorcing a spouse is a normal occurrence in Somalia, and the country has a high number of divorces.²⁵⁸ These days, divorce is more acceptable than before, and there are many divorced women as well as women who have been married more than once. In principle, divorce is not a stigma for a divorced woman, but local communities have varying attitudes towards such women.²⁵⁹

Divorce, as such, does not stigmatise a woman, but if a man wants to divorce a woman, the female can be easily blamed. She can be deemed burdensome or difficult, especially if marital problems are caused by her refusal to accept the husband's other wives. Community members may think that if religion permits a man to have four wives, the woman must accept this. The Quran should not be opposed or questioned.²⁶⁰

A divorced woman must wait for 4.5 months before she can start dating a new man. If she is pregnant, she must give birth before she can start dating again.²⁶¹

As a rule, the man proposes and decides on a divorce. Getting divorced is easy for a man, it is enough that he verbally expresses his desire for divorce three times. It is more difficult for a woman to get a divorce, and she must be able to present rational grounds for it.²⁶² Such reasons include, e.g., that the man does not bear responsibility and look after his family appropriately.²⁶³ A woman often needs her own clan's support to be able to divorce her husband.²⁶⁴

The number of divorces in Somaliland has grown. At the same time, the number of new marriages and reconstituted families has increased. It is typical within the relationship culture that

²⁵³ Somali women's organisation.

²⁵⁴ International development organisation A.

²⁵⁵ Somali women's organisation; International development organisation A.

²⁵⁶ Somali women's organisation.

²⁵⁷ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.

²⁵⁸ International organisation B; International organisation A.

²⁵⁹ International organisation A; International development organisation B.

²⁶⁰ Airi Kähärä.

²⁶¹ International development organisation B.

²⁶² International organisation B; International organisation A.

²⁶³ Airi Kähärä.

²⁶⁴ International development organisation B.



a man is deemed to have a right to sex and the wife's body, regardless of the woman's wishes. There have also been cases in Somaliland where a man has believed to have a right to sexual intercourse with his spouse's daughters, i.e., his stepdaughters. The court in Burao has heard 13 cases of rape since 2017, and in four of these the victim was a daughter in the reconstituted family and the rapist was the daughter's stepfather.²⁶⁵

The number of single mothers is on the increase in Somaliland due to divorces. In Somali culture, children always remain in the custody of the mother in a divorce, and it is possible for a woman to raise her children alone without marrying again. As a consequence of a divorce, a woman usually moves, with her children, back to the vicinity of her own parents or other family members, who can help her to bring up the children. The children's father remains engaged in matters related to the upbringing and education of the children, and shares in the expenses incurred.²⁶⁶

When al-Shabaab retreated from Kismayo on 2012, many of its fighters left their wife and children in the city. Some of the women and children who had left with the men gradually returned, for the chance to attend school and gain access to health services. There is an area in Kismayo where families of al-Shabaab's fighters live. In 2017, the government of Jubaland decided to drive them out of the city, and at least 65 families were forced to get on a bus and move to areas controlled by al-Shabaab. The same actions were also taken in the South West Somalia state. However, this forced move drew intense criticism and it was discontinued.²⁶⁷

4.5. Dating culture

There is virtually no free dating culture among young people in Somalia in the Western sense of the word, and young girls cannot have a boyfriend in the traditional meaning. Girls and women cannot move around alone outdoors after sunset. However, young women and girls are able to meet other people. A young girl can ask her parents whether she can invite a boy she knows to come over. The girl's parents must get to know the boy's parents first. If a girl plans to marry a certain boy, they can go out for dinner, for example. In such a case, the boy is not a boyfriend but is regarded as the girl's future husband. Such a relationship is more serious than friendship. A couple that is about to marry cannot live together until they have concluded the marriage, in order to avoid having a child born out of wedlock.²⁶⁸

The social media have enabled more active, secret social lives and sexual interaction for young people. They can use the social media to contact one another and agree on meetings without the knowledge of their immediate community. Young people have met each other in cars and outside urban areas. During the last few months in Somaliland, meetings agreed on via the social media have involved several cases of gang rape. A meeting agreed between a young boy and a girl was joined by the boy's friends, who gang-raped the girl.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁵ Airi Kähärä.

²⁶⁶ Airi Kähärä.

²⁶⁷ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

²⁶⁸ International development organisation B.

²⁶⁹ Airi Kähärä.



4.6. Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C)

Female genital mutilation is still almost a universal phenomenon in Somalia.²⁷⁰ When Somali women between the ages of 40 and 50 are asked about it, they all say they have been circumcised. However, no comprehensive study of the current situation, divided by age category, has been completed recently. Circumcision is most commonplace in rural areas.²⁷¹

The incidence of FGM/C is slowly decreasing²⁷², and work against the procedure continues.²⁷³ In the past, 98% of all women have been cut, but by 2015 that figure had fallen by 3 percentage points, to 95%, according to the Ministry of Health.²⁷⁴ This figure has continued to drop. According to estimates by the country's Ministry of Health, it stands at approx. 90% today.²⁷⁵ According to Abdirizak Hassan Ali, the Director of the Banadir Hospital in Mogadishu, the incidence of FGM/C in Somalia is decreasing.²⁷⁶

In 2014, an NGO called the Network against FGM/C in Somaliland (NAFIS) published a study on female genital mutilation in Somaliland. According to a report based on interviews with 1,986 women, FGM/C remains almost universal in Somaliland. The study says that 99% of women in rural areas and 98% in urban areas have been circumcised. This study does not support the claim that the incidence of FGM/C is diminishing. However, it does indicate that the form of mutilation is changing. The incidence of the most drastic form called "pharaonic circumcision"²⁷⁷ has fallen,²⁷⁸ and the proportion of other forms has increased.²⁷⁹ The pharaonic form remains common in rural areas²⁸⁰ where it accounts for 82% of circumcisions, and 80% in urban areas. Many people still believe that pharaonic circumcision is an important obligation, required by Islam.²⁸¹

In most cases, circumcision is performed on girls when they are 2-14 years of age.²⁸² In Somaliland, girls are usually circumcised before they go to school, at the age of 3 to 5.²⁸³

Women are not circumcised in hospitals or clinics.²⁸⁴ The Banadir Hospital in Mogadishu objects to FGM/C in all of its forms. Women who have been there as patients are never circumcised or sown over again after childbirth. Sowing over after delivery is possible in the countryside, but it is not very common in urban areas.²⁸⁵

Events are still held in rural areas of Somaliland, in which all girls of suitable age are circumcised.²⁸⁶ Cutting is usually performed by a known circumciser, who visits families and cuts

²⁷⁰ Somali women's organisation.

²⁷¹ International development organisation B.

²⁷² Representative of the Ministry of Health in Somalia; International development organisation B.

²⁷³ International development organisation B.

²⁷⁴ Representative of the Ministry of Health in Somalia.

²⁷⁵ Representative of the Ministry of Health in Somalia.

²⁷⁶ Abdirizak Hassan Ali, M.D., Director of the Banadir Hospital.

²⁷⁷ Edna Adan Hospital [undated] on the forms of circumcision: What is Female Genital Mutilation?

<http://www.ednahospital.org/hospital-mission/female-genital-mutilation/> and the WHO 2018: Classification of female genital mutilation: <http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/fgm/overview/en/>

²⁷⁸ International development organisation A; International development organisation B.

²⁷⁹ International development organisation B.

²⁸⁰ Airi Kähärä.

²⁸¹ International development organisation A.

²⁸² International development organisation A.

²⁸³ Airi Kähärä.

²⁸⁴ Representative of the Ministry of Health in Somalia.

²⁸⁵ Abdirizak Hassan Ali, M.D., Director of the Banadir Hospital.

²⁸⁶ Airi Kähärä.



girls according to the family's wishes. The ceremonial, ritual nature previously associated with circumcisions has disappeared.²⁸⁷

The *sunna* is becoming the most common form of FGM/C.²⁸⁸ It has been the most common cutting method for girls born since 1985 in particular, although the number of girls who are completely uncut has also been growing.²⁸⁹ The sunna form is giving way to the II and III forms of circumcision. A strong positive and moral charge is still linked to FGM/C of girls, and as a result there is intense pressure within communities to have its girls cut.²⁹⁰ Girls who have not been cut are deemed impure (*haraam*), especially in less educated families in the countryside.²⁹¹

The forms of the sunna type of FGM/C can vary considerably. At its "mildest", it can be a symbolic procedure during which a cut is made in the girl's clitoris. It may also be a larger operation during which a girl's labia major are removed, for instance. In practice, the way the sunna is performed depends on the person doing the cutting. Even if the parents express a preference about the extent of the operation, the cutter may decide to cut the girl more drastically than the parents wished, even in the pharaonic form. Whatever the form of cutting, it is extremely traumatising for those who undergo the operation. Regardless of their age, women remember the day when they were cut.²⁹²

In most cases, the whole community knows which girls have been cut and which have not.²⁹³ Young people and families discuss the matter, and information spreads during ordinary social interaction. Whether a girl has or has not been cut is also revealed when she is about to be married. It is asked of her when the possibility of marriage is considered.²⁹⁴

In practice, the decision on whether or not to cut a girl is made by the girl's mother.²⁹⁵ Women - especially in rural areas - tend to favour their daughters being cut. Girls' grandmothers refer to tradition and traditional values in their culture, which claim that cutting is an important process. Men are usually more open to the idea of not having a girl cut.²⁹⁶

It is difficult to spare a girl from being cut if the only person opposing it is the girl's mother. It is easier if the girl's father also objects to the operation, because the father is a very important person and has the power to decide against cutting.²⁹⁷ However, some women may try to have a girl cut without the father's knowledge.²⁹⁸ It is difficult for a girl's own relatives to cut her without the mother's permission, as most mothers stay at home and can watch over their daughters. No help against the threat of FGM is available from the public authorities.²⁹⁹

If a girl's own immediate community demands that she be cut, resisting its views and the ensuing social pressure is difficult. The fear of being excluded from a community is a significant threat.³⁰⁰ If a family decides not to have their female child cut, it usually tries to keep the decision secret.³⁰¹

²⁸⁷ International development organisation A.

²⁸⁸ Somali women's organisation.

²⁸⁹ International development organisation B; Representative of the Ministry of Health in Somalia.

²⁹⁰ Representative of the Ministry of Health in Somalia.

²⁹¹ Somali women's organisation.

²⁹² Airi Kähärä.

²⁹³ International development organisation A; Airi Kähärä.

²⁹⁴ International development organisation A.

²⁹⁵ Airi Kähärä.

²⁹⁶ Representative of the Ministry of Health in Somalia; International development organisation B.

²⁹⁷ Representative of the Ministry of Health in Somalia.

²⁹⁸ International development organisation B.

²⁹⁹ Airi Kähärä.

³⁰⁰ Airi Kähärä.

³⁰¹ Somali women's organisation.



People can prohibit their own daughter from being cut. Help for people who decide not to cut a girl is available from peer groups of like-minded mothers.³⁰²

Nowadays, people in Somalia are able to talk about FGM/C and discuss the matter openly.³⁰³ Members of educated, urban families, in particular, can contemplate whether cutting/mutilating girls is right or wrong. The tradition is still strongly alive in the countryside, however, and opposing and questioning it in rural areas is difficult. This is true despite efforts to expand education outside urban areas.³⁰⁴ Resisting genital mutilation is not a problem in cities, and more and more girls remain uncut.³⁰⁵

Education concerning FGM/C has had an influence, and there have been changes in attitudes. Many of those who previously supporting the mutilation/cutting of girls have begun to object to the tradition. However, many people are unwilling to talk publicly about changing their opinion, due to the general atmosphere in which traditions are respected. Local community leaders have privately taken a stand against mutilation, but they have been unwilling to issue public statements or declarations against it.³⁰⁶

Leaders of religious and local communities play an important role in the discontinuation of mutilation and discussion on the matter. They have also participated in this discussion.³⁰⁷ In Somaliland, religious leaders have issued a 10-point *fatwa* against female genital mutilation/cutting.³⁰⁸ In Friday sermons, they have also criticised circumcisions of girls, and some of them are members of a network that objects to circumcision. Resistance against FGM/C has proceeded furthest in the Somaliland region, where workshops are arranged almost every week to root out the phenomenon.³⁰⁹

Education against female circumcision has borne fruit in Somaliland. The incidence of operations has gradually decreased, and the form of operation has become less drastic. Where mutilation is still performed, it is increasingly of the “sunna” type rather than the earlier, more drastic pharaonic type. Religious Somali scholars recently issued a *fatwa* condemning the pharaonic type, but the significance and impact of the *fatwa* remains unclear at this point. Still, the issuance of a *fatwa* alone is an indication of the gradual progress made by education against mutilation.³¹⁰

Due to the effect of education and people returning from the diaspora, young Somali girls and boys living in rural areas, in particular, would like to discontinue circumcisions. Not being cut is not an impediment to marriage for young girls.³¹¹ More and more Somali men would prefer a spouse who has not been cut.³¹²

Many people in Somalia feel that the pharaonic form of female circumcision should be prohibited and that the *sunna* type of cutting should be adopted instead. This is the case in Puntland, for example, where an act prohibiting the pharaonic form entered into force in 2012. The same law encourages a transfer to the sunna form. The significance and procedure of sunna are unclear, however.³¹³

³⁰² Airi Kähärä.

³⁰³ Somali women’s organisation; International development organisation A; International organisation A; Representative of the Ministry of Health in Somalia.

³⁰⁴ International development organisation A; International development organisation B; International organisation A.

³⁰⁵ International development organisation B.

³⁰⁶ International development organisation A.

³⁰⁷ International development organisation A; International organisation A.

³⁰⁸ International development organisation A.

³⁰⁹ International development organisation B.

³¹⁰ Airi Kähärä.

³¹¹ International development organisation A.

³¹² International NGO B.

³¹³ International development organisation A.



The official policy in Puntland and Somaliland objects to circumcision, and legislation is being prepared in the regions to prohibit the practice.³¹⁴

4.7. Violence against women

Violence against women in Somalia is under-reported. In most cases, women who have been victims of violence or rape do not want to talk about it in public. Being raped often involves shame and stigmatization, and there is no legal protection against rape. Furthermore, women who have been raped do not have access to the appropriate health care. So, reporting it would be pointless.³¹⁵

Of the women who have left Somalia, 80% have experienced some kind of violence and 60% say they are victims of sexual violence.³¹⁶

In Somalia, sexual violence is commonplace, and reports say it has increased during the past year.³¹⁷ It is particularly common among women who have been forced to leave their home. The risk of sexual violence increases when people pass through checkpoints maintained by armed groups, such as al-Shabaab or the Somali army. Men carrying guns can rape women as a “fee” for getting through a checkpoint. Women can be forced out of a bus that has been stopped at a checkpoint and raped. The threat of rape concerns all women travelling within the country’s borders. It is irrelevant which clan a woman belongs to, because a clan cannot protect a woman during transits.³¹⁸

Sexual violence is also commonplace in insecure IDP camps, where women lack a community that is sufficiently able to protect them. IDP camps are monitored by “gatekeepers” but violations of rights, such as rape, take place within them. The risk of violence increases when women go to toilets located at the edges of camps, or when they collect firewood outside camps.³¹⁹ Most rape victims are women, but even young boys have been raped. Unaccompanied women are at higher risk of being raped. The perpetrators of sexual violence are often armed males, local men living in IDP camps and in their vicinity, and landowners. Reports say that even Somali police officers and soldiers, as well as al-Shabaab’s fighters, have committed rape.³²⁰ Aside from sporadic, individual cases, the authorities in Somaliland have not been guilty of rape.³²¹

Rape strongly stigmatizes the victim, and if a community knows that a woman has been raped, she has a hard time finding a spouse who will accept her. Obtaining legal protection against sexual violence is difficult.³²² There is no specific basis for the related norms. Crimes concerning sexual violence can be processed within the framework of Sharia law. Sentencing a guilty person requires three witnesses according to Sharia, and this is practically impossible in rape cases. Justice has often been served according to the customary law called *xeer* in cases of rape. However, it is difficult for a woman to obtain justice in this manner.³²³ Rape offences are typically

³¹⁴ International development organisation B.

³¹⁵ International organisation B; International organisation A.

³¹⁶ International organisation A.

³¹⁷ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

³¹⁸ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia; International development organisation B; Somali women’s organisation.

³¹⁹ Somali women’s organisation; Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia; International development organisation B.

³²⁰ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia; International development organisation A; Airi Kähärä.

³²¹ Airi Kähärä.

³²² Somali women’s organisation; International organisation.

³²³ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.



settled by exchanges of money between communities, and the related decisions are not always just for the women concerned.³²⁴ Women who have been raped have sometimes sought justice in courts of law run by al-Shabaab.³²⁵

Domestic violence is commonplace.³²⁶ It is common for men to assault their wives, and women do not openly talk or complain about this.³²⁷ Domestic violence is also common in Somaliland. Conflicts between families often escalate into violence, particularly when men behave aggressively under the influence of khat. The most common reasons for arguments in families are money and the upbringing of children. Disputes particularly occur if a woman is in a stronger financial position than the man. In principle, women in Somaliland can seek legal protection from the authorities in cases of domestic violence, but this is difficult to do in practice. Hardly any women are heard by the authorities, and it is typical for men to be only ones who talk in discussions of women's rights violations. There are few women in the police force and the judicial system, and the public authorities have received no training on the investigation of domestic and gender-related violence.³²⁸

5. Situation of children

Children have a key position in Somali culture. Parents try to provide their children with the necessities and raise and educate them to be as well off as possible, because they are regarded as the parents' protection during old age. Children are supposed to look after their parents as they grow old. Education is respected, and the objective is for children to at least attend a Quran school.³²⁹

All education in Somalia is subject to a charge. Even schools maintained by non-governmental organisations that say their education is free of charge require indirect "service fees". These include the study materials and supplies required for the education. Sometimes, chargeable education can, in practice, be cheaper than "free" education with its indirect service fees. The amount of school fees varies depending on the school, but it is usually \$10-15 per month.³³⁰ The fee of a Quran school is approx. \$10 a month, but the school fee depends on the family's ability to pay. People who are wealthier can be charged a fee of \$15-20.³³¹ The education of children is a major cost item for an average family.³³²

Corporal punishment of children is commonplace, and it has been accepted as one method of upbringing.³³³

Children in Somalia do not traditionally work unless absolutely necessary considering the circumstances of the family. Parents do not allow their children to work if they are able to provide them with a sufficient livelihood and home. Losing one parent or both parents makes children more vulnerable, which increases the risk that they are forced to find work to make a living for

³²⁴ Airi Kähärä.

³²⁵ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

³²⁶ International organisation B; International organisation A.

³²⁷ International development organisation B.

³²⁸ Airi Kähärä.

³²⁹ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu; Somali women's organisation.

³³⁰ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.

³³¹ Somali employee of an international NGO.

³³² Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.

³³³ Somali women's organisation.



themselves and the rest of the family. A child who is forced to work is in a vulnerable position.³³⁴ Children who are forced into employment perform menial tasks, such as shining shoes.³³⁵

Somalia has no orphanages for children who have lost their custodians. There is one orphanage in Mogadishu for children of soldiers killed in action. Non-governmental organisations and private, well-meaning individuals can offer a similar service for orphaned children. Furthermore, members of powerful clans usually have a relative who can help children who have lost their custodians.³³⁶ Children who have no family members or relatives may have to live on the streets, where they resort to pilfering. Some sniff glue to forget their desperate situation in life.³³⁷

Children of internally displaced persons and of marginal groups, such as the Bantus, are in an extremely vulnerable position. Bantus are one of the largest marginal groups and deemed wholly marginal and excluded from society. As a rule, their children do not go to school. In adulthood, they usually work in occupations requiring manual labour that are held in low regard and scorned by others – as plumbers, for instance.³³⁸ Families of marginal groups must often settle in miserable conditions at IDP camps, where they are exposed to various rights violations.³³⁹

Street children and orphans living in squalor can be easily manipulated by al-Shabaab's recruiters. Children have been asked to throw hand grenades at enemy targets and attach bombs to the bottom of vehicles at car washes, for a small amount of money.³⁴⁰ Children and young people who belong to marginal groups have been more easily enticed to join al-Shabaab.³⁴¹ Membership of al-Shabaab offers youngsters in marginal groups an opportunity to earn money, improve their own social status, and protect themselves and their families against violations of rights by armed troops. Up to 80% of former al-Shabaab fighters held in detention centres are members of marginal groups.³⁴²

There are also street children without custodians living in Hargeisa, the capital city of Somaliland. It is estimated that their number has increased.³⁴³

6. Health care

The biggest health problems in Somalia are infectious diseases, such as diarrhoea, pneumonia, and measles. Diseases spread easily due to inadequate waste management and poor hygiene. The majority of children's deaths are caused by malnutrition and infectious diseases. Malnutrition is acute and chronic.³⁴⁴

Another significant health problem in Somalia is mental health problems that are exacerbated by the prolonged conflict and stress caused by instability, unemployment and hopelessness. Under normal circumstances, 10% of the population usually suffers from problems with mental health. In a society in crisis, 20% of the inhabitants may have mental health problems. Estimates state that mental health patients account for 30% of the Somali population.³⁴⁵

³³⁴ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.

³³⁵ Somali women's organisation.

³³⁶ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.

³³⁷ Goobjoog News 12 Apr 2018.

³³⁸ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.

³³⁹ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

³⁴⁰ Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.

³⁴¹ Employee of a humanitarian organisation operating in Somalia.

³⁴² Somali researcher living in Mogadishu.

³⁴³ Airi Kähärä.

³⁴⁴ WHO.

³⁴⁵ WHO.



Somalia's health care system is in poor condition.³⁴⁶ The situation is even worse in areas that are not controlled by the government.³⁴⁷ In practice, only primary health care is available.³⁴⁸ The is often provided by international organisations, and is free for patients. However, patients must sometimes pay for the medication used during treatment.³⁴⁹

Specialised medical care, such as surgery, is available in Somalia to a limited extent.³⁵⁰ According to the WHO, there is no precise information about the availability, opportunities or prices related to specialised medical care, such as surgery and cancer treatment, because these may only be available from the private sector. The WHO is investigating what specialised medical care services are available and what their quality and price level is. The WHO states that the public sector is able to offer hardly any specialised medical care.³⁵¹

For example, the Banadir Hospital in Mogadishu, one of the largest hospitals in the country, mainly performs only basic operations. Besides these, it can provide orthopaedic care to some extent, but no cancer treatments, for example, are available from the hospital, or from anywhere else in Somalia.³⁵² The WHO states that the quality of specialised medical care provided by the Banadir Hospital is inadequate.³⁵³ Banadir is well equipped, with highly trained staff, compared to other hospitals in Mogadishu or Somalia. It is a university hospital that continuously trains new doctors. At present, the hospital employs almost 60 physicians and 64 registered nurses.³⁵⁴

In addition to the Banadir Hospital, the Hargeisa-Group Hospital in Hargeisa can provide some services in specialised medical care, such as dialysis treatment. The hospital also has a surgery unit and an intensive care unit.³⁵⁵ According to the director of a hospital in Mogadishu, dialysis treatment is available in Mogadishu too, but is more expensive than in Somaliland.³⁵⁶

Specialised medical care can be provided by private health clinics and hospitals, but they are extremely expensive. All patients must pay for their own treatment,³⁵⁷ and not everyone can afford their services.³⁵⁸ At a hospital in Mogadishu, a minor operation can cost \$100. Private hospitals and clinics have been established by Somalis educated abroad, and they often operate in impractical facilities designed as residential buildings.³⁵⁹ No one knows precisely what kinds of doctors work at private clinics and hospitals, because the health care sector is highly unregulated and unsupervised.³⁶⁰ Sometimes, private clinics lack the medicine required for treatment, so they have to ask the Banadir Hospital for help.³⁶¹

Patients who need more demanding treatment must travel to Somaliland, Kenya or Ethiopia.³⁶²

³⁴⁶ International development organisation B; Director of a hospital in Mogadishu.

³⁴⁷ International development organisation B.

³⁴⁸ International development organisation B; Director of a hospital in Mogadishu; Abdirizak Hassan Ali, M.D., Director of the Banadir Hospital.

³⁴⁹ International organisation A.

³⁵⁰ International development organisation B; Director of a hospital in Mogadishu.

³⁵¹ WHO.

³⁵² Abdirizak Hassan Ali, M.D., Director of the Banadir Hospital.

³⁵³ WHO.

³⁵⁴ Abdirizak Hassan Ali, M.D., Director of the Banadir Hospital.

³⁵⁵ International organisation A.

³⁵⁶ Director of a hospital in Mogadishu.

³⁵⁷ International development organisation B; Director of a hospital in Mogadishu.

³⁵⁸ Director of a hospital in Mogadishu.

³⁵⁹ Director of a hospital in Mogadishu.

³⁶⁰ Abdirizak Hassan Ali, M.D., Director of the Banadir Hospital.

³⁶¹ Abdirizak Hassan Ali, M.D., Director of the Banadir Hospital.

³⁶² Director of a hospital in Mogadishu.



According to the WHO, institutions providing health services in Somalia are maintained by NGOs and are not public in the proper sense of the term.³⁶³ At local health centres, the staff's wages are usually paid by the organisation supporting the centre in question. The government does not pay wages because it lacks the resources required to do so. Even some employees at the Ministry of Health receive their salary from UN organisations.³⁶⁴

According to its Director, the Banadir Hospital in Mogadishu is the only public hospital in Somalia.³⁶⁵ However, because the hospital does not receive public support or assistance with the maintenance of its operations, it has suffered from major financial difficulties and has had trouble providing patients with treatment free of charge. At the Banadir Hospital, physicians earn \$1,500-2,000 and registered nurses \$400-600 per month. To cover its costs, the hospital charges patients a polyclinic fee of \$5-10. It also charges a small fee for child care clinic services. According to the Director, the hospital's services and treatment, as well as medication given during treatment, are free for children and bed-ridden patients. The hospital is open to the public, and anyone can seek treatment there.³⁶⁶

The director of another hospital in Mogadishu says that the hospital accepts all patients who enter it. Treatment is also provided for IDPs with a poor ability to pay for it. According to the director, they are open to negotiation on payment of the \$5 fee, when possible. Not all hospitals are this flexible. The director of a hospital in Mogadishu says that, on one occasion, a mother who had given birth to a child at a private hospital in the capital city had to leave her infant at the hospital, until she was able to pay the fees incurred during the delivery. The general principle in health services is that all treatment is subject to a charge.³⁶⁷

Hospitals in the capital city usually charge patients a treatment fee of \$5-12. These fees are so high that not all people requiring hospital treatment can afford them.³⁶⁸ Poor people, such as internally displaced persons, have trouble obtaining health care.³⁶⁹

The standard of hospitals situated outside the capital city is considerably poorer. For instance, the largest hospital in the Gedo Region is located at Dolow. The walls of the hospital are said to be crumbling, and it has only six beds. Operations can be performed there, in principle, but there are restrictions on the use of the operating room. Using it requires generators, but fuel is not always necessarily available for these.³⁷⁰

In areas controlled by al-Shabaab where health services are available, they are supported by NGOs and the UN. They train local health care employees and deliver supplies and medication according to their financial resources.³⁷¹

Somalia has a relatively high maternal mortality rate. One reason for this is the poor availability of health services. Health centres and clinics are often situated far away, with hardly any way of getting there. Trips to health services are limited by the costs incurred and the security situation. Another factor increasing the maternal mortality rate is lack of knowledge about risks and possible complications related to pregnancy. Some public health services are available for expectant mothers, but others are subject to a fee.³⁷²

³⁶³ WHO.

³⁶⁴ WHO.

³⁶⁵ Abdirizak Hassan Ali, M.D., Director of the Banadir Hospital.

³⁶⁶ Abdirizak Hassan Ali, M.D., Director of the Banadir Hospital.

³⁶⁷ Director of a hospital in Mogadishu.

³⁶⁸ Director of a hospital in Mogadishu.

³⁶⁹ Abdirizak Hassan Ali, M.D., Director of the Banadir Hospital.

³⁷⁰ International organisation A.

³⁷¹ WHO.

³⁷² WHO.



In Somalia, mental health problems often involve stigmatization. Such problems are often deemed to relate to the soul, and religious leaders and nature healers try to cure the patient using various “treatments”. Mental health patients were previously chained to a tree, for instance, but use of this practice has diminished. There are now some institutions for mental health patients³⁷³ but, generally speaking, the availability of mental health care is very limited.³⁷⁴

The supply of medicines in Somalia is primarily in the hands of private pharmacies. The capital city and rural areas have private pharmacies, where people can buy medication needed for primary health care.³⁷⁵ The country has medicines for common underlying conditions, such as diabetes, hypertension, epilepsy, and ulcers. Painkillers are also available for purchase.³⁷⁶ The WHO states that medicines are available for the most common illnesses in Somalia.³⁷⁷ In first-instance health centres in rural areas, medication for chronic, underlying conditions is available on a limited basis only.³⁷⁸ UNICEF delivers medicines to local child care clinics and some health centres. For them, the organisation has a standardised supply package that includes key medicines.³⁷⁹

Pharmacy operations are completely unregulated, and there is no supervision whatsoever.³⁸⁰ Medicines can be purchased without a prescription.³⁸¹ There are no guarantees about the quality of medication available in the marketplace, due to the lack of regulation and supervision.³⁸² Sometimes, pharmacies may sell expired medicines of questionable effectiveness.³⁸³ Some medicines come from India, and their background may be unknown.³⁸⁴

The Banadir Hospital began an AIDS programme for HIV patients in 2011. This programme provided patients who had contracted HIV with free ART medication. A total of 700 patients are currently covered by this. According to the Director of the Banadir Hospital, AIDS is uncommon in Somalia, but the number of those who have contracted it is growing. Banadir Hospital’s statistics state that 0.7-0.9% of pregnant women who visit the hospital as patients carry the virus. The number of men with HIV is unknown.³⁸⁵

As far as returnees are concerned, nothing can be said at a general level about the availability of health services. Availability depends on factors such as where people are from and to where they are returning, and what kinds of health services they need. The supply of services varies in different regions. It also depends on a returnee’s personal wealth and ability to pay for services. The availability of services is affected by the general security situation. It is difficult to travel from outlying districts to centres where few services are on offer.³⁸⁶

³⁷³ WHO.

³⁷⁴ International organisation A.

³⁷⁵ Abdirizak Hassan Ali, M.D., Director of the Banadir Hospital; Director of a hospital in Mogadishu.

³⁷⁶ Abdirizak Hassan Ali, M.D., Director of the Banadir Hospital.

³⁷⁷ WHO.

³⁷⁸ International organisation A.

³⁷⁹ WHO.

³⁸⁰ Abdirizak Hassan Ali, M.D., Director of the Banadir Hospital.

³⁸¹ Director of a hospital in Mogadishu.

³⁸² WHO.

³⁸³ Abdirizak Hassan Ali, M.D., Director of the Banadir Hospital; WHO.

³⁸⁴ Director of a hospital in Mogadishu.

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