

Research and knowledge systems in Somalia and Somaliland

An analysis prepared for INASP by Faduma Abukar Mursal, Abdullahi Odowa and Jason Mosley

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Preface

INASP is continually exploring options for further work and new projects. As part of these exploratory measures, several in-depth country profiles have been commissioned to bring insight into research and knowledge systems in various countries. In this document, we look at the Somali regions; the background, the research landscape, higher education system and extent of use of research in policymaking. We also include a section on political analysis by Jason Mosley. In the interests of openness and sharing, INASP makes these reports available online for use by peer organizations and other interested parties. Views are the authors' own.

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Political analysis – Jason Mosley

For the international community, engagement with Somalia has long been complicated by the range of political projects which have arisen in different parts of the former Somali Republic since 1991. This has become particularly acute since 2011, when the international community's engagement with the Transitional Federal Government in Mogadishu (established in 2004 at a conference in Kenya) was significantly intensified, leading to the end of the transitional period and the creation of the Federal Government of Somalia, mandated under the framework of a Provisional Constitution in mid-2012.

The Federal Government in Mogadishu has subsequently been recognized by many of Somalia's main donors and key states influential in the country's security environment. As such, the status of different administrations in the territory of the former Somali Republic has come into sharper focus, particularly in terms of defining their relationships with the Federal Government in Mogadishu. This situation is particularly acute for the government of the self-declared Republic of Somaliland, which declared its independence in 1991, and does not recognize Mogadishu's authority over its territory (the area of the British colonial Somaliland Protectorate). The Somaliland government in Hargeisa is not engaged with the federal process in Mogadishu. As donors are increasingly framing their programmes within the context of federal Somalia, and with no countries having recognized Somaliland's sovereignty, this has heightened concerns in Hargeisa over the future of its relations with donors. Nevertheless, donors do continue to engage with the Somaliland government.

However, for the purposes of this study, including this political contextualization, Somaliland and Somalia will be covered separately. Other significant sub-regional dynamics will be considered in the Somalia section, insofar as none of the sub-national administrations outside Somaliland aspire to sovereignty. In both cases, 2016 will prove a significant year, with important electoral transitions scheduled, amid tensions and potentially highly controversial, delays.

Somalia

Politics in Mogadishu and the emerging federal units are currently centred on the political transition scheduled for August 2016. When the parliamentary and presidential (s)elections took place in 2012, a range of ambitious targets were set before the expiry of their mandates in 2016. These included review and finalization of the provisional constitution, which would then be put out for approval in a national referendum. Constituencies in Somalia's regions needed to come together to agree new federal member states, each with their own constitution and administration.

These administrations require parliamentary approval, and a mechanism to be agreed whereby the federal government and member state administrations can discuss and agree policy on the mechanics of federal governance. Member states are also needed for the election of an upper house of Parliament. In addition to these challenges, the Parliament needed to oversee the establishment of important commissions (including one for elections, and one to endorse member state boundaries), and legislation to establish political parties – in order to pave the way for the referendum and what were intended to be direct elections in 2016.

However, the past three years have not seen sustained progress towards these goals. Rather, infighting and corruption have undermined the performance of the federal institutions, while competition between the interests of the federal government in Mogadishu and the elites playing leading roles in the politics of member state formation in the regions has seen uneven and contested progress – including open conflict – as state administrations emerge.

The Puntland administration – in effect, Somalia's first federal member state, established in 1998 – has had a fraught relationship with Mogadishu, particularly since late 2008 when former Puntland leader Abdullahi Yusuf lost the federal presidency. Clan and business interests have produced a feeling of competition between Puntland and the federal government. Elites view office in Mogadishu mainly in terms of rent-seeking opportunities.



As 2016 looms, the leaders of the newly formed administrations in Jubbaland, Southwest Somalia, and Galmudug will be considering not only the future of their member state governments, and also the prospect of gaining high office in Mogadishu (which would also offer a platform for continued influence in their 'home regions'). This is particularly challenging, as elite vacillation between regional and national interests has undermined regional projects and stability in the past. This said, a platform for the regional administrations (Puntland, Jubbaland, Southwest, Galmudug and Benadir, Mogadishu's administration) to negotiate with the federal government has emerged in 2015, and served to facilitate negotiations over the shape of the transition process in 2016. With little time remaining to prepare the failure of legislators and cabinet to agree on the electoral framework or party law, as well as the failure to finalize the constitution, mean that direct elections will be impossible to hold. Negotiations appear to be pushing for some new formula to replace the clan-based formula, whereby by the four 'main' clan families (Dir, Hawiye, Darood and Rahanweyne) are each given an equal share of seats in Parliament, with a half share going to a block of smaller clans and minorities. Traditional leaders select the MPs for their sub-clans in a contested and corrupt process, and the MPs then indirectly elect the president, who nominates the prime minister. Although the 2016 transition is almost certain to involve indirect (s)election of the executive branch by parliament, the process for selecting MPs could well shift, with a proposal being developed for a new formula based somehow on incorporating member states in the selection mechanism. These negotiations will be highly fraught, straining relations between Mogadishu and the member states.

The other main constraint on direct elections is the security environment, since Mogadishu and the member state administrations do not directly control much of the territory they purport to administer. Moreover, Somali institutions at federal and state level are heavily dependent on external military support, including from Ethiopia and Kenya, mainly through the framework of the AU peacekeeping mission in Somalia (AMISOM), a force of about 20,000 troops, also including forces from Uganda, Burundi and Djibouti. The main security challenge continues to come from the insurgent militant Islamist group Al-Shabaab, which has lost significant territory since 2010 under a series of AMISOM offensives, but continues to pose a significant threat. Al-Shabaab has recently staged direct attacks on AMISOM bases, as well frequent asymmetric attacks in Mogadishu and other key urban centres.

Ostensibly, Somaliland has one of the most robust national political processes that has emerged in the Somali territories in the last two decades. A fairly stable administration has been established in Hargeisa since 1991, albeit not without challenges, or violence. However, these challenges pale in comparison to the scale of the post-1991 civil war in southern and central Somalia. The political system in Somaliland has evolved through a combination of coercion and consensus; the latter including through the institutionalization of a body of traditional leaders in the form of the upper house of Somaliland's legislature, the un-elected Guurti.

Discussion and compromise to bring most interests within the political tent has enabled the country to hold one round of parliamentary elections (2005), two rounds of local elections (2002 and 2012), and has seen four presidential administrations (with elections in 2003 and 2010) – including a non-violent transfer of power to an opposition party in the last presidential vote, when current president Ahmed Silanyo defeated the incumbent in a close race. These electoral successes belie the use of force in the mid-1990s, when President Egal used militia to defend the interests of his administration against rival clan-based interests. This early violence was an essential element in establishing the primacy of the Somaliland project over other potential, rival political projects. Somaliland still does not exercise full control over the territory it claims – in particular, control over eastern areas is disputed with Puntland, an autonomous administration within Somalia, and the aspirant, clan-based Khatumo state project. Somaliland's forces have clashed with Khatumo fighters. In part, this is due to the federal agenda in Somalia: Khatumo wishes to be recognised as a federal member state by the Mogadishu government, and rejects the Somaliland political project. It is important not to overstate the influence and impact of the Khatumo project, while recognizing that it illustrates important exceptions to Somaliland's claim to speak for all the territory of the former British Protectorate. (The British faced an insurgency in the same area as Khatumo, in the early 20th century.) In the past, the government in Hargeisa has balanced the interests of elites from this region by including key figures in government. (Puntland has used a similar strategy to maintain influence in this area, which it also claims.)

In addition to the pressure linked to the rapidly evolving political context in Mogadishu, politics in Hargeisa are also more fraught presently because of the delay to the presidential election that should



have taken place in 2015. Negotiations are still taking place, after an initial move to hold the elections in early 2017, amid international pressure for the election to take place no later than 2016. Once this is resolved external pressure may subside but political tensions will likely resurface over the question of parliamentary elections, now several years overdue. Eventually, the status of the Guurti, whose members are unelected and – after decades based in Hargeisa – have seen the nature of their relationship with their communities evolving. This raises questions over the continued ‘traditional legitimacy’ of the Guurti’s members, and without some kind of engagement and renewal, the upper house may become a source of tension.



Research, knowledge and education-based systems in Somalia – Faduma Abukar Mursal

1. Introduction

This report provides an overview of the higher education and research in Mogadishu. Following the state collapse and civil war of the early 1990s, the educational infrastructure and other major institutions were, while the majority of qualified teachers and professors have fled. Efforts to reconstruct the education sector have involved actors such as local communities, NGOs and the Somali diaspora. This is reflected in the key institutions that are active in providing higher education in Mogadishu nowadays. This paper describes how limited research is led with limited resources, in a growing sector dominated by private institutions. Indeed, since the late 1990s, Mogadishu has seen an unregulated proliferation of private universities, with around 40 operating in Mogadishu alone. Private initiatives and NGOs are other key institutions in the research system.

Given the high number of institutions, both universities and NGOs, this report does not provide an exhaustive account of the institutions producing research in Mogadishu. Rather it identifies the key actors - namely major universities, and NGOs - directly or indirectly producing research. The report does not provide an exhaustive account of the numerous universities or NGOs active in Mogadishu, but highlights main institutions and illustrate how these shape the knowledge and research system in Mogadishu and the challenges they face.

Data about the state of education in Somalia is scarce, and often outdated, with information about higher education even scarcer. This report is principally based on interviews conducted with employees in key institutions and desk research.

The majority of research done in Somalia is in the form of consultancy work, and consists mainly of donor-led policy-oriented research. It is not surprising, given the erosion of state institutions since the early 1990s. The year 2012 marked the official end of two decades of political transition, a time when Hassan Sheikh Mohamud became president of the federal government of the new Federal Republic of Somalia. The fragility of the government over the last two decades has reinforced the role of international organizations, NGOs, community-based initiatives and the diaspora. The role of the government in higher education and research is non-existent, despite the opening of the National University in 2014, and the drafting of a 'National Vision for Higher Education'.

The resources available to the different institutions vary greatly. A constant is the high number of young students enrolling every year: approximately 13,000 students are enrolled in just three universities. The context in which research is conducted in Mogadishu is characterized by private institutions, growing emergence of research and teaching institutions which train many students in conducting research, but also insecurity, limited access to learning and researching resources such as libraries and computer, while access to internet is available but slow.

2. Research and knowledge systems in Somalia

Key institutions which conduct research in Somalia are private organizations, particularly universities and NGOs.

2.1 Research centres and focus areas

Civil Society Organizations and Research

Besides universities, private research centres and NGOs are active in producing research, mainly policy-oriented.



Among the private research centres, the **Heritage Institute for Policy Studies (HIPS)** is a key institution in the production of research in Mogadishu. It is an independent think tank based in Mogadishu, and is composed of four permanent researchers including a senior researcher, and can go up to 10 staff-members depending on the project, with two women as part of the permanent team. The focus is mainly on political and governance themes: current projects involve “federalism”, upcoming elections, as well as the political and civic engagement of Somali women (Gender in politics in Somalia – GENSOM - project). There is no access to online journals, but they have access to software to analyse and produce qualitative and quantitative research. The research is conducted on a consultancy basis with a broad range of partners and donors. For instance, the GENSOM project is funded jointly by Norwegian Research Council and Somali Stability Fund (SSF); Humanitarian Policy Group is funding the report assessing the role of Islamic organization in humanitarian activities in Somalia. HIPS produces policy briefs, reports and documentaries that are sent by email to approximately 400 subscribers, as well as distributed in print and published online. HIPS also maintains a presence in the Somali local and social media. They organize forums with local politicians. They also maintain a partnership with universities, and recruit and train students on a project basis. They formulate mainly recommendations to the Somali government and international community.

Recently, there are a few more private and independent research centres emerging. The **Mogadishu Centre for Research and Studies** is one of them, funded by a group of businessmen. The staff is composed of 5 researchers who hold degrees from universities abroad, in Sudan and Egypt for instance. Their research covers politics, economics and cultural events. Their activities are quite journalistic. They provide trainings on how to conduct surveys and generally quantitative research, at the **Islamic University in Mogadishu**. They have conducted a few research projects in Arabic about federalism and youth, but do not publish online for security reasons and also the lack of a strong Arabic readership.

NGOs and international organizations conduct some research, but it is mainly related to their own activities, namely needs assessments and evaluations relating to projects. For example the **Centre for Research and Dialogue** is interested in mediation processes, and organize meetings to facilitate dialogue between and within clan systems, as well as train communities. Research is produced before and after in the form of reports and needs assessments. Evaluations and recommendations for donors are often produced and then archived at the end of a project. There are similar processes obtain at other NGOs active in Mogadishu. When not conducting their own research, they contract consultants, often not local.

Institutions of Higher Learning

Over the last couple of years, the number of universities has increased tremendously. In 2011, around 15 universities were active in Somalia, Mogadishu alone counts today about 40 universities. They deliver bachelor's degrees in English, in fields such as business administration, health, Islamic studies and education. Post-graduate programmes are more rare, but possible in the biggest universities such as **Mogadishu University**, **Simad**, **Benadir University**, and **Plasma University**. Alongside the broad range of private universities, one state-led institution has been recently established, **Somali National University**. None of them provides doctoral or postdoctoral curricula. In fact, few of the lecturers themselves hold PhDs or even master's degrees.

Despite their high number, few universities engage in research. The establishment of research centres within the universities is an emerging trend. In Mogadishu, the following can be counted as the most established universities.

Mogadishu University: opened in 1997, and is the biggest university in Mogadishu. It has approximately 5,000 students. The number of female students is unknown. Major departments provide undergraduate degrees in economics and management; education; social sciences; maths; physics; Islamic studies; art; and Sharia and law. Postgraduate degrees are offered in business administration; education; and Sharia – granted jointly with Open University Malaysia and Umu Durman Islamic University. Due to insecurity in their previous location, the library had to move and is now in the process of reopening. Computers are available in the professional offices and to the academic staff, as well as the students. Internet and wireless network access (WLAN) are also



available. There is a community radio that addresses social issues, and talks. The university has launched a research centre, although it is not yet functioning. A major event is has been issuing of the first academic journal, the **Somali Studies Journal** in 2015. The university is commissioned to conduct consultancy research work for NGOs and international organizations.

The university organizes workshops and conferences as well, to promote the research of its visiting scholars and students.

Simad opened in 1999, today having approximately 3,200 students, including 18% female students, and 250 academic staff (40 female). Main departments are in economics, statistics, business, accountancy, computer science, technology, education, law, public administration, and allied health sciences. They provide libraries and computer halls for their postgraduate students only, with access to the internet and WLAN. They publish a bulletin four times a year, focusing on social science, business and public policy. The university provides a budget for the academic staff to conduct their own research and attend two conferences per year. Professors publish in academic journals, and their publications are to be found on the website of the university. They use local and social media, including Facebook, Twitter, and Academia.edu, to share their research. Simad also performs consultancy work for international organizations such as the UN and other (I)NGOs. They organize conferences in the summer and workshops. It is worth noting that President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud led Simad University, prior to standing in the 2012 presidential contest, and that Simad's founders are closely connected to the 'Damul Jadid' political network associated with the president.

Plasma opened in 2005, and today has 2,178 students, including 900 female students and an academic staff of 117, with 7 female. The faculties also range widely but their focus is in health and nursing, agriculture and veterinary studies. They have just signed a partnership agreement with Kenyatta University in Kenya for postgraduate studies -- students were to start in 2015. There is no library, but a computer lab with internet connection. There is a small fee for the students who want to use them, but WLAN is available for free. There is a well-established health lab. They operate an agriculture lab both in the campus and in neighbouring city Afgoye (the site of the country's former main agricultural studies centre before the civil war), to provide students with practical experience with different seeds and soils and equipment in agriculture. The institution is in collaboration with a farm where students in veterinary studies are able to diagnose and treat livestock, and write reports. As at other universities, the internet is available, slowly but it works when there is no problem with the line. The university does not have a research centre, but the development of such a centre is on the agenda. The university promotes research within the institutions, and by their own lecturers for their own needs. Engaging in large research projects is too costly. Any research or reports produced are not published publically but stored internally.

Benadir University opened in 2002, now accommodating 2,385 students, with eight faculties and a focus on medicine. It has a computer lab and a medical lab, internet connection and an e-learning programme as well.

Government

Officially, a national vision for higher education is not yet available, however sources say that there is a draft version. The Ministry of Higher Education and Culture guides sectoral education strategies. The current EU funding package pledges US\$60 million investment in the sector over three years.

Research in itself, despite the needs, is not a priority in the government. There are no designated government or departmental researchers. Independent research does not exist within government - consequently evidence-based policy making is rare. There is, however, access to some local data used by technical advisers in each of the departments.

Research is thus done on an adhoc basis, with "Sheikh Google" as support. Available research produced by civil society, NGOs, and foreign and local think tanks are considered "difficult to digest", and do not necessarily address the needs and interests of government departments. The state officer I spoke with concluded that "these pieces of research rarely inform regulatory and policy frameworks".



2.2 Research and the role of donor institutions in Somalia

Donor institutions play a crucial role in the production of research in Somalia. They set the agenda for research either by calling for consultancy work, building capacity to some extent in training the research assistants within universities, or through the programmes and NGOs they support.

Donors are as numerous as the NGOs active in Mogadishu. They include multinational institutions, principally the, the European Union, IGAD, Norway and Danish funds, the Somali Stability Fund which is a consortium of several donors including UKAID, Sweden, Denmark as well as Islamic countries such as Qatar and Saudi funding Islamic NGOs.

2.3 Research dynamics and politics

Amidst the lack of national vision for research and higher education, the flourishing number of research institutions and universities are mainly private. This implies heavy competition and little collaboration. The establishment of the **Somali Research and Education Network (SomaliREN)** is an effort to facilitate collaboration between them. SomaliREN is an NGO sponsored by UNDP/AVU which aims at gathering Somali higher education institutions to foster collaboration between them. The objectives are to have better and cost-efficient internet bandwidth, to access and manage libraries and facilitate representation abroad. The organization is still new, and actual collaboration besides the membership is still being strengthened.

In terms of collaboration outside Somali territories, universities such as Mogadishu University, Benadir University and Plasma University have established a system of partnership, for instance, e-learning programme with Asian and African universities such as in Malaysia or in Kenya, to deliver postgraduate education.

Universities and research centres are in collaboration. Research centres tend to train students of universities to conduct the surveys they are interested in, and thus train research assistants. The researched issues involve governance and security, the youth, and also agriculture, livestock and environmental issues which are much less funded.

Few universities conduct research, and when they do it is upon the request of international organizations and donors. The researched issues are thus set by the donors, with the exception of Simad which has a budget for the academic activities of their professors.

NGOs created an umbrella institution, the **Somali NGO Consortium**. They establish regular visits, and organize meetings within the consortium to have a stronger impact. In theory, it should foster exchange of information and analysis on key issues, encourage collaboration and improve representation with local authorities and donors. Since NGOs largely influence available research, thematic areas are related to their domain of activity, involving peace projects, governance and migration. It is common for support to be given to research projects focusing on areas outside of Mogadishu but these are difficult to reach due to security concerns and are often not successfully completed.

3. Access to research information

None of the institutions have access to academic journals. Simad and Benadir have a link on their website to Alexandria library (in Egypt).

Libraries are starting to be provided for students, but currently, they are in small rooms, and only rarely consulted.

Internet connection is available in main institutions and each of the staff both in universities and NGOs have access to a computer with an internet connection.



4. Information communication technology infrastructure

Computers are available to workers in the offices, and in some universities there is limited access for students as well, especially postgraduate students. There is no access to online journals, either at universities or other organizations. The main obstacles are subscription fees, lack of awareness about their usefulness and slow internet connections.

Internet connections are to be found everywhere, both in professional offices and in university buildings as well as WLAN accessible via mobile phones. However, it is slow, and there are very few computers available for students.

5. Research, communication and publication

Commissioned research is given to donor institutions. The reports are protected by copyright, and belong to the donors. Several universities are able to conduct consultancy research, mainly policy-oriented, yet it does not get published, because “donors take it with them”. In rare cases, it is archived.

Some like the HIPS and NGOs publish reports online, and in some cases share them in forums and events they organize.

Overall, security is an important factor constraining the production and publication of research in Mogadishu, and thus its use. Indeed, the problem of access and data collection is a recurrent concern. It is difficult to conduct research or surveys both within Mogadishu but more importantly in neighbouring areas. Some issues that are of interest can also be sensitive, endangering both researchers and research participants. Universities have voiced a lack of interest from research participants in taking part. The language and literacy rate is a constraint with regards to the communication of any completed research, as publications may not be accessible to wide audiences because of English and/or Arabic languages. The lack of funding allocated to research is another major constraint within universities.

Publication of research is also subject to security concerns. Some topics such as youth and employment, Al-Shabaab and other issues may be regarded as sensitive issues and could subject researchers and the institutions to threats of violence.

6. Conclusions

There is a severe lack of research facilities in Somalia and Mogadishu. This is due to lack of funding, lack of awareness of the importance and usefulness of research and a limited interest in the field. There are few libraries and no institutional access to electronic books or journals. With academic staff working part time, taking on many different roles such as administration, teaching and management, many are overburdened and simply do not have the time for big research projects. Another challenge is the reluctance or inability to publish research on certain issues for security reasons.

The government hasn't committed to investing in research. The country is still waiting for the 'National Vision for Higher Education' to be published, which may address the issue of research. Policymakers within government do not often use those limited reports available because of the perceived “unreliability of the sources and their narrow coverage.” Due to the limited topics tackled by research projects, the subject matter of reports is often not relevant to most departments. There are no mechanisms in place to enable the use of research by policymakers or practitioners, other than the internet which is slow and costly.



In the NGO sector however research, when available, does play a role in policy development. Much of the time, research is the result of these NGOs themselves assessing needs or project effectiveness, meaning that research information is highly relevant to their needs.

It is fair to say that in every sector there is a lack of a systematic statistical database as not enough research has been done. Commonly researched topics, driven by donors and NGOs, include security (youth and reconciliation processes), governance (focus on federalism and the upcoming 2016 elections) migration, humanitarian issues and health. Agriculture, economic and environmental issues are some of the topics that need far more investment in research.

Overall, production of research and higher education is dominated by men, both in conducting research, teaching and learning. Women tend to be more represented in nursing and other health-related sciences. From NGOs there is no data, but in those I have visited, there were often no women acting as researchers or on managing committees. It could be different in institutions dealing with health issues for instance.

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Research, Knowledge and Education based-systems in Somaliland – Abdullahi Odowa

1. Introduction

This paper explores the research and knowledge production environment in Somaliland, the self-declared republic in northern Somalia, which has had de facto independent status since the collapse of the government of Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991. Somaliland's governance is completely separated from government in other parts of the former Somalia, although political and commercial interests still cross those boundaries. As such, with respect to the ways research is produced and used for policy, Somaliland will be treated on its own – separate from the evolving governance frameworks for the federal government based in Mogadishu.

2. Research and knowledge systems in Somaliland

2.1 Research centres

The country has a national vision as outlined in the Somaliland Vision 2013 document, developed by the Ministry of National Planning and Development (MoNP&D), which is to create “A Stable, Democratic and Prosperous Somaliland Where the People Enjoy a High Quality of Life”. However, seemingly there is no national vision focusing on the research sector and its development. While there are more than 23 Ministries and around 19 Government Agencies and Commissions in the Somaliland governance structure,¹ there is no particular government agency mandated to coordinate research related programmes and projects in the country.

Nevertheless, as part of its wider mandate of playing a strategic role in leading, facilitating and coordinating national vision and development, the MoNP&P has established a Statistics Department which aims to “Provide high quality, timely and independent statistical information and promote its use for policy formulation, decision making, research, and general public awareness”.² The Statistics Department publishes ‘Somaliland in Figures’ which is a yearly publication that contains statistical data on various components of the economic and social activities in Somaliland. Most of the indicators measured by this publication are related to the five main developmental pillars highlighted by the Somaliland National Development Plan (2012-2016) which includes environment, economics, social, infrastructure and governance. However, informal feedback from staff at the Statistics Department suggests that a lack of skilled personnel and insufficient financial resources undermine the Statistics Department in achieving its objectives.

In addition to the core areas identified by the National Planning Agenda, there are plentiful thematic areas and plans for reform in need of external support due to the huge capacity gaps in all sectors and in public and private institutions. These thematic areas include security sector reforms, particularly police reform and capacity building; justice system reform and improvement of access to justice; public service delivery (including education) and governance.

Universities

Somaliland's education system comprises five levels: early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary and higher education. The Somaliland Education Act 2007 provides the legal basis for organizing and delivering these phases of education under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Higher Studies (MoE). The state envisions education as a social tool which contributes toward the

¹ Somaliland In Figures (10th Edition), 2014

² Somaliland Ministry of Planning Website (slministryofplanning.org)



improvement of knowledge, skills, attitude and capacity of society. To deal with the increasing number of universities and other tertiary institutions, the MoE has established a 'Commission for Higher Education', which is responsible for quality control and monitoring of higher education in the country. According to the Commission, there are **26 universities registered at the MoE**.

However, despite this increase in the number of universities in the country it is obvious that the quality of teaching and learning remains extremely poor, resulting in poorly educated graduates. It is important to underline here that among local universities, there are currently none that have a strong and functioning research department. There is also no institution with an undergraduate or postgraduate programme focusing on social science research. This deficiency results in students graduating with an alarming lack of knowledge of the basic theoretical and applied skills required to successfully conduct research activities. Moreover, although the medium of instruction in most, if not all, of these universities is ostensibly English, the Somali language remains the most used among students and teachers. As a result, English language skills among graduates and instructors remain low.

The majority of the 26 registered universities in the country are privately owned while four (**Amoud, Hargeisa, Burao and Nugaal Universities**) are regarded as public, because they use public buildings and receive a small amount of annual financial support from the Somaliland government. Each of the four public universities is governed by an independent Board of Directors consisting of individuals drawn from various social groups - intellectuals, politicians, business people, women, civil society representatives and traditional or religious leaders. It is worth mentioning that more than two-thirds of the registered universities in the country operate in the capital city of Hargeisa, while others are located in other major cities. According to the MoE, there were 9,385 secondary school graduates in 2015, and more than **25,000 students** (mostly undergraduates) enrolled in the 26 public and private universities.

University of Hargeisa

Following the collapse of the Somali state and creation of Somaliland as a self-declared republic, new community-driven initiatives led to the creation of institutions of higher learning. The **University of Hargeisa** in the capital was founded in 1999 following long discussions between various diaspora-based and local groups. Ms Fowsiya Haji Aden (former Foreign Minister at Somali Federal Government in Mogadishu and currently member of Somali Parliament) and Dr. Saed Ali Shire (current Minister of Planning and National Development in Somaliland) both played a strong leadership role in the initiative. Having seen the success of Amoud University (discussed below) and the need to have institutes of higher learning in the capital, the government of Somaliland donated a government building to be used by the University. As a result, unlike other universities in the city, the University of Hargeisa has its own campus with sufficient offices, lecture halls and other facilities and enough space to carry out future expansion projects. The university is governed by a board of directors comprising government ministers, members from business and civil society as well as women and traditional leaders. The board elects a president and two vice-presidents (academic and administration) and there is a university senate comprising of faculty deans, heads of departments and heads of other sections. The university has not been free from government interventions and inter-clan conflict. During the last 10 years, the university has survived a number of conflicts and power and resource struggles: since 2008, there have been eight presidents -- some resigned while other were fired by the board of directors.

It is possible to summarize some of the advantages that the University of Hargeisa has over other institutions in the country:

- The university has its own building -- which has some basic features of a university campus, is centrally-located and accessible to students.
- As the first higher-learning institution established in the city and second in the country, it has established itself as a reliable and sustainable institution.
- It is the only public university in the city and its tuition fees are regulated by the government. It also receives some annual subsidiary budget from the government.



- As a public institution it has attracted financial support and investment from both private and international agencies and organizations. For example, there are many new buildings and lecture halls donated by local private companies and international donor. There have been scholarship schemes designed to support female students and students from extremely poor families funded by UNDP, local private companies and local NGOs.
- The payment system and governing policies are slightly better than the disarray at some private universities in the country. This has helped retain more qualified lecturers. Moreover, those working with government and NGOs who might be keen to teach part-time prefer to teach at the University of Hargeisa, which helps to attract the best lecturers in the country. It has the highest number of students of any institution in the country - an estimated 5,000-6,000 students. The University of Hargeisa has the highest number of students in the country. There are an estimated enrollments of 5,000 students of which 210 are postgraduate students. The University of Hargeisa, like other universities, offers a range of undergraduate courses including, Natural Sciences, Medicine, Agriculture, Business Administration, Information Technology (IT), Economics and Statistics, Education and Engineering.

Amoud University (AU)

Amoud University (AU) was formally founded in 1998 by a group of local business people as well as members of the Somali diaspora from the region. AU is located in the city of Borama, the capital of the Awdal Region. Like the University of Hargeisa, AU is using a former secondary school as its campus. AU is regarded as a public university, and it receives some subsidiary budget from the government.

Its major constraint is probably its location, far from Hargeisa - the economic and political hub of Somaliland. As such, AU really only attracts students from Awdal region and neighbouring regions. This is perhaps the reason why its president, Professor Suleiman, spends most of his time in Hargeisa; he has a permanent room in one of the hotels there. In terms of governance and internal rivalry it seems much more stable than the University of Hargeisa. AU has only had one president since its establishment. The pro and cons of this long continuity are open for discussion; there is a lot of debate over how Professor Suleiman is governing, and the extent to which he appears to be targeting a lifetime position.

In mid-2015, AU opened a new campus in Hargeisa. It offers a number of postgraduate programmes, similar to those at the University of Hargeisa.

Other educational and research institutes

The **Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS)** was established in 2008 with financial support from USAID and Eastern Mennonite University in the US. It was the first institute to offer a postgraduate programme: a Diploma in Peace and Conflict Studies. In January 2014, the IPCS expanded and deepened its offering to include three master's degree programmes - Project Management; Governance and Leadership; and International Relationships and Development - with 210 students enrolled across the three.

The IPCS was established to expand knowledge of peace and conflict through teaching and to research and document traditional wisdom and knowledge for conflict resolution and peace-building in Somaliland. However, while the institute has achieved the first goal (teaching), there has not been any major research done by the institute since its establishment. There are only three regular staff at IPCS - the director, vice-director and administrator; and all the teaching staff are part-time. With this capacity, it would be hard for the institute to conduct major research. However, I was told by the director that there are ongoing discussions with some universities in the UK including University of London and York University as well as the Rift Valley Institute (a UK-based NGO) aimed at enhancing the research capacity of IPCS.

The **Academy for Peace and Development (APD)** and **Observatory of Conflict and Violence Prevention (OCVP)** are the only two research organizations producing meaningful research outputs in the country. Unfortunately, there is not much coordination or cooperation between these local research organizations as each has specific donors with specific areas of focus.



The APD was established in 1998 as a research institute in collaboration with the Wartorn Societies Projects (WSP) and later became an independent research centre in the country. In its early years, the APD has attracted prominent international researchers including Mark Bradbury, Michael Walls, Ken Menkhous, Pat Johnson and others, who helped the APD publish high-quality reports on Somaliland's peace and state-building experience. However, in recent years with the financial support of Interpeace, the APD has mainly focused on elections, democratization and community dialogue.

The OCVF was established in 2009 with support from United Nations Development Program (UNDP) with the aim to work as an independent and non-governmental research and training organization covering all Somali regions. With initial financial support from UNDP-Somalia and subsequently from the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the OCVF has been undertaking district-level assessments across all Somali regions. Operating from its headquarters in Hargeisa, Somaliland and more recently opened offices on Garowe and Mogadishu, the OCVF's 'District Conflict and Security Assessment' attempts to measure and evaluate progress in peace-building and state-building projects by gathering public perceptions of the effectiveness and availability of delivery of public goods, justice, security and peace. These initial activities have been funded by the Somali Monitoring Programme portfolio within DFID-Somalia.

In addition, the OCVF launched in 2015 the two-year High-Quality Research Support (HQRS) Programme (full details of the programme are included in **Annex 1** below). This is the first research training programme of its kind in Somalia or Somaliland, targeting mid-career researchers from and living in Somaliland or Somalia. It is co-implemented by the OCVF, the University of Bristol in the United Kingdom and Transparency Solutions (TS) and is funded by DFID in partnership with Somalia Stability Fund (SSF).

3. Access to research information

Most of the reading materials used by academic and research institutions in the country are textbooks, which are either purchased by these institutions or donated by the Somali diaspora or other international institutions and agencies. With few exceptions, most of these textbooks are outdated and irrelevant to the needs of the students and institutions. There appear to be a number of factors that are causing these institutions not to obtain relevant and up to date books and journals:

- The first is that the Somali people prefer oral communication to reading. Oral communication remains the primary means of receiving, processing and transmitting information; a factor that unfortunately only serves to reinforce a culture that discourages reading and writing among members of the community -- hence, there is little demand for published materials.
- Secondly, most academic staff at the local universities hold undergraduate degrees with just a few having master's degrees which include limited training and quality control. As such, these instructors commonly use only one textbook for each subject and ask students to make more copies -- in this case students at the universities will only need to read few books while pursuing their respective courses.
- Thirdly, most of the local research centres carry out baseline studies that utilize primary data collected from the field and rarely use secondary data for their publications.
- Another obstacle is the absence of credit card providers in the country and without credit cards, local researchers and research organizations cannot pay for books and journals from online bookshops or pay subscription fees online.

4. IT infrastructure

The internet connection in Hargeisa averages around 1 Mbps and is good enough for most of the smaller and medium-scale businesses. Seemingly, the local non-governmental organizations and research centers have adequate internet access to send and receive emails, but it is hard to have



uninterrupted Skype calls for example. However, telecommunication companies provide 3G mobile data services and some of these companies have begun to offer 4G data services, though the high prices are of some concern. There is a new internet service provider, with recently reduced prices, offering fast fiber optic internet connection once a small mobile wireless router has been purchased. This wireless router is good for mobility. It can fit into the pocket, can be moved around easily, and can also be simultaneously used by many users.

Local universities only provide access to computers with internet access to their administrative offices for communication purposes. Academic staff and students cannot access the internet while on campus, primarily due to the high cost of internet connections and inability of these universities to provide enough internet access points. Nevertheless, almost all academics and students have personal laptops which can be purchased at quite reasonable prices. Currently, there are no online or e-learning facilities in the country due to the lack of required facilities and expertise as well as weak internet connectivity in the country.

The young and middle-aged generations are widely using mobile internet for various purposes:

- Exchanging personal information, political views and updates via social media
- Creating groups - professional, political, religious or clan-based groups -- to share and discuss issues of concern
- Sharing the latest articles, blogs and other academic papers

Somali Research and Education Network (SomaliREN)

SomaliREN describes itself as a membership organization of 14 universities and research organizations from across South-Central, Puntland and Somaliland. The vision of the network is to; *“be the network for the higher education institutions to unite them in the promotion and development of good research environments and collaborative relationships with their international peers, and in the enhancement of the quality of higher education through the extensive use of ICTs and building the necessary communication infrastructures to provide them with affordable connectivity to other Regional and National Research and Education Networks, and the rest of the world.”*

The SomaliREN brings together most universities and some research organizations from across all Somali regions including Somaliland. Amoud University and the University of Hargeisa were founding member institutions for this network and still play an important role. However, the lack of clear policies or strategies and lack of coordination has paralyzed the effectiveness of this network. What remains are annual forums where members meet.

When it was established in 2007, the network attracted some financial support from the European Union for capacity-building for university staff; some scholarships for staff to study in Kenya and Uganda; as well as the purchase of some computers and other teaching materials for member universities. However, since this initial phase, there does not appear to have been much activity or funding coming to this network.

5. Research communication and publications

Mainly consultancies, local NGOs and other civil society organizations produce research in support of development partners. Research is mainly funded by international donor countries and agencies in line with their programmes and agendas. Most of these research projects are designed to gather information, public perceptions and generate primary data that can be used for design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes. The publications can be accessed via the websites or offices of those organizations undertaking the work.

These frequent and repetitive data collection missions have created research fatigue among local communities, many of who often regard such research as merely a means of making money. This mistrust has actually resulted in those participating in research activities not only often demanding payment for their participation but has also increased the risk that they will provide unreliable



information. The most commonly researched areas include, but are not limited to, security, justice, governance, conflict, youth-related issues as well as land and public services. However, lack of proper coordination, shortage of skilled researchers and lack of local ownership undermines both the quality and use of these publications.

With the exception of APD and OCVP which carry out pure research under specific areas of interest, as referred to above, other NGOs and civil society organizations mainly produce monitoring and evaluation reports which are in line with their programmes. Most of the programmes implemented in Somaliland are related to the five main national developmental pillars (mentioned above: environment, economics, social, infrastructure and governance) and are mainly funded by DFID, USAID or the EU. However, current academic research focus is more on areas of health, security, peace-building and justice. It is important to note that, even for the most researched areas, the available information is small and superficial. More in-depth investigations are required to better understand the trend and linkages of these issues.

6. How research is used in policy or practice

There is an institutionalized culture of not using evidence in decision making and policy formulation. There is little incentive or appetite to promote use of information. An ad hoc way of doing business remains common even at the highest level of policy making.

There appear to be a number of challenges preventing evidence-led policy making in the country:

- First, many Somalilanders remain illiterate -- even in their own native language -- and so, oral communication remains the preferred means of communication and decision-making.
- Secondly, all sectors face huge capacity gaps and most of the politicians and policymakers are poorly qualified for the positions they hold.
- Thirdly, since most of the research done in the country is project-driven the research outputs both are, and are seen to be, less relevant to the country's needs and hence, lack local ownership.

As a consequence, there is no evidence that research feeds into policy making in government. However, NGOs use their own findings in programming. There seems to be huge gaps in capacity between government and civil society when it comes to the understanding, promotion and use of research publications. At the moment, there are no mechanisms in place to enable the usage of research by policymakers or practitioners. This is due in part to the lack of a specific government agency responsible for research coordination and in part to the lack of national policy on research and research usage.

7. Gender considerations

Somaliland people like other people in the wider Somali regions in the Horn of Africa are Muslim, mainly from the Sunni sector of Islam. Somaliland has a very traditional and conservative society. In this context, men and women face differing roles and expectations. Practices such as segregation by sex create disparities in power, both within the family and in wider society. In practice, you see fewer female students in the education system, particularly in the higher learning institutions, in formal employment and in politics. For example, the elected Somaliland Parliament has only two female MPs out of the 82 members in the lower house while the upper house has no female members.

8. Conclusions

While public universities such as Hargeisa and Amoud have fairly adequate campuses, teaching levels across the Somaliland higher education sector remain poor, producing low-quality graduates



and no universities have strong and functioning research departments. The two organizations producing meaningful research outputs are the APD and OCVP, but themes are donor led and they do not collaborate.

There is no national or institutional access to online research literature meaning that what research is done does not make use of the most up-to-date information in the sector, or relies solely on primary data.

The preference among Somali people for oral communication impacts upon the production, communication and use of research. There is less demand for, and less trust in, written materials across society, meaning that there is little demand among decision-makers for quality written research evidence upon which to base decisions.

Due to the lack of capacity in organizations and institutions for independently conceived research projects, themes, topics and timing of research is donor-led. This means that, while the research might be relevant to the donor, country or NGO in question it often doesn't meet Somaliland priorities.

Accessibility of this research is inconsistent and dependent upon whether or not organizations make it widely available or promote it.

There are gaps in capacity at all levels in the Somaliland research and knowledge sector. These are gaps in human resources, gaps in internet connectivity, access to information, qualified government officials for instance.



Annex 1: OCVP High-quality Research Support (HQRS) Programme

The two-year High-quality Research Support (HQRS) Programme is the first research training programme of its kind in Somalia or Somaliland. It is co-implemented by the OCVP, the University of Bristol in the United Kingdom and Transparency Solutions (TS) and funded by DFID in partnership with Somalia Stability Fund (SSF). The programme is conceived as a Traineeship and is designed for mid-career researchers from and living in Somalia-Somaliland who are eager to enhance their research skills and competencies, and become the country's next generation of researchers and research leaders. It equips participants with the highest theoretical and practical research knowledge and skills necessary to undertake high-quality social research activities, independently, in collaboration with local organisations and as emerging research leaders.

The Programme is rooted in an understanding of the fundamental role high-quality research plays in enabling communities and wider society to critically analyse their social problems, attain a deeper understanding of social realities, and hopefully achieve positive social transformation. Aware of the potential challenges local institutions and organisations (governmental and non-governmental) may currently face, the implementing partners have developed this Programme to strengthen their capacity to effectively design, implement and report research on different social issues.

In its launch year 2015-2016, the Programme aims to recruit 30 mid-career researchers and expose them to an eleven-month training programme divided into 3 phases (training phase, internship phase and mentorship phase culminating in publication of the research results) delivered and supervised at all stages by skilled experts. It intends to do the same again in its second year.

Programme objectives

The goal of the High-quality Research Support programme is to contribute to an improvement of the research performance of local institutions in Somalia/Somaliland in their efforts to conduct high-quality and credible social research. The Programme is based on the expectation that the participants, on their return to their institutions, will energetically and creatively use the knowledge and skills they have acquired during the training programme to build the research capacity of beneficiary institutions.

In order to achieve this goal, the Programme aims to accomplish the following objectives at the level of individual participants:

- Train 30 mid-career researchers each year for two years and give them the necessary knowledge and skills to successfully conduct and lead high-quality research;
- Develop and enhance the level of practical knowledge, skills and tools employed in the conduct of social research activities;
- Develop and enhance the capabilities and competence of local researchers to analyse local social issues and be able to generate fact-based policy options for local and international stakeholders; and
- Increase the number of qualified local researchers who can be recruited by local and international agencies and organizations working in the country.

Contents

The Research Training Programme focuses on both theoretical and practical knowledge regarding social research and academic writing. Special emphasis is placed on six particular areas which required in many cases to enhance the quality of local research: research writing and citation, qualitative and quantitative methods, research design and ethics, gender and social research, research for policy and practice, and policy and programme evaluation research.



The programme has a total duration of 11 months and consists of three compulsory phases after the three-day induction:

Training Phase (six blocks x five days during four months): Over a period of four months this initial phase will provide participants with intensive training developed and delivered by highly qualified teaching staff from the University of Bristol. This phase of the training will introduce participants to the variety of research concepts, techniques and methods applicable to the field of social research. The following units will be covered during training phase:

- Research Writing and Citation
- Qualitative and Quantitative Methods
- Research Design and Ethics
- Gender and Social Research
- Evidence for Policy and Practice
- Policy and Programme Evaluation Research

Internship Phase (three blocks x five days during three months): During the following three months participants will be split into four groups for an internship at one of the OCPV offices in Hargeisa, Garowe and Mogadishu or at the Hargeisa office of its implementing partner Transparency Solutions. During this phase of the programme, participants will be given the opportunity to travel to the field and be part of the processes of data collection, data analysis and report writing.

Mentorship Phase (Part-time continuously for four months): During the final four months of the Programme each participant is expected to return his/her institution and develop a research topic that s/he will investigate and on which s/he will write a paper on. Each participant will be assigned a mentor from the University of Bristol, who will provide assistance and feedback during the writing-up phase. Where possible, the mentor will be one of the University of Bristol staff who delivered the research training. Each mentor will mentor five participants and be available by phone, Skype and email. Participants will also have the support of a University of Bristol Chief Editor for the publication to be based on their research.

Participants who successfully complete each of the four phases of the programme will be awarded a Certificate of Participation from the University of Bristol. Participants will have a final graduation ceremony and research findings dissemination workshop.

