

Hard to Ignore: Tackling Youth Violence in Hargeisa Mohamed Moge District

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Cover Photo: Abdi Shabel standing between the former Director-General of the Ministry of Youth and Sports (left), and the Deputy Governor of Marodi-Jeh Region (right) during the ceremony in which violent youth handed over swords and knives to the Government at Mohamed Moge District football field. January 3, 2019. © Khadar Barud.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

African states face numerous challenges contributing to their increasing social and economic vulnerability. And one of the main challenges is youth bulge and unemployment. The existence of this causality is attributed to many factors such as lack of committed leadership at every level, prevalence of widespread corruption, lack of transparency and accountability and lack of strong governance institutions able to provide social services and security to citizens.

The Republic of Somaliland, a former British Protectorate in the Horn of Africa that gained its independence from Great Britain on 26 June 1960, is facing similar challenges as most African countries. From the verge of total collapse and ravaging wars (1988–1991) to state and peacebuilding efforts organized and coordinated by its people in the 1990s, Somaliland has faced and is still facing serious challenges emanating from within.

Undoubtedly, Somaliland has managed to establish functioning formal state institutions that, to some extent, are able to provide social and security services to the citizens. But these positive achievements have not been without challenges.

In general, Somaliland's state institutions have double-faceted challenges: one being a shortage of qualified personnel in leadership positions in state institutions, especially in terms of lacking vision and mission, and two is the lack of formal recognition to the Republic of Somaliland from other countries and organizations. This hinders the state from providing

essential services to its citizens due to factors such as ineligibility for foreign direct investment and alike.

However, the lack of recognition alone cannot be used as a justification for the state's failures in addressing the essential needs of its citizens. Nationals at every level continue to fulfill their responsibility of paying taxes to their local and central government, which in turn should guarantee quality provision from the state. Nevertheless, both levels of government keep on failing to provide fundamental facilities and services, such as the main infrastructures.

The local government is fervent in collecting taxes from the poor and underprivileged citizens but it dawdles when it comes to addressing the many problems facing that same community, particularly the one million residents of Hargeisa, the nation's capital. The practices of the Hargeisa local government dissipate the euphoria of the citizens, and the people are nostalgic about the old days of Hargeisa city administrations.

Youth violence in Hargeisa, in general, and Mohamed More district in particular, can be directly tied to the governance problems mentioned above. The irrational practice of not investing in the community, while simultaneously collecting taxes has left the young people dissatisfied. The youth population in the district has been left with unmet needs, from major facilities to entertainment and youth centres. Lands that were intended for public service purposes such as health centres, schools, police stations, and public parks, have been plundered by the government.

Furthermore, the quality of the education provided in the district has been deteriorating due to the state's obliviousness. Public schools are the main

victims in this regard as competent and qualified teachers are leaving due to lower wages which, in turn, has led to a lack of qualified staff in the school system and compromised the overall quality of education. Families who are financially fit are able to send their children to private schools, while the underprivileged and disadvantaged are left in the public school system that is now facing a higher rate of students dropping out.

This paper focuses on amplifying the outcry from Mohamed Moge district citizens for intervention from different fronts, mainly from the state institutions. The study conducted by this paper calls for an urgent response for the district's livelihood such as health, education and infrastructural growth.

The study brings into focus nine key points as recommendations, as well as issues to focus on, through firm leadership and clear strategies.

1. Adopt a comprehensive plan to improve social services providing facilities such as health centres, educational institutes, and roads.
2. Review and reform the education curriculum to include subjects such as civic education. This is because civic education is vital in shaping the next generation to be better citizens.
3. Improving youth centres and facilities in the Mohamed Moge district such as building the fence of the only football field in the district.
4. Integration of rehabilitated youth with a history of violence into the region's football team, so as to establish a secure environment in the district.
5. Increase the security facilities in the district, in particular, expand

and establish new police stations as the district has only one station with a limited number of policemen.

6. There is an urgent need for further institutional reforms and restructuring the police. And it is essential to adopt different approaches to confront the problems of youth violence, for example, methods of awareness-creation could be important to restore police–youth relationships.
7. Adopt far-reaching policies aimed at raising the awareness of the youth by religious leaders, parents, teachers, and elderlies.
8. The government should take charge of its responsibility to supervise and take appropriate actions against those that violate peaceful cohesion and harmony amongst the youth.
9. The recommendations of this study for Mohamed Moge district can be used as a lesson learned for other districts of the city and the experience could be replicated to learn more about how the community, security forces, and the youth could collaborate to build a more secure and safe environment.

INTRODUCTION

Fragile and weak institutions are a prevailing reality in most African states, if not all. In spite of the fact that identifying the roots and remedies of this status-quo varies from one state to another since it is multi-faceted and multi-dimensional, the impact on the citizens remains visible throughout. Mostly, the fragility of African state structures is attributed to its leaders and their failure to establish viable and inclusive institutions. Furthermore, it is aggravated by institutional colonial legacy and the engagement of external actors.¹

Consequently, fragile situations are a massive threat to international and regional security as well as to the internal stability and security of a country and its people.²

Moreover, weak state institutions deeply divide an already fragile state, leading to a subsequent failure of providing social service and security to their citizens. This failure leads to a dissipated relationship between the state and its citizens, thus making the state vulnerable to any influence both from within and outside that undermines its legitimacy. The state is characterized as legitimate when it is created by its citizens as rightful to hold and exercise political power.³

In this essence, Somaliland is a marvel and one of the success stories among African nations thanks to the institutionalization of its indigenous mechanisms of conflict resolution and reconciliation. The country has amalgamated both traditional and modern institutions formally working together. However, it's success is not without challenges. It is a fact that peace, security, and stability, neither exist nor sustain without paying attention to social justice; such as reducing the level of unemployment and underemployment, reforming the judicial system of the country and institutionalizing politics of inclusion.

There are many factors that hinder Somaliland's security and social stability, which result in a high influx of youth migration. This exodus could be linked with the government's failure to adopt inclusive policies and strategies. Moreover, the lack of institutionalization of a meritocracy based-policy aiming at appointing professionals and skillful citizens to high and important positions of public institutions by adopting instead the long-standing practice of hiring handpicked figures, hinders the process of providing and creating job opportunities for the youth in a fair and equal manner.

This study primarily examines the genesis of youth violence in Hargeisa Mohamed Moge district. The study connects the trends of youth violence with the state capacity which in return produces legitimacy from the citizens. The study's central argument is that the absence of inclusive state institutions with capacity is the source of many problems faced not only by people in the district but also by the entire nation. Consequently, this has

1 A. Mazrui, Ali (2008). "Conflict in Africa: An Overview". In *The Roots of African Conflicts: The Causes and Costs* (eds). Addis Ababa: Published in association with OSSREA.

2 D. Kaplan, Seth (2008). *Fixing Fragile States: A New Paradigm for Development*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group.

3 Gilley, Bruce (2006). *The Meaning and Measure of State Legitimacy*, *European Journal of Political Research*, pp. 499–525.

an impact on a fragile state in a changing region, the Horn of Africa.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

Mohamed Moge district carries the name of the late Mohamed Moge Liban, the well-known Somali singer, composer, teacher, nationalist, and freedom fighter who died in 1984. The district is one of the newly established districts in Hargeisa located at the confluence of its eastern and southern tips close to Hargeisa Egal Airport. The district, sharing a border with the Mohamud Haybe and Ma'allin Harun districts, has an estimated population of about 30,000. It is divided into different sub-districts.⁴

It is the key aim of this study to better understand and explain the dynamics of youth violence in Mohamed Moge District. It is necessary to identify the key themes recurring during the interviews and discussions that are indicative of the context; as well as the nature of insecurity which has such an impact on the people's way of life.

Infrastructures are one of the recurring themes in the discussion with the participants of the study as it was highly emphasized in all groups. The lack of key infrastructures, such as good roads and quality social services, is a key factor since it affects the local population on different levels.

The deficiency in important infrastructures not only has a considerable impact on the life of the community but also reflects the limited capacity of the local government administration. This in many ways impacts the dynamics of security in the

district. Consequently, these features are central in explaining the undercurrents of governance and public administration, although the overall impact of this needs to be assessed.

Security concerns and development discourses are at the heart of the dialogues among the members of the local community, the officials and the administrators. On the security and safety front, the district has one police station with fifteen policemen and a police post with two policemen in Digale, an IDP located in the eastern ward of the district. The limited number of policemen available in the district puts the security of the district and the safety of its citizens at risk.

Education-wise, despite the district having over 30,000 residents, it only has one public secondary school and three primary schools. However, some private schools such as *Kaafi* secondary school and the *Ali Ibn Abi Talib* (Mac-hadka) are also operating in the district. Furthermore, many Madrasas are also in the district. However, these private schools are not yet fully registered in the Ministry of Education and Science.

This is a clear indication of how the education facilities are limited and are not sufficient in providing services for a large population; the majority of which are breadwinners struggling in their daily lives. This makes Mohamed Moge one of the most underprivileged districts in Hargeisa when it comes to educational structures.

Health facilities are another disadvantaged sector requiring particular attention from the concerned actors. The region has only one MCH and around seven pharmacies that provide services to over 30,000 residents. This, in turn, makes

⁴ Interview with Mohamed Moge District Administrator, Hargeisa, Somaliland.

the public health service provision in Mohamed Moge district inadequately resourced, and almost insufficient to meet people's needs.

Even though Somaliland has made significant progress in terms of policy and strategy by introducing a national health policy,⁵ this has not focused on the disadvantaged and less privileged population, like those in Mohamed Moge District.

METHODOLOGY

Overview

In response to the request of Marodi-Jeh Governorate Office to gain a comprehensive understanding of youth violence in Mohamed Moge District, the Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies conducted consecutive research studies focused on safety, security and social situations in the district. The study adopted a mixed methodology employing surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions to triangulate data during the collection and analysis phases. A household investigation was employed using survey questionnaires, aimed at obtaining a representative picture of the target population. While the key informant interviews and focus group discussions were used to probe deeper into the topics and cross-validate issues that emerged from the household surveys. This mixture helped the research quality to triangulate the data collected.

Sampling method

Although the main sample target of the study was the youth and households, the application of the sampling formula to

determine a representative sample size was used. The study took into account certain statistical parameters, such as the level of confidence desired (95%) and margin of error (+ or – 5%).

Figure 1: Sample distribution

S/No.	Target Population	Sample Size
1	Household Survey	269
2	Youth Survey	44
Total		313

Household and youth surveys

Household and youth surveys were used to conduct a face-to-face quantitative examination. These surveys asked questions relating to the overview of the district's security concerns and the circumstances surrounding it, as well as the perception of the youth engaged in violence.

IPCS employed Systematic Random Sampling (SRS) where enumerators randomly selected any 4th household after a random start point. The questions were presented to randomly selected households and youth from organized groups. A team from the IPCS collected 313 questionnaires in Mohamed Moge District from May 1 to 5, 2019.

5 Somaliland Ministry of Health (2013). Health Sector Strategic Plan (2013–2016). Hargeisa: Ministry of Health.

Focus group discussions

Four focus group discussions, consisting of at least 10–15 persons each, were organized. Women, men, youth involved in violence and youth not involved in violence participated in these discussions. The aim of these discussions was to triangulate the data collected through the questionnaires and the interviews and deeply understand the perceptions of the groups on the issue studied.

Key informant interviews

The second method employed for data collection was personal interviews with key informants who possess knowledge of the issue discussed, as well as from concerned institutions. Again, the aim was to delve deeper into the subject and cross-validate the issues raised in the questionnaires.

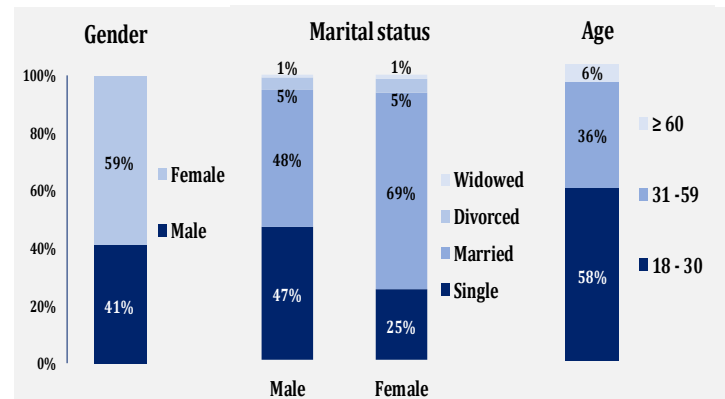
The interviews were conducted between May and September 2019. Twelve key informants were interviewed; including Marodi-Jeh Governorate Office; Mohamed Moge District Administration, the Ministry of Education and Science, Youth and Sports, Hargeisa Attorney General Office, Hargeisa Regional Court, and Abdi Shabel. The interviewees expressed their views on several key questions, including their engagement and experience with the security and social services provisions.

Descriptions of the respondents

In this study, 59% of the respondents were female, while 41% were male. Also, a diverse group of people with different social status and backgrounds, ranging from single to married, to divorced, as well as widowed, took part in the study. Of the respondents, 47% male and 25% female were single, while 48% male and 69% female were married. Five percent (5%) of both males and females were

divorced and another 1% were widowed. In addition to that, 58% were between the ages of 18 to 30, 36% were between 31 to 59, and 6% above the age of 60. This inclusivity gives reliability and balance to the study.

Figure 2: Proportion of households by gender, marital status, and age



MAPPING THE GENESIS OF VIOLENCE

Unemployed youth

The protracted and deep-rooted economic crisis that has affected nearly every country in Sub-Saharan Africa has had a profoundly negative impact on the well-being of the entire population in the region. The social and economic crisis that has plagued many parts of the region in the past three decades has had a deep effect especially on its disadvantaged and less privileged groups: children, women, and youth. Various problems, such as poverty, unemployment, and access to quality education continue to pose threats to the social and economic development of the youth⁶ in Africa including those residing in Somaliland.

6 Liberty, Mweemba (2014). "Graduate Unemployment and Marginalization in Zambia: A Dark Cloud on the Horizon". In *Employment Policies and Unemployment in*

The Somaliland Ministry of National Planning and Development (2017) has stated that profound levels of unemployment disproportionately affect youth graduates. According to the Ministry, unemployment rates amount to 65.5% in urban areas, 40.7% in rural areas, and 47.4% across the whole country.⁷

The high rate of unemployed youth in Somaliland and in Hargeisa, specifically, remains one of the major challenges faced by both the state and the citizens. Moreover, clear policies and strategies to tackle this problem are limited or absent. According to the participants to the focus group discussions in the district, the high level of unemployment among the youth in the district, and the scarce opportunities available are the leading causes of the youth joining violent groups as well as engaging in criminal acts.⁸

The existence of widespread unemployment in the area is thus a leading factor in undermining the district's security. According to the principal of one of the schools in the district, the estimated number of people from the district working in different government institutions is less than a hundred individuals. However, it is extremely difficult to substantiate this argument as there is no in-depth assessment. If this is found to be true, it is

Eastern and Southern Africa (ed). Addis Ababa: Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA).

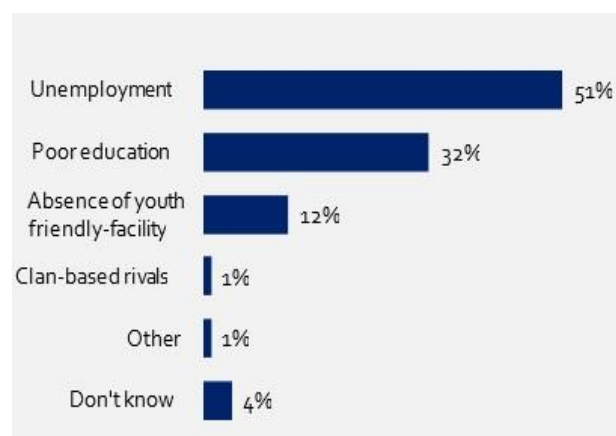
7 Somaliland Ministry of National Planning and Development (2017). The National Development Plan II 2017–2021. Hargeisa: Ministry of National Planning and Development.

8 Discussions with women focus group participants in Mohamed Moge District, Hargeisa.

a testament of how the district is desperately marginalized from the state resources and job opportunities.

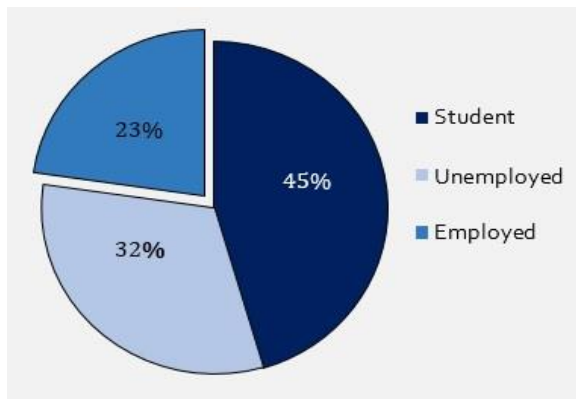
Citizen's perceptions of the cause of youth violence were also reflected in the discussions and interviews. Fifty-one percent (51%) of the respondents emphasized that a high rate of unemployment is the major cause, while 32% stated that poor education is the source of violence. The other 12% linked it to the absence of youth-friendly facilities and 1% recorded clan-based rivals as a leading reason (see the figure below).

Figure 3: Citizens' perceptions of the cause of youth violence



Social and economic opportunities are very limited in Mohamed Moge district as shown by the survey results: 32% of the youth were unemployed; 45% of whom were students, while 23% were employed. Hence, the high rate of unemployed youth in the district remains one of the major security challenges and puts a burden on the citizens' safety, as the following figure shows.

Figure 4: Status of youth respondents



School dropouts

Education, or specifically quality education, remains one of the major drivers and key components of development for any country. As the Republic of Somaliland enters the phase of reconstruction and development, it has taken steps to advance the attainment of the objectives of its national development agenda, which considers education a necessary tool.

Education is recognized as a significant instrument in these efforts towards national development, a strong education sector is seen as a source of valuable human resources for national development efforts.⁹ However, all these policies and strategies have not been fully adapted and as a result, the nation is facing a deteriorating quality of education, which is in dire need of improvement.

Furthering this point, though the levels of educational structures in Somaliland have shown a rapid quantitative increase, quality has been missing for several reasons, such as commercialization of the education to generate money, particularly by private schools which continue to put a burden on public

schools. In addition, the prevalence of inadequate skilled and professional teachers due to low wages, to which private schools also contribute as they pay higher salaries in order to keep professional teachers, remains one of the major factors hindering the quality of education. All of this, in turn, produces incompetent students that find it extremely hard to join higher education institutions.¹⁰

Similar to other parts of the country, the number of students dropping out of the formal education system in Mohamed Moge district is staggering. Of course, this is caused by a number of reasons: the economic factor is recorded as one element, meaning that the families of the students cannot afford the tuition fees, this, in turn, leads the children to leave school and join existing violent groups in the society.¹¹ The second important point to note is the lack of civic education¹² and poor quality within public schools.

Another unfortunate fact to mention is that private school students are generally more disciplined than those enrolled in public schools. This could be attributed to the strong teacher-student relationship that exists in the private education sector as opposed to the public.¹³ Furthermore and most importantly, private schools are

¹⁰ M. Ali, Nasir (2014). Building State Capacity in a Post-Conflict Situation: the Case of Somaliland, *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, Volume 4 – No. 1, (January, 2014), pp. 157–170.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹² Interview with the Ministry of Education's coordinator in the eastern part of Hargeisa, Somaliland.

¹³ Interview with a principal of one of the private schools in Mohamed Moge District, Hargeisa.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

endowed with qualified teachers because of the higher salaries they are able to provide. As a result, less privileged students and less qualified teachers remain in public schools.¹⁴

Despite these facts, the dropout rate from public schools has declined recently; mainly due to Government distribution of free textbooks. At the same time, when searching for the main reason behind the increase in dropouts, the Free Primary Education policy launched by the Ministry of Education in 2010 is at the centre. This action worsened the overall quality of education; for example, it affected the punctuality of teachers who used to benefit from the small fees charged to the students. And generally speaking, since then, the quality of primary schools has been compromised.¹⁵

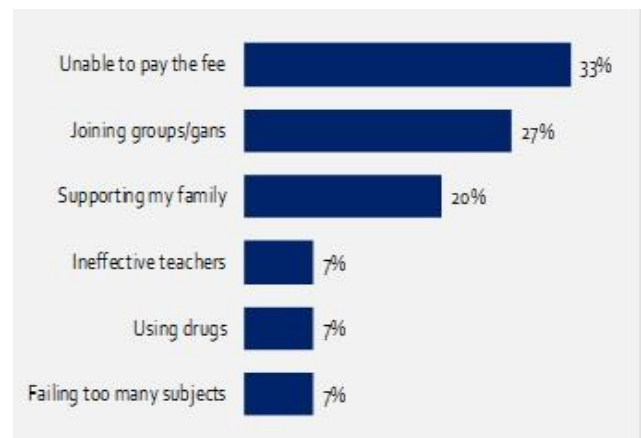
The Ministry of Education and Science, on the other hand, argues that the teachers in primary public schools are mostly trained, compared to those in public secondary schools who are constantly facing persuasion from private schools by the allure of higher pay. At the same time, however, those teaching in public schools are in the government payroll which is more secure jobs than private schools’.

The living standard of the district, which is quite low compared to other districts of the city, should also be considered as another factor. Most of the residents living in this district are breadwinners and cannot afford to pay the tuition of their children. This creates a chain reaction that leads the children to drop out, which

in turn makes them idle at home or get into drugs. Joining violent groups is what happens next, as violence is just a way for them to get money to buy different drugs.¹⁶

Against this background, survey conducted (see figure 5); shows various reasons that caused students to drop out of school. These include: inability to pay tuition fees, alliance with violent youth groups, pressure to support family through labor, ineffective and unqualified educational staff, drug culture and addiction and finally, a failure to pass certain subjects that lead to discouragement and decision to leave school.

Figure 5: Reasons for school dropout



Fairly different from other factors, the declining role of the father in the family also plays its part in students dropping out of school.¹⁷ Fathers are characterized by a severe Khat chewing culture, which affects the family in two inter-related ways. One is broadly economic and it affects society as a whole, but that impact is registered immediately in the family unit.

14 Discussions with youth violent members’ focus group participants in Mohamed Moge District, Hargeisa.

15 Ibid., 12.

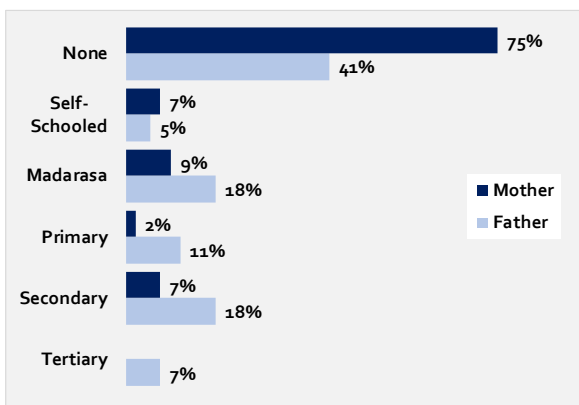
16 Ibid., 8.

17 Interview with Marodi-Jeh Governor, Hargeisa, Somaliland.

But what is ultimately more destructive to the structure of the family is the socio-cultural consequences which come as a result of economic problems. The man of the house, who spends a good deal of time away from his family because of Khat, almost automatically loses his mantle of authority and becomes a burden for his family disregarding the responsibility of sustaining his family members, including raising the children.¹⁸

Another important point to note is the parents' level of education. Indeed, the level of the parents' formal education affects the behaviour and how the children are raised. In this survey, around 75% of people argue that a lack of education from the parents, specifically the mothers, determines the behaviour and attentiveness of the child at school. Yet, 41% of respondents have argued that it is the lack of formal education on the father's side that has a greater influence on the child (see figure below).

Figure 6: Effects of parents' level of education on child behaviour



Usually, when the quality of education is mentioned, the focus does not extend beyond indicating three interrelated key factors: quality of the teacher, well-refined curriculum, and a conducive

¹⁸ Interview with a principal of the secondary school in Mohamed Moge District, Hargeisa.

environment favourable for learning.¹⁹ However, the behaviour of the student at home and outside school is not to be disregarded.

The advancement of science and technology has an impact on the security and safety of citizens. Talking about safety and violence, a recent phenomenon in the country is the usage of knives, swords, and daggers, which is something copied from other neighbouring countries, for instance, it was common in Kenya to use these weapons at the wake of the election riots.²⁰

Emphasizing the role of technology on the youth's changing behaviour, the emergence of smartphones and social media remains one of the major challenges hindering the ability to focus of the youth, both at school and at home.²¹ Nevertheless, this factor remains the least studied and less significant in the society and the concerned institutions.

Still, the violent youth focus group participants highlighted the correlation between poverty and violence. To support the validity of this point, the majority of the population in Mohamed Moge district is in fact economically deprived. Consequently, children in the district end up in public schools which, as mentioned before, are low in eminence and lead their students to be less interested in education and more keen on joining gangs and violent groups and activities.²²

¹⁹ Ibid., 12.

²⁰ Interview with a lawyer based in Hargeisa, Somaliland.

²¹ Ibid., 17.

²² Ibid., 14.

According to an interview conducted within this study with a principal of one of the schools in the district, the students spend most of their evenings on their smartphones using social media. In connection with this point, the principal highlighted that internet providing companies release internet bundles after midnight. This is reciprocated in a way that it makes most youngsters spend a good deal of their time using social media after midnight and it negatively affects their studies and their health, as they will lack the ability to be awake and attentive during class hours. However, such allegation is entirely dismissed by those companies.

This study provides pertinent information to the concerned institutions, specifically the Ministry of Education and Science as well as the Ministry of Communication, in order to tackle all the gaps that exist within education and communication policies. It will prove useful to the government by offering an array of different approaches to education which in turn will strengthen the security, which is worthy of implementation.

However, providing quality education to the public is inseparable from addressing the challenges surrounding it. Improving the quality requires an effort from both the government and the members of the broader public who are willing and able to influence the most integral parts of Somaliland's education system. This process must tackle the challenges faced by both public and private schools.²³ Indeed, a nationwide education system is something worth investing in.

Violent youth

²³ Ibid., 14.

Violent youth are the primary actors of the insecurity trends that are happening in many parts of the Mohamed Moge district. Multiple factors influence youth to join gang groups or violent networks. One of those factors is a lack of economic opportunities, for instance, lack of jobs and quality education which provides them with plenty of idle time.²⁴ It appears that the youth who join these groups are the primary victims of violence, but they remain victims of others and of themselves.²⁵

Highlighting this point, the highest level of violence exists between these youngsters themselves. For example, if and when some members decide to depart from these groups, these individuals will face lots of difficulties because of that decision and are usually forced to pay a substantial amount of money to get clearance from the group.²⁶

The Abdi Shabel initiative managed to rehabilitate and reconcile some of these groups and brought together some who are involved in different forms of crimes. However, before this initiative; rape, mobile theft, night stabbing, and gang fights were a custom of day.²⁷

In Mohamed Moge district only, around thirty-two organized groups bearing different names and characters exist. While most of them are football clubs, some are organized groups who fight against one another and destroy the public and private properties.²⁸

²⁴ Ibid., 8.

²⁵ Discussions with students focus group participants in Mohamed Moge District, Hargeisa.

²⁶ Ibid., 8.

²⁷ Ibid., 8.

²⁸ Ibid., 25.

These groups have eccentric names with different connotations: Arsenal, Dalsan, Himilo, Sahansaho, Waberi, Onkod, City, France, Horyal, Real, Aja'ib, Kasmal, Roma, are some that stand out. Simultaneously, most of the groups' members are addicted to drugs such as Khat, which is a national affliction, and alcohol and even hashish. Nonetheless, some do exist that never tried any of these drugs.²⁹

The inter-group clash sometimes extends to youth groups who reside in different neighbourhoods. This impacts the safety and security of citizens residing in those areas. For instance, the way one group raids another district is by destroying the properties of that particular neighbourhood; robbing the mobile phones, stabbing by-passers, and related criminal acts. In retaliation, the other group raids the respective neighbourhood. This kind of practice leaves the community impoverished and unsafe.³⁰

Conferring with the principal of one of the schools in the district, the violent youth groups have a system of governance with hierarchies and the final decision always rests on the shoulder of the group's leader. It is important to note that around 70% of those group members are neither under the control of their parents nor any family member. Because of this, most of the gang members are out of their house during the night; they either move around the neighbourhood or use social media.

Looking at the average population, the good youth citizens are highly outnumbered by the violent ones. This puts pressure on the upright ones as they

are given two options: either be part of the gangs and take part in the activities of the group or pay money to the group.³¹ According to a key informant interview, the youth are unrivalled and incomparable to their parents due to improper raising and the changing patterns of values and principles within the society. This is to say that most of the parents living in the district are breadwinners and unable to look after the behaviors of their children.

Of course, there is a clear dividing-line since Abdi Shabel came into the district in 2016, his involvement in those activities has created an opportunity for the district to be given some attention by some government institutions, particularly Marodi-Jeh Governorate Office. Nonetheless, the central and local governments' role in responding to the needs of the district is very minimal.

The failure of the central and local governments in addressing these issues could be attributed to the situation of domestic politics in Somaliland that is apart from its usual ups and downs. Conferring on domestic politics, the absence of clear and concrete policies and strategies that could carry forward the nation's ambition to provide equitable services to its citizens is one thing worth mentioning.

The weakness of Somaliland's Police force in attempting to control and contain the fighting among the youth groups is another important point. This does not mean that the country does not provide significant governance and security to its citizens, but some districts are poorly resourced and the presence of the police is limited, thus hardly tackle

²⁹ Ibid., 25.

³⁰ Ibid., 25.

³¹ Interview with a female lawyer based in Hargeisa, Somaliland.

the multiple challenges the security and safety of the citizens are facing.³²

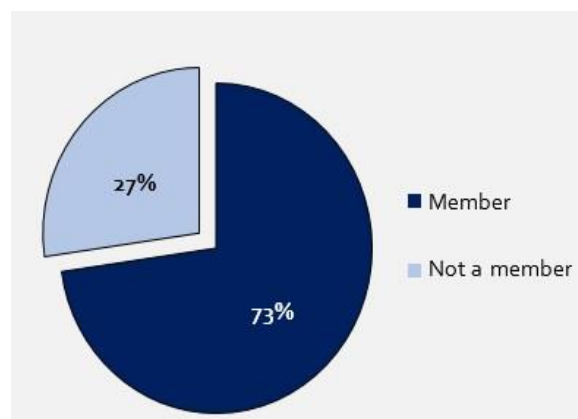
However, due to the change brought by Abdi Shabel in collaboration with the district administration, the district remains relatively stable. To strengthen the security of the district and restore trust among the violent youth, Mr Shabel officially reconciled the groups and reached an agreement signed by each group's representatives with the presence of the police and the district security and safety committee.

In addition to that, Abdi Shabel has introduced a rewarding procedure among the groups, especially in football matches. It is clear that these days the cooperation between the people living in the district, the youth and police is getting stronger.³³ Even though the problem of mobile theft remains observable, we can also witness change compared to the past. Perhaps a persistent problem is drug use and other associated substances that remain accessible in the district.³⁴

In regard to places that harbour most of the violence in the district, respondents mentioned different significant areas, according to the figure (7) below, 72% of the respondents argue that most violent activities happen in sports centres, particularly in football fields. Nineteen (19%) stated schools as the main violence arenas, while 6% retorted to neighbourhoods and of course, 3% stated that markets were the main

scene of violence. This figure strongly supports the argument highlighting that the lack of playgrounds for the youth remains the main if not the sole source of youth's violence.³⁵ And once again, this is pointed towards the local government that failed to preserve the public spaces in the district.

Figure 7: Where the violence happens



This is not to undermine the influence of other factors, such as civic education within the state's curriculum. This matter is a challenge for both the youth and the state. Although civic and physical education courses are technically incorporated in the country's curriculum they are not taught in classrooms. This could be explained by the severe lack of commitment from the Ministry. Either way, as a result of the absence of civic education the state ends up with unethical graduates, or many problems including gang acts arise from an un-refined curriculum.³⁶

Most teenagers join youth gangs to get security. This is because of the need to get social security, as there are no other bodies providing security to the youth in

32 Interview with a police officer in Hargeisa who spoke on the condition of anonymity, Hargeisa, Somaliland.

33 Ibid., 25.

34 Discussions with men focus group participants in Mohamed Moge District, Hargeisa.

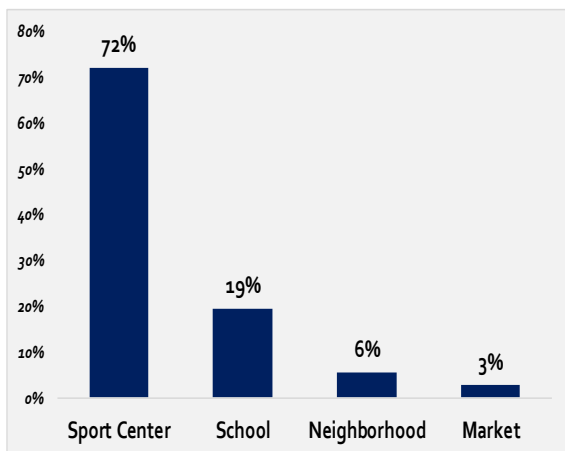
35 Ibid., 17.

36 Ibid., 12.

their neighbourhoods³⁷. Furthering this point, the protection is extended to the family of these gang members as a result of their children’s affiliation with the groups.³⁸ Regrettably, the members are not just from one gender demography, as there are also female gang members who continue to engage in violence. They usually carry out their task in association with male groups; for instance, female groups serve as intelligence and information gathering network.³⁹

According to the youth surveyed by the study, 73% of them stated that they had been members of different groups in the last six months (November 2018–April 2019), while 27% were not part of any group (see figure 8).

Figure 8: Membership of youth groups or gangs for the last six months



Drugs addictions

Drugs are one of the main threats to the country’s human and state security. The increasing consumption of Khat, without proper government control, as well as an increased use of alcohol and other

substances such as Hashish, are one of the leading threats to social security amongst youth in Somaliland. The frequency with which those substances enter the country has increased and so has their availability thereby weakening the potential and power of the youth and derailing their future.⁴⁰

Amongst drugs, Khat is obviously one of the most pressing social problems for Somaliland people. Nevertheless, the overwhelming question regarding other drugs, Hashish, in particular, is about the extent to which they are entering the country and how their consumption amongst the youth is increasing. In addition, there is an equally important, and for some even more important, series of questions to consider: What is the role of the Somaliland law enforcement machineries in tackling these specific social problems? And what is the role of different actors in the community such as local people, parents, mosques, and schools? Answering these questions requires a commitment, not only from the government through policies but also from individuals and intellectuals, as well as parents.⁴¹

In Mohamed Moge District, the youth are exposed to various types of drugs, amongst which is Khat; the most used substance, and the second most frequently-used would be Hashish, accompanied by other harmful drugs that have a direct impact on the behaviour of the user.

Indeed, the use of Hashish is becoming dominant and those who are addicted are known in the community. Hashish dealers are known to change their

37 Ibid., 31.

38 Ibid., 31.

39 Ibid., 20.

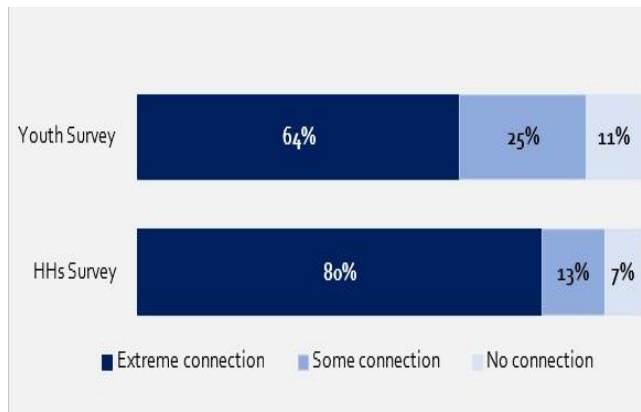
40 Ibid., 17.

41 Ibid., 17.

location frequently due to the presence of law enforcement in the community and the fear of getting caught.⁴²

Indubitably, there is a strong connection between drug addiction and involvement in violence as well as criminal activities. According to the survey, 64% of the youth and 80% of the households surveyed mention the strong connections between drug addiction and violence, 25% and 13% argue there is some connection and the rest state that there is no connection (see figure 9).

Figure 9: The connections between drug addiction and violence



Addiction to Khat and other drugs may be a source of insecurity, theft, and gang groups in the country. Nonetheless, different other factors also lead the youth to join those gang networks. For instance, boys often end up in youth gangs, which have formed in their neighbourhoods, because of the need for surrogate “families” in which they can find an alternative form of “support” and “guidance”.⁴³

⁴² Ibid., 32.

⁴³ A. Sahal, Maryama. Hashi, Abdirahman. Issa, Abdirahman. Jama, Guled. M. Osman, Abdirahman. M. Ali, Nasir & Rashid, Ayan (2018). *Confronting Khat: Strategies for Social Change*, IPCS Paper (No. 003). Pp. 1–8.

Essentially, they become truants, dropouts, and delinquents at an early stage of their lives and in turn grow up into Khat-chewing young men, who subscribe to the already established trend. Many of them become thieves or muggers who use violence and intimidation as part of their lives in the community. A substantial number of these free-floating boys (and even girls) are allured into the traps of tahrib – trying to flee a family and a country that has failed them – which puts the responsibility on the State, as much as anyone else, to tackle those problems and address them.⁴⁴

It appears that the state as it exists in Somaliland today is not capable of resolving the problems of drugs. This includes but it is not limited to Khat, which is a catastrophe for the well-being of the society and affects the livelihoods of many. This requires sustained and systematic action on the part of all of the concerned parties.

In some respects, establishing viable governance institutions with effective guiding policies could help Somaliland to at least minimize the impact of Khat, as well as eliminate other drug substances. These initiatives may be able to control the usage of Khat and other drugs, not only from the top but also from the bottom, as many citizens are eager to work with the government to eradicate these social scourges.

The fact remains that the Somaliland government is expected to adopt far-reaching policies that could protect both the state and the citizens’ interests in regards to drugs such as Khat. These drugs have great disadvantages on the society as well as the state as a whole,

⁴⁴ Ibid., 43.

and they specifically have a negative impact on the economic and social well-being of the community.

Citizens' safety and security at risk

In politics and international relations, the term security is one filled with controversies in its conceptualization; nevertheless, its simplest explanation can be explained by the initial characterization of freedom from threats, anxiety, danger or political coercion.⁴⁵ In the post-Cold War era, human security became parallel with state security, which was a dominant element for decades and even for centuries. In this regard, it is the responsibility of any government to formulate and implement security strategies and policies aimed at addressing and eliminating the causes of fears and dissatisfaction of the citizens encompassing economic, political or social instability.

This is regarded as one of the most effective approaches as it works to bring a long-term solution to existing problems and preserves the safety and security of the individuals on one hand, and the protection of the state apparatuses in the long-term on the other. However, it is important to note that the nation-state is no longer the sole actor when it comes to protection.⁴⁶

Despite the issues regarding security, Somaliland has relatively succeeded in building peace and maintaining security in a changing region, while also preserving the safety of its citizens. But

this does not mean the safety of the citizens has not been without challenges. Since 2012, the District has been experiencing security threats emanating from visible organized groups who fight against one another and put the safety of the citizens at risk.

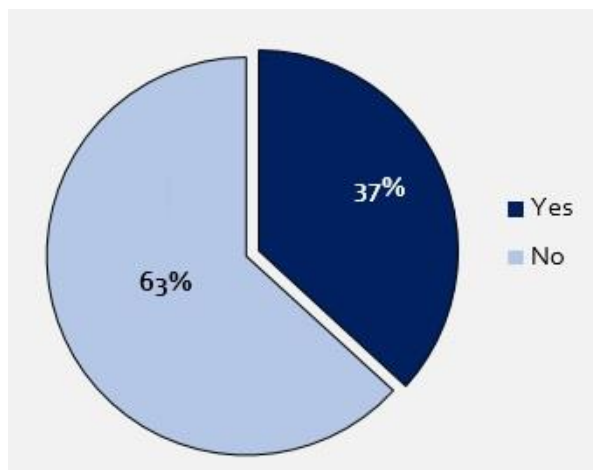
In the context of this study, insecurity and the challenges to the citizens' safety emanate from, at least, three interrelated sources. The major source is the weak and limited law enforcement machinery. The residents of the district themselves, being poor and disadvantaged, are considered a second source as this leads to the youth turning to violence to generate money for Khat and other drug substances. Another significant causation is the absence of robust institutional mechanisms capable of providing services to the citizens, which remains a factor of insecurity.

Conflict is an inevitable social process and an aspect of human nature that generally affects the people at all levels, but the weak and the vulnerable section of the society suffer most from these uneven problems. According to the survey in Mohamed Moge, 37% of the respondents stated that they were victims of youth gangs, while 63% of the respondents had never experienced any problems from those gangs as the following figure shows.

⁴⁵ Anne, Sisson Runyan & Peterson, V. Spike (1999). *Global Gender Issues*. USA: Westview Press.

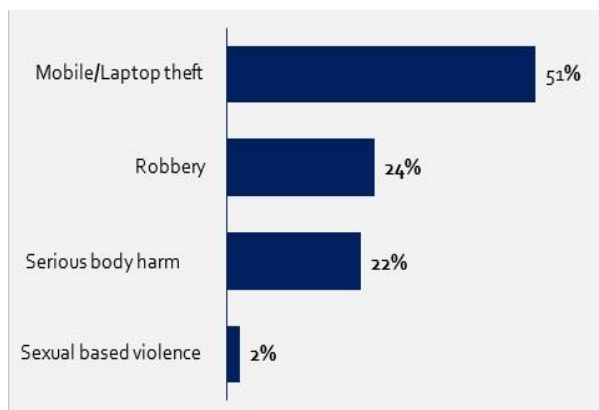
⁴⁶ Booth, Ken (2007). *Theory of World Security*. London, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Figure 10: Youth gang victims



As to what type of problems they encountered from the youth gangs, 51% of the respondents stated that they experienced mobile phone or laptop theft, 24% witnessed a robbery, while 22% faced serious physical injury, and 2% faced sexual-based violence (see figure 11).

Figure 11: Types of problems faced



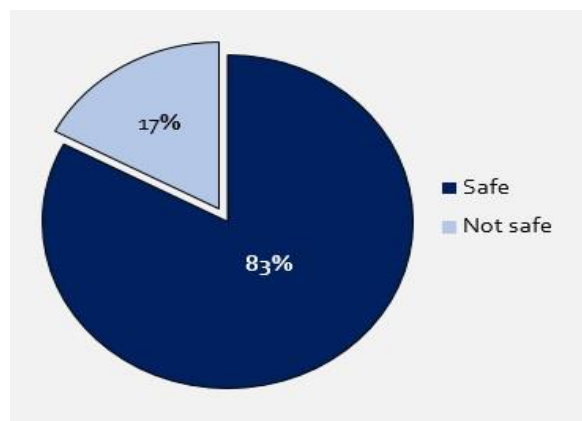
However, the situation has shown improvement when Abdi Shabel, a businessman who is living in Mohamed Moge district, voluntarily managed to reconcile the violent youth groups, who are at the source of the problems, in 2017. Those groups were causing a lot of public damage and were a threat to security as they were fighting against each other.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Ibid., 17.

Albeit the achievements spearheaded by Shabel, the lack of a sufficient amount of police force in the district remains the major factor undermining the security of the district, as per the principal of one of the schools in the district. In light of all of this, increasing the number of policemen in the district and establishing additional police stations is of the utmost importance for the security and the safety of the citizens.

According to the survey conducted, 83% of the respondents approached by the study argue that they feel safe, while the rest (17%) expressed that they do not feel safe (see figure 12). This positive response could be attributed to the efforts of Abdi Shabel to improve the safety and security of Mohamed Moge’s residents.

Figure 12: Outlooks of the citizens on safety



In many instances, the people in the district agreed on the fact that the community only sees the government actions when there is an election campaign and at the time of tax collection.⁴⁸ Moreover, fellow citizens in the district feel that their euphoria and exhilaration have been betrayed by the elected individuals who didn’t bring about

⁴⁸ Ibid., 14.

any substantial change after the elections and overall.

Certainly, shelving the promises made during the campaign undermines the trust of the citizens towards the nation's electoral processes. It also demotes the sense of collective ownership and produces weak and fragile institutions which are counter-productive to what is expected from the citizens.

YOUTH DISENGAGEMENT IN VIOLENT NETWORKS

Community-driven initiative

Since the 1990s, Somaliland has been engaging in community-driven initiatives which served as a cornerstone for its success stories and achievements. Despite the undeniable challenges in finding ways the local people can solve their internal differences without turning to any form of physical violence, the country is unique as it has developed formal institutions which are more effective than any other liberal institutions.⁴⁹ This is attributed to the amalgamation of modern state institutions with traditional ones.

The traditional instruments are impeccable and the country should learn from them, as they survived for centuries. Furthermore, the incorporation of these two systems has played a vital role in transforming the conditions of war and violence into peace and prosperity.⁵⁰

49 Murithi, Tim (2008). "African indigenous and endogenous approaches to peace and conflict resolution". In *Peace and Conflict in Africa* (ed). New York: Zed Books.

50 Eubank, Nicholas (2010). *Peace-Building without External Assistance: Lessons from Somaliland*. CGD Working Paper 198. Washington, D.C: Center for Global Development.

When examining the citizens' attitude towards peace and security one should, as already stated, take into consideration the safety and security dimensions of Somaliland in general. It is wise to take into

consideration that the people are peace-lovers and completely against any sort of aspect that might be affecting the security of the state and their own safety as citizens. Such love and respect for peace are deeply embedded in their history, culture, and civilization.

For this reason, the citizens of Mohamed Moge work alongside the government to maintain peace and security in the region. This is done through the establishment of a committee that works with the respective offices. A good example is the security and safety committee which works closely with the police and the local government in the district.⁵¹

Nevertheless, this is not to say that the residents of Mohamed Moge District are completely satisfied with the work of the government offices, as the district security mechanisms and its institutions still face governance and logistical challenges. The main challenges range from the absence of strong institutional frameworks to the presence of poor and unskilled personnel, as well as lack of enough capacity building programs. Accordingly, improving security in the district remains an important factor for those who wish to work for an overall better district.

51 Interview with the community security and safety committee in Mohamed Moge District, Hargeisa, Somaliland.

The role of local government

Somaliland has three tiers of governance: local, regional and central. The local government is mainly responsible for the basic services and providing for the needs of the citizens. Despite this fact, local government officials in contemporary Somaliland are more focused on political issues. This contravenes the designation of local government officials and other civil servants, as they are not supposed to be engaging in political issues but should only serve the public. The changing behaviour of the local government affects their performance causing most Hargeisa residents to denounce it.

Currently, the performance of the local government is the weakest in the history of the country. And the central government is hesitant to dissolve the local councillors across the country following their failure to meet the citizens' expectations.

As for the violent youth networks and the role of the local government and its strategies, it is important to note the absence of long-term approaches to tackle the problems of gang groups. According to a local government staff approached by the study, most issues concerning local government are tied with the decentralization problem.⁵² Consequently, the local government of Hargeisa, in its current condition, would neither be capable of solving youth problems nor preserve the national assets including the public lands.⁵³

It is fair to say that the local government of Hargeisa has not only failed to preserve national properties; including land for public purposes but has also failed to

maintain or at least improve infrastructures such as roads within the city and in Mohamed Moge District in particular. One challenge to the patrolling work of the police is the lack of paved roads that could harbour police motor vehicles. This is not only true for good roads but other infrastructures such as street lights. This facilitates criminal activities during the nighttime. Hence, it is up to the local government to tackle these issues in order to provide the citizens with all the services needed.

The police involvement

While actors and institutions that have the potential to transform security sector governance may be broadly similar, the champions of transformation and the issues around which they converge will vary from one context to another.⁵⁴ The police force is one of those champions and a key player in preserving the security and safety of the citizens. Without the police, countries wouldn't be able to provide a minimum level of security to their citizens or perform their regulatory functions. Hence, in order to provide security services and build long-lasting peace in a community, it is essential to build the capacity of the police force.

The citizens of Somaliland consider the police as the primary actor to maintain the safety and security of the people. Regardless, the police force faces a lot of challenges while performing their work.

These challenges include the low level of education among the policemen, lack of

⁵² Ibid., 4.

⁵³ Ibid., 32.

⁵⁴ Bryden, Alan & Olonisakin, Funmi (2010). "Conceptualising Security Sector Transformation in Africa". In Security Sector Transformation in Africa (eds). Geneva: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces.

professional integrity; such as usage of khat in public. Indeed, men and women in the police force also face different challenges such as low wages, lack of housing for their families, and lack of capacity building programs. This leads them to reluctance and undisciplined acts as well as corruption.⁵⁵ In addition, the lack of transparency and accountability is another critical challenge that needs to be addressed.

Undeniably, there is a huge gap within the police system compared to the custodian corps, as the latter receive various training and capacity building programs according to a key informant approached by the study. This, not only determines the relationship between the public and the police, but also shows the visible dissimilarities between the two institutions.⁵⁶

These gaps between police institutions and the weakness therein could be attributed to the lack of commitment from the Government to implement different reform programs for the police force. It is clear that the Ministry of Interior, which is the only governmental institution mandated to monitor, coordinate and control the activities and shape the behaviour of the police, has failed to exercise its authority to lead the police in a way that reflects its directives. In this regard, further institutional reforms and an overall restructuring of the police are urgently needed.⁵⁷

In the particular case of Mohamed Moge district, the role of the police in tackling the problems of violent youth is quite limited. The main reasons for this could

be the lack of resources, such as vehicles and limited financial resources, as well as the shortage of policemen in the district specifically assigned to tackle the problem of youth violence.⁵⁸

According to an interview with one principal of one of the schools, there are around fifteen policemen stationed at Mohamed Moge police station. Hence, the question here is how the capacity of fifteen policemen can provide security to a population of over 30,000. This is a grave issue that needs to be addressed if one wishes to solve the security challenges the district is facing.

One of the judges of the Hargeisa regional court; who spoke on condition of anonymity, argues that the Somaliland police are behind the changing behaviour of the youth. The judge asserted that the action of the police to detain the youth as well as intentionally tamper with their age so as to legalize their detention furthers the act of criminalization. For instance, if the child is 14 years old they deceptively record 18 to validate the custody.⁵⁹

On one hand, the youth criminalization at the hands of the police exacerbates the relationship between the youth and the police. On the other hand, it creates a stronger bond between the youth and their parents as the parents consider all allegations against their children as "illegal, illegitimate, and baseless" as well as fabricated by the police to collect money illegally. Consequently, the deterioration of parent-police relationship gives room for the youth to legitimize their violent actions by using

55 Ibid., 32.

56 Ibid., 20.

57 Ibid., 32.

58 Ibid., 32.

59 Interview with a judge at Hargeisa regional court who spoke on the condition of anonymity, Hargeisa, Somaliland.

the unfriendly relations between the parents and the police.⁶⁰

Overall, the changing behaviour of the police who used to be known as the “friend of the public” contributes to the deterioration of the country’s security situation. It is also unfortunate that some police stations in Hargeisa turn some youth against other youths that is the police recruit some youth who are members of violent groups to work alongside the policemen assigned to tackle the violent networks in the city. However, this kind of method and engagement deepens the inter-group conflicts rather than helping solve the problem of security and safety in the districts of Hargeisa.⁶¹

When the issue is further analyzed, one of the most concerning factors is how the police stations have moved behind their capacity regarding incarceration. In some police stations, it is distressful to see around 150 youth, exclusively between the ages of 14–20 years, detained in one centre. The burning question that arises here is: are these stations truly aimed at rehabilitation or are they severe punishment cells?

Laws such as the Somaliland Juvenile Justice Law (Law No: 36/2007) passed in 2008⁶², prohibits the detention of those under 15 years and other proclamations forbid seniors above 70 years and pregnant women⁶³. However, the juvenile and youth delinquency act has not entered into practise despite existing as state law. Enforcing these laws and addressing legal gaps in the state are of

ultimate importance.⁶⁴ The term ‘juvenile’ includes a ‘child’ – a person who has not attained the age of 16.

Moreover, it is a fact that the changing character within the police force since 2010 can be attributed to one major factor, which is the death or retirement of senior police officers. They not only had experience about the roles and responsibilities of the police but they were also behind the re-establishment of the Somaliland Police Force in the 1990s.

Furthermore, the illegal acts of the police may be attributed to the weaknesses within the state's criminal justice system which needs urgent reform and intervention. For instance, the state attorney office has failed to investigate the allegations submitted by the police against the citizens.⁶⁵

However, one of Hargeisa’s regional attorney offices expressed different views on the issue. They argue that as there is no comprehensive research on the root causes of youth violence and the role of the police and on as to whether the phenomenon is escalating or de-escalating, one can never fully question the role of the police or any other state institution.

It is, however, undeniable that the lack of civic education in the school curriculum and the absence of a national strategy to tackle the youth problem is a significant challenge. In particular, the police have failed to bring about a substitute approach to the old “chase and catch” method.⁶⁶ There is an essential need for

60 Ibid., 59.

61 Ibid., 59.

62 Ibid., 20.

63 Ibid., 20.

64 Ibid., 59.

65 Ibid., 59.

66 Interview with the Hargeisa region’s attorney general office in Hargeisa, Somaliland.

the police to adopt different approaches to confront these problems, for example, awareness-raising activities could be important to restore police–youth relationships.⁶⁷

In this regard, both the attorney and the court agree that the youth have been subjected to limited rights when they are imprisoned. While the prison system is supposed to be focused on education and rehabilitation they are actually more similar to chastisement centres. After being incarcerated, the youth are supposed to re-enter the community as reformed individuals who have abandoned their violent behavior. However, they return having acquired other dangerous habits and skills. This, of course, is also due to being in contact with other dangerous murderous criminals who are capable of transmitting many malicious habits. In relation to this, the re-establishment of the "*Mija-caseye*" jail, a juvenile correctional prison in the Sahil region established by the British Government during the colonial era, is very important.⁶⁸

Of course, it is important to note that the police are not only the perpetrators, rather sometimes they may be victims of others; including the youth. While we are on the subject, the relation between the police and youth is not friendly in nature, as the youth see the police as hostile and an enemy.⁶⁹

INITIATIVES FROM WITHIN: THE SHABEL INTERVENTION

This section is a true account of Abdi Shabel's intervention in the district and his engagement in rehabilitating and

reconciling among the violent youth groups. Certainly, the Shabel intervention remains an extraordinary initiative that deserves to be replicated in other parts of the city or the country which have similar patterns of violent youth. Nevertheless, the question that arises is: what are the motives behind this initiative? Why did Abdi Shabel spend his time and resources on this violent youth? Why did he tolerate all the challenges and problems he faced during this mission? And, most importantly, what is the role of the community and the state in this intervention?

According to Shabel, he faced challenges and intimidation from violent youth groups when he established his business in the district in 2016. In particular, whenever a shipment arrived the youth forcefully attempted to join the porters to unload it. It was at this time that he decided to challenge and resist their aggression and intimidation. However, in retaliation, these groups deflated the truck's tires just to force the businessman to accept and obey their demands. This further escalated and the youth were soon terrorizing the truck drivers responsible for transporting the loadings. Nevertheless, Mr Shabel persisted and tried to overcome the challenges, every so often by engaging the police to chase and detain the perpetrators.

However, the police involvement in resolving the problem faced by Shabel was never successful, but rather worsened the situation and complicated the issue more than expected. According to Shabel, he had only two options: either leave and run away from the area with his business or intervene in the situation and break the cycle of youth violence by communicating with those groups directly. He organized sit-ins and

67 Ibid., 32.

68 Ibid., 66.

69 Ibid., 20.

discussions to understand their needs and ways of thinking, thereby establishing a friendly relationship with them.

While Mr Abdi was investigating the issue, he came to learn that the playground of the district, the only playfield in Mohamed Moge district, had been closed by the Government due to recurrent violence and clashes among the youth, which had caused deaths and other casualties. He attempted to take the issue to the police, however, they refused to re-open the field due to the fear that the violent conflict between and among the youth will relapse. Irrespectively of this, Abdi Shabel pledged to take the responsibility to guarantee that any form of violence and confrontation will never happen again.

Interestingly, for the first time, Mr Shabel met with five groups and started to negotiate with them by approaching their leaders. It is important to note that the youth organized themselves not on a clan-baseline, but rather on localities and neighbourhoods. According to Mr Shabel, these groups consisted of as many different clans as they could accommodate. This goes to show how violent youth are immune from any clan and tribal influence, but prefer to organize themselves on the base of localities and football clubs and fans.

One of the major causes of the conflict among the youth was and still remains the existence of limited spaces, in particular, the football field. Usually, these conflicts intensify during football matches, i.e. when one club defeats another and the fans retaliate to collision instigating conflicts that later spread to other parts of the neighbourhood or groups.

After a series of negotiations and fervent discussions, the youth groups reached a consensus for Abdi Shabel to take the responsibility to re-open the playground closed by the Government, re-erect the crossbar taken by the police, sponsor the tournament for the youth, and buy attires for all football teams to participate to the matches. In return, the youth had to hand over all their weapons such as axes, knives, swords, and sharpened tools, as well as denounce any form of violence. Accordingly, representatives from all groups entered into an agreement with Abdi Shabel in a public notary and pledged that they would work with the police, the community and with him.

About thirty-two organized groups existed at the time in the district and half of them joined the appeasement with the police and Abdi Shabel. The remaining groups joined later. According to Mr Shabel, before the intervention, there was a widespread fear among the youth; individual mobility was restricted due to fear of being attacked and for this reason, people would usually move around the district with their peers or colleagues. However, since the intervention has started, the conflict between the youth groups has dropped dramatically and as a result, free mobility has increased. Nowadays, inter-group conflicts are usually contained within the subjects and don't spread to other groups or community.

Currently, there are no organized groups in the district because they have voluntarily dismantled themselves. Some of the members of the groups started working, while others settled down, got married and started a family. Moreover, Mr Shabel has not stopped helping those groups through different types of support mechanisms. He has so far helped the

youth through financial support; such as cash and material. He supported some of them in form of cash for their wedding, while others were allowed to go to his workshop to learn how to make furniture and aluminum works.

Furthermore, Mr Shabel invited religious preachers and Sheikhs, in collaboration with ERYAL TV, to address these youth and explain to them the benefits of security as well as the purification of self. Currently, Mr Shabel is responsible for the schedule of the matches and the playground to avoid the eruption of any conflict between the groups over the control of the playground.

One thing that must be mentioned is the existence of networks within the groups themselves; in particular, junior groups who associate themselves with senior groups and their role in escalating the conflict between and among the groups. These junior groups serve as an intelligence and information gathering tool for the senior groups. This kind of practice further deteriorates the situation and has also a negative impact on the future of the junior groups.

Abdi Shabel has spent a lot of his resources and time to rebuild this district by rehabilitating and reconciling the youth groups. According to him, without mentioning his time, he spent more than \$9,000 on this mission. This is a great sacrifice and contribution to the state's security and the safety of its citizens which deserves appreciation and acknowledgment. Indeed, Abdi Shabel should be recognized as a commendable citizen who has sacrificed his time and resources for his people and state without reservation.

The locality in which the business of Abdi Shabel is operating acknowledges his role

and contribution to the district. Most residents of the district are grateful for the intervention and achievement of Abdi Shabel and the positive role he has played in restoring the trust between three interdependent key actors: the police, the public, and the youth. And moreover, Mr Shabel is determined to continue his work for the sake of the people and has pledged to continue his engagement whenever possible.

FIXING THE GAPS FOR SUSTAINABLE SECURITY AND SAFETY

Certainly, police will not provide the answers to all, or even most, of these problems. And, as much as it is helpful to support and encourage the efforts of the local, regional and central government, this approach has not always proven to be effective in the context of Somaliland, as authorities are delinked from the interests and needs of the public.

To maintain the security and stability of Somaliland, it is crucial to overcome several challenges emanating from within, i.e. through adopting a comprehensive police reform coupled with an effective implementation process spearheaded by the Ministry of Interior that could lead Somaliland to assert its internal image. Unfortunately, although Somaliland has tried to improve its internal security and safeguard the safety of the citizens, it continues to fail to reform the police.

Likewise, policies and strategies should be context-specific, rather than donor-driven and this complicates the situation particularly. Similarly, the country's indigenous mechanisms have been very instrumental in preventing the escalation of any form of violence. This indicates that they can be used to settle the differences within the society and must

occupy a central place among the governance reforms necessary to respond to the pressure for change emanating from the grassroots.

The fact remains that Abdi Shabel has, since 2016, dared to penetrate deep into the violent youth groups without getting support from outside, and to some extent has managed to settle the differences among the youth groups. However, the support of the government is needed to accelerate both the state security and the safety of the citizens and in this regard financial support is desperately needed.⁷⁰

Explicitly, essential is the support from the Ministry of Youth and Sports, not only for establishing new playgrounds but also for rehabilitation through further engagement.⁷¹ It seems evident that many of the violent youth in the district are football players that turned into violent groups following the Ministry's defiance to recognize them as official teams.⁷² However, the Ministry dismissed those allegations and stated that it does not select regional football players on a district basis, but players are selected based on their talent and skills. Nevertheless, more engagement is required from the Ministry to help the youth's reintegration, as any persuasion could encourage them to renounce the violence.

Additionally, improving the quality of education in public schools while also increasing facilities such as health centres and improving infrastructures such as roads in the district, will help the population of the district. These responsibilities are mainly carried out by

the local government. In spite of this, local councillors seldom address the challenge, not only in Mohamed Moge district, but also in other districts of the city. The residents of Hargeisa are nostalgic about Hargeisa's old days when administrations did not get into office by electoral system but were appointed by the Somaliland President. They argue that they performed better than the current elected mayors.

To make responses sustainable, special attention should be given to developing context-specific approaches in governance building. Their target should be the promotion of long-term mutually reinforcing relations between the local people and established state institutions. At the same time, more focus should be given to strategies that are flexible enough to build on local resources and capacities. At the same time building and strengthening the capacity of state institutions, including the local ones, should be a priority. These long-term approaches focused on capacity and inclusiveness require more attention from decision and policy-makers.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The situation in Mohamed Moge district seems discouraging from a social, security, and economic perspective. In a nutshell, this insecurity emanates at least from two factors: organized violent youth and poor economic performance that has been the outcome of fragile government institutions at all levels. The presence of fragile governance institutions created a gap that gave space to the manipulation of internal actors to engage in various forms of violent acts, and this, in turn, cripples the district's security and undermines the safety of the citizens.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 34.

⁷¹ Ibid., 14.

⁷² Ibid., 8.

Essentially, most of the problems in Mohamed Moge District tie back to the existence of violent youth and the presence of weak institutions. There are numerous recommendations that need to be adopted in order to overcome all the challenges and problems the district is facing. These range from appointing committed officials free from political influence and corruption to establishing responsible governance institutions that serve the citizens of the district impartially and provide social services to those in need in the district. Of course, strengthening the rule of law is something that should be noted as well.

The governance structure in Hargeisa, in its current state, is not capable of resolving the issues in the city, in general, and in the district in particular. In fact, establishing viable governance institutions with effective guiding policies could help the district to move forward and may possibly eliminate the vicious cycle that has crippled both the local government and the economy.

To overcome these challenges, the central government should take the primary lead in finding appropriate solutions as to ensure that good governance with its multi-dimensional forms and social justice prevail in Hargeisa. And it is certain that this goal will not be realized if the institutions providing social services are not reformed and transformed and their weaknesses overcome.

Accordingly, the overhaul of all institutions inside the governance system and service provision, as well as the establishment of effective and social welfare institutions, will improve the livelihoods of the citizens while resolving the issues at the forefront. Simultaneously, the lack of inclusive policies for social inequality will keep

causing intensified social and economic instability that will certainly harm the citizens of Somaliland and the state itself.

ABOUT THE STUDY

Somaliland youth between the age of 15 to 30 constitute about 70 percent of the country's population, forming one of the largest concentrations of human resources in the state. An estimated 30,000 people live in Mohamed Moge District, most of which are unemployed. Despite the growth and expansion of the city, as well as the increased revenues, the state has not been capable of efficiently tackling the challenge of unemployment by creating safe and decent jobs for the citizens. However, creation of job opportunities and ways of income generation should be seen as priorities in order to have sustainable security and development.

The discourse of youth violence, which emerged years ago as a national issue, should be given particular attention in this time and it requires rigorous attention from policy and decision-makers. In spite of this, the presence of idle and delinquent youth group is becoming an unfortunate reality every day. And this is one of the chief root causes of conflict and insecurity, not only in the Mohamed Moge District but also, in the entire state.

With that in mind, it is evident that re-establishing cordial relations between the youth and the public can energize and empower the youth. This should receive important consideration from the state, as the youth are still a majority in the demography and this phenomenon has been taking place for years and has had an adversary impact on the security and safety of the citizens.

Additionally, it must be mentioned that, although the Government of Somaliland have made efforts to integrate youth into the state institutions through various legislative and policy reforms; such as the amendment of the Local Councils Election Bill in 2012, these policies and strategies have not quite served the interest of the youth, but they have actually negatively affected the youth's status and perception in the society.

Certainly, the negative perception towards the youth is not just caused the failed policies. It could be attributed to a number of factors; such as the irresponsible actions and mismanagements from certain local councillors and authorities who failed to materialize these platforms for the public interests, and who were found involved in cases of corruption.

This study primarily covered Mohamed Moge District in Hargeisa and it attempts to identify the root causes, genesis, and drivers of youth violence in the district. In addition, it examines the real and potential challenges the residents of the district are facing from, at least, two different fronts: lack of capacity from state institutions that are supposed to provide social and security services to the citizens, and lack of policies and strategies to tackle the many challenges the state is facing. The study demonstrates that the youth of Somaliland without exception can contribute significantly to the economy and political processes of the state if wisely governed.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

The INSTITUTE FOR PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES (IPCS) is a higher learning and research institution based and operating within the institutional framework of the University of Hargeisa, Somaliland. The IPCS was established in February 2008 in response to the long-recognized call for an in-depth multidisciplinary approach to understanding and addressing the conflict and violence that has engulfed many parts of the Horn of Africa. The mission of the IPCS is to provide interested scholars, institute members and students with opportunities to engage in intensive study and research on Somaliland and Somali-inhabited regions in the Horn of Africa on an interdisciplinary basis.



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