



Centre for  
International Cooperation  
and Security

## **Armed violence and poverty in Somalia**

A case study for the Armed Violence and Poverty Initiative  
March 2005

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MAKING KNOWLEDGE WORK

## **The Armed Violence and Poverty Initiative**

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) has commissioned the Centre for International Cooperation and Security (CICS) at Bradford University to carry out research to promote understanding of how and when poverty and vulnerability is exacerbated by armed violence. This study programme, which forms one element in a broader “Armed Violence and Poverty Initiative”, aims to provide the full documentation of that correlation which DFID feels is widely accepted but not confirmed. It also aims to analyse the processes through which such impacts occur and the circumstances which exacerbate or moderate them. In addition it has a practical policy-oriented purpose and concludes with programming and policy recommendations to donor government agencies.

This report on Somalia is one of 13 case studies. This research draws upon secondary data sources including existing research studies, reports and evaluations commissioned by operational agencies, and early warning and survey data where this has been available. These secondary sources have been complemented by interviews with government officers, aid policymakers and practitioners, researchers and members of the local population. This work was carried out in Nairobi in February and September 2004. The author would like to thank the many Somali, international NGOs, UN and donor bodies based there. The report has also benefited greatly from inputs from Dr June Rock. The author would also like to thank Mark Bradbury and Reg Green for comments on an earlier draft; however, they are not responsible for any shortcomings in this final version. The analysis and opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views or policy of DFID or the UK government.

## Executive summary

Somalia represents an extreme case. It has experienced a long period of insecurity and instability; its people have been subject to a wide range of armed violence. Following the overthrow of the military regime in 1991, it has experienced the longest period of statelessness of any country in modern history. A period of intense armed conflict for power between factions based around the clans that make up Somali society eventually gave way to an unresolved stalemate in the capital and the south-central areas. Fighting between smaller militia groups who preyed on the population has continued in most of these areas until the present. In the northeast and northwest a degree of security was slowly negotiated and these areas have enjoyed relative stability and the state-type administrations of Puntland and Somaliland, respectively, which offer examples of control of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and armed violence.

The case thus allows for analysis of several stages and types of armed violence and of the context of statelessness, but also comparison of the different processes at work in areas of much greater or lesser armed violence and impoverishment.

The Republic of Somalia that came into being in 1960 has been subject to intense armed violence for most of its existence (and before). It has experienced military coup, inter-state war, insurgencies, civil war and ‘institutionalised disorder’ and insecurity. Likewise, SALW, as well as heavy weapons, have been widely spread since colonial times and through these stages of violent conflict, supplied by cold war powers, neighbouring governments and an active illegal market.

The contending parties in the period of crisis since any semblance of a state with a monopoly of means of violence disappeared in 1991 have included:

- Factional militias, mainly clan-based
- Business militias, forced into self-protection
- Private security guards
- Freelance armed groups (*mooryan*)

The problem of SALW is often seen by those bidding for political power in a new Somalia and by international actors as their spread to ‘civilians’. In reality it is their possession by these armed groups that represents a threat now and to a future peace. Without alternative livelihoods there is no solution. However, the juxtaposition of critically insecure with stable regions, which were also awash with SALW, demonstrates that their availability alone is not a single explanatory ‘cause’ of impoverishment.

Even without a state, Somali society and culture has a varied set of institutions and norms for reducing armed violence and resolving conflict. For the most part these were not sufficient to hold the recent violent conflicts at bay and the structures themselves have been further eroded and distorted in the process. Nevertheless, they have been an important mechanism for building security and reducing armed violence in the stable regions – far more successful than the 14 formal peace conferences sponsored by external powers.

The long period of instability has spawned its own war economy characterized initially by seizure of public assets, then by extortion, hi-jacking, piracy, protection

rackets, including of NGOs and relief operations, seizure of land and property and trade in the local narcotic, *khat*. Many have enriched themselves at the expense of the impoverishment of the many and have a vested interest in insecurity. However, new enterprise in livestock trading, and simple but hi-tech telecommunications and private airlines have been developed by businessmen with an interest in promoting peace. Some analysts have pointed to economic growth in these areas of the economy but these has been confined to the more stable geographical areas, to those with the resources to make the best of it and left or forced others in impoverishment. The result at the macro-economic level has been to reverse the patterns of regional differentiation, with poorly endowed pastoral areas in the north now with higher income levels than formerly better-off areas, especially in the main agricultural areas in the South. This is a dramatic demonstration of the impact of armed violence on poverty.

The most direct impoverishment has been experienced by the refugees in neighbouring countries and especially by the internally displaced, together estimated at 800,000. They live in unsanitary and inadequate housing with little access to clean water, health care or education, and most are found among the 'very poor' in surveys. The proportion of their households headed by women is even higher than among the ordinary population, where it has grown significantly in the period of insecurity. Somali culture, however, imposes strict embargoes against violence on women and children; although this may have limited their being targeted it has not prevented it. The tradition of women marrying out their clan or sub-clan, to help build bridges in and resolve conflict has also been eroded, although women have been active in peace-making.

The overall climate of insecurity and the political economy associated with that insecurity have had massive indirect impacts on incomes and livelihoods. The most productive agricultural areas have been hardest hit through contest over land and destruction of irrigation works, but pastoralism has also been limited in access to grazing, in some areas by increased competition for scarce resources and limited access to markets. One measure of these impacts is that GDP per capita has fallen from US\$280 in 1989 to US\$226 in 2002. However, regional differences again correlate with the levels of armed violence, with all the regions of Somaliland and Puntland being above the national average. Health and educational provision and literacy levels have similarly fallen, with a partial recovery in the last few years as a result of private provision, which places it beyond the means to pay of the poorest, and of NGO services.

Somalia stands poised today at the start of a long negotiated peace process with all contending factions now accepting a new government-in-formation. All agree that disarmament is one of the greatest needs, but also potentially the most complex issue in the transition. Realists believe that it may be possible to get agreements between major factions to decommission heavy weapons such as the mounted guns called 'technicals', but that dependence on SALW for livelihoods and protection and the widespread lack of trust will mean general SALW disarmament may have to be approached gradually. However, lessons on disarmament and on building community-based security networks can be taken on board from Somaliland and Puntland experience. These issues are related to and will have to be planned in conjunction with the massive problem of providing alternative livelihoods for armed young males.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Why look at Somalia?

Somalia's experience in some respects makes it an extreme case. In a comparative perspective that may make it all the more revealing of tendencies latent or less intense elsewhere. It has experienced intense periods of violent conflict, of varied forms of armed violence, over a long period. It has seen the overthrow of a state and survived perhaps the longest period without a centralised state of any country in modern history. Sustained armed and political conflict has gone on around the struggle for state power. Armed violence has also been fuelled because of the absence of centralised institutions for resolving conflict and disputes, for controlling arms and for providing security for inhabitants. At the same time some areas of the country have evolved administrations that have guaranteed some security and performed these state-like functions. In these latter areas, some provision of social and economic services and collection of revenues has been possible; where statelessness has persisted all provision of former civic entitlements disappeared but may have been partially replaced by private provision.

This particular experience viewed in comparative perspective allows a number of issues to be raised:

1. **Long-term poverty impacts.** The long period of insecurity, of persistent open or latent armed violence, and the absence of a state for so long allow one to uncover some of the long-term processes affecting poverty and development although these in turn have to be set against even longer-term trends in a particular pattern of poverty that has an even longer history.
2. **'Positive' economic impacts?** Some analysts have cited evidence to suggest that certain positive impacts on development have accompanied the armed violence and chronic insecurity: in livestock and other trade, in new enterprises and adaptation of new technologies. Debate about how far these positive assessments are true or generalised, as opposed to assessments of long-term impoverishment, can be very instructive in comparative investigation about positive and negative impacts of armed violence, and identifying the unequal spread of those impacts.
3. **How much does SALW availability explain?** All areas of the country have been inundated with SALW and even heavy weapons, and these have become scattered throughout the population. This spread has certainly fuelled the violence. But the co-existence in these circumstances of areas with high-levels of continued armed violence, even if localised, with areas of stability where it is held in check, allows comparison to test the significance of SALW availability as a single explanatory factor and the significance of other factors.
4. **Benefits of security.** Areas where there has been some degree of stability offer the prospect of understanding the correlation between poverty and armed violence by assessing the extent of any 'peace dividend'.
5. **How to approach disarmament?** There are many instances of successful (in the stable areas) and unsuccessful (mainly in the still armed violence-prone areas) initiatives at arms reduction, demobilisation and broad peace-making, which could inform discussion about policies and programmes for tackling armed violence and poverty.

## **2. The context of armed violence**

### **2.1 The underlying conflict dynamics**

#### **2.1.1 *Parties to the conflict and their motivation***

Somalia has endured major armed conflict or more localised outbreaks of violence between armed groups through all but the first decade of its independence in 1960. Formed by the union of the colonies of Italian and British Somaliland at the moment of their independence, the new state also announced a grand design to unite the Somali people – the nearest sub-Saharan Africa had to a single nation – living in eastern Ethiopia, north-eastern Kenya and in Djibouti into one nation state. This was a key element in fuelling one of Africa's few inter-state wars with Ethiopia in the 1970s, which in turn brought in the Cold War super powers. Somalia's invasion of Ethiopia was reversed when it found its Soviet allies changing sides and backing Ethiopia. In the next decade, the antagonism between the states was transformed into support of each other's insurgent movements.

In Somalia, the regime of Siad Barre, which had come to power by an army coup, proclaimed broader goals of uniting the Somali people internally and the clans to which they almost all belonged, and in 'socialist' construction. Some progress was made in the former endeavour, through the introduction of a script for the language enabling it to be used as the language of instruction in all schools. However, social and economic change proved elusive and despite the rhetoric against tribalism and clanism, the regime became ever narrower in its clan composition and in the patronage it provided. Eventually insurgencies emerged in several regions, one of the strongest in the north-west in the former British Somaliland, largely among those from the Issaq clan, supported until 1988 by Ethiopia. This movement, the Somali National Movement (SNM), using guerrilla strategies, was eventually able to defeat the wing of the army based there and take control of much of that territory. Other major movements, including the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) in the north-east and the United Somali Congress (USC) in the centre, were also to challenge the power of the regime and between them they eventually ousted the government in early 1991. In a somewhat different guise these movements still tend to be the building blocks of the politics of armed violence of the last decade.

Since then, Somalia has been marked by the failure throughout 14 years to install a functioning, legitimate, central government for the former Republic – this absence of a state is a mark of its unique and perilous position. What emerged was a proliferation of armed militia groups based on clans, which vied to fill the vacuum of power in the early 1990s. In the north-west (Somaliland) and north-east (Puntland) regions, such groups reached agreement and gained support of civil society to guarantee some security and even put in place administrations that performed state functions. Some pockets of stability and order emerged, often temporarily, in the rest of the country. However, mainly disorder and low-levels of armed violence persisted to this day even though major clan militia confrontation was held in check for the last several years.

### **2.1.2 Phases of armed violence**

As indicated above, armed violence has been a feature of the history of Somalia since the 1970s with successive phases marked by increasing availability of SALW and heavy weapons, and by different forms of violent conflict:

- **Militarisation of independent Somalia, 1963-76.** A border conflict with Ethiopia from 1963 led among other consequences to acceptance of military aid from the Soviet Union and a regional arms race, which has been on-going ever since in some form, deflecting state expenditure away from development and social services. The scale became massive as Somalia eventually developed the largest army in Africa. A military coup in 1969 put the army in power and it survived so long because of huge military supplies from the USSR, and then from US aid which continued until 1988.
- **Ethiopia-Somalia War, 1977-79.** The invasion of the Ogaden region of Ethiopia by the Somalia army heralded one of Africa's few inter-state wars, with further massive military expenditures by both states, and the backing of each side by super powers. The arms build-ups in the 1960s and 1970s were the original source of the huge arsenals that the factions could draw on in the 1970s.
- **Insurgencies against the military regime, 1985-91.** The first major escalation internally was in 1988 when the insurgency in the north-west by the SNM was cut off from its base areas in Ethiopia and opted for moving to full-scale guerrilla war inside the country. Major fighting ensued with massive anti-personnel repression by the army until its overthrow. Lower-key insurgencies in other regions contributed to the defeat of the army, the overthrow of the regime and the destruction of virtually all public facilities in 1991.
- **Civil war, 1991-93.** Major clashes between the clan-based militia fighting for control of a successor government and of major locations such as Mogadishu, principally, and other ports, and of prime land, together created massive disorder, a major famine in parts of the South and clan cleansing. Despite international 'humanitarian intervention' and successive UN missions, and 13 peace conferences and many agreements since 1993, neither order nor a state was restored.
- **Institutionalised disorder and insecurity, 1994-** .The major conflicts of the early 1990s produced a stalemate in the confrontations between the major militia factions, which only occasionally erupted when control of some town or territory was challenged. In its place some security regimes emerged largely from below, which produced some disarmament and a minimal state-type structure in the north-west and north-east and in other smaller pockets. Elsewhere, the strength and the economic sustainability of the militia factions waned somewhat, but a plethora of armed groups emerged and interacted, maintaining a climate of insecurity and impunity. Persistent lower-level violence, mainly perpetrated by freelance militias (see 2.2.2 below), has continued, usually for control of resources or extortion and recently, as a 'peace' seemed possible, for a place at the political table.

### **2.1.3 Patterns of violence and how violence is organised**

The most common forms of continued direct violence, especially by the small, militias active today has been listed thus (CRD, 2004):

- Assassination
- Kidnapping
- Car-jacking
- Roadblocks
- Burglary
- Rape

With regard to the last, the CRD report acknowledges that sexual violence against women and children, “a rare occurrence in traditional Somali society”, has nevertheless increased, but that it is more associated with freelance groups. However, Musse (2004) would give greater emphasis to such trends (see 3.1.2 below).

The underlying threat of violence in turn has had more indirect but equally serious impacts. It sustains a pattern of privatised control over land and property, everything from urban real estate to water points. Sometimes conflicts over these resources are resolved by negotiated settlements, but most remained unresolved. Claims by those dispossessed and the large sections of society excluded from such assets will provide an enormous, continuing legacy of disputes that any ‘peace agreement’ and restoration of the state will have to find ways of resolving through due process, if new cycles of violence are not to resume (see Section 7 below).

### **2.1.4 The role of the state**

The state before the 1990s claimed a monopoly of the means of violence, which in practice had ceased to exist in reality. Its protection increasingly narrowed to a small group of sub-clans that formed the leadership’s clientele. As armed rebellion spread to several areas in the 1980s, the state’s armed forces used severe repression against insurgents, especially against the SNM in the north-west and the whole clan on which it was based – eventually turning its artillery and planes against the city in which it was garrisoned.

Since 1991, there has been no central state to offer protection – or to act as a major party to conflict. That is a unique feature of the Somalia case. However, administrations have come into existence in Somaliland, Puntland and in the Juba Valley Authority (JVA) area, which perform some state-like functions, including security, and more localised arrangements have succeeded in imposing some security by agreement.

## **2.2 The significance of small arms and light weapons**

### **2.2.1 The supply and demand for SALW**

Small arms have been a feature of Somali society for a century or more, used as protection for self and for water points and grazing by men in a mainly pastoral society (see details in WSP, 2001: 234). Foreign suppliers have made possible major armed conflicts since the battles against the expanding Ethiopian empire characterised relations between the two societies from the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Colonial rule by



British, French and Italians was resisted by armed struggle – notably in the 20-year long guerrilla war led by Mohamed Abdulla Hassan, and small arms spread after his defeat by the British in the 1920s. In similar fashion, fascist Italy's overthrow of indigenous leaders led to a similar diffusion. Italian-led Somali troops dispersed with their weapons when the British defeated the Italians in major battles in World War II. Being restored to a trusteeship role, Italy rearmed local leaders and elders. During the independence struggle small arms found their way to nationalist forces from Yemen. After Independence, the new government similarly rewarded its client leaders with registered arms allocations. Moreover, the country's strategic significance in the Cold War was recognised and led to a very well-equipped army. The Ethiopia-Somalia War of the 1970s led to a massive escalation of weapons in the area.

The defeat of the Somalia intervention army, and the later arming of a Western Somali Liberation movement in the Somali areas of Ethiopia in the 1980s, allowed the percolation of SALW to the population on both sides of the border. Opposition movements in several regions of Somalia, especially the SNM in the north-west and the SSDF in the north-east were in turn partly armed and supported by the Ethiopian government<sup>1</sup> and used rear bases in Ethiopia, and these rebel groups also sought arms from other sources. However, with both regimes in desperate straits, they made a deal in 1988 to curb support to each other's rebels, but that did little to reduce arms availability; indeed, the SNM responded by moving inside what is now Somaliland, to pursue a more guerrilla type struggle, involving the people more. The final escalation of all categories of weapons and their dissemination into society at large reached its peak after the overthrow of the government in 1991 (CDR, 2004: 25):

- Military arsenals were destroyed or looted.
- Heavy and light weapons fell into the hands of insurgents and the public.
- Some of the heavy and light weapons eventually came under the control of militia groups.
- Some remained in the hands of free-booting armed groups (*mooryan*).
- There has been a free trade in arms and ammunition.
- Businessmen, NGOs acquired SALW for protection, plus criminals.
- Arms shipments continued unabated despite UNSC Resolution 733 of 1992 prohibiting them.

In February 2003 an independent Panel of Experts appointed by the UN Secretary General found a “clear pattern of continuous and flagrant violations of the embargo”, pointing the finger at faction leaders, self-proclaimed administrations, businessmen and neighbouring governments. Some deliveries were initially made to militia groups, but as few fighters were paid, many weapons ended up on the open market. The extent of the proliferation through communities can be gauged from a finding from a European Commission (EC) study of 2003, which estimated that 64% of Somalis possessed one or more weapons (quoted in CRD, 2004). Many children have access to SALW.

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<sup>1</sup> There are differing pictures about the extent of Ethiopian support for Somalia movements: a former US diplomat in Ethiopia (Korn, 1986: 76) suggested that the SSDF “was practically a creation of the Ethiopian and Libyan governments”; the SNM relied primarily on the exile communities, and in 1988 refused to be reined in by Ethiopia and moved its operations entirely inside its part of Somalia (Cliffe, 1999: 91).

### **2.2.2 Who holds small arms, how are they used and why**

Somalia has seen a plethora of armed groups since 1991, but whereas they are largely contained if not disbanded in the north-west and north-east of the former Somalia Republic, they are still very much in evidence in much of south-central areas. One way of distinguishing these armed groups is between:

- **Factional militias** – these are usually clan-based and were the major warring elements in the fight for state power in the early 1990s, who moved away from mutual confrontation to pursuit of private gain. These structures still exist, and their personnel have to be paid off or allowed to loot, but their relative strength is declining.
- **Business militia** – the conduct of their trade and other activities has necessitated protection, either with recruited armed wings, or contracting out to one of the other armed groups. Protection is necessary in the context of armed violence but can be seen as a ‘tax’ on business. Thus these elements of the business community may act to some extent as promoters of security and peace.
- **Private security guards** – in the climate of insecurity, private individuals, small businesses, local and international organisations employ security guards, usually drawn from the militias or freelance groups. They offer needed protection, based on work contracts, but can also be a danger if dissatisfied with their conditions of work.
- **Freelance armed groups (*mooryan*)** – small autonomous groups, often with mixed clan composition, owing allegiance to no one. Emerging from deviant youth groups in earlier decades, they became from the late 1990s increasingly influential in South Central Somalia as guns for hire, or in pursuit of their own survival through violent crime and extortion. Containment and deterrence, and other civil society initiatives have been tried but CRD (2004; 29) concludes that: “Until the rule of law is restored and alternative livelihoods are available to the members of such groups, freelance militia are likely to remain a pervasive threat to security.”
- **Security personnel of *shari’a* courts in the south** – especially in the major towns, these courts have emerged as independent would-be authorities, seeking to impose their own order, but also pursuing their own political agendas.

### **2.2.4 Did the availability of arms spark the violence or follow it?**

“The proliferation of weapons is a contributing factor to insecurity in parts of Somalia but it is by no means the only cause – if it is a cause at all. Several areas, including Somaliland, Puntland and the central regions have known relative peace and security, although their populations are as heavily armed as that elsewhere in the country. A full understanding of the prevailing insecurity therefore demands a study of who possesses weapons and the purposes for which they are used.” (CRD, 2004: 25)

It is mistaken to imagine that there was a period when SALW were not present in society and a moment when the local ‘market’ was opened, or that, as the Somalia National Reconciliation Conference (SNRC) Committee has assumed, that the small arms ‘issue’ emerged only when the state’s monopoly on weapons was ended in 1991 and they spread to ‘civilians’. It is correct that a far wider spread did occur then and

that individual males did often seek them for protection, but protection was principally sought through the collectivity, and the spread was principally to various armed groups. There has been no shortage of weapons, through the market and supplied by neighbouring governments (see the reports in 2003 and 2004 of UN Panel of Experts on the Arms Embargo to Somalia) – a situation which has changed only very recently, as sources indicate that the free market price for an automatic hand weapon has risen to \$300.

### **2.2.5 Impact on human security**

These impacts are further explored in the next sections. It should also be stated that poverty and the particular forms it took in Somalia (see Jamal, 1988 for background) long pre-date the chronic insecurity of the 1990s and after. However, the availability of SALW and their use has given rise to a long, persistent climate of insecurity and fear in many parts of the country and this has had its own impact on lives and livelihoods generating new forms of poverty. As with some of the economic responses, some communities and individuals have developed resilience and modes of ‘coping’ with the unknowns and fears of such situations. It has also to be recognised that the persistence of insecurity, the absence of a state in most areas, and the undermining of the capacities and legitimacy of indigenous checks on violence have all allowed for the emergence and institutionalising of a ‘climate of impunity’.

Likewise the spread of arms had a distinctive impact on the shape of politics (which again pre-dated the 1990s):

“... modern Somali state politics is nothing but traditional clan politics writ large, with the difference that the society today is armed with mass destructive weapons..” (Samatar, 1991).

If this is how the narrowing political base of the former regime was seen, the armed violence since that was written shows a continuity, except that clan politics writ large plus SALW is what has characterised the politics of the struggle for a state.

## **3. Social and cultural aspects of armed violence**

### **3.1 Cultural aspects**

#### **3.1.1 Attitudes to armed violence, and to security**

Some commentators do suggest that owning a gun does fit with the strong male culture of fortitude and independence, and even that they have become status symbols, especially for young men. However, others suggest that one should not overstate how strong this urge is as an explanatory factor. Observers of the international intervention of the early 1990s have, for instance, commented that there was a widespread expectancy that when the US marines landed they would collect up the guns. Today too there are many Somalis who see SALW as the bane of their present predicament, calling for disarmament to be the urgent, number one action once a new government is formed (but see Section 7). The fear and insecurity, to be more precise the understandable belief by most people that no institution can be relied on to protect them, may well be a more important motive for each person wanting to keep a gun until security can be guaranteed. There is thus a paradox: most would like to see guns disappear off the street but will not be the first to hand them in.

Further adding to the paradox, is that identity with the clan and rallying to the cause when the clan seems threatened, seem to have become more marked in circumstances where no formal mechanisms for protection exist. At the end of the day, there is only the clan to rely on.

Another feature of Somali society, one that is ‘cultural’ and also institutional that deserves important consideration, is the mechanisms for the management of conflict and violence (see; Menkhaus, 2000). Ahmed (2001) summarises its essentials:

“The Somali social and political structure consists of clan families which subdivide into clans, sub-clans and *dia*-paying groups. The (latter) is the most stable (and smallest) political and social unit with a membership from several hundred men. The members ... have a contractual (obligation) to support each other and to share the payment of ‘blood money’. Compensation is generally paid for killing or physical injuries – (in camels or other livestock traditionally). ...

Traditionally the social and political affairs of the clans have been managed by *ad hoc* councils that interpret the social contract (*xeer*) and deliberate on how best to resolve disputes. These assemblies have the authority to declare war or to make peace with other groups. Senior elders chair the assemblies.”

Thus, there is an explicit social contract, agreements about the communal group paying compensation (*diya*) for violent injuries that ought to limit the reproduction of violence (although this collective assumption of responsibility does not necessarily discourage the individual from feeling a sense of impunity), plus mechanisms for negotiating resolution of violent conflict not necessarily always with third party mediators. As one Somali remarked: “We are experts in conflict resolution – precisely because we have so many conflicts”. These mechanisms have in fact played an important role – dramatically in the case of Somaliland and Puntland because they have come very much into play in promoting peace agreements there - but also in constraining armed violence elsewhere. However, the sheer scale of the bloodshed has posed a crisis for the *diya*-paying system and compensation has rarely been paid, although the system may have stored up a dam of claims that may be made later. The multiplicity and complexity of the conflicts have also been beyond the capacities of the clan-based mechanisms of resolution. Both trends mean that the limits to impunity have been transcended. Conflicts are resolved by force, and in the interests of the most powerful militarily, which in turn is to do with the weapons to hand.

### **3.1.2 Gender dimensions**

Two dimensions are of special significance in the Somali context: one affects women as targets of armed violence; the other their potential role in peace-making.

Several informants stressed how in traditional Somali values there were strong taboos against visiting violence on women and children:

“Traditionally, in Somali pastoral society feuding and conflict were bounded by codes and social conventions. Along with the elderly and the sick, women and children were immune from attack. That is not to say that women were never targeted, but if they were harmed, there were rules about retribution and compensation.” (Musse, 2004: 69)

One informant stressed how a recent incident in the town of Baidoa when women were killed prompted widespread revulsion, and suggested that such incidents remained very much exceptions. However, Musse implies that they are more widespread, and in this area too, there is impunity from traditional sanctions:

“Atrocities carried out by individuals and militia groups against women and girls in Somalia between 1991 and 1992 were unprecedented in Somali history. In the inter-clan warfare from 1991 onwards these traditional laws have played little part, and women as well as children and other non-fighters were attacked by warring factions with impunity.”

A survey by UNICEF Somalia (2003) supports this latter view. It reported a widespread ‘culture of denial’ – 75% of the population believed that gender-based violence does not exist at all – yet 12% of adults and 8% of children attested to first-hand knowledge of a rape victim. Timmons (2004) generalises this conclusion to argue that “violence against women dramatically escalated at the outset of the war, (as they had) no protection from clan structures” – although her work is based on secondary sources. She also asserts that their disconnection from the clan often meant that the households seldom received *diya* payments or other compensation.

One traditional practice reinforced prospects for resolving or pre-empting conflict. Marriages often involved women marrying outside their clan or sub-clan. Indeed this was sometimes an explicit tactic for peaceful resolution of disputes or past conflict. Thus, women had links with other clans, potentially placing them in a position to negotiate or at least provide bridges. Women have indeed played a key role in some of the agreements of the last decade. They were supposed to have a set of reserved seats in the new parliament formed in September 2004, but it was felt ‘convenient’ by the participants and the international brokers to forget this provision to make for more compromise between warlords and factions. Yet, women’s role in peace-making has also been undermined by social trends resulting from the armed violence. Clan loyalties are being exerted to push women into marrying within, thereby undermining a traditional counterbalance to the centrifugal nature of Somali society.

## **3.2 Social capital and armed violence**

### **3.2.1 Social relationships and power dynamics**

The trends in marriage practice referred to above are part of more profound changes in the institution of marriage which have occurred in the climate of insecurity and disappearance of social norms:

“In the decade and a half since the onset of the Somali crisis, the institution of marriage has undergone such a transformation as to be almost unrecognisable today. Many weddings now occur without the involvement, knowledge or blessing of parents. There has been a dramatic increase in the rate of teenage marriages and a proportional increase in the rate of teenage divorce – often leaving young mothers alone to raise their children.” (CRD, 2004: 37)

The massive insecurity and sweeping displacement have also put great strain on other kinship relationships and the obligations that go with them, and on the links within non-kin groups like the *dia*-paying group. Support for displaced and impoverished is

thus threatened, although social and religious norms to provide alms do still operate and are an important means of food security in some South-Central areas (see section 4 below).

Another dimension of social capital that has been an important check on impoverishment are arrangements whereby owners of larger herds will loan or lodge lactating animals or some breeding stock with poor families to provide children's food or to help replenish devastated small herds. Such practices do persist, but seem to be less in evidence, as larger herders accumulate in the war economy (see section 4 below), while those who lost the few beasts they had moved, sometimes permanently, to towns.

#### **4. The political economy of armed violence**

Given the long-lasting nature of the crisis in Somalia, there has been time and space for a very vigorous war economy to develop. As this section details, some parts of that economy have prospered despite and even as a consequence of the armed violence. In the case of South-Central Somalia, it would be inaccurate to speak of a 'parallel' 'informal' or 'alternative' economy. The war economy **is** the economy; virtually the whole of it is informal. It incorporates those adaptable components of the pre-war economy, like livestock trading and fishing, but has given rise to new enterprises, most of which would be considered illicit if there were law enforcement.

The trade in weapons is both a dimension of that trade and the underpinning needed to be an actor in this market. Somalia is to some extent the pivot of a regional and even international arms trade. Weapons come in, often on small boats, to Somalia's unregulated ports, and are a source of the revenues that legitimate self-proclaimed authorities and that factions rely on to survive. They, in turn, supply neighbouring countries, e.g., through the 'Somali' suburb of Eastleigh in Nairobi, which are able to recycle the arms deliveries to faction militias from neighbouring states.

Another critical, massive and regional trade is in the narcotic chewing twigs, *khat* or *qat*, which is of the order of \$100 million in value per year. It benefits the traders and growers, mainly in the Ethiopian and Kenyan highlands, but impoverishes the Somali people as they try to feed their habit, and may dampen energies, even if it does, as is claimed, stave off the awareness of hunger (see Green, 1999).

The period of intense armed conflict in the early 1990s was characterised by struggles to control real estate in the towns and occupy productive land, often for speculative purposes, and by asset stripping as virtually all public buildings and facilities were looted and stripped. The economy in this period was also greatly affected by the impact of the UN operations and associated relief and humanitarian supplies from other bodies – again becoming the site of struggle to control the lucrative gains to be had from controlling these supplies and from protection. Such struggles generated winners and losers.

A Puntland survey (WSP, 2001) documented other, continuing activities of "freelance armed youth living on the spoils of the gun":

- Roadblocks to extract levies on the main arterial roads;

- Piracy in the sea lanes of Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean, while protecting illegal and debilitating (over-)fishing operations;
- Protection racket for illegal burning of trees for charcoal exports.

All these rackets in turn generated further insecurity for others – in a period from the mid-1990s when there was otherwise relative security.

This non-formal economy requires finances. Remittances from the diaspora are on a massive scale, perhaps \$1 billion annually, more than double the estimate of US\$370 million annually in the 1980s (Marchal, et. al, 2000, and UNICEF, 1991, respectively, cited in UNDP, 2002:104). They allow many Somali families to survive. One estimate suggests that about 40% of these transfers support consumption. The larger portion is used for ‘investment’ in trade and in production, but also in arms and supporting armed groups.

Over the past decade Somalia has seen a rapid growth in private sector involvement in virtually all sectors of the economy. It has also been described recently as ‘the most privatised country in Africa’ (UNDP, 2002).

## **5. The impact of armed violence on poverty**

### **5.1 Directly affected**

#### **5.1.1 *The human costs of conflict***

It is unlikely that the real human costs of Somalia’s civil wars and ensuing political violence and lawlessness will ever be known, although they have been massive. The available official figures (see Table 1, below) put the number of people killed in fighting in 1988 and in 1991-92 at 90,000. Of these, some 50,000<sup>2</sup> were killed in 1988 alone during fighting between government and SNM forces in the northern towns of Burao and Hargeisa. There are no figures for the number of civilians killed in the fighting and no data on the number of people killed in the two ensuing civil wars in the northwest (1991-92 & 1994-96). Nor are there any figures for those killed in the political violence that swept virtually all of central and southern Somalia in the aftermath of the 1991-92 civil war. Recent estimates have been made from surveys (UNDP & World Bank, 2003: Table 1.12) of what proportion of all deaths in 2001-2 was as a result of ‘war’ or mines. Although the levels of armed violence were much reduced they were responsible for 11.7% of all deaths, a huge proportion. These estimates also suggest that armed violence has much greater impact in the urban than the rural areas – 9.2% of deaths there are war-related (excluding ‘mines’) as opposed to 1.9%.

As the data show, by far the greatest number of war-related deaths occurred in southern Somalia during the 1991-92 drought and famine that affected some 3 million people inhabiting the predominantly agro-pastoral Bay and Bakol regions and the agricultural, inter-riverine areas in the Jubba and Shebelle valleys. The latter areas comprise Somalia’s most fertile croplands, much of them irrigated formerly. Since the 1950s, the southern-most regions have been home to a mix of minority groups – Digil and Rahanweyn, Shebelle, Gabwing and various Bantu groups. Many of them were

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<sup>2</sup> Some estimates put the numbers killed during fighting in the northwest at 100,000, with 50,000 killed in Hargeisa alone. See, for example, Bake (1993) cited in Ahmed & Green (1999: 120).

forcibly dispossessed of their lands and reduced to agricultural labourers in a process of ‘land-grabbing’ that began in the late 1960s, but took on an accelerated form in the 1980s when those closely associated with the Siad Barre regime forcibly acquired vast areas of irrigable land. In the 1980s, the latter was highly prized more as a source of collateral for obtaining loans from aid donors than for its agricultural potential. These areas have borne the brunt of conflict both during and in the aftermath of the 1991-92 civil war, as competing factions have sought to maintain or gain control of these highly contested lands, which, with the exception of Mogadishu, have suffered the most serious devastation.

**Table 1: Human costs of conflict**

	<b>Latest available data</b>	<b>Year</b>
No. of people killed in fighting	50,000 killed in northwest Somalia 40,000 killed in south and central Somalia	1988 1991/92
No. of deaths resulting from the combined effects of war & drought	240,000-280,000 died from starvation and disease	1991/92
Internally displaced persons	556,000- 636,000 ‘visible’ displaced persons, total number possibly over 1.6m <sup>1</sup> 300,000 (the largest concentrations are found in Mogadishu, 150,000, and Kismaayo, 15,000 <sup>2</sup> )	Sept. 1992 2001
Refugees (neighbouring countries only)	600,000 800,000 <sup>3</sup> 246,400	1988 1992 2001

Source: UNDP (2002), pp.58-61 & Table C, p.199, unless otherwise stated.

<sup>1</sup> World Bank (1993), cited in UNDP (200), p.60.

<sup>2</sup> Narbeth & Mclean (2003).

<sup>3</sup> US Committee for Refugees (2001).

In 1991, prior to the on-set of the drought, the predominantly small-scale farming civilian population of the agro-pastoral areas of Bay and Bakol was deliberately targeted both by government forces and by Aideed’s militia. Alongside the destruction of villages, infrastructure and agricultural implements, crops were destroyed or looted, animals were killed or stolen, forcing hundreds of farmers to flee to Baidoa, the regional capital, which became the epicentre of the famine (see, for example, Ahmed & Green, 1999). At the height of the civil war ‘The inter-riverine people were trapped between Aideed’s forces in the north, Barre’s in the south-west, and Morgan’s – Barre’s son-in-law – in the south, in what became known as the ‘triangle of death’. Baidoa, the capital of the region, became also known as the ‘city of the walking dead’” (Mukhtar, 1996: 551, cited in Ahmed & Green, 1999: 120). The Juba and Shebelle regions nearer the coast were also targeted, farmland was occupied by invading pastoralists who were unable to cultivate it; irrigation works were destroyed. Official estimates put the number of deaths during the famine at between 240,000 and 280,000. Other estimates, however, suggest the number of deaths may be as high as 500,000 (*ibid*). Many of the deaths resulted from outbreaks of infectious diseases as thousands fled to relief camps in and around major towns. Baidoa town, in particular, suffered tremendously during the famine as a result of the blocking and appropriation of emergency relief supplies by Aideed’s forces. These southern regions have continued to be the worst affected by armed violence even up to the present, as will be discussed in section 5.2, although periods of stability and islands of security have also been created.



### **5.1.2 Women and children**

Several aspects of the direct impact on women and the extent to which they have been specifically targeted for armed violence, were discussed under 'Gender Dimensions' above. Some of the broader issues of women in families and communities are discussed under 'Households' below. One impact of the continued armed violence and the changes in social relations reviewed above should be noted here because of its consequences for what happens to households and women within them. Several reports show that the proportion of households that are headed by women has significantly increased in the period since 1991. In one study in the South it was as high as 40% of all households – a proportion higher than almost anywhere else in Africa – and among IDPs was 75%.

Children of course suffer when their households are impoverished, but also suffer particular fates. The direct casualties from armed violence and the general disruption of homes and residence leave many children as orphans or without primary caregivers. UNICEF Somalia (2003) reports that despite still strongly voiced beliefs that orphans should be cared for by relatives, the economic and social strains of the last few years have reduced many families' capabilities to give that care. Their survey reported that about one third of all households reported situations where one or more of their children had required care in another family, considerably fewer reported hosting non-biological children. These conditions force increasing numbers to seek to survive as street children, which in Mogadishu in particular exposes them to violence and to drugs. Only 2% of those included in the UNICEF survey were reported to be now living on the streets, but 19% said that they or their siblings had done so at some time.

There is, as noted, a strong cultural inhibition against harming children, and in the same vein there is a strong attitude against involving them in militias. Nevertheless, such restraints are being eroded in practice. The UNICEF Somalia 2003 survey reported that 5% of the children surveyed said that they or their siblings had carried a gun or been involved in militias. There is again a marked regional variation of involvement depending on political situation and the degree of security, and far more in urban than rural areas.

### **5.1. 3 Displaced**

In addition to the enormous toll exacted in terms of human lives lost, hundreds of thousands of Somalis have been internally displaced or forced to flee to countries within the region and outside Africa. The first major refugee flight occurred in 1988 when over 600,000, predominantly Issaq, people fled from the north-west (what is now Somaliland) from summary executions, aerial bombardments and ground attacks on villages and the cities of Hargeisa and Burao by government forces, including special troops known as the 'Issaq Exterminating Wing' (*Dabar-goynta Isaaqa*). They fled to eastern Ethiopia and Djibouti in what has been described as 'one of the fastest and largest forced population movements ever recorded in Africa' (UNDP, 2002: 58). Although some 400,000 of the refugees in Ethiopia returned spontaneously following the collapse of the Siad Barre regime, an estimated 90,000 fled again in 1994 when civil war erupted in Hargeisa and Burao. Since then refugees have been successfully returning from Ethiopia to Somaliland under a UNHCR repatriation

programme. This attests to the security in the area. The support for resettlement they receive, and which has been extended to bolster receiving communities, ensures a transition not marked by impoverishment.

However, the mass displacement of Somalis took place after 1991. According to official figures, in 1992 the number of refugees in neighbouring countries was 800,000; the number of internally displaced people (IDP) was between 556,000 and 636,000, although some estimates numbered the IDP as high as 1.6 million (see Table 1, above). People continued to leave Somalia in large numbers up until 1995. Since then there has been a decline in refugee flows and a gradual process of repatriation and reintegration. Official figures for 2001 put the number of Somali refugees in neighbouring states and the number of the IDP at 246,400 and 300,000, respectively, with the highest concentration of IDPs found in Mogadishu. However, these latter figures are based on those living in IDP camps, whereas the actual number of IDP - including those less 'visible' IDP supported by kinfolk and those who have taken up temporary or forced resettlement - is likely to be much higher. The gender impact is illustrated by figures from a 2001 UNDP Study of the camps and their inhabitants in Mogadishu, which indicated that about 75% of the households were women-headed. The decline in refugee flows and internal displacement in the latter half of the decade is attributed to the improved security situation inside parts of Somalia after 1995 and to the hard and inhospitable environment of refugee camps; and, since 2001, to the tighter asylum policies in the West. (UNDP, 2002: 59)

The returnees and those still displaced are among the poorest of the poor in many areas. For instance, a survey of urban livelihoods in the southern town of Belet Weyne (Adams *et al.*, 2003) starkly reveals the realities of life for these victims of armed violence from elsewhere. Of the small category recognised as 'very poor' almost all were IDP. Typically, they lodged with earlier arrivees in small huts, had no access to land themselves and relied on just casual labour (transporting or caring for other people's livestock, washing clothes, carrying fodder, collecting rubbish, including left-over *khat*). This group was dependent on the alms of the better-off for 30% of their food on average. They used river water not tapped, relied on the Koranic school as they could not afford formal education. They did have access to free care at a medical post, but had no access to doctors. Most other IDPs were classified as 'poor', and along with the less well-off of locals, accounted for one third of the population, receiving a slightly higher income but with the same limited access to services. They were found, however, not to be food insecure, in absolute terms, but were dependent for basic survival on the largesse of the better-off and some isolated livelihood provision by NGOs.

Evidence from the port of Kismaayo, further south, which has the second largest IDP population after Mogadishu (with almost 50% of the total), offers a similar picture. There most of the displaced live in crowded camps, in rudimentary structures, with inadequate sanitary facilities, relying on contaminated river water, while others who can afford buy water. All schooling has to be paid for and thus is not available to most IDP children. Those from weak and powerless 'minority' clans may feel safer in camps, although they are still discriminated against in relief provision and in jobs and other earning prospects. Aid gatekeepers skew such relief aid as is available reputedly keeping as much as 75%. Kismaayo has been the scene of persistent fighting between

militia, changing hands a number of times and each time retreating militia looted and pillaged, and incoming militia did likewise (Narbeth & Mclean, 2003).

A different process of displacement affected the north-east regions. In violent fighting in the south, bordering the areas controlled from Mogadishu, many thousands fled north. A 1993 peace agreement, which became the basis for stability in the north-east generally, led to massive further displacement from the contested border areas northwards to the more secure regions, releasing in the process thousands of former militia fighters and freelance armed youth into the community. Another flow occurred as a consequence of the 'clan-cleansing' in the far south. People from the Harti and other sub-clans of the Darood clan family took refuge in the city of Kismaayo, and then in turn in Kenya. Many of these were officially 'repatriated' by UNHCR in the mid-1990s to the north-east, the 'home' area associated with the Darood clan, and many others moved there of their own accord. Coping with this influx was a major challenge to the newly emerging administration of Puntland and local NGOs, left unassisted by international bodies pre-occupied with the South-Centre. Paradoxically, the arrivals had a positive impact in Puntland, as it "reversed the debilitating out-migration and brain drain ... prompted by underdevelopment and harsh conditions" in previous decades (WSP, 2001). Skilled and formerly wealthy people brought their remaining funds, their entrepreneurial talents and knowledge to invest in the towns. However, the poorer were often forced by bleak urban prospects to revert to their forebears' traditions of livestock husbandry. The area now faces a problem with the prospect of peace: will the entrepreneurs return to urban areas like Mogadishu and Kismaayo where there may be greater opportunities?

## **5.2 The indirect impacts**

### **5.2.1 Household and livelihood levels**

Some of the most telling aggregate data about the correlation of household income with levels of stability or violence is found in the results of a survey (UNDP & World Bank, 2003: 23) of how average per capita income is unevenly distributed through Somalia's 18 regions. Before the war, some of the southern regions, where there was commercial agriculture, and the Banadir region that contained the capital, with its industry and services, were generally considered to be better-off. Today the six regions in the less well-endowed Somaliland and Puntland rank with Banadir as the best off, with their regional per capita income levels significantly higher than the national average of \$226. The eight regions with incomes lower than the national average are all insecure areas in the Centre-South of the country, and include several where commercial agriculture was found.

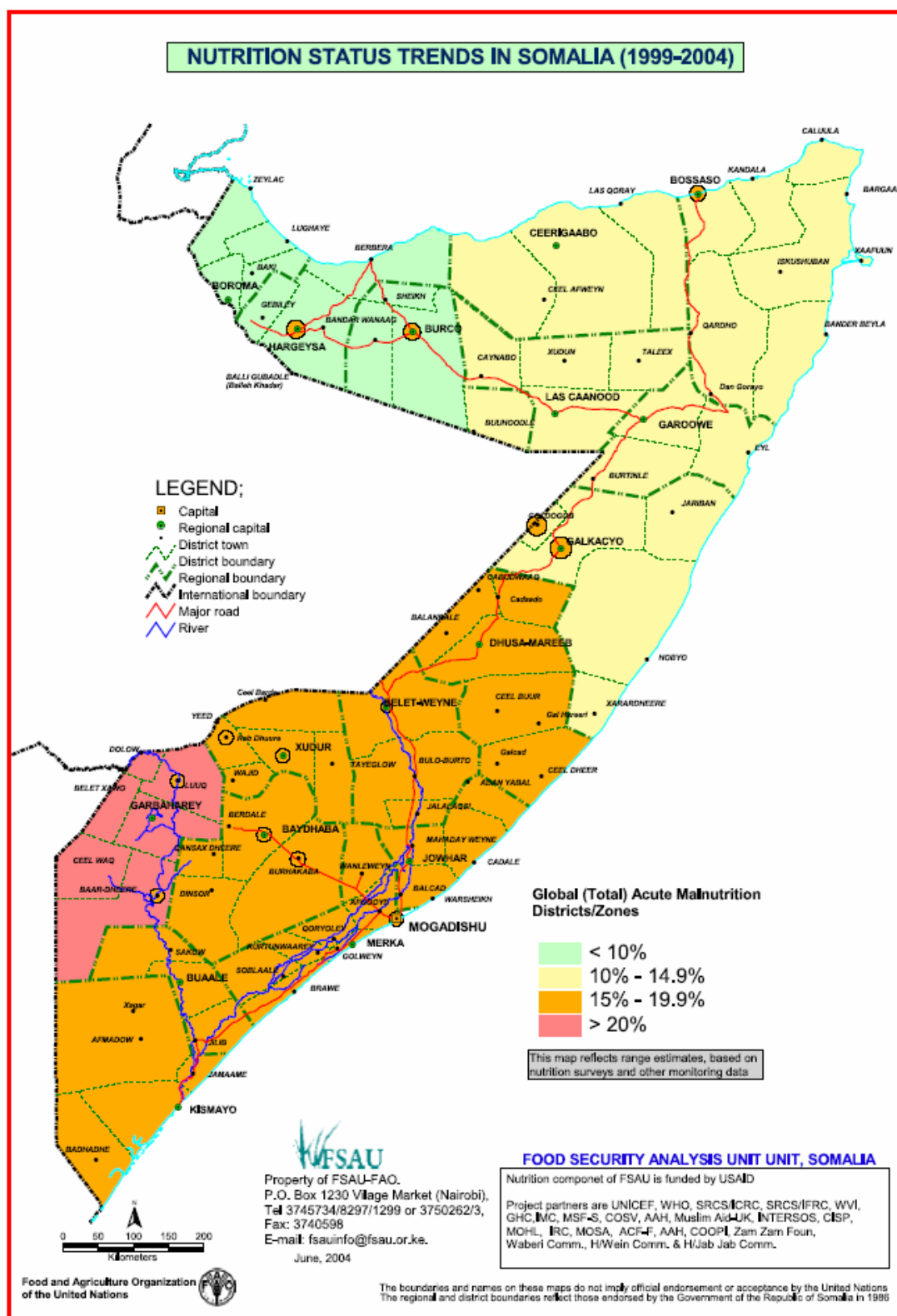
The same dramatic portrait of the uneven regional impact of persistent violence as opposed to that in stable areas is evident in maps produced by the Food Security Analysis Unit of the UN FAO (FSAU) in charting nutritional trends (see Map 1). They show that a significant proportion of people in all areas of Somalia suffer from acute malnutrition. However, the level is less than 10% in the north-west (which would still be enough in other countries to trigger a 'humanitarian emergency' by accepted international norms) and between 10-15% in the north-east – the two areas with relative security. In contrast, in much of the Central-South it is between 15% and

20%, while in the southern corner neighbouring Ethiopia and Kenya, it is an astonishing 20% plus.

The cumulative impact of long periods of insecurity leads FSAU to adopt a position in their reports where “The word ‘normal’ is deliberately avoided when referring to malnutrition rates in Somalia as ‘normal’ by international standards is very rarely seen” (FSAU, 2004: 14). As a consequence their analyses do not simply monitor whether there is at any moment a crisis, whether a result of natural or armed violence causes, that can be labeled an ‘humanitarian emergency’ in conventional ‘agency speak’; they refer to a persistent ‘livelihoods crisis’ which is a permanent condition for significant proportions of people. However, as this research was being conducted, there were clear symptoms of an ‘emergency’ mainly as a result of a prolonged drought for three years in some places, impacting to push the many vulnerable people even further below livelihood survival levels. The drought was most severe in the central and northern areas affecting in particular the livelihood position of pastoralists, who were losing large proportions of their herds and finding the terms of trade moving against them as they sought to realize some of the decline in household assets, their livestock, to buy food. These crisis conditions are beginning to change the aforementioned regional disparities, with the northern pastoralists suffering a decline even with their better security situation. Whether that worsening in their relative livelihood situation will be temporary depends on whether their better security situation is taken advantage of by outside support for replenishing herds after the drought. However, much of the southern population has also experienced a massive decline in their last harvest, and also has had to try and weather this latest crisis from a situation where they had been generally more vulnerable. In some southern areas, the 2004 crisis has also been fuelled by renewed armed violence as well as drought. With the implementation of a peace agreement finally in the offing, an invasion by a militia under General Morgan in August and September 2004 has threatened the JVA and the security its administration has been able to set up in recent years around Kismaayo. The consequences have been renewed displacement of people, some to Kenya others to rural areas, and the burning down of markets, and a further escalation of the prices of cereals, already in short supply and now “unaffordable to most citizens” (OCHA, September 2004). Delivery of humanitarian relief has, as in 1992-3, been interrupted in this area and by clashes between sub-clans in Belet Weyne further north, and generally in the Lower Shebelle and Lower Juba regions where “freelance militias continue to maintain a high number of road blocks limiting access to the area and increasing transport costs for food commodities” (OCHA, August 2004).

By and large the impact on livelihoods obtained primarily from livestock have not been as dramatic. Overall there has been growth in the livestock economy (see section 5.2.3): although estimates are not precise, there seems to have been a continuing increase in the size of herds of camels, cattle, goats and sheep, and significant increase in livestock marketed, especially as exports. But the livelihood benefits have not been experienced across the board. There is some evidence that the larger numbers have been accompanied by a polarisation in ownership, with smaller herders becoming more numerous and many dropping out of the pastoralist life entirely or becoming equally dependent on casual earnings. This burden on the poor has been emphasised by a shift toward a more widespread and intensive pattern of trade, that had been significantly commercialised for decades, and in turn a shift in the diet.

Map 1: Nutritional status trends in Somalia, 1999-2004<sup>3</sup>



<sup>3</sup> Reproduced by kind permission from the Food Security Analysis Unit of the UN FAO.

Pastoralists have always disposed of some of their natural increase often as much through barter as formal markets to meet needs for food other than livestock products, but the proportion of the latter in subsistence seems to have declined. Livestock sales become more important as food requirements have shifted to grain and other imported products (APD, 2002) but those with small or no animals have found this means of subsistence more and more difficult to sustain.

The picture provided by most of the information summarised above is an aggregate view of livelihoods by regions and agro-ecological zones. These data obscure what seems to be growing inequality between households observed in both pastoral and agricultural communities. The number and proportion of the 'vulnerable' – a status that derives from a prolonged period of asset depletion and disruptions of life – and of the 'poor' has been increasing (UNDP, 2002). Within this pattern the increase in the number of women-headed households noted above means that most of that category of families, with few or no livestock or access to secure land rights, inevitably find themselves among the vulnerable and are impoverished when emergencies such as the recent drought come along.

### ***5.2.2 Impacts of armed violence on social infrastructure and human capital***

The state collapse in 1991 saw the destruction of virtually all public buildings and facilities and thus much of the basic social service infrastructure, which was almost entirely provided by the state. The inevitable decline in the provision of social services (summarised in Table 2 below has been partially reversed in some regions in the late 1990s,. Nevertheless educational provision in 2001 was below the levels in the early 1980s and below neighbouring countries. Adult literacy had fallen from 24% pre-war to 17%. There has been almost no secondary or higher education at all for over 12 years. The development impact has been underlined by the UNDP Human Development Report 2001:

“The collapse of Somalia’s educational system constitutes a societal emergency, which will constrain development for decades.” (UNDP 2002: 85)

Similarly health indicators are among the worst in the world (UNDP, 2002). The recovery since 1998 in provision of some social services, such as primary school enrolment, and modest improvements in some health indicators, such as infant and under-five mortality rates, is very uneven regionally. It is very much correlated with the existence of security and stability, being greatest in areas previously considered the most marginalized and deprived.

Somalia has seen some recovery in some of its basic services. In the absence of state structures in the South-Centre and of any liberation movement with any humanitarian or development arm (like those in Eritrea, Tigray in the past and Southern Sudan today) the driving force of Somalia’s social service sector is the Somali private sector. Private health services have grown significantly over the past decade and, according to one estimate, accounted for as much as 90 per cent of all curative health care in the latter half of the 1990s (Development Solutions for Africa, 1997; cited in UNDP, 2002: 78). Yet, because most of them run on the basis of full-cost recovery, the

facilities are priced out of reach for households with middle levels of income let alone the poor.

Somaliland and Puntland offer some partial exceptions to this dominance of private provision. Authorities in the latter have reopened four of the six main hospitals in its various regions with the help of NGOs and donor support and provide some regulation of the health sector. With a legacy of relative neglect of its educational provision before 1991, the administration with Community Education Committees (CEC) and external agencies was able to reopen many primary school classes, but lack of revenues has made it difficult to meet recurrent costs to keep them open after initial support (e.g. from food-for-work or other support) came to an end. As of the end of the 1990s most districts did not even have upper primary schools, let alone secondary or higher education provision (WSP, 2001). The better-off could afford the fees plus the expense of sending their children to private schools and colleges in the main towns, but this provision has excluded the poor – and many girls. Somaliland has been most successful in social service provision: the security in the centre of the area allowed communities and NGOs to (re-)open schools, including secondary and some small private universities, which did receive some regular support from state revenues. But these were only enough in 2000 to cover 3% of estimated recurrent costs (UNDP, 2002). Nevertheless the central region of Woqonyi Galbeed had achieved enrolment of over 40,000 in primary school, higher even than in the much more populous Benadir region that includes the capital, Mogadishu (UNDP, 2002). Further illustrative of the positive impact, the Bay region chalked up an almost tenfold increase in primary enrolment in one year after the establishment of a RRD authority in mid-1999.

### **5.2.3 Macro-economic impacts (production, investment, trade etc)**

Somalia has always been one of the poorest countries in the world. Now it has been relegated to 161st position out of 163 in the UNDP's Human Development Index of 2001. The country's GDP per capita has worsened in the period of civil strife, absence of government and continuing insecurity from \$280 in 1989 to an estimated \$226 in 2002. Overall agricultural production remains far below pre-war levels, although there was a partial recovery in 2000 (UNDP, 2002), and food security shows little improvement after the droughts of the early 1990s and 1998-99. The country is faced with a long-term decline in the terms of trade for the crucial exports of livestock. Large amounts of capital, labour and agricultural land all remain unutilised because of the insecurity.

Paradoxically, however, there has been something of an economic boom in private sector activity, at least in the eyes of some analysts. In an early argument along these lines, Mubarak (1997) suggested that the informal market provided a functioning system that facilitated private sector activity, and did so more effectively than the previous regime's repressive policies and economic controls. However, he attributes this positive economic impact to the absence of government, while admitting that the economy has suffered from the violence of the civil war. He also admits that the economic 'boom' was confined to those areas where "local communities have succeeded in providing order and security".

**Table 2. Somalia: selected human development indicators**

	1985-90	1995-97	2001-02
<i>Population:</i>			
Total (million)	7.5	6.38	6.8 <sup>1</sup>
Urban (%)	23.5	-	34.0 <sup>1</sup>
<i>Education:</i>			
Adult literacy rate (%)	24.0	15.5	17.1
Urban (%)	-	-	34.9 <sup>1</sup>
Rural (%)	-	-	10.9 <sup>1</sup>
Primary school enrolment ratio	18.0	11.5	17.1
Boys (%)	-	-	20.8 <sup>1</sup>
Girls (%)	-	-	12.7 <sup>1</sup>
Secondary school enrolment ratio	10.0	0.4	1.1
Tertiary enrolment ratio	3.0	-	0.1
<i>Health:</i>			
Life expectancy at birth (yrs)	47.0	47.0	-
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	152	132	-
Under-five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	275	224	-
Maternal mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	1,600	1,600	-
% of population with access to at least one health facility	28.0 <sup>1</sup>	-	54.8 <sup>1</sup>
Urban (%)	-	-	62.7
Rural & nomadic (%)	29.0 <sup>1</sup>	-	36.4
% of population with access to safe (treated) water	-	-	20.5 <sup>1</sup>
Urban (%)	-	-	53.1
Rural (%)	-	-	4.1
<i>Public expenditure (as % of GNP):</i>			
Education	6.0	-	-
Health	0.2	-	-
Military	4.4	-	-

<sup>1</sup> UNDP & World Bank, 2003, p.xii.; All other statistics are reproduced from UNDP (2002), Ch.5, various tables.

Peter Little's book (2003) uses a detailed analysis of the dynamics of the pastoral economy to support similar conclusions about the resilience of that economy and of some of those engaged in it. They have the advantages of a politico-military strength derived from their lifestyle and can protect their assets by mobility. His research has been based on the trade of pastoralists in the south-west of the country who were able to reorient their trade in livestock from the Somali ports, caught up in the contest for control of them by faction militias, toward neighbouring Kenya – achieving considerable economic benefit in the process. Their benefits derive not from a perverse effect of the armed violence, but from their resilience in the teeth of that kind of threat. Certainly the trade in live animals to Saudi Arabia increased after 1991, as a result of deregulation, benefitting the north as well as the areas bordering Kenya; the through-put from Berbera port in Somaliland was greater at the end of the 1990s than before the war. However, a ban on exports from the Horn of Africa to Saudi Arabia because of fears of Rift Valley Fever interrupted this trend from 1997 and then again after 1999.

One critic of the thesis (Menkhaus, 2003b) does not gainsay that those with sustainable if not sizeable herds in one part of the country have benefited from these openings. However, he contrasts their fate with that of agriculturalists in the



neighbouring inter-riverine areas who often lost access to their lands and found their irrigation works destroyed, or that of more impoverished small herders or herdless and the many minorities found in southern Somalia. Mubarak similarly acknowledges that many people have had their prospects worsened despite the resilience of the market: the many displaced, the very large numbers of urban unemployed. Recent estimates (UNDP & World Bank, 2003: xii) put unemployment at almost half of the labour force, and at 65.5% in the towns. Little (2003) likewise cautions readers “not to equate the relative success of certain segments of Somali economy and society with an overly rosy picture that ‘all is well in Somalia’. ... The Somali paradox has some ‘winners’, but it also has had many, many ‘losers’, including women and children and Somali minority groups” – plus refugees and displaced.

Apart from the livestock economy, growth has been experienced in other areas of trade, notably the export of charcoal (with its worrying environmental impacts) and the import of *khat* (estimated to net \$100m to traders per year). Innovation has emerged as people contend with the breakdown of services and infrastructure: new, but small-scale hi-tech telecommunications, financial services to make available the massive scale of remittances from the diaspora and to finance trade and the expansion of private airlines in the region as well as internally.

### **5.3 Regional and international levels**

The successive phases of armed violence in Somalia have all been affected, usually aggravated, by regional factors. War began in the 1970s as part of the aim of uniting Somalis found in neighbouring states. Ethiopia consistently, and other countries sporadically, fuelled internal conflicts inside the former Republic of Somalia by supplying arms and providing sanctuary and diplomatic backing. Neighbouring countries have frequently backed one internal faction against another, either to get the kind of political outcome in Somalia that would suit them or as part of proxy wars with other states. States in the region have also been destabilised by Somalia’s conflicts.

The porous borders around the country have facilitated trade, often illicit, and weapons transfers as well as population movement of nomadic pastoralists, traders or combatants. The latter may have intensified armed struggles by providing sanctuary, but may also have ameliorated impoverishment, allowing pastoralists to find water or grazing when their livelihoods are threatened. Labour migration can also provide some additional source for livelihoods of those with limited assets. In Balet Weyn, for instance, a Save the Children survey found that many poor households depend on one bread-winner working in Ethiopia, where there are jobs in a secure environment, on a casual basis (Adams, 2003). Some household heads were absent for nine months a year. While this additional source provides immediate support for survival prospects, its long-term sustainability and its impact on families pose problems for the future.

One crucial international linkage has been the channelling of remittances from the Somalia diaspora around the world. As indicated above, these have been a vital source of livelihood support for many households and communities (but not necessarily spread evenly), and have provided by far the largest source of foreign exchange and fuelled such economic recovery as has occurred (Ahmed, 2000). But as some informants noted these are also used to fuel arms purchases and recruitment by armed

groups. However, their flow was interrupted by post 9/11 measures against international banking mechanisms used by Somalis, notably the al-Barakaat organisation, which were suspected of being transits for funds to support 'terrorism' – even if such individual payments might have used these channels, there were thousands of transactions between ordinary Somalis which were disrupted by these measures. A number of spontaneous, and more recently donor, initiatives have reduced the impact of these obstacles to the country receiving this life blood.

## **6. Overall impact on poverty**

### **6.1 Can poverty processes and impacts be attributed to SALW?**

These processes and impacts can only be indirectly attributed to SALW, as we have seen. The latter is only a contributing factor in a complex set of forces creating an overall situation of insecurity and impunity where armed violence is persistent and has been an enduring dimension of existence, of livelihoods and of social and economic realities. This overall situation does indeed generate poverty. Somalia's mixed fortunes in the last 10 years, with areas where peace and security have been established and arms removed from active use, and the incidence of armed violence reduced, alongside continuing disruption and violent conflict in areas where no political process has provided for security while arms available to both kinds of areas, indicates that SALW availability is not a prime cause of insecurity or poverty. All that might be hazarded is that the ready availability of SALW might be responsible for some additional percentage of the levels of armed violence and perhaps the levels of poverty.

## **7. Implications for aid programming**

### **7.1 The relationship between development and humanitarian aid programming and SALW programming**

#### ***7.1.1 Disarmament and arms reduction***

One of the most immediate issues at this critical juncture in Somalia is how to deal with the issue of disarmament, especially its phasing and linkage with peace-building, reconciliation and recovery. The Somali National Reconciliation Conference (SNRC), which began under Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) auspices in October 2002 managed to get all faction leaders to sign a declaration agreeing a constitutional framework for a five year transition under a federal government. With support and pressure from international bodies and major governments the last few weeks have seen the choosing, on a clan basis, of a transitional parliament, which now in turn is electing a president and government. Preparations are already under way to launch a comprehensive Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration programme (DDR) and other transitional programmes. Given the widespread availability of arms and the recognition that little can be done to immediately restore the rule of law and establish the new state's capacity to maintain peace and order, there is a natural presumption that an early step, some would say prerequisite, should be a programme of disarmament. Indeed, this was a strong and strategic recommendation of one of the working committees of the SNRC that was working on DDR to have a quick, total and simultaneous collection of weapons throughout the country in the first six months

of transition. Some observers feel that it was precisely the failure to pursue such disarmament that led to the broader failure of the UN intervention 12 years ago. Outside actors in donor agencies and international bodies who are preoccupied with the consequences of the extraordinary wide diffusion of arms tend to make the same assumption. One commentator suggested that NGOs might have a vested interest in promoting a disarmament agenda – partly because the peace process especially in South-Central Somalia is basically seen as an ‘aid programme’, for where else will the revenues come from except the donors?

However, a whole series of interviewees, Somali and international, who have practical experience of the realities on the ground, stressed the unrealism of this hope. There would be no means of enforcing compliance; no obvious incentive was being mooted. Thus, given the long period of insecurity and the reliance on SALW as a means of livelihood and self-defence, these people rather prioritise the establishment of a climate of security and the provision of alternative livelihoods as prior means to encourage eventual collection of SALW. However, agreement to effect the decommissioning of the ‘technicals’ and other heavy weapons which are in the hands of the main militia factions may be realisable. Indeed, in several areas agreements have resulted in the collection of heavy weaponry, which have been cantoned not burnt. As one international official trying to plan for assistance in this area put it: Rehabilitation, Demobilisation and Disarmament (RDD) in that order make more sense than DDR – a phrase echoed by at least one other official on the ground. Moreover, there is a general lack of trust in any authorities, and people will be wary of any new government, especially one made up of warlords. This leads some to argue that “the new government cannot be given a monopoly of force on day one.”

Also central to the issue of disarmament is the perception of the problem. The SNRC Committee, a third of whose members were self-proclaimed ‘colonels’, sees the crucial issue as one of “removing weapons from the hands of the civilians ... people who are not trained nor qualified to handle them, and are thus destroying their country, their people and their property”. The report (CRD, 2004) of a Mogadishu-based think-tank reminds us that the SNRC is made up very largely of those people who have been responsible for the last 15 years of armed violence. Another experienced interviewee from the War-torn Societies Project asserted that “insecurity is not due to the diffusion of weapons to the general public, but to those involved in the continuing organised violent incidents, like road-blocks, the various militias, who number only a few thousand”.

The intractable nature of this most difficult of the Armed Violence Reduction agenda was acknowledged in the WSP Report on ‘Issues and Possibilities for Puntland’ (WSP, 2001). In a document replete with creative and practical recommendations for the road ahead in all other respects, there was an admission of “the workshop participants’ inability to make any meaningful proposals” to a situation in Puntland, “teeming with weapons”. There was also a recognition that no government could claim to have re-established the rule of law without a workable solution. In a determinedly self-reliant planning document, this was one area where stakeholders admitted the need for technical support from outside. However, Somaliland did undertake a process of demobilisation of fighters in 1993, which was largely successful, and at that stage and later conducted disarmament operations. There lies a potential useful learning experience. However, whether it will be taken on board may

be affected by the potentially tense relationship between the new authorities in Mogadishu and those in Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland.

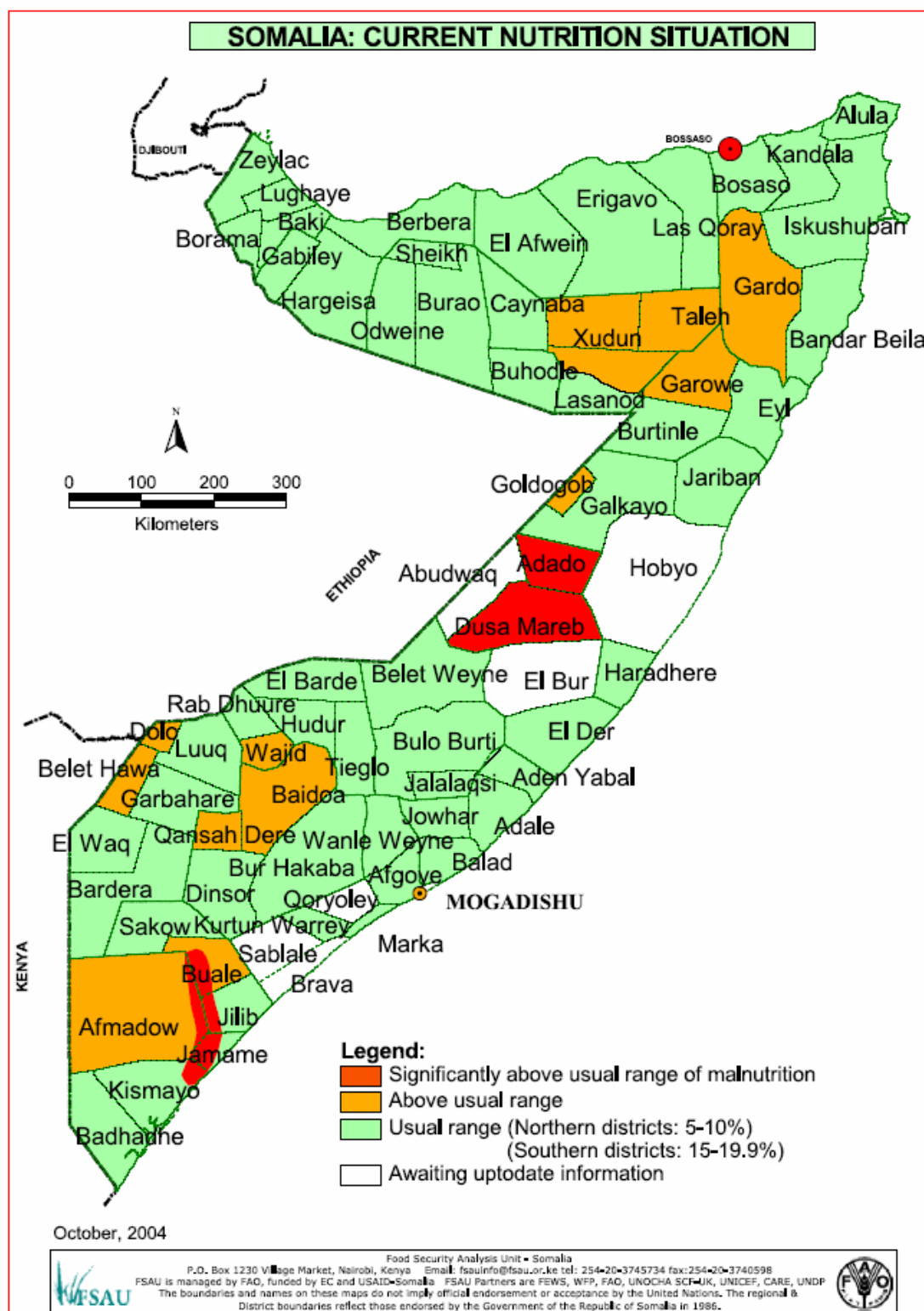
As the comment above about prioritising stability and alternative livelihoods underlines, issues to do with disarmament, its timing and its methods have to be considered alongside planning of humanitarian intervention and in the provision of development. This latter dimension will be especially crucial in programming DDR and other programmes during the transitional period hopefully now ahead.

## **7.2 To what extent should the programming of development and humanitarian aid take armed violence into account and how?**

At the root of the spectacular failure of humanitarian intervention in Somalia in the early 1990s, and one root of present disorders and dilemmas about delivering aid, was the policy of making food aid deliveries a stratagem for undermining the patronage of warlords who controlled deliveries of food. The lessons of a miscalculation of integrating humanitarian relief and peace enforcement have not yet been fully applied, or have been forgotten by new donor generations. Realisation of the pitfalls to be avoided in integrating peace-making with relief and development does not, however, justify rejection of a more integrated approach.

Other lessons from other arenas do not appear to have been applied in Somalia. Montani & Majid (2002) in an insightful evaluation of a range of humanitarian interventions suggest that the Somali Aid Coordination Body (SACB) and its member organisations have not given due emphasis to that part of its aims that calls for longer-term efforts to promote sustainable livelihoods. They also feel that donors and NGOs do not sufficiently take the political economy of violence into account by citing the infrequency of any of them consulting the UN Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS). They also point to a tendency to respond to the special hazard of working in the challenging context in Somalia by sticking to 'safe' programming, tried and tested, rather than being innovative.

## Annex 1. Somalia: current nutrition situation<sup>4</sup>



<sup>4</sup> Reproduced by kind permission from the Food Security Analysis Unit of the UN FAO.

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