

## REPORT

# LIVELIHOODS, CONFLICT AND MEDIATION: SOMALIA

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### Key findings

- Shocks impact livelihoods already under pressure from emerging trends and long-running challenges. Recent, consecutive or concurrent shocks have eroded crop production and fodder availability. Three successive failed rainy seasons are affecting ability to grow crops, wellbeing of livestock, and subsequently the market value of products. Those with livestock had already been dealing with reduced incomes from lower livestock prices as a result of the Hajj cancellation in 2020 and 2021 due to Covid-19.
- Emerging trends are impacting livelihoods. In particular, the expansion of farmland and subsequent reduction in grazing area is placing increased pressure on livestock owners, be they pastoralists or agropastoralists. This is also leading to disputes with farmers around trespassing and crop damage.
- The emerging trends occur within a background of long-running issues related to power-sharing, peace and security. Although interviews describe lower levels of violence in the last five years, there are ongoing tensions along clan lines and the presence of armed groups. In Galkayo, ongoing tensions between clans across the Puntland and Galmudug administrative line restrict the movement of livestock despite the drought. The presence of armed groups in Jowhar continues to affect communities.
- Despite the persistence of tensions, interviewees across the three interview sites express satisfaction and confidence in dispute resolution and conflict mediation measures. Most of these measures are community led, with clan elders continuing to play a key role in resolving disputes and conflict. In the case of Galkayo, interviewees note that, while clan leaders cannot intervene directly due to restrictions on cross-border movements, the Puntland Administration is stepping up measures to resolve cross-border tensions.



A camel herd in Somalia – image by Muzzamil Abdi Sheik

## About this research

This report is the second in a series highlighting learning emerging from a longitudinal study examining violent and non-violent conflict and mediation dynamics in Somalia and Nigeria. It builds on previous SPARC research examining [the impacts of Covid-19 on livelihoods](#). This research is complementary to a parallel longitudinal project [unpacking how people are anticipating and mitigating challenges](#), and [how anticipatory action by humanitarian actors](#) could be better designed and implemented to support livelihoods ahead of shocks.

The overarching aim of the longitudinal study is to document and understand the challenges facing people with different livelihoods, particularly around disputes and conflict of various types, and how these are impacting lives and livelihoods. The research did not initially focus on particular types of disputes and conflict, but rather let the interviewees describe the types of disputes and conflict they had experienced in the last five years, including their views on the perpetrators and causes.

The economic, environmental, political and social contexts at the local-to-national levels are continually evolving, and regional-to-global events such as the economic repercussions of Covid-19 are being felt at the local level. We want to capture how people are coping with and adapting their livelihoods to this dynamism. With each subsequent round of research, we will combine analysis of impactful events and trends at local-to-global scales to complement the narratives emerging from individual interviews. We will also be undertaking deeper analysis of some of the dispute and conflict dynamics mentioned during the interviews.

Specific questions guiding the research include:

- What are the most significant non-conflict shocks, stresses and constraints recently (in the last five years) and currently affecting pastoral and agropastoral livelihoods in insecure contexts in Nigeria and Somalia?
- What types of disputes and conflicts are affecting livelihoods for women and men, and what are their impacts?
- What types of actions have been taken to respond to and/or mitigate the various types of disputes and conflicts? Responses and mitigation strategies of interest may include formal and informal mediation and conflict-resolution initiatives, as well as household and community-level adaptations to conflict events.
- When non-conflict shocks (e.g., flooding, drought or price increases) and stresses (e.g., dry-season challenges or elections) occur and/or crises develop, how are disputes and conflict incidences affected?

- How, at an individual and community level, are households adapting livelihood strategies in response to disputes, conflict and other shocks and stresses?

This report introduces the overarching contexts in three sites in Somalia and highlights the predominant challenges at each as raised during the first round (September–November 2021) of fieldwork by local research partners, Hexagon Consulting. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in farming, pastoral and agropastoral communities clustered around three sites in Somalia: Jowhar district (Middle Shabelle region, South West State), Galkayo district (Mudug region, Puntland) and Burao district (Togdheer region, Somaliland) ([Figure 1](#)).

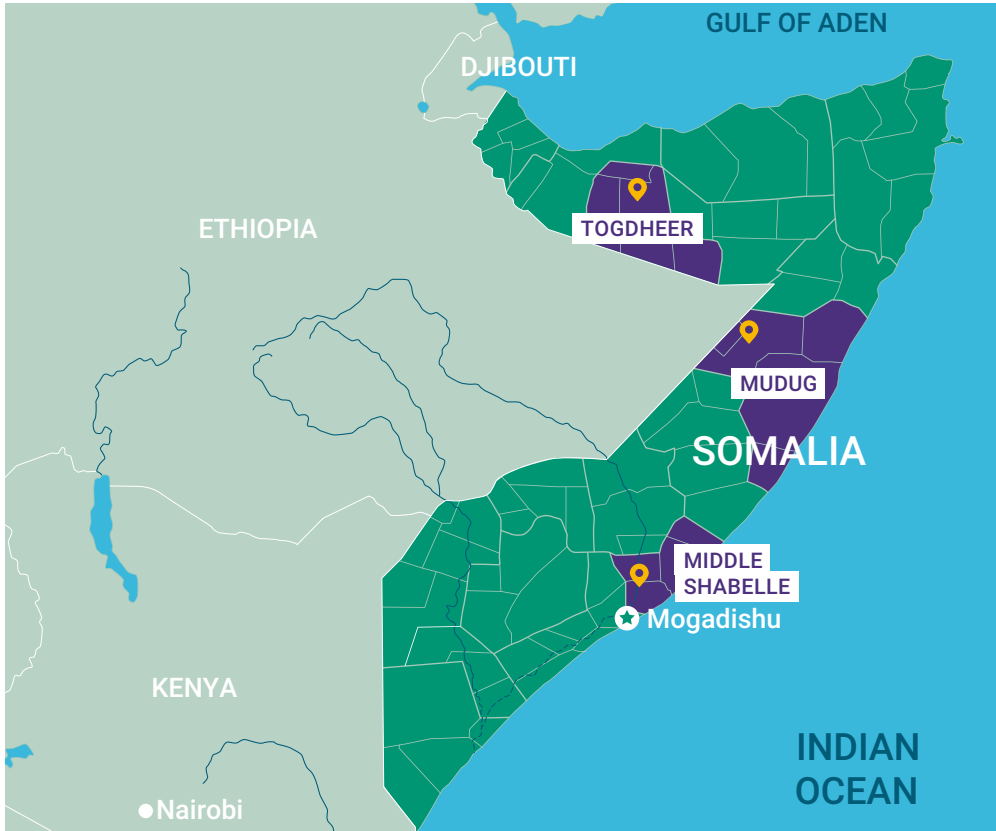
Interviewees were queried about topics related to the overall research questions in Somali, although the interview guide allowed the field team flexibility in probing deeper on particular issues on an individual basis. These sites were part of the established SPARC panel for regular interviews under the parallel anticipatory action project. A diverse set of livelihoods is represented within the interview sample of 20 women and 25 men (15 individuals per site) ([Figure 2](#)).

## 1. Introduction

A confluence of socioeconomic and political trends within Somalia and across national borders is challenging agricultural, pastoral and agropastoral livelihoods. From the late 1800s, British colonial control spanned the northwest of present-day Somalia (currently Somaliland), with Italy controlling the rest until 1960. The two former territories were then united under a single government. The Barre regime came into power through a coup in 1969. The national government collapsed entirely in 1991 following decades of violent repression and fuelling inter- and intra-clan conflict by the Barre regime (Menkhaus, 2006). The country has been experiencing incomplete peace since the civil war (1991–2012), with territorial divisions reflective of the colonial period. Clans in the north of the country declared independence and split off to form the Republic of Somaliland, which is not recognised as a sovereign state by the international community.

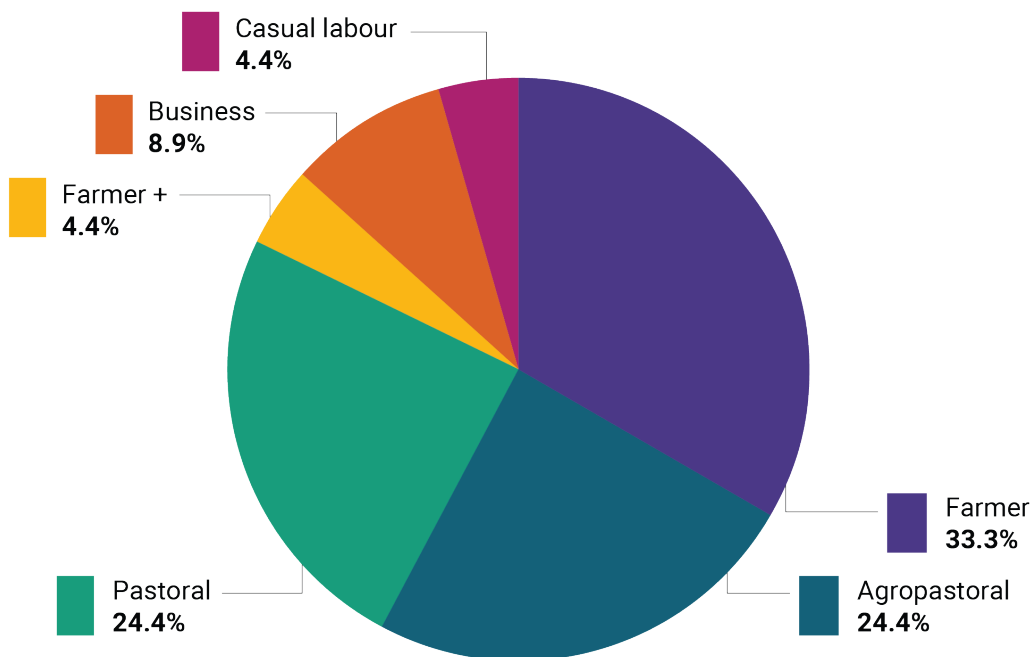
A power vacuum ensued, filled by multiple clan military units and alliances between these armed groups. The Federal Government of Somalia was instituted in 2012; the Federal Member State (FMS) system was established in 2015 (Majid et al., 2021). A diverse array of actors continue to control local governance, security and business within the system. The FMS represents a power-sharing agreement between the four clan factions (and their militias) along territorial lines, and the minority non-

FIGURE 1: MAP OF STUDY AREAS



The map shows the approximate locations of the study areas (Burao district in Togdheer region, Galkayo district in Mudug region, and Jowhar district in Middle Shabelle region).

FIGURE 2: LIVELIHOOD BREAKDOWN OF THE INTERVIEW SAMPLE



Source: Authors' analysis of basic livelihood statistics of interviewees.

Notes: The + indicates that the respondent had an additional income-generating activity, such as running a small shop or casual labour.

clan groups – the ‘0.5’ in what is called the 4.5 system (ibid.). Inter- and intra-clan dynamics continue to influence control over and access to land and water resources for agricultural, pastoral and agropastoral livelihoods. These clan dynamics may also be simultaneously competing and cooperating with growing elite interests arising from the diaspora and with other armed groups, such as Al-Shabaab in parts of southern and central regions (Menkhaus, 2018; de Waal, 2020).

Political and security instability are high in some contested territories. For instance, Galkayo is divided by two federal states – Puntland and the Galmudug Interim Administration (GIA) – each controlled by different clan families and their associated clans and subclans that contest territorial lines of control (Yusuf and Khalif, 2015). Armed clashes between the Majarteen clan (of the Darod clan family, and controlling the Puntland side) and the Habargidir clan (of the Hiwaye clan family, controlling the GIA) have occurred sporadically since the formation of the GIA in 2015. Puntland and Somaliland also dispute control over the regions of Sool, Sanaag and parts of Togdheer on the basis of clan lines versus the former Anglo-Italian colonial borders. Other major players in instability in Somalia are militant groups, with Al-Shabaab being one of the more prominent. Al-Shabaab’s territorial control frequently shifts; it had significant presence in swaths south of Puntland, including near the study site of Jowhar in late 2021 (Political Geography Now, 2021).

Additional political instability has manifested due to delays in the parliamentary and presidential elections, which were initially scheduled to start in November 2020 (Al Jazeera, 2021). President Farmaajo’s mandate expired in February 2021, but disagreements among parties to the 4.5 system around moving from an indirect to direct election, and potential dilution of power implications, led to postponement of the elections. The political instability contributed to increased tensions and some outbreaks of violent conflict in some parts of Somalia (Carboni and Daud, 2021). At the time of the interviews, neither parliamentary nor presidential elections had been held.

On top of these underlying challenges, Somalia has experienced a number of concurrent shocks since 2019. From mid-2019 through 2020, Somalia experienced two significant locust-plague outbreaks following heavy rainfall, leading to widespread crop and fodder destruction across Somaliland and northeastern regions (FAO, 2022). The country normally has two rainy seasons per year: Gu (approximately April to July) and Deyr (approximately October to January). At the time of the first round of interviews (autumn 2021), three rainy seasons had failed and the awaited Deyr was expected to be below normal (FEWS NET and NOAA, 2021). The transboundary

socioeconomic impacts of Covid-19 (the cancellation of the Hajj in 2020 and 2021 meant that Somali livestock were not sold and exported as usual to feed Hajjis) were placing additional pressure on livelihoods (Levine et al., 2021).

## 2. Burao

### 2.1 Context

The three main interview sites in Burao are the villages of Wilsil, Adan Saleban and Looya. The three villages were reported by interviewees as being established during the British colonial period as livestock watering points with dug borewells. Across these three sites, the dominant clan family is Issaq, with many interviewees belonging to various Issaq clans and subclans. In the village of Looya, most residents belong to the subclan Habar Yunis. Similarly, in Wilsil, inhabitants belong to the subclans Habar Yunis and Ciise Muse. In Adan Saleban, the community is divided between the subclan Habar Jeclo and the Madhibaan, a subgroup of the minority Gabooye group (not affiliated with any of the clan families). The majority of the Madhibaan are internally displaced people, who fled their homes due to fighting and drought in the early 1990s. The Madhibaan are bonded to pastoral clan groups (the *sab* system) and can relate only through patronage (Gundel, 2009). This minority group is not allowed to own land or livestock under the *sab* system, or to inter-marry with any Somali clans (ibid.).

### 2.2 Livelihoods

Across the three villages, interviewees from the various Issaq subclans practised a number of livelihoods, including livestock rearing and dairying, farming, charcoal making, transportation, petty trading and running restaurants and tea shops. Proximity to Burao, the closest town with a livestock market, plays a role in livelihood diversification. The farther the settlement from Burao, the lesser diversification in livelihoods was seen.

In Adan Saleban (on the outskirts of Burao, a 10–15-minute rickshaw ride), interviewees described livelihood activities ranging from casual labour (male and female) within the village or the market town of Burao, trading of livestock and fodder (female), transportation (male – driving a rickshaw, donkey cart or motorbike) and operating restaurants (female). Given proximity to Burao, there was not enough space for livestock keeping, although some had small farms and sold produce at the market. A few managed to keep herds on pasture about 10km away. The Madhibaan in Adan Saleban do jobs considered menial by the interviewees – such as shoe making, butchery and blacksmithing.



Among those interviewed in Wasil (7km, a 45–60-minute trek), livelihood activities for men include agropastoralism (camels and supplementary farming) and transporting goods. Women were described as being the primary caretakers of goats and sheep. Wet-season incomes are supplemented by sale of dairy products like ghee.

Interviewees in Looya mentioned farming (including sharecropping), agropastoralism and charcoal making as the dominant activities. Looya is the farthest from Burao, at 10km or a 1.25-hour trek. No women were interviewed in Looya, and male interviewees did not describe female livelihood activities.

In contrast to the southern regions of Somalia – including Galkayoo and Jowhar – the farming activities in Burao differ slightly due to the rainy seasons. Burao receives inconsistent rains during January and February (the Karin rains), while regions in the south are in Jilaal (dry season from approximately December to March). The Gu rains begin earlier in Burao (Gu is the long wet season for most of Somalia from April to June), arriving in March. The Gu rains peak during May, at which time livestock activities such as kidding, milk production and calving are conducted.

### 2.3 Challenges

The interviews reveal that, within the three villages, households are facing a range of challenges that impact their livelihoods. The ongoing drought is placing a heavy burden on livelihoods – with some facing a loss of employment and income – and the wellbeing of livestock. Those who practised rain-fed farming or could not afford to purchase water for livestock were most impacted. Villagers in Looya and Wilsil mentioned that some of the borewells are drying out; the water shortages were more remarked upon by Wilsil interviewees. A few farmers in Looya with borewells self-reported that they were still coping. As a result of the drought and the Hajj cancellations in 2020 and 2021, livestock is failing to fetch a good market price, resulting in low profits. Milk and ghee production have also faltered.

Long-term trends are also placing pressures on livestock raising and farming. Within the subclans of Wilsil, disputes have arisen in the past two years over farm boundaries and over a borewell. Agropastoralists also spoke of reduced grazing area due to farm expansion in Wilsil. These disputes were described as being between families, rather than as within or between subclans. Similarly in Looya, disputes over farmland ownership were described, with increasing land prices cited as a factor driving disputes. In Adan Saleban, the interviewees had legal documents issued by the local government

indicating property ownership. Property disputes are rare. However, some Adan interviewees remarked that it was becoming harder to keep camels at the distant pastures, due to encroaching farmland.

The ongoing drought was described by interviewees as being an important push factor for recent migration, from moving herds to areas perceived to have more water or pasture, to moving to towns to find work. At the time of interviews (November 2021), there had been an influx of external pastoralists into Wasil due to the earlier onset of Dyer rains than in other areas. Opinions were mixed around the potential impacts of this recent migration on social dynamics. While some suggested that the new arrivals might heighten the risk of conflict, others suggested that, where there is shared culture, the village could be accepting of new arrivals. Interviewees also revealed that people often avoid migrating to areas where there is existing conflict between clans or subclans. Furthermore, some suggested that out-migration could also reduce the risk of conflict by lowering population and resource pressures.

Somaliland completed its parliamentary and local district elections in May 2021; parliamentary elections were originally supposed to be held in 2015. The political uncertainty and run-up to elections were presented as security concerns by some interviewees in Looya, who said that elections could have fuelled existing tensions that might later spiral into conflict. These perspectives were not repeated by interviewees in Wilsil or Adan Saleban. More respondents were concerned that the election campaigns and voting had diverted attention away from livelihood activities, such as taking livestock to market or working the farming area.

## 3. Galkayo

### 3.1 Context

The main interview sites in Galkayo are Taalo-Cad, Ceelberdale, Buursaalax and Daarusalaam, all located on the Puntland side. In the village of Taalo-Cad, the community predominantly belongs to the Majarteen clan (of the Darod clan family) and its subclan Omar Mahamud, but also the Shiqaal clan (of the Hiwaye clan family). The Taalo-Cad village was established in 2016 following a severe drought, and its inhabitants include those who lost livestock during the drought. While the village of Ceelberdale is today dominated by the Majarteen clan, the village was originally established over 50 years ago by other subclans (Leelkase and Mareehand) of the Darod clan family. Similarly, the Majarteen is the dominant clan within the village of Buursaalax. Buursaalax is also

inhabited by other Darod subclans (Leelkase, Madhibaan, Majarate). Similar to the experiences of those living in Taalo-Cad, some of the interviewees who had moved to Buursaalax within the last five years had done so to escape drought in their former villages. The subclan Leelkase (another Darod subclan) also forms part of the village of Daarusalaam. The village was established in 2010 and also includes villagers from the Omar Mahamud and Reer Mahamud subclans.

### 3.2 Livelihoods

While the predominant livelihood activities across the four interview sites are livestock rearing and small-scale farming, a number of interviewees engage in other forms of livelihood activities depending on proximity to the major market towns of Galkayo and Galdogob. Taalo-Cad is within 20km of Galkayo; Daarusalaam and Buursaalax are within 30km of Galdogob. Ceelberdale is farthest from a market town, at 90km from Galkayo. Livestock (camel raising by men; sheep and goats by women) and farm products provide both subsistence and commercial opportunities. In both, milk and ghee provide important income during the wet season due to a combination of high supply and low prices. Those closer to the market towns might also engage in running small businesses such as restaurants and shops (both women and men). In Buursaalax, some spoke of also being supported by remittances. Despite its distance from major market towns and smaller size (estimated around 500 households), Ceelberdale has a number of small shops and restaurants. This could be attributed to its serving as a military base for a clan militia.

### 3.3 Challenges

Tensions and violent clashes between subclans across the Puntland and Galmudug administration border continue to present a challenge for households living in the region, as briefly outlined in the report introduction. In the village of Ceelberdale, interviewees belonging to the subclan Omar Mahamud (of the Majarteen clan) spoke of the establishment of the Omar Mahamud clan militia base in the village to provide protection from the neighbouring Habargidir Sacad subclan (of the Habargidir clan), located in Galmudug. These tensions are not limited to the village of Ceelberdale, being part of wider tensions between the administrations of Puntland and Galmudug.

In Taalo-Cad, interviewees spoke of how conflict between the Omar Mahamud subclan and Habargidir Sacad subclan had previously led to revenge killings, property destruction and looting. Interviewees in both Buursaalax and Daarusalaam also raise the issue of tensions between the two clans and their subclans in neighbouring Galmudug, which result in a restriction on movements within opposing clans' territories. Villages in Ceelberdale also reported restrictions on movements of livestock:

"during drought, we can only move our livestock to the Northern side. Even if the Southern side (inhabited by the Habargidir clan) receives heavy rain, we cannot move our animals there. The same case with them; they cannot bring their animals here even if livestock and people are dying because of drought." (Male pastoralist, 30s)

Another interviewee in Ceelberdale described recent violent incidents between subclans. The first described occurred in December 2019 in Towfiq town, involving subclan militias from either side of the border clashing over grazing areas, resulting in multiple people being killed. More recently, in 2020, violence involving two subclan militias resulted in further fatalities. One resident in Ceelberdale described the implications of these tensions for the region:

"conflict results in destruction and no benefit at all. It doesn't only affect [people's] livelihoods, but life as a whole. If someone dies, they leave their children as orphans and no one takes care of their welfare. And if someone is injured, no one will treat them because they were not fighting for the government. But their clan cannot provide for everything, so conflict will result in the destruction of livelihoods, poor economy, hunger and so on." (Male pastoralist, 30s)

The impact of drought is beginning to show effects on people's livelihoods. One interviewee in Buursaalax highlighted that, due to the ongoing drought, there is insufficient water and pasture, resulting in pastoralists moving livestock across the border to Ethiopia. The effects of drought on livestock markets were also raised by both residents from Buursaalax and Ceelberdale. In Ceelberdale, villagers highlighted that the drought is leading to poor livestock conditions, which is resulting in a lack of buyers. Similarly, residents in Buursaalax stated that livestock are currently fetching poor prices at market and that some buyers were delaying payment and purchasing on credit to be paid back months later.

Interviewees in Galkayo raised the issue of election insecurity and the impact this has had on community relations and the local economy. One interviewee in Buursaalax stated that, while not violent, the election period was leading to disagreements over who should be elected from which subclans to parliament. Other interviewees described how the elections were having both positive and negative effects on the local economy. Some cited them as leading to an influx of money entering circulation as politicians and campaigners bought goods in local shops and restaurants. Some interviewees complained that this influx of money was increasing the prices of local goods. One referred to this influx of money as 'haram' (illegal).

## 4. Jowhar

### 4.1 Context

Interviews were conducted with people from a sample of nine villages throughout Jowhar district: Baarow Weyne, Buur Fuule, Faanoole, Geedo Barkaan, Jiliyaale, Konko, MahGadaay, Qalafow and Tuulada Halgan. The villages are located in close proximity to the Shabelle River.

The interview area is dominated by the Shiidlo, a minority Bantu group not related to the four Somali clan families (Gundel, 2009). Shiidlo interviewees claim to have founded all of the villages except for Qalafow and Tuulada Halgan, during the Italian colonial period. (The Italians founded an agricultural settlement in Jowhar in 1920.) Tuulada Halgan was reported by an elder as being established by the Barre regime first for the Shabelle people, possibly a Bantu group (Abbink, 2009), with Shiidlo being invited later to settle by the Shabelle. The Abgaal and Gaaljecel, clans of the clan family Hawiye, were variously allowed to begin settling in or grazing near some of the villages. All of the Shiidlo or Shabelle interviewed claimed land tenure via inheritance. The few interviewed Abgaal and Gaaljecel did not claim any land tenure. Inheritance land tenure claims are not backed by any kind of title registered with the Jowhar district government, according to several interviewees.

### 4.2 Livelihoods

Occupations are largely group-specific. The Shiidlo interviewees engaged predominantly in farming (maize, sorghum, rice and some vegetables), with a few branching into agropastoralism on a small scale in order to sell dairy products (ghee, milk and cheese). Many of the villages are located between 5km and 20km from Jowhar, the administrative capital of Middle Shabelle region. Livelihoods do not appear to be as gendered among the Shiidlo as among some of the Somali subclans interviewed in Burao and Galkayo. Both women and men indicated that they worked on farms – their family's and as casual labourers on the farms of others. Both also sold surplus produce at the Jowhar markets, but, in this small sample, only women operated shops. A few women also work as teachers or henna artists in addition to working on the family farm. Some men are taking on jobs as construction labourers.

The Abgaal were described as being predominantly pastoral or agropastoral (small-scale farms mainly for family consumption). The Gaaljecel are pastoral and move into the area during the dry season, returning to their villages during the wet season. The few non-Shiidlo interviewees described their families practising transhumance (moving livestock between customary grazing areas). These interviewees had some family members with established dry-season grazing areas in area villages, such as Qalafow. Within the small sample, no livelihood diversification beyond pastoralism was

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**“Some relatives have lived here for a long time. My family is pastoralist and moves from one place to another to look for pasture.”**  
(Female, 30s)

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described. It was also difficult to discern the participation of women in various pastoral activities, something that will be probed further in subsequent interviews.

### 4.3 Challenges

The dominant long-running challenge was described by the Shiidlo interviewees as the lack of capital or financial resources to improve farms. None of the interviewees reported receiving any farm extension services. Many of the farmers indicated that there were not enough tractors to assist with ploughing and harvesting, limiting farm productivity. This could be one reason contributing to the prevalence of using casual labour on farms. Additional long-running challenges include flash flooding from the river, which destroys crops and causes waterlogging.

Disputes between Shiidlo farmers over land and water appear to be minimal in all villages. In the various villages, water committees manage irrigation canals and ensure allocation to each farm. Property boundaries between farms have been established and are frequently marked by fences. Interviewees described relationships with other farmers in their village as being cordial.

Proximity of the villages to the Shabelle River determined whether a lack of water was mentioned as directly problematic to farm output; but not once was it mentioned as a cause for dispute between farmers. Disputes between individuals and the potential for larger-scale dispute and armed conflict were described as arising during droughts (such as that occurring at the time of the interviews) or dry seasons, when visiting or established pastoralist or agropastoralist groups seek water and pasture for animals. A few farmers mentioned that livestock might be deliberately sent into fields at night to graze while the farmer is sleeping, and that they had no recourse to find the responsible individuals. The pastoralists interviewed concurred that a shortage of pasture and water could cause disagreement with host communities over grazing areas.

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**“Conflicts increase during the droughts; that is when pastoralists move near the river, looking for pasture on the banks of the river and that is when the farmers harvest their farm produce. The livestock sometimes trespass and graze on farms and then disputes break out.”**  
(Male farmer, 60s, Jiliyaale)

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Historically, the tensions between the Abgaal (predominantly, as mentioned in the interviews) and Gaaljecel pastoralists and Shiidlo farmers over land have erupted into armed conflict in Jiliyaale and Geedo Barkaan. Land held by some Shiidlo farmers was claimed to have been purchased by some Abgaal. The dispute erupted into an armed conflict around six to eight years ago in which 'several' were killed. The event was memorable to the Shiidlo interviewees in these two villages as they had welcomed the Abgaal to use water and pasture, and felt betrayed by the event.

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**“The pastoralists came to us who were looking for pasture and water for their livestock. But with time, they started claiming the village as theirs... Imagine the visitor claiming to own land that they were welcomed to not long ago!”**  
**(Female farmer, 50s)**

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In addition to occasional disputes with pastoralists, interviewees in Qalafow mentioned that they have faced attacks by the Macawiisley militia, who looted the village. The last date of such an incident was not mentioned by the interviewees. The Jowhar government administration then sends in security forces, and the village finds itself in the middle of armed conflict between the two. Macawiisley reportedly arose in 2014 as a countermeasure to Al-Shabaab, to protect villages in the Middle Shabelle and Hiiraan areas from Al-Shabaab extortion and violence (Shire, 2021). Due to the small sample size, it is impossible to tell if the Macawiisley are targeting just specific groups or all in a specific area.

Additionally, while we were not able to collect substantial evidence from the first set of interviews, some interviewees mentioned off-record that Al-Shabaab was also active in the area. A few mentioned that not all of the flash flooding incidents were natural, but rather caused by actors linked with the group breaching river banks. Al-Shabaab has a history of activity around Jowhar. For instance, the town was captured by Al-Shabaab during 2009 to 2012, before its liberation by forces of the Somali National Army and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The approximate territorial control of Al-Shabaab near the villages was believed to have extended from Jowhar to Mogadishu as of December 2021 (Political Geography Now, 2021). What role they and other armed groups play, and their impacts, will be explored in subsequent research as far as possible with regard to the safety of interviewees and the field team.

## 5. Mediation

Across the three sites, incidences of violent conflict between livelihood groups, within the same subclan or between subclans, around land and water had not occurred within the last five years. Violent conflict, particularly incidents that spread to involve two or more subclans, was nearly universally described by interviewees as negatively impacting livelihoods and lives, and something they wished to avoid. A number of dispute resolution and mediation techniques are employed to reduce the risk of violent conflict.

Conflict mediation and resolution mechanisms were mentioned by interviewees as based on a combination of customary law (Xeer) and Sharia law, particularly in situations in which conflict resulted in death or significant loss of property. Restitution under Xeer follows three common forms:

- Diya (blood money) collectively paid by a subclan to the victim's family. Diya obligation was viewed as a way of showing unity and responsibility to the clan. In Jowhar, interviewees also mentioned that Diya is cheaper for internal subclan disputes than in conflict involving two or more clans or subclans.
- The victim's family can request summary execution, usually by hanging.
- The victim's family also reserves the right to forgo the aforementioned penal punishment, and instead receive a Diya payment of higher monetary value or in the form of dozens of camels.

Community leaders and elders are the dominant mediators. They also play a role in fostering relationships among the clans and subclans. The majority of the interviewees across the sites expressed trust in community elders and confidence in mediation processes. Although religious leaders often avoid direct involvement in dispute settlement, they play a vital role in preaching about peace and coexistence, and counselling conflict parties about the negative impacts of conflicts. Religious leaders also act as overseers of traditions and provide support for the community elders during mediation.

In Burao, several interviewees mentioned that adherence to Xeer helps to resolve conflicts more quickly and reduce the chances of escalation. Many of the interviewees viewed inter-marriage as an instrument of solidifying peaceful relations in the community. Marriage is also used to build relationships between the families of victims and perpetrators. Business transactions were said to facilitate peace in the community. Several interviewees in Burao also mentioned that business elites are increasingly getting involved in dispute resolution, because of the perception that conflict is generally bad for business.



In Jowhar, property demarcation – boundary agreement between neighbours, building fences and livestock branding – is the primary mechanism used to prevent land-based disputes. With regard to water-related disputes, clan elders will intervene only when the two parties or water committee cannot resolve the issue. If clan elders cannot resolve a dispute between parties in their community, they may ask for assistance from clan elders in other communities. Several interviewees also stated that parties can opt to go to the Jowhar District Conflict Resolution Committee; this is usually the last resort.

Several interviewees in Galkayo also mentioned that clan elders negotiate ceasefire and ‘curse anyone that refuses to stop fighting’. In more complex cases, the Puntland Administration gets involved and may send security forces to put an end to fighting between militias. The clan elders also have the prerogative to call on the Puntland Administration to get involved in maintaining ceasefires. In villages such as Ceelberdale and Buursaalax, peace committees have been set up to facilitate conflict resolution. Several interviewees in Galkayo observed that the diaspora and business elite are also involved in dispute resolution

## 6. Reflections

The longitudinal design of this SPARC research, in collaboration with the anticipatory action research, provides an overview of the evolving household-level livelihood impacts of various shocks and coping mechanisms against the backdrop of historical issues. It is intended to provide information for humanitarian and development actors with programmes in Somalia, on the strategies of various livelihood groups in the three areas in response to drought (immediate shock), as situated within longer-term challenges related to access to land and water for farming, pastoralism and agropastoralism as shaped by clan power dynamics. Aid actors need to be cognisant of the specific dynamics within particular regions and with particular groups in Somalia.

Despite the three sites being located in different regions of the country, there are similarities in livelihood challenges faced by farmers, herders and agropastoralists. The ongoing drought situation due to three consecutive failed rainy seasons, as of autumn 2021, was impacting water availability for crops, fodder and livestock. Rain-fed farming is no longer possible, although those with deeper borewells (some Burao sites) or river access (Jowhar sites), were still coping. Many of those with livestock, particularly camels, spoke of weakened animals in poor condition that were neither producing sufficient milk (including for family consumption) nor fetching good market prices. Interviewees in Burao and Galkayo were already resorting to migrating animals much further than normal, some as

far as Ethiopia. We will continue to monitor the drought-livelihood impacts and evolutions in coping strategies with subsequent rounds of research. And we will explore trends in droughts, heatwaves and other climate extremes, in conjunction with a review of climate change literature for Somalia and East Africa, to investigate potential longer-term environmental challenges for livelihoods.

The drought situation cannot be separated, however, from deeper, longer-term challenges related to: territorial and power disputes between clans, their militias and non-affiliated armed groups like Al-Shabaab; and expansion of farm area and disputes between families around boundaries, as well as disputes with livestock owners over pasture. Where lines of control were more firmly established by a single clan family (sites in Burao), expansion of farming area and encroachment of pastures could be related to population growth and the promotion of agricultural production and commercialisation by the Somaliland government in its *Five-Year Development Plan 2018–2021* and *Vision 2030*. Within Galkayo, the territorial dispute between the Puntland Administration and the GIA concerning clan families continued to determine pastoral and agropastoral drought responses, with none willing to send herds across contested lines even if pasture and water there were perceived as more plentiful. The small area sampled around Jowhar was dominated by non-clan farming groups, but concerns were expressed about the presence of Al-Shabaab and counter-militia groups. These longer-term challenges must be considered when designing humanitarian, disaster risk reduction or climate adaptation programmes in order to reduce the risk of inflaming existing conflicts.

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