

DRAFT

THE IMPACT OF THE WAR ON THE FAMILY

**Academy for Peace and Development
Hargeysa
July 2002**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION	4
1 TRADITION AND CHANGE IN SOMALI SOCIETY.....	6
The Family and its Traditional Functions	7
The Colonial Period.....	8
Independence and After.....	9
2 THE IMPACT OF THE CIVIL WAR.....	12
The Changing Roles of Parents	14
Problems of Children	22
Mental Illness.....	27
3 QAAD USE AND THE FAMILY	29
Historical Background.....	29
The Ambiguous Status of Qaad in Islam	30
The Rationale for Qaad Consumption	30
Qaad Production.....	31
Qaad as a Source of Income and Revenue.....	32
Changing Trends in Qaad Consumption.....	33
4 SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR THE POST-WAR FAMILY	40
Issues and Constraints.....	40
Formal Support Systems	41
Non-Governmental Organizations	46
Informal Support Systems	49
Problems and Prospects.....	53
5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	56
Marriage.....	56
Juvenile Delinquency and Crime	57
Social Services.....	57
Qaad.....	58
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	60

1

Introduction

Since the early centuries of Islam, through the colonial period and the Somali civil war, up to present day, the Somali family has been shaped by diverse external influences. The war in particular has left serious physical and emotional scars that threaten the stability of the family.² Many Somalilanders still live with the bitter memory of war and the loss of life and property. Many families who survived the fighting either became internally displaced or found refuge in neighbouring countries, notably Ethiopia, where nearly half a million refugees settled in camps between 1988 and 1991. In the refugee camps it was difficult for the family to adapt and for its members to assume their traditional roles. Displacement disrupted family relationships, values, the division of labour, as well as production and income. The war led to the emergence of new social structures and relationships that were either uncommon or unknown in Somali society before the war. The disruption caused to social norms and traditional values by this experience pervades Somaliland society.

Concern about such issues led the WSP Somaliland Working Group to select “the impact of the war on the family” as an entry point for in-depth research. Three sub-themes were identified:

- Changing values, roles and relationships within the family.
- The socio-economic effects of *qaad* use on the family.
- Social support systems for the post-war family.

Three participatory workshops were held to explore these themes. The first, which examined the impact of the war values, roles, relationships and economic activity within the family, was held in Sheekh district, Saaxil region between 9 - 11 May 2000. Sheekh was chosen because of its long tradition as a religious centre and the fact that the area had experienced a decade of war. The second workshop, on *qaad* consumption, was held in Gabiley in September 2000. The third, on support systems for the post-war family, was held in Hargeysa in November 2000. The objectives of this third workshop were to study traditional support systems for families, and the strengths and weaknesses of existing legal and social institutions that have emerged to support the family in the post-war period.

The paper begins with a brief sociological description of the traditional northern Somali pastoralist family and the impact on the family of socio-economic and cultural changes brought by colonisation, urbanisation and pre-war government policies.³ It continues with an

² The study is mainly concerned with the 1981-91 civil war, though in Somaliland there were also two rounds of civil strife between 1991-1996 which had exacerbated the problems of the family

³ The study is concerned with the traditional Somali pastoralist family. While there are some differences between, for example, coastal communities and nomads, the predominant culture in Somaliland has historically been associated with pastoralism.

overview of the impact of civil war on the family and the associated increase in the incidence of *qaad* consumption. The fourth section of the paper describes existing structures, both formal and informal, of support for the family and disadvantaged members of society. The fifth and final section of the paper lists the recommendations of participants in the study with a view to effecting positive change.

1

Tradition and Change in Somali society

The harsh conditions of life in with the semi-arid environment of the Horn of Africa not only shaped Somali people, but also their cultural and economic base. Nomadic pastoralism emerged as the dominant economic activity. The scarcity of water and pasture, which were the main ingredients of livestock rearing and production, demanded close co-operation within communities and produced intense competition and frequent conflict between them. This pattern of co-operation and conflict has shaped to a remarkable extent the norms and values of contemporary Somali society.

Somali society is both patriarchal and patrilineal, in which descent is traced through the male line. Somali social organization is generally described as a segmentary lineage system, where an individual belongs simultaneously to several echelons of a hierarchical kinship structure: the 'diya-paying group', 'primary lineage', 'clan' and 'clan family' (Lewis, 1994).⁵ Kinship thus assigns every Somali an identity, which in turn defines relationships with other members of society, rights and obligations, and even personal security (UNICEF, 1998).

The clan-family is the largest unit – often so large that it has little meaning to the individual. Clan and sub-clan groupings, often linked to a geographic area, are typically of greater relevance to political and social dynamics. For the individual, however, the most important level of social organization beyond the family is the “diya-paying group,” which is characterized a common ancestry (*abtirsiinyo*) and may vary in size from several hundreds of members to several thousands.

Maintaining order is the jurisdiction of the diya-paying grouping's elders, who convene a council (*shir*) attended by the adult males of the lineage to discussing issues needing their attention. It is in such councils that matters of peace, conflict, compensation, marriage, divorce and inheritance are usually settled. Rulings of the council are based on customary law (*xeer*) -which is not written down, but rather recorded orally and handed down from generation to generation. In general terms, *xeer* establishes the reciprocal rights and obligations of individual Somalis, such as the welfare of guests, protection of the weak and vulnerable, and sharing of natural resources such as grazing lands and water. More specific *xeer* apply to the settlement of grievances and disputes at the different levels of the clan hierarchy. This latter body of law is divided into *xeer dhiig* (“blood code”), which pertains to grave crimes such as death, injury and rape, and *xeer dhaqan* (“social conduct”) which deals with theft, banditry, and family-related issues like domestic violence, marriage, divorce and inheritance.

Traditionally, violations of *xeer* by an individual or family are answered with punishment or sanctions. For example, if the male head of a family behaves irresponsibly towards his

⁴ *Diya*-paying group is a corporate group tied together by the collective payment or receipt of blood compensation (*diya*).

family, he may forfeit his right to property, such as the family's livestock, in order that the rest of the family manage their affairs on their own. If a husband assaults or abuses his wife, he may be compelled to pay *xaal* (damages). Similarly, if a wife is physically or verbally offensive to her husband, she may be disciplined with a formal warning. It is understood that every person, right or wrong, is individually responsible for his or her actions to the *tol* (lineage). Although specific penalties and sanctions are defined in *xeer*, their application and enforcement is arrived at through arbitration (*gar*) and is usually determined by jury of select elders known as *xeerbeegti*. Among the elders attending the arbitration, the wisest man is usually chosen to preside over the final judgment. The final decision is usually shaped by a variety of considerations: the type of offence and its prescribed penalty, historical or legal precedent, and the broader relationship between the lineages concerned.

Since its introduction over one thousand years ago, Islam has been a major influence on Somali norms and values. The family is considered to be the foundation of an Islamic society and its centrality is reflected in the Islamic law, which is derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah (respectively, the Islamic book of revelation and the collected deeds and sayings of the prophet). The teachings of the *Culuma* [Muslim religious leaders] required some reform of this tribal society and its adherence customary law. Experts in *shari'ca* (Islamic law)- the *qaadis* and *sheekhs* collectively known as *wadaado* – acquired moral and legal authority, and over time, Somali customary law came to borrow heavily from the *shari'ca*. But contradictions between the two legal systems still remain, and in practice, the *shari'ca* is often disregarded in favour of *xeer*, especially in matters of marriage, divorce and inheritance. For example, according to the Qur'an, a man's children (both male and female) are entitled to an equal share of his inheritance, but daughters seldom receive their share, even in contemporary Somaliland society. Likewise, the Qur'an counsels equity and responsibility between partners in a marriage and in case of divorce stipulates a period for reconciliation, maintenance payments and child support; in modern Somali society, these rights are frequently contravened by resort to customary practices. However, despite the apparent contradictions between these two sources of law and custom, both stress the importance of the institution of the family and provide moral and practical guidance for its preservation.

The Family and its Traditional Functions

The nuclear family unit – *qoys* - is the basic unit of pastoral production and the primary building block of Somali society (Abdi, 1993). This essentially economic definition of family connotes a man and his wife (or wives) and their young children, together with their livestock (Lewis, 1994). The pastoralist family typically owns a herd of sheep and goats numbering from one hundred to several hundreds, a burden camel and sometimes more. The nomadic *qoys* is usually encamped in an *aqal* (a moveable hut constructed of woven tree branches) surrounded by a fence of thorn-bushes. Some family compounds may contain the *aqallo* of several wives or immediate relatives, such old parents and married children.

In the arid environment in which the majority of the nomadic people live, animal husbandry requires high degree of mobility in order to maximize water and pasture, and a division of labour with members of the family specializing in certain tasks. Somali pastoralists have developed a strategy for animal husbandry based on the separation of the domestic camp (*reer*) and the camel camp (*geel xeer*). The domestic camp comprises the wife, daughters and

young boys who look after the family sheep, goats and milking camels, while young adult males herd the camels in the camel camps (Lewis 1994; Samater 1986). It is common for families to move long distances with their herds, grazing far away from the nomadic hamlet with other closely related agnatic kin and members of the same *diya*-paying group.

Grazing is believed to be a God-given resource, to which everyone has free access. The scarcity of water and pasture, however, can bring pastoralists into competition with each other. During long dry seasons, droughts, or war, access to grazing areas becomes more restricted as groups tend to occupy and take control over areas. Typically, it is the strongest who claim the pasture first. Since the nuclear family does not have the capacity to defend itself, mutual co-operation, based on lineage solidarity, is an essential part of the pastoralists' capacity to safeguard the family. Such interdependence also minimizes the risks associated with the harsh environmental conditions: by establishing a reliable relationship with other 'production units' that can be called upon during times of crisis, it maximizes the exploitation of the meagre natural resources of the region (Johnson & Cassanelli 1973). Common mechanisms to assist fellow kinsmen during hard times include the loan of livestock and sharing of labour for watering and grazing of animals.

The husband is the head of the family and the proprietor of the family's livestock wealth. Each family member has a specific, well-defined role and responsibility to ensure the overall welfare of the household. For instance, a husband should protect the family's dignity and property and supervise day-to-day family activities by advising on where to graze and water the animals. Men usually undertake *dhaamin*, the task of seeking water for the family from distant wells, using the burden camel for transporting the water. It is also the exclusive responsibility of the men to perform *saban*: the task of seeking green pasture for the animals and grazing and watering of camels. Unmarried young men known as *geel jire* ("camel boys") attend to the camels. Men also represent the family in social gatherings and ceremonial occasions, thus spending a great deal of their time fulfilling wider social functions.

In this patriarchal society, a wife is supposed to obey, honour and respect her husband as well as his male relatives. Women perform all of the common domestic tasks. They are responsible for child rearing, the construction of the *aqal* and its contents, milking the livestock, cooking, and collecting firewood, food and water. Children attend to the sheep and goats near to the domestic camp. Although the small stock are part of the family herd and the husband has the final authority over them, the wife is entitled in times of need to make decisions about their disposal without first consulting the husband. Likewise, if the husband wants to sell or slaughter some of the livestock he should seek the advice of his wife first.

The Colonial Period

After Islam, the second major external influence on the Somali people was imperialism (Bryden and Steiner, 1998), which began with the settlement of Arabs and Persians along the coast as early as the 10th century. Centuries later, Khedival Egypt briefly positioned garrisons along Somaliland's Red Sea coast, but was soon evicted by Britain, which established a "Protectorate" of Somaliland towards the end of the 19th century. The aim of the British

presence was to secure a supply of meat for the garrison in Aden, Yemen (Samater, 1989). This required a presence on the Somaliland coast and a degree of control over the nomads in the interior. The British were able to secure the coastal areas with relative ease, but the extension of their authority to the hinterland proved more difficult. British authority was finally consolidated via a system of “indirect rule” whereby British appointed chiefs known as *Caaqilo* (s. *Caaqil*) acted as a means of control over the pastoralists. The main task of the paid *Caaqilo* was to be the mediator between the nomads and the British authority (Lewis 1994).

The presence of the British in Somaliland and their efforts to organize livestock production initially had only a limited impact on pastoral society in general and even less on the nuclear family. Instead, the early years of British rule were characterized by a general lack of British interest in Somaliland affairs and some local resistance to British control. It was not until after the end of the Second World War, when the British re-established civil administration and livestock commercialisation gathered momentum that Somaliland society began to experience significant socio-economic changes. Increasing numbers of Somalis were employed in the administration, encouraging a process of rural-urban migration. The oil boom in Saudi Arabia in the 1950s spurred dramatic economic change by creating vastly increased demand in the Gulf States for Somali livestock. These changes accelerated the development of urban trade and administrative centres, as well as public services such as education, health, water, and courts. Families in the larger towns were exposed to foreign influences, with new consumption patterns and lifestyles.

Moreover, the colonial administration introduced codified laws based on the English common law and Indian penal code. Courts to administer the new legal system were also established, but the application of these secular laws was limited to the public sector, business and employment. Ordinary people continued to apply Somali *xeer* and Islamic *shariica* to the resolution of family feuds, disputes, marriages, divorce, inheritance and *diya* payment, leading the administration to appoint local religious judges known as *qaadis*.

In the major towns, families adapted their traditional pastoral culture and Islamic values to the new urban setting (Drysdale, 1990). Roles and relations within the family remained based on reciprocal obligations and rights, with women and children having special entitlements to protection. The father, who was now employed as a civil servant, shopkeeper, or labourer, remained the breadwinner and the resource owner. The mother was expected to be the homemaker and her role outside the house was minimal. The children went to Qur’anic schools or secular schools where they gained approval by conforming to their parent’s wishes. These urbanized families maintained their social and economic ties with their extended families in the interior. The nomadic members of the family made visits (*safar*) to the urban centres to buy goods, and in times of crisis would exchange pastoral products for merchandise or credit.

Independence and After

Socio-economic change continued after independence. The influences of commercialised livestock production, public sector employment and school enrolment combined to create a new urban population. Somalilanders were exposed to foreign cultures and lifestyles through

radio, film and other forms of media. During the nine years of post-independence civilian rule (1960-69) there were notable social changes in the family. Street children and women vendors, for example, emerged in the main urban centres, the divorce rate increased and the consumption of imported goods grew, as did the use of *qaad*.

Under the military regime of Siyad Barre (1969-1990) Somali society experienced profound political, social, and economic changes that had a far-reaching impact on the family. In 1975 a new family law was introduced giving women and men equal rights in divorce and inheritance, overriding the familiar provisions of *xeer* and *shariica*. Urban centres and public services expanded rapidly. The amount of paved road also increased, improving contact between urban and rural areas.

The modernization of the economy during this period altered family values and priorities. Obtaining regular employment and income to meet shelter, food and other material needs became a priority, often overriding other social and cultural obligations. In the mid-1970s, especially after the 1974 *dabadbeer* drought, there was a large exodus of men to the Gulf States seeking employment. In order to equip themselves for overseas work, people became more interested in obtaining vocational skills and general education declined. Participants in the study asserted that the prolonged absence of so many male heads of family during this period may have contributed to an increase in delinquency among children, especially teenage boys. What had previously been considered inappropriate behaviour gradually became acceptable, leading some participants in the study to describe this period as the onset of moral decay? The use of *qaad* continued to grow among both urban and rural people, despite the fact the regime later banned its production⁶.

The 1977-8 Ogaden War between Somalia and Ethiopia was a political and economic watershed. After the conflict, the impoverished Somali government's investment in social services declined drastically and the quality of those services deteriorated. Refugees from Ethiopia who arrived in the wake of the war placed additional pressures on public services. People were increasingly forced to turn to private and informal social services while at the same time rapid inflation undermined their purchasing power. In the years after the war, war, armed insurgencies by the Somalia Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) and the Somali National Movement (SNM) against the regime were met by increasingly repressive policies against people in northern Somalia. This caused significant internal displacement of the population.

The pressures resulting from these changes weakened traditional structures and led to an increase in broken families. Female-headed households became more common, often because the husband was outside the country seeking employment or had joined the guerrilla forces fighting the regime. Some fathers who were unable to continue supporting their families simply abandoned them, in defiance of their cultural and religious obligations. The military regime's new family legislation had also made it easier for women to obtain a divorce through the courts and a growing number of women began to seek pursue this option rather than staying in unsatisfactory marriages. Some women took over the role of the family breadwinner, while others had to work to supplement the token salaries of their husbands. Under such circumstances, children began to challenge parental authority and social

⁶ *Qaad* and its effect on the family are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

conformity. Domestic problems encouraged some children to run away from home, increasing the numbers of orphans and street children in the big cities. It also became increasingly common for young people to marry without adhering to customary marriage practices.

The import of new theological trends in the mid-1970s and the subsequent emergence of Somali Islamic movements in the late 1970s and 1980s also had a long-term impact on the family. Islamic revival was a response to what many perceived to be a growing social crisis spawned by the regime's "socialist" policies. The execution of Muslim clerics who opposed changes to the family law in 1975 both gave the movement some impetus and drove it underground. For many of its adherents, the only salvation was a return to the fundamentals of Islam and the creation of an Islamic state, starting with the family. The revival of Islamic teaching began clandestinely through Islamic study circles known as *xalaqaad*. As individuals and families in the main urban centres began to comply with these teachings, their influence became apparent in a change of dress codes and public behaviour.

The most dramatic changes were yet to come. The escalation of the civil war in the late 1980s would confront the family with unprecedented challenges. But while the impact of the war on the family has clearly been profound, it was not the sole author of social change. AS this section has attempted to illustrate, it served chiefly to accelerate and amplify pre-existing trends in Somali society.

2

The Impact of the Civil War

The escalation of war in 1988 between the SNM and the military regime led to massive refugee crisis in the Horn. In May that year, the SNM attacked and briefly captured the towns of Hargeysa and Burco. The brutality and indiscriminate nature of the government response caused over 600,000 people to flee to Ethiopia. It was the fastest and largest forced population movement ever recorded in Africa (HDR, 2001),⁷ and it was the first time that Somalis had fled their country *en masse* as refugees. By the time it had ended the war had cost the lives of tens of thousands of people and the incalculable destruction of property and livelihoods.

The flight from Somalia and the harsh living conditions in the Ethiopian refugee camps challenged peoples' capacity to cope or survive. Life in the refugee camps was extremely difficult, especially for women and children. Inadequate food, clean water, or sanitation in the densely populated settlements, and the lack of primary health care combined to aggravate health risks, creating a "public health disaster" (Africa Watch, 1990). There were frequent outbreaks of malaria, jaundice, meningitis, dysentery, measles and cholera which caused the deaths of thousands refugees. Child mortality increased due to malnutrition and the disruption of normal childcare practices. Families suffered severe economic distress due to loss of income and women were compelled to take on the role of the family breadwinner because many men were either involved in the war or unemployed.

The patterns of refugee movement illustrated the significance of familial ties and mutual co-operation in this clan-based society (Farah, 1995). Most refugees sought protection and assistance in areas along the Ethiopian border that were inhabited by their kin and where they had livestock. Refugees from Hargeysa moved to camps such as Hartasheekh or Harshin that were set up to receive them. Those from Togdheer region either fled to the interior or towards Daroor camp in Ethiopia. Most of the refugees received urgently needed support and assistance from their extended families long before arrival of relief aid from international aid agencies.

In this way, the refugees managed to survive in an inhospitable environment. Moral support and economic co-operation between close relatives played an important role in sustaining the livelihoods of families in the camps (Farah, 1994). Many received assistance from relatives in the rural areas, such as milking animals, burden camels and donkeys for transporting water and charcoal. Relatives in the Gulf, Europe and America sent remittances. Thus in some respects the experience of displacement served to strengthen and reinforce family ties, to forge solidarity between clan groups, and to foster integration between rural and urban people. On the other hand, it gradually created a refugee dependency syndrome in which people learned to expect and even demand assistance.

⁷ The later movement of refugees during the Rwandan conflict of the 1990s took place on a larger scale.

A large number of pastoralists who were less directly affected by the war also became refugee cardholders. Many of these families split into two, with some members staying with the livestock in a traditional family setting, while others settled in the camps. Many of the latter group did not return to the rural areas after the war and instead settled in towns.

As a result of displacement, the family underwent a fundamental social and cultural transformation, marked by a gradual erosion of societal norms and values. First, there was an abrupt change in the economic role of women, which represented significant departure from tradition. Second, life in the camps led to a change in food preferences. Third, dependence on refugee rations (paradoxically) gave each member of the family greater independence with respect to access to food, undermining the close-knit family relationship and parental control over adolescent children. As a result of the economic independence associated with life in the camps, many youths adopted unconventional behaviour such as early marriage (which was often short-lived) and chewing *qaad*. One participant in the study commented:

The first bombshell of the war initially dispersed the family into different directions for safety; but the most serious dispersion of all took place in the refugee camps where food rations were distributed on an individual basis, thereby granting unprecedented independence to each member in the family. Upon return from the camps, family unity was never restored and individualistic patterns have ultimately prevailed.

The experience of displacement thus catalysed a shift in social and cultural norms that persists in the post war period, and that many Somalilanders note with regret. A religious teacher at one of the workshops spoke for many when he lamented the change:

The loss of material possessions such jewellery and buildings can be recovered, but the loss of intangibles like people, values, and norms cannot be.

Changing norms and perceptions have also been shaped by necessity. Blatant corruption is today tolerated, as many people have come to believe that any means of acquiring wealth is acceptable as long as it serves to nourish a family. In their struggle to meet their daily needs, many find it increasingly difficult to distinguish between “*xalaal iyo xaraan*” (what is ‘lawful and unlawful’). For example, people seeking to emigrate to Europe or America may resort to desperate and illegal means to obtain travel documents: a daughter might identify her father as her spouse, or a brother might identify his sister as his wife in order to obtain entry visas. In such cases, there is little or stigma attached to breaking the law. According to one participant:

One of the reasons that we cannot discern anymore between what is right and what is wrong is because we don’t judge people anymore by their virtues, but rather praise them for their wrong doings. Before the war, telling a small lie was unforgivable and totally unacceptable to society. People who were known for lying were labelled, as “liars” and their views and opinions were not sought. Unlike today, when even killers are recognized as heroes, such people were treated as outcasts from their communities.

Family ties have also suffered as a result of these changes. Pervasive moral ambiguity has engendered jealousy and suspicion, even among close kin: it is widely said that one can no longer even trust one's own sister or brother.

But many of those consulted during the study recognized that social changes in modern Somaliland could not simply be attributed to the civil war. A number of factors were identified as having contributed to a long-term shift in social conduct, among them:

- Rapid urbanization: a largely nomadic people have been rapidly urbanized, without a pre-existing urban culture.
- Education has changed the way people think and behave, often promoting individualism at the expense of loyalty to one's kinsmen.
- Modernization has changed people lifestyles, creating new material needs like household utensils, clothes, and luxury good, but in an environment that offers limited economic opportunities.
- Technology has significantly changed modes of social interaction. Vehicles have supplanted camels as the primary means of transportation, and word-of-mouth communication has been replaced by the telephone or radio, even in rural areas.
- Proliferation of *qaad*. An expanding group of urban and rural dwellers spend a disproportionate amount of time and income on *qaad*.

For many Somalilanders, the answer to these changes lies in a return to tradition and religion. As an elderly participant in the research process said:

We are facing a crisis within the family, partly because of the civil war and its effects, but also the tradition and religion that have been the pillars of the society are no longer practiced as they were.

Like many Somalilanders, he affirmed that society must restore these time-honoured values in order to save itself from destruction. The renowned Somaliland linguist, Musa Ali Faruur, reinforced this point with his own observations on Somali life and culture:

A lot of our problems [...] have emerged as a result of deviating from our culture. We in Somaliland are experiencing a period of transition in which we have departed from our culture and we have not yet replaced it with the culture of a modern society.

The Changing Roles of Parents

The Woman as head of the family

The Somali family exists in a patriarchal society, where men are traditionally the heads of the household. Men are traditionally the main decision-makers: they are responsible for the security of the family, and they represent the family in the wider community (UNICEF, 1998). Men command enormous authority over their households and wives are expected to obey their husbands.

Traditionally, Somali men are expected to provide for the family economically, whether in the pastoral, agricultural or urban environment (McGowns, 1998). The working father, the mother staying at home, and the children going to school together fulfil the traditional image of the family in urban Somaliland. However, since their return from the war or the refugee camps, many men have not assumed their former roles. The lack of employment and the death or desertion of husbands and fathers means that there are a large number of female-headed households in Somaliland. A UNICEF Survey conducted early in 1996 found that 40 per cent of all household surveyed in randomly selected clusters were female-headed: in other words, that a woman was the principal breadwinner and responsible for day to day decisions. (UNICEF, 1998).

The Somali mothers are generally considered to be the backbone of the family. They manage the home, prepare the food, and do the cleaning. They tend to the children, arrange for them to school and take care of their health. Most mothers manage these tasks alone, although some rich families employ a housekeeper or have help from a relative. Mothers with grown-up daughters generally receive more help with domestic tasks than those with only sons. However, in their new-found role as breadwinners, many mothers now have the dual tasks of generating daily income for the family, as well as their normal chores. In this way they are taking over men's traditional responsibilities. An elderly woman participant in the study said:

All women whether they live in rural or urban are fighting for the survival of their families, a responsibility that used to be for men.

This role of women as producers is new and challenges previously held perceptions about the appropriate role for Somali women. The majority of the market traders in Somaliland's major towns are women. Most are petty retailers selling tea, *qaad* or cigarettes and a few are involved in the larger businesses, such as wholesale dealing of *qaad* or livestock trading. One NGO survey of 150 female petty traders showed that most were middle aged; 37 per cent were 40 years of age; 29 per cent between 30–40 and 27 per cent of them between 20–30 years of age. Furthermore, 51 per cent were married, 23 per cent were widowed and 11 per cent were divorced mothers with children (Dareen, 1999). Although these women traders pay tax to the local authorities they do not have business shelters and conduct their activities in open, often crowded and unsanitary conditions. Women who sell *qaad* are more likely to be harassed by their customers than women who perform the other small businesses because their customers are mainly men. Their daily income is small, but usually sufficient to support their families. A few women have additional sources of income from overseas remittances or assistance from relatives elsewhere in the country.

Although Somali tradition discourages women from working outside the home, petty trade is generally considered acceptable when they have no other source of income. There are, however, varied views on the issue, which created a heated debate between participants in the research process. One elderly man spoke for other conservatives in a workshop when he asserted that a woman should stick to her traditional roles, and cited a Somali proverb:

Hooyadu mar waa dabaakh, mar waa doobi, mar waa daabad, marna waa furaash.

“A mother's function is a cook, laundress, nurturer and wife to her husband”

Other participants argued that it is not a matter of choice that women go out to work, but rather the consequence of a situation in which men are unable to meet their family's needs. A third group expressed the opinion that even some women in families with a male head of household earning a secure livelihood want to earn an income and should have the right to do so.

Many women believe that working in the market all day has been detrimental to their role in the home. Early child rearing and care are traditionally the responsibility of mothers and many women feel guilty about not having enough time to attend their children. Most women traders work in the market place from 5.30 am to 6.00 pm. Some, particularly *qaad* sellers, do not return home before 10.00 p.m. Young daughters often have to fulfil the role of their mother, so that they in turn are unable to attend school. Mothers without such help face the problem of going back and forth between their places of business and their homes. Some workshop participants maintained that children in such situations might suffer health and emotional problems from the lack of maternal care. In the absence of their mothers, they argued, many children enjoy excessive freedom and are more likely to become delinquents.

Despite these problems, some women participants in the research process argued that they have gained a new confidence from their self-reliance and are economically better off than before. A middle-aged mother in the workshop expressed her view that the principal benefit to women from their new roles is that they have become decision-makers in their homes. She said:

Whatever happens, women will not return to their homes even if normalcy returns, because we have gained economic independence. For example in Sheekh we don't have good hospitals. Suppose I am in labour and my husband is not at home: instead of waiting for him to come, I will take taxi and go to the hospital in either Berbera or Burco.

This view appears to be held by many working mothers. They also tend to believe that money earned by women is more beneficial to the family than that earned by men, since women spend more money on their homes than men do.

Strained Relationships within the Family

The changing roles of men and women have challenged conventional perceptions of appropriate gender roles. Because many families rely on the income earned by women, women have become major decision-makers at home. Many men see this change as eroding their authority and detracting from the respect they are due as the head of the family. Consequently, many men have found it hard to adjust to new realities and leading to family tensions and sometimes breakdown (Accord, 1993).

Both men and women tend to blame these problems on one another, rather than on changes in the broader social context. Predictably, male participants in the study identified the emergence of the 'working mother' as the primary cause of disruption within the family. They argued that the new economic role of women has encouraged them to become less

respectful towards their husbands and less attached to the traditional family structure. In the words of one elderly man who attended the family workshop:

We have lost our cultural and religious identity because of the working mother who is trying to make a living in the market place. The family will not be the same as before unless we reinforce our cultural and religious values and return mothers to their homes.

Women participants vehemently objected to such accusations. One female participant appeared to be expressing a common view when she asserted:

Women's response to their families' needs was not to dilute the culture, but to sustain the family: merely to fill the gap and not to control the husband. Therefore, if women have taken up the responsibility of earning when their husbands are out for *qaad* sessions, their new role should be appreciated.

Many women in the research process felt that men have taken their dominant status for granted, while failing to assume their traditional responsibilities. According to one woman participant in the family workshop: "Before the war fathers used to be responsible for their families, but they have now abandoned this role." Women participants in the study asserted that neglectful fathers typically seek to justify their shortcomings by characterizing themselves as displaced and unemployed, and thus incapable of fulfilling their customary roles as protector and provider. Many other men (women participants argued) have become obsessed with the trivia of local politics in order to justify the largely unproductive time and resources they spend chewing *qaad* in *mefrishes*.

An elderly man in the family workshop felt that such accusations were unjustified, citing the trauma of the wartime experience and the lack of opportunities in Somaliland for productive employment:

Fathers have faced unprecedented crises where they have been victimized, tortured, robbed and killed. We cannot expect them to heal and recover so soon and at the same time to provide for their families. In order for the father to fulfil his family obligations he has to be provided with income generating opportunities.

Few would dispute the assertion that high unemployment has prevented many fathers from being able to meet their families' needs, but workshop participants suggested that many men do not even take up jobs that are available, choosing to remain idle.⁸ Whatever the cause of unemployment, participants generally agreed that a man's ability to provide for his family and the degree of respect and authority he enjoys at home are directly linked: "A father controls his family by maintaining their daily life. He would not be able to do so if he is not providing for them," asserted one middle-aged mother.

Some participants argued that the problem has been exacerbated by the attitudes of some women towards their unemployed spouses. One man complained:

⁸ The large numbers of migrant workers in Somaliland from Somalia and Ethiopia would appear to lend weight to this argument.

We have been supporting the family for years before the war, and if today women somehow became the breadwinners, they shouldn't disgrace us, but they should become considerate and sensitive to our feelings.

Many men find it difficult to accept that their reduced professional circumstances may necessitate some adjustments in their domestic arrangements, like staying at home and participating in domestic chores while their spouses earn an income. As one male participant explained:

Family means solidarity and living together, but the man is taken away from home an early age, while our culture places women in the position of the home manager – work they do on their own. And when they moved to the urban centres, the husband was told to work outside the home and earn income to support his family. For this reason, men are unable to attend to domestic tasks, because they were not trained to do so.

These widely held and incompatible perceptions appear to be a source of deep division between men and women in post-war Somaliland, but changing gender roles are not the only source of friction within the family. Other factors such as *qaad* chewing have also affected domestic relations. Many fathers spend 4-7 hours every day and much of their disposable income chewing *qaad*, while avoiding their families' problems at home. Disputes over household finance are common in families where a man's *qaad* habit competes with other domestic needs. Growing demand for non-essential items such as TVs, VCRs, satellite dishes, cars and jewellery, which are increasingly seen as important status symbols, can also strain family relations.

Such changes may have less to do with the aftermath of conflict than an inevitable process of socio-economic change. But in post-war Somaliland, where basic education, health, infrastructure and unemployment are all in short supply, families have found coping with these changes more difficult. Likewise, the high incidence of poverty, unfaithfulness and overspending on drinks, *qaad* and cigarettes poses a threat to the family unit. A middle-aged mother expressed the challenge in the following terms:

If the mother and father are on good terms and the children's basic needs are met, then the family leads a normal life. But we are not living a normal life anymore. Parents have to find solutions [to these new problems] and ask themselves in which direction they are headed.

Marriage and Divorce

Perhaps the most visible sign of weakening in the traditional family structure is the changing pattern of marriage and divorce in post-war Somaliland. Religion and Somali culture encourage marriage for men and women at a relatively early age. Traditionally, girls used to marry at the age of fifteen or eighteen while men would marry at eighteen to twenty five. The age of marriage was conditioned by the principle that uterine brothers and sisters should marry in the order of their birth (Lewis, 1994).

Young couples intending to marry would need the consent of their respective parents and of elders within the immediate lineage. This enabled elders to assess the suitability of the match and assigned them a degree of responsibility for the future success of the marriage. If problems later arose within the couple, then the immediate family members would be obliged to assist in resolving them and restoring stability to the marriage.

In traditional Somali society, when marriage is arranged, the paramount interest of families is in the potential social link (Lewis, 1994). Exogamous marriage was thus preferred because of its potential to generate broader economic and social benefits, such as access to pasture and water. The parents of the groom, especially the father or other senior male relatives of his lineage, exercise considerable control over his choice of bride. The social significance of marriage is captured in a Somali saying:

Maalinta uu wiilkaaga biil u babaanyahay waa maalinta aad hooyadii gursanaysa.

“The day when your child needs your help the most is the day you are marrying his mother to be.”

A fundamental precondition for marriage used to be that an individual should be deemed fit to bear a family’s responsibilities. For example, the prospective groom had to prove his ability to provide for his new household. The level of support he was expected to provide would vary depending on his means, and whether he lived in an urban or rural community. He could usually count on some assistance from the bride’s family, and perhaps his own as well. In a rural setting, the prospective groom would be allocated a certain amount of his family’s stock of animals, whereas in the urban setting such support would often take in the form of cash or goods for setting up a business venture. The nature and timing of the support was a way of ensuring the new family’s future well-being and prosperity.

The groom’s parents would value a potential bride for her physical attributes, the wealth of her family and the reputation of her family within the community. Once a suitable bride had been identified, the groom’s relatives would propose on his behalf to the clan of the prospective bride. Upon the consent of the girl’s family, the dowry (*yarad*) would be paid to the bride’s family and the formal engagement (*meher*) would take place. A date would then be fixed for the wedding day. The marital process was considered complete when the young couple finally moved into their new home together (*aqalgal*).

Non-traditional marriages:

According to participants in the research process, such traditional norms in marriage are rarely adhered to in the post-war period. Participants identified several reasons behind the increasing number of non-traditional marriages:

- Changes in the values, roles and relations in the family, that allow youths to be carried away by desire and act without parental consent
- Many families encourage early marriages for their children in order to boost the number of males in the extended family (clan) to compensate for losses during the war.

- Opportunistic marriages for perceived economic advantages
- A trend in favour of marriage between close relatives (first cousins or members of the same *dija*-paying group)

Whereas parents used to take the responsibility of preparing their children for marriage, changing norms have restricted the scope for parental guidance. The traditional, communal attitude towards marriage, in which elders provided advice and assistance, has been in decline. In the absence of adequate guidance, many contemporary couples enter the marriage contract without full knowledge of their obligations and responsibilities to one another and their respective extended families. As one grandmother explained in the family workshop: “A girl was not supposed to get married unless she was fully aware of what to expect in a marriage, its responsibilities and duties – her own and those of her in-laws.” A decreasing number of marriages are arranged by families, and some couples marry without even the knowledge of parents. One elderly women participant in the study remarked that:

It is nowadays common for a daughter to introduce her future husband to her father, rather than the groom asking her hand.

Consequently, many young couples are entering marriage unprepared, at least in a traditional sense, for the full implications of the commitment – a trend that many participants in the research process blamed for the growing number of divorces in the country. According to a Hargeysa district court judge, 334 out of 564 cases of family disputes filed with his court in the year 2000 ended up in divorce.⁹

Participants emphasized that non-traditional marriages tend not to last long since the foundations on which the new relationship is based often become shaky. This can give rise to family disputes, but like the institution of marriage itself, the cultural mechanisms for solving such disputes have been corrupted. Elders who assume the role of mediators may deliberately extend the period of mediation and counselling; such services are today provided for a price, which often takes the form of lengthy and recurrent *qaad* sessions between the elders of both parties. Such practices are increasingly perceived as a *mashruuc* - literally meaning a “project” for self-enrichment. The costs involved in such mediation can be considerable, therefore providing a disincentive for poor couples to seek help. In many cases, intervention comes too late (if at all) to save the marriage. Some working group members thus suggested the need for modern, professional counselling centres with expertise in marital problems and other family issues.

Financial stress is considered to be another major factor in the break up of marriages. Unemployment and poverty can exert severe, sometimes intolerable strains on a family. These can be aggravated if the husband regularly chews *qaad*, spending the family’s meagre resources on his habit rather than providing for the family. High unemployment also means that many youths remain financially dependent on their parents even after marriage. The pressures inherent in such an arrangement can lead to tensions between the couple. When such marriages end in divorce, the responsibility for caring for any offspring typically falls upon the grandparents.

⁹ Most marriages and divorces are performed by local Sheekhs outside the court system, so there are no comprehensive statistics.

Marriages between close relatives are generally believed to be unstable. First, there is little to gain socially or politically from such a marriage. Second, it becomes difficult for elders to mediate if problems arise, since all parties are from the same lineage and the mediators might ultimately become divided amongst themselves. However, since marriages between close relatives tend to be less expensive than more distant marriages, many young couples are attracted by this kind of arrangement.

Another problem identified by workshop participants was the proliferation of opportunistic marriages. Since unemployment is high and remittances have become an important source of income for many families, a man may marry a woman for her money or her family connections overseas. A young man complained: "It is common to see a man saying I married a woman because she has ten brothers or sisters abroad," implying that he will also receive a visa to some foreign land of opportunity.

The failure of any marriage may give rise to additional problems. In traditional Somali society, customs existed to ensure that the divorced mother and her children were cared for. Today, a father may simply abandon his family when he feels unable to support them, possibly establishing another family elsewhere. Women occasionally do likewise, taking a new husband in a different town, without divorcing the first one. There is little doubt that such practices are symptomatic of more general patterns of delinquency, promiscuity, and a long-term loosening of the family unit.

One important clue to the erosion of stable marriages and the proliferation of extra-marital relationship is the growing incidence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in Somaliland. A medical doctor who participated in the workshop stated that the number of STDs and HIV/AIDS cases has been on the increase since 1991, but there is little statistical data available to either support or challenge such assertions. Records from local blood banks, testing of suspected AIDS cases, and information from the few studies conducted in Somaliland together suggest that the prevalence of HIV in the general population is around 1% in the year 2002 (and may be increasing) and the overall prevalence of syphilis is below 2%. However, almost one third of women in antenatal care reported symptoms of STDs (UNICEF, 1999)¹⁰ suggesting that general morbidity statistics for STDs may be under-reported and that extra-marital sex may be more common than is generally believed. Data from the UNICEF study also suggests that those respondents who do not abstain from casual sex also fail to protect themselves or their partners with condoms.

The potential spread of HIV should not be underestimated. Though the prevalence of HIV is relative low, once a certain threshold is reached, the growth in incidence can be dramatic. Trends for both syphilis and HIV infection indicate that incidence of disease is lower in the east of the country than in the highest in the west, which borders on Ethiopia and Djibouti. Both of these neighbouring countries have high rates of HIV infection, and there is a great deal of cross border traffic to promote the transmission of the disease. The current low prevalence of HIV among Somaliland's population suggests that the epidemic is still in the

¹⁰ This particular study was limited in scope: vulnerable groups and at-risk groups such commercial sex workers were not included in the study. Moreover, most of the respondents did not answer question pertaining to their sexual behaviour.

early stages, providing an opportunity for an early intervention. The majority of participants (80%) in the UNICEF study cited above were aware that HIV is a sexually transmitted disease, rendering the task of AIDs prevention that much easier.

The government has not included HIV/AIDS control and prevention as a priority in the recently adopted National Health Policy, but has formed an inter-ministerial committee comprising the ministries of Health (Chair), Information, Education, and Culture, and Religious Affairs. UN agencies, local and international NGOs are also members of the committee. The government of Somaliland has adopted work plans through December 1999 (UNICEF, 1999) to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Problems of Children

Childcare is a parental responsibility and a child's development is directly related to the quality of care and protection afforded by his or her family. In traditional Somali society, it has been the duty of the parents, particularly the father, to educate his children in order to prepare them for the future. The importance of childcare in Muslim society is mentioned in the Hadith, one of which states that:

It is a prerequisite for the parents to give their children a good Muslim name, to educate them and arrange a suitable marriage for both sons and daughters.

However, in contemporary Somaliland, many parents are finding it difficult to care for and prepare their children in the way their culture and religion prescribe. Some children may also be neglected or abandoned when parents die, divorce, or when poverty lead them to default on their familial responsibilities. Although empirical data is not available, workshop participants identified the following children's problems as being associated with the breakdown of the family unit in the post-war period:

- *Social problems:* children who lack parental care and supervision often exhibit anti-social behaviour that proves difficult to correct. In serious cases, children may drop out of school and turn to delinquency, *qaad* and/or crime. Such children typically spend much of their time in the company of other delinquents or in video houses and cinemas where they are exposed to films with inappropriate sexual and violent content. Participants also believed that neglected children (i.e. children from broken homes) are more likely to become involved in *qaad* chewing, pick-pocketing, glue or petrol-sniffing, gang activities, theft, begging, rape or murder.
- *Street children:* although the reasons that children end up on the streets of Somaliland are many and varied, the participants firmly asserted that family break-up and abandonment are the primary causes. The loss of parents as a result of the war was cited as a second major cause.
- *High child mortality rate:* single mothers must earn a living and are therefore likely to have less time caring for their infants. UNDP's "Integrated Area Development Plan" (UNDP/UNHCR, 2002) estimates Somaliland's infant mortality rate at 132 per 1000

of live births, while the under 5 years mortality rate is approximately 210 per 1000. Many workshop participants believed that children of single mothers are more likely to become malnourished and thus susceptible to deadly diseases.

Relations between parents and children

One of the greatest challenges to parents, identified by participants in the family workshop, is the perceived weakening of parental authority over their children, and particularly the lack of respect children show to their parents, elder siblings or their teachers. They argued that traditional parent-child relations have been undermined by unfavourable economic conditions, lack of proper education and society's growing tolerance of delinquent behaviour.

Participants in the workshop agreed that three major institutions contribute to a child's development: the home, school and the community. In post-war Somaliland, all three are ill-prepared to assume their respective roles. In the words of one widowed mother:

Normally there are three schools that contribute to the development of children - the home, school and the society. None of these are ideal for the children. The school is not providing a quality education and the teachers are no better than those they are teaching. The home is not giving the attention and care a child needs. And [today's] society is itself unhealthy.

A child is less likely to receive adequate parental supervision if both parents must be away from home much of the day. The absence of a mother deprives the children of her crucial formative role, which an elderly man described in the following terms:

When they are sick it is the mother who takes them to the physician. When they are in trouble with the teacher at the school it is again the mother who accompanies them, and it is the mother who resolves any disputes with father at the home.

Participants in the study described different types of behaviour that they believed to be associated with parental neglect:

- children of today do not want advice;
- they do not seem comfortable around elderly people;
- boys are encouraged to go to school, but are then left unsupervised and may end up chewing *qaad* or begging (*shaxaad*) after classes;
- girls, who continue to assume responsibilities in the home, are generally less adversely affected by parental neglect than boys.

Conversely, some children interviewed blamed their problems on their parent's lack of understanding of today's youth. One 16 year-old boy voiced the universal complaint of youth when he stated: "All parents want is to be listened to, but not to listen to their children's views. But this is no good: we want to be listened to as well."

Most children interviewed during the course of the study tended to believe that they are not drifting away from parental control; they acknowledge the importance of respect and obedience to parents and elders. Instead, children's main concern is that their parents have not adapted to the changes in their children's environment, such as television, movies, fashion. For instance, parents may want their children to stay at home all day, while youngsters prefer to play football, go to movies and have fun with friends. Most children acknowledge the influence of Western culture on their hairstyles, dress and even behaviour, but asserted that it is the absence of their parents in their lives that leads them to rely on their peer groups on such issues. They also generally believe that foreign influences on their behaviour will diminish as they grow up.

The Effects of the Civil War on Children

The violence and the turmoil of conflict tore many families apart, leaving behind a multitude of widows, orphans and broken homes (SCPD/WSP, 2000). This had an adverse impact on the well-being of children. Many of today's youth, aged 15-25 years, have never known a normal home life: elder children have been raised either in a war situation or as refugees and have been exposed to violence or other sources of trauma. For some, violence has been carried over into home life, where parents may no longer be able to manage their domestic problems without resort to physical and psychological abuse. Such an environment can inhibit a child's development as a healthy, productive member of society.

Against a backdrop of widespread poverty and social turmoil, the problem of war-affected children in Somaliland's society is overwhelming. To date the family, community, social and legal institutions of the country have proven unequal to the challenge posed by orphaned, neglected and traumatized children. The development of strategy to address this issue, backed up with the requisite resources, is essential if it is not to become a handicap to Somaliland's recovery and development.

The Increase in Children as Labourers

In addition to the consequences of war, widespread poverty in post-war Somaliland has led to large numbers of children being put to work. Traditionally, during periods of hardship, poor nomadic families would send one or more children to work with wealthier relatives in order to contribute to the household income. This practice, which historically more common in the east of the country¹¹ was based on an informal contract between the heads of the two households. Under this arrangement, the employer would provide food and clothing for the child (usually a herd boy) and each year provided a young she-camel to his or her family. Under the twin pressures of poverty and urbanization, this system has broken down and many rural children now migrate to the towns at an early age instead of joining rural relatives.

Workshop participants commented that today the numbers of child workers have multiplied in both rural and urban settings due to the economic hardship facing the family. Children of desperately poor families are often sent to work to earn household income. They rarely attend classes and drop out during the early years of schooling. According to a general

¹¹ This practice was virtually unknown in western Somaliland.

survey in Somaliland conducted by UNICEF in 2000, such children engage in a variety of income-generating activities. The survey found that even in these activities, there is a traditional gender division of labour, in which boys have more options than girls do.

Table 1: Children's work by Gender and Type

Girls	Boys
Begging Petty trading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Selling meat ➤ Selling ice cream ➤ Selling snacks and vegetables Working in teashops and restaurants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Serving in hotels ➤ Washing dishes Domestic work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Maids ➤ Child attendants Garbage collection Commercial sex work ¹²	Begging Shoe shining/ repairing Car washing Working in teashops, restaurant and hotels Washing dishes Serving in hotels Cleaning in hotels Garbage collection Porter (load carrier) Petty trading Selling <i>qaad</i> Assistant to the <i>qaad</i> sellers <i>Cadey</i> ("tooth stick") selling Cigarettes Selling frankincense Selling plastic bags Serving alcohol in illicit drinking dens Domestic work

Source: UNICEF, (2000)

Working children face many problems such as non-payment of dues, long working hours, no benefits, job insecurity and physical and sexual abuse (UNICEF, 2000). Not surprisingly, neglected children tend to lack positive self-esteem and are therefore emotionally and disadvantaged vis-à-vis their peers.

Street Children

There is little statistical information about the number and circumstances of street children throughout the country. Participants in the study expressed the belief that the number of these children is increasing in most major cities due to poverty, break-up of families or inadequate parental supervision. The majority of these children are reportedly from the rural interior, and have gravitated to urban centres in pursuit of economic opportunities.¹³ When

¹² Little information is available about commercial sex work, but the workshop participants confirmed its existence, particularly among young girls

¹³ Many of the street children are from Ethiopia or southern Somalia. It is difficult to distinguish who is resident and who is not.

jobs fail to materialize and relatives are unavailable to provide familial support, many such children end up on the streets. While some work very hard to ensure their daily survival, others instead turn to pick-pocketing, stealing and drugs. A former street boy confirmed this to workshop participants:

The main reason why children move to the street is lack of financial support, while others join the streets in order to have access to drugs and alcohol.

Life on the streets can be harsh. Many children sleep under the walls of buildings or in the market places, without a roof to protect them from harassment, rain, heat or cold. For meals they make do with leftover food from restaurants or stale food from the garbage. Some groups of children adopt the lifestyle of the street gangs, and have even developed their own language, which other people cannot understand. According to a former street boy, children band together in groups in order to ensure that they can all share in the proceeds of their day's labour. Each group has a leader who oversees the distribution of food and resources amongst group members.

The rigours of street life are aggravated by public hostility towards street children. Labelled as thugs or thieves, they are subjected to routine harassment by members of the public and the authorities, including forms of physical, psychological and sexual abuse. In addition, there are no laws relating to juvenile delinquents, nor are there separate correctional facilities for young offenders. Children accused of criminal activities are usually kept in police stations for several days, together with adult suspects. During their detention these children are subject to interrogation in which they don't often understand. Some of them face 6-18 months sentence depending on their offences while others are released- those under the age of 12 years are sent back to streets after being kept several days.

Table 2: Juveniles Sent to Hargeysa Central Jail (June-Aug 2001)

Month	Offence	No	Sentenced by
June 2001	Robbery, possession of alcohol, stealing.	30	Regional security committee ¹⁴
June 2001	Robbery, trading in alcohol	9	Regional court
June 2001	Disobedience of parents ¹⁵	2	District court
Total June		41	
July 2001	Robbery, possession of drugs, stealing	19	Regional security committee
July 2001	Robbery, possession of drugs, stealing	8	Regional court
July 2001	Anti-cultural and anti-Islamic acts	3	District court
Total July		30	
Aug 2001	Robbery, possession of alcohol/ drugs, anti-cultural or anti-Islamic acts or disobedience of parents	47	Regional security committee

¹⁴ The regional governor chairs it and the heads of regional police forces, penitentiary forces, military forces, and the mayor of the regional city are the members of this committee.

¹⁵ Parental disobedience isn't crime in Somaliland, however, courts pass sentence on children who become physically abusive to their parents.

Aug 2001	Robbery, disobedience of parents, anti-cultural or anti-Islamic acts	19	District court
Total August		66	
	Total for the three month period	137	

Source: Occurrence book in Hargeysa Central Police Station

According to a policeman who participated in the family workshop, the sentences handed down by Regional Security Committees for juvenile offenders are usually between 6 and 18 months duration. In sentencing juveniles, the Regional Court, District Court, and Regional Security Committees frequently apply the criminal penal codes articles 163, 173, and 313, which state:

Article 163. (*Persons in Respect of Whom Security Measures Are Applied*).

1. Security measures may be applied only against persons who are a danger to society and who have committed an act which is made an offence by law.
2. Penal law shall establish the cases in which security measures may be applied against persons who are a danger to society on account of acts which are not made offences by law.
3. Security measures shall also apply to aliens, who are in the territory of the state.

Article 173/3:

Where the punishment for any other offence is imprisonment and where it appears that the convicted person is a danger to society, he shall be committed to a hospital or nursing home for a period of not less than six months.

Article 313 (*Bringing the Religion of the State into contempt*).

1. Whoever publicly brings the religion of Islam into contempt shall be punished with imprisonment up to two years.
2. Whoever publicly insults the religion of Islam by bringing into contempt persons professing it or places or objects dedicated to worship, shall be liable to the same punishment.

At the international level, UNICEF incorporated child and youth development and protection into its framework for action in Somalia/Somaliland for 1999 – 2000. The initial phase of this framework included a qualitative assessment of children in need of special protection, which took place in 2000. The study will provide direction for the development of appropriate policies and programs for the children whose circumstances put them at a particular risk of abuse and neglect. It is anticipated that UNICEF's work in this regard will contribute to the Somaliland government's own efforts to develop policies and programmes geared to children in difficult circumstances.

Mental Illness

War and its associated hardships have added to the numbers of mentally ill and traumatized people in Somaliland. Psychosocial trauma is reported to be widespread though there is little concrete data available. UNICEF and other professionals in the health sector report signs

and symptoms of psychological trauma in many parts of the country. Though most of the people in the country have experienced some degree of psychological trauma, it is most widespread among returnees, war veterans and children from broken homes. The victims of mental illness vary from the psychotic and violent to the depressed and reclusive. Sociological problems often mentioned include insomnia, nightmares and night terrors, depression and withdrawal. While some pose a danger to themselves, to their families and to society, others are generally able to cope with daily life. Most of these are left to the care of their families, who must explore various avenues to treat them and care for them. Ordinary people are often uncertain about how to react to a sick person. As one participant noted:

There are a lot of people who you can hardly tell whether they're crazy or not because they are neatly dressed, but they keep on muttering alone, as if they were conversing with an invisible second person.

Although there is ward for mental patients in Hargeysa hospital, it offers little or no in-patient care, drugs, or treatment. Since there are no other professional mental health services, many families resort to religious and traditional healers. Families exhaust their savings and time on seeking various treatments and help to cure their loved ones and usually ends in vain. Families of more dangerous trauma victims are obliged either to keep their patient at home (often chained) or to set them loose in the streets. The distress of taking such actions places enormous pressure on the affected household – both emotionally and financially.

3

Qaad Use and the Family

Historical Background

Qaad is the green leaf of the plant *catba edulis*, which has been used as a mild stimulant for centuries in the countries in the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. The tree may have originated from Ethiopia, but it is widely grown in the highlands of Ethiopia, Kenya and Yemen. The leaves are chewed green and fresh within 24 to 48 hours of picking. Historically, in the mediaeval Islamic and Chinese worlds, *qaad* was used for medical purposes (A. Appadurai, 1986). It is believed that religious students going to Harar, an Ethiopian region that was central to Islamic teachings in the Horn, first introduced the habit of *qaad* chewing upon returning in Somaliland in the late 19th century.

When it was first introduced, only adult male Somalis generally consumed *qaad*: particularly religious scholars who used the drug to stay awake for long recitals of the Qur'an. The habit rapidly expanded in Somaliland in the 1940s and gradually moved to Somalia. Its expansion coincided with economic development and urbanization, which enabled men to indulge in the habit and it became a primary source of entertainment and group recreation throughout the country. Probably the period of greatest expansion coincided with the beginning of the Somali struggle for independence. The intense political activity of the period necessitated social gatherings in which *qaad*-chewing became common practice.

Until the late 1960s, the habit remained confined to adult Somali male urban dwellers, particularly businessmen and the public sector employees. Since those early days the chewing of *qaad* has gained a high degree of societal approval and social gatherings of all kinds - political, religious, and socio- cultural and business engagements – routinely take place in the form of *qaad* sessions. The habit has also taken hold within the rural population, and has made inroads among women and youth. Most users acquire the habit through friends, relatives or other forms of peer pressure.

Qaad clearly possesses addictive qualities although these appear to be mainly psychological rather than physiological. The scarce laboratory research and chemical analyses of *qaad* are inconclusive as to its addictive nature. Despite the lack of hard scientific evidence, there is no doubt that individuals and families are driven to spend their incomes satisfying the habit, with potentially disastrous consequences for the family unit.

Today, *qaad* is a major economic and social problem throughout Somaliland and its consumption is escalating. Undoubtedly, the most adverse impact of *qaad* consumption is the stress it imposes on the family. The vast majority of homes in Somaliland fall into the low-income category, with earnings barely sufficient to meet the basic necessities of life, let alone to support to *qaad* habits of the adult males in the household. *Qaad* consumption is therefore a major contributing factor to abject poverty throughout Somaliland. Furthermore,

the economic impact of *qaad* sets in motion another set of social problems. The longer these are permitted to persist, the harder it will be to reverse their damage to Somaliland society.

This chapter elaborates on the negative socio-economic impacts on the family of the sustained consumption of *qaad*. Most of the findings in this chapter are based on the outcome of a workshop held in Gabiley on 17th–19th, September 2000.

The Ambiguous Status of Qaad in Islam

Qaad was first introduced to Somaliland by religious sheekhs from Harar who were spreading the teachings of Islam in the region. These Muslim scholars believed that *qaad* helped them to recite the Holy Qur'an for longer periods and to work for longer hours without getting tired. For this reason the sheekhs considered *qaad* as permissible in Islam. The scholars also defended its consumption by claiming that it possessed medicinal qualities including the treatment of malaria, coughs and stomach pains.

A sheekh who participated in the study affirmed the position that *qaad* is permissible because it is not one of the ten things prohibited to Muslims. Referring to a *Shafi'i* literary reference, he concluded that *qaad* might be chewed for the purposes of religion or work.

However, many other influential scholars hold a different view, arguing that since *qaad* is an intoxicant and does not fulfil basic human needs, its consumption cannot be considered permissible in Islam. On the contrary they consider that *qaad* contributes significantly to many of today's economic and social woes. According to one of these sheekhs, "Islam has forbidden the use of any substance that is considered a burden to the society economically and socially."

The Rationale for Qaad Consumption

Since its first introduction in Somaliland, chewing *qaad* has been regarded as a social norm for the adult Somali male. Its introduction by the religious elite significantly contributed to its social status. The consumption pattern evolved steadily as people reinvented the habit as a popular platform for socializing. In this regard, *mefrishes*, generally involving between half a dozen and a dozen people, emerged as an important venue for collective chewing.

Mefrishes exist in a multiplicity of forms, in which participation is typically defined by the nature of the issues under discussion. For example, if the issue at hand involves mediation of a dispute between two lineages, clan elders take part. If the issues relate to current events or political issues, people of similar political or professional profiles might attend. University students have their own *mefrishes* for reading and studying together. Custodians at the tombs of saints conduct special *mefrishes* every day of the week for religious recitals. Each major market or commercial service sector also has its own *mefrishes*. Finally, weddings and other social events are also held against the background of *qaad* chewing sessions. The government, business people and practically all sub-clan groupings hold chewing sessions for their respective constituencies.

Given *qaad's* stimulating effects, a wide variety of labourers such as long distance drivers, construction workers and guards believe that *qaad* gives them the strength and energy needed in their monotonous or exhausting tasks. Youths and the unemployed use *qaad* as an antidepressant in an attempt to reduce boredom, stress and anxiety.

The pervasiveness and the rate of consumption and gives an indication of the value that society attaches to *qaad*. However, the economic costs create a paradoxical situation, whereby the habit becomes both an economic burden and a social benefit to the user. According to a former customs officer attending the Gabiley workshop has estimated that around US\$ 193,390,063 worth of *qaad* is imported daily into the country, representing approximately US\$ 70 million per year. However, a full appreciation of the costs and benefits of *qaad* use cannot be obtained from its financial implications alone. Its impact on the family is a better measure of the socio-economic burden of *qaad* on society as a whole.

Qaad Production

Qaad grows best on moist, well-drained mountain slopes of elevations between 5,000 – 8,000 feet. The northern highland ranges of Ethiopia, the hills northeast of Mount Kenya and the mountains of Yemen have therefore always been the main sources of production. It is striking to note that farmers in those areas have always preferred *qaad* to coffee as a cash crop (Cassanelli, 1986). Good market prices, continuously rising demand, and increasingly efficient distribution networks, have together encouraged the large-scale cultivation of *qaad*.

Since its introduction in Somaliland, the bulk of *qaad* consumed has come from Ethiopia. As *qaad* consumption rose during the 1960s, local farmers responded by starting to cultivate it. It soon became apparent that locally grown *qaad* was of inferior quality to the Ethiopian variety. Consequently, although it was much cheaper, consumer preference discouraged local production.

However, during the 1970s, a chain of interrelated events triggered a rise in the demand for locally grown *qaad*. First, the oil price hikes of the mid-1970's and subsequent period of recession encouraged people to buy the cheaper home-grown variety. Second, the growing number of *qaad* chewers, particularly in the rural areas where there was less access to the imported variety, encouraged local production. This shift in *qaad* consumption not only encouraged farmers in traditional farming areas like Awdal and Waqooyi Galbeed to intensify *qaad* production, but also stimulated its cultivation in the less fertile Oogo plains and the Hawd.

The increase in local *qaad* production was short-lived. In 1983, the Somali government prohibited its production, importation and consumption. Reasons given for this ban vary. The government justified its decision with respect to the social and health implications of rising *qaad* consumption among the youth. Much of the public, on the other hand, particularly in Somaliland, associated its eradication with political motives related to its campaign against the northern rebels. Ultimately, the efforts of the government to control the importation and consumption of *qaad* were only partially successful, but local production

was disrupted as bushes were uprooted in accordance with the government ban. Until the collapse of the government, home-grown *qaad* disappeared from the market.

After the war, *qaad* farmers faced many challenges and many chose not to plant. Those who did resume production found themselves in adverse market conditions. First, the local production was insufficient to satisfy consumer demand because the cultivation period is very short and limited to rainy seasons (the crop is grown only when the rains fall). Second, the quality of local *qaad* was inferior to the Ethiopian variety, and most consumers preferred the latter. As a result, domestic *qaad* production in the post-war period continued to be an unprofitable enterprise. A *qaad* farmer who participated in the study noted that his income from the sale of *qaad* could not even cover the salary of his labourers, let alone produce a profit. In his words:

People grow the plant on the assumption that it's more profitable than other crops. But those involved in *qaad* cultivation hardly earn any benefits from the proceedings of their harvest due to the heavy costs involved, such as labour, water and cash .

It is thus somewhat intriguing that local cultivation of *qaad* has continued despite the adverse market conditions. This can be explained in several ways. For some communities with little livestock production, *qaad* remains an important cash crop: the local variety is cheaper and fresher than the imported one and is thus particularly attractive to rural consumers.. In addition, while local *qaad* has so far been marginalized by the imported variety, local producers believe in its future prospects. Many producers cite additional, non-commercial advantages to local production as well: it saves farmers from having to spend time searching and paying for the daily *qaad* bundles; it promotes sociability and feelings of generosity as visiting friends are given free *qaad*; and it is widely believed that *qaad* increases the energy of the farmer to attend to his other tasks.

Perhaps, the most important factor is that some farmers have adopted the practice of cultivating *qaad* as a means of acquiring land and supplementing their livelihoods during droughts. Workshop participants agro-pastoral areas noted that farmers may cultivate *qaad* in order to legitimise their ownership of large farms in what is predominately grazing land. On these farms they can both cultivate *qaad* and grow fodder.

Qaad as a Source of Income and Revenue

The *qaad* trade has become one of the major employers in the country over the last two decades. It is also a major source of revenue for the government (both local and central), earning US\$2,917,126 for the Somaliland government in 1999 (GOS, 1999). Many people earn their daily income from the *qaad* business, such as truck drives, sale agents and retailers and porters.

An estimated 1500 persons are involved in the *qaad* trade in Hargeysa, while in Boorame the number of *qaad* retailers is approximately 350 persons (Addou et. al., 1998). Women are

believed to make up the majority of *qaad* sellers in the country. A survey conducted by *Jambhuriya* newspaper in 1997 recorded 800 women selling *qaad* in Hargeysa alone.

Although some profit from *qaad* business, especially the importers, the majority of the *qaad* retailers complain that they rarely make more than their daily needs since the margin of profit is about US\$ 4 to 5 per day (Addou et. al.,1998). It is also a risky and competitive business. Most retailers don't get their *qaad* directly from the wholesalers; instead, there is a middleman who facilitates the process and gets paid by the wholesaler. Retailers receive their stock without knowing the cost of the *qaad* and pay their suppliers later in the evening after the *qaad* is sold out. Retailers must therefore set their prices without knowing how much they will be asked to pay at the end of the day. Upon paying back the dealers, retailers are obliged to cover any shortfall from their own pockets (many women retailers sell their jewellery for this reason or obtain loans from relatives and friends). Not surprisingly, many people involved in the *qaad* business at the retail level are more often in debt than profit. To aggravate the problem, a majority of *qaad* consumers pay on credit, which they sometimes take months to repay. A former *qaad* seller, who started in the trade in 1956 and continued through the mid 1960's noted:

I hardly made any profit from the *qaad* business and was always in loss. Therefore, I decided to shift to other businesses that I found to be more profitable than *qaad*.

Unfortunately, many unsuccessful *qaad* sellers lack the opportunity or the confidence to change jobs because they don't possess other skills.

Some *qaad* sellers do well from the business. Women retailers interviewed mentioned that whether or not they make a profit depends on a combination of factors: the capital base of the retailer, the number of their customers, and whether customers pay cash. Many women retailers claim that *qaad* is the most profitable and easy way to start business because it requires minimum capital or no capital at all. Given the high number of women employed in selling *qaad*, the trade contributes significantly to household livelihoods in Somaliland, particularly among female-headed households. One elderly woman who has been selling *qaad* since 1977 acknowledged this, remarking:

I have been selling *qaad* since 1977 and it really annoyed me when other people say that *qaad* should be stopped, because I have never had any other income except *qaad* and through it I have sent all my children to school, provided their clothing, food and shelter.

She conceded, however, that *qaad* trade is less lucrative for the retail vendor today than in the past, since the involvement of so many middlemen has cut into profit margins.

Changing Trends in Qaad Consumption

Participants in the study agree on the fact that *qaad* consumption in Somaliland is increasing and that it represents a growing burden to society; it would be no exaggeration to state that today not a single family in Somaliland has been spared the adverse effects of *qaad*

consumption. In the past, various factors limited its consumption. The habit took a long time to become established and was initially confined to certain segments of the society, such as religious circles and public service employees. This situation prevailed until the 1960s. The two decades prior to the onset of the civil war were marked by an indifferent attitude towards *qaad* consumption. This was mainly due to improving economic conditions: during this period of relative prosperity employment opportunities increased in the growing public and private sectors. The harmful effects of *qaad* were both less dramatic and less visible. At the same time, large numbers of men migrated to the Gulf in order to capitalize on employment opportunities that were plentiful as result of the oil boom.

The habit's adverse socio-economic impacts really began to surface during the civil war, amidst the devastation and hardship endured at the refugee camps. With the population caught in a cycle of violence and uncertainty, *qaad* was widely consumed during this period as an anti-depressant. Thousands of guerrilla fighters adopted *qaad* as a stimulant to steady their nerves for battle and to combat fatigue at the front. Youths began to take up the habit on a large scale. Although there is no data available on the patterns of consumption during the war, the observations of participants in the study suggest that this period witnessed a sharp increase in daily *qaad* use by boys under the age of 15 years. Since the 1980s the number of women chewing has also been on the increase, transgressing a long-standing cultural taboo. While *qaad* chewing among women remains limited to a small minority in urban areas, it has nevertheless gained considerable ground since the pre-war period.

Prior to the height of the civil war in 1988-91, the average quantity of *qaad* consumed by an adult male was one bundle (or *mijin*), while a rare few chewed two bundles per day. Since then there has been an upward trend in both quantity of *qaad* consumed and the varieties available. According to workshop participants, the vast majority of *qaad* users today chew an estimated two or more bundles of *qaad* per day, irrespective of their income. According to one former *qaad* dealer, the volume of the *qaad* trade in Somaliland in the early 1980s was about 9,000 kilograms per day, compared to nearly 32,000 kilograms per day in 2001.

The number of hours spent in chewing sessions has increased correspondingly. A growing number of *qaad* users even start their daily sessions early in the morning, followed by another in the afternoon and again in the evening, sometimes extending to the late hours. This heavy consumption, which is increasingly common among adolescent boys still under the care of their parents, is attributed by some to the frustration brought on by the high unemployment situation in the country. In the view of one elderly man:

The only problem with *qaad* is how we chew and the time we spend on the habit. It would not have been a problem if our daily intake were limited to one time. Instead we have developed a habit in which we chew *qaad* four times a day and this has become a hindrance to healthy socio-economic life.

Despite the apparently overwhelming evidence that the adverse effects of *qaad* use far outweigh any conceivable benefits, public opinion about *qaad* in Somaliland remains divided. The opinions of workshop participants converged upon the dangers of its chronic abuse, particularly with regard to the new generation of users that includes women and adolescents. Some participants further argued that the habit is responsible for the enfeeblement of traditionally strong family structure. While a small minority of participants advocated the

total banning of *qaad*, most expressed the belief that creating employment opportunities would be more effective in reducing its consumption and reversing its detrimental effects on society.

Mefrishes

Another recent change in patterns of *qaad* consumption has been the emergence of new chewing venues, or *mefrishes*.

The increasing use of *qaad*, for example, has given rise to a boom in teashops (*goodbi*) in all major towns as an alternative place for chewing. These places are viewed by their regulars as a more suitable place than the home to chew because they shield the user from the inevitable family arguments that arise from excessive chewing. They are also safe havens for teenage boys who want to indulge in the habit without the knowledge of their parents. Many *goodbi* are run by young women and have become places where young people of the both sexes intermingle freely until late at night. Members of the older generation in particular depict the *goodbi* as dens of immorality that have contributed to the spread of illicit sex. As one traditional elder complained:

The effect of *qaad* has always been limited to economics and health, but I believe that recently introduced teashops have affected the family culture above anything else. If we don't take strong measures against them, they can destroy the future of our young generation.

Other types of *mefrisha* include those formed along lineage lines, those formed among people of mutual political interest, professionals, or members of the same religious sect. These regular *mefrishes* can act as powerful lobbying and advocacy groups that can impact, for example, on Somaliland's peace and stability. While some participants in the study were concerned by the potential damage such *mefrishes* can do, others argued that *mefrishes* also provide democratic forums for dialogue on important pertinent social issues are addressed, and everyone is entitled to express his view without criticism.

Qaad Use and Family Relations

It is difficult to generalise about the effect of *qaad* use on family relationships: *qaad's* impact varies from one household to another, depending in part on levels of income and patterns of consumption. However, due to the high costs involved and its addictive nature, the attitude of workshop participants towards *qaad* was almost entirely negative. The main reason cited for this was the belief that *qaad* use has contributed to the weakening of the traditionally close-knit family structure and to the loss of personal integrity and pride.

Women in particular dislike the *qaad* culture and perceive it as a major focus of contention within the family. This is exacerbated by the fact that many men prefer to chew outside the home, straining the husband-wife relationship and sharply limiting the time he spends with his children. Some workshop participants believe that the father's routine absence from the home encourages juvenile delinquency, since youngsters are less responsive to the disciplinary efforts of their mothers.

On the other hand, some participants argued a man's habitual *qaad* chewing need not be a source of tension in the home. One mother who took part in the study suggested that compromise between *qaad* and the family is indeed possible:

Homes where fathers are present can't be compared to homes where they are absent. Therefore, a father who chews *qaad* should do so at his home in the company of his family. In this way he is aware of what is going on and a good family can be built in which all members take an active part.

Another woman (a *qaad* vendor) averred that, given the alternatives, *qaad* is the lesser of possible evils:

Qaad is far less harmful than alcohol and I even encourage men to chew *qaad* instead of taking up other habits.

Qaad and Household Income

Chewing *qaad* is an expensive habit, circulating tens of millions of dollars through the Somaliland economy every year. Some families earn living from the *qaad* trade, while others spend their earnings on *qaad*. But whatever a family's source of income, expenditure on *qaad* is one of the main economic problems common to families across Somaliland today.

Not surprisingly, wealthier families tend to be more tolerant of *qaad* consumption. One elder from Gabiley declared that despite his daily devotion to his vice, chewing had not affected his family life. He explained that he takes his daily *mijin* (bundle) to his home, where he spends his time in the company of his children and wife. He also noted that chewing helped him to assist his children with their homework. Like other wealthy chewers, the financial costs of his *qaad* use were not an issue.

Among low-income families, however, *qaad* represents a much more difficult problem. Expenditure on *qaad* creates tensions within the family, especially if at the same time the user neglects the household's other needs. Poor *qaad* consumers often find themselves soliciting funds (*shaxaad*) from close relatives and friends in order to buy their daily dose, which creates a relationship of dependency. Over time, a serious *qaad* habit can lead to financial bankruptcy. Tolerance towards the person soon fades, leaving the user feeling rejected by the family and friends, and occasionally leading to violence against family members. The impact on family relations can be destructive, and the tensions created can sometimes lead to divorce.

Most families in Somaliland are in the low-income range and can ill afford to support a typical user's *qaad* habit. According to some studies the cost of consuming *qaad* habitually (two to three bundles every day for 300 days a year) is between US\$900 and \$1,500 (Green, 1999 and UNICEF, 1998). The absolute poverty line budget for a Somaliland household is estimated to be US\$1,250 and the average household income in the order of US\$1,500 (Green, 1999).¹⁶ Remittances from relatives abroad may add to a family's income and relieve

¹⁶ This figure excludes remittance income. According to the same study (Green, 1999), average household income rises to US\$2,500 per year when remittances are taken into account.

some of the pressures of chronic *qaad* use, but they can also play a role in financially supporting the habit.

The circumstances of government employees help to illustrate the costs of *qaad* use. Soldiers and policemen receive a monthly salary of roughly Sl.Sh. 130,000 (equivalent to US\$ 18). A man who is a habitual *qaad* chewer spends more than his salary each month on *qaad*, but if he only chews on weekends, he might spend about Sl.Sh 40,000. The cashier of the police department in Gabiley described the situation as follows:

Women *qaad* sellers come to the police compound at the end of each month in order to take the money they are owed by the soldiers. For some of the men all the salaries are taken while for some additional money is charged, in many instances incurring high deficit.

Teachers receive a monthly salary of Sl.Sh 360,000; the habitual user will spend about Sl.Sh.10,000 per day on *qaad*, or Sl.Sh. 300,000 shillings per month, leaving Sl.Sh.60,000 (less than \$10) to cover household needs.

For this reason, many women have found themselves obliged to seek to work outside their homes to supplement the family's income. It is no longer unusual to see them working the markets of major towns at all hours of the day or night – many of them selling *qaad*, as one elderly man who took part in the study observed:

We encountered many women walking in the streets late at night. The reason behind this is *qaad*. As men spend all their income on *qaad*, women decide to work for their families.

The Impact of Qaad on Productivity

The habitual use of *qaad* directly affects levels of individual and collective productivity. The sleeplessness induced by the stimulant and a hangover (*qaadiro*) the next morning drastically impacting on the performance of Somaliland's labour force. The private and public sectors are equally affected. A prominent Somali poet described the situation as follows:

Qaad culture is a full time job, it is a twenty-four hours activity and we are never free from its effects. A man is chewing it all-day and groaning all night long while trying to get some sleep. And again in the morning he has a hangover. Then his searching for the *mijin* [to relieve the hangover] again affects productivity because of his absence from work.

The consumption of *qaad* also contributes to corruption in the public sector. Given that most civil servants underpaid, the quest to cover their daily *mijin*, as well as that of unemployed friends and relatives, leads many to demand bribes or simply to skim public funds.

Many labourers base their daily wages on the price of *qaad*, making their services more expensive than those of labourers from the neighbouring countries. Many local and unskilled workers therefore find themselves marginalized in the market, since their *qaad* habit renders

them uncompetitive against migrant workers from Ethiopia and elsewhere in Somalia who are more determined to find work than *qaad*.

The impact of *qaad* is no less injurious among the rural population, where productivity levels have been reduced drastically, with many men abandoning their livestock and farms. Women or relatives are left to attend to the family's workload including livestock, watering and grazing. Rural *qaad* users are often in debt, selling off their livestock at low prices in order to maintain their habit. In many towns, it is common to see rural men loitering in teashops for their *qaad* sessions, only returning to their families when they run out of cash or are in debt.

Qaad Use in Relation to the Crime Rate

Many of the crimes that are brought before courts in Somaliland are in one way or another related to *qaad*. For instance, in Gabiley district, out of a total of 99 reported civil cases in 1999, 67 of them were related to *qaad*. In most of these cases, the culprits were adult, married men who were habitual *qaad* users whose wives filed cases against them. According to one court official, 56 of these cases later ended in divorce. The figures from a small town like Gabiley, thus offer a bleak insight into the links between *qaad* use, criminality and family stability.

Another avenue to crime is the delinquent behaviour of young boys who have become *qaad* users. Some of these youngsters rely on their parents, who already face extreme financial difficulties, to pay for their *qaad*. In most families, parents are unable or unwilling to sustain the habits of both the father and the sons at the same time. In the ensuing arguments, teenage boys have been known to fight with their parents, to threaten them, or to steal from them. In Gabiley alone, 43 such cases were brought before the court in 2000, involving offences ranging from petty theft to assault and bodily harm.

In their struggle to satisfy their cravings for *qaad*, many youngsters find themselves on the wrong side of the law. A senior police official in Hargeysa asserted that the theft of *qaad* by teenagers is a rapidly growing problem throughout Somaliland, especially in *qaad*-producing areas. Such crimes usually involve youths without any income who are prepared to maintain their habit at any cost. Peer pressure, whereby youths feel compelled to obtain *qaad* in order to socialize with friends, can also play a role. The sale of *qaad* on a credit basis encourages youths to keep chewing, even when they can't afford to, leading many to resort to petty crime. In an extreme form, the quest for a *mijin* of *qaad* may lead youths to steal directly from *qaad* vendors.

The Effects of Qaad on Human Health

No field research has been conducted on the effects of *qaad* on health in Somaliland. Nevertheless it is clear that the excessive use of the drug has adverse effects on the health of the user. Generally not fatal, the prolonged chewing of *qaad* often results in the loss of appetite, constipation, sexual impotence, aggressiveness and insomnia. Various researchers have noted that *qaad* use can lead to serious illnesses in the long run, including mental disorders, and may aggravate conditions such as hypertension and diabetics.

A medical practitioner in Gabiley described some of the physical symptoms associated with long-term *qaad* use. This doctor noted that regular *qaad* users often become hot when they start chewing *qaad* and sweat a lot, sometime causing dehydration. He added that the chemicals contained in *qaad*, including cathine and cathinone, act on the central nervous system, causing the pupils to dilate and the frequency of the heartbeat to increase. In extreme cases, these effects are believed to be capable of triggering a heart attack. The heavy use of *qaad* also increases the level of acid in the stomach, reducing the appetite, and leads to constipation. According to the doctor, the *qaad* user's immune system also becomes weak, rendering the individual more vulnerable to disease.

Some participants in the study also believed that *qaad* contributes to the spread of communicable disease such as tuberculosis. They noted that people who chew in the *mefrishes* may contract illnesses from one another since they spend long hours in confined spaces together, and often share the same cups for drinking water and tea.

Its effects on individual health notwithstanding, *qaad* also poses a serious public health hazard. According to an officer in the sanitation department of Hargeysa municipality, *qaad* garbage makes up the largest portion of daily collected garbage. It is not unusual to see tons of garbage piled up in the centre of city, where the *qaad* market is located, much of it wet grass and leaves used to wrap *qaad* and keep it moist. Animals - especially goats and cows - often feed on these leftovers. Another by-product of the *qaad* trade is the ubiquitous plastic bag used to wrap the individual *mijin*. Every sale of *qaad* involves one or more of these small, insubstantial wrappers, which eventually end up caught in the trees and bushes around human settlements where they are frequently consumed by sheep and goats. Despite the lack of hard data, there is little doubt that the *qaad* trade is the single largest source of these pollutants.

4

Support Systems for the Post-War Family

Economic decline and the deterioration of the livelihoods of many households in the urban sector started long before the civil war in 1988. This was largely due to rapid urbanisation, unmatched by adequate employment opportunities, affordable social services, insurance or other welfare benefits. As a result, members of the family had no choice but to cooperate and assist each other in sharing their meagre economic resources, helping one another to find jobs or lending money to one another.

The war aggravated the dismal economic situation, destroying property, assets and careers. During the war the number of orphaned children, widowed mothers, handicapped and broken families multiplied, producing a generation of vulnerable people. These people turned to traditional kinship networks for help, increasing pressure on the already destitute, war-affected population and seriously straining the survival capacity of the traditional family.

To examine this problem in depth, SCPD/WSP organized a workshop on the state of social support systems for the post-war family, from 23-26 November 2000 in Hargeysa. The main objectives of the workshop were.

- To study the existing traditional support systems for the post-conflict family
- To examine the emergence of new vulnerable groups and their family situations
- To understand more about the problems and different kinds of support needs of the post-war family.
- To analyse the strengths and weaknesses of existing legal and social institutions that support the family and thereby explore the prospects of improving them and for greater institutionalisation and regulation of these support systems.

Issues and Constraints

The violence and turmoil of conflict tore families apart, leaving behind a multitude of widows, orphans and broken homes. The conflict ruined livelihoods and reduced family holdings to nothing. Female headed households, an infrequent phenomenon before the war, are now commonplace. Women have become the earners for many households. Unattended children and delinquent children from broken home lives joined the orphans in the streets of the major towns in growing numbers. Changing patterns in marriage led to an increase in unsuccessful unions. Many households include a member who has become physically disabled or mentally disturbed by wartime experiences (SCPD/WSP, 2000). These

cumulative stresses on the family have everywhere been exacerbated by the growing use of *qaad*, which swallows meagre household incomes and strains family relationships.

Despite the gradual reconstruction of civil administration and the proliferation of local and international NGOs, support services available for the Somaliland family are either lacking or rudimentary. Informal and traditional support mechanisms have been overstretched and are anyway insufficient to meet new social needs. Thus among the many challenges Somaliland must face in its passage from post-war recovery to long-term development, is the problem of meeting the basic needs of the family for security, health care, education, and psycho-social support.

Formal Support Systems

Since 1991, Somaliland has made considerable progress in re-establishing public and private institutions from scratch. A plethora of local and national level actors have emerged to fill the gap left by the collapse of the state. In everything from legislation to service provision, necessity has produced a blend of imitation (of pre-war structures) and improvisation. Not surprisingly, initiatives to support the family often involve a combination of governmental, private and community elements.

Legal System

The government of Siyaad Barre introduced radical legal reforms in matters concerning the family and children. Clanship was banned along with *xeer*, *shariica* and the payment of *diya*. The promulgation of the 1975 Family Law gave women equal legal status to men with respect to marriage, divorce and inheritance and was deeply opposed by many Sheekhs and Islamic scholars. However, a large number of women, especially those in the towns, took advantage of the opportunities created by the new law, including access to education, employment and professional development.

In contemporary Somaliland, the judicial system has been partly restored, utilising pre-1991 laws. The 1975 family law still applies to domestic issues, except for those articles that contradict the Islamic *shariica*. Article 7 of the Somali Civil Code assigns jurisdiction to District Courts over issues related to marriage, divorce, inheritance, child custody and clan feuds, and affirms that family matters will be settled by family law (*xeerka qoyska*).

Although the Islamic legal system includes a comprehensive body of law pertaining to the family, this is often not applied. For instance, while it is the prerogative of the man to pronounce divorce, the *shariica* also allows a woman to demand a divorce for reasons such as lack of maintenance, absenteeism, or threats to her life. Many delinquent husbands, however, demand that their wives forego their legal rights in exchange for a divorce, even when she is within her rights to demand one. Since few women in Somaliland are aware of their rights under *shariica* law, or are prepared to demand them, it is not uncommon for a woman to exempt her husband from alimony and give up her rights to the custody of the children in order to obtain a divorce.

Most families prefer to solve their problems in the first instance by referring to customary law (*xeer*). Only if this fails do they resort to the courts and the formal legal system. This preference exists in part because the traditional mechanisms for family mediation are more familiar, even though they have been weakened in recent years. In part it is due to the weakness and corruption of judicial institutions and the lack of qualified judges. Since many judicial decisions seem to be based chiefly on the interpretation of the presiding judge, rather than on a firm basis in law, the public has largely lost faith in the courts.

The existence of parallel laws, such as the penal code, *shariica* and customary law creates considerable confusion and offers loopholes that can complicate the course of justice. Many people associate the family law currently used by the courts with that introduced during the Siyaad Barre era. In the opinion of workshop participants, there is a need to revise these laws to make them compatible with Islamic jurisprudence.

Another weakness in Somaliland's justice system is its inability to deal with young offenders. In the absence of juvenile laws, correction facilities, counselling and psychiatric centres, judges have few options at their disposal when dealing with juvenile offenders. The courts are obliged to try the children as adults under the existing penal code or to set them free.¹⁷ There are no provisions within the law for trying crimes committed by children. Consequently, the police typically charge young offenders under the general penal code articles 163, 173, 313 which carry penalties of between six months and two years imprisonment. This means that most young offenders are simply treated as dangers to society. No remedial sentences or facilities are available.

In prison children are kept in the same facilities as adults, where conditions are generally poor and unsanitary. Inmates share same cells, regardless of their ages, profiles or the crimes they have committed. A journalist who had been jailed described his own experience:

In the jail, I was roomed with four other inmates who committed different crimes: a seventy-year-old prisoner, fourteen-year-old boy who had raped a girl, thief and an insane person, all of whom were charged for cases related to family.

There is clearly an urgent need for policies and legislation addressing young offenders, including separate rules for sentencing and dedicated custodial facilities. In addition, a comprehensive package ranging from special schools, counselling centres and health facilities also needs to be developed in order to address the special needs of children.

Social Services

Since 1991, basic social services in Somaliland have expanded considerably. The government, UN agencies and NGOs have all taken part in the reconstruction of social services. Schools have been rehabilitated, hospitals have reopened and a large numbers of mother and child health centres (MCHs) and health posts have been built throughout the country. According to UNDP and UNCHR's "Integrated Development Action Plan", the number of health posts has increased from 22 to 132, functioning MHCs from 10 to 48,

¹⁷ Somaliland continues to use the penal code that was used in Somalia in 1963.

and functioning hospitals from 1 to 10 during the period 1999 to 2002 (UNDP and UNCHR, 2002).

Education

Prior to the colonial period, Somali children were educated informally within the family, where they were principally schooled in traditional values and norms. In addition, children who could be spared from work, especially boys, used to receive an Islamic education in local Qur'anic schools, usually under a shady tree. In the mid-twentieth century, the colonial administration introduced a secular, western-style education aimed at producing public servants for the British administration, initially by sending few local students to their other colonial territories such as the Sudan and Aden. The first school was opened in Somaliland 1943.

These measures education initially met with widespread resistance from the population, particularly the nomads, who believed that their children would acquire the culture of the colonizers and converted to Christianity. Nevertheless, the country's education system continued to grow, with the enrolment of students and teachers substantially increasing through the colonial period and after independence. Following the Somali- Ethiopian war in 1977-78, there was a rapid decline in the educational system as the government diverted the resources allocated for social services to military use and only 2% of national expenditure was allocated to education, compare to 11% in the mid-1970s (UNICEF, 1998). The situation remained unchanged until the collapse of the Barre government and the formal education system with it.

The revival of education in post-war Somaliland began in late 1991 when communities and former teachers re-opened schools in the major urban centres. Children learned in roofless buildings without basic furniture or teaching materials. In some communities with a strong desire for education, parents and private individuals contributed to cover the essential needs including incentives for the teachers. Progress accelerated after 1994, when the government, UN agencies and INGO's and the LINGO's undertook a joint initiative to rehabilitate schools and provide material assistance and training. Eventually, supervisory structures for primary and secondary education, reflecting the pre-war arrangements, were established under the Ministry of Education (MOE).

Currently there are 222 primary and 15 secondary public schools functioning in Somaliland. Enrolment of students in public schools has overtaken pre-war figures: the Department of Planning and Research in the Ministry of Education estimates the primary enrolment school in Somaliland in the scholastic year 1987-8 at 34,278 students. In 2000-1 that figure was more than double at 74, 456.

In spite of these advancements, there remains an unmet demand for facilities. To meet this demand, numerous private schools operate in parallel with the public and community schools. Private schools generally offer a variety of subjects, especially English and Arabic languages, but generally do not respect the national curriculum. Many private training institutes also offer classes in accountancy, management and computer skills.

Despite the involvement of so many new actors in the sector, the general quality of education is considered poor in both private and public schools. The MOE has developed a standardized curriculum for primary education, but even this is seen as lacking in mechanisms for supervision, teaching methodology and evaluation of students learning achievements. Many parents complain that the schools do not provide high quality education to their children and consider schools to be little more than places to keep their children off the streets and out of trouble.

Another weakness of the current education system is the lack of co-ordination between parents and teachers. Neither parents nor teachers are properly supervising students. On the one hand, teachers often fail to check their student's work, informing parents about the progress of their children or taking appropriate disciplinary actions when required. On the other hand, parents tend to assume that their child's educational development is the teacher's responsibility rather than their own. A middle-aged mother who participated in the Sheekh workshop described the situation as follows:

We send our children to schools in order to educate them in both knowledge and discipline, but we get the opposite. This is because those who are supposed to be teaching and their students exhibit similar attitudes and behaviour. It is normal to see a teacher and his students smoking together in the school compound, which was unusual in the past. Even as parents, we don't care enough about our children's educational development.

Most schools are under-funded. They lack proper educational materials, qualified teachers, equipment and facilities. For instance, only 48% of the primary school teachers are trained, while 52% have no background training at all (UNDP, 2001). In addition, a teacher's basic remuneration is very low (Sl.Shs 360,000) and they are often paid with three to four months delay. However, additional fees are often charged to parents in order to supplement the teacher's salary. In primary school, the family of each student pays Sl.Sh. 5,000, while secondary schools collect a fee of Sl.Sh 94,000. Not all families can afford to pay the fees, so exemptions are made to children in difficult circumstances such as children from poor families, broken homes, orphans and street children. Poor families who have more than one child in the same school may receive exemptions from fees for some of their children, or may receive a total exemption from school fees if they enrol only one child. However, teachers are still considered underpaid and many draw income from different sources. As a teacher from Sheekh put it:

With the burden of feeding hungry mouths, how can one expect a teacher to be fully devoted to his students, when he himself is not getting enough bread? Thus we have to go around [looking for other work] to ensure that we survive.

Another major concern of the education is the disparity in accessibility to education from region to region, between urban and rural areas, and between females and males. According to the statistics in the Ministry of Education only 19.4% of enrolled students come from the rural settlements, while 80.6% come from urban areas. Though some of the rural schools have been rehabilitated and new ones have been built, neither the government nor most rural communities can afford to employ more teachers under the present circumstances. Regional statistics show that 50% of all schools are concentrated in the western regions

(Awdal and Woqooyi Galbeed), which account for 47.1% of total student enrolment. The remaining regions share the other 52.9% (GOS, 2000/2001). Across the board, enrolment of girls represents 32 per cent of the total primary school student population, but this proportion declines significantly in higher grades.

The challenges facing Somaliland's educational system are many, including standardizing the educational system, coordinating the various actors involved in sector, improving accessibility for disadvantaged groups and achieving sustainability. Resource constraints are the chief problem. So far, foreign aid has been instrumental in re-establishing educational services: international donors spend about 10% of their global contribution to Somaliland on the educational sector, whereas, while Somaliland government contributes only 3% of its annual budget (HDR, 2001). From an educational point of view, the quality of education depends primarily on the level of investment. Working group members were therefore unanimous in their belief that the present government expenditure on education should be increased.

Health Services

Somaliland suffers from most of the same problems as other war-torn and developing countries. Main health risks include diarrhoea, respiratory diseases and malaria, which are the main killers of the infants and children. Other major killers are communicable diseases such as tuberculosis (TB) and malaria. Maternal mortality in Somaliland is ranks among the highest in the world.

Like other social services, health care in Somaliland was rebuilt from scratch after the war. Initial support for the rehabilitation of the hospitals, MCHs and other health posts was provided by international aid agencies who supplied equipment, medicines and incentives for health care personnel. Gradually, the government has taken up an increasing share of this burden. As of 2002, all regional hospitals in Somaliland were functioning, though heavily dependent on donor agencies for drugs, equipment and other materials .

Despite these improvements, public health services institutions still operate at a low capacity. A general overview of the situation in the health sector indicates that the provision of basic health services to the public is far from adequate. The main problems include in those related to accessibility, poor quality services due to inadequate trained personnel, mismanagement at the facility level and poor knowledge and practice resulting from the lack of meaningful regulatory procedures.

Facing many problems, this sector is arguably in worse shape than it was prior to the war. A medical nurse described the situation of health in the following terms:

Despite the presence of the central government in the capital, the capacities of the hospitals run by the Ministry of Health have been inadequate to meet the public demand. Therefore, it is not surprising to hear service delivery in public hospitals described as a market in which those with money are always first served.

The fate of the public health services is the same as the rest of other public institutions existing in the country, which face similar human and financial resource constraints. As clearly stated by a medical doctor who participated in the family workshop:

In education you get untrained teachers who are teaching in schools. Similarly, in the health service you see untrained personnel in the hospitals, which lack proper equipment, drugs, resources, and professional medical personnel have impaired the conditions of the hospitals.

Not all hospitals are the same, and some improvements have been made in specialized areas like tuberculosis treatment in Boorame and surgery in Berbera. These services have been so successful that they attract people from neighbouring Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somalia who come for free medical treatment. Some of these programs receive external funding from donor agencies, ensuring adequate medical supplies and adequate running costs. But the majority of the hospitals in the country are unable to meet the health needs of the public. In addition, doctors and other health care personnel are under-paid so that many maintain their own private clinics. One doctor explained:

My salary is Sl.Sh. 25.000 per month (about \$4) and it takes about 3 to 4 months to arrive. Therefore, I considered myself as a voluntary worker. Not all doctors are kind enough to work under such conditions, but instead work for themselves in lucrative private health care clinics.

The recently introduced patients' fee in all public hospitals is meant to cover the running costs of the hospitals. Outpatients are required to pay Sl.Sh 3,000 while in-patients are charged Sl.Sh.10.000. There are also unofficial costs. But this fee system limits access of people in difficult circumstance such as orphans and the destitute to health services. Though some exemptions are made, usually in respect of doctors' services, the use of facilities and drugs are always charged. As a result, the demands of basic health service delivery for a large part of Somaliland society remains unmet.

Non-Governmental Organizations

Local NGOs have made an important contribution since 1991 to relief and rehabilitation efforts throughout Somaliland, particularly in the provision of social services and the empowerment of disadvantaged groups in society. Many of these NGOs have contributed significantly to improving the lives of a large number of people, particularly women, children and other vulnerable groups, by supporting a range of essential services that the state cannot currently provide.

The efforts of most NGOs involve various income generating, rehabilitation and advocacy activities. Some women's NGOs work with deprived children in various regions of the country, providing food or sometimes shelter. Others provide vocational training in which the beneficiaries acquire skills for further employment. Other organizations provide services to the mentally and physically handicapped. A handful offer small credit schemes to female-headed households. In many instances their activities are funding-led and so, lacking their own resources, NGOs respond to the priorities of potential donors.

War Veterans Association (Sooyaal)

The association of SNM war veterans provides support to ex-combatants, widows and orphans of the civil war. Since its establishment in 1994, Sooyaal has offered a wide variety of training programmes, many of which aim to upgrade the income of war veterans through skills training. During 1995, 45 trainees completed a six-month vocational training course in brick-making and electrical repair. Since then Sooyaal has expanded into carpentry, metal work, masonry, construction and textiles and business skills.

Sooyaals' training component has two phases. In the first six months, the trainees acquire basic skills at at Soyaal's vocational training centre. Upon successful completion of the first phase they are transferred to an enterprise for three months as an apprentice. During this period, the trainees concentrate mostly on the business side of the skills they have acquired. This involves a tripartite agreement between the family of the trainee, Sooyaal and the enterprise in which the NGO pay US\$2 per day per person towards the costs of materials used as well as any damages during the training. With the help of international donors, Sooyaal expects to have trained 405 trainees and 15 trainers of trainees in 2001-2002.

During the course of the study, the project manager explained that only 15% of the trainees are war veterans with the other 85% being returnees. He said that it is difficult to persuade the ex- militia members to join training. Some of them are over 40 years of age and find it difficult to acquire new skills. They therefore prefer to send their relatives or friends who are returnees.

Despite its achievements, Sooyaal faces the constant challenge of finding jobs for its trainees upon completion of the course. Lack of credit or capital to start their own businesses is the main obstacle for the newly trained students. Another problem is that the marketplace is already saturated with the same sorts of product or services provided by the centre.

Soyaal intends to tackle this problem by providing services to more businesses. The organization already covers 20% of its own operating costs and aims to increase this proportion with a view to long-term sustainability. Its success at turning out well-trained youth and the production and sale of quality products have contributed to the programme's viability. As the official association of war veterans, the organization has earned the respect of the government and the public, and may also be able to count on support for its activities from both of these sources in future.

Hargeysa Orphanage

Hargeysa orphanage (today the only one in the country¹⁸) dates from the early 1970s, when it was one of a handful of orphanages established by the Somali government. The centre used to cater for orphaned and abandoned children from destitute families, and street children. Originally financed by the government, it used to provide housing, education and other skills. Upon graduation, children were encouraged to pursue further studies, while

¹⁸ An orphanage centre was to have been constructed in Badhan in Sanaag region, but was never completed.

those who chose not to were widely sought after for jobs. Many Somalis viewed these centres as one of the very few successful programmes of the Barre government.

The centre was partially rehabilitated in 1993, when it resumed work after the war, and currently houses 325 children, mainly street children and orphans. It provides for children to be taught the Qur'an starting from the age of six. With the help of the government, the children attend public schools up to grade eight and secondary schooling.

The nearest kin of orphaned children usually bring them to the centre. In order for an abandoned child to be admitted to the centre, the person who has found the child, together with a witness, should first take the child to the nearest police station. The police prepare a report on the status of the child (where he/she was found, what time etc.), attempt to verify the information they have been given and do some tracing and investigation of their own. If the mother of an abandoned child is found, she is jailed. Otherwise the police request a court injunction giving custody of the child to the centre. The centre accepts those children referred by the court, or any children brought by ordinary people with legal documents to authenticate the child's orphan status.

The number of girls currently living at the centre is 20, with the oldest being eight years. The girls are usually taken up for adoption when they reach the age of eight. A family wishing to adopt should meet certain criteria and have permission from the Supreme Court and Ministry of Justice. When the child has been adopted the centre checks on the well being of the child at specified time intervals.

In addition to orphans, the centre also houses some children from very poor households although their number is relatively small. Children at the orphanage who have surviving relatives can visit their relatives. Children thirteen years old and above can go out on Thursdays on their own, while younger ones can only go out accompanied by a relative. Those children who have no surviving family members stay at the centre.

The staff at the centre number fifty-six. Although they do not get a monthly salary, they receive small incentives from the government and "food-for-work" from WFP. They also sometimes receive donations from business people and organizations such as the Somaliland Forum, which is an international association based in the United States. The government also makes occasional contributions.

Havoyoco

The Hargeysa Voluntary Youth Committee (Havoyoco) established and runs the first street children's rehabilitation centre in the country. This programme aims to provide food, shelter and education for almost sixty street children. Most of these children are collected from the streets of Hargeysa, while a small number of them are from other major cities like Berbera and Burco. Since Havoyoco's priority is to rehabilitate the street children, they first try to offer psychological counselling for the children by talking to them about their living situations and why they are in the streets. Some of the children may have parents, but don't know their whereabouts. In such cases, if a child wants to be reunified with his or her family, Havoyoco attempts to trace the parents.

Havoyoco also integrates street children into the organization's other development programs, such as the vocational training centre for the poor youths of low-income families. In this project, the organization has targeted young people in order to equip them skills that would enable them to earn a living. The training offered includes carpentry, metal work, masonry and auto mechanics. They also provide literacy classes.

Committee of Concerned Somalis

The Committee of Concerned Somalis (CCS) runs the largest credit programme in Somaliland, which started in 1995. The main objective of the program is to upgrade the income level of female-headed households. Initially the project targeted about 500 women who already were involved in petty trade, but who lacked sufficient capital. Today, women who own small business are provided an amount of between US\$200 and \$400, while middle-size businesses owners receive between US\$600 and US\$1,000.

Informal Support Systems

Traditional Support

In traditional Somali society, the survival and the well being of the family depends on the support of the extended family, which could stretch from one's brother to a *dhya*-group or – at the highest level - to the clan itself. In the pastoral environment, mutual support, economic cooperation and common ownership of nomadic resources reinforce lineage and clan cohesion.

This tradition of solidarity survived largely intact until the civil war. Urban and rural populations maintained their own networks of mutual support, but these networks came under threat during the war as war-affected families turned to their relatively better-off relatives for support and often overwhelmed them. In the post-war period, capacities to cope with crisis remain overstretched. As a widowed mother observed:

In the old days, orphaned children were taken care of and their relatives provided for their needs, but such support no longer exists because people's sense of morality has faded or they are simply unable to provide assistance.

Pastoral Support Systems

Pastoral support systems continue to help family members to survive during droughts, conflicts and periods of crisis. Most of these traditional systems of family support have continued to function in rural settlements, where they have traditionally ensured the preservation of the family.

Keyd

Families with plenty of livestock would usually keep aside a certain number of their stock to be given as a charity to the poor. Families who lost their stock during droughts or other

crises could benefit from this system by borrowing some breeding stock and paying back the debt with the offspring.

Dhowrto

This is usually surplus milk put aside for distribution amongst the poor households who do not have milking animals, especially during the dry season (*jilaal*), when pastoral people often lose animals due to the scarcity of pasture. Some butter extracted from milk is also put aside and given to poor households. However, this kind of support is said to have virtually disappeared due to the increasing needs of the pastoralists: most rural families, especially those near towns, tend to trade their livestock products for consumer goods such as sugar, cereals and medicines rather than setting aside the surplus.

Qaraamaad

This system exists within the *diya*-paying group, where members collectively contribute breeding livestock to poorer members of the clan. It usually takes place during the rainy *gu'* season when, having survived *jilaal*, the families of a given *diya*-paying group come together to share a common grazing area. Members agree upon who should benefit from such assistance as well as who should contribute and how much. The number of animals a family contributes varies, depending on the number of stock owned. Elders are then given the responsibility of collecting and distributing the animals.

Yabadh

Traditionally, the husband is the sole proprietor of the animal wealth owned by the family; other members of the nomadic family are not allowed to raise livestock. In return, each and every newly married family member, particularly sons, has the right to be supported from the family herd. When a young man decides to marry, it is therefore his family that pays the required bride-price on his behalf. Soon after the marriage, the newly married husband may also claim his share of stock from the family's herd. If his immediate family cannot spare enough animals, close relatives may also pitch in.

Agricultural Support Systems

Although farming is not practiced throughout the country, there are areas where conditions are favourable for crop production and raising cattle as primary stock. Communities living in the west of the country, where such conditions prevail, have a long history of cultivation. The main cereal products are sorghum and maize. Since most farmers practice rain-fed agriculture, they must synchronize their efforts to the changing seasons. This imposes severe time constraints on such activities as sowing and harvesting, and many agricultural communities have thus established systems for helping each other.

Guus

The most widespread form of agricultural co-operation is known as *guus*. This is a collective labour service practiced by the farmers of a given community at peak periods of ploughing, sowing, weeding and harvesting. This system reduces the input costs of the farmer and

sustains a spirit of mutual cooperation. Similarly, irrigation farmers who produce fruits and vegetables for sale in large towns have formed associations whereby they collect a certain amount of money from each farm on a monthly basis. This money is usually used for the procurement of irrigation pumps for those unable to buy them.

Urban Support Systems

Although the system of assistance to needy kinsmen and economic co-operation has its roots in the rural settlements, it has gradually spread to the urban areas as well. The system contributes to a collective sense of identity and shared values. In a society with strong pastoralist economic and cultural roots, the shift from rural to urban mode of life has required the traditional family support system to adapt to the new urban context:

A man's lineage affiliation is as important in town - as in the pastureland - in determining whom he associates with and in what capacity (Lewis, 1984).

In urban areas, low-income families receive regular support from wealthier relatives in the form of cash, shared accommodation and food. Upon the death or marriage of family members, exceptional material and moral support is also provided. However, in addition to these conventional forms of familial solidarity, there also exist more structured systems of financial and material co-operation.

One of the most ancient of these systems is known as *maqdarad*, an Arabic word meaning "fundraising". A person seeking funds for specific purpose assistance would present his or her case to friends and relatives. The friends would then organize a fundraising event, typically involving entertainment such as poetry and song. Relatives and neighbours would be invited to attend and expected to contribute to the "pot". This type of support has gradually been replaced by other practices such as *baabo* or *kaalo*, in which a group of two or three persons goes from house to house collecting money (or material support) for the needy family or individual.

In the absence of functional government institutions, the number of non-formal institutions in urban communities has significantly increased in the post-war period, helping a large number of townspeople people to survive. The majority of workshop participants believe that traditional support mechanisms are among the few sources of social support available to the family in post-conflict Somaliland. As one participant in the study has noted:

The support system is all we have left of our tradition, and it is the only institution to have kept us going during the post-war period.

Most of these voluntary associations are informal self-help arrangements based either on clan or profession. Such support is usually associated with particular groups, like meat associations, bus owners, market agents or vegetable vendors or textiles sellers. For example, kinsmen or professionals from these groups may collect money together on regular basis – perhaps once a month. This money is drawn on to support the needy, the sick and so on as needs arise. An elderly woman who is a member of such a group explained the activity as follows:

We collect money on monthly basis in order to help poorer families during calamities and weddings. We have categorized the needs: for instance a woman who gives birth receives Sl.Sh. 150,000; upon her death Sl.Sh. 400,000. A family without income receives Sl.Sh. 200,000. For a wedding we pay between Sl.Sh. 400,000 and 500,000. And we don't discriminate against anyone.

Remittances

Over the past century, remittances have emerged as the single most important support system in the country. As early as the 1920s, men working in the urban centres used to send money to their families in the interior for them to invest in livestock. Somali seamen stationed abroad with the British Navy or merchant marine also sent money home to their families, increasing the number of stock owned by the family, building man-made water reservoirs (*berked*), or contributing to the establishment of small businesses in urban settlements

During the 1970s oil boom, a large number of Somalis emigrated to the Gulf countries in search of employment and remittances became an important source of revenue for the local economy. A large number – perhaps the majority - of Somalis who migrated to the Gulf during that period originated from Somaliland due to the established livestock trade linkages and geographic proximity. Most of these migrants were men who would remit most of their income towards the upkeep of their families and productive investments such as construction businesses (Ahmed, 1998). The flow of remittances contributed in an important way to the development of Somaliland's major urban centres.

The importance of the remittance business has increased dramatically since the war in 1988 that forced thousands of refugees to migrate to Europe and North America. The vast majority of families who remained behind became dependent on money transfers from their relatives abroad. The Somaliland Ministry of Planning estimated remittance flows in 1998 at US\$478-540 million per year. Independent studies indicate that an estimated 120,000 households throughout Somaliland receive money from abroad on a monthly basis (Ahmed, 1998). Although there is no reliable data on the average remittance received by each household, estimates of the average amount received range from US\$1,200 per year (UNDP, 1998) to as much as US\$4,170 per year (Ahmed, 1998). These studies agree that most of the repatriated money goes to family consumption rather than productive investments. Some participants in the study argued that this has fostered a dependency syndrome, particularly among youths who prefer to be provided for rather than seeking employment.

Religious Support Systems

Religious groups are widely credited with having mitigated the moral and social decay associated with the war (SCPD/WSP, 2000). In a society where almost 100 per cent of the population is Muslim, much solidarity and social assistance in the post-war period derives from religious principle and practice. Religious groups have reinforced the integrity of the traditional family. Some groups have organized campaigns against immorality (*dbaqaan xumo*) and religious leaders have preached against it in their religious sermons at Friday prayers. These groups generally advocate the application of Islam in every aspect of life, and particularly family life. Some assist in resolving family disputes such as divorce, alimony,

inheritance, and the payment of *diya* through resort to religious precepts. Such influence has helped to foster the growth of private Islamic courts, which charge a minimum service fee and have offices throughout the country. These are generally more efficient than state-run courts and many people have greater confidence in the *shariica* than in secular law.

The contribution of religious groups to the education sector has also gained growing recognition from the public since 1993. The number of Qur'anic schools and mosques has increased. According to 1997 survey, there is a one Qur'anic school every 300-500 meters in settled areas. (UNICEF, 1998). Nearly every village in Somaliland now has a Qur'anic school. The majority of these schools were built by charities based abroad and token fee is charged to the families of those students who can afford to supplement the teacher's salary. Special consideration is given to orphans, the poor and children in special circumstance.

Zakaat (Sako)

The Islamic faith also provides for the welfare of disadvantaged groups, such the orphaned, the disabled and the poor. According to the Qur'an:

Alms is for the poor and the needy, and those employed to administer the (funds); for those hearts have been (recently) reconciled (to truth); for those in bondage and in debt; in the cause of God; and for the wayfarer: (Thus is it) ordained by God, and God is full of knowledge and wisdom. (Qur'an: 9: 60)

The payment of religious tax, known as *zakaat*, is one of the five pillars of Islam and obliges every Muslim to pay 2.5% annually from his or her assets above 85 gram of gold, equivalent to US\$ 850. It can be given either in cash or in kind: urban dwellers typically pay cash, while in rural settlements people may pay with livestock or agricultural produce instead¹⁹.

In most Muslim countries, *zakaat* is collected either by government or charity organizations for distribution to those members of society prescribed by the Qur'an. But in Somaliland neither of the two systems exists: instead, *zakaat* is usually given to close relatives and friends. Although Islam gives priority to close relatives – if they fall into the categories for whom the *zakaat* is intended – some participants in the study argued that the absence of a central body to collect and administer the *zakaat* limits its potential contribution to the wider community.

Problems and Prospects

The hardships of the post-war period, however, have tested the limits of formal and informal support systems alike. In rural areas, pastoralists spend a growing proportion of their livestock and animal products on consumption of grains and other commodities. This means that there is little surplus remaining for disadvantaged relatives and that such traditional forms of co-operation are becoming overstretched. In major towns, economic distress and high unemployment have made it increasingly difficult for families to make ends meet, even as demands for assistance have increased to unprecedented levels. Some

¹⁹ There are specifications for the amount to be paid in terms of livestock or crops.

households have simply been overwhelmed and are unable to provide support when asked; others manage their limited resources by giving priority to their own kinsmen. This can lead to disagreements within the clan, and even to the collapse of mutual support systems. The efforts of government and NGOs to provide support for Somaliland's most disadvantaged families and social groups take place in the context of an inadequate policy framework, incomplete legislation, and scarce resources.

Workshop participants thus identified the principal constraints and challenges to be addressed in the future development of this sector as follows:

Policy constraints

Participants dealt with this issue from several angles. First, they discussed the general lack of policy pertaining to post-war social issues. They asserted that the regulatory vacuum aggravates the poor socio-economic prospects for the post-war family and that the government ought to be providing the policy framework that could provide guidelines for public and private actors in the social sector. For instance, the participants considered relationship between the weak judicial system and the increasing incidence of broken homes. They debated the assertion that incompetent officials in some regional and district courts may actually encourage divorces once a dispute-affected family approaches them, in order to bring the case to a quick close.

Another problem identified was the ambiguous legal status of street children and young offenders. The participants were additionally concerned that the current system of justice lacks any provision with regard to children's rights and is generally unequipped to deal with youth. Some participants also asserted that the lack of appropriate facilities for young offenders, such as rehabilitation centres might contribute to the incidence of crime over the long term.

Although participants generally had little experience in the policy domain, they expressed deep concern, and urged the government to make greater efforts to clarify the legal and policy framework for addressing such issues.

Economic Constraints

Participants were unanimous that Somaliland's difficult economic circumstances have both contributed to Somaliland's social problems and also hampered the search for solutions. First, the impoverishment of so many families in the post-war period is in large part responsible for the stresses on the contemporary family. Second, the scarcity of resources restricts the opportunities for public and private actors to develop social programmes of the quality and scope required to address the problem. However, since the economic problems of the country fell beyond the scope of this study, participants accepted them as a given.

Erosion of traditional support systems

Participants noted the importance of traditional systems of support, and the degree to which they have been weakened. The breakdown of traditional support systems has placed an even greater burden on formal, institutionalised services that are already inadequate for the task.

Although participants argued for a revitalization of informal support systems, it is unclear how this could best be achieved.

Workshop participants affirmed the importance and the inherent strengths of Somaliland's informal support systems. However, they noted that their effectiveness has been undermined by the shift in values and norms as a result of the war, as well as by widespread economic hardship, and that a more institutionalised form of social assistance is called for. However, according to the renowned poet, Maxamed Xaashi Dhamac "Gaariye", Somali nomadic culture has prevented more institutionalised systems from taking root:

The informal system of support cannot be turned into a sustainable mechanism largely due to the cultural barriers. We Somalis are enmeshed in our nomadic culture: a culture that denies continuity - and for that matter - sustenance. It is possible that if you encounter a problem you might be assisted to overcome that problem. But it is very unlikely that you will receive sustained assistance to address recurrent problems. It is the nomadic lifestyle and the continuously shifting patterns and culture of our life that dictate a "one-time" way of helping and solving problems, instead of seeking sustainable solutions. But an institutionalised support system can be established with strong leadership.

Designing such systems and putting them in place is the challenge addressed in the final section of this paper.

5

Conclusions and Recommendations

The post-war family in Somaliland is in state of rapid transformation. The war in particular has accelerated trends in changing values, roles, and relationships that had begun to emerge in the pre-war period. The ordinary Somaliland family today finds itself in a situation where its own resources are largely depleted, and where alternative sources of support – the family, the co-operative or NGO, and the state – are scarcely better able to assist.

Both the working group and workshop participants on the family expressed concern over what they termed the disintegration of the traditional family, in which respect, obedience and discipline constituted fundamental values of the family unit. While assigning the breakdown of the family to exogenous factors like the civil war, poverty and globalisation, they also acknowledged that some changes may be irreversible and that there may be a need to redefine what it means to be a healthy family in contemporary Somaliland.

The workshops have produced numerous recommendations on all three themes. Among these the following key policies, programmes and actions recommendations have been distilled by the study.

Overall policy

The problems facing the contemporary Somaliland family are many and complex, and there are no simple or comprehensive solutions. There has been very little support for the post-conflict family with respect to health, education or other social sectors. Addressing these problems will require action from a wide variety of actors at different levels and to recognise the family issues as a national crisis. At present, family issues are considered a private matter, and may require the intervention of only elders and religious leaders. Government intervention is needed if this to change.

- For immediate action, a national family policy should be developed under the leadership of the central government: participants proposed a task force composed of the Ministries of Justice, Religion, Culture, Education and Health. Local NGOs, especially youth and women's organizations, should also be members of the initiative.
- Multi-purpose, modern family counselling centres should be established across the country, starting in the capital, with a mandate to assist in issues of marriage, street children and trauma victims.

Marriage

- The government should present new and comprehensive legislation pertaining to family matters. Specifically, new legislation should set clear procedures and

responsibilities in respect of marriage, divorce, alimony, child custody etc. Legislation in force in other Muslim countries may serve as a point of reference for the development of new legislation.

- The Ministry of Information, in collaboration with existing umbrella organizations and youth groups, should develop awareness-raising programs concerning family matters. Such programmes should target the general public, judiciary, police and other officials dealing with family matters in order to ensure that relevant laws, procedures and obligations are understood.
- Marriages between first cousin/*diya*-paying groups should be banned. This would increase the social and economic costs to marriage and possibly reduce divorce rates.

Juvenile Delinquency and Crime

- The Ministry of Justice should develop legislation concerning juvenile offences and their sentences.
- The Ministry of Justice should establish juvenile courts with judges specialized in juvenile offences.
- The police force should establish a special department to deal with delinquents and juvenile offenders. This should take place within the context of global training program for the police on human rights, police ethics and community policing.
- The Custodial Corps should established reformatory facilities for young offenders. The prison law requires separation of juveniles from adults. If separate facilities are not available, separate space should be set aside for the children in existing facilities. This should ideally take place in within the context of a general improvement of the conditions in Somaliland prisons.
- A committee consisting of religious groups, parents and the police should monitor and classify films for public viewing.

Social Services

Although the workshop participants made numerous specific and concrete recommendations, their over-riding consideration involved the improvement in quality and access of social services in Somaliland. In particular, this would require a global increase in expenditure on social services as a percentage of the ordinary budget.

Education

- The Ministry of Education should introduce counselling mechanism in schools, to advise students, parents and teachers on managing the relationships between teachers, parents and students.
- A committee consisting of parents and educational experts should be formed under the auspices of the Ministry of Education to propose reforms of the educational system. The main function of the committee should be to evaluate the quality of education offered, qualifications of teachers, educational material, facilities etc.
- There is a need to include day-care schools for young children and afternoon classes for girls in Somaliland's basic education system in order to relieve the burden on single and working mothers, and to give the opportunity to girls who are obliged to perform domestic chores during normal school hours. The Ministry of Education can spear-head this initiative seeking collaboration support from concerned NGO's and NGO's, UNICEF, and UNESCO.

Non-Governmental Organizations

- The government, together with international humanitarian agencies, should establish more care centres for orphans and street children in the major towns of Somaliland.
- The government should register and encourage private associations that help disadvantaged families, street children, orphans and elders. The government can provide the technical know how on how to set up such associations, their regulations and management training, and provide certificates of appreciation or awards to those who do serious work.
- The business community should create a charity fund to for the collection of annual alms (*zakaat*) and its redistribution for prescribed social causes

Qaad

Most of the workshop participants agreed that a legal ban on *qaad* use would be impracticable. They generally believed, however, that *qaad* should be made socially unacceptable and users should be banned from chewing in certain places. In addition, they made the following recommendations

Civil service

- The government should prohibit *qaad* chewing in public places like government offices and chewing should be prohibited during office hours.

- Working hours should be increased (8 a.m to 5 p.m) and enforced to discourage *qaad* chewing in the civil service.
- Government ministries and agencies should stop providing *qaad* to their employees on government occasions or from public funds.

Production and sales

- The cultivation of other crops should be encouraged, to ensure farmers do not devote all their agricultural land to *qaad*. The Ministry of agriculture with the help of donor agencies to assist existing research centres such as Amoud university to develop and introduce a cash crop that can replace *qaad*.
- *Qaad* markets should be separated from general markets and placed on the outskirts of main towns. This would discourage casual *qaad* users through inaccessibility, while improving municipal sanitation and appearance.
- Vocational training programmes should be encouraged to allocate a proportion of their places to *qaad* vendors, in order that they acquire alternative business skills.

Public Awareness / Civic Education

- The government, in consultation with civic groups and religious leaders, should develop public awareness programs highlighting the problems associated with *qaad* use.
- The curriculum committee should include courses on *qaad* and its effects in the school curriculum in order to sensitise young children at an early age.
- Sports and other social entertainment should be encouraged as an alternative to chewing *qaad*. For this to happen, existing facilities would need to be improved and new ones set up. Local governments should provide land and contribute to the facilities.

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