



Somalia's Education Sector: Fostering Skills Through A Demand-driven Education System



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Executive Summary



The overarching objectives of this assessment are to review the current state of the education sector in Somalia, identify the key challenges it is facing and suggest strategic interventions based on evidence drawn from rigorous qualitative findings

Education is one of the most important determinants for an individual's productivity and future success, and is also one of the key drivers of economic development. The overarching objectives of this assessment are to review the current state of the education sector in Somalia, identify the key challenges it is facing and suggest strategic interventions based on evidence drawn from rigorous qualitative findings.

The report begins with a discussion of the history and current context of education in Somalia, covering the period from the pre-colonial era to the aftermath of the prolonged civil war. Somalia has experienced five distinct education transformations: the advent of Islamic education; the introduction of missionary schools in the colonial period; and educational reform in the years after it achieved independence; the era of state collapse; and the revival period marked by intensive interventions from private educationists.

The second part of this report addresses issues related to access to basic education and technical and vocational education and training (TVET). In 2017, the gross enrolment rate in primary education was approximately 32.7 percent, meaning that roughly 67 percent of the country's primary school-age population were out of school. The gross enrolment rate in secondary education was even lower at 18.4 percent. A relatively small number of students (13,071) are currently enrolled in TVET programs. As far as tertiary education is concerned, there is limited rigorous data on the enrolment rate. However, the current structure of the higher education system is not adequately geared towards meeting the current labor market demands of the productive sectors of the economy.

Against this backdrop, this report relies on a comprehensive qualitative approach (including key informant interviews and focus group discussions) to investigate constraints on the education sector and to develop actionable strategic interventions. This report finds significant challenges facing the sector, including the following:

- **Barriers to educational access remain very high**, especially affecting certain socio-economically disadvantaged groups and individuals, remote geographical areas and women.
- **The country's education system continues to be of poor quality.** There is a lack of qualified teachers, poor training for teachers, no unified curriculum with economic and civic relevance, poor education infrastructure and meager supplies of instructional materials and textbooks.
- **A lack of responsiveness to the productive sectors' labor market needs.** Factors in this include a failure to prioritize early childhood education, a limited focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and a shortage of skills relevant to productive sectors such as agriculture, livestock and fisheries.
- **The current education system is hampered by insecurity and political instability, as well as limited policy and regulatory mechanisms.** Somalia's poor enabling environment has important implications for the development of its education sector.

This report concludes by suggesting a set of strategies to support education sector development. Each strategy includes a list of strategic interventions and activities to respond to the constraints highlighted above, including the following:

- Implementing an immediate five-year national literacy campaign to increase citizens' literacy and numeracy skills
- Implementing a national campaign to urgently increase access to education for Somali children
- Establishing new primary and secondary schools and rehabilitating existing ones
- Improving and ensuring equity in education for vulnerable and underserved populations (including women, internally displaced persons and people with disabilities)
- Developing and financing new primary, intermediate and secondary education systems to replace the unacceptably substandard systems that have been normalized and accepted
- Establishing well-planned and high-quality tertiary education systems geared towards employment creation, the labor needs of the productive sectors and the need to spur economic growth in Somalia
- Developing TVET as a national priority to promote employment and productivity
- Implementing an education system based on patriotism, values, the common good and students' rights and responsibilities
- Developing and implementing a unified national qualification framework that recognizes overall knowledge and skills acquisition qualifications
- Harmonizing education stakeholders to unite their strengths, efforts and resources to develop the education system
- Creating stakeholder awareness about the importance of gathering reliable data and research to improve and develop the education system
- Allocating sufficient national budgetary and financial resources to implement overall strategic priorities for education



*Developing TVET
as a national
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employment and
productivity*

Acronyms

CRPD	Charter on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FGS	Federal Government of Somalia
FMS	Federal Member States
HCDM	Human Capital Development Mechanism
ICT	Information communications technology
IDPs	Internally displaced persons
INGOs	International non-governmental organizations
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
LNGOs	Local non-governmental organizations
MOECHE	Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education
MoPIED	Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development
MoWHR	Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development
NDP	National Development Plan
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
PWDs	People with Disabilities
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

1. Background

1.1: Historical Transformation of Education in Somalia

Historians demarcate Somalia's educational development into five distinct phases: the advent of Islamic education, the introduction of missionary schools in the colonial period and educational reform during the post-independence, civil war and post-war eras.

The first phase in the development of formal education coincided with the arrival of Islam in Somalia more than a millennium ago. Islamization led to a shift in Somali culture from one informed by ancient Cushitic deities to one based on Islam. Somalis devised new methods of learning, proselytizing and retaining divine knowledge. Islam became inseparable from social, economic and political life. This gave birth to an indigenous education system in which Quranic schools (*dugsi*) became a prominent feature of education, and they remain so even today. These schools became embedded in the social fabric from rural communities to the medieval coastal cities on the shores of the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. A teacher (*macallin*) instructed, guided and supervised children in their rote memorization of verses and chapters of the Holy Qur'an. Students wrote on wooden slates (*loox*) using washable ink made from a mixture of charcoal and myrrh gum. Learning the Qur'an was seen as a religious duty.

The purpose was twofold: to preserve religious knowledge and to produce spiritually trained and disciplined future propagators of the faith. Scholars acknowledge that the spread of Islam shaped the experience, awareness and indigenization of education in Somalia before the intervention of colonial systems of learning. Qur'anic schools became the bedrock for both the production of indigenous knowledge and the creation of an "ethnicized Islam" that made Islam inextricable from the Somali identity. Deeply immersed in the divine laws and completely Islamized, traditional preachers linked the Somali lineage system with religious saints. Any secular explanations of the world drew condemnation.

The spread of Islam brought with it what linguist B.W. Andrzejewski described as an "itinerant attitude"¹ to education. Students travelled far in search of knowledge and it was common to see a teacher walking in the countryside, followed by a group of learners. This perfectly suited Somalia's traditional agro-pastoral way of life. These indigenized teaching methods and the formation of a unique phonetic blend of the Somali and Arabic alphabets paved the way for what could be described as knowledge appropriation without acculturation, popularized through Sufi poetry and spiritual mysticism.²

In Somalia's memorization-focused form of learning, little or no attention was paid to understanding the message or underpinning meaning of the Qur'an. Learners could either be full-time (*oog*) or part-time (*loox-jiid*) students. The former dedicated their time to memorizing the divine words and were often trained as future teachers while the latter participated in the herding of livestock in the daytime and attended evening sessions. Translation, interpretation and higher pedagogical skills were reserved for religious scholars. Roving holy men (*wadaado*), who in the words of Said Samatar "boasted about their rudimentary knowledge in Arabic literacy and sacred laws," taught the basics of religious science.

¹ Andrzejewski, B. W. "Is there Arabic influence in Somali poetry?" *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 1.

² Samatar, S. (1982). *Oral poetry and Somali Nationalism: the case of Sayyid Muhammad 'Abdille Hasan*. Cambridge University Press.

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Although traditional Somali methods of teaching and learning remain understudied, historians agree that religious studies dominated the educational landscape and its knowledge production. Individuals pursued careers as teachers or judges in pre-colonial Somali society. Being a judge required in-depth knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence, and sheikhs (*wadaad* in Somali) concentrated on teaching literacy and simple arithmetic by using the Qur'an as the source of guidance. The Qur'an itself was the heart of the scholastic curriculum and its recitation and translation were considered to be the highest achievements. Reinforced by contact with learning centers in Harer (in present-day Ethiopia) and the Arabian Peninsula, mosques in Somalia served as the guarantors of high standards of Islamic scholarship. Knowledge seekers (*xer*) studied under the tutelage of prominent Islamic scholars.³

Secularized Western forms of education came with the colonial powers in the nineteenth century. The establishment of missionary schools met with strong resistance from Somali society, spearheaded by religious scholars who viewed the European presence on Somali soil as a threat to their religious identity. Both the Italians in the south and the British authorities in the north limited their presence to the coastal strips while Somalia's vast hinterland largely retained traditional methods of teaching.⁴

The colonial powers paid little attention to education until the 1950s, before which education was restricted to the “administrative and low-level technical needs of the imperial powers.”⁵ In Italian Somaliland, one of the first schools opened its doors to Somali children in 1907, run by the Dante Alighieri Society. Colonial in character, its mission was to teach the Italian language and promote Italian culture in urban centers.⁶

Though Somalis' aversion to colonial projects impeded the development of missionary education, more schools were opened in the late 1940s. In the British Somali protectorate, 21 secular elementary schools were built between 1941 and 1950 with an estimated 1,600 pupils and 45 teachers.⁷ The first boarding school for girls was set up in 1949. Somali schoolchildren in both the north and the south could not go beyond grade seven, indicating that the education of Somalis was ultimately aimed at fulfilling the objectives of imperialism. The reasons for the underdevelopment of education were twofold. First, the colonial authorities suspected that giving local children a proper education might bring about a social and political awakening. Second, the colonizers feared that an educated elite might form the basis of an emergent middle class that could compete for scarce resources.⁸

After the end of World War Two Somalia was placed under Italian trusteeship for 10 years, but agitation began to intensify for independence, inevitability for which Italy frantically but inadequately prepared. Under pressure from the liberation movement and international powers, Italy devoted considerable attention to education for the first time. The aim was to create a cadre of bureaucratic administrators for an independent Somali state. Italy sought to establish a system of public elementary, secondary and vocational schools as quickly as possible, though the colonial power itself was unprepared for this task. The 160 elementary schools alone would admit 22,000 pupils each year. From the Italian administrators' viewpoint, this was a milestone achievement for a society that was reluctant to embrace secular education. In the Trusteeship period,

3 Said, S. (1982). *Oral poetry and Somali nationalism: The case of Sayyid Mohamed 'Abdille Hasan*. Cambridge University Press.

4 Aw Jaamac, C. (1974). *Diwaankii Gabayadii Sayid Maxamad Cabdille Xasan*. Xarunta cilmi baadhista, Jabuuti.

5 Abdi, A. (1998). Education in Somalia: History, Destruction and Calls for Reconstruction. *Comparative Education*, vol. 34 (3).

6 Laitin, D. & Said, S. (1984). Somalia and the world economy. *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 30 (4).

7 Fatoke, S. (1981). *Educational Development and Administrative Control in British Somaliland*. Michigan State University Press.

8 Andrzejewski, B. & Lewis, I. (1964). *Somali poetry: an introduction*. Oxford University Press.

administrators established a school of Politics and Administration, a Higher Institute for Economics and Law and a School of Islamic Studies. A University Institute later became the Somali National University to groom what Cassanelli and Abdikadir describe as “an elite corps of Somali professionals.”⁹ Fast-moving global events combined with internal demands for freedom worked against the wishes of the colonial administrators, and so training to produce some professional Somali nationals took place outside of Somalia.

To meet increasing demand for literacy, starting in 1954, colonial authorities established a few learning centers offering instruction on farming methods and handicrafts. Somalis’ traditional scorn for manual labor, a challenge that persists even today, stifled the transfer of much-needed skills to local farmers.

After independence in 1960, the former British and Italian territories united to form the Somali Republic. Though this brought both territories under a single Somali administration, the education sector remained divided based on the two colonial modes of instruction (English in the north and Italian in the south). In 1961, the Ministry of Education recognized that it was a major challenge to unify the country’s modes of instruction. In order to address linguistic challenges, the first independent Somali government attempted to suspend Italian and Arabic as languages of instruction and in 1966 it introduced English as the sole language to be used in schools.

The first decade of independence saw no substantial changes in the education policies inherited from the colonial era. Emphasis was laid on urban schooling and professional training for the children of the elite. There were no specific or sector-oriented programs geared towards developing knowledge and skills in essential fields such as veterinary science and animal husbandry, and students studying abroad in Italy and elsewhere focused mainly on administrative professions with good income-earning prospects. Most of the Somali population lived in rural areas on the margins of modern education and the Qur’anic schools remained the only means of acquiring knowledge for many children.



The slogan “learn or teach” (bar ama baro) was adopted and over 100,000 students and civil servants were sent to teach, live and stay in the countryside for six months in a 1973-1974 campaign

In 1969, the civilian president of Somalia was assassinated by his guard. A group of military officers led by General Mohammed Said Barre. The new military government under Barre introduced “scientific socialism” and revolutionary programs. They instituted a written form of the Somali language based on Latin script in 1972 and embraced it as the medium for all national bureaucratic functions as well as academia. Barre’s revolution, the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC), “solved [a] decades-old language feud over the implementation of orthography.”¹⁰ The military mobilized a nationwide mass campaign to expand literacy.

Most of the rural population tasted the fruits of independence and modern learning in their mother tongue. The slogan “learn or teach” (bar ama baro) was adopted and over 100,000 students and civil servants were sent to teach, live and stay in the countryside for six months in a 1973-1974 campaign that sharply increased the rate of literacy from a dismal five percent to 55 percent.¹¹

9 Cassanelli, L. & Abdikadir, F. (2008). Somalia: Education in transition. *Bildhaan* Vol. 7.

10 Eno, M. (2018). The challenges of ESP/EFL education: an examination of teachers’ perceptions. *Journal of Somali Studies*, vol. 5 (1 & 2).

11 “Staff Appraisal Report: Fourth Education Project in the Somali Democratic Republic,” report by the Education Projects Division of the World Bank’s Eastern Africa Regional Office, January 15, 1981, available online at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/pt/969941468335060889/pdf/multi-page.pdf>, last accessed on 22 May 2020.

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Somalia completely replaced foreign languages in the bureaucratic administration and in the national newspaper *Xiddigta Oktobar*. Linguists and researchers embarked on a word-hunt (eray bixin) process and converted the elementary, secondary and to a certain extent tertiary curricula into Somali. The substantial growth of enrolment at the lower levels of education hastened the printing of new materials in Somali and the new written language was adopted in technical and scientific fields. The military government had in a sense acted on a Somali proverb that says “one quenches a strong thirst only by drinking water with his own hands.”

As a measure of national development, the literacy campaign paved the way for an exponential rise in primary enrolment. A report published by the World Bank in 1981 indicated that the number of students completing primary schools rose from 7,600 in 1977 to an estimated 35,000 in 1980, placing heavy pressure on the government to expand secondary school placement.¹² The government initiated a sector-oriented educational policy to accommodate the high number of primary leavers who could not find places in post-primary education. Twenty-four percent of primary leavers joined general high schools, 14 percent entered technical secondary schools and 42 percent enrolled in vocational schools.¹³ The new role that the Somali language assumed in education and the achievement of literacy was in the words of Abdalla Mansur a “model for imitation and emulation”¹⁴ by other countries on the continent.

The establishment of sector-based technical schools was a turning point. In the higher education sector, the University Institute of the colonial era was renamed the Somali National University (SNU) in 1970, starting with departments of economics and law. It quickly transformed itself into a full-fledged institution of higher learning and expanded its faculties to other key areas of study such as agriculture, veterinary science, animal husbandry, engineering and medicine. The funding of this national university depended heavily on Somalia’s former colonizer, Italy. Corruption and bribery hampered admission to the university in the 1980s. Scholarships and fields of specialization fell under the politics of patronage and nepotism. Merit-based and development-oriented education crumbled, and intellectual repression became widespread.

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Somalia’s education infrastructure completely collapsed under the military government, and during the ensuing warlord era polarization and sectarianism tore the country apart. Schools, universities and libraries were either destroyed, deserted or turned into residences. In the words of Somali scholar Ali Abdi, marauding youth and warlords were the “enemies of what they never understood: the value of knowledge and learning and the permanent relationship between social development and education.”

Before the civil war all levels of education rested in the hands of the government, but educational institutions disappeared after the collapse of the central government. During the civil war, non-profits and private foundations and institutions of learning appeared to fill the void, resulting in the emergence of uncoordinated education systems. National curriculum disappeared from the educational landscape and the Somali language almost completely disappeared from the nation’s fledgling classrooms.

¹² “Staff Appraisal Report: Fourth Education Project in the Somali Democratic Republic,” report by the Education Projects Division of the World Bank’s Eastern Africa Regional Office, January 15, 1981, available online at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/pt/969941468335060889/pdf/multi-page.pdf>, last accessed on 22 May 2020.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Abdalla, O. M., “The case of Somali language.” *Wardheer News*, April 1, 2017, available online at: <https://wardheernews.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/The-case-of-Somali-language-By-Abdalla-Manur.pdf>, last accessed on 22 May 2020.

Private organizations, individuals and NGOs filled the vacuum, but they failed to adopt a single curriculum. Re-established schools taught in Arabic or English. Education became a donor-driven machine detached from Somalia's productive sectors, and the absence of central authority left millions of children at the mercy of informal education. Because of the destructive nature of the prolonged conflict, the social environment was as tumultuous as the political atmosphere, resulting in youth adopting "a culture of thuggery and war-like attitude towards life."¹⁵

A report by the World Bank in 2018 found the existence of 14 private umbrella organizations in south-central Somalia that ran more than 1,000 schools offering unregulated basic educational services. The complete privatization of basic education led to compromised quality and commercialization¹⁶ and left millions of Somali children from impoverished or rural families out of school. The private umbrellas in the capital city remained the most important actors in the education landscape and highly commercialized higher learning institutions grew significantly between 2004 and 2012.¹⁷ Universities mushroomed in the absence of regulatory mechanisms, producing graduates who unsurprisingly lacked practical skills that could be applied in key sectors such as agriculture, fisheries and livestock. As Ali Mazrui articulated, "no university can be a first-class institution of higher learning if the secondary schools which feed into it are all mediocre."

1.2 Purpose and Methodology of the Study

This study sought to produce a comprehensive report on the state of the education sector in Somalia, specifically mapping the key challenges and priorities needed for the sector to reach its potential. It feeds into a wider baseline study that will inform a national human capital development strategy and the National Development Plan (NDP) produced by ministries of planning at the federal (FGS) and federal member state (FMS) level.

This report relied on both quantitative and qualitative research to explore specific issues, underlying challenges and opportunities in Somalia's education system. The quantitative approach involved gathering documents such as the statistical yearbook on education and other key reports related to indicators like primary and secondary student enrolment rates, numbers of schools, deployment of teachers and public and private education expenditures. The study also reviewed key literature related to education in Somalia produced by both international development partners (World Bank, UNESCO and UNDP) and local NGOs.

For the qualitative fieldwork, an experienced methodology team led by Professor Abdi Mohamed Kusow prepared, implemented and documented 15 focus group discussions (FGDs) and 16 key informant interviews (KIIs) involving a total of 93 participants. The FGDs had a minimum of five and a maximum of 10 participants each and sessions normally lasted from 45 to 120 minutes. For each KII and FGD, a moderator was deployed to lead the discussion and record it for transcription. Qualitative approaches were carried out from September 2018 to April 2019 in all member states and in the Banadir region (Mogadishu).

15 A. (1998). Education in Somalia: History, Destruction and Calls for Reconstruction. *Comparative Education*, vol. 34 (3).

16 (2018). Review of livestock-related education and training in Somalia. World Bank.

17 "The State of Higher Education in Somalia," Heritage Institute for Policy Studies website, August 2013, available online at: <http://www.heritageinstitute.org/state-of-higher-education/>, last accessed on 22 May 2020.

Other key aspects of the research methodology included the following:

- A literature review was conducted of relevant documents covering other countries' development of human capital or skills strategies, policy-orientated documents produced by local and international partners in Somalia and other relevant studies or analyses.
- Data was collected on education and labor from the country's statistical agencies and administrative data was gathered from line ministries including the federal and FMS level ministries of education, culture and higher education, as well as the FMS ministries of labor and social affairs.
- Fieldwork was conducted to obtain the perceptions and insights of key stakeholders in the education system. Evidence and perceptions were obtained through workshops and consultations. Extensive KIIs and FGDs were held with government officials, representatives from the private sector, academia and civil society and other stakeholders. Workshops and stakeholder forums were held and presentations made to the Human Capital Development Mechanism (HCDM) working groups.

PART 2: OVERVIEW OF THE EDUCATION SECTOR

This section presents a quantitative analysis of the state of primary, secondary and tertiary education in Somalia, as well as technical and vocational training. The findings are derived from secondary sources obtained in Mogadishu as well as in the member states and Somaliland.

2.1 Primary Education

The significance of primary education in Somalia's overall education system can hardly be overstated. Before 1991, the government established primary schools to fulfill the educational needs of the country's future generations. However, since the collapse of the central state, basic education in Somalia has been predominantly privatized. Somalia hosts one of the world's most significant out-of-school populations. Forty percent of the total 12.3 million¹⁸ Somali population, roughly 4.9 million,¹⁹ are school-aged.²⁰ Of the 4.9 million children who should be in school, enrollment in school is staggeringly low—3 million children are out-of-school.²¹ Across Somalia, three out of ten children have access to school. According to the latest education statistics yearbook 2017, roughly 605,144 pupils were enrolled in primary schools, 45 percent of whom were female. Of these, 229,833 are in South-Central of Somalia, 222,203 in Somaliland and 153,108 in Puntland respectively. There were a total of 18,578 active primary school teachers across Somalia, representing a notably low pupil-teacher ratio of 33:1.

The gross primary enrolment rate stood at 32.7 percent, meaning that an alarming 67.3 percent of primary school-age children were not in school. Since privately-owned schools accounted for about two-thirds of enrolment, it is likely that most out-of-school children came from the poorest segments of society. Nevertheless, there were disparities in primary school enrolment among the three Somali regional zones. Enrolment in South-Central zone was 21%. Puntland had the highest rate with 58.2% while Somaliland registered 43.6%^{22/23}.

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Note: Unless otherwise noted, data for this section is drawn from statistical yearbook of the Federal Government of Somalia Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education, Puntland and Somaliland.

18 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Somalia. (2014). Population Estimation Survey (PSS). Mogadishu hosts wan estimated population of between 1.6 million people, accounting for 13 percent of the total population of Somalia. Banadir, Galmudug, Hirshabelle, Jubaland and South West hosts 56 percent of the total population, followed by Puntland at 18 percent and Somaliland at 25 percent.

19 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (2017). Education Cluster Meeting presentation. October 4, 2017.

20 Five to ten-year old's comprise a fifth of Somalia's population, while the youth bracket of 15-34 comprise 36% of the population. Federal Government of Somalia Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education. (2017). Education Sector Strategic Plan 2016-2018

21 Federal Government of Somalia Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education. (2015). Joint Review Education Sector (JRES); UNICEF (2017). Education Cluster Meeting presentation. October 4, 2017.

22 Education statistics yearbook 2016/17: Federal Government of Somalia Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education.

23 Education Statistics Yearbook 2016/17: Puntland Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

The regional variations of enrolment rates are due to the size of the school-age population. This extremely low level of access to high-quality primary education reflects the challenges ahead in developing Somalia's human capital. Gender equity is another important indicator of access. For every 100 male primary school students in 2017, there were about 82 females.

2.2 Secondary Education

Even though secondary education has registered significant growth in the past decade, most schools have no basic facilities such as libraries or laboratories. Furthermore, access remains limited since most schools are privatized. According to the Education Statistics Yearbook, in 2017 secondary education enrolment in Somalia stood at 154,199 students. The combined gross enrolment ratio for all secondary age groups was 18.4 percent. Girls accounted for 40.4 percent of students enrolled. There were 6,104 teachers at the secondary education level, representing a pupil-teacher ratio of 25. Gross enrolment rates have remained low and over 80 percent of secondary school-age children are not in school, which raises urgent questions about the country's ability to achieve political, social and economic recovery.

Table 1: Summary of selected primary education indicators in Somalia, 2017

	Enrolment			Teachers			GER*	PTR*	GPI*	School-age population
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total				
South-Central (2016/2017)	126,703	103,130	229,833	5,713	650	6,363	21	36	0.84	1,085,736
Puntland (2016/2017)	84,441	68,667	153,108	3,648	662	4,310	58.2	35	0.81	263,175
Somaliland (2013/2014)	123,057	99,146	222,203	6,364	1,541	7,905	43.6	27	0.81	509,091
Somalia (Total)	334,201	270,943	605,144	15,725	2,853	18,578	32.7	33	0.82	1,858,002

Sources: MOECHE Education Statistics Yearbook 2016/2017: FGS, Puntland & Somaliland
 *GER: Gross enrolment ratio, *GPI: Gender parity Index, *PTR: Pupil-teacher ratio

Table 2: Summary of selected secondary education indicators in Somalia, 2017

	Enrolment			Teachers			*GER	*PTR	*GPI	School-age population
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total				
South-Central (2016/2017)	48,740	36,842	85,582	3,245	115	3,360	18.1	25	0.76	473,431
Puntland (2016/2017)	15,684	9,432	25,116	947	42	989	16.3	25.4	0.64	153,799
Somaliland (2013/2014)	27,368	16,133	43,501	1,608	147	1,755	20.5	24.8	0.63	212,483
Somalia (Total)	91,792	62,407	154,199	5,800	304	6,104	18.4	25.3	0.67	627,230

Sources: MOECHE Education Statistics Yearbook 2016/2017: FGS, Puntland & Somaliland
 *GER: Gross enrolment ratio, *GPI: Gender parity Index, *PTR: Pupil-teacher ratio

Table 3: Education indicators in selected sub-Saharan African countries, 2017

	Primary Enrolment			Secondary Enrolment			Education Allocation of National Budget (%)
	GER	GPI	PTR	GER	GPI	PTR	
Kenya	105	1	31	57	0.9	33	17.6%
Liberia	94	0.92	27	36	0.78	15	7.1%
Sierra Leone	121	1	39	41	0.95	22	12.5%
South Sudan	67	0.71	47	10	0.54	27	0.1%
Somalia	32.7	0.82	33	18.3	0.67	25	5.1%
Tanzania	85	1	47	26	1	17	17.3%
Uganda	99	1	43	25	1.03	21	12.0%

Sources: World Development Indicators (WDI), World Bank, and Somalia Education Statistics Yearbook 2016/2017: FGS, Puntland & Somaliland

*GER: Gross enrolment ratio, *GPI: Gender parity Index, *PTR: Pupil-teacher ratio

Table 3 presents comparative education indicators from several African countries including Somalia, allowing for an understanding of the state of education in Somalia within the context of other African countries. In 2017, the gross enrolment ratio (GER) at the primary education level for Kenya, Sierra Leone and Uganda stood at 105, 121 and 99 percent respectively. It is worth noting that if there is late enrolment, early enrolment or repetition, the total enrolment can exceed the population of an age group that officially corresponds to a certain level of education, leading to ratios greater than 100 percent.²⁴ For that reason, the 99-121 percent range for the countries in question reflects an effort to extend education to all within the target group and ages beyond as repeaters or return learners. At 32.7 percent, Somalia has the lowest GER among peer countries in Africa.

With an average gender parity index (GPI) of 0.8, achievement towards gender parity in primary education is also much lower in Somalia than in neighboring countries. GPI in this case refers to the ratio of female to male values of a given education indicator. It measures the progress towards gender parity in education participation or learning opportunities available for girls in relation to those available to boys. It also reflects the level of women's empowerment in society. For example, the primary-level GPI among selected Sub-Saharan African countries is wide-ranging, with Kenya, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Uganda having achieved gender parity at one, meaning that 100 girls were registered for every 100 boys. In Liberia and South Sudan, both affected by conflict, about 92 and 80 girls respectively were enrolled for every 100 boys in 2017.

The quality of education, which is commonly measured by the pupil-teacher ratio (PTR), shows significant variations. A lower PTR means class sizes are smaller, which is often associated with better outcomes. Liberia and Kenya have the lowest PTRs at 27 and 31 respectively while Somalia and Tanzania have the highest PTRs at 33 and 47 respectively. All these countries fall below the standard ratio but Liberia and Kenya register a better performance than Somalia and Tanzania.

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With an average gender parity index (GPI) of 0.8, achievement towards gender parity in primary education is also much lower in Somalia than in neighboring countries

Note: Unless otherwise noted, data for this section is drawn from statistical yearbook of the Federal Government of Somalia Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education, Puntland and Somaliland.

²⁴ World Development Indicators (WDI), World Bank, available online at: <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>, last accessed on 22 May 2020.

Similar conditions exist in terms of access to secondary education. As Table 3 indicates, the gross secondary enrolment rate is significantly lower than that of primary education. The GER of secondary education in Somalia (18.3) is the second lowest among the surveyed countries after South Sudan, leaving more than 80 percent of school-age children outside the system.

Gender gaps exist at the secondary level, although girls' participation in some countries has made positive strides, with Uganda, Tanzania and Sierra Leone showing better gender parity. These countries have the highest GPIs – 103, 100 and 95 girls for every 100 boys in secondary school respectively. South Sudan and Liberia have the lowest gender parity with 54 and 78 girls respectively for every 100 boys in secondary enrolment. In the case of Somalia there are only 67 girls for every 100 boys.

The PTR in secondary education showed marked differences across the selected countries. Secondary schools in Liberia and Zambia have PTRs of 15 and 17 respectively. The PTR in Somalia stands at 25, higher than all other countries listed except Kenya and South Sudan. Somalia is struggling to respond to rising demand for education from a growing school-age population and is experiencing a severe shortage of qualified teachers with only 20 to 30 percent of primary and secondary teachers trained.²⁵ This worrisome challenge affects Somalia's future human capital and economic recovery. There are signs that the current education system will not guarantee inclusive education for all if the right policies are not put in place.

Government budgets for education vary across the selected countries. In 2017, education's average share of the government budget in Kenya was 17.6 percent, the highest among the selected countries. South Sudan allocated less than one percent of its total government expenditures to education, compared with 7.1 percent in Liberia, 12.5 percent in Sierra Leone and 17.3 percent in Tanzania. Education's share of Somalia's national budget was 5.1 percent in 2017, lower than all other selected countries except South Sudan.

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Education's share of Somalia's national budget was 5.1 percent in 2017, lower than all other selected countries except South Sudan

Somalia faces unique challenges including conflict, insecurity and poor education policies. However, other countries that have gone through civil wars and experienced periods of political instability have since made significant progress in education, such as Liberia and Sierra Leone – the latter had a gross enrolment rate of 121 percent in 2017. This exemplary transformation of education in post-conflict countries signals the importance of crafting timely strategic interventions for Somalia.

Assessment systems are quality measures that cater to a number of requirements of the education system. These can be used to measure overall system efficiency as well as individual students' performance for movement in the education system. The assessments may also suggest that even for those children who are in school, they are not actually learning. As student outcomes are measured by standardized tests or national examinations, the federal ministry of education undertook centralized examinations in primary and secondary education for the first time in 2015. Puntland and Somaliland were not part of these centralized examinations as they have their own school leaving examinations.²⁶ From the statistics regarding pass/failure of national examinations, 25,628 students took the exam with the pass rate of 78 percent – with a significantly higher pass rate for girls than boys.²⁷ Furthermore, in an Early Grade Reading Assessment²⁸ conducted in a limited sample of schools around Mogadishu testing students in Grades 2 through 4, when Grade 2

²⁵ 2018 World Bank report: Systematic Country Diagnostic of Federal Government of Somalia.

²⁶ World Bank. 2019. Somalia Economic Update, Fourth Edition: Building Education to Boost Human Capital. © World Bank.

²⁷ Data from Federal Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education (MOECHE).

²⁸ Early Grade Reading Assessments include a series of sub-tests which measure five key-sub-skills including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.

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A recent reports
conducted by the
World Bank in
Somalia indicates
the adult literacy
rate is 55 percent

students were asked to read a passage, nearly half of students (47 percent) in Grade 2 could not identify a single word.²⁹ This reduced to one quarter of students in Grade 3 and 11 percent of children in Grade 4. The poor quality of education is also evident in high student dropout rates, especially between Grade 1 and 2.³⁰ In Banadir, Galmudug, Hirshabelle, Jubaland and South West, roughly one-third of children leave school before Grade 5.³¹ On the other hand, other data suggests that students are able to decode simple texts and understand literal comprehension or possess reading fluency at 35 correct words per minute (cwpm), less than the 45-60 wpm global benchmark.³²

The adult literacy rate in Somalia is among the lowest in the world. A recent reports conducted by the World Bank in Somalia indicates the adult literacy rate is 55 percent.³³ Variations exist among federal member states. In South-central 38.3 percent of Somalis can read and write; 42.9 percent in Puntland; and 45.3 percent in Somaliland.³⁴ The high rate of illiteracy partly accounts for the low level of development in Somalia, because the growth and development of any nation depends largely on the quantity and quality of all segments of its population. However, given the huge population of out-of-school children, it is understandable that the overall literacy level is low.

2.3 Technical and Vocational Education and Training

Youth unemployment is a major concern with 70 percent of Somali youth (14-29 years old) unemployed, one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the world.³⁵

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is an essential avenue for the acquisition of employment skills that match with local demand. Somalia's current TVET situation is fragmented though the country is in dire need of more technically-skilled workers to transform untapped natural resources and fill skills gaps and shortages in productive sectors of the economy including agriculture and fisheries. In recent years there has been considerable expansion in the financing of TVET institutions in Somalia by NGOs and private institutions.

Table 4: TVET students and instructors in Somalia, 2017

	Student			Trainers			Centres Institutions	Student- Teacher ratio
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total		
South-Central Zone	4263	5697	9960	225	68	293	52	33
Puntland	1062	2049	3111	121	96	217	29	14.3
Somaliland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Somalia (total)	5325	7746	13071	346	164	510	81	23.6

Sources: MOECHE Education Statistics Yearbook 2016/2017: FGS, & Puntland

29 Unesco Institute for Statistics (2016). What Works in Oral Reading Assessments. Conducting an Early Grade Reading Assessment in a Complex Conflict Environment: Is it Worth it? Retrieved from http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/understanding-what-works-in-oral-reading-assessments-2016-en_2.pdf.

30 Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2016.

31 Federal Government of Somalia Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education. (2017). Education Sector Analysis 2012-2016

32 Care International (2018). Somali Girls' Education Program – Transition (SOMGEP-T) midline. Unpublished draft

33 World Bank. 2018. Federal Republic Of Somalia Systematic Country Diagnostic Report.

34 World Bank. 2019. Somalia Economic Update, Fourth Edition: Building Education to Boost Human Capital. © World Bank.

35 World Bank Group. 2015. Somalia Economic Update: Transition Amid Risks with a Special Focus on Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations. p.06. <https://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Africa/Somalia/somalia-economic-update-october-2015.pdf>

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The TVET services offered at present are insufficient and do not produce skilled graduates to work in critical productive sectors

Based on available data, in 2016/17 there were 81 TVET institutions in Somalia which enrolled 13,071 students and employed 510 trainers, of whom 32 percent were female.³⁶ Most of these institutions offered short-term programs covering subjects such as tailoring, setting up beauty salons, hairdressing and basic information and communication technology (ICT). Some offered electrician, plumbing and carpentry courses. However, large productive sectors such as agriculture, fisheries and livestock lacked focused investment and programs addressing the latest technical advances.

The TVET services offered at present are insufficient and do not produce skilled graduates to work in critical productive sectors. Revitalizing these sectors offers enormous opportunities for economic development and employment, and the most crucial factor is the availability of a skilled and technically oriented workforce. It is imperative for governments to formulate strategies that promote the necessary technical and vocational skills to revamp the country's productive sectors.

2.4 Tertiary Education

Accessible, high-quality and equitable tertiary education is the most crucial driver in the production of skilled labor, economic growth and sustainable development. Tertiary education also contributes to the promotion of civic education and social unity. Tertiary education includes public and private universities and other institutions of higher learning.

Before the civil war, higher education was completely governed by the central government, but currently it is predominately provided by the private sector and community organizations. The Somali National University (SNU), established in 1954 is still Somalia's only public university and its financing is limited by the constraints of the federal government's budgetary process.

Somalia has witnessed phenomenal growth in the number of universities, from one before the civil war to 44 in 2012 with a total student enrolment of 51,471. In 2012, most students were enrolled in social sciences, computer technology and public health studies.³⁷ Productive sector-related subjects were among the courses with the lowest enrollment. A survey of Somali university graduates conducted by the Iftin Foundation indicated that about 14,971 students graduated from 54 universities across the country in 2018, mostly with degrees in public administration, computer science and public health.³⁸

The current number of universities is estimated at 124, with about 70 in Mogadishu alone.³⁹ The increase in private higher education institutions is driven by the profit motive and the absence of regulatory control. Enrolment in tertiary education is subject to a lack of reliable data but qualitative evidence suggests that it is increasing as many students transition from secondary school. This rapid expansion in the number of universities has not been matched with a greater availability of qualified lecturers, improved infrastructure or increased regulatory control by federal and state governments. Most of the expansion took place in the absence of a properly functioning state. Ensuring equitable access to the sector remains a formidable challenge for the tertiary education sector and children from lower-income groups are less likely to access higher education.

³⁶ MOECHE Education Statistics Yearbook 2016/2017: FGS and Puntland.

³⁷ 2013 HIPS report: "The State of Higher Education in Somalia".

³⁸ 2018 IFTIN foundation report: Country graduate survey.

³⁹ Ministry of Education, culture and higher education, federal government of Somalia.

The quality of teachers has never been high in Somali universities. A 2013 Heritage Institute for Policy Studies (HIPS) report showed that among 44 universities surveyed there were 2,501 lecturers, of whom only 11 percent had Ph.D. degrees, 50 percent had master's degrees and 39 percent had bachelor's degrees.⁴⁰ Most of the existing universities have weak research capacity and limited research production due largely to scarce research funding, the unavailability of e-libraries and the shortage of qualified academic staff who can produce good research.⁴¹

A total overhaul of the higher education system is needed before it can produce skilled human capital for the country. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) was recently created by the federal government to serve as the apex body for all matters pertaining to policy, plans, programs, standards, funding and oversight of tertiary education and to transform the sub-sector into an engine for human capital development.

Given the scarcity of reliable secondary data on education, this study primarily utilizes qualitative approaches. FGDs and KIIs were used to gather evidence on stakeholders' perceptions about challenges, opportunities and areas of priority regarding education in Somalia.

PART 3: KEY FINDINGS

The following section presents information gathered from 13 FGDs, 13 KIIs and a number of stakeholder forums held in Mogadishu and in all FMSs. The analyses are organized into several major themes of relevance to the country's underperformance in education. These include access, inclusivity, governance and management of education and the relevance of the education system to the country's key productive sectors. In order to gauge participation in basic education, this study takes into account the availability of schools, affordability in terms of fees, gender inclusivity and the opportunities available to marginalized groups. The findings are integrated and synthesized to highlight challenges that hamper human capital development and the progress of education.

3.1 Access and inclusivity

Somalis' lack of access to education remains an obstacle to human capital development and the emergence of a skilled workforce. Respondents indicated that around 70 percent of school-age children are not attending school, which is impeding progress in post-civil war educational recovery, particularly in South West and Jubaland.

Since the central state collapsed in 1991, basic education has not reached most of the rural population. The Ministry of Education reports that it manages only 30 public schools and employs 900 teachers. As a result of the prolonged conflict and the shortage of schools in remote areas, a generation of school-age children has had no opportunity to learn to read and write. Evidence indicates that some areas lack both basic and higher-level educational services.

"Yes, there is a need for education in rural areas. Those nomadic pastoralists have no access to education at all. This may be due to a lack of awareness or the low value placed on education."

Education expert

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The Ministry of
Education reports
that it manages
only 30 public
schools and
employs 900
teachers

⁴⁰ 2013 HIPS report: "The State of Higher Education in Somali".

⁴¹ 2020 Overseas Development Institute (ODI) Somali Institute for Development and Research Analysis (SIDRA): Research in Somalia: opportunities for cooperation, https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/research_in_somalia_opportunities_for_cooperation.pdf

3.1.1 Affordability

In the aftermath of Somalia's prolonged civil war, considerable progress has been made in the private education sector, which now accounts for approximately 70 percent of the country's schools.⁴² However, most of the population cannot afford private education, while public education services remain limited. Free basic education has yet to be introduced and implemented, thereby limiting poor children's access to schooling. Even if free primary and secondary education were offered, poorer households' access to education would still be affected by indirect costs such as books and uniforms.

The recent rehabilitation of a number of public schools in Mogadishu by the federal government is boosting access to education, but these schools only accommodate about 17,000 students. National scholarship program for children from poor socio-economic backgrounds could alleviate financial constraints to education and stimulate access to schools for students from disadvantaged households.

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Poorer parents cannot bear the costs of their children's schooling and so poorer families disproportionately carry the burden of illiteracy

“There are poor people who will not come to seek help. They will simply say, ‘I don't have money and therefore will not go to school.’ I have seen people who will come to schools and say, ‘I want to study but I don't have money and I can't pay the school fees,’ so the schools would assist such people. But I am sure there are a lot of poor people who do not seek such assistance and hence will miss out on any opportunity for education.”

School principal

Poorer parents cannot bear the costs of their children's schooling and so poorer families disproportionately carry the burden of illiteracy. In a country struggling to unite, this further marginalization of the impoverished serves to delay the stability and prosperity so many desperately need.

3.1.2 Gender Inclusion

Cultural practices still hinder many school-age girls from participating in education. Traditional culture has been the main impediment, and the demands placed on girls as family caregivers and income providers still supersede their access to education. Social and cultural norms require that girls and young women marry early and bear children, often disenfranchising them and greatly restraining them from realizing their full potential. Young mothers are forced to quickly adapt to their new circumstances without adequate support should they want to return to school.

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if I have three boys and three girls all of school age, I will follow the Somali culture. The girls will do the housework and the boys will be sent to school

Informants pointed out that female enrolment is also impaired by the hidden costs of education such as school uniforms, books and transportation. For many families, especially the poorest, the cost of sending a daughter to school seems like an extra burden, especially when the family already has school-going boys.

“For example, if I have three boys and three girls all of school age, I will follow the Somali culture. The girls will do the housework and the boys will be sent to school. The attitude is that the boys will have responsibilities and families to raise but the girls will be married off to men who will take their responsibility.”

Government official

⁴² World Bank report 2018: Study on Understanding The Role of Non-State Education Providers in Somalia. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/811231567610111001/pdf/Somalia-Economic-Update-Fourth-Edition-Building-Education-to-Boost-Human-Capital.pdf>

However, despite such constraints in the education mainstream, women can be found pursuing training for jobs in the informal economy where many find work outside the ambit of skills development initiatives. Education programs for girls in hand sewing, work in beauty salons and tailoring often lead to income generation or employment. However, there is over-emphasis on these courses for women to the neglect of other sectors in the formal economy. Unless women are trained for a wider economic opportunities, they will be at a disadvantage in the labor market. Training is available to women and girls in only a narrow range of courses. Such courses either have poor linkages with the formal labour market or are associated with lower incomes.

The findings emphasize the lack of specific policy directions as well as inadequate funding to address gender parity in enrolment. Policies must be urgently implemented to address this, such as affirmative action to encourage and increase girls' access to education. The success of these initiatives will depend on the availability of financial resources and the commitment of stakeholders to eliminating gender inequality in education.

3.1.3 Educational Barriers to Persons with Disabilities

Though Somalia's disability rate is unknown, it is presumably much higher than the UN's universal benchmark of 15 percent in a given society, in light of the country's history of protracted conflict and the total collapse of its national healthcare system. Somalis have a selective understanding of disability, under which only those who are physically incapacitated are considered disabled while those who live with chronic mental health issues and psychosocial or intellectual disabilities are not. This section spells out the key barriers to education for people with disabilities (PWDs) and the uncoordinated efforts and meager educational services that currently exist. It also suggests a way forward.

According to the FGDs and KIIs, the terminology used to refer to PWDs and students with special needs has created some challenges. For instance, the terms "special needs" and "disability" have been used interchangeably by politicians, civil society organizations, civil servants and even some prominent disability activists, though of course they describe different conditions. Some children have one or the other, while others fall into both categories. For instance, a disabled child whose arm or leg has been amputated can receive education without any special needs other than physical accommodation, while a mentally disabled child requires greater attention and resources. Article 11 (Social Rights) of Somalia's provisional constitution uses the word *curyaamiin* in reference to PWDs, but this word implies specifically those who have mobility-related disabilities. Misconceptions about the disabled are reflected in the confusion regarding the appropriate terms, and this requires a concerted effort by all actors to correct. Designing, financing and delivering educational programs for PWDs is extremely costly and technically complicated. According to UNESCO, this is the main factor in the exclusion of children and adults with disabilities from learning opportunities in the developing world. Due to UN-led initiatives, global consciousness towards disability has significantly improved in recent decades. Major international commitments to which Somalia is a signatory require states to provide education, employment and protection from all forms of discrimination to citizens who live with disabilities. The UN Convention on the

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Children and adults with disabilities in Somalia face manifold challenges that exacerbate the effects of their physical or mental incapacity on their lives and render them completely deprived

Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), in particular Articles 7 and 24, explicitly calls on governments to provide accessible and inclusive education for children with disabilities and lifelong learning programs for adults. Sustainable Development Goal 4 also demands that governments “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”.⁴³ These commitments make basic education for all a global goal, and such targets cannot be achieved if learners with disabilities are not included.

Children and adults with disabilities in Somalia face manifold challenges that exacerbate the effects of their physical or mental incapacity on their lives and render them completely deprived. They are subjected to a dismal reality that combines abject poverty, negative stereotypical views, discriminatory treatment, a lack of laws and government policies obligating education for PWDs, a lack of accommodating schools and trained teachers, poor public awareness of their plight and inattentiveness by donors and aid agencies in Somalia. PWDs are excluded from most learning opportunities and remain the poorest of the poor.

According to limited surveys and FGDs conducted for this project, some PWDs are more disadvantaged than others. For instance, people who are visually impaired, hearing impaired or are suffering from a mental disability, especially women, face greater prejudice and lack of opportunity than other PWDs. Families tend to keep children with disabilities at home and give priority to their able-bodied siblings. A lack of accommodating schools and safety concerns were the two main reasons expressed by parents for this. Although those reasons are valid, there are other underlying factors. Many people believe children with complicated forms of disability cannot accomplish much, and therefore they should be kept at home. Government interventions including strong public awareness-raising campaigns are seriously needed.

At present there are no ongoing state interventions designed for the education of PWDs or children with special needs. The FGS has taken some promising steps by developing a progressive disability agenda that encompasses all fundamental rights, including the right to education. If successful, these efforts will extend constitutional rights to PWDs for the first time in Somalia’s history. In the absence of a state role, local NGOs and some private businesses, mainly in Mogadishu, have come up with their own modest initiatives, providing segregated charitable educational opportunities, mainly to people with hearing and visual impairments.

Two small schools for visually impaired children and one for the deaf exist in Mogadishu and there is a school for the blind in Garowe, but their services are far from sufficient and they only serve a small number of students. They use Braille and sign language in Arabic and English as there are still no Somali versions. Due to lack of resources, those small schools do not have enough educational materials or specialized programs like screen readers for the blind or magnifiers for partially sighted students. They also lack the necessary expertise to deal with students with complex needs and forms of disability. However, they have made considerable achievements in educating students. The first batch of around 30 blind students took the national secondary exams in 2019 and scored excellent grades,⁴⁴ a great victory for students and their teachers in disproving societal misperceptions of the disabled.

⁴³ Sustainable Development Goals 2015. <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>

⁴⁴ HIPS Interview Dec, 2019

3.2 Quality of Education

A high-quality education requires not only adequate classrooms but also qualified teachers who can deliver the curricula. Somalia's civil war and the collapse of the government had a devastating impact on the quality of education. After 1991, school infrastructure was demolished, competent professionals left the country or were internally displaced and this brain drain halted progress in education. This study's FGDs and KIIs revealed a number of challenges constraining the quality of education.

These include the lack of standardized curricula, insufficient educational infrastructure, a shortage of qualified teachers and inadequate salaries. Learning outcomes are not linked to national goals and students are not competent at any level to seek employment in their fields of study. An educationalist who now works in one of Mogadishu's universities said that the current education in the country "is no more than the dissemination of incoherent content. There is no end goal in mind, apart from fleecing money from the poor, an intolerable aspect of privatized education."

3.2.1 Infrastructure

High-quality infrastructure underpins education globally, including school buildings, equipment, libraries, laboratories and sanitation facilities. Many participants in this study revealed that education infrastructure is severely limited and in a deplorable state.

Study participants explained that most schools do not have enough classrooms, chairs or learning and teaching materials. Educational infrastructure was damaged or completely destroyed in the civil war and is now slowly recovering, impeded by dismal budgetary allocations. FGDs with the federal ministry of education (MOECHE) noted that the FGS has reconstructed and rehabilitated about 30 public schools, which will hopefully increase access to quality education.

Overcrowded classrooms, dilapidated facilities and nonexistent materials or laboratories for practical and technical science subjects remain common in school compounds. Educators expressed concern about the lack of access to water, sanitation facilities and electricity in many schools. Though the quality of school infrastructure varies among rural and urban areas, congested classrooms and poor sanitation are widespread. Respondents were of the view that introducing ICT into the education system would improve teaching, learning and management in schools. Nevertheless, educationalists pointed out that this would face a number of limitations such as the high cost of power supply and ICT facilities, insufficient technological equipment and a lack of experts and financial resources.

3.2.2 Curriculum

At the heart of Somalia's educational shortcomings is the curriculum, which guides the training of teachers and the content taught in schools. A civil servant in Mogadishu said that "there will not be order in the education system nor will there be provision of quality education if the curriculum is not restructured by



Study participants explained that most schools do not have enough classrooms, chairs or learning and teaching materials

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FGDs in Kismayo, Baidoa, Mogadishu and Garowe underscored the urgent need to establish teacher training colleges in every FMS

the government.” With no structured and evaluated curriculum, teacher-student interaction is extremely low quality and limited in scope. In the words of a former minister of education, “school syllabi range from English to Arabic and even Kiswahili.” To its credit, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education produced a new unified curriculum for grades 1 to 4 and distributed 270,000 books in 2018. This curriculum is, however, confined to the Banadir Region. The ministry indicated in a recent presentation that it has 950 teachers on its payroll, but there are few education specialists to train these teachers in the new curriculum. In December 2019, the FGS has finalized the second phase of national education curriculum for grades 1 to 8 and distributed textbooks to elementary and intermediate students. The distributed textbooks is aimed to benefit for more than 300,000 students in 915 schools across the country and this has enabled the Federal Ministry of education, culture and higher education to conduct unified national examinations for students leaving primary schools.⁴⁵ More recently, MoECHE has announced that the standardized secondary schools curriculum is ready and the plan is to use the new curriculum in the 2020/21 school year.

FGDs in Kismayo, Baidoa, Mogadishu and Garowe underscored the urgent need to establish teacher training colleges in every FMS, and one civil servant in Baidoa reiterated that the current myriad of curricula lack uniformity and do not accommodate or promote Somali culture and values.

The language question is one of the most contested aspects of post-colonial debates about the development of education in Africa. In Somalia, the fragmentation of the medium of instruction predates the political chaos in 1991, but the era of chaos following the collapse of central authority brought even more unstructured education with Arabic, English and Somali becoming the preferred choices for the privatized and commercialized post-1991 system. The current education system is mediated by uncoordinated and often competing modes of instruction, reminiscent of the pre-1972 era before the Somali language was adopted as the medium of instruction. The failure to adopt a single national language of instruction stifles the development of a uniform curriculum and the training of competent teachers.

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While university courses are delivered in English, students’ English writing, reading and speaking proficiency is dismally low and they can hardly communicate in the language

Study participants indicated that teaching in a common language would give all learners an equal opportunity in education and the labor market. Proficiency in English is seen as an indispensable tool for global competency while learning Arabic is for many a religious duty necessary to understanding Islam’s divine knowledge and to securing scholarships in Arab countries.

Participants expressed frustration that tests and exams are written in arrays of competing languages that are not adequately taught in schools. They proposed that Somali should be the language of instruction in primary and secondary schools as well as universities rather than trying to borrow curricula written in English or Arabic and deliver them to Somali-speaking students. The challenge is that few schoolbooks or academic texts have been written in Somali since the collapse of the central government.

An educationalist in Kismayo stated that “there are no research papers or academic books published in Somali.” English, as the primary global medium of communication, is the obvious choice for schools even while Somali is the language students use for their daily interaction. While university courses are delivered in English, students’ English writing, reading and speaking proficiency is dismally low and they can hardly communicate in the language.

⁴⁵ HIPS interview with the Head of Curriculum Department at the Federal Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education 2020.

While the standard Somali language is a unifying factor in the country, various dialects also exist. A child whose daily interaction at home is in *Af-maay*, the Somali dialect mainly spoken in South West state, would struggle with schooling in the mainstream dialect, *Maxaad-tiri*, but there is little or no literature written in *Af-maay*. Participants in an FGD in Baidoa said that introducing *Af-maay* in schools would strengthen basic education and reduce illiteracy.

“
Somalia’s massive illiteracy could be reduced by adopting Somali as the medium of instruction and sparing students the rote memorization of English or Arabic texts”

Somalia’s massive illiteracy could be reduced by adopting Somali as the medium of instruction and sparing students the rote memorization of English or Arabic texts. Many developed countries with high rates of literacy and skilled manpower (such as Sweden, Norway, Singapore and Taiwan) use their native tongue in schools, indicating that foreign language proficiency is not the answer to local challenges. The end goals of education and human capital development are to promote self-reliance and produce skilled manpower, and this may be achieved effectively in any language.

Educationalists interviewed for this study pointed out that restoring the Somali language in schools is crucial for the following reasons:

- It boosts morale in general and the self-confidence of the younger generation in particular
- It accelerates the learning process
- It has the potential to rapidly reduce or eradicate illiteracy
- It enables effective and short-term skills transfer in vocational training.

“
English is one of the hardest and the least understood subjects in schools, few teachers are professionally trained to teach it and there is no structured content or proper guidelines for educators”

Learning an international language is an added advantage, but one’s environment is best understood in the native tongue. English is one of the hardest and the least understood subjects in schools, few teachers are professionally trained to teach it and there is no structured content or proper guidelines for educators. “If you were to go to each and every school in the country, you’d hardly find a professionally trained English teacher,” said one government official.

While private education providers prefer English as the medium of instruction, Somali-speaking learners are greatly disadvantaged. More teachers are trained in Arabic than in English, but they too remain underutilized. “One finds schools that instantly switch from Arabic to English with no teaching materials or manpower in place because there is allegedly more money to be made from learners by hiring an English-speaking person who is not trained as a teacher,” said a key informant in Mogadishu. Language inconsistencies also create career confusion and hamper talent identification. If students are not guided to write simple compositions in any language during their primary and secondary school years, they will find university-level studies all the more difficult.

The amorphous medium of instruction offers no clear career path for students after high school or at the university level. “Eight in every 10 students you meet express genuine and legitimate concerns about the medium of instruction,” said a focus group member in Garowe. As Somali is spoken at home and in the school environment, empowering students in their own tongue might turn out to be less costly and more productive than teaching in English or Arabic.

3.2.3 Teacher Quality

Most government officials and other key stakeholders recognize the importance of qualified and sufficiently remunerated teachers in producing competent students. Both KIIs and available data suggested that teachers' quality and compensation have been far from optimal in Somalia, which has worsened the present challenges in education.

During KIIs, representatives of educational institutions said that salary increases attract competent teachers while poor compensation due to extreme financial constraints discourages effective education delivery and is demotivating and damaging to teachers' productivity. Locally trained teachers and those who have studied in other countries expect higher salaries and, according to a school representative in Mogadishu, schools are often forced by budgetary and staff shortages to hire untrained, unqualified and substandard teachers or to close down altogether. It is highly unlikely that value can be added to Somali educational institutions without addressing these financial limitations. As the result of poor remuneration, teaching is regarded as a worthless profession that no longer commands a high social status. Low salaries force competent teachers to look for alternative income-generating employment. Study participants complained that teachers struggle to deliver content because they have no formal training. Government officials underscored that there are efforts underway to build teachers' capacity, but cost implications threaten to hamper this process.

3.3 Education Priorities

FGDs in Mogadishu, Garowe, Baidoa and Kismayo asserted that producing competent university graduates largely depends on the quality of early childhood education. This study revealed that childhood education is neglected both by private education providers and the public sector. "I don't know any center or a single school which pays attention to early childhood education," said one of the participants in Garowe.

Formal pre-schooling is not part of the education system in Somalia and children are instead sent to Qur'anic schools (dugsi). These schools are often overcrowded with no basic facilities such as latrines. Teaching methods are traditional and the aim is rote learning and memorization of the Holy Qur'an. Qur'anic schools are the most accessible to Somali children and they are where children's first encounters with reading and writing often begin, rendering them the foundation of early childhood education in Somalia. These community-owned, traditional institutions enjoy no formal recognition or funding from development partners and government institutions because of the following factors:

- Qur'anic schools are not regarded as formal schooling
- Teachers are not professionally trained
- They provide religious education
- Subjects such as mathematics and languages are not taught

However, this ignores that Qur'anic schools expose children to disciplines of learning and understanding their environment, their history and their identity and shape their codes of social conduct, which has a profound influence on them as they grow. Participants considered dugsi to be vital as pre-schools and recommended that education providers recognize this domestic institution. Participants were of the view that enhancing Qur'anic schools by training teachers and introducing numeracy and other basic subjects would better prepare children for entry into formal primary schools and potentially have a massive impact on reducing illiteracy. This would require a unified curriculum implemented by qualified teachers, but interviewees emphasized that it would create educational opportunities for millions of children who go to dugsi but might never have the chance to attend formal primary schools. At all levels of government in Somalia, said an education expert, "the first, second and third priority is given to security," to the exclusion of other sectors such as education. Education experts interviewed for this study overwhelmingly pointed out the need to invest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Empirical evidence suggests that secondary school students do not receive enough guidance and exposure to different fields of study, leaving them unsure what to study in post-secondary education. This causes career confusion as students constantly change from one program to another or from one university to another. Universities do not often conduct career fairs for high school students. One key informant in Baidoa pointed out that investment in STEM subjects is utterly inadequate and teachers lack basic professional training.

"It is impossible to provide quality education without building the foundation. A good foundation will result in better performance in primary and secondary schools and universities will produce competent graduates."

Education expert

The result is a shortage of relevant skills for the country's productive sectors such as agriculture, livestock and fisheries. Students who receive poor STEM instruction in their primary and secondary education will avoid university programs in biology, chemistry, physics and pure mathematics such as engineering, agriculture and marine science. Participants agreed that higher education in Somalia is not tailored to market needs, which creates considerable frustration among university graduates who cannot find employment.

Civics education is another important element of both early childhood and secondary education, linked to the provision of information and learning experiences to equip and empower citizens to participate in the social, political and economic progress of their country, either through classroom teaching or informal training. An integral part of this is to help people understand their immediate environment in order to be resourceful and responsible citizens.

This research revealed that civic education is not part of the curriculum in Somalia. Various FGDs attributed what they described as "shallow patriotism" to a lack of civic education, highlighting that familiarity with the country and its history and environment is a prerequisite for the emergence of patriotic and well-informed citizens and a skilled workforce. One key informant said that civic education instills youth with a strong work ethic and respect for public spaces like roads. If delivered by qualified teachers, civic education is a potent instrument to change personal attitudes toward work.

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This research revealed that civic education is not part of the curriculum in Somalia. Various FGDs attributed what they described as “shallow patriotism” to a lack of civic education

This study indicates that civic education should not be limited to the notion of active citizenship and advocacy at the national level. Personal integrity and self-reliance can also be advanced through civic orientation and educating the youth that individual skills are more important than clan allegiances. Enrolment in elementary schools marks the beginning of personal growth and capacity development. “Simple things like telling a child not to throw dirt or break a bottle on the road is civic education and it begins in elementary classes,” said one educationalist. The aim is to help students combine their personal ambitions with national aspirations.

Civic education creates national awareness, taps into the energy of youth and prepares them to take pride in technical jobs and participate in Somalia’s political and economic recovery. One key informant remarked that “the youth is Somalia’s greatest asset and neither peace nor economic progress is possible without their participation and skills development.” Respondents saw civic education as a tool to bring young people into the fold of the national development plan for the following reasons:

- It exposes youth to the richness of the country in terms of natural resources and productive sectors
- It instills patriotism
- It raises awareness about employment opportunities
- It initiates youth into the idea of accepting manual and technical jobs
- It promotes ownership of public property and the right to free thinking and innovative ideas
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Above all, civic education reconnects young people to national role models, making them want to become allies of change rather than to escape the country. Interviewees pointed out the need to reintroduce civic education at all levels of learning, particularly in primary and secondary schools. The underlining belief is that nurturing children’s minds with civic education from elementary through high school prepares them for critical thinking and productive work. While strengthening democracy and political stability, civic education can also be a bulwark against recruitment into violent groups.

Evidence suggests that civic education is linked to performance in schools. Schools with well-structured civic education programs produce responsible students who foster partnership within their communities. Teachers and principals with a strong sense of civic responsibility are said to be more dedicated to their profession and are likely to be more productive. Incorporating elements of civic education into technical and administrative training is likely to yield productive manpower, professional educators and highly capable civil servants. The research also revealed that education in civic responsibilities is key to institutional reform, anti-corruption and human capital development.

Given Somalia’s current polarization among political and community groups, participants said that the country needs a coordinated national civic education program, from elementary schools to institutions of higher learning. Civic education strengthens the quality of democracy, governance and the rule of law. Citizens must understand their roles and responsibilities not as mere spectators but as guardians of their rights. Civic education is an incubator for critical thinking, responsible citizenry and a work ethic.

3.4 Accreditation

Accreditation is the process by which a professional association or agency evaluates educational institutions and programs of study to assess whether the content taught and qualifications awarded meet minimum predetermined requirements. Somalia currently lacks a credible national accreditation body to inspect, scrutinize and approve the curricula, qualifications and physical facilities of educational institutions and to ensure the originality and the quality of academic qualifications. This is especially important in a technology-driven world where professional-looking documents can be produced with the click of a mouse.

According to a former minister of education, “learning institutions should be subjected to thorough scrutiny and those that have not met the minimum standard should be closed and their students transferred to other credible schools and universities.” Discussions on the state of education revealed that there is no system in place to determine whether an educational program or an institution meets these minimum standards. This is important for the following reasons:

- Fragmented education providers need to be unified
- A national examination board needs to be formed
- The national curriculum for primary and secondary schools needs to be authenticated
- Genuine and hard-earned higher education qualifications need to be separated from counterfeits
- Education in general must be standardized

Given Somalia’s prolonged state collapse and the fragmentation of the educational landscape, the absence of a national accreditation body is not surprising. However, if the country is to provide quality education and curb its mushrooming mediocre and commercialized centers of learning, it must restore accreditation. At the federal level, parliament’s passage of the pending Education Act and Higher Education Act might mark the beginning of effective regulatory mechanisms. Some participants suggested that the federal government could adopt a national test to provide a benchmark for the recruitment of all civil servants. There is currently no functioning commission for higher education or national examination board.



There is currently no functioning commission for higher education or national examination board

Without a clear vision or coherent policy on accreditation, Somalia risks stagnation in knowledge production. Participants in this study agreed that most private institutions attract uninformed learners to “empty intellectual plates”. One interviewee likened the provision of diplomas, degrees or masters programs that do not equip graduates with interpretive or practical skills to offering an empty plate to a hungry person. “It is bad when you cannot even be fed with your own money,” said one member of a focus group. Providing certificates should not be the goal in itself, but rather the means to imbue school leavers or university graduates with actual capabilities once they finish their education. If, for example, a graduate cannot draft an email or write an application letter for a job after four years in university, this is demoralization, not education.

While considering that the expense and the burden of educating children in today’s Somalia falls on the shoulders of poor parents, the FGS and its Ministry of Education should take responsibility for institutional quality and provide minimum benchmarks.

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Specialized accreditation authorities are not only necessary for professional protection but also for addressing the overall national strategic deficit in human capital development

Quality control often depends upon the effectiveness of ministerial and governmental policy. Specialized accreditation authorities are not only necessary for professional protection but also for addressing the overall national strategic deficit in human capital development. Professional training is meaningless without referral agencies or associations.

To halt what participants in this research described as “robbing the poor of time and resources,” the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders, private and public, need to re-establish the professional public agencies which ceased to exist after the state collapse in 1991. Members of these agencies, including any commission for education, should be free of political appointees and nepotistic hires, and should be selected or appointed based on merit in order to increase public confidence and trust and restore accountability to educational institutions. Though it has not yet started working, the Minister of Education recently announced the creation of a Higher Education Commission for Somalia, which is a step in the right direction.

3.5 Cultural and Social Mindset

In Somalia, the cultural mindset and overall cultural values regarding work present a serious impediment to the development of technical and vocational education and training. “TVET was considered a prestigious career in the 1980s when I was studying, but now it is frowned upon,” said an educationalist in Mogadishu.

Culture is constantly evolving based on the social and political environment. Although Somali society has traditionally been less appreciative of certain segments of the economy such as fisheries, farming and manual labor, begging for food when one could work is equally disliked. Asked why he was working in a butchery, a 20th century poet answered that a “dented pride because of work is more pleasing than an empty belly”. The traditional work song *xoolo ma lihida xammaaliga baro* roughly translates as “if bereft of wealth, learn to be a porter”.

This attitude changed during Somalia’s years of educational and political disorder. In the words of one educationalist interviewed during this study, it is normal to see “graduates who ask for \$10 but are not willing to engage in manual labor and earn \$1,500 a month”. While public awareness of the importance of technical skills is a key entry point for human capital development, institutions of higher learning currently concentrate on business and administrative professions. One way to reverse this situation is to reinvigorate the public sector by restoring the prestige of technical skills and manual labor. Technical prestige in this sense refers to efficiency and professionalism in vocational training as well as incentives to encourage more students to enroll in TVET.

An immediate change in mindset is required in the following three aspects that encourage a negative attitude toward technical skills:

- Dependence on remittances
- Assumptions that technical jobs demean one’s dignity
- Societal preference of idleness to manual work

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Cultural mindset remains a significant obstacle to the development of manpower and technical skills to address Somalia’s development needs

Cultural norms also create greater hurdles for people with disabilities, depriving them of a supportive social environment in which to acquire education. One participant in this study explained that cultural perceptions perpetuate the notion that PWDs cannot be entrusted with social and political responsibility of any kind. One interviewee explained that “it is difficult to be a productive member of the society when one is seen as a burden because of disability.” Few schools exist in Mogadishu for people with special needs.

Cultural mindset remains a significant obstacle to the development of manpower and technical skills to address Somalia’s development needs. This problem has been exacerbated by the civil war and the massive exodus from rural nomadic and agro-pastoral areas, which has led to a significant decrease in agricultural and livestock production. It is imperative that the FGS, member states, educational practitioners and business leaders collectively develop a national campaign that raises public awareness about the importance of work and imparts the message that one’s dignity is rooted in gainful employment, regardless of the type of work.

3.6 Current Issues in TVET

Participants in this study overwhelmingly emphasized the importance of TVET, highlighting that establishing TVET programs is a prerequisite to enabling a skilled workforce, faster economic growth, labor productivity gains and the development and growth of the productive sectors. Efficient and inclusive TVET-based education can resolve mismatches between the workforce and market demand, enabling graduates to participate in, and benefit from, the nation’s untapped resources and to stimulate economic growth. Giving technical skills to more individuals is key not only to unlocking Somalia’s economic recovery but also its social mobility potential. Unfortunately, the state of TVET in the country is fragmented and uncoordinated.

Interviews with key stakeholders confirmed the existence of a few TVET institutions which are privately owned, but their services are limited to short-term courses in subjects such as tailoring, electrical courses and working in beauty salons. Numerous NGOs also provide unregulated informal training, often at short notice. Key informants pointed out that current TVET programs do not cater for labor market needs and instead focus on minor technical skills that require minimal tools and equipment.

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The analysis revealed that TVET institutions neither teach uniform content nor do they prioritize productive sectors

Women, rural residents and PWDs do not have equitable access to TVET, and short courses and other training programs are not designed to address inclusivity in employment. For instance, many trainings do not accommodate women, particularly in construction, electrical and mechanical subjects. The geographical distribution of training programs favors those living in urban areas and the tuition fees are a barrier to marginalized groups.

The analysis revealed that TVET institutions neither teach uniform content nor do they prioritize productive sectors. Experts reported that there is a critical mismatch between ongoing training programs and the market demands of the productive sectors. Little content is taught related to agriculture, livestock or fisheries, while many private institutions focus on fashion design and tailoring. The TVET system caters to only a limited number of people and is far from sufficient for improving the country’s human capital development.

“The Somali population is overwhelmingly young. About 70 percent are less than 35 years old and they are at risk, so to prevent them from migration and other risks there should be initiatives supporting the youth. TVET would give them career opportunities so they will eventually play a role in the country’s development. But the skills and the training they would receive should be based on overall needs in the country such as agro-pastoral and fisheries.”

Government official

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The lack of government oversight, accreditation, effective monitoring and inspection of existing TVET institutions to ensure their adherence to minimum standards has hampered quality and allowed the proliferation of substandard training

The lack of government oversight, accreditation, effective monitoring and inspection of existing TVET institutions to ensure their adherence to minimum standards has hampered quality and allowed the proliferation of substandard training. Most privately-owned TVET institutions are not conducive environments for learning and teaching, due largely to inadequate infrastructure and inappropriate locations. Respondents highlighted that incompetent instructors who lack practical experience or up-to-date technological skills contribute to the fragmentation of TVET.

“There are enormous challenges, not only the teachers and other aspects, but obtaining equipment necessary for the program. Some software and other equipment is not allowed in Somalia and you have to go through neighboring countries such as Kenya. There must be strong advocacy groups to eliminate these kinds of obstacles. The Somali government has a limited capacity so it’s necessary for the private sector to play a role and support these projects. Their support is vital.”

TVET expert

Funding constraints have also negatively impacted the provision of TVET in Somalia. TVET programs require significant financial input and a public mode of financing has not been established by the federal or state governments. The institutions from which we obtained data were clearly financially challenged, relying heavily on student fees and limited support from international partners and NGOs. Training is often irregular and NGOs fund only short courses lasting from just a few months to one year. Vocational schools are viewed as a choice for dropouts and those who cannot pursue higher education. TVET stakeholders underscored that this societal stigma has impeded the development of technical schools, as these careers are still poorly perceived in the labor market. Informants and FGD participants reported that this negative mindset has been aggravated by lower academic requirements for admission to these courses and limited career prospects for graduates.

3.7 Enabling Environment

3.7.1 Political Instability and Security

The turbulent nature of post-civil war politics, recurrent violence, consistent internal displacement and destruction of schools has interrupted the progress of education and stifled Somalia’s development of human capital. At the federal level, public institutions are not only dysfunctional but are also hidden behind sandbags. In the words of one key informant, providing quality education to all Somali children in the absence of political stability is an arduous task if not an unrealistic dream.

Political turmoil interrupts institutional memory in learning environments. Policy coordination remains fragmented and investment in education and human capital development is overshadowed by security concerns. Elsewhere, countries that have undergone similar cycles of violence have successfully embarked on processes of educational and economic recovery, but only after registering a degree of political stability - pertinent examples include Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

This research reveals that three main aspects of internal political instability have prevented the recreation of an enabling environment for the progress of education in Somalia: the politically-motivated tension between the FGS and the member states; the uneasy relationship between public and private education providers; and Al-Shabaab's continued grip on many rural areas and towns.

One example of FGS-FMS tensions impairing education is Puntland's recent boycott of proposed national exams. In response, the federal Ministry of Education refused to recognize Puntland's secondary school examinations, jeopardizing the progress of education and the future of young people in Puntland.

The resistance of private education umbrellas, particularly in South-Central Somalia, to regulatory policies has also fueled avoidable friction between the government and educational institutions. A former minister of education interviewed for this research stated that private sector education providers prefer to work in what he described as a "loose environment, outside of any governmental interference or legal framework".

The inability of the government to implement a national comprehensive education policy gives private education umbrellas the leeway to ignore increasing calls to hand over former public schools and institutions. Private education providers maintain that the Ministry of Education has neither the capacity nor the will to run schools. It is one thing, they say, to "register a political presence but completely a different task to provide education to millions of children".

Political instability, institutional fragility and job insecurity disrupts professional adjustment in the following ways:

- Constant cabinet reshuffling
- Replacement of ministerial staff
- Absence of systematic data-driven education planning at ministerial level

It has become common practice for a ministry to be headed by a minimum of four ministers in one presidential term. In most cases, ministers do their own internal recruitment, and reforms initiated by one minister are discarded when another is appointed. "I was the fourth minister of education in one presidential term," a former minister told interviewers. "In my short term, I initiated a policy to register all teachers in the country, particularly in primary and secondary schools, but the private educational associations lobbied against it, and it was thrown out after I left."



The inability of the government to implement a national comprehensive education policy gives private education umbrellas the leeway to ignore increasing calls to hand over former public schools and institutions

The role of private umbrellas in providing education in the absence of capable state institutions is undeniable, but there are growing demands to curb the complete commercialization of basic education.

Given the ever-present threat of internal dissolution and the lack of a long-term strategy or strong political will, there is great need for an immediate and amicable political settlement to the feud between member states, federal authorities and private educational umbrellas.

In areas that fall under Al-Shabaab's grip, the realization of all children's right to high-quality basic education depends upon the future success of either defeating or co-opting the militant group.

3.8 Education Policy and Planning Documents

The provisional federal constitution guarantees every Somali citizen the right to equal access to educational opportunities. Based on this guarantee, the FGS and FMS governments have produced the following key policy documents:

The Education Sector Strategic Plan 2016. This short-term federal education plan, the first produced since the civil war, outlines strategic goals such as promoting equitable access to basic education, improving the quality of the education system, strengthening governance, developing sustainable financing mechanisms and establishing better and more up-to-date education management systems. The implementation of this plan failed to achieve its stated targets because it was inadequately financed and lacked effective means of implementation.

The Education Sector Strategic Plan for Somalia 2018-2020 (ESSP2018). The FGS launched this two-year strategy to tackle challenges hampering the education system from early childhood to higher education. The main focal areas of the plan included increasing access to early childhood education; expanding equitable access to free primary and secondary education; improving learning outcomes in primary and secondary education; improving access and increasing the quality of TVET programs; increasing access to and equity in higher education; and strengthening the national capacity for research and innovation. The ESSP2018 further commits to “developing a quality system that promotes inclusion and from which students achieve core learning competencies in literacy and numeracy and are technologically proficient with lifelong learning and life skills.” Towards this end, the FGS has led on a number of important initiatives, including the administration of national primary and secondary examinations for four consecutive years, inclusive of public and private schools; the validation of a 2017 National Curriculum Framework for primary and secondary schools, both public and private; the development of Memoranda of Understandings of roles and responsibilities between FGS and FMSs; and the finalization of National Education Act which calls for a system “promotes inclusion” from which students achieve “core learning competencies in literacy and numeracy...”

The 8th National Development Plan (2017-2019). The first of its kind to be crafted by the central government of Somalia since 1986, covers the fiscal period 2017-2019, and put forth a bold vision and mission for “social and human development” as it relates to the education sector.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Puntland and Somaliland have aligned their own development plans to the federal National Development Plan.

The vision for education is to “build an adequate, well-educated, better skilled and competent workforce that contributes to the economic and human development of the nation.” Illustrative targets include increasing gross enrolment, reducing school dropouts and increasing the number of teachers with appropriate competencies. The NDP8 emphasizes access, equity, and quality education.

The 9th National Development Plan (2020-2024). This latest initiative emphasizes the need to improve the quality of education provision and service delivery from basic to higher education by developing skilled human capital. It gives massive responsibilities to the FGS and member states for mainstreaming and expanding access to quality basic and tertiary education as well as TVET; harmonizing human capital development stakeholders; developing national qualification frameworks; and enhancing higher education competencies to provide skilled manpower for the job market.

The Education Sector Strategy for Puntland (2017-2021). Puntland is the only state government to date to develop its own education sector strategic plan. This plan identifies four key priority areas; increasing access and equity in educational opportunities; improving the quality of education and learning outcomes; enhancing the efficiency of the education system; and strengthening administrative systems.

PART 4: CONCLUSION AND STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS

4.1 Conclusion

This study found that, despite some progress in basic and higher education, significant challenges remain. Somalia’s education system lags behind other countries both in terms of access and quality. In particular, the quantitative analysis indicated that roughly 70 percent of the country’s school-age children were out of school in 2017.

Evidence shows that most students in higher education and TVET do not pursue qualifications in key economic sectors such as fisheries and agriculture and the structure of these educational systems is not adequately geared towards meeting current labor market demands.

The contextual analysis showed that access to basic and higher education remains limited, especially for poorer socio-economic communities and groups that are marginalized on the basis of geography and gender. Due to poverty, many school-age children are out of school. This threatens the country’s long and short-term economic development and contributes to a low level of human capital.

The quality of education emerged as one of the most pressing issues. The study revealed that Somalia’s education system continues to be of poor quality due to several factors: outdated or incoherent curricula; a shortage of qualified teachers; and insufficient infrastructure and facilities.

If this substandard state of education is not addressed, Somalia is unlikely to produce competent graduates or make room for the emergence of skilled manpower.

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The study revealed that Somalia’s education system continues to be of poor quality due to several factors: outdated or incoherent curricula; a shortage of qualified teachers; and insufficient infrastructure and facilities”

4.2 Education Strategic Interventions

Table 5 identifies key education sector constraints aligned with proposed strategic interventions or activities.

Strategy	Constraints	Potential stakeholders	Interventions
Implement an immediate five-year national literacy campaign to significantly increase literacy and numeracy skills	<p>Almost half of the Somali population cannot read or write, which makes Somalia one of the least literate countries in the world. A literate citizenry is essential for social, economic and human capital development. Empowering individuals to improve their reading, writing and basic numeracy enables them to become self-sufficient and productive citizens.</p>	<p>Ministries of Education, Culture and Higher Education FGS and FMS</p>	<p>Form a public-private partnership to establish a National Literacy Commission (NLC) charged with effectively coordinating and implementing a national literacy campaign</p>
		<p>Presidency PM Office and State Presidents (Political weight and awareness purposes)</p>	<p>Establish a durable national presence for literacy and numeracy programs using existing schools and places of worship where possible, and establish new literacy centers in villages or localities that have no schools</p>
		<p>Ministry finance (FGS & FMS)</p>	<p>Partner with existing school buildings and infrastructure for literacy programs after school hours in all member states and Mogadishu</p>
		<p>Ministry Planning, Investment and Economic Development (FGS & FMS)</p>	<p>Tailor applicable elements of the national curriculum for use in literacy and numeracy campaigns, with guides for implementation</p>
		<p>UN and International Education Partners</p>	
		<p>Education umbrellas, private schools</p>	

Strategy	Constraints	Potential stakeholders	Interventions
		<p>Qur'anic schools for early childhood education and participation of national literacy campaign</p> <p>Ministry of Religious Affairs (FGS and FMS);</p> <p>Public and private financing institutions</p> <p>International partners</p> <p>Philanthropic entities</p> <p>Ministry of Post, Telecommunications and Technology (FGS & FMS)</p> <p>Ministry of Information (FGS and FMS)</p>	<p>Align national literacy programs to primary schools, provide participating schools with additional budgets and develop partnership models with private umbrellas playing an active role in management and supervision of literacy programs in schools</p> <p>Develop and distribute relevant adapted learning and teaching materials for use by lay practitioners to address literacy with family and friends</p> <p>Conduct a broad campaign to recruit citizens who can read and write and provide them with modified guidelines and materials to deliver household-level literacy and numeracy programs across the country</p> <p>Enlist core community institutions such as Qur'anic schools (where most early childhood education is provided) and provide training for Qur'anic teachers to imbed literacy and numeracy programs in Qur'anic school curricula</p> <p>Establish a partnership with ICT providers to adapt and promote technology-assisted leapfrogging in functional literacy to expand access and improve the quality of literacy program delivery</p> <p>Provide sturdy all-in-one computers with solar charging or affordable tablets preloaded with literacy and numeracy lessons for nomadic families to move around with and learn from</p> <p>Develop public service messages for use by licensed public local and national radio and TV outlets, as well as private educational institutions, to partake in a campaign to promote literacy and numeracy</p>

Strategy	Constraints	Potential stakeholders	Interventions
<p>Urgently increase access to education for school-age children</p>	<p>The baseline study indicates that three million Somali children, or about 70% of all school-aged children, are not in school. This has left them disengaged and susceptible to the influence of extremist elements. Over 12,000 new schools are needed across the country to accommodate out-of-school children.</p>	<p>Ministries of Education, Culture and Higher Education (FGS and FMS)</p>	<p>Enforce constitutional rights and legislation to provide universal compulsory free basic primary and secondary education in all public and government-aided schools with a target enforcement date of no later than 2025</p>
		<p>Ministry of Information (FGS & FMS)</p>	<p>As an interim measure, petition for increased donor and private sector support through scholarships and grants to increase access to primary and secondary education for a million students each year starting from January 2021</p>
		<p>Education umbrellas,</p>	<p>Establish a strategic Self Help (Iskaa Wax u Qabso) programs at the FMS level to construct new primary and secondary schools and rehabilitate existing ones, giving special priority to rural areas and disadvantaged districts, to expand access to and delivery of education</p>
		<p>Private schools,</p>	<p>Increase the numbers of competent, qualified and adequately paid teachers by 30% each year while ensuring that teacher recruitment, professional development, promotion and posting are adequately invested in and are based solely on merit</p>
		<p>International partners</p>	<p>Standardize and institutionalize teacher training arrangements, accreditation and certification procedures at the national level</p>
			<p>Establish a public awareness campaign for marginalized and disadvantaged communities on the importance and advantages of enrolling children in schools coupled with mentorship, incentives and scholarships</p>

Strategy	Constraints	Potential stakeholders	Interventions
<p>Address equity in education for marginalized, vulnerable and underserved populations</p>	<p>Certain segments of the Somali population have little or no access to educational opportunities, including women and girls, marginalized groups, underserved communities (including IDPs and PWDs) and rural residents. This inequity can be attributed to cultural and social norms, socio-economic barriers and the absence or poor implementation of policies emphasizing inclusivity. This has serious implications for Somalia's sustainable and equitable development. Inclusive education ensures that everyone can participate in education, employment and economic opportunities.</p>	<p>Ministries of Education, Culture and Higher Education (FGS and FMS)</p>	<p>Adopt policy and legal reforms to provide equal educational opportunities for girls and boys</p>
		<p>Ministry of Information (FGS & FMS)</p>	<p>Establish a measurable and results-oriented national public education and awareness campaign to promote girls' equal access to educational opportunities</p>
		<p>Education umbrellas</p>	<p>Allocate gender-based enrolment quotas of at least 30% in areas where enrolment has most marginalized girls, coupled with scholarships and education grants to promote women's basic education</p>
		<p>private schools</p>	<p>Establish new schools and centers for learning in every IDP camp with specific budgets to ensure that IDP children have free access to schools and a high-quality education</p>
		<p></p>	<p>Develop and distribute customized or tailored learning and teaching materials that are tied to national curricula to ensure children in IDP camps receive a high-quality education</p>
		<p></p>	<p>Remove legal and administrative barriers to enrolment such as requirements for documentation that may not be available to IDPs</p>
		<p></p>	<p>Establish a specific focus on girls' enrolment in IDP education programs to prevent exclusion and discrimination</p>
		<p></p>	<p>Implement policy and legal reforms to establish a guaranteed and government-funded right to accessible education for PWDs</p>
		<p></p>	<p>Form an inter-governmental (FGS and FMS) ministerial taskforce to implement national disability policies supported by the national disability agency</p>
		<p></p>	<p>Establish an intergovernmental task force with the goal to create specific programming that addresses learners with complex disabilities like visual or hearing impairments and to develop accessible education tailored to their needs</p>
<p></p>	<p>Develop disability-oriented programs within mainstream educational facilities and provide employment-oriented vocational education for adult PWDs</p>		

Strategy	Constraints	Potential stakeholders	Interventions
<p>Align tertiary education curricula with market needs, and productive sector growth</p>	<p>The current higher education system is not adequately geared to promote competencies critical to the productive sectors of the economy. At present, higher education does not draw on labor market data to establish programs responding to emerging trends for employable skills. Higher education should play a crucial role in Somalia's economy by providing a competent, well trained and educated workforce. To do so it must align program development with data on labor market needs</p>	<p>Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher education (FGS & FMS)</p>	<p>Align higher education coursework with productive sector (agriculture, livestock and fisheries) and service industry skills needs to increase the prospect of graduates getting jobs.</p>
		<p>Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (FGS & FMS)</p>	<p>Incorporate courses on entrepreneurship, business planning and management into higher education programs for students to explore possibilities for self-employment</p>
		<p>Ministry of Commerce and Industry (FGS & FMS)</p>	<p>Establish collaboration between the commission and private sector market players to provide sound advice on how to produce skilled and competent graduates</p>
		<p>Higher education institutions Education umbrellas</p>	<p>Align scholarship incentives with hard-to-fill programs relevant to productive sectors such as agriculture, fisheries and provide guaranteed employment pending satisfactory course completion</p>
		<p>Chamber of commerce</p>	<p>Direct the thousands of scholarships provided to the Somali government annually by friendly nations to meet the priority knowledge and skills development needs identified in the study (productive and services sectors)</p>
		<p>Private sector employers</p>	<p>Establish a cross-cutting commission among relevant ministries such as education, labor and commerce at the FGS and FMS level to advise higher education sector planning informed by data-driven trends and projected needs in the workforce</p>

Strategy	Constraints	Potential stakeholders	Interventions
<p>Develop TVET as a national priority to promote employment and productivity</p>	<p>Somalia's current TVET system is fragmented and suffers from a lack of integration and coordination with the marketplace. TVET programs experience low enrollment rates, a lack of qualified teachers and trainers and poor governance and program management, all leading to a public perception that TVET has limited value. Effective TVET can play an important role in the fight against poverty and spur economic growth, but if TVET is not aligned to market demand, graduates become discouraged at the lack of reward for their efforts. Efforts to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of TVET should be responsive to the present and future needs of the country's workforce</p>	<p>Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher education (FGS & FMS)</p>	<p>Align the TVET curricula with the mainstream educational system, with coursework benefiting from insights on market demand (skills sought by employers) aligned with key productive sectors and national economic growth strategies</p>
		<p>Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (FGS & FMS)</p>	<p>Promote synergies among private sector, commerce and education to inform overall TVET offerings</p>
		<p>Public and private TVET schools</p>	<p>Incorporate TVET courses and subjects into primary and secondary education to educate students about the importance of technical and vocational skills at a young age</p>
		<p>International Development Partners</p>	<p>Establish a national steering committee with involvement from the FGS and FMS, educational institutions and industries to evaluate, streamline and rehabilitate existing TVET schools and centers, and establish a strategic plan to add new TVET institutions, prioritizing alignment with regional or district-specific economic advantages</p>
			<p>Actively involve the productive sectors in promoting TVET systems and providing tailored learning, internships and apprenticeships</p>
			<p>Provide TVET scholarships to attract and encourage students in ways that are aligned to labor market needs</p>
			<p>Hold promotional events and campaigns highlighting the benefits of TVET and its links to viable career paths in national priority sectors</p>
			<p>Provide competitive salaries or employment schemes for TVET workers, whether in public or private employment, to boost the image of TVET</p>

Strategy	Constraints	Potential stakeholders	Interventions
<p>Implement an education system based on core national values</p>	<p>The current education system does not offer well-structured civics education that encourages learners to establish a strong national identity, fosters a sense of civic pride and communal moral values and produces responsible citizens. Civic education focused on strong moral values, patriotism, responsible citizenship and respect for one's rights is fundamental to peace and social development</p>	<p>Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher education (FGS & FMS)</p>	<p>Incorporate civic education courses (for example government, history, law and culture) and core national values (patriotism, Islam, leadership and students' rights and responsibility) into curricula with a greater focus on unity and fostering stronger bonds among students</p>
		<p>Ministry of Information (FGS & FMS)</p>	<p>Develop extra-curricular activities that encourage students to participate in civic endeavors such as current events, volunteer work and activities that focus on good governance, upholding the rule of law and patriotism, as a prerequisite for graduation</p>
		<p>Education umbrellas and other private education stakeholders</p>	<p>Conduct national awareness campaigns on the importance of civic education to be shared via media platforms</p>
		<p>Civil society</p>	<p>Develop teacher training programs on civic education so that civic educators are properly trained to understand and appreciate the importance of, and need for, imparting core national values to students</p>
		<p>Adopt participatory approaches to developing civic education, giving a role to parents and member states</p>	

Strategy	Constraints	Potential stakeholders	Interventions
<p>Adopt a unified National Qualification framework (NQF) that provides standardized measures of knowledge acquisition and skills mastery</p>	<p>Qualification frameworks are globally regarded as all-encompassing tools to guide systematic approaches to human resources development. At present, the national education system does not apply a national accreditation or national qualification framework (NQF) to assess the quality of educational institutions and the programs they offer. Although neighboring countries adhere to the East African Community Qualifications Framework for Higher Education, Somalia does not measure qualifications in any standardized way.</p>	<p>Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher education (FGS & FMS)</p>	<p>Establish a National Qualification and Accreditation Council (NQAC) comprising a national basic education council, a higher education commission, a TVET council and a national examination board. The NQAC would be responsible for reviewing existing knowledge and skills standards and developing new ones</p>
		<p>Education umbrellas</p>	<p>Ensure stakeholder participation in the design and implementation of an NQF that includes such areas as a single system of levels for all qualifications, qualifications based on standards, modular or unitized qualifications, assessments based on explicit criteria, a national system of credit accumulation and transfer, a common approach to describing qualifications, and a common classification system for subjects and occupational sectors</p>
		<p>Higher education institutions</p>	<p>The NQAC should be responsible for reviewing entry qualifications and selection methods for all cadres in education</p>
	<p>The establishment of a centralized NQF will elevate education and training to require commonality in meeting standards and outcomes.</p>	<p>Association of Somalia Universities</p>	<p>All tertiary and vocational educational institutions should be required to register within the NQF, and no institution (private or public) should be allowed to operate without an accreditation certificate</p>
		<p>Somali Research and Educational Network</p>	<p>The NQF should have at its core the objective to enhance transparency, comparability and recognition of qualifications across the country</p>

Strategy	Constraints	Potential stakeholders	Interventions
<p>Harmonize education stakeholder efforts to create synergy in education governance.</p>	<p>The education sector suffers from legal ambiguities over FGS and FMS jurisdictions, fragmented governance, lack of structure, poor coordination and lack of harmonization among education stakeholders. Where harmonized efforts are absent, stakeholders are less effective. Coordination among the FGS, FMS and public and private institutions is key to achieving a common agenda and improving outcomes</p>	<p>Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher education (FGS & FMS)</p>	<p>Develop a national core working group or institution for human capital development and establish sector-appropriate reporting structures anchored by relevant ministries, civil society, the private sector and the donor community</p>
		<p>Education umbrellas</p>	<p>Finalize the constitution and demarcate roles and responsibilities for all levels of government</p>
		<p>Higher education institutions</p> <p>Association of Somalia Universities</p> <p>Somali Research and Educational Network</p>	<p>Until the provisional constitution is finalized, urgently make interim agreements among ministries of education at the national and FMS levels as well as private sector actors</p>

Strategy	Constraints	Potential stakeholders	Interventions
<p>Institute systematic educational data collection and dissemination strategies</p>	<p>There is a widespread lack of capability, commitment and awareness when it comes to education data collection. Surveyed stakeholders were often unaware of how to obtain data, provided incomplete data when it is available, and were broadly unaware of how critical data is to policy and planning. Availability of, and access to, accurate and timely data is critical for sound policymaking. Without reliable data, it is difficult to plan and direct resources to education development</p>	<p>Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher education (FGS & FMS)</p> <p>Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development (FGS & FMS)</p> <p>National Bureau of Statistics</p> <p>Education umbrellas</p> <p>Private education institutions</p> <p>Somali Research and Educational Network</p> <p>International development partners</p> <p>Other Research institutions</p>	<p>Provide government-wide linkages to the MoPIED and National Bureau Statistics to provide expert advice on improving education data collection</p> <p>Set national education development performance indicators (e.g. enrolment, quality, teacher-student ratio) to promote standardized achievement levels in education, facilitate analysis of education data by key stakeholders and publish an annual digest to inform policy decisions</p>

Strategy	Constraints	Potential stakeholders	Interventions
<p>Allocate adequate financial resources to the HCDM proposed priority areas for education</p>	<p>The FGS and FMS allocate a smaller proportion of government expenditures to education than other developing nations and regional peers. Access to, and quality of, education are not likely to improve without adequate resources. Investing in education development is a cornerstone of the national commitment to human capital development and a prerequisite for quality education</p>	<p>Ministry of Finance (FGS & FMS)</p>	<p>From 2020, increase the federal budget allocation for education to achieve a goal of 25% or more of total federal and state government expenditures by 2025</p>
		<p>Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher education (FGS & FMS)</p>	<p>Report on separate and distinct allocations of total public expenditure to primary, secondary and tertiary education to promote transparency and clearly identify differentiated budgetary commitments by educational level</p>
		<p>Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development (FGS & FMS)</p>	<p>Establish a charitable giving facility to secure targeted donations for education from the private sector, diaspora, philanthropists and other giving communities tied to transparent, concrete and specific deliverables</p>
		<p>UN and International Education Partners</p>	<p>Establish an independent oversight board with the mandate to provide transparency and checks and balances for the responsible use of public and private educational expenditures and to publicly address any concerns over mismanagement of educational funds</p>
		<p>Education Umbrellas</p>	
		<p>Private education institutions</p>	
		<p>International partners</p>	

