



RAAGSAN

CONFLICT ON THE RANGE: AN ANALYSIS OF CONFLICT BETWEEN HERDING COMMUNITIES IN SOMALIA AND THEIR STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING CONFLICT AND PROMOTING PEACE

Policy Brief

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INTRODUCTION

Somalia has been grappling with conflict for several decades, and the effects of climate change have compounded the situation. The country has experienced a range of climate-related events, such as droughts, flash floods, erratic rainfall, strong winds, cyclones, sandstorms, dust storms, and increased temperatures. These events have contributed to local grievances and community tensions, which have fueled herder-farmer conflicts as settled communities and livestock herders compete for scarce resources. The resulting displacement of people has led to overcrowding in areas that were already suffering from resource scarcity, increasing the risks of violent conflict. While there is no direct causal link between climate change and conflict, researchers argue that climate change may exert an indirect and conditional effect on conflict risk. In this paper, we explore the drivers of conflict among pastoral communities in Somalia and their management strategies for promoting peace (ICRC 2021).

This policy brief draws on extensive research conducted over several years by Raagsan Consulting in Galmudug, supplemented by insights from experts. This policy brief will delve into the root causes of conflicts among herding communities in Somalia and explore the different strategies applied by these communities to address conflicts and foster peace. By delving into these intricate dynamics, policymakers and implementers can identify effective approaches to peacebuilding that are adaptable and can be expanded to enhance stability and prosperity throughout Somalia.

EXPLORING THE DRIVERS OF CONFLICT IN GALMUDUG

There is considerable hostility between clan lines in Galmudug. Regularly, revenge raids and counterraid occur between neighboring towns, resulting in the shooting and death of hundreds of people and the destruction of property. The profound clan, sectional allegiances, and rivalry in the Galmudug States complicate conflict management (Berghof Foundation, 2019). Herding communities also add to the violence cases in the area, with the main driving factors being competition over resources such as water points, grazing land, and limited resources. Clan borders and previous clan conflicts exacerbate the situation, leading to violence and displacement of people. Table 1 below exhibits communities that are in constant fighting within the Galmudug Region.



Table 1: Drivers of conflict, conflict hotspots and conflicting clans in Galmudug, Somalia

Location	Conflict Hotspots	Main drivers of conflict in the area	Impacts as of 2022
Hananbure and Bangeele	Between Hananbuure and Bangeele	Competition over resources, particularly water points and grazing land	Casualties, displacements, closed markets, and ceased inter-clan movement
Balanbale	Jinni-faley, and Laan-qaylo	Interactions at water points, revenge for previous killings, and competition over scarce resource	Violence and insecurity
Guriel	Balanbale, Balihawd, and Mayeran	Drought and lack of water land disputes, competition over resources, clan borders, and previous incidents of conflict	Violence and insecurity
Hobyo	Haarxuseen, between Goryaale and Qararow	Competition over resources such as water, food, land, and grazing	Currently experiencing peace

CLIMATE CHANGE AND CONFLICT IN SOMALIA'S GALMUDUG REGION: A COMPLEX INTERPLAY

The complex interplay between climate change and long-standing social and political tensions increasingly threatens the fragile peace in Somalia. In particular, the Galmudug region, characterized by its reliance on rain-fed agriculture and pastoralism, is one of the hardest hit regions by the adverse effects of climate change, leading to rising conflict in the region. Climate change has affected Somalia in several ways, as summarized in Figure 1. The Somali government, grappling with long-standing instability and limited resources, struggles to effectively manage climate-related risks and provide security for its citizens, especially in remote areas like Galmudug (UN Somalia, 2023). As such, the impacts of climate change are vast. First, competition for access to water, land, and grazing creates a vicious cycle of violence, with communities resorting to armed conflict to secure necessities (SIPRI, 2023). Also, droughts and conflict force people to flee their homes, often seeking refuge in already strained urban areas, further aggravating social and economic pressures (IOM, 2023). This vulnerable population is susceptible to exploitation and recruitment by armed groups.

Figure 1: The interplay between climate change and conflicts in Somalia






- 1 Droughts and Erratic Rainfall**
Somalia experiences recurrent droughts, with the worst one in decades ravaging the country from 2021 to 2023. Erratic rainfall patterns further exacerbate water scarcity, impacting agricultural productivity and displacing pastoral communities (FAO, 2023).
- 2 Land Degradation and Desertification**
Deforestation and unsustainable land management practices, combined with droughts, accelerate desertification, reducing arable land and grazing resources (UNEP, 2023).
- 3 Increased Competition for Scarce Resources**
Diminishing water and dwindling grazing areas intensify competition between farmers and pastoralists, fueling intercommunal tension and violent conflict (Crisis Group, 2023). This is particularly acute in Galmudug, where diverse communities share limited resources.

Figure 1: The interplay between climate change and conflicts in Somalia

CONFLICT PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY HERDING COMMUNITIES

Over the years, communities in Galmudug have developed effective conflict prevention strategies that have helped to minimize conflicts and protect their livelihoods. Figure 2 below highlights some of the common conflict prevention and management strategies employed by communities in Galmudug.

Figure 2: Conflict management strategies in the Galmudug Region

 Territorial restriction	 Surveillance and communication	 Mediation by community own persons	 The government	 Formation of clan militias to observe peace
<p>Herders restrict their movement within their own clan territories, avoiding areas that are known to be conflict-prone and minimizing the risk of violent confrontations with other clans.</p>	<p>Herders rely on communication with friends in other zones to check the safety of routes before moving to another place.</p>	<p>Local committees, authorities, elders, scholars, and other societies from different clans in Galmudug support hold reconciliation meetings, and promoting peaceful coexistence between communities.</p>	<p>In areas with a stable government, the government plays a key role in preventing conflicts. For instance, in Guriel, the government of Galmudug is responsible for security management in the area.</p>	<p>In areas where there is no religious armed groups and no government authority, clans form militias to protect the area during times of conflict.</p>

THE ROLE OF ELDERS IN CONFLICT PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT IN SOMALIA

In Somali society, elders play a crucial role in decision-making, conflict resolution, and maintaining social order. Somali society is organized around clan-based systems, and the elders are highly respected members of their clans who act as intermediaries between the community and its governing institutions. Their extensive knowledge and experience in traditional customs, laws, and culture make them essential figures in maintaining the social fabric of Somali society. Clan elders have been instrumental in maintaining peace and stability in Somalia, particularly during the post-conflict period, by resolving conflicts through dialogue and negotiation rather than military intervention (Farah, 2010). As anticipated, elders were also mentioned as the main key actors in conflict prevention and management in Galmudug. Elders have played a critical role in managing conflicts within herding

communities in Galmudug by spearheading the development and implementation of conflict resolution strategies, such as interclan arrangements guiding equal allocation of grazing resources, treaties, and reconciliations, and have played an important role in mediating disputes between herding communities.

Current Efforts to Manage Conflict and Foster Peace in The Galmudug Region

In an effort to promote peace, several international, regional and local actors, including the government, have established numerous programs and initiatives to manage conflict in the Galmudug state. The Galmudug government has played a key role in promoting peace and reconciliation within the region, including establishing local security forces and engaging in dialogue with different communities. This effort has been ongoing since the formation of the Galmudug state in 2006 (Garowe Online, 2024).



Among international players, the UN, through its agencies like the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSAM) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP), has been a major player in Galmudug's peace process. UNSAM supports security and reconciliation efforts (UNSAM, 2024), while UNDP focuses on long-term development projects to address the root causes of conflict (UNDP Somalia, 2024). Their involvement dates to the early 2010s and continues to the present.

The AU has also partnered with the UN in peacekeeping efforts, primarily through the AMISOM (African Union Mission in Somalia) troops deployed in Galmudug. AMISOM played a crucial role in stabilizing the region in the late 2010s and continues to provide security support (UN, 2024).

IGAD, an East African regional organization, has been involved in facilitating dialogue and peace agreements between different factions in Galmudug. This involvement has been ongoing since the early 2000s, with renewed efforts in recent years (ReliefWeb, 2023).

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the European Union (EU) are currently implementing a series of projects in Galmudug, Somalia, aimed at promoting community-driven solutions and investments in water access and management. In the current one, The Transhumance Tracking Tool Project, IOM collects data on movements and works with communities to build social cohesion and identify

solutions to natural resource conflicts. IOM also constructs infrastructure to improve natural resource management, and the project's unique approach aims to positively impact other parts of the country ((IoM 2022).

Organisations such as Search for Common Ground (SFCG) have implemented various peacebuilding programs in Galmudug, focusing on conflict resolution, community dialogue, and reconciliation initiatives. Their work started in the mid-2010s and continues today (SFCG, 2024).

Mercy Corps has implemented food security, water sanitation, hygiene, and livelihood programs in Galmudug, alongside supporting peacebuilding initiatives. Their involvement dates back to the early 2010s (Mercy Corps, 2024).

The Somali Peace and Development Network (SPDN) works on peacebuilding, human rights, and good governance in Galmudug. Their activities include conflict mediation, civic education, and promoting the participation of women and youth in peace processes. SPDN has been active since the early 2000s (SPDN, 2024).

The Berghof Foundation is supporting peacebuilding efforts in Galmudug, Somalia, by enhancing the capacity of peacebuilders, raising awareness about climate change's impact on conflicts, and establishing a peacebuilding network using the "Shirarka" (traditional Somali community assemblies) methodology. The project aims to strengthen Infrastructures for Peace, establish a radio program, and work with the government to analyze conflict and mitigate it in the long term (Berghof Foundation, 2023).

Table 1 below summarizes other peace building initiatives that have taken place in chronological order. Although not exhaustive, this list provides evidence of efforts drawn from several actors to restore peace in the Galmudug region.

Table 2: Past and current efforts to reduce conflicts in the Galmudug region

Period	Efforts/Initiatives
The early 2000s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD): Facilitates dialogue and peace agreements between factions in Galmudug (Source: https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/galkayo-peace-week-reflection-strengthening-social-cohesion). Civil Society Organizations (CSOs): Local CSOs emerge, focusing on peacebuilding through dialogue, mediation, and human rights promotion (Source: SPDN, local NGO).
Mid-2000s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Somali Peace and Development Network (SPDN): Implements peacebuilding programs focusing on conflict mediation, civic education, and youth/women inclusion (Source: SPDN website). Galmudug State Government: Established in 2006, it plays a key role in promoting peace through local security forces and community dialogue (Source: Galmudug state government website).
Late 2000s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM): Deploys troops in Galmudug, playing a crucial role in stabilizing the region (Source: UN News, https://peacekeeping.un.org/mission/past/unosom1backgr2.html). United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM): Supports security and reconciliation efforts, addressing root causes of conflict (Source: UNSOM website).
The early 2010s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mercy Corps: Implements food security, water/sanitation/hygiene, and livelihood programs alongside peacebuilding initiatives (Source: Mercy Corps website). Search for Common Ground (SFCG): Starts implementing conflict resolution, community dialogue, and reconciliation programs (Source: SFCG website). United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): Focuses on long-term development projects to address conflict drivers (Source: UNDP Somalia website). Galmudug Peace and Reconciliation Conferences: These conferences brought together warring factions and community leaders to negotiate ceasefires and reconciliation agreements (International Crisis Group, 2012).
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of the Galmudug Peace and Reconciliation Committee: This committee, composed of representatives from various clans and communities, plays a crucial role in mediating disputes and promoting peace (Galmudug State website, 2019).
2020s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Galkayo Peace Week: Launched in 2021, promotes peace and social cohesion between Galmudug and Puntland (Source: ReliefWeb) Galmudug Inter-Clan Dialogue: This dialogue facilitated by the Galmudug Peace and Reconciliation Committee led to agreements on resource sharing and peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms (Galmudug State Media, 2020). Galmudug Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution Training: This initiative trained community leaders and youth in conflict resolution techniques and peacebuilding skills (International Alert, 2021). Berghof Foundation: Implements "Infrastructures for Peace and Environmental Peacebuilding" project in Galmudug and Hirshabelle (Source: Berghof Foundation website) African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS): Supports peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts through workshops, food aid, and security assistance (Source: ATMIS website) Youth peace platforms, like the Mudug Joint Youth Peace Platform, organize peacebuilding activities and advocate for peaceful solutions (Source: ReliefWeb)

2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Galmudug State Livestock Marketing Project: This project aimed to improve market access and secure livelihoods for pastoralists, potentially reducing competition over resources (FSNAU, 2024).
2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Galmudug State Building Conference: This inter-clan forum addressed internal political and security concerns, aiming for consensus on power-sharing and governance (Hiiraan Online, 2023). • Galmudug Peace and Reconciliation Committee Meeting: This committee, established in 2019, continues to work on resolving inter-clan disputes and promoting peaceful coexistence (Galmudug State Media, 2023). • Galmudug Women's Peace Network Workshop: This network, launched in 2021, empowers women to advocate for peace and participate in conflict resolution processes (UN Women Somalia, 2023).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis of the conflict between herding communities in Somalia reveals an intricate web of factors contributing to the conflict and the strategies employed by these communities to manage and promote peace. Conflicts on the range arise from competition over scarce resources such as grazing land and water, exacerbated by ethnic tensions, historical grievances, and weak governance structures. However, despite these challenges, herding communities have developed several strategies to mitigate conflict and foster peaceful coexistence. These strategies include traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, resource-sharing agreements, and community-based peacebuilding initiatives.

Table 3: Proposed strategies for managing conflicts and promoting peace in the Galmudug region, Somalia.

Strengthen governance and rule of law	The Somali government should prioritize strengthening governance structures and rule of law in the regions affected by conflicts between herding communities. This includes establishing clear land tenure systems, enhancing access to justice, and ensuring equitable resource allocation. Strengthening governance will help address underlying grievances and prevent conflicts from escalating.
Promote cross-community dialogue and cooperation	Facilitating regular dialogue and cooperation between different herding communities is crucial for building trust and resolving conflicts. The government and local authorities should actively support and promote platforms for inter-community dialogue, such as peace conferences and mediation initiatives. These platforms should provide space for communities to discuss their concerns, find common ground, and develop mutually beneficial solutions.
Invest in livelihood diversification and resource management in an effort to increase resilience towards climate induced shocks and stresses	Encouraging herding communities to diversify their livelihoods beyond pastoralism can help reduce competition over limited resources. The government, in collaboration with development partners, should invest in alternative income-generating activities such as agriculture, small-scale businesses, and vocational training. Additionally, promoting sustainable resource management practices, including water conservation and rangeland rehabilitation, can help alleviate resource scarcity and reduce conflicts.
Community-based conflict resolution capacity building	Implementing targeted training programs on conflict resolution and mediation at the community level can equip individuals with the skills to manage conflicts effectively. These programs should focus on empowering local leaders, women, and youth to play an active role in mediating disputes and promoting peaceful coexistence.
Resource-sharing agreements and establishment of committees led by clan elders	Establishing resource-sharing agreements and committees among herding communities can provide a framework for managing shared resources fairly. These committees can be These agreements should involve the participation of all stakeholders and outline clear rules for resource allocation, water access, and grazing rights.

Support local peacebuilding initiatives

The government and international organizations should provide financial and technical support to local peacebuilding initiatives led by communities themselves. These initiatives could include community-led dialogues, peace education programs, and income-generating projects that promote cooperation and reconciliation. Such support will strengthen community resilience and encourage sustainable peacebuilding efforts.

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