Introduction

Situated approximately 250 kilometres west of Mogadishu the city of Baidoa (Somali: Baydhabo) serves not only as the capital of Bay region but also one of the most important economic centres in south-central Somalia.

Traditionally inhabited by members of the Rahanweyn clan this city of approximately 60,000 persons has long enjoyed strong economic ties, to not only to domestic markets in the neighbouring Somali regions of Gedo, Bakool, Lower Shabelle and Middle Juba, but also to Kenya and Ethiopia. The political, economic and strategic importance of the city and its surrounding district has resulted in frequent heavy fighting amongst clan-based militias and, more recently, between al-Shabaab, Ethiopian troops, the combined forces of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the internationally backed Federal Government of Somalia (formerly the Transitional Federal Government).

This briefing paper draws on the work undertaken by members of the OCVP Research team in the city of Baidoa from the 12th to 15th December 2013 in order to identify and provide an assessment of the key issues affecting Baidoa District related to conflict, governance, justice, security and safety.
CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

The ongoing struggle between the Somali government, backed by AMISOM troops, and al-Shabaab for control of the city and its surrounding districts was reaffirmed by both focus group participants and the Traditional Leader interviewed as a key informant. Participants in the focus groups also emphasised the recent conflict among local leaders who are supportive of the establishment of a new semi-autonomous state (South-West Somalia) that would be comprised of six regions; and local politicians, backed by the Federal Government, who were promoting a new state comprised of three regions.

The success of recent efforts by AMISOM, and to a lesser, but far more brutal, extent by al-Shabaab, to decrease the level of inter-clan violence for which the city and its surrounding regions was notorious for (even in the context of post-1991 Somalia), was demonstrated by the fact that only 19% of survey respondents reported witnessing incidents of conflict between clans within the past twelve months. Where clan conflict occurred the most significant cause was cited as disputes over land and resources. Participants in the traditional elders focus group emphasised that it is the presence of armed militias and a weak local economy that have been the primary divers of conflict over pastoral areas, water points, land and water catchments.

Despite crime appearing to remain a major problem – 35% of respondents having personally witnessed a crime against someone outside their homestead – a significant majority (71%) of respondents indicated that they felt safer than the past year; it should be noted however, that this perception varied significantly across the city’s four sub-divisions with HawlWadag residents reflecting a greater concern for their safety than the 3 other wards.

Further Research Required

The unregulated possession of firearms by civilians was said to be a major threat to security during some focus group discussions. However, other participants considered this to either be of no consequence or even a possible contributor to local security. This remains a matter that warrants further in-depth investigation.

SECURITY AND SAFETY

It was observed by participants in every focus group discussion that the police in Baidoa are severely understaffed and underequipped. During the OCVP field mission only two police stations for the entire city were noted – the Central Police Station in Hawl-Wadag and Saldhig-Bari Police Station in Horseed. According to traditional elders the effectiveness of the police is further hampered by the fact that officers are underpaid, ill-equipped and divided along clan lines.
Although focus group participants frequently complained of harassment, brutality and use of excessive force by members of the police, some 53% of household survey respondents identified the police as their most trusted security provider in responding to crime. The two most commonly cited reasons given for this response were ‘ease of access’ (36%) and ‘fast response’ (34%). Furthermore, a majority (64%) of survey respondents expressed a ‘high’ or ‘very high’ level of confidence in the police. This trust was exemplified by the fact that the police were indicated as the first choice for respondents should they need to report problems involving civil matter, petty crime or more serious crimes.

After the police, the second most preferred authority as expressed by respondents were traditional elders while the courts were rated as only a third preference in all matters except cases of petty theft for which religious leaders were the third most favoured.

It is possible, however, that the confidence expressed in the police as a security provider may be coloured by the presence and activities of other security providers operating in the city and surrounding district. Indeed through the focus group discussions it was inferred by participants on more than one occasion that any security void or deficiencies existing due to the weakness of the local police force may be compensated by the presence of AMISOM forces who maintain two bases in the district as well as an ad-hoc civilian police force that operates as a neighbourhood watch in the city.

GOVERNANCE

Amongst those surveyed ‘security’ was cited as the most important service provided by the local government, having been highlighted by 28% of respondents while sanitation (19%), education (17%) and health (14%) also featured strongly. Less than half (44%) of survey respondents in Baidoa, however, were aware of the existence of an elected local council. There was also a corresponding low level of familiarity (25%) with any services provided by the local council, except in the case of residents in the Horseed district who recorded a relatively high level of awareness. Similarly, an overwhelming majority of survey respondents (81%) indicated that they were not aware of the existence of communication channels between the

![Fig 2. Most Trusted Security Provider in Responding to Serious Crime](image)

![Fig 3. Local councils and services provided](image)
community and its elected representatives.

Even among the 14% of respondents who indicated an awareness of such communications only 32%, or 16 people in total, had participated in consultations between the community and its representatives within the last twelve month. Nevertheless, almost all respondents (94%) still expressed a belief in the importance of having elected officials.

The most pressing area of concern identified by survey respondents across the 4 sub-districts was unemployment (35%), followed by insecurity (24%). Participants in the Youth focus discussion groups indicated that services such as water and electricity were provided by local private companies and that local people found their own means of waste collection. The Mayor of Baidoa agreed in a key informant interview that it is the responsibility of local Councillors to address security concerns, provide services and maintain the city’s prisons out of the revenue collected through taxes and customs duties. Insecurity and the absence, however, of a Tariffs Act challenge the ability of Councillors to perform these duties on behalf of the city’s residents.

JUSTICE

Although there are three courts in Baidoa most survey respondents (63%) demonstrated an awareness of only one. The courts, like the city’s police force, were observed by members of the OCVP team to be in a critical condition. The District Court in particular, comprising of six permanent staff members that including a chairperson, assistant, clerk and a process server, had no premises of its own and instead uses two ill-equipped rooms in a police station. Members of the research team also received reports of judicial staff going without pay for the last year and having to depend on meagre file-opening fees incurred by clients of the courts. With these formal courts already suffering from allegations of corruption and taking too long to resolve cases it is likely that this reliance on clients of the court by staff for their income has done little to improve the public image of these institutions.

Nevertheless, despite indications in the qualitative interviews and discussions that the court would have low levels of confidence, the formal justice system, which comprises the courts, judicial officials, the police and the custodial services, received positive ratings. Exceptions were noted from the responses received by residents of Horseed where respondents were
least likely to have used any of the justice providers for any issue of justice within the last 12 months.

Respondents reported a preference for the use of traditional means of justice provision, whether from a traditional leader or religious figure, rather than rely on formal legal courts. In particular, religious figures were preferred by female respondents who considered them more trustworthy than the courts.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the data collected by members of the OCVP research team the following recommendations are offered in order to address ongoing issues of conflict, crime and insecurity in Baidoa district.

**General Recommendations**
- Additional funding and technical support is needed to ensure that the necessary infrastructure, equipment, training and financial resources are available to support the day-to-day activities of the police, local council and official courts in the city of Baidoa.
- Increased efforts should be undertaken to design, implement and provide on-going financial and technical support for programs and initiatives exposing the dangers and negative impacts of clanism; especially among members of the police.
- The unregulated ownership of firearms by civilians and its impact on crime, conflict and insecurity in Baidoa District is an issue requiring further serious investigation and analysis.

**Federal Government of Somalia**
- Organize and provide increased resources and technical assistance for the local administration to become more representative, responsive and accountable to residents of urban and rural communities in Baidoa District.
- Take steps to integrate local militias into the Somali National Army and police force. Should these remain a separate auxiliary force then effort should be taken to provide training and impose discipline in order that then can not only provide security but also win the support of local residents.
- Provide Human Rights training (as part of the recommendation above) and in general to the police force.
- Continue to pursue security sector reform (SSR) in Baidoa District that includes mapping, legitimizing, and coordinating the responsibilities and activities of local government and non-government security providers.

**Other Non-State Actors**
- Increase efforts to design and implement evidence based programs that are responsive to the needs of local residents; even if limited to the city of Baidoa.
- Increased coordination of organisations that are addressing district level needs and requirements that include the input of community leaders and district level - governance actors where applicable.
REFERENCES
OCVP (December, 2013) District Conflict and Security Assessment Report: BAIDOA

OCVP Mogadishu Office
Bar Fathi Area
Taleh Zone - Hodan District
Telephone: + 252 (0) 1850221