Burao is the capital of the Togdheer region and is the second largest city in Somaliland. It holds Somaliland’s largest livestock population, and is the centre of the livestock market within Somaliland as well as Somalia and Eastern Ethiopia. A number of small and medium size businesses in telecommunications, mineral water production, hospitality, detergent-manufacturing and other industries also exist. In addition, remittances from the Diaspora form a major contributing source to the district’s economy. Social services in Burao are provided by several agencies, including the government, local NGOs, international organisations, the private sector and other community-based organisations. The Diaspora has also contributed to several social and development activities.

Much of Burao was destroyed during the prolonged civil war in the 1980s and several persons were displaced. This culminated in 1988 when most of them were forced to flee for their lives and many ended up in refugee camps in Ethiopia. Rehabilitation commenced in 1991, when people started to return to the city, but was interrupted by local conflict in 1992 and 1994. The process was also negatively impacted by a ban on livestock exports to the Middle East in 2000; however, the environment has become more conducive to investment and regeneration now that there has been a prolonged period of peace. Key findings from the 2015 DCSA which was conducted in Burao are summarised below.

Overall, residents in Burao had little experience with major incidents of crime and violence in recent times. There was significant awareness of the formal governance, security and justice systems among respondents. However, traditional systems continued to play a role in these areas. In the case of governance, representatives were elected based on clan and therefore meant that respective clans still held considerable influence in related matters. Additionally, traditional leaders were often consulted regarding matters of justice and even more
trusted than the courts. Security provision was the only area in which the formal system was clearly dominant, with the police being regarded as the most trusted entity to respond to various security issues. Even so, respondents felt that the police force was not adequate to meet the needs of the local population and, in addition to the traditional systems, found alternative means of obtaining security through the engagement of private security guards.

**Governance**

In keeping with Buroa’s classification as a Grade A District under the Regions and Districts (Self Management) Law of Somaliland, the town has a Local Council, which comprises twenty-one (21) elected members. Most respondents were aware of the Local Council (90%), and the majority of these persons were able to state at least one service which the council provides. However, very few respondents had participated in consultations with the Local Council over the past year (5%). Nonetheless, respondents demonstrated awareness of issues facing the community. Poor infrastructure (54%), poor health facilities (46%), poor sanitation (45%), lack of water (24%), poor education (18%), unemployment (16%), and insecurity (11%) were identified as some of the main community challenges. Notably, these were areas that fell within the ambit of the council’s mandate. Speaking to the challenges that the council experienced, the Mayor pointed out that although Burao had the largest livestock market in the country, it did not tax its livestock. Instead, in keeping with what was termed the ‘Tax Unification Law,’ relevant taxes were collected by the Central Government and the Berbera Local Council who received predefined percentages. Consequently, Burao did not benefit directly from the livestock sold in its markets. Against this background, there was optimism about the ongoing pilot decentralisation programme in the district. It was expected that successful decentralisation would serve to empower the Local Councils by enabling more autonomy to address the affairs of the district at the local level.

The majority of respondents maintained that it is important to have elected representatives (82%). However, 16% of respondents did not share this opinion. Few discussants expressed dissatisfaction with the electoral process. They argued that electorates voted for candidates on the basis of their clan affiliation, rather than merit. This was thought to influence further biases along clan lines, extending to areas such as the appointment of ministers and selection of civil servants. Participants also suggested that twenty-one councillors who required payments and other benefits created an added burden in light of the poor economy. Further to this was the cost of the elections, especially to the councillors who sometimes incurred substantial debt while vying for office. Participants suggested that, upon assuming office, these councillors then became more concerned with profiting from the post than fulfilling their responsibilities.

Despite these issues, a little more than one-half of the respondents felt that the council’s performance had improved over the past year (51%). However, approximately one in every five respondents (21%) also felt that there had been a decline in the council’s performance during this time.
**Security**

The police were the main security providers in the district of Burao. As with other districts in the region, traditional elders, religious leaders, and the wider community supported the police in security provision. Their involvement was, however, mostly limited to keeping watch and informing the police of potential issues of insecurity. Nearly all respondents (98%) acknowledged the presence of the police in the district. However, several persons argued that the five police stations were not sufficient to meet the needs of the local population. There were also mixed views regarding the adequacy of the number of police. A number of participants, including the Police Commissioner, stated that the city did not have sufficient police officers. This was said to be exacerbated by the deployment of police officers to other areas. As a result, several persons enlisted the services of night guards or security officers to provide additional support to the security efforts in the district.

Respondents were most likely to turn to the police for security matters, with the majority stating that they would prefer to report issues such as civil matters (84%), petty crimes (96%), and serious crimes (98%) to the police as opposed to other entities. The police was also identified as the most trusted security provider by a vast majority (93%). The police’s fast response was the most frequently cited reason for trust in the police ahead of other entities. Accessibility, unbiased enforcement and respect were also mentioned as reasons for this choice. However, despite being credited for their fast response by household survey respondents, discussants spoke of undue delays due to logistical challenges such as the unavailability of vehicles and shortage of fuel.

Overall, the police appeared to be well regarded, with approximately nine in every ten respondents (90%) stating that they have fairly or very high levels of trust in the police. However, the remaining respondents all indicated fairly or very low levels of trust. Discussants raised a few points which may help to identify factors which had a negative impact on trust. There were complaints that the police sometimes exhibited biases based on clan affiliation or an individual’s status within the community. In addition, it was suggested that the police sometimes required a payment before they would provide assistance. Nevertheless, more than three-quarters of respondents (76%) perceived that there had been an improvement in police performance when compared with the previous year.

**Justice**

In keeping with its status as a regional capital, a District Court, a Court of Appeal, and the Regional Court are present in Burao. These courts are integral components of the formal justice system. However, as is commonplace in most Somali regions, the informal justice system, which includes traditional elders and religious leaders from the community also play a key role in justice provision. At times, the formal and informal systems complemented each other by way of working together or referring of cases to one another. Traditionally, the formal and informal systems handled similar cases. However, there were now specific cases such as rape, which were legally declared to be outside of the jurisdiction of the informal system. Despite this, there were accounts of these cases being handled
by the informal system, specifically the elders.

The Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) utilised the services of a Dispute Settlement Committee as the first option for settling disputes among themselves. However, the formal justice system was widely accepted as the legitimate justice provider. Overall, approximately one in ten respondents (9%) stated that they had used the court in the past year. Usage of traditional elders and religious leaders among respondents was lower at 3% and 1% respectively. Cases which had been referred to both formal and informal justice providers included land disputes, household violence, assault and business disputes, whereas cases relating to youth violence had only been referred to the courts. When asked to identify their most trusted security provider, the court was mentioned most (42%), followed by traditional elders (37%), and religious leaders (20%). While the court was the preferred choice, the results also indicate that collectively, the informal providers were more highly regarded, with a combined 57% of respondents indicating trust in the elders or religious leaders ahead of the court. Fast decisions and fair judgments were the most popular reasons for choice of the courts as the most trusted justice provider. Independence from politics and fast decisions were the main reasons for selection of elders, while fair judgments was the main reason for selection of religious leaders.

The majority of respondents stated that they were very or fairly confident in the formal justice system (82%), yet 17% stated outright that they were not confident. Discussions revealed that the courts faced a number of challenges, including insufficient working space as well as a limited budget for equipment and stationery. There were also allegations of unethical practices such as the issuance of practicing licenses to lawyers who had been dismissed as judges for professional misconduct. It was also perceived that members of the judiciary were susceptible to bribery, especially since their salaries were regarded as being meagre and barely enough to cover their expenses. In spite of this, more than one-half of household survey respondents (52%) stated that there had been an improvement in the performance of the court over the past year.

### Conflict and Violence

Respondents’ accounts of their experience with conflict and violence in Burao suggest that the district was relatively peaceful in the twelve months leading up to the assessment. However, this did not mean that the district was free from insecurity. Approximately 8% of household survey respondents stated that they had witnessed conflict between clans or subgroups in the past year, while 5% had witnessed at least one incident of crime or violence during that period. Youth violence was the most frequently mentioned reason for the conflicts that were witnessed. Crime, family and business disputes, and resources were also identified as factors which had contributed to these conflicts.

Both formal and informal entities played a role in conflict resolution. However, it was the responsibility of the formal institutions - particularly the police - to manage conflicts, especially in cases where there was a risk of escalation into violence. Efforts undertaken by the police to curtail the occurrence of incidents which involved the youth were reported as being largely
successful. Private night guards and security officers also helped to protect the neighbourhoods and businesses within the community. Despite this, most respondents (53%) perceived that there had been no change or that there had been a decline in the level of safety in the area over the past year.

Youth-based incidents such as group conflict and robbery remained one of the main causes of insecurity along with family disputes and rape. Migration and the unavailability of jobs were identified as key contributors to youth-related problems. Clannism was also a feature of some of the disputes among the youth. The private security personnel were also regarded as a potential risk on account of retaliation measures for discontinuation of their services. In light of this, while close to two-thirds of respondents (64%) stated that they safe in the area, more than one-third (36%) indicated that they felt rather unsafe or very unsafe.