Beledweyne is the capital city of Hiiraan region of Somalia and is the most populated district in the region. The district is located along the Shabelle River, and is approximately 315 km northeast of the capital, Mogadishu. Beledweyne is divided into four main subdivisions namely Hawo Tako, Buunda Weyn, Hawl Wadaag and Kooshin. The town straddles the Shabelle River and the eastern and western sides are connected by two famous bridges, Buundoweyn and Liiqliiqato.

Beledweyne is a vibrant commercial centre because of its strategic trade links with Mogadishu in the south, Galkacyo and Bosaso to the north, Ethiopia to the northwest, as well as Huddur and Tiyeglow in the west. However, like other districts in central and southern Somalia, Beledweyne continues to suffer from recurrent clan conflicts. Although regional and district administrative structures have been established, they are relatively ineffective primarily due to lack of resources and constant internal strife. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) forces stationed in the east of the town near to the airport (Jente Kundishe (115) settlement) and the Somali National Army (SNA) constantly provide support to the district administration towards the maintenance of security in the town.

The results of the assessment indicate that a sizeable minority of respondents were aware of conflict in the area over the past year. Further to this, more than one in ten respondents in the household survey stated that they had witnessed conflict between clans or groups in the past year. A similar proportion of respondents had also witnessed incidents of crime or violence during this time. Overall, respondents expressed concern about the level of safety in the area, with more than one-quarter of the respondents indicating that they feel unsafe. Nonetheless, the majority stated that they felt safe and most also had a positive perception of the change in the level of safety in the district in the year leading up to the assessment. A local government structure was in place and both formal and informal systems of security and justice were operational in Beledweyne. However, based on the feedback from respondents, the informal systems (Elders and Religious Leaders) were more highly
regarded, both collectively and individually. There was also notable room for improvement in respondents’ trust and confidence in the formal entities.

**Governance**

The local government in Beledweyne is headed by the Mayor who is supported by other members of the District Council. There are various departments within the Beledweyne municipality which fall under the direct control of the Mayor. These include Finance and Administration, Human Resources, Taxation, Social Affairs, Public Works and Land, and the Planning Department. Most respondents in the household survey (80%) were aware of the District Council. The others were uncertain about whether or not there was a council or stated outright that one did not exist. Among those who were aware of the Council, nearly one-half (46%) declared that it did not provide any services, while an additional 10% stated that they did not know the services that the council provides. However, the services that were most readily associated with the council were security provision, infrastructure and sanitation. Health, education and justice were each also mentioned by a small proportion of respondents.

Only 2% of all respondents had participated in local consultations with the local council over the past year. However, the Mayor claimed that several meetings had been held with established committees to discuss matters of significance to the community, particularly security, in the past year. Nonetheless, when asked to state pressing issues facing their community, nearly all the respondents identified at least one area of concern. Poor infrastructure, unemployment, and poor sanitation were the three areas that were mentioned most. More than one-half of the respondents also mentioned issues relating to health, education and the economy.

A vast majority of the respondents (97%) maintained that it was important to have elected officials. However, there was room for improvement with respect to confidence in the local council as less than one-half of respondents (48%) agreed that they had fairly high or very high levels of confidence in the council. In addition, although 14% of those who were aware of the council felt that there had been an improvement in the council’s performance over the past year, the majority (67%) were of the opinion that their performance remained the same, while 5% felt that there had been a decline in the council’s performance during this time.

**Security**

A number of entities collaborate to provide security services in the district of Beledweyne. The formal security providers in the district are the police, Somali National Army (SNA) and the African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). They are supported by informal entities, including elders and religious leaders, while the community also cooperates with security providers, particularly through women and youth committees as well as established District Safety Committees, to help maintain peace. While most respondents acknowledged the presence of the police (77%), a sizeable minority (22%) could not confirm the presence of the police in the area. Awareness was lowest among the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), with approximately one-third of the respondents among the IDPs stating that there was no police or that they did not know whether or not the police was present in the area. The district had one police station, which most respondents (81%) estimated that they were able to walk to from their homes within forty minutes, including a little less than one-half (45%) who estimated that they would be able to get there within twenty minutes.
With respect to reporting preference for various types of crime, traditional elders were identified ahead of the police as the entity to which respondents would prefer to report civil matters (45%), petty crimes (49%), and serious crimes (39%). The police followed in each case, with 29% of respondents stating that they would prefer to report civil matters to the police, while 27% and 37% of respondents stated that they would prefer to report petty and serious crimes to the police. Overall, however, religious leaders were most trusted for responding to crime and violence by 31% of respondents, whereas elders and the police were most trusted by similar proportions of 29% and 28% of respondents respectively. Respondents cited similar reasons for their choice of most trusted security provider. Religious leaders were overwhelmingly selected based on the respect they command as indicated by 83% of those who selected them. The main reasons for selection of elders were their fast response; respect; and unbiased enforcement. In the case of the legitimate security providers, the police, those who trusted them most cited their accessibility and fast response as the leading factors that influenced this selection.

There were complaints about the lack of resources available to the police. The size of the police force was regarded as being inadequate to meet the needs of the local population. It was also noted that the police station lacked office space. The use of the Police Commissioner’s office as the radio room provided an example of the challenges that this presented. In addition, other implications of the lack of resources included a shortage of vehicles, fuel, equipment such as computers and office furniture. In spite of this, some were of the opinion that the police made significant efforts given their limitations. However, this had the potential to influence their performance and even after making efforts to mobilise transportation, police were often late to the scene of a crime due to the delays incurred. It was also reported that clan dynamics interfered with the work of the police as police were often unable to respond in the event of disputes between two clans.

Respondents were almost evenly split regarding their perception of trust in the police. Near equal proportions indicated that they had fairly high or very high levels of trust in the police (46%) and fairly low or very low levels of trust (47%). The remaining few did not give a clear indication of their trust. Furthermore, most respondents felt that there had been no change in the police performance over the past year (56%), while one in five (20%) felt that there had been an improvement in performance. However, 11% of respondents were of the opinion that the police performance had declined during this time, while 13% did not have an opinion regarding the change in performance.

### Justice

There are three courts in Beledweyne – a district court, a regional court, and a court martial. However, only two thirds of the respondents in the household survey acknowledged the presence of the formal court in the district. The remaining respondents were evenly split between those who stated that they were unsure about whether a court was present and those who stated outright that there was none. There was substantial variation in respondents’ proximity to the courts across the different subdivisions. IDPs appeared to be furthest away, with only 9% estimating that the court was located within twenty minutes of their homes compared with 83% in Buunda Weyn who estimated that they would be able to get to the court within this time.

Despite the presence of the formal courts, traditional elders and religious leaders (informal justice providers), also played a role in the administration of justice. Notably, reported usage of these informal providers was higher than usage of the courts. The elders, followed by religious leaders, had been most utilised by respondents for matters pertaining to justice in the past year whereas the court had been least utilised. Issues such as land disputes and
household violence had been referred to all three entities, while the informal entities had also handled cases of robbery, assault, and business disputes.

When asked to state their most trusted justice provider, religious leaders were the leading choice for most respondents (67%). Traditional elders were second (19%), and the court was identified as the least trusted among the three (8%). Nonetheless, fair judgments was the most frequently cited reason for selection of each entity. Discussants, however, argued that the informal entities were generally more accessible. However, they were not without challenges. For example, it was noted that elders were not best suited to solve issues such as rape as they were not believed to be in a position to protect the offender from being hurt or even killed by those who seek to avenge the act. A number of issues concerning the formal court were also highlighted. These included inadequate powers of enforcement partially resulting from the limited capacity of the police, as well as a need for improved coordination among the various stakeholders. In addition, recommendations for put forward for more adequate and suitably qualified staff. Concerns were also raised about the salaries that were paid to personnel throughout the justice system.

Overall, there was little confidence in the formal justice system. Only one-quarter of respondents (25%) declared that they had fairly high or very high levels of confidence in the justice system. In contrast more than one-half (52%) stated that they had no confidence in the system, with a further 23% failing to give an indicative response. Generally, the court was not considered to have made much progress over the year leading up to the assessment. Most respondents (69%) felt that the performance of the court had remained the same over this period. However, 16% were not sure whether there had been any change, while 10% were of the opinion that there had been a decline in performance. Only 5% of respondents felt that there had been an improvement in the court’s performance over the past year.

### Conflict and Violence

A little less than two in every five respondents (38%) indicated that they were aware of conflict that had taken place in the district in the past year. There was notable variation in this awareness across the subdivisions, ranging from 17% of respondents in Buunda Weyn to 67% of respondents in Hawl Wadaag. Overall, approximately 13% of the respondents said that they had actually witnessed conflict between clans or groups during the past year. More than one-third of the respondents (36%) in Hawl Wadaag stated that they had witnessed such conflict, whereas similar proportions of one in ten respondents in Buunda Weyn and among the IDPs, along with 5% of the respondents in each of the subdivisions of Haawo Tako and Kooshin also reported that they had witnessed conflict during this time.

Among those who had witnessed conflict, power or cultural struggles were identified as the leading cause. Revenge, rape and resources were also identified among the factors that contributed to these incidents. According to the discussants, conflict between clans or groups were mainly incited by tension over resources, such as land and water. They further stated that these issues were often fuelled by a perceived lack of justice and political interests. Communities were said to get involved in conflict due to what they regarded as being unfair judgments by the justice providers. With respect to political interests, politicians were accused of using khat as a means of inciting the youth to form militia groups which perpetrated acts of violence on their behalf.
Robberies were identified as the most prevalent crimes in the district. Murders by Al-Shabaab as well as those which committed as a result of clan conflict were also among the mentioned criminal activity. In addition, acts of violence were thought to be propelled by poverty and limited livelihoods. Women, children and the elderly were regarded as being most vulnerable to acts of crimes and violence. However, the youth pointed out that they were the main victims as they were often used to perpetuate acts of violence and face the associated risks.

Despite the noted areas of concern, most respondents (70%) indicated that they felt safe in the area. However, more than one-quarter of the respondents (28%) noted that they did not feel safe. There was also a positive perception of the change in safety in the year leading up to the assessment. A little less than one-half of respondents (48%) felt that there had been an improvement in the level of safety. Conversely, only 5% felt that there had been a decline in safety.