Borama is the capital of Awdal region of Somaliland. It is situated near the border with Ethiopia in the northwest and is mainly inhabited by the Gadabuursi, also known as Samaroon, Somali clan. In the 15th century, Borama was ruled by the Adal Sultanate (Kingdom of Adal), which later formed a part of the British Somaliland protectorate in the 20th Century. In 1993, Borama hosted a Grand National Conference which attracted delegates from all clans in the former British Somaliland protectorate to have a national dialogue on the formation and structure of the Somaliland government. The conference ushered in the formation of a hybrid governance system, which combines traditional and modern institutions. The government is separated into an executive branch, a legislative branch, and a judicial branch, each of which functions independently. In addition, the Guurti, which is comprised of members who were selected by the respective clans, represents the traditional system within the Somaliland government. The members of the Guurti remain those who were selected at the Conference or relatives who have since inherited their positions in the Guurti House.

The establishment of Amoud University, the first higher learning institute in Somaliland, after the collapse of the former state in 1988, stimulated the expansion of schools and an increase in student enrollments. The town attracted students not only from Somaliland, but also from Puntland and South Central Somalia. Furthermore, there are nine secondary schools in Borama. This has caused the town to be dubbed as the Hoyga Waxbarashada (education centre).

Overall, the majority of respondents in the district of Borama indicated that they felt safe in the area. Most respondents were also of the opinion that safety had improved over the past year. There were, however, accounts of conflicts and incidents of crime and violence that had been witnessed during this time. Competition over resources, clashes among the youth, and family disputes were identified as the leading causes of conflict and violence in the area. Borama had a local council and formal systems of justice and security in place. However, while the majority expressed trust or confidence in these institutions, a sizeable minority also stated the opposite. Traditional entities, primarily elders and religious leaders, were highly regarded and influenced perception towards these state institutions. Generally, most respondents declared that it was important to have elected representatives although several arguments were presented in favour of the nomination system, which was previously utilised. Criticisms were also levelled against the police and the formal justice system. Nonetheless, the police was identified as the leading choice for responding to crime and violence whereas the formal justice system and elders were jointly regarded as the most trusted entity for dealing with matters pertaining to justice.
Governance

Borama is classified as a Grade A district under the Regions and Districts (Self-Management) Law of Somaliland. In accordance with this classification, the town has a Local Council, which is comprised of twenty-one (21) elected members, who in turn elect a Mayor and Deputy Mayor among themselves. Nearly all the respondents in the household survey (99%) acknowledged the presence of the Local Council and most were aware of at least one service that the council provides. The provision of infrastructure and sanitation were the services that were most readily associated with the Local Council. Few respondents also mentioned that the council played a role in the provision of water, health, security, education and agricultural services.

Knowledge of avenues of communication with the Local Council was generally low, with only 25% of respondents stating that they were aware of existing communication channels. Furthermore, only 3% had participated in any consultation(s) with the Council over the past year. Nevertheless, most respondents identified what they perceived as challenges facing the community, with more than one-half of those interviewed citing lack of infrastructure and poor sanitation as pressing community needs. Other issues concerned unavailability of good health facilities and poor health care, unemployment, the poor state of the economy, and poor education. The supply of water and electricity as well as insecurity were also mentioned by a minority of respondents.

The council’s ability to fulfil its role in service provision was said to be negatively impacted by a shortage of funding. Taxes were the main source of revenue for the district, but it was noted that there was a significant shortfall in this area. In addition, it was argued that the centralization of services in the capital, Hargeisa, meant that the revenue which was collected went into the national coffers rather than stay in the district. In a bid to improve service provision, the local government delegated certain services to private companies in an act, which was dubbed 3P - Public Private Partnership. NGOs and international organisations were also reported to assist the council in fulfilling its responsibilities due to the limited capacity of the council to provide services in full.

Notably, the majority of respondents (83%) were in favour of the election of local government representatives. However, several discussants argued that the previous system of nomination had resulted in greater accountability since non-performers could simply be replaced. Added to this was the perception that the election system caused rivalry and polarization among the clans and sub-clans and furthermore, elected candidates were generally regarded as being less experienced. In general, there were also mixed views regarding the council, with near equal proportions of respondents expressing high and low levels of confidence (49% and 48% respectively). While 45% of respondents felt that the council’s performance has improved over the past year, close to one-quarter felt that there had been a decline. Females had a more favourable attitude towards the council than males as indicated by 60% of females compared with 41% of males expressing high levels of confidence in the council.

Security

The police presence in Borama was acknowledged by all the respondents in the household survey. There were two police stations in the district along with a police post, which had been recently built but not yet operational. Nearly all the respondents (98%) estimated that the closest police station was within one hour’s walking distance from their homes, including two-thirds (67%) who stated that they would be able to walk to the closest police station within 20 minutes.
With respect to security provision, there appeared to be high regard for the role of formal institutions. While elders and religious leaders played a role in supporting the police, as is customary in Somaliland, when asked who they would opt to report various types of security issues to, the police was identified as the preferred choice for civil matters (74%), petty crimes (90%), and serious crimes (95%). Very few respondents (1%-3%) mentioned traditional elders in each case, and no one mentioned religious leaders. Other formal entities, such as the Local Authority and the Court, were also named among the institutions that respondents would prefer to report various types of security issues to. Overall, the police was identified as the most trusted security provider for responding to crime and violence by 89% of respondents. However, the traditional elders also saw an improvement in their status in this regard, with 7% of respondents stating that they trusted them most compared with 2% who selected the Local Authority and 1% who selected the court. The main reason for selection of the police was said to be their fast response (82%), while elders were most selected based on their command of respect (55%) and accessibility (36%).

Despite the more favourable perception of the police relative to other entities, a number of criticisms were levelled against the police. Participants in the focus group discussions purported that the police were susceptible to bribery though this was negated by the Police Commissioner who argued that such beliefs existed due to false perceptions and lack of understanding of the work of the police. The police faced a number of challenges, including shortage of manpower and worsening relations with the community.

It was argued that the number of enlisted police officers was sufficient to meet the needs of the local population; however, the majority were regarded as being unfit to undertake police duties on a daily basis due to factors such as age, illnesses, maternity leave, and training. Community members, who in the past had been very supportive of the police, were said to interfere with police operations from time to time. Instances were cited in which the police had been prevented from arresting alleged wrongdoers such as thieves or alcoholics by members of the community. The Police Commissioner lamented that the relationship between the police and the community was at its worst since Somaliland declared its declaration of independence. A sizable minority of respondents (27%) expressed very low or fairly low levels of trust in the police, while just less than one-quarter (23%) felt that there had been a decline in police performance over the past year. Nonetheless, despite the concerns and negative perceptions, most respondents maintained a favourable opinion of the police. A little less than three-quarters of respondents (72%) indicated fairly high or very high levels of trust in the police, and a majority (59%) stated that the police performance had improved over the past year.

### Justice

There were three courts operating in Borama, a district court, a regional court, and a court of appeal. All the respondents in the household survey were aware of the presence of the formal court(s) in the district. The majority of respondents (98%) estimated that the court was less than one hour away from their homes by foot, including approximately one-quarter (26%) who said that they could get to the court in 20 minutes. However, like any other district in Somaliland, traditional entities also played a role in justice provision (informal justice providers). There was no Shari’ah court in Borama, but elders who employed the use of customary Somali law, called Xeer, were also active in the administration of justice.
The court was the entity that had been used most for matters of justice in the past year. Approximately 12% of respondents stated that they had used the court during this time compared with 5% who had used traditional elders. Similar issues, such as household violence, land disputes, business disputes, and robbery, had been referred to the formal court and the traditional elders. Overall, when asked to identify the entity that they trust most for dealing with matters pertaining to justice, equal proportions of respondents identified the elders and the courts (46% each). Religious Leaders were most trusted by 5% of respondents, while 2% indicated that they had no preference. Fast decisions and accessibility were the leading reasons for choice of the courts, while elders were mainly selected on account of their reliability and accessibility. Fair judgments was the most frequently cited reason among the few who had selected religious leaders. Contrary to these reasons that were put forward by respondents, feedback from those who had utilised the services of various justice providers over the past year suggested that the elders had been more effective when it came to issuing and enforcing judgments. Elders were considered to be more efficient than the courts in part because, unlike the formal court, they had more flexible procedures and did not depend on other institutions. Delays in court judgments were also attributed to the poor infrastructure. For example, there was only one trial room, which the judges in the regional court had to use in turns. Furthermore, in addition to the region of Awdal, the regional court and court of appeal in Borama also served the Salal region.

With respect to enforcement, the court sometimes failed to receive the support of the police in instances where the judgments were considered “faulty.” In such cases, there were claims that the police would sit with the courts and explain the possible consequences of enforcing these judgments and request further mediation. Generally, it was argued that measures needed to be put in place to address the issue of partiality and unfair judgments in the courts before tacking the issue of enforcement.

Overall, most respondents (66%) stated that they were confident (very or fairly confident) in the formal justice system; however, one-third of respondents (32%) stated outright that they were not confident. Furthermore, the majority of respondents felt that the performance of the courts had either improved (41%) or remained the same (38%), whereas 16% perceived that there had been a decline in the court’s performance over the past year.

**Conflict and Violence**

The majority of respondents (76%) in the household

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**Conflict and Violence**

The majority of respondents (76%) in the household survey stated that they were unaware of any conflict that had taken place in the area during the twelve months
leading up to the assessment. Nonetheless, one in five (20%) respondents indicated that they had actually witnessed conflict during this time, while 12% had witnessed an incident of crime or violence. A greater proportion of men than women reported that they had witnessed conflict or violence over the past year.

Those who had witnessed conflict mainly attributed these to clashes among the youth, resources, crime, and family disputes. Competition over resources was identified as the leading cause of conflict and violence by focus group participants. In particular, disputes over land were said to be most prevalent. In urban areas, land disputes often resulted from conflicting proof of ownership, which was blamed on a poor land management system as well as negligence or corruption among public officials. There were also accusations that persons would claim and fence portions of land that did not rightfully belong to them. Armed militia from clans within the area also instigated acts of violence, allegedly in response to the unequal sharing of power and resources among clans in Borama. While some acknowledged that they had grounds for discontent, it was felt that they should seek a peaceful resolution rather than change through force.

Speaking about the issue of youth violence, participants mentioned that there was a “graduate crisis.” They pointed out that there was a high number of university graduates, but with limited employment opportunities available to them in the region, they were influenced to leave the region in search of jobs. However, in other cases, they would end up in gangs and cause trouble through acts such as muggings and gang feuds.

Notwithstanding these concerns, there was general optimism regarding the level of safety in Borama. More than two-thirds of the respondents (68%) felt that safety had increased over the past year, whereas only 9% were of the opinion that there had been a decline. Moreover, a vast majority of the respondents (96%) regarded the area as being fairly safe or very safe.