Las Anod is the regional capital of the disputed region of Sool, between Somaliland and Puntland. As early as the late 19th century, the area was the setting of an anti-colonial struggle, known as the Dervish Resistance. On the 15th October 1969, Las Anod was thrust into the limelight when the then president of Somalia, President Abdirashid Ali Shermarke, was shot dead by one of his own bodyguards on a visit to the town. On the 21st October 1969, a day after the funeral, Major General Siad Barre led a military coup d’état and took control of the country without experiencing any opposition. In the 1970s and 1980s, Siad Barre’s divide-and-rule policy revived intra and inter clan tensions. In 1991, the region was incorporated into the new state of Somaliland, but Puntland took over stewardship of the area from 2002 to 2007. Deteriorating security led allegiances to shift once again, however, and Somaliland regained control of the area in 2007. In 2009, the Sool, Sanaag and Cayn (SSC) Militia, which was a precursor to the declaration of the Khaatumo State of Somalia in 2012, was created. The Khaatumo State also claims Las Anod as a part of its territory and declared it the administrative capital in August 2014, although it has not managed to wrest control from Somaliland.

Although regarded as one of the most unstable regions in Somaliland, the findings from the 2015 Las Anod DSCA suggest that the district was relatively peaceful in recent times. There were few reported incidents of conflict or violence in the year leading up to the assessment despite the geopolitical instability resulting from various entities (Somaliland, Puntland and the Khatumo State) claiming territorial ownership. There was an established local council, which operated in accordance with the Regions and Districts Law of Somaliland, as well as formal structures in place for the provision of services to the community, including security and justice. However, while the formal institutions were generally well recognised, traditional (informal) entities - elders and religious leaders - remained integral within the society. Notably, the results from the assessment indicate that these informal entities were collectively more trusted than the police and the courts to address matters pertaining to security and justice respectively. In addition, although the majority of respondents perceived that there had been an improvement in
the performance of the various local government institutions over the past year, reported levels of trust or confidence towards the Local Council and the police, in particular, were reported to be low. Nevertheless, in keeping with the reported experiences, there was a positive outlook regarding the level of safety in the community, with most respondents stating that they felt safe within the area.

**Governance**

Despite being a part of a contested region, Las Anod is classified as a Grade A District under the *Regions and Districts (Self-Management) Law* of Somaliland, and therefore has a Local Council which is comprised of 21 elected councillors. Most respondents (89%) acknowledged the presence of the Local Council, although one in ten (10%) claimed that there was none operating in the area. Overall, 8% of respondents stated that they had attended or participated in consultations with the Local Council in the twelve months leading up to the assessment. Participation was reported to be higher among males, with 12% of male respondents compared with 5% of females stating that they had participated in consultations with the Local Council during this period. Among those who were aware of the council, the majority (95%) were able to name at least one of the services that the council provides. Sanitation, infrastructure, and justice were the services that respondents were most aware of. Justice, water, health, security, and agriculture were also mentioned among the areas in which the council provided services.

Approximately two-thirds of the household survey respondents (66%) maintained that it was important to have elected local government representatives. Conversely, a sizeable minority (32%) did not share this opinion and instead, stated outright that they did not regard this as being important, while 3% of respondents did not give a definite opinion. Discussants among the traditional leaders and the youth supported the election of local representatives, stating that it promoted accountability and helped to ensure that candidates were elected based on their capacity and a contextual understanding of the district. However, discussants among the women complained about the lack of inclusion in the electoral process, stating that they would simply hear that a candidate had been elected without being involved in the process. Further to this, they stated that they knew nothing of the services provided by the council and were unable to confidently state anything that they had done.

Respondents identified several challenges facing the community. Chief among these was water scarcity, which was cited by 89% of respondents. Other pressing issues included poor infrastructure (32%), unemployment (31%), poor sanitation (24%), poor health (20%), and poor education (18%). Notably, the council was responsible for spearheading the provision of services in these areas. Nonetheless, respondents were generally of the opinion that the performance of the council had improved over the past year, as indicated by 81% who stated that their performance had improved during this time. Only 5% of respondents felt that there had been a decline in performance. Discussants among the youth were also of the opinion that the performance of the council would keep improving although the council had not yet met their expectations. In spite of this optimism regarding the progress that had been made in recent times, respondents generally reported low levels of confidence in the council, with more than one-half (55%) stating that they had fairly low or very low levels of confidence in the council compared with 45% who reported fairly high or very high levels of confidence.
Security

At the time of the assessment, Las Anod had three (3) police stations within the town as well as several police outposts in the peri-urban areas. All respondents in the household survey were aware of the presence of the police. In addition, approximately seven in every ten respondents (71%) estimated that they lived within forty minutes of the closest police station on foot, including approximately 26% of respondents who estimated that they would be able to get to the closest police stations within twenty minutes. However, approximately 7% of respondents noted that it would take them more than one hour, while another 21% estimated that it would take between 41 minutes and one hour to get to the closest police station. Several survey participants, including the Police Commissioner, argued that the number of police stations was insufficient given the size of the area and that the stations were too far apart, thereby resulting in lower levels of accessibility for residents in some areas. It was also suggested that a prison was needed at each police station. Further to this, the existing prisons were described as being in poor condition and generally unsuitable for detaining suspects.

The Local Government, headed by the Mayor and the Governor, collaborated with the police in terms of security provision. In addition, the Somaliland military was also called in to provide support especially in cases where there was risk of violence. Informal entities – particularly traditional elders within the community – also played a role in helping to maintain peace and stability within the community. As a result, they were usually willing to assist the police, for example by using the clan networks to assist in the capture of perpetrators, or by mediating between disputing clans. Religious leaders, youth activists and other community representatives were also said to interact with the police in the provision of security services.

Despite the involvement of several stakeholders in security provision, when asked to identify the entity to which they would prefer to report various types of crimes, the police was consistently mentioned by more than one half of respondents. The police was the leading choice for reporting civil matters (51%), petty crimes (59%), and serious crimes (56%). However, when asked to identify their most trusted security provider, the police did not fare as well. Traditional elders and religious leaders were each mentioned by 36% of respondents as their most trusted security provider, while 18% stated that they trusted the police most. The remaining 10% of respondents identified the Local Authority as the entity that they trusted most in this regard. When asked to state reasons for their choice, similar reasons, including fast response, unbiased enforcement, and respect were cited as the top three for selection of each.

The issue of security provision in the district was somewhat complex. The control of the district remained disputed between Somaliland, Puntland, and the secessionist Khaatumo State. This sometimes led to riots, which have at times turned into violent confrontations between the police and members of the public, or between different groups of civilians supporting different factions. Further to this, the police was said to be at risk of losing their jobs if they did not support the government that currently had control over the city.

Overall, respondents expressed low levels of trust in the police. While approximately two in every five respondents (42%) indicated that they had fairly or very high levels of trust, the majority stated that they had low or very low levels of trust (59%) in the police. Yet, there was a general perception that the performance of the police had improved over the past year, as indicated by close to three-quarters of the household survey respondents (74%). Less than one in ten respondents (8%) felt that the performance of the police had declined during this time.
In keeping with its status as a regional capital, a District Court, a Court of Appeal, and the Regional Court are present in Las Anod. These courts are integral components of the formal justice system. However, as is commonplace in most regions in Somaliland, the informal justice system, which includes traditional elders and religious leaders from the community, also played a key role in justice provision although there was no recognised religious court within the area. Most respondents (94%) were aware of the presence of the formal court(s) within the district, with the majority of these persons (85%) stating that it would take one hour or less to walk to the court from their homes.

Very few respondents reported that they had used formal or informal justice providers in the year leading up to the assessment. Equal proportions of respondents stated that they had used the formal courts and traditional elders (3% respectively), while 1% reported that they had used religious leaders. Similar issues had been referred to both formal and informal justice providers during this period. Land disputes, robbery, household violence, and assault were stated among the issues that had been referred by respondents. However, despite the reported levels of usage, when asked to identify the entity that they trust most regarding matters of justice, religious leaders were mentioned most by 39% of respondents, followed very closely by the court, which was mentioned by 38% of respondents. Traditional elders were mentioned by 22% of respondents. Fair judgment was the most cited reason for choice of both traditional elders and religious leaders (54% and 47% respectively), whereas the fast decisions was the primary reason for selection of the formal courts (79%).

Discussions revealed that the courts faced a number of challenges, mainly as a result of lack of support from the government, which manifested itself in inadequate resources. The number of judges was said to be insufficient relative to the needs of the entire district. Furthermore, it was also suggested that training was required in order to strengthen the capacity of the staff. Discussants in the justice providers’ group pointed out that a capacity building initiative had been undertaken by UNDP in the previous year, but noted that there was still need for further training. Survey participants were of the opinion that there had been a positive change in attitude towards the formal courts, despite lingering negative impacts of the judiciary and other government officials being targeted for assassination in the past. In spite of its limitations, the formal justice system commanded a high level confidence. The majority of respondents stated that they were very or fairly confident in the formal justice system (84%), yet 17% stated outright that they were not confident. In addition, the progress made by the court over the past year was regarded as being favourable, with 83% of respondents noting that the performance of the court had improved over the past year.
Las Anod is regarded as one of the most unstable districts in relation to the rest of Somaliland. The presence of rival factions in support of the various entities that claim territorial ownership of the region was a major contributor to politically motivated instability. Despite this perception, there was little account of conflict or acts of violence during recent times. Although 16% of respondents stated that they were aware of conflicts that had taken place between clans or groups in the twelve months leading up to the assessment, only 6% reported that they had witnessed any such conflict in the stated period. The general perception was that safety in the area had increased during this time, as indicated by most respondents (83%). Also, among those who had witnessed conflict, only 10% indicated that any of the conflict(s) that they had witnessed was due to power or cultural struggle. Another 10% indicated that resources, particularly land, had played a role in the conflicts that they had observed, while the majority (90%) stated that youth disputes had been behind conflict(s) that they had witnessed.

With respect to crime and violence, only 4% of respondents stated that they had witnessed any incidents of crime or violence against someone outside of their household in the past 12 months. Overall, safety in the area was favourably regarded; a little less than three-quarters of the respondents (73%) in the household survey stated that they felt very safe. Another 17% also indicated that they felt rather safe in the area, with only one in ten respondents stating that they felt rather unsafe or very unsafe.