

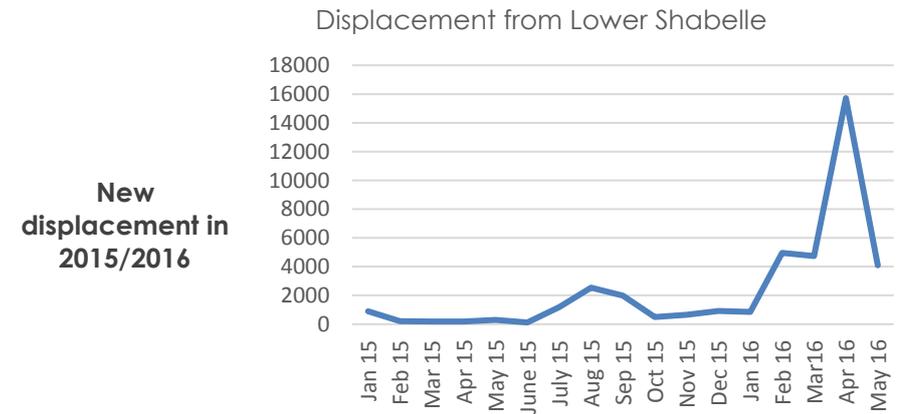
CONFLICT AND PROTECTION ANALYSIS – LOWER SHABELLE, JUNE 2016



Lower Shabelle is a region of Southwest State of the Federal Republic of Somalia. It is the second most populated region of Somalia and situated at the Indian Ocean bordering with Middle Juba, Bay, Bakool, Hiraan, Banadir and Middle Shabelle regions. Marka, Afgoye, Wanlaweyn, Sablaale, Kurtunwarey, Qoryoley, Barawe and Awdhegla are the main towns.

Lower Shabelle is home to a multitude of clans, mostly sub-clans of the Dir, Hawiye and Rahanweyne, as well as minority clans, mostly coastal people, such as the Somali Bantu, the Gibil'ad in Marka and the people of Barawe.

Conflict layers	<p>The conflict in Somalia, including in Lower Shabelle, is recognized as non-international armed conflict (NIAC) with international influence between the Federal Government coalition with support of foreign troops against Al Shabaab.</p> <p>The multi-clan composition of Lower Shabelle and the intertwining of clan dynamics with the non-international armed conflict adds a complex layer, involving a wider range of armed actors. Clan conflicts and other situations of violence are frequent in Lower Shabelle and influenced by political processes.</p>
Main stakeholders	<p>Clans and multiple clan militia, Federal Government and SNAF, South West Administration, AMISOM (UPDF), increasingly ENDF, US Forces, Al Shabaab, possible foreign fighter influence</p>
Main protection issues	<p>Housing, land and property rights violations, including destruction of civilian property, sexual and gender-based violence, forced recruitment, violations of freedom of movement in safety through illegal checkpoints and explosive hazards, limited access to health facilities</p>



From January 2015 to May 2016, over 40'000 people were internally displaced from Lower Shabelle.

Main causes of displacement from Lower Shabelle are clan conflict and insecurity. Displacement is usually responsive, rather than pre-emptive.

Marka is the main place of departure for flight.

Conflict dynamics

The complex clan makeup of the region is the key factor in the prevailing conflict dynamics in Lower Shabelle.

Clan dynamics in Lower Shabelle are not static. Clan migration, conflict, external armed influence, political processes, urbanization and displacement have changed clan relations and alliances, as well as allegiances to Al Shabaab. This has created new conflict dynamics.

Particular clan constellations prevail in all the region's districts and distinctly relate to the broader non-international armed conflict and the engaged armed forces and groups. These two interwoven streams of conflict are manifested as a conflict between the Somali National Armed Forces (SNAF), AMISOM (UPDF), pro-Government militias and other forces against Al Shabaab, rooted in, exacerbated and driven by clan oriented violence and conflict, and further influenced by political processes affecting the local power balance among clans.

The SNAF present in Lower Shabelle are composed of clan militias. Their respective clan relations and allegiances affect the chain in command in the force and accelerate the clan-related drivers of conflict. This is further influenced by international armed forces operating alongside or in support of SNAF, notably AMISOM (UPDF).

Lower Shabelle remains a stronghold for Al Shabaab regarding both, influence and territorial control. While the group's factions were pushed out of most of the main towns, they continue to control the immediate surroundings and main roads accessing those towns, effectively besieging them. The severity of the siege in a given location depends on the respective clan relations and allegiances with Al Shabaab.

US armed interventions against Al Shabaab in Lower Shabelle have reportedly been implemented in isolation and with little consideration to the wider political security landscape and clan dynamics.

Reports of other foreign armed influence in Lower Shabelle surged notably during the last cycle of conflict in Marka, when communities ascribed the targeted killing of vulnerable civilians to foreign influence. The direct targeting of civilians as well as the nature of the killings added a new dynamic to the conflict situation in Lower Shabelle.

Hotspot in focus: Marka

Over the past two decades, Marka experienced rapid urbanisation, a shift in clan demographics, authority of Al Shabaab and the subsequent AMISOM/SNAF military recovery. The federalism process has also significantly influenced clan allegiances with different parties to the conflict, i.e. SNAF and Al Shabaab, in Marka.

The shift in clan demographics is fundamentally due to the migration of the Hawiye sub-clan Habr Gidir (Ceyr) to Marka, from across South Central Somalia particularly Mogadishu during the 1990s civil war and later from Galgaduud region. The substantial increase of the Habr Gidir resulted in competition over land and trade notably with the locally predominant Dir sub-clan Biyamal. In the absence of an overarching governance system, the resource competition was mostly mediated through violence.

While the Biyamal saw a significant encroachment into their space and resources by the Habr Gidir, the political representation remained largely with the Biyamal due to pre-recognised clan constituencies. The Habr Gidir have been vying for greater political representation and to move out of the peripherals of the South West Administration's political fora. In order to assert their authority and allow for safe passage of trade and civilians, the Habr Gidir in Marka formed an opportunistic allegiance with Al Shabaab, while providing clan protection for their activities.

The Biyamal are perceived to be associated with local government and AMISOM (UPDF), mostly due to proximity as they are situated close to AMISOM's base in Marka. This proximity has resulted in a conflation of AMISOM and the Biyamal. The Habr Gidir view AMISOM as a pro-Biyamal force that is in direct opposition to them. This perceived clan association fosters a binary armed conflict line between government forces/AMISOM and Al Shabaab.

The Federal Government has made many efforts to mediate the conflict between these two clans. Most recently, in June 2016, a delegation of MPs, Government officials and clan elders held peace talks under the protection of AMISOM (UPDF). An agreement remains yet to be announced. Communities fear that due to external and foreign armed influence in Marka, the clan conflict's resolution may not be attained.

Protection concerns for civilians

Clan alliances and allegiances with Al Shabaab are often opportunistic, very fluid and can change suddenly. Very few clans are inherently aligned with one party to the conflict, rather it is the dynamics of the broader conflict that compel clans to maximize their security, mobility and resources in any given context.

In such a fluid, complex, multi-faceted and layered armed conflict in Lower Shabelle, protection of civilian concerns are numerous:

Freedom of movement in safety

Civilian's safe and free movement is severely constrained by the presence of the diverse armed forces and groups, checkpoints imposed by them as well as explosive hazards.

Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) have commonly been used along the main roads from Mogadishu to Afgoye, from Afgoye to Barawe and also from Wanlaweyn towards Baidoa. IEDs pose a particular threat to civilians, especially when



on the move, as IEDs are difficult to detect and often a secondary IED coupled to the detonation of an initial IED is causing civilian harm. Even if and when not targeted at civilians, IEDs can cause significant collateral civilian damage. In addition, indiscriminate firing by armed forces targeted by an IED incident, regularly caused civilian casualty.

Humanitarian access remains limited in Al Shabaab controlled areas and increasingly too in areas witnessing clan conflict. Al Shabaab only allow activities and organizations they see as directly benefiting them. Checkpoints manned by different armed entities is one of the greatest hindrances to freedom of movement in Lower Shabelle. While static checkpoints are mostly found leading in and out of main towns, remote roadsides are frequented by less formal checkpoints. At least 28 static checkpoints exist between Mogadishu and Barawe. Most of them are manned by SNA forces, others by Al Shabab, clan militias (Habr Gidir and Biyamal), and one is manned by South West Security forces.

Financial extortion at checkpoints is common and ranges from 10USD for a minibus to 150USD for a truck. Al Shabaab manned checkpoint tend to ask

for less and do normally not double tax the same vehicle.

Safe access to health services

Closure and scale down of health facilities has been a feature of Al Shabaab's authority, mostly as a result of organisations not being willing to pay the imposed taxation. With few exceptions, most health facilities in Al Shabaab controlled towns remain closed. Movement impediments further hinder the safe access to health care in Lower Shabelle, which is already constrained by the limited functional health facilities available.

The Marka district hospital is the main referral hospital for Lower Shabelle. However, due to the clan conflict in Marka, the hospital had to significantly scale back since February 2016. Hospital staff were caught in cross fire and the hospital's war wounded kit reportedly is almost exhausted. The location of the hospital near the frontline of the clan violence makes access difficult.

Child rights violations and gender-based violence

Gender-based violence is allegedly widely perpetrated by different parties to the conflict. Of particular concern is the limited service capacity in Lower Shabelle, especially with regard to access to health services for GBV survivors.

Reports of forced recruitment of children in Lower Shabelle are second highest across Somalia. Notably in the first quarter of 2016, a steep increase in forced recruitments was reported. Both, Al Shabaab and the SNAF are among the parties that forcibly recruit children.

Housing, land and property rights

One of the tactics used in clan conflicts is the destruction of civilian property, particularly killing or setting fire to livestock, harvests, businesses and homes. The definition of a civilian in clan conflicts is defined using customary laws, the Xeer and the Birmageydo: Both stipulate who constitutes a civilian and what constitutes communal property to be spared in conflict. However, in Lower Shabelle, these customary understandings as well as traditional mediation structures have been disregarded.

Community grievances over historic injustices over land starting with the colonial occupancy, expropriation and land grabbing under the Siad Barre regime, and not least the changes in the clan demographic, remain a main source and driver of conflict in Lower Shabelle.

Fostered by current political processes, land has come to symbolize political authority and representation. Marginalization from access to land therefore drives relations between clans, allegiances with Al Shabaab as well as conflicts.