Conflict Assessment Report

Hirshabelle State, Somalia

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Executive Summary

This report discusses the pertinent concerns and perceptions of Somalis about conflict and reconciliation issues in the areas in which they live in Hirshabelle State. The report focuses on perceptions related to the general security situation of the districts, various types of conflicts that exist in the districts, critical factors that drive conflicts, key stakeholders of the conflicts, current initiatives for managing the conflicts, challenges faced by the mediators, and the needs and prerequisites for reconciliation and mediation. The report highlights similarities and differences between the districts of the state, though it should be noted that the similarities exceed the differences. The findings of the assessment are rich and complex. Four significant highlights will be presented in more detail below.

First, in all the locations visited most conflicts occur between clans or between sub-clans over the ownership of land, such as farmland, and competition over scarce pasture and water during drought. The discussants indicated that in most cases the conflicts are triggered by armed militias who erect roadblocks with the aim of guarding their lands. It is important to note that some of the conflicts listed by the discussants and the interviewees have been resolved while some remain unresolved. Second, most Somalis we spoke to agreed that conflicts start from disagreements between the individuals and later escalate to be a violent clan-based conflict. As with every violent conflict, the civilians bear the brunt of the conflicts in Hirshabelle State. The conflicts have had tremendous effects on local residents including loss of life, displacement of people, loss of livelihoods, loss of property, poor economic situations, hatred and animosity, and trauma.

Third, due to the limited formal justice system in many parts of Hirshabelle State, and the legitimacy placed on traditional conflict management mechanisms, many Somalis rely on community el-

ders to resolve their conflicts. The community elders who lead the traditional conflict management mechanisms are respected and seen as a symbol of unity by many. Religious leaders and Hirshabelle authorities are also perceived as legitimate actors in conflict resolution, mainly due to their knowledge about Islamic teachings on violent conflict and due to their leverage and enforcement capacities for implementation, respectively. Youth, women, politicians and professionals also play a central role in conflict resolution in various capacities. However, concern about women's hindrance from effective participation in decision making during conflict resolution processes was central to the discussions. According to many discussants, women are excluded from important decisions during mediations mainly due to the patriarchal nature of Somali society and the cultural beliefs held by many. On the other hand, some participants, including some women, stressed the traditional role of women as peacemakers, primarily through their positions as mothers and wives.

Fourth, the study highlights a need to improve local mechanisms for conflict resolution. The discussants expressed a need for timely intervention with regard to conflicts, provision of land ownership certificates to communities, financial support to mediation processes, training of mediators, formation of district peace committees, and a region-wide civic awareness campaign on the effects of conflict and the importance of peaceful co-existence among the communities.

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Acknowledgements

List of Abbreviations

AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
ASWJ	Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'a (ASWJ)
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
NGO	Non-government Organization
WOCCA	Women and Child Care Organization

Methodology

This study employed qualitative research methods which allowed interviewees to express, in detail, their thoughts about existing conflicts in Hirshabelle State. The assessment, which was based on focus group discussions and key informant interviews, was conducted in six locations in Hirshabelle State in September 2017. Three locations – Jowhar, Warsheikh and Adale – were selected from the former Middle Shabelle region, while another three locations – Beledweyne, Matabaan and Bula Burte – were selected from the former Hiiraan region. Due to security concerns in accessing Matabaan, the participants of Matabaan were interviewed in Beledweyne.

The fieldwork was conducted in the framework of two separate missions: the first field mission was conducted in Middle Shabelle while the second mission was conducted in the Hiiraan region. Each mission took 10 days, with 3 days in each town.

The research methodology was developed to specifically understand the participants' views about the various types of conflict that exist in Hirshabelle State, critical factors that drive conflicts, key stakeholders of the conflicts, current initiatives for managing the conflicts, challenges faced by the mediators, and the needs for improved (re-)conciliation and mediation. The tools were tailored to the specific category of respondents.

In each location, focus group discussions were held with five different stakeholder groups (with 8 people in each group for a total of 240 people), namely traditional community elders, religious leaders, women's groups, youth groups, professionals (former civil servants and teachers) while two key informant interviews were held with government officials such as governors, district commissioners and mayors in every location.

The field work was administered by Berghof Foundation Senior Project Manager, Abass Kassim, and assisted by researchers selected from Jobkey University and Hiiraan University. State government representatives helped in securing approval from local authorities and convening the participants during the interviews. Prior to the fieldwork, the research team received training on research methodology and ethical guidelines that should be considered during the fieldwork. The team also reviewed the interview questions and conducted a pilot interview for training purposes. The questions were also translated into Somali for the target groups in order to elicit better participation in the process.

The field data was managed and analyzed using electronic data management software NVIVO.[1] The software was used to manage and organize the field data according to the themes set by the research team. Prior to the analysis, the field data was reviewed and quality-checked by the senior project manager and the researchers.

Limitations and Challenges of the Study

The main limitations and challenges faced during data collection included the following:

- **Poor infrastructure and security concerns:** Due to poor roads in Hirshabelle State, the team experienced difficulty when traveling to various districts within the region. In addition, due to Al-Shabab's close proximity to Adale town, there was a fear of attacks from Al-Shabab. During the data collection exercise in Jowhar, there was an attack on Somali military forces on the outskirts of Jowhar. There were reports that Al-Shabab had doubled its threats due to the state presidential election campaign that was ongoing at that time.

- **Length of the discussions:** Due to the interest of some participants, some focus group discussions took longer than anticipated, which caused other participants to become impatient during the discussions. When faced with such a challenge, the researchers used their skills to calm the participants and focused on important questions.

- **Difficulty in finding interviewees:** Due to their busy schedules, in some locations it was difficult to find government representatives for interviews. The majority of the government representatives were busy during the time of the research with the political developments in the state.

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1 http://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo/nvivo-products

Key Findings

1. General Security Situation

Although security was perceived to be improving in many parts of Hirshabelle State, it remains a concern to many residents, especially in towns that are in close proximity to Al-Shabab controlled areas. In locations such as Jowhar, Warsheikh and Adale, security was perceived to be improving, although there were incidents of insecurity both inside and on the outskirts of the towns, especially in Jowhar and Adale. In Adale, due to its close proximity to Al-Shabab controlled areas (about 20 kilometers) and constant threats from the group, especially to the local businesspeople, the residents believe that the town can be attacked anytime. Therefore, they live in fear.

Due to the presidential election campaign in the state, Al-shabab doubled its threats, especially to the capital of Hirshabelle State, Jowhar. During the data collection process which ran concurrent with the political campaign, there was a land mine explosion on the outskirts of town where five people were killed. In addition, discussants from the local women's group indicated chaos and confusion in the security sector. The discussants said that there are a number of armed men who walk in the streets of the town, and it is not clear whether they are genuine members of government security agencies or imposters. The discussants also said that members of government security forces should be identifiable with proper uniforms and identity cards.

However, some discussants in all three districts noted improved security in their towns. Though there have been some minor security incidents in the past months in Warsheikh (a historical spiritual town in Middle Shabelle),[2] most discussants agreed that there were no major security related incidents in the past years. According to the discussants, this can be attributed to the close collaboration between the local communities and the Hirshabelle local authorities while those in Adale attributed the improved security to the presence of AMISOM soldiers and their close collaboration with local security agencies. In Warsheikh, the local communities and the local authorities work together in order to build peace and prosperity in the district.

Cases of insecurity in Jowhar, Adele and Warsheikh can be attributed to a number of issues as discussed in the lines below. First, the discussants attribute the cases of insecurity to the lack of functioning institutions in the region. Since the state was recently established, there are no institutions in place to maintain proper law and order and to hold criminals accountable for their actions. Second, the discussants indicated that illegal roadblocks erected at the outskirts of the town by clan militias are the main source of insecurity in the districts. The discussants believe that though there are some roadblocks which were erected and manned by government security agencies, there are a number of roadblocks which are illegally erected and manned by militias. Most of the roadblocks are placed along the main roads that serve the main towns and their villages, thus limiting the movement of people and endangering the economy of the towns.

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2 Most of the security incidents in the Warsheikh are related to roadblocks erected by clan militias. Though gradual, there are efforts by local authorities to clear the roadblocks.

Third, cases of insecurity can also be attributed to the clan-based conflicts and the animosity and lack of trust between members of various clans. The discussants revealed a number of conflicts that happened in their towns and villages over a period of time as a major concern for the communities. Often, clan-based conflicts grow from individual-level disputes over ownership of land, expansion of land boundaries and the grazing of livestock on farmland. As a result of their escalation to clan-level, the conflicts cause the loss of many lives, displacement of many people and destruction of property. Fourth, competition over scarce resources due to drought and poor infrastructure are also regarded as a source of insecurity in the region.

In the Hiiraan region, the discussions revealed diverse views regarding the general security in Beledweyne, Matabaan and Bula Burte. In Beledweyne,[3] some of the discussants believed that the security situation of the town has worsened in the past few months while others believed that the security situation has improved in the past months or years, largely due to the presence of the Somali national army and AMISOM[4] forces from Djibouti. Those who believe that the security of the town has worsened argue that Al-Shabab has tremendous influence over the security of the town since it controls the town during the night and carries out its operations. They argued that the police and AMISOM soldiers' control and operations are only limited to day time and they have no control during the night. Targeted killings are common in the town. The discussants attributed their claims to recurring clan-based conflicts and recent attacks on government troops in Beledweyne town during the past weeks and months.

One discussant of the FGDs stated: '*...the general security situation in Beledweyne is not good because there are some assassinations that often happen within the town. Al-Shabaab can kill anyone they want within the town. Recent incidents include the Kalabeer and Maroodile attacks*'.[5]

Another discussants said '*...one cannot speak to the media against Al-Shabab because of fear. They are able to come to your home during night time and kidnap you. There is no protection from the government*'.

In addition, Beledweyne town is divided into two sections which has a tremendous impact on the peaceful co-existence of communities in the town or district. Clans that live in the East of Beledweyne are Hawaadle, Shiiqal and Makane, while those who live in the West side of the town are Gaalje'el, Jejele and Makane. Both groups belong to the wider Hawiye clan confederacy but are often divided by conflict over political and resource issues. The relationship between these two sides of the town has worsened and the division among the clans limits the interaction and movement between them, weakens their trust, and causes animosity and hatred among them.

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[3] In September 2017, there was an explosion near the governor's office leaving several people dead and others injured. Other security related incidents in the town include deliberate attacks on Somali government forces by Al-Shabab leaving four dead in Kalaber village and Al-Shabab's attack on Hirshabelle government authorities in Maroodile, 25km from Beledweyne town.

[4] African Union Mission in Somalia - http://amisom-au.org

[5] **Kalabeer security accident:** There was a deliberate attack from Al-shabab to the local security forces leaving four security officer dead and two injured. **Maroodile security accident:** Two weeks from the date of data collection, there was an attack by Al-Shabab in Maroodile, a village 25KM from Beledweyne town. Three people were killed and others injured.

Moreover, a large number of Beledweyne residents seek justice in Al-Shabab's local courts in villages within the district. According to the discussants, many residents prefer to seek justice at Al-Shabab-run local courts in the villages (known as Luuq-jeelow), because they believe that justice is served better there than in government judicial courts. This is a clear evidence of Al-Shabab's influence on the residents of Beledweyne.

The security of Matabaan district is controlled by two different groups – Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'a (ASWJ)[6], a moderate Sufi religious group and the Hirshabelle administration – and is stable. The town is controlled by ASWJ while the villages within the district are controlled by the Hirshabelle administration. However, some discussants believe that although the security situation of the town is calm, competing authorities in the district makes the situation uncertain.

In contrast, Bula Burte town is controlled by the Hirshabelle administration (with assistance from AMISOM soldiers) while the villages within the district are controlled by Al-Shabab. The discussants argued that the town is isolated since access by road is almost impossible and food and other commodities are transported to the town through corridors facilitated by a group of businessmen. Despite this isolation, the security within the town has improved tremendously owing to the close collaboration between the local communities and the Somali security forces assisted by AMISOM troops. There is also the presence of international organizations such as the World Food Program (WFP) and Save the Children which provide food and other necessities to the residents. Similar to Beledweyne, other security related concerns in Matabaan and Bula Burte also include clan-based conflicts which are caused by issues concerning ownership of land, expansion of land boundaries by individuals or clans, and grazing of livestock.

There are a number of causes of insecurity in the Hiiraan region. First, attacks by Al-Shabab which controls many parts of the region is a source of insecurity and concern especially in Beledweyne, Matabaan and Bula Burta. Second, the desire to expand land territories by individuals or clans is also a source of insecurity/conflict in the region. In most cases, conflict erupts after two or more clans claim ownership of the same land or seek to expand the boundaries of their lands. Third, competition over resources such as water and grazing land due to drought is another source of insecurity and conflict in the region. Fourth, division, the lack of trust between communities and animosity is a major source of insecurity in Hiiraan. Lastly, clan-inspired revenge is also a source of insecurity. Some clan-conflicts are triggered by the desire to carry out revenge for events that happened between two clans many years back. In Bula Burte, handing over members of the community who are suspected to be a member of Al-Shabab have also caused chaos among the communities.

2. Nature and Scale of the Conflict

Conflict usually occurs primarily as a result of a clash of interests in the relationship between parties, groups or states, because they are pursuing either opposing or incompatible goals. Although the term *war* is sometimes used as a synonym for conflict, it is more usual to restrict the meaning of war to violent conflict, involving armed forces. Ever since the central government in Somalia collapsed in

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[6]http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/109

1991, protracted inter and intra clan conflicts have increased in some parts of the country, thus making it chaotic for almost two decades.

Hirshabelle State is characterized by the presence of the Shabelle River whose water enables irrigation farming to be a significant source of income. Access to the ocean and its fishing opportunities represents another valuable source of income. Clashes occur between clans or between sub-clans over ownership of land, such as farm lands, competition over scarce pasture and water during drought. As a result, lives are lost, many people are displaced, properties are destroyed and livelihoods are disrupted. Though interventions have been made to manage the conflicts, many discussants believe that the efforts have not been enough to transform the conflict, thus leaving many conflicts unresolved. The following types of conflicts have been listed by both the discussants and interviewees.

2.1 Conflict over Land Ownership

In almost all the locations visited, the assessment revealed that the most common conflict in the region is intra and inter-clan conflict over land ownership. Due to a lack of proper demarcation and proper land-ownership documents, as well as the desire to expand land boundaries, most clans claim the same land and use arms to resolve their conflicts. In Middle Shabelle, most cases in such conflicts are triggered by the erection of illegal roadblocks by clan militias with the aim of protecting their land from other clans or the desire to expand their land boundaries. These roadblocks are also erected by clan militias for the collection of taxes from those who use the road, whereby failure to comply and pay the demands often leads to the death of travelers, which generates further revenge and clan conflict.

However, it is important to note that in some cases, these conflicts start on an ad hoc basis precipitated by rogue youth (members of clan-militia groups), who may start a fight without the consent of their clan elders. Below are examples of land-based conflicts that occurred in the locations visited within Hirshabelle State.

Adale District

One land-ownership conflict that was mentioned by almost all the groups interviewed in Middle Shabelle is a conflict that happened between two sub-clans of the Hawiye-Abgaal clan - Eli Omar and Abdalla Aroni – in the village of Burdhere. The conflict, which first emerged in 1992 between the two clans, re-emerged in February 2017 when groups of armed militia groups from the conflicting parties erected roadblocks on the land in order to guard it from other clans. In 1992, the conflict was resolved by a group of traditional elders from both the conflicting clans in a mediation that took close to two months in Burdhere. The conflict was triggered again by roadblocks erected 1 km apart by the groups from the two clans. One group claimed that its counterpart erected the roadblock on their land, and as a result many lives were lost, properties were destroyed and many people were displaced.

A discussant in Adale stated regarding the recurrence of the conflict: '...*the youth who were born during the conflict in 1991 are now fighting in the current conflict*'. However, people from the two clans have co-existed peacefully for the past 25 years.

A major intervention was made by the Hirshabelle authority in order to resolve the conflict. A third-party group of community elders and those of the conflicting parties were convened in Jowhar in order to resolve the conflict but the process was halted by the Hirshabelle authorities after 24 days into the dialogue. The community elders from both the conflicting parties were arrested for prolonging the process and for not reaching an agreement, despite the support and hospitality provided to them during the mediation. The elders were later released and asked to resolve the conflict.[7]

Jowhar District

In Jowhar, the discussants shared cases of conflict that erupted due to land ownership in the district. One of the major cases is between the Bantu-Shidle clan and Hawiye-Abgaal clan. One of the key aspects in this conflict is the challenge the Bantu community is facing in securing rights to their ancestral lands. A large piece of farmland was taken from people from the Shidle clan by the government of Siad Barre for the purpose of agricultural trials within the framework of a rice project, but after the civil war the farms were taken by armed groups. The original owners of the farms (Bantu-Shidle clan) are now claiming ownership of the land as they feel that properties have been illegally occupied by the current occupiers. Although there is no active conflict between the clans, the injustice experienced by the Bantu-Shidle clan may escalate the tension and lead to a possible radicalization or a clan conflict.

Another example of land-related conflict is that between the people from Mohamed Muse, a sub-clan of the Hawiye—Abgaal clan and the people of Walamoi, a sub-clan of the Bantu-Shidle clan over ownership of farm land since 2012 in Gether Burkina. The conflict has affected the people of Walamoi clan in 12 villages as many houses were burnt, people killed, others injured and some displaced. The displaced people live in tented camps near Jowhar airstrip. The conflict has not yet been resolved fully, as the grievances of both conflicting parties have not been addressed.

Warsheikh District

In Warsheikh, the discussants mentioned a land-related case that emerged when two men from the Hawiye-Abgaal clan clashed over the construction of a shallow well on land claimed by both men. The construction of the shallow well was halted when one man claimed ownership over the land without providing documents to prove it. The case was protracted, but it was later resolved by Abgaal community elders.

Another land ownership incident happened a day before the research team arrived. A group of people from the Abgaal clan objected to a proposal by the mayor of the town, Cornel Ahmed Hussein Ahmed (Shiidka), to distribute a large chunk of beach plots to investors regardless of their clan, including Somalis in the diaspora. The project is aimed at attracting investors to the town and improving its infrastructure, thus improving its economy. The protesters, who are from the indigenous communities of Warsheikh, did not want to see the land distributed to people from other clans, and this led to their arrest. The mayor confirmed that the project will still go on, despite the objections from the group.

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[7] Mediation process was ongoing in Jowhar during the data collection.

Beledweyne District

Similarly in the Hiiraan region, there has been a number of conflicts over ownership of land, mainly farmland. The farmland is very productive and therefore controlling access to these farms has been a key factor in the conflicts in the region. For example, the conflict between the Hawiye-Hawadle and Dir clans over farmland in Defow and Kabhaley has claimed many lives and invaluable properties. Both clans claimed the ownership of arable and productive land along the Shabelle River. The conflict caused a political uproar in the Hiiraan region while the heat of the same tension was felt in areas far beyond the conflict hotspot. The then governor of Beledwyne, Ali Jeete Osman, made efforts to bring the conflicting parties together and resolve the conflict, but the governor was then replaced.

In another case of conflict, the Hawiye-Gaalje'el clan and Hawiye-Jejeela clan fought over ownership of grazing land in the villages of Buq-eldere, Baar-ga'anlow and Buq-goosaar. The fighting between the two clans has been recurring for many years. The conflict claimed the lives of many people, and led to the injuries and the displacement of many others.

Bula Burte District

A conflict over ownership of farmland erupted in Bula Burte district which affected a number of villages including Showliga, Jilale, Harar and Guulaalimey. The main parties in the conflict were people from the Garjante and Eeyle clans and the conflict resulted in the destruction of three villages, the killing of 11 people, the injury of 17 people, the loss of invaluable property and the displacement of a large number of people. A ceasefire was then implemented. The conflicting parties are now fully separated since one party lives in Al-Shabaab controlled areas and the other lives in a government controlled area. It is therefore highly unlikely that the conflict will occur again although it is simmering.

In addition, another conflict happened between two sub-clans of the Hawaadle-Ibrahim Isse clan over boundaries of farmland in early 2017. Although the conflict has had less of an impact in comparison to the rest, it was severe and lasted for months. The conflict was later resolved by religious leaders and community elders by creating proper demarcations on the farm.

2.2. Resource-based Conflict

Complex inter and intra-clan violence in Hirshabelle state is also deeply rooted in issues such as resource scarcity (e.g. water and grazing rights), resulting in violent clashes among the clans and sub-clans that live in the state. In almost all the locations visited, the discussants reported conflicts related to competition for resources such as grazing land and water. Traditionally, sharing of water and grazing land is a common practice among the Somali clans until a drought, which is when competition over resources such as water and grazing land starts. Below are examples of land-based conflicts that have occurred in various districts in Hirshabelle State.

Jowhar District

Following the grazing of livestock belonging to the Eli Omar clan (sub-clan of Hawiye-Abgaal) on a farm owned by a person from the Bantu-Shidle clan in a village called Hawaadley in 2016, a conflict erupted when the livestock was evicted from the farm. The farm owner was later attacked and killed by an armed group from the Eli Omar clan. This resulted in the death of many people, the destruction of houses in three villages inhabited by people of the Shiidle clan, namely Jamea Misru, Kumis Yarow

and Maqdis. There was also the displacement of many people in the neighboring districts. A ceasefire was implemented, but a reconciliation process has not yet been initiated. Authorities from the Hirshabelle administration said that a dialogue between the parties will be initiated once the Burdhere conflict (in Adale district, see page 11) has been fully resolved (which was ongoing during the data collection).

Warsheikh and Adale Ditsricts

Although there were no specifics provided in this case, discussants in both Warsheikh and Adale often mentioned resource-based conflict as a source of tension and insecurity in their districts. For example, the key informant interview in Adale revealed that among the 11 clans that reside in the district, 9 clans have the largest population of people. Every clan or sub-clan claims ownership of large parts of land in the district which stretch to the sea, and people from other clans or sub-clans are not allowed to use the land for either grazing of animals or fishing. In order to protect their resources and restrict the use of it, the clans use their militias to guard their territories. However, it is important to note that these clan militias have cleared Al-Shabab from the districts and the neighboring towns.

Beledweyne District

Similarly, in the Hiiraan region, resource-based conflicts have been experienced by the local communities. In the village of Don Maleeko there was a conflict between the Hawiye-Galje'el clan and the Hawiye-Jejela clan over ownership of grazing land and the utilization of shallow wells for their livestock. This conflict, which was believed to have been incited by the local politicians, has caused the death of 54 people, and the injuries and displacement of many other people. In addition to these impacts, the conflict also caused the loss of much livestock. At first, Ethiopian troops tried to stop the fighting and solve the problem but they failed due to the fact that the Galje'el clan believed that the Ethiopian troops were siding with the Jejela clan. This was followed by a failed attempt by the Djibouti troops. Finally the conflict was resolved by elders from the Makane clan who acted in good faith and as a third party. The elders first called for a ceasefire, then followed it up with dialogue between the two clans.

Matabaan District

The discussions in Matabaan were dominated by the discussion of a conflict between Ali madahweyne clan, a sub-clan of the Hawiye-Hawaadle clan, and the Habar Iji, a sub-clan of the Hawiye-Habar Gidir/Eyr clan, over ownership of land in 2017. Following an outbreak of drought in the Hiiraan region which affected the livelihoods of the people in the region, the people of the Hawaadle clan who had water reserves in Bayaaley village invited the drought-affected people from other clans, including people from the Habar Iji clan, to utilize the water on their land. The people utilized the water peacefully until people from the Habar Iji clan claimed ownership of the land with water reserves. This resulted in conflict between the owners of the land – Ali madahweyne clan and Habar Iji clan – which claimed the lives of many people, and caused the burning of polythene water storage bags, the disintegration of community cohesion, the loss of property and the displacement of people. Though a ceasefire has been implemented, the conflict has not been resolved fully. If immediate measures are not taken, the conflict may re-emerge.

2.3. Politically-motivated Conflict

Beledweyne District

A politically-inspired conflict emerged in the rural villages of Beledweyne district between groups from the Jejela clan and the Galje'el clan when a group from the Jejela clan formed a Westland state due to grievances over a lack of inclusion in regional politics. The conflict was triggered by an attempt by the Jejela group to collect taxes from the local communities, especially people from the Galje'el and Jerer clans who are opposed to them. This resulted in the death and injury of many people and the displacement of many others, especially in Hawl-wadaag village. Though a ceasefire has been implemented, and efforts have been made by the Hirshabelle authorities to address the root causes of the conflicts, more efforts are needed to find a lasting solution to the conflict.

2.4. Other Conflicts

The study also revealed other conflicts between clans in Hirshabelle State. They include conflicts caused by rape and revenge killings. Often, when such cases happen within society, it leads to clan conflict, especially if it is not resolved in a timely manner. In Somali culture, rape is regarded as a taboo and an embarrassment to the family of the victim. Although such conflicts are often resolved by community elders and religious leaders, clan members mostly seek revenge, thus escalating it into a clan conflict. For example, in Beledweyne, a woman from Galje'el clan was raped by a man from the Jejela clan, though the claim was denied by the Jelela clan, and the case was resolved by a local NGO. However, the victim's family were not satisfied with the agreement reached as they claimed that the Jejela clan was hiding the perpetrator. The NGO then made a second intervention by demanding that the Jejela clan produce 15 men to testify that they were not hiding the perpetrator. Once this was done, the victim's family was satisfied and the case was resolved.

3. Key Drivers of Conflicts

According to the focus group discussions, the various conflicts in Hirshabelle State are characterized by a multifaceted array of causes and drivers. First, the lack of demarcation in clan-based settlements or lands, a desire to expand land boundaries by land owners and clans, and clan affiliations controlling access to grazing land have generated the existing violent conflicts and will generate future ones. According to the discussants, in most cases confusion and overlap in land boundaries and clan settlements have also exacerbated other conflicts in Hirshabelle State. The discussants further added that due to a lack of a proper record of land ownership since the civil war, many people claimed lands with no proof of ownership thus causing violent conflicts and animosity between the clans.

Second, the struggle between members of various clans in the scramble for available land for different purposes (for farming, water and grazing) due to the effects of drought also exists. The increase in pastoralist populations and the reduction in the size of the land available to the households or clans have also caused various groups of people to claim the same land, thus causing clashes between the claimants and the land owners. Often, if such conflicts are protracted, it escalates into clan conflict.

Third, the scarcity of pasture and water available for pastoralist communities, farmers and internally displaced persons is also a major cause of conflict between the clans. This is often linked to the increasing frequency and severity of droughts and the decreasing amount of rainfall in the region, which leads to the migration of communities in search of water and pasture in the neighboring districts. In such a case, if the available resources are not shared equally, clashes can erupt between communities or clans. A good example of such as case is the conflict between the Ali madahweyne clan, a sub-clan of Hawiye-Hawaadle clan and Habar Iji, a sub-clan of Hawiye-Habar Gidir/Eyr in Bayaaley.

Fourth, a lack of trust among the communities also fuels clan conflict in the region. A majority of the discussants revealed that, due to scarcity of land available for many clans' use, and the recurring conflicts in the region, trust among the communities has deteriorated, thus limiting their ability to co-exist peacefully with each other. For example, clans who had less access to land for either farming, water or grazing will develop animosity towards the clans who have access to land and resources, thus fueling tension and violent conflicts between the clans. The tension between the Bantu-Shidle clan and the Hawiye-Abgaal clan over land ownership in Jowhar is a good example of such a conflict.

Fifth, a lack of genuine reconciliation between the clans (especially those who have been in conflict with each other before) may generate conflict again. The discussions revealed that due to a lack of proper mediation skills by the local mediators, such as peace committees (Dubab+ in Jowhar) or community elders, and the unwillingness of the conflicting parties to accept decisions made during mediation often leads to revenge conflicts. In such a case, important issues which were left unresolved during mediation may awaken deep-rooted wounds, thus triggering an escalation of the conflict.

Sixth, local politicians also play a central role in either generating conflicts or fueling existing ones. Both the discussants and the interviewees agreed that politicians can be both a stabilizing and destabilizing factor in a conflict. As a destabilizing factor, the local politicians may fuel an existing conflict by influencing and encouraging the conflicting parties to continue fighting in order to gain victory over the counterpart. In most cases, the politicians' objectives are to gain mileage in the political sphere.

Seven, predictions of victory from soothsayers have been a cause of conflict in Hirshabelle State. Driven by financial interest, the soothsayers often influence one or both of the conflicting parties to wage a fight by predicting victory for them. The discussants said that although this practice has been prohibited in Islam, it is a common practice among the clans in Hirshabelle State. Other causes of conflict listed during the discussions include a lack of functioning institutions to enforce law and order, cultural beliefs and practices (e.g. insults and abusive songs which incite communities to fight), clan superiority and social discrimination of minority groups.

4. Intensity and Impact of the Conflict

The study revealed that most of the inter- and intra-clan conflicts start as a disagreement between individuals over an issue and later escalate into a violent clan-based conflict, resulting in loss of life and property and the mass displacement of people, among other effects. The following are the effects of the conflict on the communities in Hirshabelle State.

According to the discussants, almost all the conflicts that have occurred in Hirshabelle State have resulted in considerable loss of life and maiming of people, particularly when there are armed conflicts. In some conflicts, the exact numbers of those who are injured or succumb to injuries in the conflicts were not reported, although the number of events make it evident that there are indeed a very large number of fatalities and injuries. For example, the discussants reported a large number of fatalities and destruction of property in the conflicts that occurred between Abdalla Aroni and Eli Omar in Burdhere, Adale district, between Ali Madahwyne of Hawaadle clan and Habar Iji of Habar Gidir clan in Matabaan, and Eli Omar of Abgaal clan and Shiidle clan in the villages of Jamea Misru, Kumis Yarow and Maqdis in Jowhar district.

The displacement of people including vulnerable groups such as women, children and people living with disabilities is another major effect of conflict revealed during the fieldwork. Once displaced by the conflicts, these people are often accommodated in tented camps or in villages in the neighboring districts by the Hirshabelle authorities and by non-governmental organizations. According to the discussions, it is difficult for these displaced people to return to their villages of origin until the conflicts are fully resolved, which in most cases takes some time. For example, there are a large number of people displaced from the local conflicts in the Jowhar airstrip.

In addition, the discussants also noted that the conflicts are a major cause of orphans in the communities. Killings directed at the local residents during conflicts ruin families, leaving many children orphans and in absolute desperate situations.

The local conflicts in Hirshabelle state also result in the significant loss of property including houses, livestock and other belongings, which have affected the livelihoods of the local communities. During conflict, the armed groups destroy the properties of the local residents thus leading to a loss of income-generating property such as livestock. In addition, road blocks are often erected during conflict, which leads to the limited movement of commodities to the towns and villages, thus reducing the amount of food and necessities available in the local markets. For example, due to roadblocks erected by Al-Shabab along the main road that serves Adale town, the transportation of food items and other commodities are facilitated by local businessmen through corridors. As a result, the prices of the commodities have increased.

A young man in Adale town said: *'...before the conflict, 1KG of sugar was 15,000 Somali Shillings, and after the conflict the price has increased to 25,000 Shillings'.*

Another example that is closely related to the above is the lack of accessibility to Bula Burte and Beledweyne districts by road due to Al-Shabab who control the areas surrounding the towns. Similar to Adale town, the movement of commodities to Beledweyne and Bula Burte is facilitated by a group of businessmen with networks to Al-Shabab, and as a result, the livelihoods of the local residents are affected.

Hatred, animosity and erosion of social-cohesion is another effect of the conflicts in Hirshabelle State. It was noted that communities' social cohesion is eroded and hatred and animosity increases when communities or clans stereotype each other and when deep rooted grievances such as historical injuries (killings and land grabbings) are not genuinely addressed during reconciliation processes. According to many discussants, the chances of these issues escalating to a violent clan-based conflict is high. For example, the issue of the Shidle clan's farmlands in Jowhar has not been addressed since the fall of the central government in 1991.

As a result of the recurring conflicts in the region, there has also been underdevelopment, especially in infrastructure and in particular, roads. The poor roads and the road blocks erected by clan militias along the main roads make the movement of vehicles almost impossible. For example, the discussions revealed that due to poor roads in Middle Shabelle, the residents have experienced difficulties when transporting expectant mothers and patients to Mogadishu for specialized treatment.

Finally, trauma is a problem faced by the local residents as a result of the conflicts in the state. Depending of the intensity of the conflicts and the horror experienced by the local residents, vulnerable groups such as youth and children suffer from trauma, thus limiting their ability to realize their potential in life.

5. Assessment of Current Conflict Resolution Initiatives

Due to the limited formal justice system in the many parts of the state coupled with the legitimacy placed on traditional conflict management mechanisms, many Somalis rely on the traditional conflict management system known as Xeer. Community elders who are the main actors in the system are known to dispense swift and inexpensive legal solutions to the communities. This traditional system is widely recognized as a code of conduct for settling disputes and keeping the peace between clans and between members of the communities.

Traditional conflict management is led by a council of elders, comprised of respected and influential elders who make decisions on behalf of the community. They also set the rules and norms that are adhered to by the entire community, and any violation of these rules and norms will attract penalties.

Aspects of the traditional system include sending an initial peace messenger followed by organizing a dialogue between the conflicting parties which is facilitated by the council of elders. During conflicts, a white flag would be extended by the peace messenger, typically a representative of the council of elders who would approach and request the conflicting parties to stop fighting. He would then be allowed to communicate the message of peace from the council of elders. The council of elders would then prepare for a dialogue between elders who are nominated by the two parties. The elders would talk about the root causes of the conflict and reach a peace agreement, and if needed compensation for loses are made. However, if the traditional conflict resolution system fails, the central and regional government will intervene and the case will be referred to the judicial courts in Mogadishu.

Since the traditional system has been widely used to resolve many conflicts in the region, many people place legitimacy in it. The majority of the discussants stated that among all the initiatives for conflict resolution, the traditional conflict resolution system is the most effective. However, another group believes that some elders may prolong the mediation processes so as to benefit from the hospitality and incentives provided to them during mediation. The process can thus be dragged out for years before reaching a conclusion.

5.1. Ongoing Efforts

In addition to the role of the council of elders, there are other conflict resolution initiatives waged by third party local and/or international actors as detailed in the section below.

On the Community Level: Other key actors in conflict resolution processes include religious leaders, youth, women, politicians and professionals, such as teachers. The religious leaders are respected members of society, they are regarded as having a strong stabilizing influence on the communities since they use Islamic teachings to denounce violent conflicts. Though the youth are hindered from effective participation in conflict resolution processes by the community elders, they play a crucial role by denouncing violence and engaging in discussions with their peers on the effects of conflict on the community. The youth also sometimes discourage their peers from active participation in conflicts. Many elders hold the view that the youth lack the necessary skills and wisdom to resolve conflicts – an opinion which is contrary to the view held by many other members of society, that the youth do indeed have the wisdom and skills to resolve conflict. The professionals are engaged in reconciliation initiatives within various capacities. Although women play a significant role in conflict resolution in general, they are often not included in formal conflict resolution processes.

Local, Regional and Central government: The Hirshabelle administration and the local government of each of the locations visited are highly engaged in conflict resolution initiatives. In collaboration with the council of elders, both institutions facilitate dialogues with the conflicting parties in order to resolve conflicts and enhance peaceful co-existence among the communities. The regional government has also intensified security patrols in the region in order to prevent the outbreak of violent conflicts, and in severe cases, the institutions have deployed troops to implement ceasefires in conflict areas. The central government only intervenes when the need arises.

International and Local NGOs: These actors also play a crucial role in bringing about peace in conflict-affected areas, which is contrary to the view held by many Somalis that NGOs exacerbate local conflicts in Somalia. These institutions facilitate dialogue and provide support to mediators as well as those affected by the conflicts. For example, in Jowhar the Danish Demining Group (DDG), through a local organization called Women and Child Care Organization (WOCCA), has established a local peace committee known as Duubab+. The 45-member (30 traditional elders, 10 women and 5 youth) peace committee has resolved 12 conflicts since its establishment in January 2017. In addition, a local initiative by a local organization in Beledweyne – Association of Awareness and Safeguarding the Common Interest of the Society – has resolved a number of disputes including murder, rape and domestic violence cases.

5.2. Gendered Experiences in Conflict Resolution

It is critical to consider the role gender plays in traditional conflict management mechanisms, and the specific roles women have played and continue to play in ameliorating violent tensions and improving the security of the communities. In Somali society, women's formal role in conflict mitigation and solution is subtle; one reason has been attributed to the patriarchal nature of Somali society in which men's formal engagement and contributions are desired and rewarded and women's formal engagement in this sense is not desired. Another reason why women's contributions have historically been underappreciated relates to the deferential role women play. According to almost all the discussions conducted, women are hindered from effective participation in decision making, mainly due to a cultural belief held by many that women should concentrate on the family and allow the men to make the important decisions in the society. It is likely that they enjoy some influence like advising their husbands, brothers and sons against conflict but that decisions, especially important ones, rest with the men.

During the discussion with religious leaders in Warsheikh, the discussants stated that the involvement of women in mediation processes may raise issues of conflict of interest especially if their husbands' clan is one of the parties in the conflict. The discussants believed that in such a case, the chances of the women being sympathetic to their husband's clan is high. Additionally, the discussants claimed that if the women become involved in mediation initiatives, they may abandon their core duty of homemaking.

However, in some locations there is an increasing involvement of women in conflict resolution. Some discussants, including women, held the view that women play a significant role in creating peace in their communities. They felt that since women are often victims of conflict, they conduct awareness among the communities on the effects of conflict and the importance of peaceful co-existence in society. The discussants also held the view that during mediation processes, women raise funds from their families and friends and assist in the preparation of venues and meals. In Matabaan, the discussants noted that women sometimes demonstrate against conflicts in the district.

Though women's involvement in peace making is hindered, many women agreed that they may have much wider opportunities in peace making in the future as they are taking initiatives to manage conflicts. For example, the women discussants in Jowhar, including some members of the Dubab+ peace committee, stated that they took the initiative to intervene in the stalled mediation of the Burdhere conflict. The women group visited the imprisoned elders and urged them to end the conflict for the sake of the community.

5.3. Challenges to Conflict Resolution

The actors who lead conflict mediation processes in Hirshabelle State are confronted by a complex array of challenges and problems. The majority of the discussants agreed that the current conflict resolution initiatives in the region do not resolve the conflicts fully, mainly due to a lack of effort to address the root causes of the conflicts, a lack of commitment to agreements reached during mediation and a lack of follow up after the mediation is completed.

Limited mediation skills by the mediators is another challenge mentioned by the discussants. Although some mediations are successful, especially those facilitated by the community elders, the discussants believe that most mediators lack proper mediation skills to make peace between the communities. According to many discussants, in order to understand the root causes of the conflicts and to facilitate a genuine dialogue for effective reconciliation, the mediators must be equipped with the right mediation techniques.

Inadequate funds for mediation processes is also another challenge experienced by the mediators. The discussants held the view that most of the mediators, including community elders, lack the necessary funds and resources to initiate and deliver mediation for the communities. Although in most cases the process is initiated and supported by the Hirshabelle administration, the mediators lack continuous support throughout the mediation period. The mediators require funds for transportation to the conflict affected areas, accommodation, meals, venue hire, communication and other necessities.

Accessibility to the conflict-affected areas has also proved to be a challenge for the mediators. Poor roads have made it difficult for mediators to access the areas. Closely related to accessibility to conflict affected areas is safety when traveling to those areas. Due to road blocks erected by clan militias

and poor roads, the mediators find it difficult to access the conflict-affected areas thus making the conflicts prolonged and having a wide effect on the lives of the people.

A lack of will to reach a compromise by some conflicting parties has also proved to be a challenge during mediation. Following a dialogue between the conflicting parties, sometimes they may not be willing to compromise on issues in order to reach an agreement. Many discussants believed that if such a case happens, it immediately puts the mediation in jeopardy.

Sabotage and partiality by the mediators may also put the mediation processes in jeopardy. Many discussants noted that sometimes some mediators may deliberately sabotage the mediation or favor one party, thus raising questions about the honesty of the mediation. According to the discussants, this is largely due to private interest as some community elders are bribed by other stakeholders or interest groups in order to favor a certain party. The elders may then receive the money and act on the favor of theses stakeholders.

A lack of trust in the mediators is also another challenge which creates hurdles in the implementation of mediation. The conflicting parties may not openly discuss issues with the mediators, especially if they do not trust them, which is highly detrimental to the process as trust is fundamental to any mediation process. As a result, the mediators' decisions are not respected by the conflicting parties. According to many discussants, this is a major challenge which limits the ability of the conflicting sides to openly discuss issues and improve their relations.

The discussions also revealed that the agreement reached by the conflicting parties during the mediation may not be sustained due to a lack of authority to enforce the decisions or the agreements made. The discussants held the view that due to a lack of effective government institutions to enforce the agreements reached during the mediation, the conflicts may re-emerge again.

Competition by authorities to lead conflict resolution initiatives is also a challenge to successful mediation, particularly in Matabaan district. In this district there is competition between the Hirshabelle administration and Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'a (ASWJ) on the facilitation of the conflict resolution initiatives. Since both authorities sees themselves as the legitimate authority in the district, both seek to manage the conflicts in the district, thus causing confusion.

Two members of the youth group in Matabaan stated: '...*control of Matabaan district by two different authorities (Hirshabelle state and ASWJ) is a great obstacle to successful mediation'. 'Each entity believes that it is legitimate'.*

Other obstacles to successful reconciliation in the region include the influence of local politicians over the mediators, a lack of consultation with the local communities prior to mediation, a lack of will by the conflicting parties to take responsibility for their actions and a lack of awareness of the importance of peaceful co-existence among the communities.

6.   Specific Needs to Improve Local Mechanisms of Conflict Resolution

Based on their experiences, the discussants in all the assessment areas listed the needs of the communities for achieving successful resolution of the local conflicts. They include:

- A need to conduct a region-wide civic awareness campaign on the effects of conflict on society, and the importance of peaceful co-existence among the communities. The discussants emphasized the need to educate the community members, which they believe will reduce conflicts and enhance social-cohesion among them.

- A need for better provision of scarce resources such as water, which is one of the root causes of conflict in Hirshabelle State. For example, the discussants believe that the construction of shallow wells in various locations such as villages would tremendously reduce the conflict among the communities. Once the shallow wells are constructed, it is important to educate the communities in the areas on the importance of sharing the water among them.

- A need to equip the mediators with the right skills to find lasting solutions to the conflicts. The mediators, such as community elders, religious leaders, professionals, and women's and youth groups need the necessary skills to facilitate successful mediation processes for conflicting parties. Skills needed by the mediators include an understanding of ethical issues such as impartiality, as well as communication and facilitation skills.

- The establishment of an institutionalized peace committee in every district. The peace committees would be established by the regional administration in consultation with various stakeholders, including community members. Members of the peace committee would be selected from various clans and groups within the community. A good example is the 45-member Dubab+ peace committee established by Danish Demining Group (DDG) and WOCCA in Jowhar. Since its establishment, Dubab+ has resolved 12 conflicts in Jowhar district.

- Funds and other resources for mediators to initiate and implement conflict resolution initiatives. The funds will be used to cover costs associated with transport, accommodation, venues, meals, communication and other needs that may arise. According to the discussants, it is imperative to provide continuous financial support to mediation processes in order to achieve successful and sustainable conflict resolution in the state. Additionally, the discussants also placed priority on the importance of constructing conflict resolution facilities such as conference halls and offices for the mediators.

- The timely intervention into conflict. The discussants indicated a need to implement a ceasefire immediately when a conflict breaks out in order to minimize the impact of the conflict, such as loss of life, the displacement of people and a loss of property. The discussants further argued that delayed intervention in conflicts has resulted in prolonged tension and more severe conflicts.

- Government and international actors should increase the presence of security forces in all locations, as well as increase the capacity of the security forces by providing proper remuneration and facilities such as police stations and vehicles. The discussants also appealed to the government to increase the number of judicial courts in the region. This will enable a timely intervention to conflict and increase accountability within communities.

- Since the youth make up the majority of those who actively participate in conflict, the discussants expressed a need to minimize their involvement in violent conflicts. According to the discussants, this can be achieved by addressing youth unemployment in Hirshabelle State through funding income-generating projects for the local youth, and making available funds for micro-finance loans.

≡ A need for emergency preparedness and provision of healthcare service in conflict-affected areas, especially for internally displaced persons. Due to a lack of proper medical facilities, those injured in the conflict and displaced persons require immediate medical treatment. The displaced persons face health-related issues due to a lack of proper medical attention and the unsanitary living conditions in the camps. In addition, there is a need to provide trauma healing seminars to vulnerable groups such as youth and children who have experienced violent conflict.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The study investigated the perceptions that Somalis in Hirshabelle State have regarding the general security situation in their districts, the various types of conflicts that exist in their districts, critical factors that inform and drive conflicts, key stakeholders of the conflicts, current initiatives for managing conflict, challenges faced by the mediators, and the needs and prerequisites for mediation and sustainable (re-)conciliation. Due to the wide coverage of the study, the author feels that the views of the discussants represent the views of the majority of people living across various locations in Hirshabelle State.

Conflict and its effects were a major concern for the majority of the interviewees, since they have a tremendous impact on the lives of the people, including loss of life, injuries and the massive displacement of people within the state. The majority of the conflicts listed by the discussants are based on land ownership. In most cases, two clans claim ownership over a piece of land (in some cases farmland) and clan militias guard the land in an effort to protect the land, thus fueling violent conflict between the clans. In other cases, conflicts are caused by competition over resources such as water and pasture, especially during drought seasons.

The study revealed that influential stakeholders in the conflicts have played a significant role in either ending the conflict or fueling it further. Some stakeholders such as soothsayers and weapon dealers may not have any interest in seeing an end to conflict since they benefit from it. Local communities have played a crucial role in ending conflict and enhancing peaceful co-existence among the members of the communities, although it was noted that current efforts are somewhat lacking. Women and youth were noted to be important actors in peace making although they are hindered from effective participation in decision-making processes. It is important to note that there are drivers of conflicts that require different strategies, prioritization and harmonization. Effective leadership and collaboration among various actors is essential in order to achieve successful and sustainable conflict resolution.

The analysis of this study allows significant insight into a number of pressing issues across Hirshabelle State. Following the assessment, it is important to consider the following recommendations.

≡ The Hirshabelle administration, as well as local and international organizations, should aim to address the root causes of conflict which in most cases is the lack of demarcation of lands, the lack of documents confirming land ownership, the desire to expand land boundaries, and competition over resources such as water and pasture. For land ownership, the Hirshabelle administration and organizations should come up with ways of providing lands to communities/clans, espe-

cially those whose lands were taken or occupied, and issuing deeds and certificates of land ownership to communities. For water, the actors should construct shallow wells and other water bodies in remote villages within the state and educate the communities on the importance of sharing the wells.

- Governments at both the regional and national level should come up with a campaign to clear the roadblocks from the main roads that serve the towns and to increase the presence of the security forces across the state, especially in conflict-affected areas. This will improve the situation of local businesses and the free movement of people within the districts. Additionally, a region-wide civic education program on the consequences of conflict on communities and the importance of peaceful co-existence among the communities should be conducted across the state.

- Conflict resolution initiatives may be improved by increasing the role of the local and regional administrations within the initiatives. It is important for the authorities to initiate ceasefires immediately when a conflict emerges so as to reduce its impact, which in most cases results in a loss of life, the displacement of people and the destruction of property. The Hirshabelle administration should also initiate mediation processes by facilitating dialogue between the conflicting parties so as to address the root causes of the conflict.

- It is extremely important to provide skills trainings to mediators such as community elders, religious leaders, professionals, women and youth. The mediators should particularly be trained on skills such as communication and facilitation, as well as an understanding of ethical issues (such as impartiality during mediation). The governments and international organizations should also make special efforts to increase women and youth participation in mediation processes by providing them with roles and encouraging them to participate in peace making processes. Government policies should also discourage the elders from excluding youth and women from participating by increasing their understanding of the benefits of involving these groups in mediation and conflict resolution processes.

- Government and local and international organizations should consider establishing peace committees in every district in Hirshabelle State, using the Dubab+ peace committee established in Jowhar as an example. This process should include the selection of members of the various clans and the development of joint values which will be used to resolve conflicts in every district. The committees should also be provided with the required funds, resources and facilities to resolve local conflicts.

- Finally, it is imperative for the governments and the local and international organizations to strengthen the local justice system across Hirshabelle State. The actors should construct judicial courts in all the districts in the state and provide them with equipment and qualified personnel to deliver justice for the local communities. In addition, the local communities should also be sensitized on the importance of seeking justice in the local courts.