



BRIDGES

Building Relationships through Innovative Delivery of
Growing Education Services



Child Protection in the Somali Region of Ethiopia



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*Piloting the delivery of quality
education services in the
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Hobeeyaa Hobeeyaa Hobeeyaa Hobeeyaa
Ma geeli baa arooray?
Arooroo oon ku raagay
Ma naaskii baa gabnoobay
Gabnooboo godol ka wayday
Ma aabaa kaa sadcaalay
Sadcaaloo socod ku raagay
Maxaad waydoo la ooyi
Ha waayin Ha waayin
Ha waayin Soomali wayn
Ha waayin walaalo dhowrah
Ha waayin labadaada waalid
Hobeeyaa Hobeeyaa Hobeeyaa Hobeeyaa
Hooyo marna kaa tagi maayo
Cadowga anaa kaa ilaalin
Hooyo Jacaylkay adaan ku siiyey
Hooyo marna baahi kugu daawan mayo

Hobeeyaa, Hobeeyaa, Hobeeyaa, Hobeeyaa
Did the camels leave to drink water?
Leave after being without water for a long time?
Are the breasts milkless?
Milkless so that you haven't got a drop?
Did your father travel?
Travel for a long distance?
What made you cry that you can't find?
Don't lose, don't lose
Don't lose the Somali people
Don't lose many siblings
Don't lose both your parents
Hobeeyaa, hobeeyaa, hobeeyaa, hobeeyaa
My child I will never leave you
I will protect you from your enemies
My child I gave you all my love
My child I will never let you suffer

**Song that Somali mothers sing to their children mentioning
different reasons why children cry, and comforting them
(Women, Mieso-Mulu *woreda*)**

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Acronyms

ABE	Alternative Basic Education
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CMC	Centre Management Committee
CSA	Central Statistical Agency
DFID	Department for International Development
EGLDAM	Ye Ethiopia Goji Limadawi Dirgitoch Aswogaj Mahiber
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HTP	Harmful Traditional Practice
IRC	International Rescue Committee
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
OWDA	Ogaden Welfare and Development Association
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
TVET	Vocational Education and Training Centre
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive Summary

This study has been carried out for the DFID funded BRIDGES project (Piloting the delivery of quality education services in the developing regional states of Ethiopia) which aims to develop and test strategies for state and non-state actors to work in partnership to promote peace and state building in the Somali Region through the provision of improved education services. The one year project started in May 2010 and is being implemented by a consortium led by Save the Children UK, and including Islamic Relief and Mercy Corps, in Shinile, Afder, Jijiga and Gode zones of the Somali Regional State.

The study was carried out during December 2010 and January 2011 and aims to inform and guide the BRIDGES project as well as the design of possible future projects aimed at developing child protection mechanisms in schools and communities. The study examines the current attitudes, behaviour and practices towards child protection in the project areas and investigates the degree, underlying causes and impact of child abuse, with particular reference to the school environment. It also analyses existing protection mechanisms and other mechanisms and positive practices in the community that may support improved child protection. The data was collected through desk research and qualitative field research in project areas in Shinile, Jijiga, Gode and Afder zones of the Somali Region.

The results show that children in the Somali Region are exposed to various forms of abuse, with the most prevalent being child labour, corporal punishment, FGM and other harmful traditional practices. The different forms of abuse have a strong underlying gender dimension reflecting the roles and status of women and men in the Somali Region. Children from poor families, orphans and children from minority clans were reported as vulnerable groups.

Although access to education has greatly improved in the past few years, enrolment rates remain among the lowest in the country. Child labour is a main reason for children not to go to school and children struggle to combine school with work. Especially in rural areas, both children and their families see it as children's responsibility to help support their families through assisting with livestock tending, watching livestock of others, and selling water transported by donkey carts and other jobs.

In the study areas, corporal punishment is frequently used by both parents and teachers. Adults often said that beating is necessary to discipline children and there seemed to be little awareness of alternative positive forms of disciplining.

Although early marriage is less prevalent than in some other areas of Ethiopia, it was still reported to occur frequently. Poverty, lack of education and job opportunities and a desire to conform to the social norm were reasons given for early marriage. Boys and girls reportedly often marry voluntarily below the age of 18; however some children, mainly girls, were also said to be forced into marriage. 'Promising' sometimes happens at an early age, and widow/widower inheritance was also mentioned to take place. Reasons given for forced marriage included the bride price, fear of a girl losing her virginity and the large social consequences of refusing a marriage proposal.

FGM seems to be almost universal in the Somali Region. Although a large shift has taken place in the last few years from the infibulation to the so called *sunna* type of FGM, in some areas in Kebribeya and Gode

woredas infibulation was reported to be still the dominant form of FGM. The *sunna* type of FGM is largely seen as a religious requirement, while as specific reasons for infibulation, protection against rape, preservation of the girl's virginity and fear of rejection on the wedding night were reported.

Sexual abuse was in general reported to be very rare which was attributed to the severe consequences it will have for the perpetrator and the perpetrator's family under Somali customary law.

Clan conflict and conflict between ethnic groups has greatly affected children in some communities of the study. Conflict has led to burning down of houses, looting of animals and killing of people, which forced children and their families to move, disruption of education and has made some children orphans. In some areas it was reported that boys below the age of 18 may take part in armed conflict between clans and ethnic groups. There were also suggestions that boys below 18 years sometimes join the special police force of the government and district militias, although this was not verified during this study.

Child protection cases in the region are dealt with by three co-existing legal systems: regular formal law, Sharia law and customary Somali law. Respondents reported mainly relying on customary law to solve child protection issues, with formal law often only used when elders are not able to solve the case or when one of the parties does not accept resolution through customary law. The use of regular formal law and Sharia law is growing while customary law is losing influence, especially in urban areas. Customary law contradicts regular formal law and Sharia law on several child protection issues.

Children in the study described that they would report child protection issues to their parents and teachers and seem to have little access to (other) child-friendly, nearby and confidential reporting mechanisms. Regular formal law enforcement bodies reported receiving very few reports of child abuse and deal with few child protection cases, the majority of which involves rape. Sharia courts reportedly mainly deal with neglect, child custody, child support and forced marriage. Women's Affairs Offices and women associations reported receiving some reports of FGM, early and forced marriage and rape and to mediate and/or refer cases to the police or the Sharia court. Elders reported dealing with a limited number of cases related to verbal, physical and sexual abuse.

In many *woredas* awareness raising on child protection issues is conducted by teams of representatives of different government offices often involving other stakeholders like women's groups, community leaders, Islamic leaders and medical professionals. FGM seems to be the child protection issue receiving the most attention, followed by early and forced marriage. Interventions targeting other child protection issues seem limited. Religious leaders were described as playing a key role in realising behavioural change with regard to FGM and other child protection issues. However, some respondents described encountering a lot of resistance in addressing child protection issues in their communities.

The study ends with several recommendations for developing child protection mechanisms in the Somali Region both at the school and the community level, and emphasises the importance of engaging with the government and religious leaders.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

This study has been carried out for the DFID funded BRIDGES project (Piloting the delivery of quality education services in the developing regional states of Ethiopia), which combines education, protection and peace objectives. The one year project started in May 2010 and is implemented by a consortium of Save the Children UK, Islamic Relief and Mercy Corps in partnership with the Regional Education Bureau, Woreda Education Offices, the Jijiga College of Teacher Education, the Regional Bureau of Youth and Sport as well as a number of local NGOs. The project aims to develop and test strategies for state and non-state actors to work in partnership to promote peace and state building in the Somali Region through the provision of improved education services.

The project is operating in more than 150 formal schools, ABE centres and Quranic schools in Shinile Zone (Afdem and Mieso-Mulu *woredas*), Afder zone (Hargelle, Chereti and Elkere *woredas*) and Jijiga zone (Kebribeya and Babile-Dandamane *woredas*) of the Somali Region. The project is also supporting the Jijiga Technical and Vocational Education and Training Centre (TVET), the Gode Rural Technology Promotion Centre and the Gode Agricultural-TVET.

Linked to the delivery of quality education, the protection of children is a key responsibility of adults managing and running schools. The BRIDGES project has therefore trained 561 PTA/CMC members in child protection concepts and supports PTAs/CMCs in establishing child protection systems in schools.

1.2 Objectives of the study

This study intends to provide information on the child protection situation in the Somali Region of Ethiopia with particular reference to the education system in order to inform possible future projects that aim to develop child protection mechanisms in schools and communities. More specifically this study intends to:

- diagnose the current attitudes, behaviour and practices towards common child protection and identify gaps, needs and positive practices that exist;
- investigate the degree, underlying causes and impact of child abuse in the community with particular reference to the school environment;
- analyse existing protection mechanisms and other mechanisms in the community that may support improved child protection in the Somali Region.

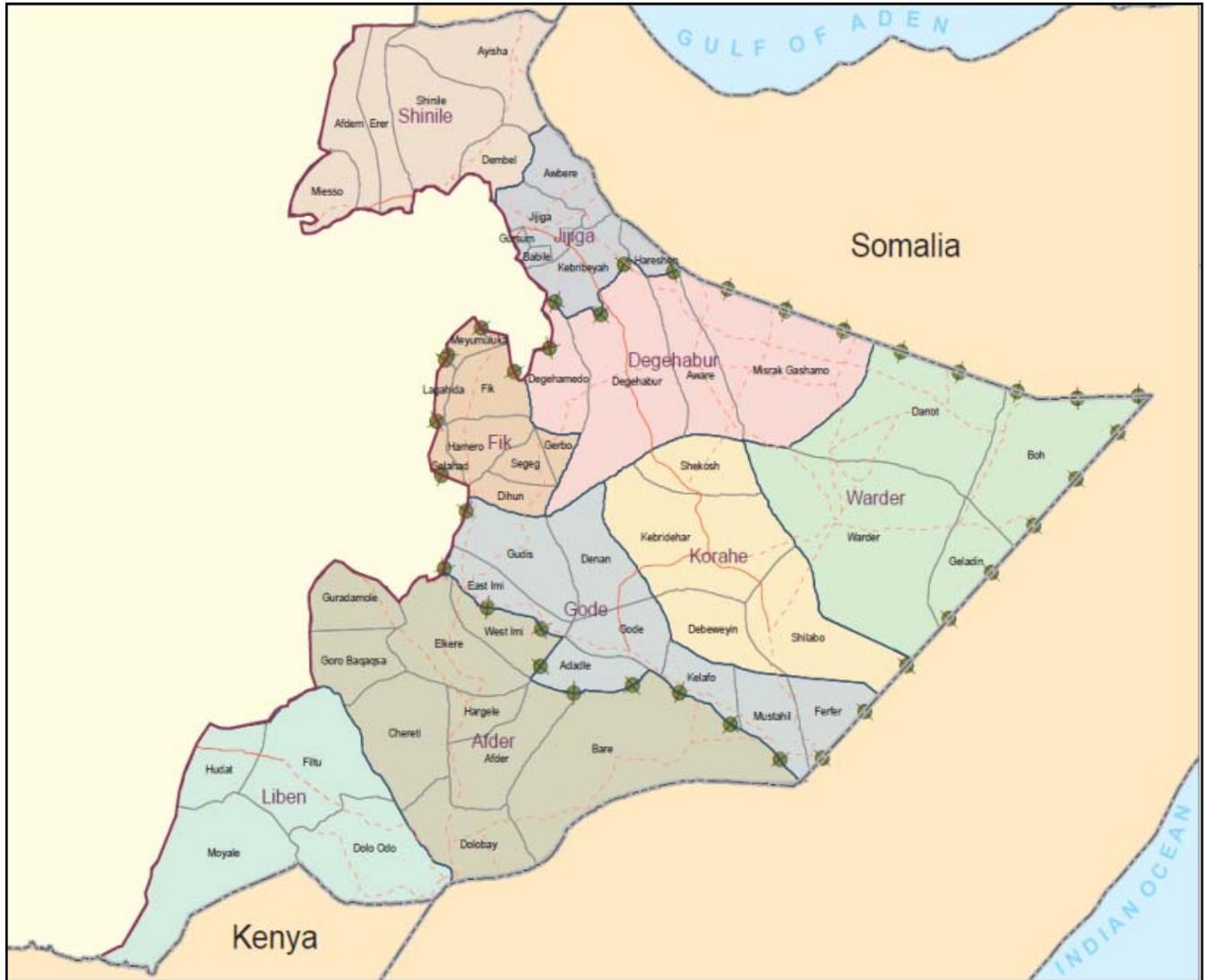
1.3 The Somali Region

The Somali Region is the most eastern and second largest of nine Ethiopian regions. The region is divided into 9 zones and 52 *woredas* (see map below). According to the 2007 Census carried out by the Central Statistical Agency (CSA)¹ the region had a population of 4,445,219 in mid 2007 of which 53% are children under the age of 18. The population is predominately Somali (97%) and Muslim (98%) and

¹ Central Statistical Agency, 2008. Census 2007. <http://www.etharc.org/resources/download/viewcategory/68>

mainly uses Somali as the working language (97%). About 86% of the population lives in rural areas, and are mainly pastoralists and, to a lesser extent, agro-pastoralists. The region suffers from recurrent droughts, famine and floods.

Figure 1: Map of the Somali Region of Ethiopia²



The population of the Somali Region is among the poorest of Ethiopia; data of the 2005 Demographic and Health Survey show that 72% of the inhabitants fall into the lowest wealth quintile.³ In 2007, the

² UNOCHA

³ Central Statistical Agency and ORC Macro, 2006. Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey 2005. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and Calverton, Maryland, USA: Central Statistical Agency and ORC Macro.

adult literacy rate for men was 15% and for women 12%.⁴ Gross school enrolment rates have increased from 33% in 2007/08 to 64% in 2009/10⁵.

The Somali population is genealogically divided into patrilineal clan-family groups, with many subsidiary clans and sub-clans, descended from common ancestors. The clans and sub-clans form an important social structure and are a source of great solidarity, but also conflict between Somalis. In various parts of the Somali Region, conflict between clans take place and in five zones of the region there is conflict between the government and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) insurgent movement.

1.4 Child protection

This study uses Save the Children's definition of child protection which defines child protection as "measures and structures to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence affecting children."⁶ The adopted definition of a child is "every human being below the age of 18 years old." Every child has the right to be protected from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation as provided in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. However violations of this right take place in every society and are often related to poverty, social values, norms and traditions.

Failure to protect children undermines national development and leads to negative effects that continue well beyond childhood into the individual's adult life⁷. Children subjected to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation are at risk of injury, poor physical and mental health, HIV/AIDS infection, educational problems, homelessness and vagrancy. It undermines their development as functional adults and good parents later in life. In most severe cases it can even lead to death.⁸

Child protection is the responsibility of everyone at every level of society. Achieving a world where children are protected from abuse requires that people at every level of society do their part, including policymakers, legislators, NGO staff, teachers, parents and children themselves.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research methods

The research design of the study consists of desk research of documents related to child protection in the Somali Region and qualitative data collection methods in the field, including focus group discussions and key informant interviews.

⁴ Central Statistical Agency, 2008. Census 2007. [Http://www.etharc.org/resources/download/viewcategory/68](http://www.etharc.org/resources/download/viewcategory/68)

⁵ Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, 2010. Ethiopia: 2010 MDG Report. Trends and Prospects for meeting MDGs by 2011. Addis Ababa.

⁶ Save the Children Alliance, 2007. Child Protection in Emergencies: Priorities, Principles and Practices. Stockholm, Sweden: Save the Children Sweden.

⁷ UNICEF, Inter-Parliamentarian Union, 2004. Child Protection. A handbook for parliamentarians. [Http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_21134.html](http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_21134.html)

⁸ UNICEF, Child Protection Information Sheets, 2006. [Http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_34146.html](http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_34146.html)

2.2 Selection of sites, schools and participants

The research was carried out in sites in Mieso-Mulu and Afdem *woredas* in Shinile zone, Kebribeya *woreda* in Jijiga zone, Gode *woreda* in Gode zone and Elkere, Hargelle and Chereti *woredas* in Afdere zone of the Somali Region. With the exception of Babile-Dandamane, these are all the *woredas* where the BRIDGES project is implemented.

Within each *woreda* 1-4 schools of the BRIDGES project were purposively selected based on differences with regards to education type (formal, ABE, Quranic), exposure to conflict and the mobility and livelihood base of the population (pastoralist, agro-pastoralist, other). From the selected schools boys and girls were randomly selected for focus group discussions. In addition, focus group discussions were held with the PTAs/CMCs as well as elders/men and the women's group/women of the community surrounding the schools if they were available. With regard to the key informant interviews, individuals and organizations were chosen based on their role and relevance with regard to the study. Participants of the focus group discussions and key informant interviews were recruited with the assistance of Save the Children UK in Shinile and Jijiga zone, Mercy Corps in Gode zone and Islamic Relief in Afdere zone.

2.3 Data collection in the field

The data collection in the field was conducted in two phases: in Shinile and Jijiga zone from 8-20 December 2010 and in Gode and Afdere zone from 13-23 January 2011. The focus group discussions and key informant interviews were held by the female researcher together with an female interpreter who provided Somali-English and English-Somali translation. Questions for the group discussions and interviews (see Annex 1) were developed in advance and pre-tested and adjusted in Mieso-Mulu *woreda*.

Focus group discussions

A total of 47 focus group discussions were held with boys, girls, PTA/CMC members, women's groups/women and elders/men (Table 1). The groups of boys and girls usually consisted of 6 children who were generally between 12-18 years old, however a few children were a bit older or younger. The focus groups of PTA/CMC members, elders/men and women's groups/women varied in size. In total 75 girls, 69 boys, 40 PTA/CMC members, 55 women and 26 men/elders participated in the discussions. The discussions were held in different locations, including empty classrooms, offices of schools and women's associations and outside in the open air. Attention was paid to securing a private environment for the discussions, however in a few instances this was not completely realised.

Table 1: Number of focus group discussions

Focus groups	Mieso-Mulu	Afdere	Kebribeya	Gode	Hargelle	Elkere	Chereti	Total
Girls	3	2	1	1	2	2	1	12
Boys	2	3	1	1	2	2	1	12
PTAs/CMCs	1	2	2		2	1	1	9
Women's groups/women	3	1	3		1		1	9
Elders/men	1	1	2			1		5
Total	10	9	9	2	7	6	4	47

Key informant interviews

In total 26 key informant interviews were held with representatives from local government offices, the police, NGOs and the UN as well as with religious leaders and medical professionals (see Table 2). In some sites it was not possible to interview representatives of some local government offices and/or the police usually because their staff was out of town.

Table 2: Number of key informant interviews

Key informants	Mieso-Mulu	Afdem	Kebribeya	Gode	Hargelle	Elkere	Chereti	Total
NGO	1	1	1	3	1		1	8
UN				1				1
Police	1 *	1			1	1	1	5
Justice Office	1*	1*						2
Women's Affairs Office	1*		1	1	1	1		5
Youth and Sport Office	1*	1*						2
Education Office		1*	1		1			3
Health Office		1*		1				2
Labour and Social Affairs Office				1				1
Kebele administration	1*							1
Religious leaders					1	1*	1	3
Medical professionals		1		1				2
Total	6	7	3	8	5	3	3	35 [^]

*Interviewed as part of a group

[^]Since some key informants in Mieso-Mulu and Afdem *woredas* were interviewed in a group, the total number of key informant interviews is 26.

2.4 Ethical issues

The data has been collected in line with the following ethical principles:

- The topic, purpose, confidentiality and benefits of the research as well as the organizations involved in carrying out the research were explained to all respondents.
- The informed consent of all respondents has been secured.
- Children were interviewed in the school setting and the consent of teachers has been obtained before approaching children.
- Children were not asked about personal experiences of sexual abuse.
- The anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents has been kept.
- The researcher and translator signed a declaration to abide by Save the Children UK's Child Protection Policy which includes reporting children facing serious child protection risks to Save the Children UK.

2.5 Limitations of the study

The study uses qualitative methods and therefore focuses on the perceptions of respondents and not on actual facts.

It was felt that participants were sometimes not completely open because of the sensitivity of the topic and because they are aware that certain practices are illegal or disapproved of. Different answers were given about the prevalence of abuse in a few focus group discussions and interviews within the same community which might also demonstrate that respondents were not always accurately describing the actual situation. It is therefore likely that the prevalence of abuse is underreported.

Somalis transmit their cultural traditions orally and therefore it was in a few instances difficult to establish whether something is a current practice or an extinct tradition.

Due to the English-Somali translation some of the more complex meanings might have been lost in translation. In one community in Elkere *woreda* the population did not speak Somali but a local language and a second translator was used.

3. Perceived nature, prevalence, causes and impact of child protection issues

The main child protection issues that emerged from the study are child labour, corporal punishment, early and forced marriage, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and other harmful traditional practices (HTPs). Other less prevalent, but important, child protection issues included sexual abuse and abduction and children affected by or involved in armed conflict. The perception of these issues as 'child abuse' obviously differs among and between children, parents, communities, government bodies and other actors including NGOs that are involved with child protection in the region. For example, while it is recognized that children's workload related to farming, livestock, household chores is often 'child labour', it is also widely seen as children's responsibility to contribute to their families' livelihood and this contribution is recognized to be crucial to many farming and pastoralist households' livelihoods. The nature, prevalence, causes and impact of these child protection issues in the region are described below, as well as the groups of children that were identified to be more at risk. The impact of these issues on children's education is discussed in more detail at the end of the section. Note that since the study was qualitative, the results are not statistically valid, but are based on the perceptions and opinions of the various respondents.

3.1 Child labour

Nature and prevalence

When children were asked what they are doing besides (or instead of) going to school, almost all children reported helping their families in various ways. In both urban and rural areas girls described doing household work like cooking and washing clothes. Fetching water and collecting firewood is reportedly done by both boys and girls; however seems to be more frequently a task of girls. In farming areas, girls and boys help on the land and in pastoralist areas boys mainly look after camels and search for pasture while girls watch the sheep and the goats. Respondents described that especially in rural

areas there is a lot of work to be done at family level and that both children and adults see it usually as children's responsibility to assist in the work. Respondents explained that parents sometimes decide to send only some of their children to school, while their other children look after livestock. Oldest children and children without brothers or sisters were reported to be out of school more frequently and girls are more likely to be out of school than boys.

Aside from contributing to their families' livelihoods through their labour contribution, children also contribute through earning an income by doing different types of jobs. In Kebribeya and Elkere *woredas* some children from the age of 10 reportedly watch the livestock of other people for payment. In Gode, Chereti and Hargelle towns, children, mainly boys, are engaged in shoe shining, selling water transported by donkey carts and selling tooth sticks and firewood. In Chereti and Gode towns boys were also reported to work as porters and manual labourers in construction sites. A police officer in Chereti explained that boys of 15 years and older, who initially started as shoe shiners, ended up selling chat and addicted to chat.

In various sites respondents stated that rural boys and girls, usually from the age of 15 but sometimes younger, leave to urban centres for work. In Mieso-Mulu and Afdem *woredas* children reportedly mainly go to Djibouti, in Elkere *woreda* it was mentioned that a few children go to Chereti and Gode and in Kebribeya *woreda* children reportedly go to Kebribeya town, Hargeisa, Jijiga and Hartisheik. Girls mainly leave to work as domestic labourers, often with relatives, and boys usually leave for manual labour. Children are reportedly frequently brought or sent by relatives, but sometimes also go on their own initiative with or without informing their parents.

"Girls as young as 14 go to Djibouti to work as domestic labourers. Some are sent by their parents and others go by themselves. Some mothers bring their daughters back home when they find out that they are working as a slave." (Women's group member, Mieso-Mulu *woreda*)



Boys collecting water with donkey carts.

Causes and impact

Children's support to their families' livelihoods is expected, and in many cases, crucial to the family. Although a problem both from the perspective of child labour as an 'abuse' and in terms of a denial of children's right to education, the causes are understood as being difficult to address.

"Children from poor families are often absent. They are collecting and selling firewood for little or no payment. We understand their situation and don't punish them." (PTA member, Hargelle woreda)

"I notice that some children are not able to do their homework because they have to help their parents. Absenteeism increases during harvest and planting season, when there is a lack of water and when there is an epidemic disease." (Teacher, Elkere woreda)

Seasonal mobility and factors such as drought also impact on the involvement of children in work and consequently their school attendance. Participants described that when nearby water wells run dry children have to travel for long distances to fetch water and take livestock to drinking places. Drought also makes children spend a lot of time looking for pasture and forces families to move which causes drop out or disruption of school.

"We believe that making children fetch water from far places is child abuse, but circumstances force us to make them do it." (Woman, Kebribeya woreda)

Girls from an ABE centre in a pastoralist community in Afdem woreda with 40 boys and only 10 girls in the second grade were asked why there are fewer girls than boys in their school and they explained:

"Girls have to get grass and firewood and do household tasks early in the morning. Girls who get married stop with school and girls who are promised to a man don't see the need to go to school"

3.2 Corporal punishment

Nature and prevalence

Corporal punishment is defined by the Committee on the Rights of the Child as "any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light."⁹ Respondents reported that corporal punishment, mainly in the form of beating with the hand or a stick, is frequently used by parents to discipline children. Forms of discipline used by parents were discussed in 41 focus groups of which 28 focus groups (68%) reported beating to be common, 6 (15%) reported beating to be rare and 7 (17%) reported beating not to be used. All focus groups mentioned that

⁹ United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children, 2006. World Report on Violence Against Children, Geneva: United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children.

parents also use ‘advice’ to discipline their children. Shouting was reported in 7 focus group discussions and pinching in 3 focus group discussions.

In two towns, respondents in 2 focus group discussions mentioned that parents take older boys to the police who advise them and sometimes put them in prison for a while. This reportedly happens when they refuse to go to school, steal or are “uncontrollable”. The police in one of the towns said that they only imprison children who threaten their parents, while the police in the other town said that they only advise children.

Two children’s focus groups (one of girls and one of boys) in Chereti and a women’s focus group in Hargelle mentioned that parents ask the Quranic teacher to lock their child up in the Quranic school. The reported duration of the locking up varied from a day to several days during which time they go home in the evening and are brought food by parents.

In four focus group discussions in Mieso-Mulu *woreda* a traditional form of punishment was described during which boys are tied to a tree either standing or hanging down and beaten. The father of the boy reportedly asks clan members to assist him in this procedure, after which an animal is slaughtered and the boy is blessed. A focus group of boys in Afdem *woreda* described a similar punishment during which boys are tied up and brought to a remote area where they are left in the sun. These punishments were said to be applied only in very severe cases, for example when the boy is aggressive towards his father. However, it should be noted that few participants were aware of specific occasions in which these punishments were applied and therefore their practice seems to be rare. In Kebribeya, Afdem and Mieso-Mulu *woredas* this type of punishment was also mentioned as being applied to adult men who commit a very bad offence like rape.

Corporal punishment is also frequently used by teachers to discipline children. Out of the 32 focus groups in which disciplining by teachers was discussed, 20 (63%) mentioned beating to be common, 2 (6%) said that beating is rare and 10 (31%) stated that children are not beaten by teachers. Other forms of corporal punishment that were reported to be used by teachers are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Forms of punishment by teachers mentioned in focus group discussions

Form of punishment by teachers	Number of focus groups that mentioned punishment (n=32)
Kneeling down	4
Kneeling down under the sun with hands up	2
Kneeling down and beating	2
Walking on knees	1
Holding ears while bending down	3
Holding ears and standing in the sun	3
Looking at the sun	3
Standing up and sitting down continuously	2
Twisting pen between fingers	2
Standing or kneeling down with arms wide and holding stones	2
Beating while blindfolded	1

Beating while tied	1
Locking up	1
Locking up while being tied	2

The majority of the children in the study reported that they are only punished by their parents and teachers; however a few children also mentioned being punished by older brothers, cousins and neighbours. One key informant described that assistant camel herders are frequently beaten by the main camel herder, usually a close relative. Respondents also described that girls are mainly punished by their mothers.

In a few instances it was reported that boys are punished in a different and/or more severe manner than girls. For example, it was mentioned in Chereti *woreda* that teachers beat boys on their back and girls on their hands.

In Kebribeya *woreda* the use of corporal punishment by both parents and teachers was less than in the other *woredas* where the study was conducted. Respondents explained that beating used to be more frequent in the past, but has decreased due to awareness raising by government and religious leaders.

“Beating used to take place a lot here, but 6 or 7 years ago this has changed. Government and religious leaders raised awareness. Beating physically and mentally hurts children. It makes them run away and gives them a bad attitude.” (Man, Kebribeya *woreda*)

Causes and impact

There seems to be a general acceptance of beating as a form of discipline and a lack of knowledge of alternative positive forms of disciplining children. Respondents, both children and adults, often believed that beating is necessary to discipline children. PTA members in Mulu also mentioned that parents who do not beat children are looked down upon.

“We think that beating children is ok, otherwise they will end up on the street.” (Women’s Affairs representative).

“No parent wishes to beat his/her children and it hurts us when we do it, but it is for their own sake. We don’t want them to be in danger.” (Woman, Kebribeya *woreda*)

When children were asked what they think about beating as a form of discipline opinions were divided, however a small majority of the children believed that beating is a good and effective form of disciplining children. This is likely to demonstrate the socialization of children into the prevailing social norms.

“Beating is good because it will scare you and discipline you and make you do what is required.” (Boy, Hargelle *woreda*)

“We think beating is good because advising doesn’t work for all children. If children are not beaten they will end up in the jungle. We will also use it on our own children if we are not able to control them.” (Boy, Afdem *woreda*)

Despite the above, quite a number of adults and children also expressed opinions against beating children and mentioned several negative consequences, including that beating physically and mentally hurts the child, is not effective, makes children leave their families, damages the relationship between the child and his/her teacher or parent, leads to a bad attitude of children and has the risk of adults losing control.

"I believe beating is bad because when parents are really angry they can beat you everywhere and you can get injured." (Boy, Elkere woreda)

"We hate beating. It doesn't stop us from doing what we were punished for." (Girl, Mieso-Mulu woreda)

In Mulu town it was also mentioned that beating leads to a continuation of the use of violence and that not only children but also women are beaten frequently.

3.3 Early marriage

Nature and prevalence

In this study early marriage refers to the marriage of boys and girls before they have reached the age of 18. According to the 2005 Demographic and Health Survey, the average age of first marriage for women aged 25-49 in the Somali Region is 18.0, while the average age of first marriage for men aged 25-49 in the Somali Region is 24.3. These ages are higher than the national averages, which are 16.1 for women and 23.8 for men.¹⁰ A national survey conducted in 2007 by EGLDAM found a national early marriage prevalence of 21.4% and a relatively low early marriage prevalence of 4% in the Somali Region.¹¹

The current study suggests a much higher prevalence rate for early marriage in the study areas than indicated by the EGLDAM survey. Out of the 35 focus groups in which early marriage was discussed, 20 focus groups (57%) stated that early marriage is common in their area and 15 focus groups (43%) stated that early marriage is rare or not taking place in their area. Respondents usually reported that men marry from the age of 20 onwards and early marriage of boys was seldom mentioned. Only during a few focus group discussions and interviews it was reported that girls marry below the age of 15, however in Mieso-Mulu *woreda* younger ages, usually 13 and 14, were more often mentioned than in other *woredas*. It was highlighted by respondents in this *woreda* that especially girls marrying the husband of a deceased sister are marrying young. In Kebribeya *woreda* several participants explained that according to Sharia law boys and girls are considered to be adults from the age of 15 and therefore get married from that age onwards. Respondents stated that the age of marriage for girls is lower among pastoralists and in rural areas than among settled populations and in urban areas.

Causes and impact

¹⁰ Central Statistical Agency and ORC Macro, 2006. Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey 2005. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and Calverton, Maryland, USA: Central Statistical Agency and ORC Macro.

¹¹ EGLDAM, 2008. Follow up National Survey on the Harmful Traditional Practices in Ethiopia. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: EGLDAM.

When asked why boys and girls marry at an early age participants most often described that it is the voluntary choice of the couple to get married; however pressure or force exerted by parents, the future husband and other community members was also quite frequently reported to play a role (see 3.4).

"I got married when I was 16. My husband and I fell in love and dated for one year. He asked me to marry him and I agreed and then our fathers arranged the wedding." (18 years old girl, Hargelle woreda)

Poverty, a lack of education and job opportunities and desire to conform to the social norm of getting married early also were reported as causes for early marriage.

"Girls will marry at a later age when they have other goals than running a household, like pursuing education." (Woman, Kebribeya woreda)

"If they are poor and don't go to school marriage is the only option." (Government representative, Gode woreda)

In almost all areas of the study participants also mentioned that boys and girls get promised to each other for marriage. However, the practice was described to be very rare in some sites and quite common in others, and seems to be generally decreasing. In rural areas in Mieso-Mulu, Afdem, Gode, Chereti and Elkere *woredas* boys and girls reportedly get promised at very young ages, sometimes even before they are born. In Kebribeya *woreda* and Elkere town participants described that promising takes place, but not before the children have reached the age of 15. Several respondents highlighted that promising of girls at an early age is a cause for early marriage because at a certain moment the man is no longer willing to wait and starts pressuring the family of the girl.

"It happens in our area that boys and girls get promised to each other by the age of 9 or 10. The girl will then wear a necklace and waits a few years before getting married. In the past this used to be the most common way of arranging marriages, but now it is decreasing and the minority." (CMC member, Elkere woreda)

When asked what they believed to be a good age for boys and girls to get married, about half of the participants mentioned ages below 18 (usually 16 and 17).

"I believe 16-18 is a good age for a girl to get married, as then they are mature." (Girl, Gode woreda)

"I think 16 is a good age to get married. I got married at the age of 13 and my first baby died during delivery. I was bleeding a lot and was sick for a long time. After that I gave birth to a son." (17 years old girl, Mieso-Mulu woreda)

"Girls in our area marry between the age of 16-20 and boys marry from the age of 20 onwards. I think 18 is a good age for a girl and 25 is a good age for a boy to get married. It is not good for a girl to have a baby too early. A girl also needs to know how to manage a family and a boy needs to be able to provide for a family." (Boy, Hargelle woreda)

According to UNFPA, the consequences of early marriage include limited or no educational opportunities, lack of skills to become a viable part of the labour market, increased risk of maternal and infant mortality, increased vulnerability to HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases and restricted freedom of movement and social mobility.¹² There is also existing evidence suggesting that girls who marry younger have a higher risk of suffering from psychological, sexual and physical violence from their husbands.¹³ In this study early marriage and promising for marriage were mentioned as significant reasons for not going to school (see 3.10).

3.4 Forced marriage and marriage by abduction

Nature and prevalence

With regard to forced marriage, the right to marry with free and informed consent is reflected in several international human rights instruments¹⁴, the Ethiopian Constitution and the Ethiopian Revised Family Code. However, especially in areas where early marriage is taking place, free and informed consent of both parties may be lacking.

Participants were asked to explain how marriages are decided upon in their area and in the majority of the sites it was reported that most marriages are concluded after the man has proposed to the girl. Subsequently the man asks his father to propose to the father of the girl and a bride price, usually in the form of livestock, is paid to the family of the girl. A wedding ceremony (*nikat*) will be held and is led by a religious leader in the presence of witnesses. The bride is often not present at the ceremony but is represented by a male family member. In towns the ceremony might take place at the Sharia court and a marriage certificate is issued, however in rural areas no formal document is provided.

Couples may also decide to run away together, usually to the man's house, after which fathers are informed and arrange the marriage. This reportedly takes place when the father of the girl has rejected the proposal or the couple is afraid he will do so, for example because the family of the man is not able to pay a large bride price. According to respondents it might also occur when the father of the man refuses to propose to the father of the girl or the couple is too shy to tell their parents that they want to get married.

In all areas where the study was conducted marriages arranged by parents were mentioned to take place. This was especially often reported in two pastoralist communities in Mieso-Mulu *woreda* where boys and girls were said to hardly talk to each other. Respondents in all *woredas* described that fathers don't always ask their daughters for consent when they choose a husband for her or receive a marriage

¹² UNFPA, Child Marriage Factsheet.

[Http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2005/presskit/factsheets/facts_child_marriage.htm](http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2005/presskit/factsheets/facts_child_marriage.htm)

¹³ United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence Against Children, 2006. World Report on Violence Against Children, Geneva: United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children.

¹⁴ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

proposal. However, except in one pastoralist community in Mieso-Mulu *woreda*, this appears to occur to a limited extent. Boys are reportedly much more often than girls able to choose their spouse. In several sites respondents also stated that young girls sometimes marry elderly men.

According to the 2005 Demographic and Health Survey the percentage of women aged 15-49 in the Somali Region who are married by abduction is 4.6%, which is below the national average of 8%. A study conducted by Save the Children Denmark, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Women's Affairs in two *woredas* of the Somali Region found no evidence of the occurrence of abduction¹⁵. In the current study, four focus groups in Mieso-Mulu *woreda* and four in Afdem *woreda* mentioned that abduction for the purpose of marriage takes place. However, specific cases of abduction were rarely mentioned and a few participants also seemed to confuse abduction with a couple agreeing together to run away. In Kebribeya, Gode, Chereti, Elkere and Hargelle *woredas* respondents reported that abduction for marriage does not take place.

"Abduction happens in the countryside. The perpetrator is not punished and has to marry the girl."
(Woman, Mieso-Mulu *woreda*)

"Some girls are forcefully abducted when they watch livestock; however this does not happen in our area." (Boy, Afdem *woreda*)

Causes and impact

The line between what is a forced and a voluntary marriage might be difficult to draw sometimes. Some may accept the marriage without protest but may be too young to make an informed decision about the spouse or about marriage itself. When early marriage is a long tradition protest might be very difficult and refusal could have large negative social implications. As one key informant said:

"The girl is usually accepting the decision of her father. I call it a forced marriage when she resists". (NGO representative, Gode *woreda*)

Some participants described psychological pressure and physical violence to force girls into marriage.

"In rural areas forced marriage takes place. The father forces the girl by saying "you either have my blessing or my curse". (Women's Affairs representative)

"In our community the man asks his father to propose to the father of the girl. The girl is usually not asked for her opinion. If she runs away she will be beaten." (Woman, Mieso-Mulu *woreda*)

In all sites respondents reported the existence of widow/widower inheritance. This is the practice of a man marrying the sister or another close female relative of his deceased wife (*Xigsiisan*) and the practice of a man marrying the widow of a deceased brother or deceased other male relative (*Dumal*). The justification of these practices is reportedly to ensure the welfare of the woman and her children and to

¹⁵ Save the Children Denmark, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2008. A Study on Violence against Girls in Primary Schools and its Impact on Girls' Education in Ethiopia.

maintain the ties between the two families. However, respondents explained that if it is not practiced the family of the woman is often required to pay back the bride price to the family of the man, which they are usually unable to do.

“Widow/widower inheritance takes place here. However, the younger sister of the deceased wife will not marry before the age of 15. It is a tradition and therefore the girl will accept it.” (Woman, Kebribeya woreda)

“We fight against widow inheritance. It takes place in rural areas and to a limited extent here in town. A woman who lost her husband was shot when she dated another man outside of her family in law.” (Women’s Association member, Chereti woreda)

When asked why parents are forcing their daughters to get married, it was often mentioned that the family wants to receive the bride price. A representative of Pastoralist Concern explained that the amount of the bride price varies per clan and that they see a link between the amount of the bride price and the implementation of women’s rights. For example, the bride price often makes divorce impossible because the family of the girl is unable to repay the bride price. Bride price is also a main factor in the practice of widow/widower inheritance.

Fear that the girl will lose her virginity or become pregnant and cause shame on the family reportedly also makes fathers eager to see their daughters get married. Respondents also mentioned that marriage proposals are rarely refused because it is seen as an honour if someone wants to marry your daughter and refusal of a marriage proposal could lead to problems between clans and block future intermarriage between the clans.

“The marriage proposal is valued more than the health of the girl.” (Woman, Mieso-Mulu woreda)

In Mieso-Mulu woreda it was mentioned in three focus group discussions and a key informant interview that victims of rape are forced to marry the perpetrator and in Afdem woreda two key informants reported that victims of rape might accept to marry the perpetrator because they believe that nobody else will marry them (see also 3.7.).

Representatives from two NGOs reported that forced marriage sometimes occurs as part of peace building between clans.

“As part of peace building clans exchange girls. The girls are about 16 years and older, some marry voluntarily and others are not asked for their opinion and have no choice. This takes place in Gode, Chereti, Danan and Elkere.” (Representative of an NGO, Gode woreda)

3.5 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Nature and prevalence

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), also known as Female Genital Cutting (FGC), comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. FGM is classified into the following four major types.

1. Clitoridectomy: partial or total removal of the clitoris and, in very rare cases, only the prepuce (the fold of skin surrounding the clitoris).
2. Excision: partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora, with or without excision of the labia majora.
3. Infibulation: narrowing of the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal. The seal is formed by cutting and repositioning the inner, or outer, labia, with or without removal of the clitoris.
4. All other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, e.g. pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterizing the genital area.¹⁶

Data from the 2005 Demographic and Health Survey suggest that 74% of Ethiopian women aged 15-49 have undergone a form of FGM. The highest prevalence rates of the country are found in the Somali Region, where 97% of the women aged 15-49 have undergone FGM and 84% have undergone the infibulation type of FGM.¹⁷ EGLDAM conducted surveys in two zones of the Somali Region in 1997 and in five zones of the Somali Region in 2007 and found a FGM prevalence rate (including all women and girls from age 0) of 69.7% in 1997 and 70.1% in 2007.¹⁸

Participants of the focus group discussions and interviews reported that all girls in their area are circumcised. When asked at what age girls are circumcised in their area most of the respondents mentioned ages of between 7-10.

A large shift has taken place from the infibulation (type 3) to the so called *sunna* type of FGM, which reportedly involves cutting the tip of the clitoris or making an incision in the clitoris (type 1 or type 4). In 18 (69%) of the 26 focus groups where the topic was discussed, *sunna* was mentioned as the only type of FGM currently used. Except in one locality in Elkere where respondents said they had always used *sunna*, a change has taken place in the past few years from infibulation.

In Gode and Kebribeya, infibulation seems to be more prevalent than in the other *woredas* included in the study. Respondents of two pastoralist communities in Kebribeya reported that infibulation is the only practiced form of FGM in their community while respondents of two other pastoralist communities in Kebribeya reported that they mainly practice infibulation. In Gode town respondents explained that the change from infibulation to *sunna* has only recently started. A representative of the Women's Affairs office in Gode highlighted that women are re-stitched after they give birth and believes that this "repeated infibulation" does not receive enough attention.

¹⁶ [Http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/index.html)

¹⁷ Central Statistical Agency and ORC Macro, 2006. Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey 2005. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and Calverton, Maryland, USA: Central Statistical Agency and ORC Macro.

¹⁸ EGLDAM, 2009. Survey on Harmful Traditional Practices in Ethiopia. Somali Regional Report. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: EGLDAM.

Causes and impact

When asked why girls are circumcised in their community, respondents provided some different answers for the infibulation and the *sunna* type of FGM. The reasons given both for infibulation and *sunna*, were as follows:

- Tradition – mentioned by 9 of the focus groups asked (35%).
- Uncircumcised girls are *haram* or dirty - mentioned by 7 focus groups (27%)
- Men will not marry uncircumcised girls – mentioned by 6 focus groups (23%)
- Reasons related to reducing the sexual desire of girls or controlling their sexual behaviour – mentioned by 4 focus groups (15%).

In addition, stigmatization of uncircumcised girls was mentioned by 3 focus groups (12%), as described below:

“Girls ask their parents to be circumcised, because there is a lot of peer pressure. Girls are divided into two groups: those who are circumcised and those who are not.” (Girl, Mieso-Mulu woreda)

Specifically in relation to infibulation, respondents mentioned protection against rape (3 focus groups), preservation of the girl’s virginity and fear of rejection of the girl on her wedding night (only mentioned in interviews).

“We partly practice sunna and partly infibulation. We believe infibulation is better than sunna because it protects girls against rape because the man has to struggle to open the girl. Sunna might be fine for the town, but we live in a remote area where girls run risks when they fetch water.” (Woman, Kebribeya)

Significantly, the *sunna* type of FGM is largely seen as a religious requirement and for a lot of participants (8 focus groups) this seems to be the main reason for practicing it. As was often explained:

“Sunna was practiced by the prophet and we have to follow him.” (Women’s group member, Hargelle)

In the communities that have shifted to *sunna*, infibulation is largely seen as forbidden by Islam. Two key informants, however, mentioned that infibulation is also seen as a religious requirement in some communities that are practicing it.

Internationally Islamic scholars are divided about whether the *sunna* type of FGM is an Islamic requirement and FGM is practiced in some, but not in the majority of Islamic countries. The branch of scholars that believe that FGM is recommended or obligatory, usually do not refer to the Quran but to Hadith, a source of guidance for Muslims which describes *sunna* as the words, practices and approvals of the prophet.

FGM has no health benefits and could have severe consequences. Immediate complications can include severe pain, shock, bleeding, bacterial infection, urine retention, open sores in the genital region and injury to nearby genital tissue. Long-term consequences can include recurrent bladder and urinary tract

infections, cysts, infertility, sexual problems, psychological problems, childbirth complications and newborn deaths.¹⁹

Participants in focus group discussions were often aware of some of the negative consequences of the infibulation type of FGM; pain and problems during intercourse and delivery were often mentioned. However some respondents seemed to have little knowledge about the risks of infibulation.

“We don’t experience any problems because of infibulation, except that it hurts a lot. It doesn’t lead to infections.” (Woman, Kebribeya woreda)

Respondents usually described *sunna* as a small procedure with little or no consequences for girls, and a few respondents compared it to male circumcision or did not define it as FGM.

“FGM is no longer a problem here, two or three years ago we changed to sunna.” (Police Officer)

In three localities it was mentioned that *sunna* is not correctly understood and that it is performed by cutting away the whole clitoris and sometimes also the labia. In two other localities this was mentioned as a problem that used to exist but has been solved.

3.6 Other Harmful Traditional Practices

Nature and prevalence

The EGLDAM survey conducted in 2007 reported the harmful traditional practices (HTPs) described in Table 4 below to be prevalent in the Somali Region.

Table 4: Percentage of respondents who practiced, knows as harmful and promised to stop HTPs in the Somali Region and in Ethiopia

HTP	% who performed in the last 5 years in own family		% who knows the practice as harmful		% who promised not to practice	
	Somali	Ethiopia	Somali	Ethiopia	Somali	Ethiopia
Uvula cutting	51.5	31.6	38.4	78.8	18.3	68.0
Food discriminating women	47.9	20.1	33.5	77.7	25.0	73.5
Milk teeth extraction	47.4	27.5	40.9	81.2	34.7	80.4
Giving fresh butter to a newly born baby	43.9	29.1	40.3	71.5	29.4	66.8
Soiling umbilical cord of a newly-born child	42.9	25.7	42.6	72.7	35.9	71.0
Keeping baby out of the sun	42.1	22.7	40.7	78.6	32.1	73.8
Skin burning	40.2	20.3	44.6	79.2	30.7	73.9
Blood letting	38.8	17.4	49.0	80.0	37.9	76.0
Tonsil scraping	36.1	21.3	52.7	80.8	40.0	75.1
Incision	33.3	16.6	56.7	83.3	44.7	79.4
Massaging abdomen of pregnant women	31.9	23.3	54.4	78.3	41.4	72.8
Tattooing	23.3	16.7	30.8	79.9	23.7	75.4

¹⁹ http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/fgm/health_consequences_fgm/en/index.htm

Source: EGLDAM, 2009. Survey on Harmful Traditional Practices in Ethiopia. Somali Regional Report. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: EGLDAM

The table shows that while these practices are also taking place in other regions in Ethiopia, all were reported to be more prevalent in the Somali Region than in the country as a whole. Knowledge about the harm of the practices and willingness to promise to stop the practices are also lower than the average Ethiopian level. In addition to the above mentioned practices, the EGLDAM study identified rectal ulceration and bleeding the nose as HTPs common in the Somali Region, but not in other parts of Ethiopia.

The survey showed a 42% and 46% decrease in the prevalence of uvula cutting and a decrease of 12% and 20% in the prevalence of milk teeth extraction in the Jijiga and Shinile zones, respectively, since the baseline study, conducted in 1997.

The existence of several of the above HTPs was confirmed during interviews and focus group discussions in Kebribeya, Gode, Hargelle and Elkere *woredas*. However according to a government representative in Elkere these practices are rare in Elkere town and are decreasing in rural areas. An official in Gode also mentioned that traditional healers may delay people from seeking medical treatment:

“Traditional healers sometimes give people assignments that are impossible to fulfil, for example finding a goat with a particular pattern of skin, and which keeps them busy for a long time.” (Government representative, Gode *woreda*)

Causes

Respondents explained that practices like tonsil scraping, rectal ulceration, bleeding the nose, milk teeth extraction and uvula cutting are often carried out by traditional healers in the belief that they prevent or cure medical problems. Shortage of essential drugs in health facilities and the belief that modern medicine has no appropriate response to some medical conditions was reported in the EGLDAM study to contribute to the prevalence of these practices.

3.7 Sexual abuse

Prevalence

Respondents generally reported that rape and other forms of sexual abuse, like unwanted touching, does not take place or is very rare in their community. Out of the 26 focus groups in which the topic of rape was discussed, a large majority of 20 focus groups (77%) reported that rape does not take place in their area while 6 focus groups reported that rape does occur but is rare. Participants explained that rape seldom takes place because it is a very shameful act in Somalian society and it leads to severe consequences for the perpetrator and the perpetrator’s family.

“If rape happens it would cause conflict between the family of the victim and the family of the perpetrator and might lead to bloodshed. The perpetrator has to pay a lot of animals and/or money as compensation.” (Woman, Kebribeya *woreda*)

One key informant also suggested that rape is rare because religion and Somali culture keeps women and men apart. Protection against rape was mentioned by some respondents as a reason for infibulation

of girls (3.5), however when the same respondents were asked if rape takes place in their community they denied its occurrence. Some underreporting by participants might however have occurred due to the sensitivity of the topic. Representatives of formal law enforcement organizations in 5 *woredas* were asked how many rape cases they deal with on a yearly basis and their answers varied between 0-10 rape cases per year, including both girls and adult women.

When asked if they believed there is a possibility that victims of rape will keep quiet about being raped, almost all respondents believed that would not be the case, especially if the girl is a virgin. Respondents often believed that rape occurs more frequently in remote areas and two key informants highlighted that rape is likely to be more prevalent within than outside of marriage.

Rape was more frequently reported to occur in Mieso-Mulu *woreda* than in other sites of the study. Respondents in urban and rural sites in Mieso-Mulu *woreda* described that rape happens when girls are alone in rural areas to look after livestock or go to the toilet, during wedding parties and during clan conflict.²⁰

“The Issa killed some men in our community and we also heard they have raped girls in the mountains, but we don’t know any of these girls...” (Girl, Mieso-Mulu *woreda*).

According to a government representative in Mulu perpetrators who marry the victim are sometimes not punished which makes men think they can get away with rape. Two respondents in Afdem *woreda* described that the punishment for rape in Issa customary law is the same as the punishment for insulting a girl and believed that this contributes to the occurrence of rape.

Impact

In Mieso-Mulu *woreda* it was reported that victims of rape may be forced to marry the perpetrator, while in Afdem *woreda* it was reported that girls might not be forced to marry the perpetrator, but may feel they have no other option because they believe that no other man will marry them.

“When a man has raped a girl he has to marry her if she is a virgin and if she agrees. She is unlikely to find somebody else who wants to marry her and therefore she might accept.” (Community leader, Afdem *woreda*)

“Court cases are stopped because the girl marries the perpetrator. Nobody else is likely to marry her. A few rape victims run away.” (Government representative, Mieso-Mulu *woreda*)

²⁰ A Save the Children UK field worker reported that the population in Mieso-Mulu *woreda* confuses rape with girls voluntarily agreeing to sex, however some respondents in Mieso-Mulu seem to clearly refer to cases in which girls were forced to have sexual intercourse.

3.8 Children affected by or involved in armed conflict

Several areas where this study was conducted are affected by clan conflict or conflict between the Somali and the Oromo or Afar. Respondents in Mieso-Mulu *woreda* reported conflict between the Issa and Hawiye clans; however the situation has been calm for two or three years now. In a rural community in Afdem *woreda* inhabited by the Issa clan, respondents mentioned that a year ago conflict had taken place with the Oromo. In Chereti *woreda*, clashes between the Afgab clan and other clans were reported to occur and in Gode *woreda*, where nine different clans live together, clan conflict was reported to take place outside of Gode town. A representative of Mercy Corps explained that fighting between clans usually starts when they want to use the same pasture, when pastoralists enter an area where crops are growing of another clan and when people use the water wells of another clan when their own wells have dried up. Clan conflict reportedly also takes place when a girl who is promised to a man from a different clan runs away with another man.

Clan conflict had a large impact on some communities where the study was conducted. Respondents reported that houses are burnt down, animals are looted and people are killed which forces children and their families to move, affects their livelihood, disrupts education and makes some children orphans.

“A year ago we were fighting with the Oromo. They stole our animals, burnt our land and we were shooting at each other.” (PTA member, Afdem *woreda*).

In five focus group discussions and three interviews it was mentioned that boys below the age of 18 take part in armed clan and ethnic conflict, while participants in three focus group discussions reported that only boys older than 18 take part in conflict. Girls reportedly do not take part in the fighting. However, they may be affected in other ways such as rape and forced marriage (see section 3.4 and 3.7).

“Boys from the age of 15 are involved in clan conflict. They join as soon as they can carry a gun.” (Government representative, Gode zone)

“Our men from the age of 15 defend us. Boys are considered to be a man at the age of 15.” (Woman, Mieso-Mulu *woreda*)

In Gode zone it was reported that the conflict between the government and the ONLF insurgency movement has a large impact on the population's daily life. No other sites involved in the study reported to have been affected by this conflict, except one community in Hargelle *woreda*. During focus group discussions in that rural community it was explained that the ONLF came to their area two years ago and was chased away after a week, by the local population and the government. All community members were reportedly involved at the time: boys and men from the age of 16 were involved in the fighting, younger boys helped with carrying things and women and girls cooked and treated wounded people.

Concrete evidence of children under the age of 18 joining government forces is hard to acquire, however a few key informants suggested that there have been incidences of children joining the special police force of the government in some parts of the region. Some children may join voluntarily because

there are little other employment opportunities in the region and they are attracted by the salary. Although the government announced criteria for joining the special police force, which includes a minimum age of 18, completion of grade 8 and good health, these may sometimes be difficult to apply in practice, for example because of a lack of adequate birth registration.

“After grade 8 there is nothing to do in my area so boys from the age of 15 join the special police and the district militia. They carry a gun and wear a uniform.” (Respondent, Gode zone)

Recruitment of children under the age of 18 as a member of defence forces for participation in armed conflict is listed in the 2005 Ethiopian Criminal Code as a war crime against civilisation.²¹ According to the Ethiopian government, recruits and conscripts are required to produce documents such as school or medical records testifying to their age.²²

3.9 Vulnerable groups

The previously discussed forms of child abuse have a strong underlying gender component, reflecting the status, roles and power relations of men and women in Somali society. While FGM, early and forced marriage and sexual abuse are only or mainly affecting girls, boys may get engaged in armed conflict and face more severe forms of corporal punishment. Moreover, boys and girls are involved in different forms of work and girls are more often than boys not going to school. Some respondents also described the existence of a general preference for baby boys in the Somali region:

“When a boy is born the father will shoot in the air, when a daughter is born he may not do so”.
(Representative of an NGO, Hargelle)

In a 2006 survey, participants reported intra-household discrimination of girls in the Somali region, including a preference for sons in terms of fertility, male bias in the intra-household allocation of resources like food and favouring sons with access to services such as health care and education. In addition, the study highlighted that the relative vulnerability of females is reflected in higher mortality and lower life expectancy rates for women than men in the Somali Region.²³ In the 2007 EGLDAM survey almost 50% of the respondents reported that food discrimination of women and girls had taken place in their households during the past 5 years (see Table 4).²⁴

During interviews and focus group discussions respondents mentioned orphans, children from poor families and children from minority clans as vulnerable groups. Double orphans are reportedly usually well taken care of by relatives, but it was described that single parents are often struggling to provide

²¹ Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2005. Criminal Code.

²² UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Consideration of report submitted by Ethiopia, Summary record, UN Doc. CRC/C/SR/1164, 22 September 2006.

²³ Devereux, S, 2006. Vulnerable Livelihoods in Somali Region, Ethiopia. Brighton, UK: University of Sussex, Institute of Development Studies.

²⁴ EGLDAM, 2009. Survey on Harmful Traditional Practices in Ethiopia. Somali Regional Report. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: EGLDAM

for the family. In Gode the presence of a few street children was reported and it was mentioned that some children who came to town for work are spending the night in the mosque. Several participants described the existence of a strong support system at family and sub-clan level. Different traditional forms of assistance exist in Somali communities, including loans and gifts of food, cash and livestock, as well as a compulsory contribution in Islam called *zakat*²⁵.



Girls doing the laundry in a river

Respondents described that there are several minority clans living in the Somali Region, including the Midgan clan and several Bantu clans, who are generally looked down upon. They are reportedly often engaged in specialist occupations and living under the protection of a majority clan for whom they provide services. Intermarriage between majority and minority clans was said to be almost non-existent and calling a member of a minority clan by his/her clan name is reportedly a bad insult. In Gode, Chereti and Hargelle *woredas* respondents described that the Rer Barre is a marginalised group that is hardly mixing with other clans. Children of the Rer Barre are reportedly more often not enrolled in school and involved in low status jobs, including (un)loading vehicles, selling water with donkey carts, shoe shining and farm work.

“People can see from my face that I am a Bantu. Here in Gode I am not able to marry a girl from a different clan and people have a negative perception of us. They insult me sometimes by calling me by my clan name and have torn my shirt. I think people need to be made more aware of this problem.” (Boy, Gode woreda)

²⁵ Catley, Andy and Iyasu, Alula, 2010. Moving Up or Moving Out? A Rapid Livelihoods and Conflict Analysis in Mieso-Mulu Woreda, Shinile Zone, Somali Region, Ethiopia. Medford, USA: Feinstein International Center and Mercy Corps.

Respondents generally described that children with a disability are not treated differently from other children in their community. Children with a disability reportedly go to school, unless they are physically or mentally unable to do so. Special facilities or programmes for children with a disability did not seem to be present in the sites where the study was conducted. Very few participants mentioned that bullying of children with a disability occurs. It was described that it is a Somali custom to give people a nick name and that children with a disability are often called after their disability. Respondents saw this generally as a harmless. However, one boy with a visual disability explained that he is not happy with this tradition.

“I have a blind eye and they call me “sunken eye”. I don’t like it when they say this and I fight with them.”
(Boy, Afdem woreda)

3.10 Impact of child protection issues on children’s education

In the past few years, considerable progress has been made in improving access to education in the Somali Region and gross enrolment rates have increased from 33% in 2007/08 to 64% in 2009/10. However, large numbers of children are still out of school and the Somali Region has the second lowest enrolment rates of the country, after the Afar Region.²⁶

In terms of the impact of the different child protection issues described above on children’s education, the study found that ‘child labour’ has the most significant impact on children’s school enrolment, attendance, drop-out and level of achievement. Table 5 shows the reasons given when study respondents were asked why children in their area are not going to school. The reason most often mentioned was that children have to help their parents through contributing labour or income. This was closely followed by the reason that parents are not aware of the value of education and that, specific to girls, they drop out or don’t attend because of being promised for marriage and early marriage. This again contributes to the perception that there is no need to educate girls.

“They say a girl is born for a man.” (Government representative, Mieso-Mulu woreda)

Table 5: Reasons children do not go to school mentioned in focus groups of children, PTAs/ CMCs, women and elders/men

Reasons children do not go to school	Number of focus groups that mentioned reason (n=21)
Work	10
Early marriage of girls	8
Promising of girls for marriage	4
Child birth	1
Lack of understanding of value of education	8

²⁶ Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, 2010. Ethiopia: 2010 MDG Report. Trends and Prospects for meeting MDGs by 2011. Addis Ababa.

Inability to pay for books or uniforms	5
Pastoralists move	4
School is too far	2
Illness	2
Hunger	2
Beating by teachers	2
Safety	1

Most respondents reported that girls who get married usually drop out of school, although there were also reports of some girls continuing with their education after both marriage and delivery. Some participants mentioned that girls who are promised for marriage are often not going to school because they are kept at home or because their family does not see the need for them to go to school.

“Some girls who are promised don’t go to school. The father and/or the husband make them stay at home out of fear that she is raped or meets other boys.” (PTA member, Afdem woreda)

Inability to pay for school uniform, books and stationary was also mentioned several times. In addition, in several areas where the study was conducted children attend ABE only teaching up to grade 3 and have very limited opportunity to continue their education after completion. Only children with relatives in locations with formal schools (and who can afford to host them) have the opportunity to leave their area to continue their education.

Note that although highly prevalent in the study schools and communities, as described in section 3.2 above, corporal punishment was only mentioned by two groups as a specific reason for children not going to school.

“In our Quranic school girls are sometimes blindfolded and beaten. It crosses our mind to stop going and older children fight with their parents about it.” (Girl, Gode woreda).

Children generally said that they feel safe walking to school and inside the school while parents generally said that they do not worry about the safety of their children when they go to school. Only in one focus group discussion in Gode town, were fears about safety and exposure to bad influences mentioned as reasons for girls not to go to school.

The other most prevalent child protection issues - FGM and other harmful traditional practices – were not mentioned as reasons for non-enrolment, non-attendance or drop out of school. Although it is possible to see how these practices may be addressed through education, it is less easy to judge whether and how these practices, which mainly affect girls, may be part of the reason for girls’ relatively low enrolment and attendance at school. Generally, it may be argued that societal norms and attitudes towards girls, which are embodied in and illustrated by traditional practices such as FGM, also underlie the second highest response given as to why children don’t go to school i.e. that there is a lack of understanding or appreciation of the value of education, particularly for girls.

However, attitudes to girls' education are changing and many participants described that large progress has been made during the past few years in increasing school enrolment of girls due to various activities, including awareness raising, establishment of girls advisory committees and weekend classes for girls. The World Food Programme (WFP) is running feeding programmes in schools and provides oil on a monthly basis to girls who are attending school regularly. This reportedly has led to higher enrolment rates of girls than boys in some schools.

"Everyone is focussing on girls nowadays and it has paid off. There is now equal enrolment of girls and boys in our town". (Women's group member, Hargelle woreda)



Construction of a new school in Hargelle woreda

4. Child protection mechanisms

4.1 Coexisting law enforcement systems

There are three different legal systems operating in the Somali Region: regular formal law, Sharia law and customary Somali law. The Ethiopian Federal Constitution allows the resolution of disputes relating to personal and family issues through religious or customary laws if all parties agree.

Sharia law

The primary sources of Sharia law are the Quran and the Hadith (acts, sayings and approvals of the prophet). In addition, there are two agreed-upon derived sources of Sharia law: scholarly consensus (*ijma*) and legal analogy (*qiyas*). Sharia law covers many aspects of life and classical Sharia manuals are

often divided into four parts: laws relating to personal acts of worship, laws relating to commercial dealings, laws relating to marriage and divorce, and penal laws. Sharia law classifies human actions into five categories: obligatory, recommended, permitted, disliked or forbidden.²⁷ There are different interpretations of Sharia law among different schools of thought, scholars, cultures and locations.²⁸ Proclamation No. 188/199 formally established Sharia courts at the Ethiopian federal level. All of the State Councils have also given official recognition to Sharia Courts within their respective jurisdictions. Sharia courts only apply Sharia law and are required to follow the procedural rules of ordinary courts and receive their budgets from the state. Parties must voluntarily submit to the jurisdiction of these courts, or the dispute should be redirected to the regular courts. Proclamation No. 188/199 states that Federal Courts of Sharia have common jurisdiction over questions regarding marriage, divorce, maintenance, guardianship of minors and family relationships. In addition, the proclamation allows Federal Courts of Sharia to deal with *Wakf, Hiba* (gift) and succession of wills, provided that the endower or donor is a Muslim or the deceased was a Muslim at the time of his death.²⁹

Customary Somali law

Traditionally, Somali society is guided by *Xeer* (pronounced as “heir”), a set of customary rules, regulations and values guarded and applied by elders. *Xeer* is used to solve conflicts within a clan, and can also represent agreed rules between sub-clans that govern their relations. However, not all sub-clans have *Xeer* with one another.³⁰ *Xeer* is orally transmitted, based on old customary norms and influenced by Sharia law. Respondents in the various sites of the study, belonging to different sub-clans, reported some variations in the content and application system of *Xeer*.

Sub-clans are headed by one or several leaders, called *Ugas*, who have a council of elders under them that can also function independently from the *Ugas*. The *Ugas* usually holds this position by inheritance but, as respondents of the Issa clan explained, could also be elected. The *Ugas* and the council of elders have an important and influential role within their sub-clans. The *Ugas* of the Griire sub-clan in Elkere explained his role as follows:

“The Ugas is the head of the society. People report cases to me and I call the elders together. I also engage in resolution of clan conflict and maintain relations with the government. The government contacts me if they like me to convince my society and they ask me for permission if they want to intervene with the army in my area.” (Ugas, Elkere woreda)

At the lowest community level, referred to as the *diya* (blood compensation) paying group, *Xeer* is implemented by a group of elders who form a so called *Guurti*. New elders are selected by existing elders based on their wisdom and sense of responsibility. Women are excluded from participation in

²⁷ http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/beliefs/sharia_1.shtml

²⁸ [Http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sharia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sharia)

²⁹ Alemu Aneme, Girmachew, 2010. Introduction to the Ethiopian Legal System and Legal Research.

<Http://www.nyulawglobal.org/globallex/Ethiopia.htm>

³⁰ CHF International, 2006. Grassroots Conflict Assessment of the Somali Region.

Http://www.chfhq.org/files/3707_file_Somali_Region_Assessment_8.4.06.pdf

debate, negotiation and decision making. Respondents explained that if families within a community are not able to solve a conflict they ask elders to intervene. If elders at the *diya* paying group level do not succeed in solving a case, the case is reportedly passed on to a higher level group of elders and ultimately to the *Ugas*.

According to the study respondents every problem has its own customary solution. When it comes to child protection *Xeer* reportedly deals with physical, sexual and verbal abuse of children. Punishments usually include payment of livestock or money as compensation, but may also include payment of medical costs.

“We divide men, women and children into different vulnerable categories and anyone who hurts them pays 15 camels. The punishment for murder is 100 camels.” (Elder, Mieso-Mulu woreda)

“When a man makes a girl cry elders will deal with it. We say “girls cry for a reason”, they are either in love or hurt. Elders will investigate the reason and if they find out that the girl is in love the man has to marry her. If the girl is hurt, whether it is physical, sexual or verbal, the man has to pay 15 camels.” (Community leader, Afdem woreda)

If a member of a *diya* paying group kills or hurts a member of another *diya* paying group the compensation payment is usually divided among the members of the perpetrator’s *diya* paying group. Half of the compensation payment is received by the victim’s family and the other half goes to the clan of the victim. Compensation is usually paid over a considerable amount of time in instalments and could be reduced if the other clan offends against the debtor clan.³¹ Respondents described that if one of the parties does not agree with the decision made by the elders the possibility of appeal exists.

Use of regular formal, Sharia and customary law

In most areas, respondents described that mainly customary law is used for solving disputes, including child protection cases. Regular formal law is often only used as a backup, when elders are not able to solve the case or when one of the parties does not accept resolution through customary law. Especially among the Issa community there is a strong reliance on customary law. However, it appears that customary law is losing influence, especially in urban areas, where people are making more and more use of regular formal and Sharia law.

“We prefer customary law because it is very detailed and we believe in the laws of our forefathers”. (Community leader, Afdem woreda)

“We are caught in the middle. We feel that we can’t go back to customary law, but at the same time the regular formal law is not working well.” (PTA member, Mieso-Mulu woreda)

This is confirmed by the findings of a 2006 survey which found an urban – rural divide in the way that conflicts are dealt with in Somali communities. In this study more than 80% of the participants from

³¹ Devereux, S, 2006. Vulnerable Livelihoods in Somali Region, Ethiopia. Brighton, UK: University of Sussex, Institute of Development Studies.

rural areas preferred conflict resolution by elders, while in the urban centres of Jijiga and Gode more than half of the participants mentioned the police as the primary institution of conflict resolution.³²

Respondents described that when the choice between Sharia and regular formal law is available, Sharia law is usually preferred because it is in line with their religion and seen as stricter. Cases are reportedly sometimes also dealt with by more than one law enforcement system.

Regular formal law and Sharia law enforcement authorities described having mixed feelings about customary law. They felt that customary law helps to keep order, but also pointed out contradictions between the laws. Religious leaders in Hargelle, for example, explained that issues like widow inheritance, infibulation, forced marriage and payment of a bride price are permitted in customary law, but are not allowed in Sharia law.

“We think customary law is both positive and negative. We have few police officers and militias in this woreda and we are not able to reach the whole area. Customary law, however, opposes formal law sometimes and can stand in our way.” (Police officer)

In Mulu town in Mieso-Mulu *woreda* frustration was expressed by government representatives about elders putting pressure on the family of rape victims and witnesses of rape cases to withdraw from court cases.

“We dealt with rape cases which were clinically proven but were stopped because elders forced the father to drop the case and marry his daughter to the perpetrator. It also happens that witnesses are threatened by elders.” (Government representative, Mieso-Mulu *woreda*)

On the other hand, elders and the police in Elkere town described how they work together:

“When we receive a case we decide whether we will deal with it ourselves or whether we will refer the case to the police. We work with the police and we feel that we need the police because they can investigate cases, use force and put people in jail.” (Elder, Elkere *woreda*)

4.2 Reporting systems

The first step in addressing child protection cases is the reporting of abuse disclosed by children or suspicions of child abuse to relevant individuals and/or organizations that have the capacity to adequately follow up.

When children were asked who they would tell if someone would hurt them they usually mentioned their parents and, if it happened in the school environment, their teachers. They described that their parents would first talk to the parents of the perpetrator and if they did not succeed in solving the case their parents would go to elders, and in some instances, to the police.

³² Devereux, S, 2006. Vulnerable Livelihoods in Somali Region, Ethiopia. Brighton, UK: University of Sussex, Institute of Development Studies.

Representatives of the police, who were interviewed in five sites, reported receiving very few reports of child protection cases; this they attributed to the preference for the use of customary law as a first resort.

“They prefer customary law and hardly report cases to us, however if we have a suspicion we investigate.” (Police officer)

Islamic leaders, Women’s Affairs Offices and women’s associations described receiving some reports of child protection cases which they either mediate and/or refer to regular formal law enforcement bodies or the Sharia court. A representative of UNICEF reported that UNICEF has carried out a pilot project during which social welfare workers were trained. They are currently employed in 12 *woredas* of the Somali Region and receive and deal with reports of children’s and women’s issues.

In December 2010, Save the Children UK organized seminars on child protection for PTAs, local government officials, the police, elders, women and other key stakeholders from two sites in Mieso-Mulu *woreda*. During the seminars, child protection committees were established that will follow up reports of child abuse. In one of the sites children were informed that they can report to the child protection committee by putting a note in a box at the school. Participants of the seminars that were interviewed for this study were positive about the newly formed committees, but felt that continued support and supervision would be essential.

It was reported that formal schools and a few ABEs have child rights clubs and/or girls’ advisory clubs. However, the capacity of these clubs to play a role in receiving and following up reports of child protection issues seems currently very limited.

In general, children in the study sites have very little access to child-friendly, nearby and confidential reporting mechanisms. They usually only have the option to report to family members, teachers or other community members, and may not be sure that those that they confide in will not discuss the issues with others or take action without their consent, unless they are at immediate risk. Particularly regarding child protection issues or cases involving family members of the child, children require confidential assistance.

4.3 Case resolution

Representatives of the police interviewed during the study described dealing with only a few cases involving children, the majority of which involves cases of rape. Sharia courts reportedly deal with cases of forced marriage, neglect, child custody and child support. Respondents in a few sites also mentioned that Sharia courts deal with physical abuse, rape and FGM. Elders reported dealing with a small number of child protection cases including physical, verbal and sexual abuse of children, but reported that the majority of the cases they deal with involves adults. Women’s Affairs offices and women’s associations mentioned mainly dealing with cases of rape, early and forced marriage and FGM. PTAs/CMCs reported following up absenteeism from school and talking to parents of children who are out of school. Although they are often faced with child protection issues like child labour, early marriage and discrimination of girls, they generally have little involvement in resolving child protection cases.

A representative of UNICEF reported that UNICEF is carrying out a 'Justice for Children' programme which included the training of justice professionals of 13 *woredas* in the Somali Region on Justice for Children and gender-based violence. In addition, child protection units at police stations and child-friendly benches were established in Jijiga, Gode and Degehabur and are planned to be established in other *woredas* as well. UNICEF also plans to carry out a Community Based Diversion programme involving the establishment of community based structures for mediating in child protection cases in Jijiga, Gode and Degehabur. A training of trainers programme on child and women rights in conflict situations has furthermore been provided to the special police force.

Rape

According to the Ethiopian Criminal Code, rape of a minor is a crime punishable with three years up to lifelong imprisonment, depending on the circumstances. Regular law enforcement representatives in five sites reported dealing with between 0-10 rape cases per year, including both children and adults. In Mieso-Mulu *woreda* government representatives described that elders have sometimes blocked court cases of rape (see also 4.1.). In Mieso-Mulu *woreda*, there were reports that perpetrators of rape who marry the victim are often not punished and that this may make men think they can get away with rape.

Although reportedly dealing with very few rape cases, elders apply severe punishments for rape: payment of 15 camels was often mentioned. Respondents of an Issa community in Afdem *woreda* described that the punishment for rape in their customary law is the same as the punishment for insulting a girl and believed that this (relatively minor punishment) contributes to the occurrence of rape.

"Since the punishment is the same, a man who insulted a girl may think "why not rape her". (Boy, Afdem woreda)

Early and forced marriage

Marrying a minor is criminalized in the Ethiopian Criminal Code and the right to marry with free and informed consent is reflected in the Revised Family Code and the Ethiopian Constitution. However, regular formal law enforcement bodies seem to rarely deal with cases of early or forced marriage. Only the police in Elkere *woreda* reported dealing with cases of early marriage, which they felt had contributed to reducing the practice.

"Some victims of early marriage came to us. We arrested the parents and they were transferred to the district court who further dealt with it. Early marriage has decreased in our area because further awareness has been raised and people have seen that the police take action". (Police officer, Elkere woreda)

According to Sharia law, girls and boys are considered to be adults by the age of 15 and respondents described that they can therefore get married from that age onwards. Religious leaders in Chereti *woreda* explained that Sharia law mentions that girls are ready to live with a man after they have had their first menstruation, but that Sharia law also prescribes that girls should always decide for themselves when they are ready to get married. Both Islamic leaders and representatives of Sharia courts reported dealing with cases of forced marriage. Women's Affairs Offices in Hargelle and Gode

also stated that they have received reports of women who are forced to marry a man and that they have intervened in those cases, either by talking to the man or family members of the girl or by reporting the case to law enforcement bodies.

“A woman from a surrounding kebele came to us because she ran away with a man while she was promised to another man. Her family was forcing her to marry the man she was promised to. We took the case to the police and the Sharia court decided that the woman should be allowed to marry the man of her choice.” (Women Affairs representative, Hargelle woreda)

Representatives of Islamic Relief mentioned that a PTA in Afder zone convinced parents to delay an early marriage. In addition, PTA members in Hargelle woreda suggested that they have been successful in bringing married girls back to school.

“We convinced married girls to go back to school, including my own daughter of 18 who has a baby. After I received a training of Islamic Relief I told her about the importance of education and she decided to go back to school.” (PTA member, Hargelle woreda).

FGM

According to the Ethiopian Criminal Code of 2005 infibulation is punishable with 3-5 years of imprisonment and in the case of injury to body and health with 5-10 years of imprisonment. Other forms of FGM are punishable with imprisonment of not less than 3 months or a fine of not less than 500 Birr. In Mieso-Mulu, Kebribeya, Gode, Hargelle, Elkere and Chereti woredas respondents described that the police or courts have dealt with a one case or a few cases of FGM. In Kebribeya it was also mentioned that the Sharia court has dealt with cases of FGM and practitioners of infibulation were reportedly punished by paying 75 camels and three months of imprisonment. Cases were often reported to law enforcement bodies by the Women’s Affairs office or the women’s association. Law enforcement and other government bodies apparently prefer to warn circumcisers first before taking legal action and to focus on the infibulation type of FGM.

“We prefer people to understand first before taking action against FGM. We are raising awareness and advise people to circumcise in the sunna way.” (Police Officer)

“Yesterday two women were arrested because they practiced infibulation. Although they had promised to stop, they continued with the practice. They are kept in the Kebele compound but will be released today. Next time we will go to court.” (Head of Women’s Affairs)

Representatives of a women’s association in one of the study sites reported that they have dealt with various cases involving women and children but have received limited cooperation from law enforcement bodies.

“We reported 10 cases to the court, but they have all been dismissed. They say we have gone crazy and that we are destroying families and want to torture men. A woman here was rejected by a man on her wedding night when he found out that she was not infibulated. We reported it to the police, but the case was dropped by the police and the court. We took the case to the regional level and a head of the police

and a head of the court were replaced. The case has been dealt with by the Sharia court, but the case is still pending in the regular court.” (Women’s Association representative)

Other harmful traditional practices

Other harmful traditional practices, including milk teeth extraction, massaging the abdomen of pregnant women, soiling the umbilical cord, cutting the uvula of a child, keeping a newly born baby out of the sun and feeding it butter are also criminalized by the Ethiopian Criminal Code. Resolution of cases involving these types of HTPs was not identified during this study.

Corporal punishment

The Ethiopian law prohibits corporal punishment in schools, however allows corporal punishment by parents or guardians. In Kebribeya, parents who repeatedly beat their children are reportedly punished by the police with two days of imprisonment and a fine. Religious leaders in Hargelle explained that corporal punishment is not allowed in the Islamic religion and that they advise and caution parents who are beating their children. Resolution of cases of corporal punishment in schools was not reported in this study.

4.4 Awareness raising and other child protection interventions

In many *woredas*, awareness raising on various child protection issues is reportedly conducted by teams of representatives from different government offices, including the Education, Women’s Affairs and Health offices and the police, and often also involves other stakeholders such as women’s groups, community leaders, Islamic leaders and physicians.

FGM

FGM was reported to be the child protection issue receiving the most attention. The Women Affairs Offices in all *woredas* included in the study reported working on FGM. In addition, UNICEF and several NGOs are working on FGM in the Somali Region, including the International Rescue Committee (IRC) (Kebribeya *woreda*), Pastoralist Concern (Afer and Liban zone), SOS Children’s Village (Gode town) and the Ogaden Welfare Development and Association (OWDA) (Gode zone).

It was often described that the involvement of Islamic leaders in awareness raising is key to achieving behavioural change and in many sites of the study they were engaged in awareness raising on FGM, for example, during services in the mosque. Other activities that were described as being successful in addressing FGM included community conversations, providing model awards to families and girls who have abandoned FGM and assisting practitioners of FGM to acquire alternative means of income. The SOS Children’s Village in Gode organizes seminars on FGM for different groups, including Islamic leaders, women, FGM practitioners, religious leaders, youth and government officials. Subsequently, at a conference in December 2010 for all stakeholders, a resolution on FGM was passed stating that at least the infibulation type of FGM should stop, that government bodies will enact the law and will be supported by administrative bodies; and that religious leaders will curse those who practice infibulation and bless those who do not practice it.

The activities on FGM seem to focus mainly on eliminating infibulation and often the advice is given to practice *sunna* instead.

"We tell people to circumcise girls in the sunna way because Islam doesn't allow infibulation of girls. Sunna is however obligatory because the prophet performed it." (Religious leaders)

The widespread belief that the *sunna* form of FGM is a religious requirement and, to a lesser extent, the deep rooted tradition of FGM, makes total elimination of FGM a difficult topic. A few representatives of NGOs and government organizations expressed that they would prefer total elimination of FGM but felt that it is a bridge too far at this moment.

"If we say all or none, we will not reach anybody. I believe we have to maximize our input and that we need to be flexible. We can convince much more people to shift from infibulation to sunna than to stop altogether." (Representative of NGO, Gode woreda).

"Shifting to sunna is a large step forward; the second step might follow later." (Government Representative, Gode woreda).

The Ethiopian Muslim Development Agency of the Ethiopian Islamic Supreme Council, in cooperation with Norwegian Church Aid, has organized a national conference and regional conferences for Islamic leaders on the topic of FGM in 2009 and 2010. During the conferences, Islamic leaders expressed that the *sunna* type of FGM is desirable according to Islamic religion; however they were concerned about infibulation being practiced in the name of *sunna*. Because of this, they felt that advocating for total elimination of FGM might be justified, but that further research was needed on this issue. Norwegian Church Aid plans to carry out this research and to continue working with Islamic leaders on FGM.³³

Early and forced marriage

Several government organizations, women's associations and UNICEF raise awareness on early and/or forced marriage. In a rural community in Mieso-Mulu woreda, the kebele leader reported that he has set a rule in his community that girls can only get married after they have finalized their education. Islamic leaders in Hargelle also said that they are actively working on the topic:

"We raise awareness on several issues, including early and forced marriage, during visits to rural areas and in mosques. We work in a team with government organizations and NGOs. The acceptable age of marriage is 15 according to Sharia law but we advise 18 because then the girl is fully matured." (Islamic leaders, Hargelle woreda)

Islamic leaders in Chereti and the Women's Affairs Office in Hargelle also advocate for the abolishment of the bride price paid to the family of the girl. Elders in a rural community in Mieso-Mulu woreda have recently decided to lower the bride price in their community after long discussions; the main reason for doing so was that marriage was unaffordable for many young men.

³³ Information provided by Kidist Belayneh, HIV and AIDS, and HTP/FGM Programme Coordinator, Norwegian Church Aid.

Other harmful traditional practices

Other types of harmful traditional practices, like uvula cutting, milk teeth extraction, rectal ulceration and skin burning receive less attention than FGM and early and forced marriage. Representatives from the Women's Affairs Offices in Kebribeya and Hartisheik reportedly raise awareness on these types of HTPs and the Women's Affairs Office in Gode is planning to do so. The EGLDAM study also mentioned that interventions on these forms of HTPs are minimal except for health education given by health workers.³⁴

Corporal punishment

Awareness raising on corporal punishment appears to take place to a limited extent. In Kebribeya the use of corporal punishment was noticeably less than in other sites and respondents reported that awareness raising by local government organizations, Islamic leaders and UNICEF had taken place. In Gode, the BOLSA has raised awareness on beating and in Hargelle, religious leaders have raised awareness of corporal punishment.

The BRIDGES project has trained 561 PTA/CMC members in child protection concepts and supports PTAs/CMCs in establishing child protection systems in schools. A few of the PTAs/CMCs in the study areas reported that they have agreed on rules for disciplining children (including alternatives to corporal punishment), but most schools still seem to lack clear rules. In Hargelle, some formal schools and ABEs reportedly have disciplinary committees which consist of teachers and sometimes students.

"We decided as a CMC that teachers should only advise children and if they don't listen they report to their parents and leave the punishment up to them." (CMC member, Kebribeya woreda)

Child labour

During the past few years, school enrolment in the Somali region has increased due to efforts of the Ethiopian government, NGOs and UN organizations, including the establishment of new schools, awareness raising on the value of education and school feeding programmes. Special attention has been given to the enrolment of girls by providing incentives to girls, the establishment of girls' advisory committees and weekend classes for girls. Islamic Relief has employed female teachers for a few months in rural areas with a lack of female teachers to promote education for girls, provide girls with advice and serve as a role model.

Many ABE centres have been established relatively recently, with the aim of providing education to children who are not able to attend formal education in a manner compatible with their lifestyle. The mid-term review of the BRIDGES project however described that ABE centres are often not working as intended. Although they have flexible operating hours, few facilitators move with the students and

³⁴ EGLDAM, 2009. Survey on Harmful Traditional Practices in Ethiopia. Somali Regional Report. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: EGLDAM.

employ alternative vacation times. When ABE centres are upgraded to formal schools they often lose the flexibility that they need to be able to respond to the seasonal workload and lifestyle of the children and their families.³⁵

Resistance

Some respondents have encountered resistance in addressing child protection issues in their community. As participants of a seminar on child protection organized by Save the Children UK described:

“If we tell others about these issues they insult us. They say “my child is my business”. It forces us to keep quiet and it is a difficult situation for us. We need to increase the number of people who are aware of these issues, now we are too few in number. We believe that more seminars should be held in our community and we believe these seminars should be organized by outsiders because they will not listen to us.” (PTA member, Mieso-Mulu woreda)

A senior member of the women’s association in one of the study sites has received personal threats due to her work on child protection and women’s issues.

“People told my husband that I have to stop with my activities otherwise I might get killed. My whole clan became involved. I am however not going to stop as long as these practices continue.” (Women’s association member)

4.5. Overview of positive attitudes, practices and mechanisms

The study found various positive attitudes, practices and mechanisms in Somali communities that help to protect children from different forms of abuse and that could potentially be built on, supported or expanded as a starting point in future child protection interventions. Section 5.2 provides recommendations which are partly based on the identified positive practices, attitudes and mechanisms for future child protection programming in the region, particularly within the education sector.

Regarding perceptions of and attitudes towards children and childhood generally, Save the Children UK has collected various Somali proverbs and expressions and these are organized, together with others collected during this study, in Annex 2. These proverbs and expressions offer positive and negative reflections of how children traditionally are regarded in Somali society. It is important to note that, as in any culture, proverbs do not necessarily capture the reality, nor do they show how traditional attitudes and perceptions are changing. However, they could be used as a starting point to stimulate discussion in communities around attitudes to children and child protection.

Examples of positive beliefs, practices and mechanisms related to the various child protection issues in the region are summarized below, without aiming to be exhaustive.

³⁵ Napier, A., Bekele, G., 2010. BRIDGES, piloting the delivery of quality education services in the developing regional states of Ethiopia. Mid term review report to Save the Children UK, Mercy Corps and Islamic Relief. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Tufts University Feinstein International Center

Child labour

- Government commitment to increasing school enrolment.
- Large progress in school enrolment due to various activities like establishment of new schools, awareness raising, school feeding programmes and special activities focussed on increasing the enrolment of girls.
- Flexible education in some schools and communities that accommodates the lifestyle of children, like moving of facilitators with communities, shifts in watching livestock and evening classes.

Corporal punishment

- There is evidence that awareness raising can lead to a reduction in corporal punishment (Kebribeya).
- Corporal punishment is prohibited in Islamic law and some religious leaders advise and caution parents who beat their children.
- A few schools have clear disciplinary rules and/or disciplinary committees.

Early and forced marriage

- Government organizations, women's associations, Islamic leaders, NGOs and UNICEF raise awareness on early and/or forced marriage.
- Islamic law does not allow forced marriage.
- Even though early marriage is permitted in Islamic law some religious leaders are advocating for no marriage for girls below the age of 18.
- There are examples of Islamic leaders, Women's Affairs offices and women's associations dealing with cases of early and/or forced marriage.
- Police in Elkere dealt with cases of early marriage, reportedly resulting in a reduction in the practice.
- There is an example of a PTA succeeding in bringing married girls back to school and an example of a PTA which convinced parents to delay marriage.
- There is an example of a kebele leader who has set a rule in his community to prevent marriage before girls have completed school.
- Decreasing practice of promising for marriage ('nikah').
- Some religious leaders are advocating that payment of a bride price contradicts Islamic law.
- Some Islamic leaders and government offices are advocating for abolishment of the bride price and there is an example of elders deciding to lower the bride price in their community.

FGM

- Awareness raising and other activities targeting FGM by government organizations, UNICEF and NGOs like IRC, Pastoralist Concern, OWDA and SOS Children's Village.
- The police, Women's Affairs offices, women's associations and Islamic leaders deal with cases of FGM, although mainly involving infibulation.
- The shift from infibulation to the *sunna* form of FGM, although opinions are divided on whether this is a positive development.

- Islamic religion does not allow infibulation.
- Support of religious leaders has been instrumental in banning the infibulation type of FGM.
- Organised discussions are being held at the national level with Islamic leaders on FGM by the Islamic Supreme Council in cooperation with Norwegian Church Aid.

Sexual abuse

- The police, Women's Affairs offices, women's associations, elders and religious leaders are dealing with rape cases.
- Sexual abuse is regarded as a very shameful act in Somali culture and is severely punished under Somali customary law.

Children affected by or involved in armed conflict

- UNICEF's training of trainers programme on child and women's rights in conflict situations for the special police force.

Vulnerable groups

- Existence of strong traditional support networks for OVCs in communities.
- Enrolment of girls has significantly increased due to activities like awareness raising, establishment of girls advisory committees, weekend classes for girls and provision of oil on a monthly basis to girls who attend school regularly (as part of school feeding programmes).
- Temporary employment of female teachers in areas with a lack of female teachers by Islamic Relief.
- Islamic law does not allow discrimination.
- Attention for children from minority clans from Mercy Corps.

Child protection mechanisms

- Somali customary law is instrumental in maintaining order, but contradicts regular formal law, Islamic law and international child rights standards on some child protection issues.
- Physical, sexual and verbal abuse are crimes according to Somali customary law.
- Example of the police and elders working in close cooperation in Elkere.
- UNICEF's Justice for Children programme which established child friendly benches and child protection units in three *woredas* and build the capacity of justice professionals in 13 *woredas*.
- UNICEF's plans for the establishment of community based structures for mediating in child protection cases in three *woredas*.
- Presence of Social Welfare Officers in 12 *woredas* dealing with child protection cases.
- Establishment of child protection committees in two sites in Mieso-Mulu *woreda* by Save the Children UK.
- Training of PTA/CMC members in child protection concepts by the BRIDGES project.

General

- Committed organizations and individuals exist in the region that are working to change attitudes, promote positive practices and encourage the use of child protection mechanisms.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

The children, PTAs/CMCs, community members, religious leaders, medical professionals as well as representatives of local government organizations, NGOs and the UN that participated in the study reported that children in the Somali Region are exposed to various forms of abuse, reflecting the general situation in Ethiopia in some areas, while being specific to the Somali region in others. Parents and teachers often use corporal punishment to discipline children, mainly in the form of beating by hand or with a stick. The Somali Region has the highest prevalence rates of FGM in the country, with FGM being almost universal. However in recent years a large shift has taken place from the infibulation type of FGM to the so called *sunna* type of FGM. Other harmful traditional practices, like uvula cutting, skin burning and milk teeth extraction also have higher prevalent rates in the Somali Region than in the country as a whole. Although early marriage is less common than in some other parts of Ethiopia, it was reported that children still frequently marry below the age of 18 and some children are forced into marriage. School enrolment rates have improved significantly during the past years, however are still among the lowest of the country. Child labour was often given as a reason why children are not going to school. Conflict has a large impact on children in some sites of the study by affecting livelihood of families, forcing children and their families to move, disrupting education and leaving some children as orphans. Boys from the age of 15 were furthermore sometimes reported to take part in armed conflict. Sexual abuse and abduction were in general reported not to occur or to be rare.

The different forms of abuse have a strong underlying gender dimension and reflect the different roles of women and men. Besides discrimination on the basis of gender, children from minority clans were also reported to be looked down upon and marginalized.

There is a strong reliance on traditional ways of solving child protection issues within the Somali Region. However, the use of regular formal law and Sharia law is increasing, especially in urban areas. Customary Somali law is contradicting regular formal law and Sharia law on various child protection issues and does not allow the participation of women in decision making, although it is generally believed to play a large role in maintaining order. It was reported that elders and law enforcement officials are sometimes not cooperating when it comes to solving child protection cases.

Children in the Somali Region have little access to confidential, child-friendly and nearby reporting mechanisms, and often only have the option to discuss child abuse issues with family members, teachers or other community members. Regular formal law enforcement bodies receive relatively few reports of child abuse and deal with few child protection cases (mainly involving rape). Sharia courts reportedly mainly deal with neglect, child custody, child support and forced marriage. Women's Affairs Offices and women associations receive some reports of FGM, early and forced marriage and rape and mediate and/or refer cases to the police or the Sharia court. Elders reportedly deal with a limited number of cases related to verbal, physical and sexual abuse.

Besides UNICEF's activities in the area of 'justice for children', interventions targeting child protection issues in the Somali Region seem to mainly focus on FGM, followed by early and forced marriage, while

activities in other areas are limited. Religious leaders appear to have played a key role in realising behavioural change with regard to FGM and also other child protection issues. Although the *sunna* type of FGM is largely seen as a religious requirement and Sharia law allows early marriage, it was explained that Islamic religion forbids infibulation, corporal punishment, forced marriage and discrimination and therefore provides a good basis for addressing these issues.

5.2 Recommendations

The findings of the study lead to the following recommendations for future projects that aim to develop child protection mechanisms in schools and communities in the Somali Region:

General approach

- Link child protection to wider development issues, at least initially. Education is a good entry point for establishing trust and addressing child protection issues. Respondents often mentioned that child protection issues are not among their priority concerns, especially in remote areas suffering from drought. As a woman of a pastoralist community in Kebribeya said: *“Why are you asking us about how we discipline our children? Our problems are famine, drought and lack of health care”*.
- In order to create a high impact it is recommended to implement a programme involving deep discussions over an extended period of time in a small number of sites. Although quite a lot of the study respondents seem to have been exposed to awareness raising activities, behavioural change is often yet to take place. Respondents do not seem deeply convinced and there are several factors withholding them from stopping certain practices. The programme could serve as a pilot from which lessons learned are drawn to be applied in other communities in the Somali region. In addition, the results will make visible what is achievable to other communities, government representatives and other stakeholders.
- Use a dialogue centred approach involving all stakeholders, including elders, religious leaders, women, children and local government representatives. Enable ongoing discussions, information exchange, analysis of different views, and critical reflection and decision-making by the community about what is in the best interests of their children. Allow the process to be just as important as the activities to be carried out.
- Identify together with stakeholders solutions for addressing child protection issues in their community and facilitate the implementation of these solutions.
- Build upon existing child protection concepts in Somali culture and Islamic religion. For example, Islamic religion does not allow infibulation, forced marriage, corporal punishment and discrimination and according to customary Somali law physical abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse are offenses.
- Build on and strengthen existing initiatives and mechanisms of government organisations, NGOs, religious leaders, women’s associations and others to address child protection issues.
- Organise experience sharing between key stakeholders from localities where social change has already taken place and key stakeholders from similar localities that are in the process of changing.

Work at community level

- Consider using community conversations as a tool to address child protection issues.
- Look together with communities for opportunities to decrease the workload on children, for example by creating water points near the school or organizing shifts in looking after livestock.
- Hold workshops with clan leaders to explore the linkages between Somali customary law and child rights and protection and engage clan leaders in awareness raising on child protection issues.
- Work with elders on decreasing the bride price, widow/widower inheritance and the practice of promising ('nikah') of girls and boys.
- Develop child protection monitoring and reporting mechanisms together with communities, for example through the establishment of community child protection committees. These committees need to be linked to formal child protection mechanisms and to be provided with follow up support for an extended period of time to be effective.
- Facilitate linkages and cooperation between elders and government offices, the police, religious leaders, Sharia court, health facilities and government offices, for example through the establishment of a child protection committee.
- Engage health professionals in awareness raising on harmful traditional practices that are believed to have health benefits and address the perception that modern medicine is incapable of addressing the problems.
- Investigate the possibility of culturally appropriate ways for children to share their experiences and views on child protection issues, for example through songs, storytelling or drawings.
- Support groups and individuals in the community who are addressing child protection issues but receive a lot of resistance.
- Provide children and their parents with role models of children that continued education and improved their livelihood, girls who did not undergo FGM, men who married uncircumcised girls and parents who do not use corporal punishment.
- Pay special attention to inclusion of children from minority clans and address discriminatory practices.

Work at school level

- Continue awareness raising on the value of education and creating access to education for children who are currently not able to go to school.
- Build the capacity of PTAs/CMCs to mediate in child protection issues linked to school enrolment and drop out, like child labour, promising and early marriage and discrimination of girls.
- Hold practical workshops with PTAs/CMCs in which they develop alternative positive forms of discipline and disciplinary rules for the school. Enable PTAs/CMCs to widely inform parents and

children about the disciplinary rules, the rationale behind them, and how to complain about breaches of the rules.

- Facilitate linkages and cooperation between PTAs/CMCs and local government offices, the police, elders and religious leaders, for example through the creation of a child protection committee.
- Establish and strengthen children's clubs in schools and link them to skilled facilitators within the community (e.g. trained PTA/CMC members, teachers, child protection committee members).
- Establish a child-friendly mechanism at schools for reporting abuse and providing children with appropriate support.

Engaging with government

- Strengthen and participate in existing awareness raising activities of government organisations on child protection issues.
- Link to and build on activities of UNICEF with regards to 'justice for children', including the establishment of social welfare workers, child friendly benches, child protection units in police stations and capacity building of justice professionals.
- Advocate to and work with government to ensure that ABE centres are accommodating the lifestyles of children and their families. In addition, advocate for formal schools and upgraded ABE centres in rural areas to be flexible and responsive to the lifestyles of children and their families while meeting the standards of the formal curriculum.
- Advocate to and work with government to create opportunities for children to continue education after finalising education at an ABE centre (for example by advocating for 'second cycle' ABEs).

Engaging with religious leaders

- Hold workshops with religious leaders to explore child protection and child rights concepts in Islam and engage religious leaders in awareness raising on child protection issues.
- Work with religious leaders performing marriage ceremonies on early and forced marriage.
- Link to national discussions on FGM with Islamic leaders.

Annex 1: Guiding questions focus group discussions and key informant interviews

General questions

- What do you think are the main child protection issues in your community?
- Are there children in your community who not going to school? What are the reasons they are not going to school? Do you think some children are not going to school because they or their parents don't think it is safe?
- Are there children in your community who are working for long hours? How old are these children, what kind of work do they do and are they going to school? Are there children leaving your community or coming to your community to look for work?
- In what ways are parents and teachers disciplining children in your community? Which forms of discipline are most common? What do you think about these forms of discipline?
- What harmful traditional practices take place in your community? What types of female circumcision are practiced in your community and how prevalent are they? At what age are girls circumcised in your community? What are the reasons girls are circumcised? Have any changes taken place during the past years with regards to female circumcision in your community?
- At what age do girls and boys in your community get married? In what different ways are marriages decided? Does it occur in your community that girls get married without their consent?
- Is there conflict taking place in this area? If yes, in what ways are children affected or involved?
- Are there groups of children in your community who are looked down upon, stigmatized or particularly vulnerable to abuse?
- Do you think sexual abuse of children takes place in your community?
- If a child in your community would be hurt, how would it be dealt with?
- Are there initiatives or organizations in your community focusing on child protection?
- What measures could be taken to address child abuse in your community?

Specific questions interview with police

- In what ways does your police office come into contact with children?
- Have you dealt with children who committed crimes? If yes, please describe.

- Have you dealt with crimes committed against children, like sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, early and forced marriage and harmful traditional practices? If yes, please describe.
- To what extent are customary law and Shari law used in this area? How do you see the co-existence of the three types of laws?

Specific questions interview with religious leaders

- Have religious leaders been engaged in addressing child protection issues? If yes, please explain.
- Is there a Shari court in your area? Has the Shari court dealt with child protection cases?
- To what extent are customary law and formal law used in your area? How do you see the co-existence of formal law, Shari law and customary law?

Specific questions interview/focus group discussion with Women's Affairs Office and Women's Groups

- Please describe the activities your Women's Affairs Office / women's group is carrying out in general and with regards to child protection in particular.
- Have you received any reports of child abuse taking place in your community? If yes, how were the cases dealt with?

Specific questions focus group discussion with PTAs/CMCs

- Please describe the activities and responsibilities of your PTA/CMC.
- Is early marriage a reason for school drop out?
- Are there differences in school attendance of boys and girls?

Specific questions interview with Education Office

- Please describe the activities and responsibilities of the Education Office.
- Is early marriage a reason for school drop out?
- Are there differences in school attendance of boys and girls?

Specific questions focus group discussion with elders

- What do you think are the main problems of children in your community?
- To what extent are elders and the customary system involved in solving problems, including child protection issues, in your community?
- Could you explain how the customary system would deal with child protection issues? Did elders deal with any child protection cases?
- How do you see the co-existence of customary law, formal law and Sharia law?

Specific questions interview with representative of NGO or UN

- Please describe the activities your organization is carrying out in general and with regards to child protection in particular.

- Are there other initiatives or organizations in this area focusing on child protection? Who are the partners you are working with?

Annex 2: Somali proverbs and expressions about children³⁶

General	Related to girls
<p>“Children are the beauty of life”</p> <p>“A house without children is a dark house”</p> <p>“Children are flowers who need care”</p> <p>“A child is like a farm”</p> <p>“A well-reared child will benefit the parents”</p> <p>“Let your son have better clothes than you”</p> <p>“Parents love their children more than children love their parents”</p> <p>“Childhood is a problem that has to be overcome by growing up”</p> <p>“These youth taught their mother to give birth”</p> <p>“Children have the mind to fear, but no mind to respect”</p> <p>“Children have a body, but no mind to do right”</p> <p>“The god of children is the stick”</p> <p>“When you show your child your teeth, they will show you their buttocks”</p> <p>“However the boy runs, he will never beat his father”</p> <p>“A child cries when he falls but laughs when his father falls”</p>	<p>“A girl is a light of life”</p> <p>“Being without a girl is being without children”</p> <p>“Educating a girl is educating a society”</p> <p>“A daughter must be married or in the grave”</p> <p>“A girl is an enemy we are bringing up”</p> <p>“A girl is ready meat”</p> <p>“If you trust your sister don’t trust yourself”</p> <p>“A girl is her mother, a boy is his father”</p> <p>“The women you marry will determine what kind of child you have”</p>

³⁶ Most of these Somali sayings were acquired from Save the Children UK staff.