

Somalia: Education in Transition

Lee Cassanelli and Farah Sheikh Abdikadir

I. Introduction: Education in War-Torn Societies

We begin with the premise that education is a basic human right, as well as a precondition for any serious effort to return peace, prosperity, and justice to Somalia's citizens on a lasting basis. The collapse of the Somali state and the subsequent civil war(s) have altered most aspects of Somali life; but they have been particularly devastating in the area of education, where an entire generation has lost out on one of the most precious opportunities of childhood. The restoration of regular schooling is critical if Somalis expect to survive the present upheaval and envision a hopeful future. Education can provide structure and stability for children who have been traumatized by war. It is the starting point for creating a skilled workforce that can compete in the global economy. Education fosters the intellectual discipline necessary to solve problems, and the civic virtues essential for good governance. Good education can help reduce gender inequalities, child exploitation, and the likelihood of future violence in the wider society.

The challenges facing Somali teachers and students today are far more formidable than anything they confronted in the past, not only at the level of local material conditions but also at the level of global geopolitics and ideologies. Yet those challenges are not insurmountable: both the lessons of the country's educational history and the committed efforts of Somali teachers in the face of the difficult circumstances of the past sixteen years provide grounds for modest optimism. Our survey reveals much that is positive about Somalis' attitudes toward

schooling (both secular and religious); about the capabilities of local communities for supporting educational initiatives; and about the benefits of multiple language instruction, gender equity, and community ownership in the process of educational reform.

II. Brief History of Education in Somalia

A. Pre-Colonial and Colonial Education

Somalis' expectations and anxieties about education today have been shaped in large measure by their experiences with schooling in the past. Any realistic assessment of the prospects for educational renewal in Somalia requires serious attention to those historical experiences. While this is not the place to detail the long history of pre-colonial learning in Somalia—whether through the oral transmission of practical pastoral and agricultural knowledge across the generations, or in old centers of Islamic learning like Zeila, Mogadishu, and Brava—it is important to recognize that Somali education did not simply begin with its colonial rulers.

Even before the European conquest of Africa in the late nineteenth century, two significant historical trends had begun to shape Somalis' outlook on the acquisition of new knowledge. One was the spread of the latest currents of Islamic thought throughout Somalia by members of local Sufi religious orders, who introduced popular religious writings in Arabic, new prayers and liturgical practices, and the establishment of religious settlements and farming cooperatives guided by Islamic principles. In addition to increasing the prestige associated with Arabic literacy, this religious revival exposed many Somalis to the lively debates on modern education, religious reform, and Western imperialism that were circulating through the wider Islamic world. A second noteworthy development was the growing awareness of the wider world that Somali travelers—religious pilgrims, traders, soldiers, seamen—brought home with them. The point here is that on the eve of European colonization, new forms of Islamic and Western knowledge were diffusing throughout Somalia, providing a set of competitive discourses about the modern world that would shape Somali public opinion for years to come.

Not surprisingly, then, colonial authorities in Somalia encountered a broad range of responses to their educational policies. They found many Somalis who were willing to learn English or Italian and to

acquire the skills necessary to gain employment in the colonial system. At the same time, they faced resistance from many kin and religious leaders who had a stake in the Islamic educational institutions that had been expanding prior to the colonial occupation. (It is not surprising that Mahammad 'Abdille Hasan's militant "dervish" resistance to foreign occupation began, according to popular lore, with his angry response to the conversion of Somali children in a Western missionary school in Berbera.) Indeed, much of the subsequent educational history of Somalia involved competition for the "hearts and minds" of the local population between advocates of two distinct educational models, the Islamic and the Western. The struggle over how best to educate the local populace is thus not simply a recent phenomenon.

In the face of Mahammed 'Abdille Hasan's anti-colonial resistance movement, the British wisely prohibited Christian missionaries from proselytizing in the North. However, the Protectorate authorities did attempt to establish small secular elementary schools in Berbera, Bulxaar, and Zeylac, and in 1920 introduced a livestock tax to provide capital for building six new elementary schools and one intermediate school in Burco. Their efforts provoked an attack by the local inhabitants of Burco, resulting in the death of the local District Commissioner and the abandonment of the school project. In 1929, British officials tried a new strategy, giving small grants to Somali sheikhs in selected private Islamic schools on the condition that they taught reading, writing, and arithmetic (in Arabic), along with religion. The government also provided funds to enable young men to study at Gordon College in Sudan, where five Somalis were enrolled in 1933.¹ By then, a local self-improvement association, the Somaliland National Society, had begun pushing for modern education that included subjects in English, which indicates that Muslim Somalis were themselves taking the initiative in this area even prior to WWII.

After the war, the British continued to be proactive, opening new elementary schools at Hargeisa, Berbera, and Burco with grants from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund. They also launched a concerted campaign by radio and mobile cinema to promote educational development. In 1944, the Protectorate's new Superintendent of Education recruited Islamic religious leaders to his teaching staff to help allay the suspicions of the local Somalis.² By 1945, 400 Somali boys were attending seven elementary schools in the Protectorate, and "assistance was also being given to nineteen private Quranic schools

teaching Arabic and arithmetic." By 1950 there were two intermediate schools and plans for a secondary school.³

In the South, the Italians also discouraged Christian missionaries from trying to convert Somalis for fear of provoking Islamic resistance, but they did subsidize Catholic elementary schools. Under the Fascist administrations of the 1930s, schooling for Europeans and Somalis became increasingly segregated, even though the government subsidized a school for the sons of Somali elites. Secular education was further stimulated during the period of the British Military Administration (1941–50), and 29 elementary schools had been established by 1950, enrolling some 1,600 pupils and employing 45 teachers.⁴ The first school for girls opened in 1949, and the first secondary school in the South was established through the efforts of a Somali notable.

It is clear that both British and Italian colonial education was elitist, aimed primarily at training small cadres of Somalis to fill positions in the colonial administration. In the North, the British allocated fewer than 500 pounds sterling to primary education in 1939, and the Protectorate government reported that only sixteen Somalis were receiving formal (Western) schooling as late as 1942. Even in 1955, only about 1,000 pupils were attending the nineteen new elementary schools that had opened since the end of the war. One elementary school for girls had 64 students. The anticipation of independence led to a modest increase of investment in education in the North: the three-year plan of 1957 allocated 340,000 pounds for education. When independence came in 1960, there were 38 elementary schools for boys (enrollment 2,020), three for girls (319), twelve intermediate schools for boys (1,039), and two secondary schools for boys (70). About 150 Somalis from the Protectorate were studying overseas, mainly in Britain. There were 45 trained Somali teachers in 1960 in the North.⁵

The bulk of the modern educational infrastructure in Southern Somalia was laid during the ten years of the Italian Trusteeship Administration (AFIS). Between 1950 and 1960, more than 100 additional elementary, secondary, and vocational schools were started. Nonetheless, even though AFIS had been mandated by the U.N. to establish the foundation for a system to educate the masses, it was apparent that "professional and higher education was stressed during the trusteeship period."⁶ On the eve of independence, a little more than 16,000 pupils were enrolled in primary schools, about 2,800 in intermediate schools, and 782 in higher secondary schools. About 500 Somalis were enrolled in vocational schools.⁷ Although the number of Somali teachers in the

South grew from about 60 in 1950 to 470 in 1959, only 290 had full teaching diplomas. Then, as later, the anticipation of government jobs in the soon-to-be-independent state proved to be more attractive than teaching careers.⁸ Fewer than 7% of the elementary school population went on to secondary education.

To be fair, the AFIS administration did lay the groundwork for the country's higher education system by establishing several institutes to provide Somali high school graduates with advanced semi-professional training. These included a School of Politics and Administration (1950), the Higher Institute of Economics and Law (1954), the School of Islamic Studies, the Scuola Magistrale, and the University Institute (later the Somali National University). Although designed essentially to produce an elite corps of Somali professionals who could take over upon independence, it is worth noting that these institutes did not neglect linguistic, religious, and cultural subjects. The School of Politics and Administration, for example, offered a three-year course that emphasized training in civil and public law, public finance, history, and geography, but also included courses in Arabic, Italian, and mathematics.⁹ Superior students could go on to Italy for an additional eighteen months of preparation. The Higher Institute of Economics and Law provided secondary school graduates with advanced training in law, economics, history, and political science, and it awarded 58 diplomas between 1954 and 1960. Several graduates of this two-year program also received scholarships to complete their university degrees at Italian universities. The School of Islamic Studies, which was set up to train judges (*qadis*) to administer Islamic law, offered a four-year program in which the first two years were devoted to general education and the last two to religion and jurisprudence. By 1959–60, a total of 450 Somali students were attending these institutions.¹⁰ In 1953, the Italian Trusteeship authority also established a teacher training institute in Mogadishu. Grade Five graduates were enrolled for two years of training as primary teachers. The language of instruction was Italian. Besides the pre-service course of study, short in-service training classes were provided to the teachers.

One lesson from this brief history is that colonial efforts to introduce modern schooling were most successful when they included Somali religious leaders as planners and teachers, or when local Somali associations took the initiative in promoting the new education. Somali opinion, of course, was never unanimous with regard to the benefits (or risks) of Western-style schooling. The Protectorate's first Director of

Education was stoned when he visited Burco in 1936, for example, but by the end of WWII, most of the new Somali political parties included “modern” education as a major goal in their political platforms. The Somali Youth League (SYL), which subsequently became the dominant political party in the country, organized classes in both Arabic and English, a good indication that the early nationalist leadership did not consider “modern education” to be an exclusively Western-language enterprise. Mohamoud Ahmed Ali, often considered the father of modern Somali education in the North, believed that every Somali should be exposed to Western education only after completing their Quranic schooling. It is also worth noting that Arabic-language schools continued to flourish during the AFIS period, with assistance from the Egyptian government, which provided Arabic instructors for Somalia as well as scholarships for Somali students to continue their education at Al-Azhar University in Cairo. This experience suggests that in an era of political and economic optimism there was room for Western and Islamic schools not only to co-exist but also to expand side by side.

One other aspect of colonial education warrants mention, if only to note its lack of success. Both British and Italian authorities made modest efforts to reach the country’s rural citizens, who before 1960 made up well over 90% of the population. In 1955, the Protectorate government began offering a six-month course for Quranic schoolteachers who were willing to work among the nomads, offering classes that included Arabic, arithmetic, hygiene, and livestock and soil management. However, only twenty such teachers had been trained by 1960. Italian efforts to extend vocational schooling to the rural areas had some success in the settled regions of the South, but little in the pastoral districts, where parents objected to removing their children from the responsibilities of tending the herds. Some parents also disdained the manual labor that the vocational schools were promoting.¹¹ Drop-out rates in rural schools were high, partly the result of poorly trained Somali teachers and objections to expatriate teachers. Plans to educate some 19,000 adult learners were not realized, again because of a seeming lack of enthusiasm.¹²

B. Independence and After

The first decade after independence saw little substantial change in the educational policies inherited from the colonial era, with their strong emphasis on urban schooling and on higher education and

professional training for the children of the elites. The ruling SYL and other parties gave lip service to the need for modern education for all Somalis, but budgetary allocations did not reflect that commitment. In the mid-1960s, Dawson estimated that education's share of Somalia's national budget was 7.5%, as compared with 18% in Kenya and Tanzania, and 27% in Uganda.¹³

Three important challenges faced the education sector in the 1960s: (1) how to integrate the different school systems of the former British and Italian colonies into a single national system, (2) how to ensure an adequate supply of qualified Somali teachers to staff the system, and (3) how to turn an elitist educational system into one that served the Somali masses. The record of the government was noteworthy only on the first count.

Integrating the former colonial systems required attention not only to differences of structure and curriculum but also to those of custom. For example, while girls and boys often attended the same schools in the South, this was almost unheard of in the North, even in the 1960s.¹⁴ British authorities had required students to pay their own school fees, in contrast to the South where education under AFIS had been free. School administration was less centralized in the North, with greater local control, which almost certainly contributed to the lower dropout rate (about 15% in the North compared to estimates ranging as high as 75% in the South). Finally, elementary schools in the North were for three years and used Arabic as the initial medium of instruction, introducing English in the second year. In the South, elementary education was for four years, with Italian used for instruction after the second year.

After 1960 the Ministry of Education sought to turn all elementary schools into four-year programs, followed by four years each of intermediate and secondary schooling. It was decided that English should eventually replace Italian as the medium of instruction in the third year of primary school. At the intermediate level, those students who had begun their education in Italian could continue with it, while for others English would gradually be phased in to become the medium of instruction for all four years. In 1965, the Ministry decided that Arabic was an appropriate medium of instruction in the elementary years, while English would be used in the intermediate and secondary levels. To facilitate the transition and unify the system, Egypt sent three experts to assist the Ministry.

The problem of training and then retaining qualified Somali teachers proved to be one of the most persistent challenges for the independence government. In 1962, the Ministry of Education reported that 112 of 201 intermediate and secondary school teachers were expatriates, and only 89 Somalis.¹⁵ Anecdotal evidence suggests some of the reasons for the acute shortage of Somali teachers. A U.S. Peace Corps volunteer working at the Scuola Magistrale in Mogadishu reported that, "only the poorest students intend to teach" as a career.¹⁶ Even at the well-equipped National Teachers' College at Lafooley, which was built and supplied with funds from USAID, students received more content courses than education work, and many went on to pursue other careers. In Hargeisa, "Somali men often consider it beneath their dignity to instruct girls" and some of the women teaching in the Northern region "have no firm dedication to the profession." Extending schooling to the masses was clearly hindered not only by the difficulties of multiple languages of instruction but also by limitations of infrastructure and personnel. The first independence government took no bold initiatives to remedy these problems.

One result of these problems was high student attrition, particularly in the South. According to the available statistics (which vary from source to source), the dropout rates after primary school ranged from 50% to 75%. Gender discrepancies were also evident. Statistics from 1964 indicate that 16,000 students were enrolled in 175 elementary schools, with boys outnumbering girls four to one. Fourteen intermediate schools enrolled 2,200 pupils, including almost 500 girls. But the five secondary schools operating in 1963 counted only 25 girls among their 625 students. One problem was that the schools tended to be concentrated in the most urbanized parts of the country. For example, 62 of the 175 elementary schools and 14 of the 20 intermediate and secondary schools were located in the Benadir region, which included Mogadishu and its hinterland.¹⁷ Families living in the rural districts were extremely reluctant to send their daughters away from home for schooling.

Throughout the 1960s, Islamic schooling continued to appeal to Somalis, particularly at the pre-primary and elementary levels. A 1964 report estimated that some 40,000 students were enrolled in 1,928 Quranic schools in the South, while about 3,200 students officially attended 189 such schools in the North. A typical Somali child began his formal education in a two-year Quranic school, which provided introductory lessons in Arabic, religion, and usually some elemen-

tary arithmetic. As we have seen, before 1960 the British had given small subsidies to Quranic schools and even contemplated making them a formal part of the elementary educational system in the North. While Quranic schooling was never a formal prerequisite for entering elementary school in the South, the reality was that most students who enrolled in primary schools had at least a year or two of Quranic education. In the North, boys outnumbered girls in Quranic schools about six to one; in the South, the ratio was closer to four to one. As noted above, these ratios were similar to those found in primary and secondary schools more generally, suggesting that gender ratios in the Quranic schools contributed to the pattern of gender inequality in education overall in the early years of independence.

C. The Siyaad Barre Era

Despite the many critiques of Siyaad Barre's efforts to implement "scientific socialism" in Somalia after 1970, most observers acknowledge that Somali education began to move in a dramatic new direction during the early years of his regime. Two accomplishments with implications for educational reform were the establishment of an official script for the Somali language in 1972, and the launching of two national literacy campaigns, urban (1973) and rural (1974). Both sought to overcome the legacy of elitist colonial educational policies. Indeed, socialist rhetoric argued that existing policies served only the families of the country's bourgeoisie and that one goal of the new government was to democratize the educational system.

The Siyaad Barre regime quickly nationalized all private schools, which according to the Ministry of Education had enrolled 31% of the country's pupils in 1969. In 1975, the government made education free and compulsory for all children between six and fourteen years of age. To accommodate the expansion of the school system and to expedite the preparation of educated manpower for the job market, the primary/intermediate phase of schooling was reduced from eight to six years. The government argued that since lessons were now being given in the Somali language, students could cover more ground than they had previously.¹⁸ However, the shortened primary cycle proved to be inadequate and in 1979 was lengthened again to eight years.¹⁹

Somali language textbooks were rapidly prepared, printed, and introduced into elementary and early intermediate level classes between 1972 and 1974. In 1974, the Ministry of Education created

fifteen committees, consisting of 268 Somali teachers and curriculum specialists, to produce textbooks in all the required subjects, including mathematics, the sciences, and the philosophy of socialism. By 1977, 135 textbooks in the Somali language had been produced and were being used through the first year of secondary school classes, with the intention of gradually phasing out English as the medium of instruction.²⁰ Teacher training programs were expanded (325 students were enrolled at the Lifooley College of Education in 1975–76), and after 1972 all secondary school graduates were required to do a year of National Service by teaching in a primary school. In 1976–77, 1,680 high school graduates performed such service.²¹ The government also appealed to local communities to build schools in their districts under the principle of self-reliance, and was subsequently able to boast that the number of primary schools increased from 204 to 844 between 1969 and 1976, general secondary schools from 17 to 43, technical and vocational schools from 8 to 17, and teacher training colleges from 1 to 3, according to statistics provided by the Ministry of Education.²²

As a result of the Somali language policy and the increase in numbers of schoolteachers and classrooms, primary school enrollments expanded dramatically in the early Siyaad years, from circa 40,000 in 1970 to nearly 300,000 in 1979.²³ While girls had made up approximately 20% of primary school students in 1970, by 1979 that figure approached 40%. The percentage of women teachers in primary schools also rose from about 10% in 1969 to about 30% in 1979. While the successes were more modest at the intermediate and secondary levels—many girls dropped out after their primary schooling—there were nonetheless 181 young women enrolled in the University Institute in 1974, as compared to only 11 before the revolution.²⁴ This suggests that the Siyaad regime was serious about extending educational opportunities for women.

The adoption of an official written form of Somali enabled the government to launch two national literacy campaigns in an effort to bring education to the masses. The urban literacy campaign of 1973 helped bring basic literacy to some 400,000 citizens, according to Hussein Adam.²⁵ In August 1974, the government launched its Rural Development Campaign (RDC). This unique and ambitious venture was aimed at closing the knowledge gap between urban and rural areas. All state schools were closed for one academic year to enable teachers and students to participate in the campaign, whose goals were to eradicate illiteracy, improve human and animal health, and provide a census in

the vast rural areas of the country.²⁶ “The literacy aspect of the RDC involved 1.2 million people,” and claimed (probably with considerable exaggeration) to have achieved a literacy rate of 70%. Even at the time, officials acknowledged that a “relapse into illiteracy” was likely to occur without the establishment of ongoing local literacy classes and the production of additional quantities of teaching and reading materials relevant to the rural nomadic environment.²⁷

While the introduction of the official Somali written language in 1972 clearly facilitated short-term gains in national literacy levels, its medium- and long-term implications for Somali national development can be debated. On the one hand, the use of Somali as the official language of education and administration enabled citizens without knowledge of English or Italian to offer their opinions and to participate in public political debates. It allowed the government to recruit more local primary school teachers, thereby reducing dependence on expatriates. And when Somali became the official language of the government bureaucracy, Somalis with knowledge of Western languages no longer were privileged as office holders. On the other hand, the reliance on Somali meant that individuals with no more than a primary school education could join the bureaucracy, opening the door to political nepotism and the appointment of less-qualified officials. In addition, while the decision to make Somali the official national language had the potential to reduce tensions between the English-speaking North and the Italian-speaking South, Northerners soon discovered that they had lost their advantage in the competition for government jobs.²⁸ Although we have not found any studies that critically evaluated the impact of the use of Somali as the medium of instruction on the quality of the education students received, many observers contend that experiences with unqualified teachers and the uneven standards of Somali-language textbooks served to diminish the value of a formal Somali education in the eyes of many Somalis. As one observer noted, “for formal schooling to play an important role in society, it must be ‘legitimate.’ People who use it must trust that it serves their interests and needs.”²⁹

Despite their noteworthy accomplishments, the educational reforms of the 1970s were not sustained into the 1980s. Like many other popular programs from the early Siyaad era, mass education fell victim to the regime’s preoccupation with natural disasters, war with Ethiopia, and the subsequent refugee crisis. Increasing corruption and nepotism in all agencies of government (including the Ministry of Education)

drained resources and enthusiasm from the schools, the teachers, and their pupils. It is instructive to examine what occurred in a few areas of educational and cultural life after 1975, as illustrations of what can go wrong when education is marginalized.

- The severe drought of 1973–75 burdened the government with the responsibility of providing food and shelter for the afflicted rural population, but also provided an opportunity to bring education to the countryside. Teachers and high school students were sent out to work with displaced nomads who had been resettled in farming and fishing villages, introducing large numbers of them to the new Somali script for the first time. However, shortages of relevant instructional materials and the nomads' propensity to abandon their schooling in order to rebuild their herds or to seek out more lucrative employment in the Gulf soon eroded the gains of the Rural Literacy Campaign. Mass rural education stagnated in the 1980s. From an (admittedly exaggerated) estimate of 70% rural literacy in 1975, United Nations' estimates placed the literacy rate at about 25% in 1990, on the eve of the state's collapse.
- While the socialism-inspired reforms of the 1970s won guarded praise from many secular observers, they also alienated some of the country's important religious leaders. Many of the latter had opposed the government's choice of Latin script (rather than Arabic) for writing Somali and claimed that "*Latiin waa la diin*" (Latin is godless). Islamic educators were suspicious that "socialist" education paid insufficient attention to religion, and that new laws giving women equal inheritance and divorce rights would undermine the traditional authority of the Sharia courts. These tensions were exacerbated when the regime publicly executed ten sheikhs in 1975 in response to charges that they were preaching against the new legislation. In retrospect, it seems highly likely that these events marked the beginning of a serious rift between the state regime and many of the country's Islamic scholars and educators, perhaps laying the foundations for the post-1991 Islamist movement in Somalia.
- For a short period of time, according to George Urch, "the Somali National University was viewed as a unifying institution." Founded in 1970, it grew to include thirteen faculties with 800 instructors and 7,500 students. Unfortunately, the University gradually succumbed to the nepotism that became rampant throughout the country. The politicization of overseas scholarship awards and government jobs,

coupled with the lack of visible employment opportunities for qualified graduates, soon reduced the value of a university education in the eyes of many Somalis. What might have been a training ground for a new generation of nationally oriented Somali professionals became instead another lost opportunity.

- For a time in the 1970s, the Somali Academy of Arts and Sciences (under the Ministry of Higher Education and Culture) served as a base where Western-educated Somali academics and homegrown intellectuals could meet to discuss Somali language, literature, and culture. Much valuable research and collection of Somali oral history and folklore occurred under the auspices of the Academy, whose mandate was to preserve and disseminate information about Somalia's cultural heritage. Regrettably, the Academy's budget was inadequate, and much of the important work done by the researchers was never published by the State Printing Office, which had barely enough capacity to churn out government documents and propaganda.
- Foreign aid to Somalia's education sector was fragmented and largely driven by the desire of donors to promote their own languages and cultures (most notably Italian and Arabic) or by Cold War politics (U.S. and Soviet Union). There was little coordination by international agencies and NGOs, and no Somali institutional structures existed to provide oversight, set national educational priorities, or ensure quality control on a national basis. As an example of the country's linguistic schizophrenia, although UNESCO in 1965 backed the Somali government's decision to move to an English-language university system, it was Italy rather than English-language countries that stepped forward to fund the establishment of a full-scale Somali National University, with the result that nine of the twelve faculties that made up the University in 1983 used Italian as the language of instruction.³⁰ (Ironically, the sizable perquisites provided by the Italian government to attract visiting lecturers to Mogadishu meant that Somalis were sometimes instructed by distinguished Italian professors and researchers, even if on a short-term basis. To their credit, many Somalis took crash courses to learn Italian in order to take advantage of the opportunities.)

III. Education after the Collapse of the Somali State

A. The UNOSOM and Post-UNOSOM Period

Even before the Somali state imploded in 1991, one can say that the country's education system had collapsed. School enrollment at primary and secondary levels had begun declining in the 1980s, teachers started to desert their classrooms for work in Arab and other countries, and budgetary allocations for education had reached an all time low by 1985. Many in society had seriously begun to question the value of the education being offered and its relevance to the job market. The breakdown of law and order following the collapse of the state destroyed whatever vestiges of the system still survived. Armed militias plundered school furniture and fixtures; school compounds became homes for displaced people; and school playgrounds were converted into graveyards. There were times, especially in the early '90s, when it was almost impossible for citizens to think about education. The quest to survive and satisfy basic needs left no time to organize schooling, much less to focus on planning for the future.

By 1993, as the violence subsided slightly, some small educational projects were launched through the efforts of Somali educators who remained in the country, with assistance from a few international organizations. With the intervention of UNITAF and UNOSOM in Southern Somalia, a number of schools were rehabilitated by international forces or by Western and Arab NGOs. For example, Canadian troops rehabilitated four schools in Beled Weyne district, and Irish Concern some 22 others in Benadir, Lower Shabelle, Baay, and Bakool regions. UNESCO reprinted several old Somali textbooks from grades one to four, and UNICEF distributed education kits containing chalk, exercise books, and pencils. The World Food Programme initiated food for work projects to help rebuild schools, while UNHCR, in collaboration with CARE, supported refugee education programs for Somalis in Kenyan refugee camps. Several schools became operational in early 1993. However, the lack of any coordinating authority, even at the regional or district level, made planning and implementation very difficult, and nearly all these initiatives collapsed after the withdrawal of UNOSOM in 1994.

The small gains made in the education sector during the UNOSOM period had been limited by the lack of a national Somali authority, limited local community involvement in the planning and implemen-

tation of the projects, and the emphasis on rehabilitating or reconstructing buildings rather than on establishing a strategic educational plan. Local civic actors, who were often short on experience and understanding of the needs of the sector, became the only permanent feature of the program. Unfortunately, the international agencies failed to prioritize enhancing the capacity of those local actors. Even conferences intended to generate ideas for developing the education sector failed to take place due to disinterest or concerns over security by international actors.³¹ A lack of shared objectives among the local stakeholders was the main cause for the closure of the remaining facilities. The only schools that survived were those that enjoyed the wide participation of local communities or those that were established by or with the assistance of Arab and Islamic charities, such as the Imamshafici Foundation, Zamzan Foundation, Africa Muslims Agency, Emirates Red Crescent, and the International Islamic Relief Organization.

The withdrawal of United Nations forces and several international NGOs threw local Somalis back on their own resources. By 1995, it was apparent that greater community awareness and increased local participation were the only ways to revive the educational systems. With only rudimentary facilities and without any central planning or common examination system, several new schools were opened that drew their legitimacy from the communities that started them. They provided the basic literacy, numeration, and science skills that could be offered under the circumstances. Not surprisingly, the most notable achievements occurred in the Northeast and Northwest regions of the country, where there was greater political stability, security, and administrative development. Even here, post-war educational reconstruction can be characterized as piecemeal, dominated as it was by a series of separate NGO projects or independent schools set up by individuals in the private sector.

In Puntland (Northeast Somalia region), data from a 2004 report indicated that 50,250 pupils were enrolled in 253 lower primary (elementary) and upper primary (intermediate) schools, with 1,542 classes and 1,617 teachers. Approximately 3,500 students were enrolled in 14 secondary schools. Two post-secondary institutions (Puntland Community College in Garowe and East African University in Bosaaso) had 420 students. The percentage of girls enrolled in primary school was noteworthy (39% in lower primary, 35% in upper), although the percentage dropped to 21% (750 girls) for secondary school and to less than 10% for college level. Nonetheless, the Puntland Administration,

with support from UNICEF and several NGOs, has pledged to increase opportunities for women as part of its “education for all” campaign. Puntland also recently announced that the regional government would begin to contribute to the salaries of all primary school teachers, which currently come almost exclusively from members of the local communities where the schools are located.

In Northwest Somalia, the self-governing republic of Somaliland established a Ministry of Education, which collaborated with U.N. agencies and international donors for the reconstruction of over 180 schools. By 2001, the Ministry ran over 230 primary and secondary schools with nearly 70,000 students; 18 family learning centers with 1,573 students; and a national teaching force of some 2,000. A teacher’s training college was established in Hargeisa, and two new universities, at Amoud and Hargeisa, were launched through private efforts.³²

The founding of Amoud University in Borama has been well documented³³ and offers some instructive lessons for educational planners. It was inspired by the ideas and energy of several Somalis who were working in Saudi Arabia and sought to make an educational contribution to their home zone and to the citizens of Somalia as a whole. While the Borama district may have been exceptional in its long historical commitment to Quranic and secular schooling for its children, its residents still had to be persuaded to invest in the rehabilitation of old school facilities, classrooms, and roads, and to subsidize the salaries of teachers, drivers, and guards. This was accomplished by long and patient negotiations, essential to allay suspicions and give local residents a stake in the new university, which is now fully owned by the community. Students’ families pay the modest school fees, and members of the diaspora contribute books and raise funds to help with the salaries of lecturers. Despite its limited financial resources, Amoud has worked to increase the number of women enrolled (only 15 of 50 students in the first-year class) and to challenge persisting kin divisions by opening its doors to qualified students from other parts of the country.

According to UNICEF, 52% of the educational activities in Somalia are based in the south-central region, where there is no central government system. In this region, a network of educational organizations was established in 1999 to help implement a common curriculum and examination system for their member schools. Known as the Formal Private Education Network in Somalia (FPENS), the organization now has a membership of 150 schools serving a population

of over 90,000 students. Along with its coordinating function, FPENS established a teacher training institute, developed school textbooks, issued school graduation certificates recognized by many countries, and advocated for the educational concerns of Somalia at local and international forums. Commendably, FPENS operates within Somalia in the absence of a centralized governance structure. Outside the country, the Nairobi-based Education Sectoral Committee of the Somali Aid Coordinating Body (ESC/SACB) holds bi-monthly information-sharing meetings for NGOs and other bodies involved in the education sector. Unfortunately, ESC/SACB has had limited participation from education providers in Somalia. Attendance at its meetings is often skewed in favor of Western and Nairobi-based NGOs. In one instance, ESC/SACB failed to convene an advertised Education Vision Conference in June 2005, whose aim had been to give direction to the future of Somali education following the establishment of the Transitional Federal Government. On another occasion, international actors attending a two-day retreat held by ESC/SACB in Nairobi in November 2005 failed to agree on the modalities of organizing a suitable intervention for the sector. Some donors favored delegating the coordination work to a leading U.N. agency, while others emphasized the necessity of building the capacity of the Somali institutions.

B. The Current System of Education

At present, there is no coherent educational system in Somalia. Planning and implementation are piecemeal, mirroring the wide assortment of schools run by local and international NGOs, both Islamic and Western, or by private individuals on a for-profit basis. Most of the currently operating schools tend to follow the educational models used in the past, which were adopted from different countries. The two main models are the 4-4-4 system inherited from the post-1960 era, and the 6-3-3 system followed in several Arab countries. Both systems add up to twelve years of schooling, which is compatible with most international schooling systems.

The medium of instruction at the primary school level may be Arabic, Somali, or English. Most secondary schools use either Arabic or English. There are still extensive debates about the merits and demerits of using English or Arabic in the schools, particularly in the regions sometimes controlled, until recently, by the Islamic Courts Union. These debates are intensified by the ideologies and cultures associated

with the two languages, raising many of the same emotional responses that occurred during the struggle over the Somali script in the 1950s and 1960s. In the post-September 11th era, there is a misperception among Western NGOs that if a school's language of instruction is Arabic, then the school must be an Islamic one. However, what actually determines the language of instruction in any given locale is the availability of textbooks, trained teachers, opportunities for secondary-level education, and access to international universities. Given these factors and the current situation on the ground in Somalia, the Arabic-medium schools have found greater favor among parents and students. According to a survey conducted in Mogadishu in 2003 by Novib-Wamy, 54% of the parents interviewed preferred Arabic-medium schools compared to 38% for the English-medium schools. Interestingly, there are a growing number of schools that use more than one language at the secondary level.

Whatever the language medium, most primary and secondary schools teach similar subjects. At the primary level, these are Islam, mathematics, social sciences, natural sciences, and languages. Although some classes may include discussions of peace, environmental, and civic issues, very little formal education in these subjects is provided in the current school system. The schools may differ in the weight they give to different subjects, according to the medium of instruction. At the primary level, the Arabic language schools devote considerable time to religious education. At the secondary level, both English and Arabic schools tend to teach the following ten subjects: language courses of Somali, English, and Arabic; and courses on Islam; Mathematics; Physics; Biology; Chemistry; Geography; and History.

C. Quranic Schools and Religious Education

By virtue of being community owned, the traditional Quranic school (*dugsi*) and its teachers (*macallim*) were highly valued and respected within the society. This is still the case throughout Somalia, where local communities typically build and maintain the *dugsis* and pay the teachers. The scale and mode of remuneration depends upon a contractual agreement between the teacher and the community, and vary according to the specific community and its mode of economic production. This type of acceptance and sense of ownership made the traditional religious education system cost effective and even partially immune from the devastation caused by the civil war. During the dif-

difficult days of the crisis in Somalia, when all types of public institutions were vandalized or forced to shut down, most *dugsis* remained intact and operational, except when there were issues related to security or the migratory behavior of the traditional Somali society. While there are no official statistics on the number of children who currently attend Quranic schools, they remain by far the major source of early childhood education in the war-torn regions. Observers have noted that children who attend Quranic schools tend to pick up learning at the formal school much faster. According to Novib-Wamy, "Even though Arabic is not the first language of Somali children, it is the first language they learn to read and write in the *dugsi*...which over 95 percent of children will have attended before being taken to formal school. School heads in Somalia contend that over 75 percent of all children can read and write Arabic when they join formal schools at age six to eight years."³⁴

In the past, at the end of two or three years in the *dugsi*, the young Somali boy or girl was ready to move to a second learning level. This level provided either life-related learning experiences or a continuation of formal religious training that frequently required the student to leave his community, following the traditional pattern of religious education in which one goes through various stages of instruction under different teachers and scholars. It appears that this system is experiencing a revival in Somalia. Attention to the teaching and learning of the Quran had already increased in Somali society by the end of the 1980s. However, because of the unstable social conditions after 1990, very limited improvements have been introduced in the infrastructure and the teaching methodology in the *dugsis*. Most are still maintained by a single *macallin* and the structure remains simple. Well-equipped *dugsis* are rare and found mainly in big cities like Mogadishu and Hargeisa, which have permanent buildings and classrooms with chairs and desks. In these new *dugsis*, pupils use Quranic textbooks and exercise books, and the teachers (usually more than one) use whiteboards or blackboards for their lessons. An innovative method of promoting Quranic instruction can be observed in the annual international Quran memorization and recitation competitions held in some Arab countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, where the performance of Somali children has been increasingly recognized. A 12-year-old girl won first place in memorizing the whole Quran in the annual competition of the year 2005 in Mogadishu.

IV. Current Challenges for the Education Sector

A. Access to Education

As noted above, the education system was suffering seriously from underfunding and the large-scale attrition of educators even before the collapse of the state. That collapse aggravated the situation and led to a massive flight of teachers. Hence, even as the sector re-emerges from the vestiges of the civil war, it is severely handicapped by the lack of facilities and trained personnel. The schools have very little reach and a significant proportion of school-age children remain out of school, although enrollments in both primary and secondary schools have marginally increased in the last five years, especially in the country's more stable areas. There is no reliable data, but UNICEF estimates that only one in five children currently attends school in the country.

There are still serious problems of access for girls and for physically handicapped children. The gender disparity in today's education has historical roots. Even following the peak of Somalia's achievements in women's education in the late 1970s, the Ministry of Education in 1985 noted that female representation in decision-making positions in the Ministry was less than 7%. Women made up only 3.8% of primary school head teachers, and 1.8% of secondary school head teachers. Today, women share with the rest of society the loss of opportunity for basic knowledge and professional growth that education provides. According to the 2003 annual report of the Formal Private Education Network in Somalia, the enrollment of girls at the limited existing primary schools is 30% compared to male students, and the percentage declines to 15% at the secondary level. The obstacles to achieving gender equality in access to education are also cultural. Girls are introduced to household chores from an early age and frequently prepared for early marriage. In addition, many parents still prefer to spend more on schooling for boys than for girls. Deterrents on the supply side include the dearth of female teachers and managers in upper grades, a shortage of female role models to provide inspiration, the distance of schools from the girls' homes, and the frequent lack of proper sanitation facilities.³⁵

B. Education Policy and Management

Even before the catastrophic civil crisis, diminished public confidence in the education system's ability to meet the challenges of a modern society was apparent. Today, many Somalis argue that the post-independence educational system failed to produce good governance, either because too many leadership positions went to poorly educated individuals or because the system was unable to convert the innate entrepreneurial aptitude and capacity of the Somali people into the kind of public competence necessary to lead the nation into the global community of the 21st century. With the collapse of the nation-state, there has been no opportunity to discuss and formulate a policy direction for the sector as a whole, decide what today's modern education should entail, or determine how to implement a countrywide education system. In the absence of a coherent policy direction, schools emerge and provide education according to their abilities. The international actors who are supposed to support policy formulation for the sector have failed to consult and consolidate the views of Somali education providers. The Somali people have rarely participated actively in, or contributed adequately to, the formation of a national educational strategy.

The regions of Somaliland and Puntland have created Ministries of Education that supervise their education systems. In central and southern Somalia, there are no such supervisory institutions. Although most of the education projects in Somalia are owned by the communities (generally on a non-profit basis), they can most appropriately be considered private rather than public ventures. The FPENS initiative mentioned above also fits that description, although within its limited capacity it has addressed educational issues that would normally fall under the purview of a national government, such as teacher training, curriculum development, examination and certification, coordination among member schools, and advocacy for education. Conspicuously absent from the educational planning and management sector have been the national and regional representatives of the recently formed TFG, who have been more preoccupied with partisan politics than with educational problem solving. Until recently, many private schools and education organizations were regularly harassed by the warlords and militias, who demanded bribes or imposed "taxes" on the schools, frequently demanding that they employ unqualified teachers and administrators in exchange for protection. In their brief reign, the Islamic

Courts Union appeared to have made access to safe and well-supplied schools one of their main priorities in the districts they controlled. What will become of their initiatives is still up in the air.

In all the existing structures of education, qualified manpower for system administration and management is still woefully inadequate. Many very dedicated teachers and supporters of schooling lack the knowledge and expertise for planning, mapping, financing, supervising, monitoring, and evaluating at the school level, not to mention the capacity required to deal with post-conflict administration at the regional and national levels. Since Somalia's independence, the UNESCO Institute of Educational Planning (IIEP) in Paris has trained only one Somali national in its advanced program of educational planning.

C. Quality and Relevance of Education

Somalis today can take some pride in their efforts to begin revitalizing the country's schools, even though the capacity and quality of the current system are far less than what a dynamic post-conflict nation like Somalia needs. There is no systematic research and only limited reliable data about the teaching and learning achievements of the country since 1990. Even the existing anecdotal evidence does not reveal what goes on within the classroom, or how successful the country's primary and secondary school graduates have been in the wider society. Despite these shortcomings, the existing education system continues to produce several thousand secondary school graduates (estimated at over 20,000 in 2005) who manage to enroll in local and international universities. There is a need to document the graduates' rates of employment in the private and nonprofit sectors, as well as to track the success of graduates from existing local universities in continuing their higher education.

D. Curriculum Development and Materials

Very limited efforts have gone into curriculum development, which requires expertise and resources that are beyond the capacities of many education providers in Somalia today. Extensive debates over the legitimacy of developing new curricula for Somalia in the absence of a recognized national government have distracted many educators from the practical tasks at hand.³⁶ Most schools still use books of dif-

ferent origins, including the old Somali-language texts prepared in the early 1970s and 80s, as well as imported schoolbooks from Kenya and various Arab countries. The choice of the textbooks was guided by the immediate needs of having educational material at hand rather than by any comprehensive policy developed and shared by the wider Somali society. Over the past decade, UNICEF and UNESCO have led an initiative to produce textbooks for the primary level. To date, they have been able to provide material up to Grade 7. Although several primary schools currently use the so-called “UNESCO books,” their value has been limited by the absence of clear educational guidelines for their use, the prolonged process of producing the books (eight years between the production of Standard One and Standard Seven books), and an unclear distribution policy. Education networks, such as FPENS, have initiated the production and introduction of Arabic textbooks. With the assistance of the Islamic Development Bank, Arabic textbooks have already been produced for Grades 1–6; unfortunately, to date they have only reached 10% of the pupils who need them. UNESCO and UNICEF might do well by collaborating with the FPENS project, but their reluctance to partner with and fund local initiatives remains a concern of Somali education providers.

E. Teacher Training

Contemporary education in Somalia is hindered by the scarcity of trained teachers. Many teachers from the pre-1990 era have retired, left the country, or changed occupations. To fill the gap, untrained people with different levels of education joined the teaching service. Many secondary schools employed engineers and scientists without education backgrounds to teach mathematics and sciences, while graduates of Islamic schools often teach Arabic language and Islam. To remedy the teacher shortage, international agencies and NGOs started short-term in-service training workshops. Although not always well coordinated, these workshops place an emphasis on teaching methodology to enable instructors to cope with the daily challenges of classroom management and delivering the knowledge from the often-inadequate textbooks that happen to be available.

Other promising initiatives include the recent establishment of teacher training institutions in Mogadishu, Garowe, and Amoud, which aim to prepare teachers beyond basic subject matter and to provide formally recognized academic certification, namely, a post-

secondary diploma in teacher education. Low pay and a perceived lack of professional development opportunities have discouraged many potentially qualified individuals from enrolling in these institutions, and “head-hunting” for prospective candidates is often conducted in a random and unprofessional manner.

Nonetheless, local educators have begun the serious debate about such issues as the criteria and eligibility for admission to teacher training programs. For example, should such programs follow the model of the old Scuola Magistrale by taking in middle school graduates? Or should they be willing to accept candidates with primary schooling, as the Siyaad Barre regime did? Or should the programs set the strictest standards and admit only secondary school graduates? Should training consist of at least two years for primary teachers and four years for secondary? Practical issues like adequate compensation, working conditions, and opportunities for further professional development will naturally determine how these debates are resolved, and whether there will even be an adequate pool of qualified candidates from which to draw.

F. Higher Education

With the collapse of the Somali state, the Somali National University was reduced to deserted buildings. All its documents and equipment were destroyed or looted. Fortunately, a sizable portion of its invaluable Forlani Collection of rare books, as well as many of the holdings of the National Library—which had also been pillaged—have been reassembled through the efforts of the Islamic Research and Documentation Centre in Mogadishu and are available for consultation upon request. At the Lafooley College of Education, the former teaching staff managed to save the buildings and some of the College’s library books and laboratory equipment. These small victories pale, however, beside the formidable challenges of reviving the country’s higher education system.

From 1996, civil society groups, international organizations, and local educators began a series of higher education initiatives in response to the growing number of secondary graduates seeking to continue their education. The earliest projects were Amoud University in Borama zone and Mogadishu University. These were followed by the founding of Hargeisa University and East African University in Bosaaso. Other less well known universities have recently sprung up in Mogadishu,

with support from local businessmen, the EU and Arab countries, and Western and Islamic NGOs. They include Islamic University, Benadir University, Xamar University, and Indian Ocean University. The Somali Institute of Management and Administration Development (SIMAD) started offering professional courses in accounting, business, and information technology at diploma and degree levels. Recently, still more “universities” have been announced by leaders in Kismayo, Baidoa, Hiran, Burco, Berbera, and Galkayo, besides another six universities in Mogadishu itself. Despite the uneven quality and questionable relevance of some of the education they offer or intend to provide, the proliferation of universities is a clear response to the hunger of Somali secondary school graduates for more advanced training (as well as an acknowledgement that foreign scholarships for Somali students are extremely hard to come by).

As yet, no network or association exists to monitor or regulate the quality of instruction in these newer universities, which are clearly not yet up to recognized international standards for higher educational institutions. A major question at the outset is who should have the authority to design the basic structure and curriculum for these universities and to certify any degrees they issue? Other critical issues facing Somali higher education more generally include:

- Setting priorities among disciplines and specializations to ensure that fields critical for national needs are sufficiently enrolled while avoiding an oversupply of graduates in less relevant fields
- Avoiding regional imbalances of educated citizens that may result from leaving the establishment of private institutions to market forces alone
- Ensuring that certified institutions of higher learning have adequate numbers of qualified professionals in planning, management, and instructional roles
- Ensuring that fiscal and governance structures are transparent and accountable
- Ensuring that classrooms, libraries, and laboratories are up to international standards in order to attract top students and faculty
- Devising a system for funding operations, salaries, and student scholarships over the long term

These challenges must be met if Somalia expects its university graduates to compete effectively in the global economy of the 21st century.

V. Recommendations

The following recommendations incorporate the lessons learned from the history of education in Somalia and the realities of the current situation. The challenges of rebuilding the education sector in Somalia are multiple and complex, ranging from the strictly educational (training or retraining teachers, developing curricula, providing books and other pedagogical resources) to the administrative and fiscal (planning, management, remuneration) to the infrastructural (facilities, access, sanitation, security). The kinds of schools that are established at the outset of the reconstruction process will invariably become models for the rest of the country and should therefore reflect the values and aspirations of the next generation of Somali citizens. Because rebuilding after conflict provides Somalia with an opportunity to introduce substantial reforms in its educational system, we offer an ambitious range of suggestions for consideration.

A. General Principles

1. *Security*

Provision of elementary and intermediate education for all Somali children ought to be one of the primary goals in the initial stages of reconstruction, and not put off as a secondary objective. We consider schooling as a vehicle that can help restore a sense of normality and bring a message of calm and peace to children affected by war. Because a safe learning environment is essential for the psychological well-being of young children, **one of the first priorities for security forces ought to be the protection of school premises and personnel throughout the country.**

2. *Access*

Certain foundational principles should guide educational planners right from the start, as these will set the direction for the next generation. Perhaps the most important is the **principle of equal access and opportunity for all Somali children**, regardless of gender, clan affiliation, regional origin, or economic status, and with full attention to the needs of those children handicapped or disabled by the war. Where there are separate schools for girls and boys, resources should

be allocated to ensure parity in the quality of instruction, facilities, and educational resources.

3. Recognition and Inclusiveness

Educational reconstruction must recognize the efforts of those educators who have struggled over the past sixteen years to provide basic learning for Somalia's children in the most difficult of circumstances. Planners and donors must be careful not to marginalize these individuals and their projects, but rather seek to include them in any new educational initiatives, drawing on their experience and offering to supplement their training and qualifications so they can continue to play a major role. This means that **Islamic schools and instructors**, who have carried the burden of education since the collapse of the state, ought to be considered **full partners** in planning and implementing the post-war educational system. Modern learning need not exclude the opportunity for students to continue with their moral and spiritual education; indeed, the latter has much to contribute to the restoration of civic life in Somalia.

4. Representation and Empowerment

The interests and assessment needs of foreign donors can sometimes be at odds with the experiences and needs of educators in Somalia. It is therefore essential that associations of educators inside Somalia have official representation on all government and international NGO donor committees involved in educational interventions in Somalia. Experienced Somali educators must be empowered to review and evaluate the advice of external agencies. The current Forum offers an ideal opportunity to consider new ways of structuring partnerships between Somali educators and international donor agencies, as well as new models for inter-donor collaboration.

5. Community Investment

History suggests that communities with an investment in their local schools are far more likely to sustain and protect them than if they feel dependent on external beneficiaries. We reiterate the necessity for local Somali community involvement in the planning and implementation phases of primary education, as well as involvement in the financing

and maintenance of local schools, taking the community's financial means into account.

B. Content and Curriculum

1. Media of Instruction

The use of Somali for teaching and learning in the early primary grades is the best way to reach the widest possible audience, and the **acquisition of basic literacy in Somali** is a desirable goal for a country with such a rich linguistic heritage. The updating and reprinting of Somali textbooks produced during the heyday of the 1970s literacy campaign can provide a valuable set of resources for primary school instruction. At the same time, the reality today is that many Somali children first learn to read and write in Arabic in Quranic schools. **Primary schooling that combines instruction in Somali with continued development of Arabic skills** poses a huge challenge for both students and teachers, but it will give Somali children a marked advantage in both the national and international language arenas. Proficiency in Arabic has practical as well as religious value, since many Somalis find productive work in the Gulf States.

2. English as a Second International Language

The introduction of English at the earliest appropriate level will help prepare Somali students for higher education, for employment with international organizations and businesses, and for engagement with the rest of English-speaking Africa. We recommend that **intensive English-language institutes funded by international donors** be established in various regions of the country to train Somali and Arabic-speaking teachers who would like to acquire proficiency in English. Other foreign languages familiar to Somalis (Italian and French, for example) could be taught to advanced students in institutes subsidized by those governments, with instruction geared to the kinds of specialized professional training that those European countries offer. Though **periodic linguistic "retooling"** can be time-consuming, it recognizes the reality of Somalia's complex foreign language history. Somalis have long demonstrated their capacity for acquiring **proficiency in multiple languages** to pursue their professional goals, and this skill will give them a decided advantage in the new global economy.

3. Education for Problem Solving

In addition to standard subjects for which there already exist materials and lesson plans, curriculum planners should include courses or case studies that deal with issues of communication, cooperation, reconciliation, and problem solving. They would utilize some of the vehicles (poetry, music, drama, storytelling) with which Somalis are familiar from their traditional culture. New and revised textbooks might include **lessons on underlying issues, such as poverty, illiteracy, discrimination, and patriarchy**, which have produced tensions in Somali society in the past. Somali universities and think tanks can collaborate with NGOs, educational research institutes and related organizations to develop up-to-date teaching materials in the critical areas of science, technology, law, engineering, and business.

4. Education for Victims of War

Child victims of violence and psychological trauma require special attention and counseling. Experts in this area of special needs should be made available (perhaps via mobile clinics) to train Somali personnel and to work with teachers and parents to help the students deal with their experiences, even as they integrate them into the normal classroom experience.

C. Teacher Training and Support

1. Rewarding Teachers

Teachers serve as important role models, not only for their pupils but also for their wider communities. They are often delegated to act as mediators, advisers, or spokespeople in dealings with governmental, non-governmental, and international agencies in the education sector. To expect all this from the new generation of Somali educators, there must be **adequate remuneration for the teaching profession**. International donors ought to target the provision of salaries for qualified Somali teachers as a practical and cost-effective priority in their aid programs.

2. Recruiting Somali Émigrés

To complement in-country efforts to attract Somalis to the teaching profession, foreign countries hosting Somali émigrés with professional training should seek ways to support those professionals who may want to return on a temporary basis to help educate citizens in their homeland. One strategy might be for foreign aid ministries to recruit Somalis living in their country for short- or medium-term projects in Somalia, perhaps allocating a portion of the professionals' salary to help subsidize the schooling, job training, and housing costs of family members who remain overseas in the host country.

3. Educational Partnerships

Short- or medium-term partnerships with distinguished teacher training and technical institutes in Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and North America—with exchanges in both directions—can expose Somali teachers to innovative pedagogical and research tools while familiarizing them with the latest international standards.

D. Non-Formal and Adult Education

1. Training for Re-employment

Adult education is an important consideration for post-conflict societies. The history of adult education efforts in Somalia offers little guidance, since few of the programs attempted in the late colonial or independence eras had lasting impact. Nonetheless, training adults for re-employment and income generation will help stabilize family economies and reinforce the value of education in the minds of their children. In addition, educated adults may be able to contribute in short-term ways to the rejuvenation of local security services, legal services, and the judiciary during the transitional period. Adult education is an area in which international NGOs might most productively contribute to educational reform, while leaving the more sensitive matter of educating children to Somali teachers, organizations, and educational planners.

2. Education for Peace and Community Building

Parent and adult education programs can provide families with the skills to help children recover from the trauma of war, as well as equip adults themselves with the knowledge to identify, monitor, and investigate instances of violence or potential violence. Schools can also be used as sites for workshops to assist community leaders in dealing effectively with people in authority in local government, international agencies, and NGOs. Local communities can be encouraged to seek out NGO support for establishing and equipping youth camps, clubs, and sports and recreation programs, in order to help youths of different backgrounds develop communication skills, teamwork, cooperation, and mutual respect. This was one of the positive lessons of the government-sponsored youth associations and sports clubs of the early years of the Siyaad Barre regime.

E. Higher Education and Long-Range Planning

1. Universities to Serve the Nation

Higher education has generally been designed to prepare an elite group of students for careers in government, public service, business, or world affairs. While these will continue to be important objectives for Somalia's higher education system, the revitalized universities should also be envisioned as important **centers of scientific and professional research in areas relevant to Somalia's development**, as sites for open discussion and debate about critical national issues, and as agents of social change. Universities could establish departments or programs of Community Research and Service Learning. Students would be required to collect data and consult with local leaders around the nation about the economic, environmental, medical, and social needs of Somalia's many communities. Then they would help design useful projects and programs to address those needs. Several old and new universities in West and South Africa have begun experimental programs to bridge the gap between "ivory tower" universities and the communities surrounding them. Somalia could become a regional pioneer in this area.

2. Research and Policy Chairs

International donors can be solicited to establish term Chairs for Somali scholars and professionals at Somali universities or other high profile research institutions. Individuals holding the Chairs would be charged to set up and supervise **programs of research and practice in areas of ongoing importance to Somali civic life** (e.g., peacemaking and conflict resolution; interaction of customary, Sharia, and international law; gender issues; human rights issues; civic education for youth; and democracy and international affairs). This would begin to **give Somalis control over the nation's research agenda and policy priorities**, and enable them to deal with international agencies from a solid foundation of research and knowledge.

3. University Linkages

Cooperative arrangements with reputable foreign universities should be partnerships rather than dependencies, aimed at building the capacity of Somalia's educational institutions. Priorities need to be set by Somalia's own scholars and educators. Matching these priorities with the resources of selected foreign universities can be accomplished through the creation of a database that identifies the assets, research needs, and short-term personnel requirements of Somali universities, as well as through Somali-led brainstorming workshops attended by representatives of agencies and institutions with histories of productive involvement in Somali education. Instead of the traditional one-to-one linkages, we recommend experimentation with consortia that might include other African as well as Middle Eastern and Western universities, centered on specific Somali priorities. Accomplished overseas Somali professionals identified through a new database can be encouraged to assist in the planning and implementation of these linkages.

VI. Conclusion

We recognize that education is only one component of the rebuilding process that faces Somalia. For work in the education sector to have lasting results, it must be accompanied by the restoration of the political, economic, and social infrastructure of the country. This larger reconstruction effort faces many internal and external obstacles.

Among the internal obstacles are: (a) a Somali political culture preoccupied with the mechanisms of power-sharing rather than with processes of problem solving; (b) an intellectual culture less inclined to engage in serious debate over the merit of new “ideas” than to question the motives of the individuals and groups who offer the ideas; and (c) an economic culture that values short-term, risk-averse investments in private enterprises more than longer-term investments in national public institutions. An educational model that focuses on identifying and solving shared national problems; encourages free debate over ideas on their own merits; and formulates goals and methods for building a civic order committed to human rights, equal opportunity, and environmental security across the entire nation is certainly one prerequisite for overcoming these entrenched attitudes and behaviors.

External obstacles to reconstruction range from donor fatigue to fear of terrorism. Here again, educated Somalis can play a major role in dispelling the skepticism of foreign friends whose cooperation is necessary, if not sufficient, for Somalia’s recovery. Schools and universities that produce Somali graduates with skills valued in the wider worlds of science, technology, diplomacy, and business will gain the respect of international organizations and governments and enable Somalia to play a positive role in regional developments in the Horn. Somali graduates with a commitment to high academic achievement, the values of international cooperation, peaceful resolution of disputes, and a religiously-informed commitment to human rights, development and social justice can help bridge the current unproductive divide between modern Islamic and progressive Western aspirations for a better society. While it would be fanciful to suppose that Somali education holds the key to resolving all these problems, there is nothing to prevent us from envisioning the possibilities as Somalia enters this critical and lengthy time of transition.

Notes

1. Lewis, p. 103–4.
2. Dawson, p. 203.
3. Lewis, pp. 132–33.
4. Dawson, p. 201.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 204.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 202.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 201.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 202.

9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p. 201.
12. Ibid., p. 202.
13. Ibid., p. 213.
14. Ibid., p. 200.
15. Ibid., p. 209.
16. Ibid., p. 210.
17. Ibid., p. 207.
18. Fanon Conference, pp. 313–14.
19. Hoben, p. 405.
20. Fanon Conference, p. 266.
21. Ibid., pp. 320–21.
22. Ibid., p. 314.
23. See Laitin and Samatar, p. 84; Fanon Conference, p. 313.
24. Figures from Laitin and Samatar, p. 87.
25. Fanon Conference, p. 255.
26. Ibid., p. 255 ff.
27. Ibid., pp. 256–57.
28. Laitin and Samatar, pp. 82–83.
29. Fanon Conference, p. 25.
30. Hoben, p. 407.
31. Bennaris 1996.
32. Ahmed Yusuf Duale, pp. 282–83.
33. Abdi I. Samatar 2001.
34. Novib-Wamy 2003.
35. Farah 2004.
36. Bennaris 1996.

Bibliography

Abdikarim et al. *History of Education in Somalia* (in Arabic). Ministry of Education, Somali Democratic Republic, 1978.

Africa Muslims Agency. *Education in Somalia: Past, Present and Future* (in Arabic). Mogadishu, Somalia, 1997.

Dawson, George G. "Education in Somalia." *Comparative Education Review* (October 1964): 199–214.

Duale, Ahmed Yusuf. "Education in Somaliland." In *War Destroys, Peace Nurtures. Somali Reconciliation and Development*, edited by Richard Ford et al. Lawrenceville, N.J.: Red Sea Press, 2004, pp. 281–283.

Formal Private Education Network in Somalia (FPENS). *Annual Report 2003*. Mogadishu, Somalia, 2004.

- Hoben, Susan J. "Language Issues and Education in Somalia." In *Proceedings of the Third International Congress of Somali Studies, Rome 1986*, edited by Annarita Puglielli. Rome: Il Pensiero Scientifico Editrice, 1988, pp. 403–409.
- Jama Musse Jama. "Investing in Teachers and Other Professional Educators: The Somaliland Case." In *War Destroys, Peace Nurtures. Somali Reconciliation and Development*, edited by Richard Ford et al. Lawrenceville, N.J.: Red Sea Press, 2004, pp. 286–292.
- Laitin, David, and S. Samatar. *Somalia: Nation in Search of a State*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1987.
- Lewis, I.M. *A Modern History of Somalia*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1988.
- Retamal, G., and M. Devadoss. *Rehabilitating the Education Sector in Somalia*. UNESCO, Somalia, 1994.
- Salem, H. *Somalia: Past and Present* (in Arabic). Egyptian Printing Press, 1965.
- Samatar, Abdi I. "Somali Reconstruction and Local Initiative: Amoud University." *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies*, Vol. 1 (2001): 107–134.
- Samatar, Ahmed I. *Socialist Somalia: Rhetoric and Reality*. London: Zed Books, 1988.
- "Somalia: Revolutionary Transformations." Papers presented at the Third Frantz Fanon International Conference, Mogadishu, June 18–24, 1979. Selected, compiled, and edited by Hussein Mohamed Adam. Mogadishu: State Printing Agency.
- Urch, George. "Teacher Education and Reconstruction in Somalia." In *Mending Rips in the Sky: Options for Somali Communities in the 21st Century*, edited by Hussein M. Adam and Richard Ford. Lawrenceville, N.J.: Red Sea Press, 1997, pp. 403–410.
- WAMY and NOVIB. "Arab Donor Policies and Practices regarding Education in Somalia/Land. A Joint Research Project of Somalia," 2003.