



Conflict Factsheet

Conflict between the Sa'ad and Suleiman of the Habar Gidir

Type of conflict
Sub

Intensity
3

Conflict Locality
Eastern Africa

Time
1991 –ongoing

Countries
Somalia

Resources
Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water



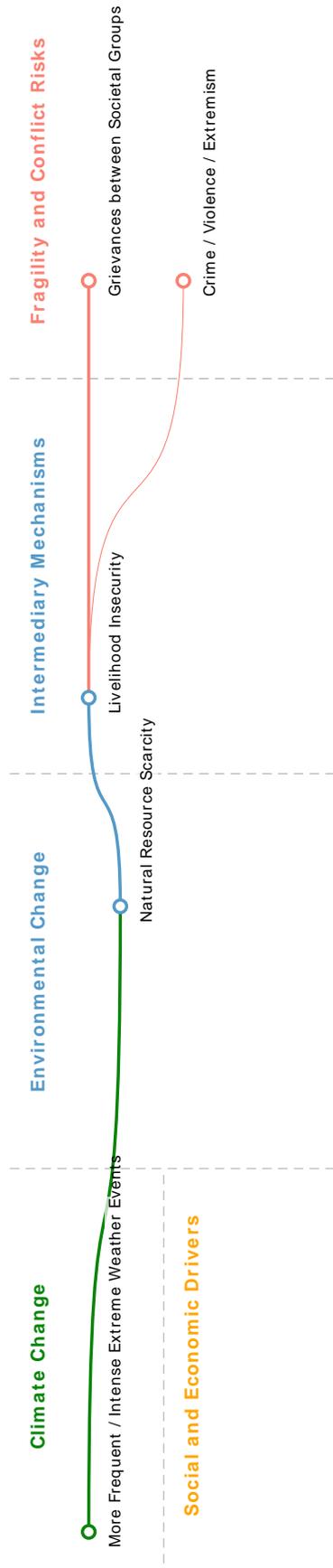
Local resource competition

Conflict Summary

Conflict between the pastoralist Sa'ad and Suleiman sub clans of the Habar Gidir clan revolves around access to water and grazing land. The scarcity of these natural resources has been increasing due to a higher frequency and intensity of droughts in recent years. The availability of heavy weaponry has added to the high number of fatalities.



Conceptual Model



Context Factors



Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water

Water-stressed Area

History of Conflict
Lack of Alternative Livelihoods
Low Level of Economic Development
Weak Institutions



Conflict History

Since the collapse of Mohamed Siad Barres' authoritarian regime in the early 1990s, the Sa'ad and Suleiman sub clans of the Habar Gidir have repeatedly fought over grazing rights and political dominance. At first, fighting revolved around the control over parts of the Madug area in central Somalia, a major centre of trade and commerce. In the following years the conflict died down. Between 2004 and 2011 clashes over access to wells and grazing areas opposed both communities against the background of severe droughts. Fighting between the two sub clans, which has involved the use of heavy weaponry and violent attacks on civilians, has claimed over 300 lives and is likely to resurface in the wake of severe drought (UCDP, 2015).

Droughts and armed violence in Somalia

Due to its geographical location and volatile environment Somalia is highly vulnerable to extreme weather events such as droughts and floods. Particularly, droughts have increased as a crucial factor fuelling local conflict in Somalia over the past decades, with 2011 being the most destructive drought in the last 50 years. The ensuing famine killed over 250,000 people according to UN information (Howden, 2013; Hove, Echeverría & Parry, 2011). Research has found that droughts in Somalia have an indirect impact on the number of local conflicts. By limiting the availability of essential resources they frequently drive local communities such as the Sa'ad and Suleiman of the Habar Gidir into fierce competition for access to wells and grazing land (Maystadt & Ecker, 2014).

Moreover, droughts decrease the income of pastoralists by lowering livestock prices, thereby creating incentives for conflict participation. Extremist groups such as Al-Shabaab profit from these developments as they can provide food or payment. Thus, their recruitment numbers increase sharply in times of extreme environmental hardship (see [Droughts, livestock prices and armed conflict in Somalia](#)).

Favourable conditions for conflict escalation

The impact of droughts on the life of Somalian pastoralists is further heightened by Somalia's high dependence on the livestock sector. It contributes to approximately 60% of the national GDP, provides food and income to about 70% of Somalia's population and makes up 85% of the country's export earnings (Godiah et al., 2015). Furthermore, the political instability in Somalia has played an aggravating role. There has been no effective central government in Somalia between the collapse of the Barre regime in 1991 and the inauguration of the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) in 2012. The absence of a central authority, which provides basic services and security, facilitates the escalation of drought-induced conflicts (UCDP, 2015).

Resolution Efforts

The Sa'ad and Suleiman sub clans held several peace conferences between 2004 and 2007, when a final peace agreement was reached. Funding for these conferences and the resulting measures was provided by the TFG, the Puntland administration as well as the governments of Sweden and Norway through Interpeace (Amber & Habibullah, 2008).



Preliminary meetings between in 2004 and 2006

A first peace conference was held in 2004. The outcome was a settlement in which both communities agreed to an unconditional ceasefire and the establishment of a joint committee of elders. However, negotiations were interrupted as the Suleiman delegation of the joint committee was ambushed by Sa'ad fighters later the same year.

In 2006 a conference was organized by elders and politicians of both groups in collaboration with the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of Somalia. It was attended by high level representatives such as the President and the Prime Minister of the TFG, highlighting the interest of the TFG to pacify both groups. Later the same year two smaller conferences were held in Bandiradley and El Hur. During these conference issues concerning access to water points and grazing areas were addressed and mechanisms to deal with grievances and avoid revenge killings were established. These mechanisms include increased communication between the two communities, a ceasefire, the constant monitoring of the peace process by joint committees and regular meetings in conflict prone areas. Overall these conferences were used to build trust and confidence in the light of the main reconciliation conference at Adado in February 2007 ([Amber & Habibullah, 2008](#)).

The Adado settlement in 2007

At Adado hostilities between the two groups were settled. It was agreed upon that stolen property was to be returned through a joint property dispute committee, which was created at the conference. Furthermore, free movement and access to pastures by both communities was agreed upon. To ensure the sustainability of the peace and to monitor any wrong doings a joint elders' council and a joint local judiciary were initiated. The conference was attended by 230 participants, including religious and traditional leaders, women and observers of the TFG and the Puntland administration ([Amber & Habibullah, 2008](#)).

Obstacles to a lasting peace

Despite these efforts, relations between both groups are unstable and violence has re-erupted in 2011, claiming more than 30 lives. A lasting solution to the conflict seems difficult to achieve. Unlike certain other groups in Somalia the Suleiman and Sa'ad sub clans lack an established "xeer", a customary law defining compensation in the event of the killing of a clan member and establishing the foundation for collective resource use and local conflict resolution ([Amber & Habibullah, 2008](#)). Reconciliation efforts are further hampered by the absence of a strong national authority. Inaugurated in 2012, the Federal Government of Somalia is struggling to establish functioning state structures against major security and development challenges. Furthermore, the question remains, if the newly elected government will have the necessary capacities to reduce pastoralists' vulnerability against increasingly frequent droughts and floods ([Amber & Habibullah, 2008](#)). Due to the Somalia's fragile political situation, national drought adaptation strategies remain limited (see Droughts, livestock prices and armed conflict in Somalia). Finally, the involvement of international aid organizations in the central regions of Somalia remains limited, due to persistent insecurity and the lack of adequate infrastructures ([UCDP, 2015](#)).



Intensities & Influences



INTENSITIES

International / Geopolitical Intensity

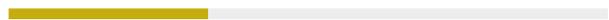


Human Suffering



INFLUENCES

Environmental Influences



Societal Influences



Violent Conflict

Yes



Salience with nation

Regional



Mass displacement

Less than 100.000 and less than 10% of the country's population are displaced within the country.



Cross Border Mass Displacement

No



Resolution Success

Reduction in Violence

Violence reduced significantly, but did not cede.



Reduction in geographical scope

There has been no reduction in geographical scope.



Increased capacity to address grievance in the future

The capacity to address grievances in the future has increased.



Grievance Resolution

Grievances have been partially addressed.



Causal Attribution of Decrease in Conflict Intensity

Decrease in conflict intensity at least partially the result of conflict resolution strategies.





Entry Points for Resilience and Peace Building

Mediation & arbitration	2
To ensure the sustainability of peace and to monitor any wrong doings a joint elders' council and a joint local judiciary were initiated.	
Treaty/agreement	3
A peace agreement was reached between the Sa'ad and Suleiman sub clans after several peace conferences held between 2004 and 2007.	
Compensation	2
Both communities agreed that stolen property was to be returned through a joint property dispute committee.	
Coping with uncertainty	0
National drought adaptation strategies need to be strengthened in order to reduce pastoralists' vulnerability against increasingly frequent droughts and floods.	

Resources and Materials

Conflict References

[Droughts, Livestock Prices and Armed Conflict in Somalia](#)

References with URL

[Amber, A. I. & Habibullah, S. I. H. \(2008\). The Search for Peace. Somali Programme: Community-based Peace Processes in South-Central Somalia](#)

[Godiah, L.M., Baker, D., Elmi, I., Costagli, R., Gulaid, I. & Wanyoike, F \(2015\). Enhancing the provision of livestock marketing information in Somaliland](#)

[Hove, H., Echeverría, D. & Parry, J.E. \(2011\). Review of Current and Planned Adaptation Action: East Africa](#)

[Howden, D. \(2013\). Somalia: UN's late declaration of famine in 2011 cost lives](#)

[Maystadt J.F. & Ecker, O. \(2014\). Extreme Weather and Civil War: Does Drought Fuel Conflict in Somalia through Livestock Price Shocks? American Journal of Agricultural Economics](#)

[UCDP \(2015\). UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia - Somalia](#)

Further information

<https://factbook.ecc-platform.org/conflicts/conflict-between-saad-and-suleiman-habar-gidir>