

Mogadishu: City report

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Abstract

Mogadishu, the capital and largest city of Somalia, has an estimated population of about 2 million and faces numerous challenges. This report is part of the African Cities Research Consortium (ACRC), and it examines Mogadishu's urban development challenges through six comprehensive studies. It explores the intersections of political settlements, city systems and four key domains: land and connectivity, informal settlements, safety and security, and youth capability development. The findings highlight political complexities, governance issues and systemic patterns affecting urban growth. Key challenges include land disputes, poor infrastructure, informal settlement dynamics, security threats from gangs and al-Shabaab, and youth unemployment and political underrepresentation. The report identifies crosscutting themes that hinder development and suggests potential reforms. Overall, it provides an in-depth understanding of Mogadishu's complex issues and proposes interventions for future urban development.

Keywords: Political settlement, city systems, informal settlement, gatekeeper system, youth gangs, reforms

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Acronyms

AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
ATMIS	African Union Transition Mission in Somalia
AU	African Union
BRA	Banadir Regional Administration
CURA	Comprehensive Urban Services Regulatory Authority
IDPs	Internally displaced people
MFI	Microfinance institution
MTO	Mobile money transfer operator
PPP	Public–private partnership
UNOSOM	United Nations Operation in Somalia

1. Introduction and overview

Mogadishu, as the capital of the Somali government, has undergone a gradual process of urban recovery over the past decade. This recovery has been accompanied by rapid urbanisation, with estimates suggesting a growth rate of up to 4% per year (Earle, 2021, Expanding Access to Justice Program, 2020), leading to a surge in construction activities and escalating land prices. However, despite these positive developments,

Figure 1: Map showing the geographic location of Mogadishu

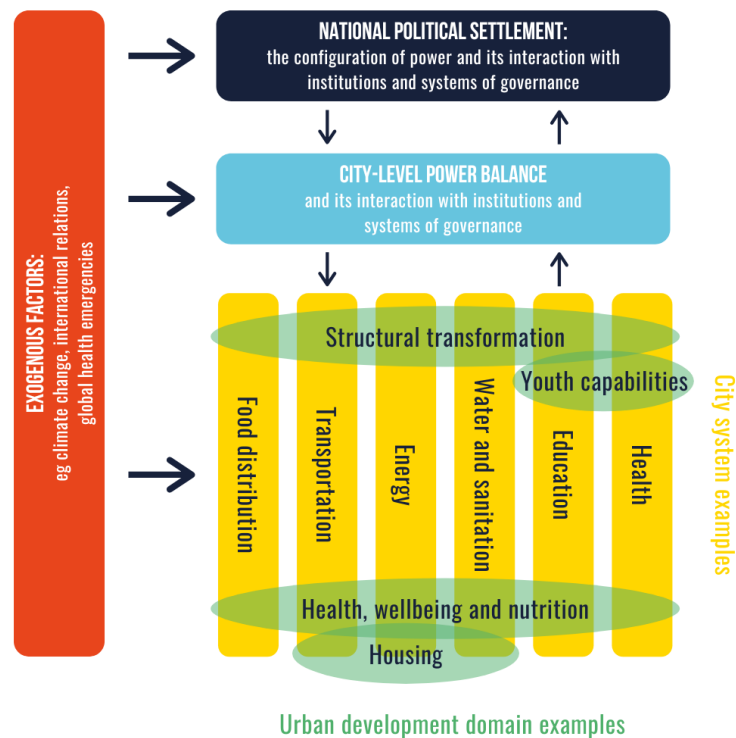


certain fundamental aspects of the city's political settlement remain unresolved, particularly Mogadishu's constitutional status.

In response to the complex challenges and opportunities presented by Mogadishu's urban transformation, the African Cities Research Consortium (ACRC), in collaboration with the Heritage Institute for Policy Studies (HIPS), Tana Copenhagen, the Somali Public Agenda, and the Somali Gender Equity Movement, undertook an extensive and meticulous research project. The ACRC's holistic framework for analysing urban development in Africa has three integrated components – **politics,**

systems and **development domains**. The politics component uses “political settlements” theory to model how power is configured at the national and city levels, and then analyses how these configurations of power shape (and are shaped by) urban development processes in the given city. The systems component analyses the functioning of the key systems (composed of physical infrastructure and people organised in various ways) that sustain and/or improve urban life in each city. The domains component looks at some of the distinct fields of discourse, policy and practice that have formed around complex, intersystemic development challenges in the city, and analyses how the actors (political, bureaucratic, professional and popular) engaged in these fields collaborate and/or compete for authority. Figure 2 below indicates how these three components come together; each component is explained in more detail in the main sections of this report.

Figure 2: ACRC's conceptual framework



In Mogadishu, the ACRC team conducted six comprehensive studies on politics, city systems, and the four domains of land and connectivity; informal settlements; safety and security; and youth and capability development.¹ This report synthesises the key findings of these studies and reflects on some crosscutting issues that emerged. It also identifies priorities for future research and interventions in Mogadishu. Key issues to be addressed are: the undefined security structure of the city; youth gangs (*ciyaal weero*); the aid basket; and the political economy of privatisation of public services, such as waste management.

Generally, while employing qualitative research methods, all six studies combined interviews and document analyses. For the political settlement study, the researchers used qualitative research methods, interviewing 76 people including members of parliament, former ministers, district commissioners, directors, businesspeople, youth, and women leaders. They also conducted three focus group discussions. The city of systems study, conducted by Tana Copenhagen, used comprehensive literature review and key informant interviews. On the domain side, the safety and security domain study is based on 30 in-depth qualitative interviews conducted by the Somali Public Agenda team in July 2022 with a range of residents in Hodan and Kahda districts.

¹ Each research team started with a desk review and a mapping note. They then gathered data using key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Two of the studies (safety and security and informal settlements) focused on the Kahda and Hodon districts, where most informal settlements and IDPs are located.

Similarly, the informal settlement domain was conducted in Hodan and Kahda. These sites were selected because of their diverse location, with Hodan district located in the city centre and Kahda district on the outskirts, thus providing a rich picture of the city's different experiences. The land and connectivity study utilised two methodical approaches to collect and generate primary data: semistructured interviews with key officials and experts; and a participatory mapping exercise. These methods were chosen to address potential gaps in data availability. The youth and capability development domain methodology employed three approaches with a gender lens to collect data: focus group discussions, key informant interviews (KII), and a stakeholder engagement workshop.

The research teams faced challenges and limitations due to the fluid security situation in Mogadishu, where road closures prevented field staff from accessing interview sites. Additionally, residents of Mogadishu face risks if they stand out, resulting in some respondents being reluctant to engage with field staff, despite assurances of confidentiality. The fieldwork also coincided with a period of intense national elections, making it more challenging to engage and interview certain stakeholders. Finally, a significant number of attacks and sieges by al-Shabaab occurred during the data collection process, leading to the cancellation of appointments for several days. Despite the challenges, the research teams were able to complete their projects on time.

2. Making sense of the political settlement of Somalia

To understand urban development and prospects for developmental reform in Mogadishu, we need to understand who wields power and how they use it. City-level power dynamics do not exist in a vacuum; they are typically influenced by what we call the country's "political settlement". A political settlement is a common understanding among a society's most powerful groups about the basic rules (or institutions) of the political and economic game. Those rules create opportunities or benefits for "insider" groups, often to the exclusion of "outsiders".

Political settlements can be analysed in a variety of ways, but we focus on two main dimensions: *power configuration* and *social foundation*.

The power configuration describes the relative strength of groups loyal to the leader (collectively referred to as the "leader's bloc") vis-a-vis groups that oppose the leader or are only contingently loyal. Crudely, where the leader's bloc is strong, we say that power is "concentrated". Where, by contrast, the leader's bloc is weak, we say that power is "dispersed". Power concentration, interacting with other variables, shapes the ability of the government to make and implement decisive, consistent urban development policy.

The social foundation describes the breadth and depth of groups that are “insiders” to the settlement.² Where a relatively large proportion of the population are insiders, we describe the settlement as “broad”. Where, conversely, only a relatively small proportion of the population are “insiders”, we describe the settlement as “narrow”. The social foundation, interacting with other variables, will shape the degree to which governing elites are committed to “inclusive” urban development policy.³

The most recent (2018) classification of Somalia’s political settlement found it to be “broad-dispersed” (Kelsall et al., 2022: 201). Much political analysis to date has had a focus on the national rather than the sub-national scale. In this section, we analyse how this political settlement has historically shaped urban development in Mogadishu, and how it shapes the city’s prospects for reform.

Although not fully settled, Somalia’s tentative political settlement is based on four domestic factors and two external components. The first and perhaps most important domestic factor is the 4.5 clan-based power-sharing formula. In post-civil war Somalia, clan identity serves interchangeably with political constituency in terms of representation and belonging. After more than 15 reconciliation conferences failed to produce a political settlement (between 1991 and 1999), the civil society-led group that convened in Arta, Djibouti, in 2000, decided to adopt the 4.5 clan system for power-sharing. Each of the four clans (Darod, Digil and Mirifle, Dir and Hawiye) received 61 seats, while many smaller, unarmed clans were allocated 31 seats. For politicians, clan identity becomes a politicised tool for gaining power. While some scholars have lauded it as a golden power-sharing formula, others criticise it for institutionalising discrimination and sectarian politics.

Second, Somalia’s political settlement is based on federalism, albeit poorly understood and incomplete. Though still contested and incomplete, the nation is structured into three levels of government – federal, federal member states, and local. Excluding Somaliland, there are five federal member states: Puntland, Galmudug, Hirshabelle, South-West and Jubbaland. The justification for adopting this model, according to its proponents, was to address the previous military government’s excessive centralisation of power in the capital, which neglected or suppressed other regions. Somaliland, declaring itself an independent territory yet lacking international recognition as such, is not considered part of Somalia’s national political settlement. Representation for Somaliland within Somalia’s national political framework is provided by unionist politicians from Somaliland territories, who, however, face the challenge of being officially unable to visit their fully controlled territories. It should be noted that the

2 To be an “insider” a group has to satisfy two criteria: 1) it is potentially powerful enough, acting alone or with others, to make significant trouble for the leadership and/or significantly affect struggles between political blocs; and 2) the leadership chooses to manage this potential threat predominantly by “co-opting” the group, and thereby incorporate it into the settlement, by channelling benefits of some description to it. Groups that either lack the power to affect struggles in this way, or that are predominantly repressed by the leadership, are “outsiders” to the settlement.

3 For further details, see Kelsall et al. (2021).

Benadir regional administration is controlled by the federal government of Somalia (as it is not a federal member state and so does not have representation in the Senate). The president has the authority to appoint the mayor and its four deputies.

Third, Somalia's political class conducts elections (political dispensations) every four/five years. Since the establishment of the third republic in 2000, six presidents have been elected: Abdiqasim Salad Hassan, Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo and Hassan Sheikh Mohamud for the second term. The Somali political elite is determined to change governments every four or five years. Attempts by any president to extend their mandate beyond this period have precipitated political instability. A good example is when the former President Farmajo signed a controversial law to extend his term by two years, which resulted in the worst political violence in Mogadishu for years (Aljazeera, 2021).

The fourth and final domestic factor in the political settlement is the threat from al-Shabaab. The federal government's inability to monopolise the legitimate use of violence and extend its control throughout the country compels the political elite to maintain the settlement instead of engaging in conflict, either against Mogadishu or among themselves.

Externally, the African Union peacekeeping forces (ATMIS) and the international community's financial and political support prevent the Somali elite from reverting to active conflict. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and international financial support have kept the political settlement from failing. AMISOM is an important guarantor of the country's political settlement and power configuration, as it has been protecting the government from armed non-state actors. First deployed in 2007, AMISOM has been instrumental in creating a degree of stability. Though it has fallen short of defeating al-Shabaab, the survival of the federal government in Mogadishu largely depends on the presence of the foreign peacekeeping forces. AMISOM has now been reconfigured as the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). Funds from the international community, particularly the European Union, sustain the Somali government. International funding also enables the African Union (AU) mission and operations that provide a measure of stability and a vital source of security for the settlement. For instance, the Federal Government of Somalia passed an almost \$1 billion budget in 2022, of which the international community paid about 75%.⁴

2.1. Political settlement of Mogadishu

The role of Mogadishu and its relationship with the ruling coalition can be summarised with Nuruddin Farah's quote, "Mogadishu is the country, and the country is Mogadishu" (Farah, 1988). It is the seat of the federal government, the international community and

⁴ The FGS budget of 2022; Appropriation Act for the 2022 budget available at the Ministry of Finance's [website](#) (accessed 15 July 2024).

the peacekeeping missions. In electoral seasons, all the elites in the political settlement gather in Mogadishu. No other city in Somalia can carry the weight of the political elite in terms of political pressure, rent distributions and the making and unmaking of political alliances.

According to Law Number Six, which was passed during the military regime, the sitting federal president is the ruler of the city because he appoints the city mayor/governor, deputies and the general secretary. Political appointments are along clan lines. The mayor appoints district commissioners, directors and departmental heads. Clans in the city form the social production model of power but have no political voice in deciding who becomes the mayor/governor, a deputy or the general secretary. The mayor and his deputies struggle for power and political influence by expressing their loyalty to the president.

Federal ministries compete with the city administration for development projects and taxation revenues. Mogadishu does not have senators in the upper house because its status in the federal arrangement is undecided. This has generated a debate on whether Mogadishu should become a city within a new federal member state – the Banadir region – and so become the capital city of both Somalia and this region. Other proposals suggest that the whole city or some districts should become federal territory. Dominant clans and groups, meanwhile, believe that the city is underrepresented because of the lack of clarity about its place in the federal structure. Mogadishu residents cannot select members of the senate. They say the regional states hold the city's political future hostage by constantly opposing its preferred status in the federal dispensation. They also point out that Mogadishu is the only place in Somalia where federal taxation is in place. If a political aspirant whose clan dominates city politics wants to be a member of parliament, he or she must seek a seat from a regional state, Galmudug or Hirshabelle.

Leaders of the regional states argue that Mogadishu is the largest beneficiary of foreign aid and developmental assistance. A former federal interior minister, Abdi Farah Juha, who is now a regional minister of Puntland, was quoted saying, the “presentation of Mogadishu as a victim in the federal structure is a mere scapegoat”.⁵ The former minister said that neither the debates on federalism nor the undecided status of the city are obstacles to district council formation and the election of a mayor. Whichever model of administration is implemented in Mogadishu, a decision on its political future has the potential to reshape the national political settlement, be that positively or negatively.

Formal power in the city is embedded in the federal structure, since the mayor and deputies are appointed by the sitting president. The autonomy of the city authority is limited in terms of decisionmaking and management. Although formal power is concentrated at the top from the presidency, city mayor and district commissioners, it is

⁵ Interview with Minister Abdi Farah Juha, August 2022, Garowe, Somalia (Muhumed and Elmi, 2023).

fragmented and territorialised at the bottom. The airport is a good example of the complexities and multiple layers of fragmented power at the bottom in Mogadishu. On entering the airport building, Ugandan peacekeeping forces take over, frisking travellers bound for domestic or international flights. The Ugandans also oversee the private security firm which operates the sniffer dogs, along with masked Somali security officials. After checking in, travellers bound for international flights enter a security area run by their airline. The airport is also dotted with compounds and hotels, foreign missions and UN agencies, all with private security.

Whilst the Banadir Regional Administration, al-Shabaab, clan militias and the powerful business sector all wield power in Mogadishu, the main actor is the federal government, an entity bolstered by the AU's peacekeeping forces and funded by the donor community. The power and legitimacy of the federal government in Mogadishu lies in the financial and military support it receives from these external actors. There has been speculation that if the international community withdrew from Mogadishu, there would be chaos and the government would collapse, as happened in Afghanistan after NATO's disorderly departure. Others contend that Mogadishu's internal power structure, clan dynamics and militias are dissimilar to Kabul, and the capital would not fall to militant groups. Ongoing operations against al-Shabaab and the declaration by the current president of an "all-out war" give a degree of credence to the latter argument. Al-Shabaab does not have permanent bases in Mogadishu, but it is a parallel authority that generates income and conducts operations in the city. The militant group poses a potent threat to the formal and informal strands of the political settlement, both in the city and at the national level.

In terms of Somalia's developmental strategy, Mogadishu plays a key role for two main reasons: first, it is the only city under the federal government's control, from which taxes are collected; and second, a significant portion of foreign aid, including budget support, developmental projects, and humanitarian assistance, is funnelled through the federal government, based in Mogadishu. As noted, the aid basket provides over 70% of the country's annual budget – in part because al-Shabaab is perceived as a regional and global threat. Leaders of the regional states also protest that Mogadishu's share of foreign aid and development assistance is disproportionately large. Nonetheless, Mogadishu represents a central level of government, as it is the seat of the Federal Government of Somalia. The distribution and decisionmaking regarding foreign aid and development grants for Somalia are undertaken by the Federal Government of Somalia during meetings between the federal government and federal member states under the auspices of the ministry of finance. However, there is no established mechanism for fiscal aid federalism; instead, it relies on a gentlemen's agreement between the finance ministries of Federal Member States and Federal Government of Somalia.

Thus, international financial assistance is the backbone of elite spoils, patronage and political rivalry in Mogadishu and throughout the country. In this topdown, internally mediated political settlement, it is primarily the elite who reap the benefits of the status quo – a situation that has seen minimal change over the past two decades. At the time

of writing, Somalia's political settlement ignores the voices, concerns and needs of ordinary Somalis (despite it being classified as having a broad social foundation as recently as 2018 (Kelsall et al., 2022: 201), resulting in a failure to deliver benefits in the form of service delivery.

2.2. Mogadishu governance

Al-Shabaab, ATMIS, the international community and the influential private sector each play a crucial role in shaping the dynamics of power and politics in Mogadishu. However, at the official level, district commissioners and various security branches of the federal government, including national and district police commissioners, compete for control at the sub-city level. Yet, the city has not reached a formal political agreement.

In terms of city administration, politicians from the Hawiye clan, especially the Mundullod, Habar-Gidir, and Murursade sub-clans, have predominantly influenced Mogadishu's politics. The mayor, deputy mayors and the majority of district commissioners are selected from these sub-clans, adhering to the city's informal clan-based powersharing arrangement. The federal president nominates the mayor/governor, whose tenure and authority largely depend on the federal president's discretion. The mayor, who is supported by four deputies, also serves as the governor of the Banadir region, with the acting deputy mayor being the second most influential position. Typically, the deputy of finance and administration assumes the role of acting deputy mayor, although the deputies of security and political affairs occasionally contend for this significant position.

Clan affiliation and loyalty are key criteria for securing top political positions in the city. The mayoral post is traditionally awarded to members of the Mundullood sub-clans, a practice that has been unofficially in place since 2004. The roles of three out of the four deputies and the secretary general are distributed among the Murusade, Habargidir, Duduble and Hawadle sub-clans of Hawiye, respectively. The remaining deputy slot is usually allocated to a member of the Banadiri community. The mayor is responsible for appointing district commissioners and senior officials who manage the city, with all appointments being made according to informal clan powersharing traditions, a practice as old as the country's political settlement.

Such appointments lead to power struggles within the city's governance structures. For example, deputies compete over who represents the mayor in his absence, with those closer to the president wielding more influence. It is common for them to seek the president's favour and support his campaign efforts, as reported by a district commissioner.

The city's administration is divided into 17 districts and three “emerging districts” (*deegaan beeleedyo*),⁶ which are clan settlements. Before 2017, the federal ministry of

⁶ The phrase “district to be” implies that they are not fully recognised as a district, but they are expected to become one, given that they exhibit all the characteristics of a district.

the interior was involved in appointing district commissioners, but this authority was transferred to the Banadir region as part of the decentralisation process by Abdi Farah (Juxa), the then federal minister of the interior. Although the mayor, in consultation with his deputies and the secretary, was expected to appoint district commissioners, this has rarely occurred, with the mayor frequently accused of selecting loyalists without consultation.

The study on political settlements identified four methods through which local politicians secure senior city administration roles: by gaining support from a powerful federal minister, by securing the backing of a president of a member state, by mobilising clans, and by nurturing existing relationships with the sitting mayor.

Clan dynamics and district size determine the number of deputies (two or three) for each district commissioner, and it is the mayor who appoints them. Like the mayor, district commissioners lack the authority to dismiss their deputies, resulting in ongoing power struggles at the district level. Commissioners and their deputies often recruit staff members and bodyguards from their own families, citing security concerns.

City residents cannot select their public officials, either at the district or city levels. Although they can campaign, sub-clan families do not have the power to choose the mayor, his deputies, or district commissioner and his/her deputies, or secretaries or departmental heads. The current president has blocked all efforts by clan elders, the business community and political groups to nominate their preferred candidates for mayor and deputies.

Power division and collaboration at the district level follow accepted practices, rather than formal rules regarding authority distribution and delegation. The district council, comprising district commissioners, deputies, department heads and chairs of youth and women's organisations, lacks a formal hierarchy, due to internal conflicts. Since district commissioners cannot discipline or remove their deputies, they report to the mayor, accusing their deputies of usurping their mandate and authority.

City politics thus mirrors national politics, characterised by a fragile power balance, patronage, economic rentseeking and unpredictability. A notable similarity between city and national politics is the absence of co-opting dissidents, despite widespread economic rents. Instead of winning over opponents, city political elites prefer to reward loyalists.

The command structure in Mogadishu is loose, resulting in territorialised and competing authorities. District commissioners have developed innovative strategies to combat gangs, such as *ciyaal weero* ("aggressive youth"), by involving parents, elders and religious scholars. These district-level initiatives extend to managing community-collected funds.

For instance, Mohamed Abukar Ali “Ja’far”, the former district commissioner of Dayniile, exhibited leadership that earned both fear and admiration within his district. Gunmen were unable to operate under his rule, which restored law and order. Ja’far effectively repelled al-Shabaab and other militant factions, ushering in a much-needed peace. Furthermore, he established strong connections with the local populace, gaining their respect and trust by resolving land disputes and counterfeit title deeds. Ja’far also took on the task of renovating roads and constructing new ones. Residents of Dayniile, interviewed for the political settlement study, described him as fair and not swayed by the city’s influential figures (Muhumed and Elmi, 2023). The key to his influence was his substantial base of loyal military gunmen positioned around the outskirts of the Dayniile district. Moreover, Colonel Saney Abdulle, who runs the Gubadleey clan settlement, provides protection for its residents, shielding them from armed factions within the city, including al-Shabaab.

Saney Abdulle and Mohamed Ja’far are examples of how power is both centralised and decentralised within the city at the same time. Power is centralised through appointed positions, yet decentralised, as individuals like soldiers at roadblocks, militia leaders, commissioners or the city’s police chief can occasionally act autonomously.

Tax collection within the city is managed by three entities: the federal ministry of finance; the Banadir region (represented by a private company contracted by the mayor at the time of data collection); and district-level tax collectors. Notably, the mayor’s decision to outsource tax collection led district commissioners to initiate parallel tax collections. Taxation here does not represent a social contract, wherein taxes are exchanged for services to the residents. Rather, it is coercive, often overlooking the needs of the city’s inhabitants. For instance, in addition to paying protection money to al-Shabaab, a small business owner is also obliged to pay taxes to both the federal ministry of finance and the Banadir/city administration.

Territoriality serves as a fundamental pillar in maintaining the power equilibrium in Mogadishu, preventing the disintegration of the city’s political agreement. Whether it concerns a checkpoint, junction or district, the power enclaves respect each other’s boundaries. This mutual respect for power and territory prevents elite conflicts and stabilises the political landscape. In 2021, when their interests were at risk, Mogadishu’s dominant clans established territorial spheres of influence through powerful militia groups.

The territorialisation of power poses a significant challenge to developmental initiatives, as soldiers at checkpoints, district and police commissioners and militia leaders demand bribes. Failure to meet their demands heightens the risk of project sabotage. Despite the extensive territorialisation and fragmentation of power, forming coalitions for reform remains feasible if elite commitment is secured. The city has seen a variety of medium-sized developmental projects, spearheaded by both international and local efforts, over the last decade. Notable projects include those managed by Turkish development agencies or funded by Qatar, such as road constructions and refurbishments of public buildings and hospitals.

Reform advocates in Mogadishu need to foster a relationship with the current mayor, Yusuf Hassan Jimale (Maddaale). During his previous tenure, Maddaale transformed the business elite into development partners, especially in the renovation and construction of new roads. Consequently, he is viewed as someone who respects agreements, is diligent, less corrupt, open to significant reforms and responsive to public needs. Business leaders interviewed held Maddaale in high regard, portraying him as an effective reformer, provided he remains uninfluenced by his political superior, the federal president.

Maddaale initially enjoyed popularity among the public for being perceived as a religious man. His approachable manner lends significant political weight to his mayorship in a city where the political class is generally distrusted. Additionally, his alignment with the political orientations of the president and the prime minister, marking a first in post-civil war national and city politics, bolsters his political standing. With the support of both the president and the prime minister, Maddaale is well-placed to implement reforms and initiate development projects. The district commissioners he appointed are also likely to support these initiatives.

Upon Maddaale's request, key business figures, construction firms and district commissioners have commenced the reconstruction of the road linking Kahda, Garasbaley and Dharkeynley with other districts. This effort aims to reduce traffic congestion and facilitate connectivity between Banadir and Lower Shabelle. On 7 February 2023, the mayor, along with the district commissioners of Kahda, Garasbaley and Dharkeynley, and business community representatives, committed to completing the initial 2.4km within 30 days. This commitment signals a promising start in forming a reform coalition, beginning with cooperation from the mayor's office.

3. City of systems

In the previous section, we examined how the distribution of power in Somalia influences development and the prospects for developmental reform in Mogadishu; in this section, we add a more material dimension, analysing the systems by which various actors and agencies attempt to sustain and/or improve urban life. All of these “urban systems” depend on both physical infrastructure and human actors (but in more “social” systems, such as healthcare and education, humans play a more pivotal role in system functioning).

The partial dependence of all urban systems on physical infrastructure creates powerful constraints and path dependencies, and produces unintended (negative) externalities. We analyse how the externalities of systems (compounded by intersystem interaction⁷) and the scale of system failures/fragmentations add to the challenges that residents and enterprises face.

⁷ Complex problems in African cities often involve multiple city systems that interact with each other; we will capture intersystem interaction in our third concept of “urban development domains”.

Since systems are also governed and resourced by numerous human actors (formal or informal, public or private actors – but usually a combination of these), their functioning is impacted by the political settlement described above, as well as by ideas deriving from developmental paradigms like modernism and neoliberalism. This means that systems tend to allocate goods and services unevenly, and may be used to extract benefits and secure political advantage.

The primary systems operational in Mogadishu include water, energy, waste management, sanitation, education, healthcare, food distribution, transportation, finance, and law and order. We have examined how they function, how they support or hinder urban development, and how they may be improved. We found that political events over the past decades have significantly shaped these systems. Mogadishu is recovering from an extended civil war, with the city's systems at varying stages of recovery. The government is actively developing policies related to system governance. Prior to the war, most systems were under the control of the central government, but now, private companies and donors are also involved.

Education: At the time of the study, there were 24 public schools managed by the Banadir administration and the federal government, representing 1% of the city's educational facilities. The majority of schools (79%) are under the control of private umbrella organisations, with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) managing 12% and community-based organisations operating 8%. There are two major education systems: public schools adhere to the 8-4 system,⁸ while the 9-3 system⁹ is mainly used by Islamic religious institutions and communities (such as the Quranic schools), and provides religious education for children, focused on the study of the Quran and related subjects. The report suggests further research into these systems, particularly on how madrasa or Qur'anic schools can contribute to the city's overall peace and stability.

While access to education for young children remains a challenge nationwide, Mogadishu boasts the highest accessibility and enrolment rates compared to other regions in the country (refer to Table 1 below).¹⁰ Puntland and Somaliland utilise different systems from the federal government system. At the time of this study, data indicated that only 264,071 students, including internally displaced people (IDPs), were enrolled in school, out of an estimated 1.6 million school-aged children residing in Mogadishu.¹¹ This highlights a significant gap in school enrolment among school-aged children in the city. However, the ministry of education's decision to hire 3,000 teachers (Mohamed, 2023) is anticipated to improve educational access for children currently out of school. The quality of education varies according to the socioeconomic

8 8-4 system: eight years in primary, four years in secondary, two to four years post-secondary.

9 9-3 system: nine years in primary, three years in secondary, two to four years post-secondary.

10 See IIEP-UNESCO (2020: 67).

11 Federal Government of Somalia (2020). Somalia Education Sector Covid-19 Response Plan. ReliefWeb. [Available online](#) (accessed 15 July 2024).

conditions across different parts of the city, with access to education being more limited on the outskirts of Mogadishu.

Table 1: Gross enrolment ratio by state, 2016-2020 (%)

	2016	2017	2019	2020
Lower primary				
Banadir	39.0	37.7	26.7	24.1
Galmudug	9.6	9.3	10.5	10.3
Hirshabelle	12.5	12.3	9.4	7.6
Jubbaland	30.6	33.7	26.6	26.6
South West	8.3	8.7	4.7	9.1
Upper primary				
Banadir	36.8	38.5	32.3	46.4
Galmudug	6.1	7.0	6.9	7.9
Hirshabelle	5.2	5.0	5.3	5.1
Jubbaland	10.8	12.7	10.1	9.7
South West	3.6	3.9	3.3	7.0
Secondary (General)				
Banadir	50.6	49.4	38.1	57.4
Galmudug	3.9	4.0	5.2	5.9
Hirshabelle	5.5	5.2	4.5	4.0
Jubbaland	4.6	5.1	4.3	4.0
South West	4.0	3.9	2.3	4.6

Source: EMIS (2016, 2017, 2019, 2020).

Source: EMIS (2016, 2017, 2019, 2020).

Water: When it comes to water supply, Mogadishu primarily relies on groundwater, extracted from wells. The management of water resources is predominantly in the hands of the private sector, with minimal governmental involvement, although humanitarian organisations also contribute to water provision. The government's role has largely been limited to administrative functions, focusing on policy development and infrastructure planning through the Ministry of Energy and Water Resources of Somalia (AfDB, 2015,). Private boreholes, operated by dominant clans and religious institutions, play a significant role in the city's water industry, controlling various sections of the market (Watanabe and D'Aoust, 2021).

Despite the competition among well owners and private water companies, the clans facilitate direct interactions between water companies and customers, which helps mitigate excessive competition and potentially prevents price hikes. The lack of centralised coordination and regulation leads clans to fill this regulatory gap, demonstrating a beneficial impact. Their involvement helps maintain water affordability and prevents monopolistic practices, ensuring equitable and accessible water supply for all residents. However, the quality of water in the city poses a critical challenge, especially for the urban poor and the IDP community. This issue can be attributed to the lack of government oversight, weak capacity for monitoring and regulation, and insufficient investment in water filtration systems.

Energy: In Mogadishu, three private companies – Becco, Mogadishu Power and Blue Sky Energy – supply electricity, with rates among the highest globally. It is estimated

that the annual energy consumption of Somalia is 4 million tonnes of locally sourced firewood, which meets up to 90% of energy needs.¹² Solar energy adoption remains minimal. The research recommends the adoption of renewable energy sources, such as geothermal, hydro, wind and solar, to offer the community more affordable and sustainable electricity options and to reduce costs. The Federal Ministry of Energy and Water is urged to develop policies for regulating the city's energy and electricity sectors.

Transport: The city's main modes of road transport are auto rickshaws, known as *tuk-tuks*, and small buses referred to as *Caasi*. Innovative companies like Rikaab and Dhaweeye offer transportation services utilising technology akin to Uber's. Additionally, brokers facilitate the safe passage of trucks through roadblocks, for a fee. Over 90% of the city's roads are in poor condition. Although tuk-tuks provide employment opportunities for the youth, they contribute to insecurity and traffic congestion, due to the absence of functioning traffic lights. The government plays a limited role in transportation regulation.

Food distribution: Food-related items is the country's second-largest import sector, following construction (FGS, 2018). This system includes a variety of stakeholders, such as importers, wholesalers, transporters, brokers and small-scale retailers. The private sector's dynamic involvement is pivotal, complemented by humanitarian aid organisations.

The shift from emergency food provision to cash transfers for food assistance has broadened food access and availability. Nonetheless, many residents still face significant challenges in accessing food, due to widespread poverty. The population primarily depends on imported staples like pasta and rice, with maize and millet being the main locally produced foods. Given the critical role of road transportation in accessing local produce, enhancing road security is imperative.

The city boasts four major markets – Bakara, Suq Bacad, Hamarweyne and Madina – while the Banadir Regional Administration (BRA) manages an additional 21 markets, overseeing distribution, vendor operations and tax collection. Despite government taxation, concerns persist regarding the quality of food and the prevalence of food waste.

Waste management: Before the civil war, Mogadishu's waste management system was efficiently managed, with the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organisation assisting the local government in handling solid waste and terminal disposal sites. Public areas were equipped with waste disposal bins, and specialised vehicles were deployed for waste collection and disposal.

12 FGS and AfDB (2015). *Compare Somalia: Energy Sector Needs Assessment and Investment Programme*. Abidjan: African Development Bank Group. [Available online](#) [pdf] (accessed 1 July 2024).

Presently, the Mogadishu municipality, through the BRA, engages in public–private partnerships with companies or community groups for waste, drainage and sewage management. The BRA has specifically collaborated with a waste management company named IFI to oversee waste collection and disposal in Mogadishu. Additionally, informal entities contribute by collecting waste from businesses situated away from main collection points. However, the service is often too costly for many, especially impoverished residents and IDPs, limiting the service coverage. A contributing factor is the monopolisation of the waste management sector by private entities like the IFI company. There is a clear need for innovation and the introduction of open competition among private investors in the waste management sector.

The sewage system in Mogadishu, established during the colonial era, has not been modernised to support the city's expanding population. Consequently, many residents rely on septic tanks, which now contaminate the underground water supply. Although some NGOs have launched sanitation projects in impoverished areas, their services are fragmented and insufficient for the population's needs. The study also revealed that less than one-third of households and commercial properties in Mogadishu possess their own sanitation facilities, and over half of the population lacks access to improved sanitation facilities and uses unimproved pit latrines or open defecation.¹³ Particularly affected are displaced individuals, who are often prohibited from constructing their own facilities, due to the absence of formal land rights. The report suggests that distributing the responsibility for waste management among all stakeholders and promoting joint efforts could enhance the system's efficiency. Unfortunately, this approach has not been adopted, leaving the poor and most vulnerable residents to suffer the social and environmental repercussions of inadequate waste management. Poor drainage frequently leads to flooding, and the prevalence of open sewage contaminates water sources, triggering outbreaks of disease.

Finance: In Mogadishu, a variety of institutions, including banks, remittance companies, microfinance institutions (MFIs), and mobile money transfer operators (MTOs), provide financial services. The Central Bank regulates and oversees the operations. Only 15% of the city's population have bank accounts, with an even smaller number actively using banking services, showing a preference for mobile money services instead (UNIDO, 2020). The usage of banking services by women is notably low. Beyond formal financial systems, Somalis also rely on informal support networks and charities, such as *zakat* and *qaaraan*,¹⁴ which are managed by religious groups

13 “An improved sanitation facility is one that likely hygienically separates human excreta from human contact. Improved sanitation facilities include: flush or pour-flush to piped sewer system, septic tank or pit latrine; ventilated improved pit latrine; pit latrine with slab and composting toilet. However, sanitation facilities are not considered improved when shared with other households, or open to public use.” (Definition from [WHO Global Health Observatory website](#) (accessed 1 July 2024).)

14 *Zakat* is mandatory almsgiving for wealthy Muslims. *Qaaraan* is a Somali practice where community members, led by clan elders, contribute resources to help those in need.

and clan elders. Various authorities in the city impose taxes, and al-Shabaab also extracts revenue from the city, evading regulations.

Health: Mogadishu's health system, in comparison to the rest of the country, is more advanced. The city has 61 public facilities that provide healthcare services, in addition to 105 private institutions and 49 clinics with operating licences. Additionally, Mogadishu is home to nine hospitals that have the capacity to perform surgeries, and various NGOs operate 17 healthcare centres. The private sector offers essential services, such as MRI scans and dialysis machines, which previously compelled Somalis to seek treatment abroad. Despite often delivering superior care compared to the public sector, the private healthcare sector is viewed by many residents as expensive, poorly regulated and unreliable. Donor-funded health facilities also offer higher quality services with more resources than those funded by the government.

Law and order: The justice system in Somalia consists of three levels: a court of first instance, an appeals court and a state supreme court. However, due to scepticism towards the formal justice system, many Somalis prefer Sharia law, the customary Xeer system,¹⁵ clan elders or al-Shabaab. It is estimated that the informal justice system handles 80-90% of all legal cases in Somalia. Factors such as a lack of staff, the formal justice system's limited capacity in these environments, inadequate communication and coordination among security and justice agencies due to insufficient training, equipment and capacity, and the absence of a standardised curriculum for training justice practitioners drive people towards the informal justice system. Few courts apply statutory law, and customary practices significantly influence legal proceedings.

This underscores the need for accessible, affordable and well-trained legal aid services to ensure that individuals seeking justice are informed, do not have to sacrifice their daily livelihoods to pursue cases, and are treated fairly. Vulnerable communities, such as women, individuals from marginalised clans, and IDPs, encounter significant barriers to accessing justice, arising from a lack of resources and representation. This issue is particularly pressing for women and girls, who are at risk of sexual and gender-based violence. We now review the common patterns and principal challenges faced by these systems, focusing on themes of ownership and governance, coverage and accessibility, and quality and risks.

3.1. Ownership and governance

In terms of governance, it is essential to underscore several key points. The existing urban systems function within a hybrid governance framework marked by minimal government oversight and extensive involvement of non-state actors that provide

¹⁵ The Xeer system is a traditional Somali legal framework passed down orally from generation to generation. It provides a rule of law governing various aspects of life, such as safe travel, trade, marriage and more, throughout the region. This customary system is known for its adaptability to local customs and has historically facilitated dispute resolution and maintained societal order within Somali communities.

services across the city. The engagement levels of the federal government and the BRA with these systems vary, with neither entity exclusively providing services. Notably, the FGS and BRA are absent when it comes to sanitation and sewage services. A clear lack of legislation or regulations to delineate responsibilities between the federal and state levels, as well as between the state and the BRA, is evident. Moreover, there is no federal oversight concerning water supplies, their quality or maintenance, relegating the government's role to merely administrative duties (AfDB, 2015).

Because of a lack of sufficient capacity and resources, governmental control over water and other services is markedly limited. Similarly, the city lacks regulations for sanitation management. Nevertheless, there has been legislative progress in areas like the energy sector, where new policies and regulations have been formulated and enacted in the past three years, alongside a new public–private partnership (PPP) policy. This, at least theoretically, enables the facilitation of private sector participation in service delivery and its regulation. Despite these legislative advancements, especially in the energy sector, the technical capability and financial resources for effective monitoring and enforcement remain limited within both the BRA and federal agencies. Therefore, challenges such as weak governance, regulatory gaps and scarce resources hinder policy execution and the provision of quality services to the community. Moreover, the development of the city faces a significant obstacle – al-Shabaab. Beyond their corrupt practices, al-Shabaab pose a major security threat to Mogadishu's citizens, maintaining hostile relations with aid agencies and private businesses and being responsible for attacks and the loss of lives among humanitarian workers. The threat of al-Shabaab restricts the mobility and activities of government officials, who are compelled to operate within the confines of large urban centres, unable to venture beyond the city's limits.

3.2. Coverage and access

Moving onto accessibility, Mogadishu faces significant challenges in delivering essential services to the community and enterprises, particularly in transportation, education, healthcare, water and electricity. The city's structure can be visualised as three concentric circles, with the inner and middle circles being more accessible to government authorities, such as the BRA. The outer circle, lying on the outskirts of the city, encompasses informal settlements that are difficult for officials and humanitarian actors to access.

Transportation is accessible primarily to those who can afford it, leaving out low-income households, IDPs and low-income urban residents. These groups, needing frequent transportation to and from the city, are disproportionately impacted by transportation costs and availability (Bryld et al., 2019: 31). IDPs and those on low income residing outside the city limits might often resort to walking long distances, posing several safety, health and security risks.

Geographical location and distance from schools or healthcare facilities serve as a disadvantage for certain communities, particularly IDPs, nomadic/pastoralists, minority clans, rural communities and low-income urban residents. Households in both non-IDP and IDP settlements are likely to face challenges in meeting their educational needs.¹⁶ For example, IDP and urban poor communities in Mogadishu have lower enrolment and literacy rates than other urban population groups. Only 24.2% of IDP children under the age of six are enrolled in school, which is 12% below the national average (Hagmann (2019: 21). IDPs often turn away from accessing educational opportunities to further their education, due to the distance required to travel to get to these educational institutions (Watanabe and D'Aoust, 2021). Access to healthcare in Mogadishu is influenced by multiple factors, including financial constraints, distance and clan affiliation. Some private hospitals offer waived doctor's fees either once a week or during their first month of operation, while others set up medical tents or mobile clinics to provide free health services to vulnerable populations, such as orphanages and IDP settlements (Muchunu et al., 2023). Despite these efforts, low-income populations often struggle to access these facilities due to high transportation costs and the uneven distribution of healthcare services across Mogadishu's districts (ibid.).

Water access in Mogadishu is highly segregated, with urban households benefiting from better services due to their proximity to water facilities. In contrast, peri-urban and IDP populations rely on expensive non-piped water from small-scale vendors, which increases their financial burden and limits their access to clean water (Watanabe and D'Aoust, 2021: 88). The World Bank reports that only 12% of Mogadishu residents have access to improved sanitation, compared to 14% in Somaliland and 11% in Puntland (World Bank, 2017: 41). IDPs and low-income urban residents face a shortage of latrines, insufficient for the high number of households in these areas, making women particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence, due to the distance of latrines from their settlements (UNOCHA, 2017: 8). Both displaced and non-displaced populations struggle with access to facilities such as water and soap, with only about 4% of Mogadishu's latrine facilities having access to water.¹⁷ Electricity access is similarly uneven, with urban residents benefiting most, due to their proximity to the grid and service providers, while IDPs and low-income urban residents are insufficiently supplied.¹⁸ These disparities, influenced by socioeconomic factors, clan affiliation and geographic location, perpetuate existing inequalities and significantly impact the quality of life for Mogadishu's peri-urban and IDP populations.

16 REACH Initiative - Joint Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment, Banadir, Somalia.

17 REACH, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Assessment, (2021:26). "Joint Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment: Banadir, Somalia - June-August 2020". [Available online \[pdf\]](#) (accessed 29 July 2024).

18 "These residents' access (IDPs and Urban Poor) only 14 hours of electricity per day in comparison to their urban counterparts which gets 20 hours of electricity per day" (Watanabe and D'Aoust, 2021: 48).

3.3. Quality and risks

The city's various systems exhibit notably poor quality, characterised by inconsistency and significant deficiencies. Several factors contribute to this widespread issue, including insufficient government regulation, historical challenges like security incidents, and financial and institutional capacity constraints. The energy sector, for example, has seen considerable improvements in recent years, yet the quality of energy sources remains inconsistent.

Before the state collapse in 1991, Mogadishu's existing infrastructure was largely destroyed. Today, the sector is mainly controlled by private individuals and their companies (Energy Catalyst, 2020), who have made significant investments. Hormuud's investment in BECO Company has made it the country's largest electricity provider. However, the expansion potential of this sector has been hindered by security incidents in the city over the past two years, delaying the modernisation of energy sources. The reliance on diesel-powered mini-grids and a minimal focus on renewable energy highlight the need for development. The electricity system in Somalia experiences energy losses of approximately 25% to 40%, leading to inefficiency, reliability challenges, long or frequent blackouts, and connections that operate at very low capacity (Watanabe and D'Aoust, 2021).

Issues with electricity supply and wiring quality have posed significant fire risks to numerous houses, small and medium-sized enterprises and supermarkets in the city. A notable incident is the Xamarweyne supermarket fire, which caused substantial property damage, including a shop suffering losses of \$50,000. These incidents, driven by substandard wiring and electricity supply, underscore the urgent need for improvements in the city's electrical infrastructure. Enhancing safety and preventing such devastating losses are critical.

Similarly, the water sector's quality is alarmingly low. Notably, many communities, especially IDPs and low-income urban residents, rely on donkey carts for water distribution, leading to poor water quality, due to unclean barrels. This situation poses a serious risk of outbreaks of chronic diseases, such as cholera and diarrhoea, in the city. Despite sufficient groundwater resources that could meet current and mid-term future demands, the city's raw water quality fails to meet WHO guidelines for potable water, indicating a likely deterioration in groundwater quality (Abdi-Soojeede and Kullane, 2019). Frequent malfunctions in water supply systems are attributed to weak water management models, high operational and maintenance costs, a lack of a spare parts supply chain, and technical limitations of service providers.

4. Development domains

We have examined the political settlement and city systems; now, we analyse how these shape some of the development domains in Mogadishu. A development domain is a distinct field of discourse, policy and practice that has formed around a complex,

intersystemic development challenge in a city, in which various actors (political, bureaucratic, professional and popular) collaborate and/or compete for authority.

These development challenges usually fall under the remit of specific central and/or local government departments. In most cases, affected residents and civil society groups become involved in addressing them; experts (often constituting an “epistemic community”) also get involved; and ruling elites may or may not get involved, depending on the opportunities that these domains offer for asset accumulation, rent extraction and electoral success (through the representation of ideologies, demonstration of state capability, or manipulation of voters).

In each development domain, particular ideas, practices and systems interoperate in ways that either sustain or reshape the power configuration in the city and country. If we wish to change the way a domain’s problems are framed and addressed, we need to understand its key actors and interoperating ideas, practices and systems. In this section, we generate such an understanding for the domains of land and connectivity; informal settlements; safety and security; and youth and capability development.

4.1. Land and connectivity domain

The land and connectivity domain is rapidly transforming in Mogadishu, significantly contributing to the city's dynamic urban development. Notable growth and urbanisation are marked by new buildings, governmental building revitalisations, residential house refurbishments and the establishment of new hotels, shops and restaurants. These developments are shaping the urban landscape, yet challenges persist, particularly in security, due to ongoing threats posed by al-Shabaab and political instability within the city. This section explains the key findings from our comprehensive report on Mogadishu's land and connectivity domain.

Regarding land, the BRA is responsible for land administration, including facilitating land title transfers, authorising construction and managing property taxation. A conflict resolution committee at BRA handles document validation and land disputes. Post-state collapse, there have been no new land registrations or allocations of new plots in the city. While BRA's official mandate includes land registration and titling in Mogadishu, it focuses only on title transfers through private sales. District commissioners also play a crucial role in land management and administration, acting as the first contact point for community inquiries or dispute reports.

Several national ministries impact this domain. The Ministry of Public Works, Reconstruction, and Housing collaborates with BRA on urban planning and oversees infrastructure upgrades, with ultimate responsibility resting with the Municipality. The Ministry of Finance manages taxation on rental income and property sales registration tax. The Ministry of Planning aligns urban development priorities with the Somali National Plan, while the Ministry of Justice registers notaries crucial for land transactions.

De facto governance structures exist alongside official governance, involving state and non-state actors, including religious leaders, clan elders, and businesspeople. Landowners and gatekeepers play pivotal roles in negotiating with humanitarian organisations and communities, especially in informal settlements (Bakonyi et al., 2019; Kamau et al., 2019). Religious leaders and clan elders often mediate private land disputes, while land brokers manage information on land pricing and value. Notaries handle paperwork for land sales and transactions within ministries.

Large telecommunications and financial services companies, like Hormuud, IBS Bank and Salaam Bank, have become significant actors in land services, with Hormuud investing in “Darussalam village”.¹⁹ Powerful urban actors, including businesspeople, former warlords, and politicians, use wealth or threats of violence to influence land acquisitions or dispute outcomes. Diasporic returnees significantly impact land dynamics through investment and involvement in land disputes, increasing land value, and political capture.

Albeit designated as a “terrorist” organisation, al-Shabaab also provides judicial services, including those relevant to land, establishing a parallel justice system chosen over the formal system for its reputation of less clan-based discrimination, minimal political interference and improved outcomes, backed by the threat of force (UN Panel of Experts, 2019).

On the other hand, the report also explores land connectivity, examining digital and road connectivity's linkage with the land sector. The economic significance of the connectivity sector is highlighted by an estimated \$2.7 billion monthly turnover, with 70% of Somalis regularly using mobile money services (World Bank, 2018).

The Ministry of Communication and Technology grants licences to telecommunications companies, with the Central Bank of Somalia licensing mobile money transfers, businesses and banks. Hormuud dominates the telecommunications market, while Dahabshiil, a significant money transfer organisation, plays a crucial role in financial transactions.

Digital connectivity and land domain interlinkages are evident in services like the “Deeqtoon Service”, facilitating land transactions through mobile money, and Sharia-compliant housing finance aiding construction material loans. Moreover, competition among telecommunications actors has reduced monopolistic behaviour, providing reliable communication services at no cost for transactions up to \$150.

In terms of road connectivity, various state and non-state actors are involved. For instance, the Banadir Regional Administration and national ministries are responsible for road infrastructure. Turkish engineers have significantly contributed to constructing main roads since 2014, despite criticisms related to the lack of sewage systems and urban flash flooding risks. The World Bank has played a crucial role in road rehabilitation, implementing projects across different districts to improve urban

¹⁹ New suburban apartments on the city outskirts.

resilience. These projects include the Somali Urban Investment Planning Project (SUIPP), the Somalia Urban Resilience Project Phase I (SURP-I) and the Somalia Urban Resilience Project Phase II (SURP-II). Nevertheless, there are significant challenges posed by urban flooding, which hinders the movement of urban residents. It not only destroys road infrastructure but also makes it difficult to navigate around roadblocks caused by standing water. These issues are compounded by the security infrastructure restrictions caused by roadblocks, thereby presenting significant mobility challenges for urban dwellers.

In short, the report concludes that challenges in urban management arise from private land disputes, public land and state ownership issues, deteriorating road quality and the absence of strategic urban planning. The prioritisation of these issues is crucial for addressing the complexities of urban development in Mogadishu.

4.2. Informal settlements and IDP camps

This study is about two types of settlement: “informal settlements” within the city inhabited by low-income urban residents, and “IDP camps” on the urban periphery, in which the occupants are mostly internally displaced people. The research in this domain focused on two of Mogadishu’s 17 districts: Hodan and Kahda. Hodan, an established district at the city’s core, contrasts with Kahda, a newer district on the outskirts. Interviews were conducted with local authorities, IDPs, residents of informal settlements, NGOs, businesspeople and members of the ‘host community’ (ie, long-term Mogadishu residents in formal housing).

4.2.1. *Characteristics of informal settlements*

Informal settlements, inhabited by low-income urban residents, are located within the city. They are loosely managed (unlike IDP camps), often by volunteers without specific roles or responsibilities. Although informal settlements are often located close to utilities/service grids, their inhabitants usually cannot afford these services because of privatisation and resultant high costs (especially of electricity and water systems).

4.2.2. *Characteristics of IDP camps*

IDP camps are located on Mogadishu’s outskirts. They have organised management and closer engagement with district commissioners than inner-city informal settlements. Their emergence in 1992 was driven by conflicts in Somalia. They have limited access to centralised utilities like electricity and shared sanitation, but humanitarian actors often step in to provide these services, such that IDPs sometimes have better access to water and gender-segregated latrines than low-income urban residents of informal settlements.

4.2.3. *Management of IDP camps: The gatekeeper system*

With the arrival of UNOSOM in 1993-94, the “gatekeeper” system was established to provide representation and governance for IDPs, a system that persisted and evolved,

despite changes in the city's security landscape and humanitarian intervention strategies. Gatekeepers are camp managers and business figures,²⁰ either self-appointed or nominated by district commissioners or landowners, who have strong connections to dominant clan elites in the city and wield considerable influence in the governance of IDPs. Gatekeepers are supported by a camp management committee of respected clan leaders, reflecting traditional Somali governance structures. Understanding the origins and formation of gatekeepers is crucial for humanitarian agencies planning interventions in Somalia that can fit into the humanitarian, development and peace nexus (Oxfam, 2019).

The link between formal and informal governance structures forms a “hybrid” system of governance in IDP camps, with appointed officials such as the district commissioners being part of an alliance between the municipality and clan leadership. Sub-governance structures under the district commissioner, influenced by clan leadership, do not receive regular salaries and often participate voluntarily, implicating them in the gatekeeper system in IDP settlements. Businesspeople (the successful amongst whom tend to belong to one of the four dominant clans) play a significant role in appointing local authority leaders, up to and including mayors, and protecting their business interests.

4.2.4. Conflicting views on IDP camps

There are different views within the host community about how to deal with IDP camps. Some believe that these settlements are a source of insecurity in the city, and they advocate for IDPs' relocation to their places of origin, which was in fact the preferred solution among interviewees. But others advocated supporting these vulnerable inhabitants, not only through humanitarian aid, but also through donations from the city communities. It is imperative to recognise the tangible benefits the non-IDP population derives from the IDP community, particularly as a cost-effective labour force and in the flourishing of small enterprises.

4.2.5. Security situation of informal settlements and IDP camps

A major concern for both informal settlement residents and IDPs in camps is forced relocation by the Somali National Police and landlords. Informal settlements that are located on government land and have strong clan affiliations are afforded better protection than IDP camps (even though the latter have more organised management). A clear example is Taleh Hotel grounds, where residents are former militias or related to Somali Army personnel, and they enjoy protection from clan elders and security sector actors. On the other hand, in informal settlements on private land, tenure security depends on rental payments and landlord–tenant agreements. In other words, as long as they pay the rent, the settlers will have high security tenure. In contrast, IDPs, who mostly live on private land, have improved their tenure security due to land

20 (Men and women who own or manage land for IDPs, making money by charging IDPs for access. They also partner with humanitarian organisations to deliver emergency services, creating and managing makeshift camps in exchange for cash or a portion of the aid received.)

rental agreements that are overseen and regulated by the Mogadishu municipality. Previously, these agreements were verbal and led to frequent forced evictions. A clear example of this is IDP settlements in Kahda, where arbitrary evictions have been reduced, due to oversight from BRA.

4.2.6. The significance of the informal settlements domain for elites

The significance of this domain for political and business elites in Mogadishu is profound. Business and politics are closely intertwined in Somalia – those who have built their businesses on the back of foreign aid continue to influence the politics of the country and Mogadishu (El Taraboulsi-McCarthy et al., 2017).²¹ Business elites, linked to powerful clans, often supply critical goods and services to informal settlements and IDP camps.

As for political elites, their main aim is to maintain control and influence, so as to advance clan interests and secure economic benefits from land and business engagements. The political system is riven with clan interests, and structured around the 4.5 clan-based political representation formula. In terms of control, the Hawiye clan is dominant in Mogadishu, and it is threatened by the presence of large IDP populations in the city, because the IDPs are largely from other clans from other regions of Somalia (Watanabe and D'Aoust, 2021). In terms of economic interest, IDPs present a profitable opportunity for political elites in terms of international humanitarian aid, since the country's internal revenue generation only amounts to approximately 4%²² of GDP. Policymakers must understand this complex political economy of aid in the city.

Al-Shabaab is another crucial actor in this domain, with interests primarily in revenue generation. Notably, al-Shabaab has its own form of taxation and has infiltrated almost all economic transaction spaces in the city. Its taxation system is considered the most sophisticated and potentially the most challenging issue for other political actors in Somalia to negotiate.

4.2.7. Reform efforts

While low-income residents of informal settlements and IDPs in camps have some “voice” within their settlements, they have little say in city-level governance, and their needs and priorities do not influence the selection of candidates or political representatives. They must rely instead on the personal motivation of specific district commissioners. However, humanitarian and development actors do advocate for informal settlers and IDPs' rights and protection, including better housing and other needs. Actors like the World Bank also aim to improve outcomes for residents of informal settlements.

²² Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development, 2019; 34.

Legislative and policy reform initiatives in this domain are gaining traction, with efforts to integrate IDPs and low-income residents into urban communities – a significant challenge considering the city’s political complexity. Initiatives such as eviction guidelines and social housing projects, supported by international donors, aim to improve living conditions for informal settlement residents. A fundamental component of the National Development Plan is to provide housing, services and access to livelihoods in Mogadishu. With support from donors like the EU and funding from the World Bank, the BRA and the FGS have embarked on pilot projects, constructing social housing in Heliwaa, Abdizaziz, and five other districts – all targeted at residents of informal settlements as well as IDPs (FGS, 2019). Still, the challenge of providing quality and affordable housing remains hampered by funding constraints and unresolved spatial and sociocultural issues.

4.3. Safety and security

This section analyses Mogadishu’s complex security landscape, with a focus on key security actors across two urban districts, Hodan and Kahda. This analysis draws from a broad spectrum of academic and grey literature on conflict and urbanisation dynamics in Mogadishu, as well as prior studies by the authors on policing practices. It further presents and analyses interviews detailing the lived experiences and perceptions of individuals regarding various forms of everyday insecurity. It encompasses violent street crime, sexual and gender-based violence and political violence, examining how spatial and social inequalities influence exposure to these insecurity types. Additionally, it explores access to community and state-based protection and justice mechanisms, such as neighbourhood watch initiatives and formal policing.

Mogadishu continues to be Somalia’s most contested urban area, significantly impacting the physical safety of its residents.²³ Since the complete collapse of the state in 1991, the city’s security situation has fluctuated, displaying varying forms and intensities over time. Mogadishu’s violent history has fostered complex patterns of inclusion and exclusion, grievances, aspirations and diverse coping mechanisms among urban residents against physical threats. Currently, insecurity in Mogadishu manifests in various ways, from al-Shabaab attacks targeting government officials to intercommunal conflicts, robberies and physical assaults. The underlying spatial and social logics of these threats reflect historical settlement patterns, class dynamics, gender divisions and the varying degrees of social capital among the population.²⁴

As the federal government’s seat, Mogadishu remains a central point of political tension, resource competition, and conflicts among political elites. The capital has

23 [ACLED](#) reported 565 conflict events in Benadir region, including battles, violence against civilians and explosions/remote violence between mid-May 2021 and mid-May 2022.

24 Membership in a specific clan lineage (organised through patrilineal descent groups) is a key determinant of social capital in Somali society. Social capital in the sense of Pierre Bourdieu is “a capital one has as a result of being a member of a particular group or network” (Hagmann et al., 2021).

experienced rapid demographic growth, return migration and urban redevelopment following mass displacement due to the 2006 Ethiopian military intervention. However, unresolved questions regarding Mogadishu's "ownership" – pertaining to which clans hold political dominance – stemming from civil war times, persist. These issues create social stratification between those considering themselves native to the city (or specific districts/neighbourhoods) and urban in-migrants from historically marginalised clans.

The primary structural causes of instability in Mogadishu include the chronically unstable national "political marketplace" characterised by the commodified use of violence, deepseated grievances over urban property rights, and the federal government's failure to establish a social contract with its citizens based on effective service delivery (De Waal, 2015). These factors contribute to the multitude of armed actors governing the city, blurring the lines between "state" and "non-state", and serving as sources of both security and insecurity. Consequently, city residents navigate a fragmented, uncertain and constantly evolving security landscape in pursuit of their daily livelihoods.

Both Hodan and Kahda, despite their differences, are marked by multiple forms of inequality relating to gender, social class and clan/tribalised identities. Hodan, a central district of Mogadishu, boasts a booming real-estate market and a growing middle class of professionals working in business, the humanitarian sector and state offices, alongside being a high-profile target for al-Shabaab violence. In this district, the unpredictability of al-Shabaab attacks and concerns over escalating street crime, including violent armed robberies by youth gangs and/or security forces, predominate among residents' fears.

Kahda, on the other hand, is a peripheral district. It has emerged as a recognised entity in the last 15 years, developing due to significant displacement-linked in-migration from southern regions and displacements of former inner-city residents due to earlier phases of urban violence and evictions. Kahda has a higher density of camps compared to Hodan, but the proportion of permanent structures and upscale developments is on the rise. Robbery poses a major concern for many district residents, regardless of their living situation, while sexual and gender-based violence particularly affects the district's most vulnerable populations, such as widowed or divorced women in poorly secured IDP camps. Gender-based violence in IDP camps is exacerbated by the city's patriarchal societal norms and often goes underreported. The inadequate sanitation facilities in these camps are identified as contributing factors to the prevalence of gender-based violence, emphasising the need to improve the camps' conditions and to foster environments conducive to reporting and addressing such violence.

The past decade of research on security threats in Mogadishu has found that the focus of security concerns has shifted toward youth-related gang activities. Since 2021, the city has seen a noticeable increase in youth gangs, known locally as *ciyaal weero*. Youth gangs are predominantly based in the peripheral districts, such as Dharkeynley and Kaaraan, and commit crimes like armed robbery and sexual assaults on women. This rise in gang prevalence can be attributed to a security gap left by political and

security forces, who have been preoccupied with electoral disputes. Additionally, the proliferation of these gangs may be linked to the increased visibility of their activities on social media platforms like TikTok, although it is unclear whether these platforms contribute to the problem or simply make it more visible. The root causes of this issue are likely tied to high unemployment rates and the growing number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Mogadishu.

Al-Shabaab attacks in Mogadishu have decreased in recent months. However, al-Shabaab remains a persistent threat to the city's security, especially in the outskirts, adversely affecting development efforts. An example of this is the disrupted construction of the Mogadishu–Jowhar road, where attacks on foreign engineers and their teams led to the project's suspension. This situation highlights the critical need for intensified efforts to combat al-Shabaab and secure Mogadishu and its neighbouring regions.

While newly trained police forces have made commendable progress in recent months, the police force in Mogadishu finds itself in a challenging position, navigating the fine line between counterterrorism efforts and fostering community engagement. The continued presence of al-Shabaab in certain districts exacerbates this challenge, as fear of reprisals discourages public cooperation with state security forces. This militant group is known for targeted killings and property damage, particularly in the Kahda district, where it instils fear in those working with international NGOs and the state. Moreover, police are perceived variably by the community, seen as either a source of security or a cause of insecurity, depending on their actions and visibility. The situation is further complicated for displaced populations and residents of informal settlements, who face compounded vulnerabilities related to social belonging, discrimination and the enforcement of patriarchal norms and minority rights.

In response to these multifaceted security threats, communities have taken it upon themselves to establish and finance informal security patrols. This grassroots approach to safety, however, often leaves the most vulnerable, such as single female campdwellers, exposed to violence and exploitation. These developments underline the complex dynamics at play in Mogadishu's security landscape, where the interaction of political instability, social media and economic hardship fuels a cycle of violence and insecurity.

4.4. Youth and capability development

This section is about how urban politics, policy interventions and city systems impact young people's lives in Mogadishu. It examines the challenges, opportunities, historical trends and aspirations of the city's youth.

The definition of youth in Somalia is a topic of debate. The National Youth Policy (NYP) identifies youth as those aged between 15 and 40 years. Although some participants aligned with this definition, due to their awareness of the policy, the majority defined youth as those under the age of 35, starting at 15 or 18. Remarkably, an estimated 70% of Somalia's population is under the age of 30, emphasising the significance of

this demographic, especially when adopting the NYP's broader age definition. Distinctions emerge among youth, based on gender, urban versus rural living conditions and age. Young women, upon entering marriage and motherhood, often exit the youth category, unlike their male counterparts, who remain categorised as youth, even as fathers.

Young people in Mogadishu face a multitude of challenges that increase their vulnerability and constrain their future possibilities. These challenges include high rates of unemployment and underemployment, poor educational quality and limited access to education for low-income urban residents and IDPs, forced internal migration, illicit external migration – known as Tahriib – involvement in youth gangs, lack of unity and information sharing among youth, and clannism. The challenges are gendered, with young women and girls experiencing acute difficulties. Structural and cultural gender inequities manifest in higher rates of school dropout and unemployment among young women, alongside frequent encounters with sexual violence and harassment.

The vulnerabilities faced by Mogadishu's youth are further exacerbated by systemic failures. The collapse of the Somali state in 1991 resulted in the breakdown of essential health and education services, crucial for the futures of young people. The limited public provision of these services and the high costs of private options affect the majority of the population. Generations have endured chronic violence and limited access to justice, living in a constant state of survival. This prolonged exposure to violence has lasting impacts on young people, who have historically been overlooked in youth initiatives, hindering the development of resilience and empowerment necessary for their positive engagement in political, economic and social spheres.

The conflict between the Somali state and al-Shabaab over the past 17 years has made Mogadishu the focal point for IDPs. Al-Shabaab's influence in the city is marked by frequent and violent attacks, exploiting young people's frustrations and reflecting deeper systemic issues. Although the involvement of youth in violence is often highlighted, their potential as agents of peace is equally significant. The commitment of Somalia's current president to defeating al-Shabaab, with the active participation of young people in security efforts, suggests a path towards peace, development and stability.

In terms of political participation and empowerment, there is a lack of frameworks, laws or designated seats that guarantee the involvement or representation of the youth in political processes at any level – be it federal, regional or local. The absence of national youth organisations, influential youth advocacy groups, or coordinated youth movements with specific agendas to tackle their critical issues is notable. In 2022, a National Youth Policy accompanied by an Action Plan was formulated, yet, at the time of writing this report, it awaits approval from the Council of Ministers.

This proposed National Youth Strategy is an extensive plan aimed at addressing issues pertinent to youth across six main areas: health and well-being; education and skills enhancement; economic advancement and sustainable livelihoods; active participation

in civic duties, peace and safety; environmental stewardship and conservation; and other issues impacting youth and efforts towards building their capacity.

In Mogadishu, four major challenges hinder the empowerment of youth: the 4.5 clan-based power-sharing framework; the method of indirect elections; the undefined status of Mogadishu; and the exclusion of the Banadir region from representation in the upper house of the parliament. Despite the youth making up a significant portion of Mogadishu's demographic, the political agreements provide limited opportunities for them, particularly young women, to engage in the city's developmental, economic and political activities. Young individuals are often sidelined during crucial political discussions and decisionmaking processes. Moreover, the traditional governance models, dominated by clan elders, generally exclude young people and women from participating in their structures and activities.

Youth, especially young women, are often not familiar with clan elders who may show bias against them. Conversely, politicians occasionally encourage youth participation, believing them to be more susceptible to influence for their political gain. The 4.5 formula not only affects political representation but also job opportunities, making clan affiliation a crucial factor in the inclusion or exclusion of the youth.

The indirect elections for members of parliament in 2016-17 and 2021-22 took place predominantly in the federal member states, except for a few seats allocated to Benadir and the Dir clan from Somaliland in 2021-22. Consequently, many young residents of Mogadishu face the challenge of having to travel to their ancestral regions to participate in elections as candidates and voters, a task complicated by the lack of familiarity with local traditional elders and the financial burden of travel and accommodation for themselves and their campaign teams. The registration fees for candidates significantly increased from the 2016-17 to the 2021-22 elections, with a notable discount for female candidates.

Since the approval of Somalia's provisional federal constitution by a national constituent assembly in 2012, it has been under review, leaving uncertainty about the governance structure of Mogadishu, including the status of its youth. Article 9 of the constitution specifies that the status of Mogadishu will be determined through this review process.

Banadir, home to more than 2 million people, does not have representation in the upper house of parliament. As the largest city and most populous in Somalia, directly governed by the federal government, the residents of Mogadishu, predominantly youth, are deprived of the opportunity to elect their local officials, impacting their direct engagement in political administration.

In short, the study concludes that despite widespread acknowledgment of the critical role of youth and investments from various stakeholders, governmental efforts at both federal and regional levels have fallen short of addressing the needs of young people. Nonetheless, the youth interviewed in this study remain hopeful, viewing Mogadishu as

a city on the rise, and are optimistic about the future and the recovery of their city and nation.

5. Overarching analysis

This report provides an in-depth examination of how national and city-level politics, urban systems and specific configurations of actors, agencies, ideas and practices have influenced development in the domains of informal settlements, safety and security, youth and capability development, and land and connectivity. It highlights the persistent developmental challenges that compromise the wellbeing and future prospects of urban residents – especially those in marginalised groups – and pose risks to the environment. Through a comprehensive analysis, this report identifies critical developmental issues in Mogadishu and anticipates challenges in addressing them equitably and sustainably, both environmentally and fiscally. This concluding section examines these developmental challenges and suggests viable solutions, taking into account various obstacles, such as contested governance, security concerns, urban infrastructure deficits, planning failures and the taxation system.

5.1. Political economy of development in Mogadishu

Over recent decades, the influence of the business community on the politics of Mogadishu has been unmistakable. As the centre of Somalia's economy, the city boasts a vibrant network of entrepreneurs, predominantly men, who have forged strong connections with government authorities, notably the federal government and the Banadir Regional Administration. This community has adeptly navigated various political climates, leveraging clan-based affiliations to support presidential candidates and unite as a cohesive group with the common aim of profit maximisation. This dynamic sees politically engaged businesspersons primarily from the Hawiye clan, gaining seats in the federal parliament to safeguard and enhance their economic interests.

In Somalia's competitive political arena, achieving elective office often requires significant financial investment (VenturesAfrica, 2016), underscoring the role of the business sector in funding political entities and swaying electoral outcomes. With democratic elections on the horizon for Mogadishu – a city administering over 2 million residents (estimates vary) – the politically motivated business community is poised to emerge as a formidable force.

The intersection of militia involvement in decisionmaking and the privatisation of public services present notable challenges. For example, the management of Gubadley's waste system by a militia leader illustrates the complex interplay of politics, economics and development, which presents a significant hurdle for service advancement.

Research on youth involvement in Mogadishu's economy indicates a substantial contribution to the city's revenue, such as through the taxation of three-wheel motorbike (*bajaj*) drivers, a dominant force in the transportation sector. They also pay \$10 a day for rent to the owners, some of whom are elite politicians who own several

bajaajs. Notable are the complexities and dynamics of political power and economic relationships in Mogadishu, where the potential for positive contributions by young people is entangled with the risk of being used for the interests of the elites. Young people are manipulated by influential politicians to take part in political demonstrations, pointing to a dual role of youth – as contributors and as tools for elite agendas. This complexity mirrors the broader interplay of political and economic forces in the city, where young people's potential positive impact is entwined with exploitation by the elite.

Insights from land and connectivity research further illuminate Mogadishu's political economy. For the elite, land is both a revenue source and a vulnerability, as illustrated by IDPs and low-income urban residents forming makeshift communities. The privatisation of public land through land grabs underscores a politically and financially driven agenda, highlighting the urgent need for transparent land management and public consultation on the future of public lands.

The commercialisation of essential services, including education, health, water, telecommunication, electricity and waste management, underscores a significant shift towards privatisation, with major sectors controlled by a few companies. There is a need for more research into the political economy of waste management and drainage, especially as rapid urbanisation outpaces planning efforts.

As Mogadishu hosts both the government and international community, foreign aid significantly influences political dynamics, often exacerbating conflicts and instability. At present, as Menkhaus (2018) points out, the flow of foreign aid glues elite interests together and expands the “shares of the cake over which political elites negotiate.” However, the lack of regulatory and transparency mechanisms in aid projects contributes to mismanagement, underscoring the international community's responsibility to establish accountable, citizen-centric frameworks to prevent aid misappropriation. The above analysis highlights the multifaceted challenges facing Mogadishu's development, pointing to the need for informed, collaborative approaches to ensure equitable and sustainable progress.

5.2. Prospects and reforms for resolving domain-level problems in development

In addressing the complex issues identified within each domain, there are a number of potential entry points that policymakers should consider. The following analysis outlines viable strategies that could mitigate challenges within each domain, and contribute to a comprehensive and nuanced approach to addressing developmental issues.

Land and connectivity domain: The challenges within the land and connectivity domain are deeply rooted in historical issues, particularly the impact of the civil war in Somalia. Complex historical events, such as multiple land transactions and the absence of proper documentation, contribute to issues of land contestation, both private and public. The lack of political will to address these historical problems and the absence of a comprehensive nationwide initiative to tackle the nature and impact of the civil war

suggest that these disputes are likely to persist. The parliamentary debate concerning the status of Mogadishu, coupled with the expectations of organising local elections in June 2024 that the then Minister of Interior Affairs, Ahmed Fiqi, articulated, signifies a potential turning point for urban development and land reform. This is because a one-person, one-vote system in democratic elections for high offices could potentially transform the efficacy of the political leadership of the BRA.

Moreover, there are local thinktanks and research institutions in Somalia, primarily based in Mogadishu. Engaging them to conduct the necessary urban data and knowledge on land and related basic services required for reform and decisionmaking by local authorities is crucial. This may help to address the challenges of an adverse political economy through knowledge brokerage. This approach will enhance data ownership and build trust between local authorities and researchers. Establishing a data centre for urban planning in the BRA would also be a valuable initiative for this domain to tackle the “data deficit” faced by policymakers.

Furthermore, the World Bank Urban Resilience Program's focus on addressing the city's drainage system is a crucial strategy for solving the impact of climate change (urban flooding) and reducing health risks arising from the lack of a drainage system in the city.

Informal settlements domain: There have been promising interventions funded by the international community to solve issues in this domain. Such interventions include the formulation of a Durable Solutions Unit at the municipality level and the provision of social housing to 300 households in informal settlements funded by the European Union. The EU Reintegration Programme and the Danwadaag Programme (2018-22), as well as the IDP Policy of 2019, were all crucial actions taken by the international community, the BRA and the Somali government. However, questions around the IDP status in Mogadishu pose challenges to the local integration of IDPs; the Somali constitution does not define the IDP status quo in the city. Moreover, the short-term land agreement overseen by the BRA between landowners and IDPs was also a promising action that reduced forced evictions of IDPs.

The Banadir regional administration developed an IDP policy in 2019 and established a Durable Solution unit in the mayor's office. This policy has a durable solutions outlook and covers various aspects, including access to land, tenure security and inclusive development. It also focuses on individual documentation, social inclusion and participation, access to services and labour markets, as well as rural integration capacity (Tana Copenhagen, 2018).

Safety and security domain: The main issues highlighted by the safety and security report are al-Shabaab, youth-related gangs and political violence in the city, noting the 2021-22 events during the data collection of the report. The recent improved security situation in Mogadishu, due to proactive police operations reducing youth-related gang crimes and al-Shabaab activities in the last two years, suggests a potential positive outlook for the city's security and safety. The tangible decrease in al-Shabaab activities

in Mogadishu is credited to the counterinsurgency operations against al-Shabaab in rural areas.

The security vacuum in 2021-22, due to the split of state security over an electoral dispute, caused the emergence of youth gangs in the city. So avoiding such political violence (for example, by preventing the president's term extension) would be a crucial step for safety and security in the city. On the other hand, a community policing programme called "Dariseyn" Neighborhood Watch, initiated in 2014, has shown some encouraging results in districts such as Waberi and Hodon. Despite being politicised during the 2017-21 administration, with limited links between the community and police, the community expressed a willingness to welcome the programme back. Examining the failures and successes of this programme could serve as an entry point for reforming the city's safety and security. "Samakaab"²⁵ operations against youth gangs are also a crucial initiative that has shown commendable results.

Youth and development domain: The National Youth Policy with Action Plan, developed in 2022 and approved by the cabinet in March 2023, marks a promising milestone. This policy encompasses ten pillars, including entrepreneurship, drug prevention, and rehabilitation, offering opportunities for reform as it provides a roadmap with action items that can address youth challenges in Mogadishu. The political will to implement these plans is indispensable. There is a one-stop youth centre in Mogadishu, the Somali Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship Programme, though its geographical location is not accessible to many youths from peripheral districts, IDP camps and informal settlements, and its operational budget is limited. Engaging these existing centres and providing support could be a step forward and enable potential reforms. Moreover, the current president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, announced that he is committed to fighting against al-Shabaab militarily, economically and ideologically. If successful, this could present an opportunity for the reform of the youth and development domain. It is crucial to mention that the involvement of young people in the military and militia is at the core of this fight, which could lead to peace, prosperity and development.

6. Crosscutting issues

6.1. Governance of Mogadishu

The governance status of Mogadishu within Somalia's broader political structure remains unresolved, leaving the question of whether Mogadishu will be recognised as a federal state, or simply a city within a federal state, hanging in the balance. This ongoing debate complicates the governance of the city, as the roles and responsibilities of its officials remain unclear. For example, while security is managed

25 The Samakaab operation in 2022 was conducted by the Somali police to round up suspected youth gang members (*ciyaal weero*), confiscate weapons and seize alcohol in Mogadishu. (Chonka et al., 2023).

by the federal government, the specifics of this arrangement demand further clarification and resolution.

Mogadishu is the only city in Somalia directly taxed by the federal government. However, both the BRA and al-Shabaab also collect money from the city's residents. Despite these collections, services such as flood mitigation remain inadequate. The government's initiative to establish a centralised electronic tax revenue database is commendable. Yet, the coexistence of multiple taxation systems in Mogadishu poses a significant challenge. The competition for revenue between national and city politicians further complicates the issue. Poor governance results in Mogadishu's residents paying taxes multiple times to different entities.

Despite progress by the current government in diminishing al-Shabaab's revenue stream, the absence of personal identification (national identity cards) remains problematic. The government's recent shift to customs taxation based on product value is a positive step. However, the involvement of multiple actors without a clear overall plan could impede Mogadishu's economic development. Creating an efficient and effective tax system, reliant on accurate data, is crucial to ensure compliance and eradicate unlawful tax collection.

The BRA, which oversees Mogadishu, is influenced by the predominance of three major clans: Mudlood, Habargidir and Mursade. However, the mayor is appointed by the president, which often undermines the quality of services delivered to the city's residents. The city's leadership, nominated by and working under the incumbent president's interests, rarely exhibits accountability and transparency. Thus, conducting local elections for the city council is essential to empower residents in the decisionmaking process. Furthermore, the city's administrative leadership exhibits a significant gender imbalance, with none of the mayor's current four deputies being female. Only three of the 17 district commissioners are women, highlighting the urgent need for more inclusive and diverse representation in Mogadishu's city administration.

Mogadishu faces governance challenges from various influential political actors within the city. Notably, during the election turmoil of 2021-22, militia leaders like Ja'far and Saney Abdulle defied the directives of both the mayor and the president, demonstrating a considerable degree of autonomy. Ja'far, for instance, earned the trust of the Deynile community by effectively maintaining law and order, thus keeping militant groups at bay. Similarly, Colonel Saney Abdulle, a key figure in the Gubadley outskirts, showcased the clan's power by managing waste disposal and providing protection against the emergence of armed factions, including al-Shabaab. These instances illustrate the complex interplay between politics, economy and the development landscape in Mogadishu.

Our findings reveal that the unresolved governance status of Mogadishu, the influence of clan dynamics and the power of individual actors significantly impact various urban systems, such as waste management, education and water. The absence of governance oversight and regulation in certain areas has led to private entities

delivering substandard, interest-driven services, often inaccessible to marginalised communities within the city, such as IDPs and low-income urban residents. Additionally, the gatekeeper system in IDP camps, a consequence of inadequate governance, allows private interests to dominate humanitarian assistance, underlining the necessity for regulatory institutional strengthening to improve service quality and foster economic growth and job creation for the youth.

6.2. Climate change, flooding and urban planning failures

Climate change, exacerbated by global warming, has led to temperature extremes and altered rainfall patterns, stressing water service delivery and causing recurrent flooding. Some interviewees suggest that the situation in Mogadishu is aggravated by its historical drainage system and inadequate topographical assessments (Mohamed, 2023).

Urban flooding presents significant health and mobility challenges, disrupts the transport of people and goods, and affects economic livelihoods. The shortcomings in sewage system planning and a malfunctioning waste management system, managed by private entities, have worsened these challenges. There are concerns about human waste contaminating floodwaters, posing additional health risks. For example, in 2016, heavy rains caused overflow in six districts, leading to flooding near IDP settlements and vulnerable host communities that house tens of thousands.

This situation highlights the critical need for improved sanitation infrastructure and measures to fortify the city's sanitation system against extreme weather events. Investments in resilient sewage systems and drainage networks are paramount. Furthermore, with a substantial number of IDPs in the city, site-specific interventions are required to safeguard their safety and wellbeing during such environmental crises.

Additionally, climatic shocks have prompted significant displacement towards the city, driven by recurrent droughts and floods in regions such as the Lower and Middle Shabelle, Bay and Bakool. Consequently, young people migrate from rural to urban areas like Mogadishu, settling in informal and IDP settlements among low-income urban Residents. This migration exacerbates challenges for marginalised communities in neighbourhoods and limits their access to essential services like education, electricity and water, especially in peripheral areas.

At the federal level, Somalia has marked a historic milestone with the establishment of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, aimed at combating the adverse effects of climate change and promoting environmental protection and conservation. In October 2022, the Somalia Green Initiative was launched by the president, targeting the planting of 10 million trees to address climate crisis aspects. However, municipal efforts towards climate change mitigation remain insufficient. Notably, despite Somalia having the world's windiest coastline, the country predominantly relies on diesel generators for power, limiting its renewable energy potential.

These findings indicate that climate-induced flooding and urban planning failures adversely affect the city's road transportation, health, sanitation and waste management systems, posing a risk of urban disasters without proper future planning. The lack of urban planning data is a significant challenge for Mogadishu and its policymakers. The city is undergoing rapid growth and infrastructure development, expanding outward without strategic planning. The report on land and connectivity highlights significant and uncontrolled city expansion as the urban population increases. Therefore, addressing Mogadishu's urban planning challenges and establishing a long-term vision for the city's development over the next few decades is essential. This must include formulating regulations to control the city's real estate and expansion.

7. Conclusion

This report synthesises the key insights from six studies on Somalia's political settlement, Mogadishu's urban systems, and four domains: land and connectivity; security and safety; youth and capabilities; and informal settlement and internally displaced people. The city's unresolved status has profound implications, especially for its security framework, which is under the jurisdiction of the federal government. A crucial factor in preventing the collapse of Mogadishu's political settlement is the consolidation of power within the security sector, evidenced by territorial control via checkpoints and districts. Despite the integration of many IDPs into low-income urban communities since their arrival in 1991, they are still categorised as IDPs. The presence of al-Shabaab, along with the rise of youth gangs, partly due to the 2021 power vacuum following electoral violence, adds to the city's security dilemmas. Nonetheless, since January 2023, the efforts of newly trained security forces have notably enhanced the security situation in Mogadishu. The city also grapples with issues stemming from land disputes and the commercialisation of land involving both private and public sectors. Ultimately, Mogadishu is at a crucial crossroads, dealing with intricate political, security and development challenges. Strategic and collaborative efforts are essential to ensure a more stable and prosperous future.

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Appendix A: Key synthesised reports

In writing this report, the authors drew on research presented in the following (mostly) unpublished reports:

Chonka, P, Wasuge, M and Mohamud, F (2023). "Safety and security in Mogadishu". Unpublished ACRC report. Manchester: African Cities Research Consortium, The University of Manchester.

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