



SOMALIA STANDING COORDINATION COMMITTEE

Nairobi, Kenya

1 - 2 February 1994

Regional Profile : Bay

UNITED NATIONS OPERATION IN SOMALIA
DIVISION FOR HUMANITARIAN RELIEF AND REHABILITATION

REGIONAL PROFILE - BAY

Overview of Region

1. The Bay region, in central Somalia, borders Bakool to the north, Lower Shabelle to the east, Middle Juba to the south and Gedo to the West. The region covers an area of approximately 41,000 square kilometres and has population of around 700,000 (according to pre-war estimate). Three-quarters of the population are rural. The region contains five districts: Baidoa, which is also home to the regional capital, Bur Hakaba, Dinsor, Bardale and Qansadhere. The dominant clan in the Bay region is the Rahanweyn.

The Economy

2. Agriculture and Livestock are the two major principal contributors to the Bay economy. The region has traditionally been a net export region for sorghum, most going to the North (e.g. Galcaio, Bosasso, and Hargeisa). Although Bay is not a major livestock producing region in national terms, Baidoa, the regional capital, is used as a central staging post and trading area for pastoralists and merchants. Baidoa is a very active trading centre in many sectors and the presence of the international community has had a significant impact on the local economy.

3. Agricultural production in the Bay region is based on a rain-fed system with Sorghum as the main crop. The region has an estimated cultivable area of 280,000 hectares. Pre-war figures indicate that Bay produced nearly 70% of Somalia's sorghum in 1987 and it is likely that today regional production accounts for well in excess of half the country's sorghum crop. Most farmers using traditional, low technology farming methods. There are two harvests per year following the main (Gu) and secondary (Der) rainy seasons in July/August and January respectively. Last season's (Gu) crop was variable with some districts reporting good production and others poor. The current Der Season rains have been little and late and crop production expectations are poor to very poor. General constraints to agricultural production include lack of "seed money", a reduced labour force, poor roads and a shortage of water for irrigation due to the poor state of wells.

4. Prewar livestock figures show the Bay region as having approximately 720,000 head of camels and cattle and 320,000 sheep and goats, around 2.5% of the country's total. However Baidoa is a significant trading post and staging area for livestock. The main migration patterns are North/South to Ethiopia and to the Middle and Lower Juba regions as well as to the West to the Shabelle - moving towards the river areas during the dry season.

5. Traditional ports for export from the region are Mogadishu and Kismayo, although the latter is now difficult to access for political reasons. The use of aircraft for direct export to the Gulf states is being explored, although given the current depression in livestock prices it would probably not be viable. The impact of the civil war on livestock herds through drought, disease and distress selling on the livestock sector in the Bay region is unclear. While it was apparent that in some areas livestock herds have been completely destroyed, the current decline in livestock prices would indicate an oversupply of animals on the market, which is inconsistent with major losses.

6. Private sector activity, appears heavily biased either towards rapid turnover trade (partly as a function of insecurity) or activity linked to the presence of the international community. There is evidence of construction activity, and even some rudimentary manufacturing (furniture-making), but this appears to be driven by demand from various international agencies. The lack of a Somali banking system did not appear to be a constraint to enterprise as most merchants held "off-shore" accounts in Kenya, keeping only minimum balances in the country. The current security situation was considered to be the overriding constraint to business activity in Baidoa. In addition to the bias toward short-term trade in the region, the present insecurity has greatly increased the cost of transportation, as a result of the need for armed guards which impedes regional and inter-regional trade.

Security

7. The security situation in the Bay region is quiet but remains tense. The recent inter-clan clashes between the Laysan and Harin appear to have been resolved and while the clans have stopped fighting, relations remain strained. The Indian Army took over the responsibility for providing security in the Bay region from the French on 15 December. Indian troop strength in the region is presently at 2,600. There are reports of increased banditry on the main commercial routes into Baidoa. Increased Somali police and Indian Army patrols have lowered the number of incidents, however it is still necessary for international agencies to travel with armed escorts.

Operating Environment

8. Despite the cessation of inter-clan fighting, the operating environment in the Bay region is still insecure due to banditry and attacks against property and vehicles belonging to international organisations. The most recent incidents, in the week ending 29 December included bomb explosions at the Baidoa offices of the international NGOs CRS and GOAL Ireland (no injuries), a WFP car attacked by bandits with one guard killed and driver wounded and a UNICEF car hijacked and later returned. There have been no further serious incidents against the international community since then. The presence of the Indian Army and the 350 strong Police force has clearly improved security but the December incidents indicate that the area is far from secure.

Governance

Politics

9. SDM (Somali Democratic Movement) is the principal faction in Bay, as the faction of the Rahanweyn, the dominant clan. The faction is centered around Baidoa, and traditionally enjoys support in Bakool and parts of Middle Shabelle, Lower Shabelle, Middle Juba and Lower Juba. Rahanweyn are primarily farmers and speak a distinct dialect. They are not as strong militarily as other clans, and they suffered greatly during the civil war. Most of the starvation during the war occurred in Rahanweyn areas. After UNITAF established security in Bay Region, SDM evolution entered its current phase, with its center in Baidoa and no outside interference. Some leading Rahanweyn politicians and intellectuals came from abroad to Baidoa to join the political process. This has produced a third branch, called SDM/Bonka. There seems to be little difference of views between SDM/Ali Mahdi and SDM/Bonka.

10. There is currently a major disagreement between the Chairman of SDM/Bonka and his deputy over the selection of the region's members to the TNC. The dispute centres on the position of the Harin sub-clan vis-a-vis the selection criteria of members to the TNC. It appears that the two major sub-clans, Erlay and Leysan have decided to isolate the Harin clan, who feel that they have been out-manoeuvred. The selection of Mohamed Ali Hamud, the Chairman of SDM/Bonka to represent Bay region in the TNC when he himself is from Bakool is a contentious issue which could lead to insecurity in both Bay and Bakool.

Institutions: District and Regional Councils

10. The Bay regional council has been established as well as district councils in Baidoa, Bur Hakaba, Qansadhere. The remaining district, Dinsor is yet to form a district council. A family dispute over claims to the sultanate of Dinsor is the major obstacle. The Baidoa district council has identified a development committee, which has begun to consider issues of revenue collection, sectoral allocation and banking, albeit in a limited way. District councillors are nominated by the clan elders, and it appears that the UNOSOM requirement for representation across all sub-clans has undermined the authority and effectiveness of the councils as legitimate and truly representative bodies.

Regional Development Committee

11. The Bay regional council has the responsibility of establishing a regional development committee. The committee has been established but remains in a nascent form.

Revenue

12. Currently proposed tax systems are unworkable and inefficient. Different sales taxes are proposed for about 400 items and there are recommendations for taxes on agricultural produce and livestock, and poll taxes on houses and land. Sales taxes would be very difficult to collect and poll taxes not feasible at this stage because of extensive displacement and the lack of a register of property and land. Taxes on trade are likely to be the most feasible to collect at this stage.

13. A financial consultant employed by the Baidoa and Berdaale district councils advocated the collection of all taxes at district level and the transfer of a proportion of those revenues to the regional council for specific region-wide projects. The district and regional councillors themselves were not however wedded to this approach. They were receptive to the idea that collection of taxes at regional level, where region-wide planning and budgeting would take place, would be more efficient.

Sector Issues

Police, Prisons and Judiciary

14. There are presently 350 policemen in the Bay region, supported by UNOSOM and under the direction of the Indian and French contingents. Military Police from the French contingent are training them. The quality of the police trainees is high, according to the French contingent commander. Approximately 40% of the police in the region are armed, but they lack transport to carry out frequent region-wide patrols. The regional security committee confirmed that because the police receive orders from external sources (Indian and French army) they can carry out operations such as enforcing regional weapons policy without interference or reprisal. However, the issue of transfer of oversight to Somali civil administration will have to be addressed. The Bay regional security committee and district security committee felt that if the court system was fully operational, then the police would have increased confidence to arrest criminals.

Education

15. The Regional Council appointed a Regional Education Committee in June 1993, however there is some doubt as to its effectiveness. As a result, larger management issues related to education are not being addressed by any Somali institution at present. A number of NGOs are running schools in the region, primarily in the larger towns. They are training teachers and are also paying their salaries although it is becoming increasingly more difficult for NGOs to cover these expenses. Communities do not appear to be involved in financing education, even in those towns where teachers were not being supported by NGO funds (e.g. Qansadhere). Some small private schools which teach English are operating in the region. These tend to be small and self-

financed. One new trend is the combining of Koranic schools with primary schools on a cost-sharing basis.

Health

16. There are two hospitals presently functioning in the Bay region. The regional hospital in Baidoa is operated by the international NGO IMC (International Medical Corps). There is concern about the long-term sustainability of the hospital and other health activities by the agencies involved in the sector, especially with respect to payment of staff and procurement of necessary supplies and equipment. The other hospital in the region is in Bur Hakaba and operated by the international NGO AICF. They have indicated that their relief programme is coming to end and that they will eventually phase out their support to the hospital.

Water

17. The water situation in Bay region is not critical, although the shortage of rainfall this season is expected to result in poor harvests. There are three primary sources of water: deep wells (boreholes), shallow wells, and springs. In addition, water catchments also exist in some villages. At present, UNICEF estimates that 30-40% of Baidoa residents have adequate access to water. No assessment of water outside Baidoa has been done as yet, although it is estimated that 20-25% of the population here has adequate access to water. UNICEF has taken the lead in setting up a Baidoa Water Authority (BWA), which is expected to start operations by January 1994. This is planned to be along the same lines as the Hargeisa Water Project, which has proved to be a success in terms of sustainability.

De-mining, Demobilisation and Disarmament

18. The presence of an estimated 3000 ex-militia in Baidoa constitutes a major risk to security in the region unless demobilisation efforts are quickly made. UNOSOM and the Bay regional council have agreed on a phased demobilisation program starting with 50 ex-militia. UNOSOM and the regional council also plan the registration of the former militia weapons. There do not appear to be mines in any significant quantity in Bay region.