

INCREASING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND
INCLUSION IN JUBBALAND PEACE PROCESSES

WOMEN, CONFLICT AND PEACE:

Learning from Kismayo

A STUDY REPORT
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Life & Peace Institute
Peace Direct
Somali Women Solidarity Organization

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Lead agencies in the research

Life & Peace Institute

The Life & Peace Institute (LPI) is an international centre with headquarters in Uppsala, Sweden. The institute supports and promotes non-violent approaches to conflict transformation through a combination of research and action, and contributes to the prevention and mitigation of violence as preconditions for peace, justice and non-violent coexistence. LPI has over 30 years of peacebuilding experience with a specific focus on the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes regions. LPI has been carrying out peacebuilding work in Somalia since the early 1990s, with a focus on grassroots, community-led conflict transformation and emphasis on strengthening the capacity of local organizations and institutions. In Kismayo, LPI has been implementing, in partnership with Somali Women Solidarity Organization, a transformative women-to-women dialogue process with diverse women, starting from an intra-clan level in 2016 and moving forward to an inter-clan level at the time of compiling this report.

Peace Direct

Peace Direct is an international non-governmental organization dedicated to supporting local people to stop war and build lasting peace in some of the world's most fragile countries. Peace Direct supports 11 local partners in 10 countries around the world to stop violence escalating and build long term peace. The organization speaks out for local people to ensure that the world hears their voices and to challenge world leaders to support them. Peace Direct has a unique network of 30 local peacebuilding experts. They conduct research and have profiled more than 1,500 local peacebuilding organizations for Peace Insight, the lead online resource on local peacebuilding. Visit: www.peaceinsight.org.

In Somalia, Peace Direct works in the city of Kismayo in partnership with local organization Social-life and Agricultural Development Organization (SADO) to prevent violence and build community resilience. This work supports disaffected at-risk youth to build livelihoods, get jobs and earn an income, giving them a practical alternative to joining militant groups. The work with SADO also supports young people and women to play a more active role in community cohesion, development and peacebuilding.

Somali Women Solidarity Organization

Somali Women Solidarity Organization (SWSO) was formed in 2006 as a community-based organization engaged in promoting solidarity and increasing women's participation in decision-making processes. It is active across Lower Jubba, with headquarters in Kismayo and field offices in Dhobley and Afmadhow. SWSO has actively engaged in peacebuilding work over the years, including work with the UN, Pact Kenya and LPI, in particular at the grassroots level to enhance the capacity of communities to understand and respond to insecurity. SWSO also advocates for the interests these communities at both national and international levels.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AU	African Union
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
KII	Key Informant Interview
LPI	Life & Peace Institute
LS	Life Story
PSRP	Political Settlements Research Programme
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
Sida	Swedish International Development Agency
SNA	Somali National Army
SADO	Social-life and Agricultural Development Organization
SNM	Somali National Movement
SWSO	Somali Women's Solidarity Organization
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USC	United Somali Congress
VM	Validation Meeting
WPS	Women, Peace and Security Framework

Executive Summary

United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325 enjoins member states to provide protection for women and girls in war, and to ensure the full participation of women in humanitarian, conflict resolution, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction initiatives. UNSC Resolution 1325 is a key milestone in the international recognition of women's rights in policy and law. While there has been significantly more policy attention paid to women's inclusion in peacebuilding initiatives, in practice little has changed to date. Globally, and in the Somali context, peace processes and political settlements remain elite bargaining scenarios involving mainly male actors in a conflict. Conducted with women and men in Kismayo, this research underlines how the inclusion of Somali women in resolving violent conflict and achieving political settlements is essential for long-term conflict reduction and reconciliation.

The study generates findings that Somalis with experience of the war already know – women play an instrumental role in the construction and prosecution of violent intra and inter-clan conflict. In addition to being fundraisers, mobilizers and (co)producers of violent masculinities, they can be combatants and killers. They are also vital peacebuilders. At any one time, where a woman stands on the spectrum of conflict to peace promotion depends on context and her individual circumstances. Respondents demonstrate how in intra and inter-clan conflict, the political is the personal. They evidence how women are political actors.

What emerges from these accounts is a depiction of how the intra and inter-clan conflict since 1991 has been a joint effort between men and women in which women are critical and possibly equal players. Violence, it seems, is not a natural Somali male state. It needs to be produced and reproduced, an enterprise in which women play an important role. Not all women have directly supported conflict but their contribution has been of sufficient magnitude for women to describe themselves and be described by men as 'responsible for conflict'.

This proposition raises many questions for further study. What, then, are the roles and responsibilities of men in clan-related violent conflict? To what extent are women and men similarly motivated when violent conflict is conducted along clan lines? And how do women benefit from the investments they make in clan-related conflict? On this last point, it is notable that respondents do not identify any significant gains for women – no substantial and enduring emotional, structural or political benefits are mentioned. Despite their roles and responsibilities in and for aspects of the conflict, as a group it seems that women ultimately stand to lose. Except for the fact that both women and men assert women's liability for conflict, it would not be at all remarkable to conclude that the winners of clan-related conflicts appear to be mainly men and patriarchy.¹

Linked to this is the need to better understand how women's support for violent conflict is engineered, or at least made use of, by those directing war in the name of their clan. A political economy analysis can map out how the clannism that

¹ Patriarchy is defined as a system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it.

drives much of the conflict in Somalia, and in Kismayo in particular, is rooted in a continuum of violence marked by historical grievances, fuelled by present-day geopolitics and serving elite (largely male) interests.² In contrast, the study findings shed light on the gendered social structure giving rise to the person-to-person dynamics of clannism. As a result of their position within this structure, women are instrumental to the success of clannism but at the same time suffer terrible consequences.³ This gives rise to a question. Are women instrumental or instrumentalized in the pursuit of conflict? The answer seems likely to be both. Importantly, however, women have a breaking point in either case. For the study findings suggest that female suffering is the social fuse that blows, altering the trajectory from one of violent conflict to the pursuit of peace.

The study material deepens understanding of how women construct pathways to peace. The risks and painstaking steps involved in producing collective peace actions include building women-to-women reconciliation and consensus within and across clan divides, plus resource mobilization. The leadership skills and strategic thinking involved are evidence – if evidence should be required – that women are men’s equals in both war and peace. As such, delivering on the inclusion of women in peace processes is not just about fulfilling a policy requirement but is an essential practice to reduce conflict and improve chances of stability and sustainable peace.

Support for women-to-women reconciliation emerges as the key opportunity and entry point (at least in Kismayo) for women to make a significant contribution to ending violence. Remarkably, despite the depth of hostilities accumulated over the years of conflict, women who have finally reached their tipping point and become peace activists have found the wherewithal to reach out to one another in a collective effort to rebuild relationships and construct pathways to peace. Conflict transformation in the Kismayo context is shown to be a risky and painstaking process requiring collective action reached through women-to-women reconciliation and consensus-building.

Reconciliation is needed within and across clan divides. Existing and ongoing women’s dialogues facilitated by the Somali Women’s Solidarity Organization (SWSO) and the Life & Peace Institute (LPI) in Kismayo appear to have accelerated reconciliation efforts and led to much positive feeling. Reflecting on their achievements and the challenges that lie ahead, these women appear optimistic. Although women are the custodians of clan-based conflict, with violent contest for clan supremacy and control of Kismayo (currently) abated, if they can reconcile their grievances, then the cycle of violence that has persisted since 1991 can perhaps finally be broken, helping to make sustainable and potentially transformational peace more likely.

The study firmly disproves the notion that the only important protagonists in Somalia’s intra and inter-clan conflict are male. In so doing, it highlights how the inclusion of Somali women in resolving violent conflict and achieving political settlements should not be seen as an optional aspiration but rather a vital ingredient for sustainable peace. It shows that their continued systematic exclusion from, or tokenistic inclusion in, peace processes only helps to ensure that the continuum of

2 For example: Hagmann, T. (2016) ‘Stabilization, Extraversion and Political Settlements in Somalia’. Rift Valley Institute. Accessed 29 May 2017. <http://riftvalley.net/publication/stabilization-extraversion-and-political-settlements-somalia#>. WS1-XevyjIU; and Hoehne, M. V. (2010) ‘Political Representation in Somalia: citizenship, clannism and territoriality’, in *Whose Peace is it Anyway? Connecting Somali and international peacemaking*. Bradbury, M., and Healy, S., eds. (2010). Accord/21. Conciliation Resources.

3 See footnote 24 in Gardner, J., and El-Bushra, J., eds. (2004) *Somalia—The Untold Story: The War Through the Eyes of Somali Women*. CIIR and Pluto Press. Somali women describe how intra and inter-clan conflict places them at the centre of suffering because the conflict emotionally tears families apart and often causes their break up.

violence is never fully broken – an outcome that arguably only serves the interests of the largely male elite.

Finally, although data is limited, the study suggests that educated female (and male) youth and youth-based organizations are enthusiastic and important sources of peace activism and may have potential to provide innovative solutions to specific types of conflict or conflict drivers. Although there is a lack of evidence to assert that, unlike their parents' generation, they are not so bound up with traditional or even accepted forms of conflict prevention, management, resolution or transformation, it does seem reasonable to speculate that this may be the case. Among these youth are the future leaders of the country and for this reason alone their enthusiasm as peace activists deserves positive attention and encouragement.

Background to this study

In recent years, in partnership with Somali civil society, the Life & Peace Institute (LPI) has contributed to reconciliation and reconstruction efforts in South Central Somalia at two levels. First, LPI focuses on addressing underlying and protracted local intra and inter-clan conflicts at the grassroots level through the active participation of local stakeholders, with a special emphasis on gender and generational representation, as well as the inclusion of minority and marginalized groups. This work takes place across five regions in South Central Somalia; namely, Lower and Middle Shabelle, Hiran, Galgadud and Lower Jubba, with linkages to actors and dynamics in Mogadishu. Second, LPI influences overarching conflict narratives in the country and internationally through lessons and analysis from the ground. Both strands of work are interconnected and supplement broader efforts to address conflict and build peace in Somalia.

Simultaneous to LPI's work, Peace Direct has been collaborating with the Social-life and Agricultural Development Organization (SADO) in contributing to the reduction of violence in Kismayo. This has been achieved by supporting young women and men to build livelihoods by giving them training and small grants to start businesses. The opportunities provided mean that young people, previously at risk of joining militant groups, no longer have an economic imperative to do so. It is this economic imperative that has driven many young people to join groups such as al-Shabaab in the first place. Peace Direct and SADO also have identified the need for young people and women to play more active roles in the social and political realms from which they are traditionally excluded. Both organizations support peacebuilding processes and dialogue to this end.

Indeed, Somali women's marginalization from peacemaking and peacebuilding processes remains an obstacle to sustainable peace in the country. LPI's decision to initiate a women-centred dialogue process, and Peace Direct's decision to specifically support women's livelihoods, organizations and their participation in governance and peacebuilding, have been designed as responses driven by the (perceived) limitations of more conventional dialogue processes in Somalia, where women's perceptions and voices are rarely heard or formally represented. Both LPI and Peace Direct are committed to supporting local civil society in Somalia, and in particular to supporting women to take on active roles as peacebuilders. To best facilitate this, there is a need to develop a comprehensive understanding and analysis of women's contribution to conflict and peace. The programmatic strategies of LPI and Peace Direct also conform with the global Women, Peace and Security Framework (WPS), especially UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325, which urges member states to promote women's inclusion in peace processes.

Based on this rationale, LPI launched a women-centred transformative dialogue-to-action project in Kismayo town in partnership with Somali Women Solidarity Organization (SWSO) in January 2016. The process's transformative aspect is two-fold. On the one hand, the dialogues aim to provide a safe space to diverse women to

encourage them to share their experiences, perspectives and solutions to the conflict. On the other, the dialogues bring together women who differ from one another in terms of socio-economic status, age and other identity markers. The process began with a series of intra-clan dialogues among women from conflicting clans in order to identify and articulate key conflict issues. At the time of finalizing this report, the process has moved through a series of inter-clan dialogues to deliberate these issues, culminating in the establishment of a cross-clan Kismayo Women's Peacebuilding Platform that will potentially link in with other peacebuilding structures, undertake practical peacebuilding work and engage in advocacy with federal and state-level authorities.

Building on these women-centred dialogue processes, LPI, Peace Direct and SWSO have undertaken this research project to shed light on women's experiences of conflict and peace in Kismayo, and get local insights on the options and possibilities for sustainably promoting and supporting more inclusive peace processes in Lower Jubba and in Somalia writ large. In order to operationalize their respective inclusive peacebuilding commitments, the three lead agencies concluded that they needed a thorough and locally informed insight into the lives of women in Jubbaland: their experiences of the conflicts that have characterized the region and Kismayo in particular, and the roles they have played in supporting violent conflict and in canvassing for peace. This study is designed as a first step in generating these deeper insights into women's lives and experiences.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 BRIEF CONTEXT ANALYSIS: KISMAYO

The study is undertaken in the city of Kismayo, the administrative capital of Jubbaland Federal State. Situated in Somalia's most fertile agricultural region, a centre of the charcoal industry and the possible site of gas and oil deposits, Kismayo has been a strategically important commercial centre and seaport since precolonial times. It is the biggest economic hub in South Central Somalia after Mogadishu and one of the largest cities with a current estimated population of 180,300.⁴ These factors have made Kismayo the lucrative and highly fought-over target of the warring parties competing for control of revenue and resources in southern Somalia.

Kismayo has experienced some of Somalia's most intense and longstanding violent conflicts since the collapse of the Siyad Barre government in 1991, and the security and political vacuum that ensued. The nature of the conflict has changed over time – from inter-clan fighting to intense and protracted violent conflict within and between the clan families that have historical claim to the city, moving to more ideologically driven conflict within and between diverse non-state armed groups, including al-Shabaab and clan militias. As such, clan dynamics are not the sole conflict factor, yet over the years they have been ignited and inflamed, fomenting the violent conflicts endured in the city over the past two decades. In one case, clan grievances are said to go back over 200 years – such is the depth of collective memory and grievance yet to be laid to rest through reconciliation.⁵

Kismayo's population, including study respondents, have therefore experienced (directly or indirectly) the fights and conflicts perpetrated by rival warlords, clan militias and other non-state armed groups, including al-Shabaab, resulting in death, destruction and displacement. Kismayo is considered home by members of the four major Somali clan families (Darood, Dir, Digil and Mirifle, Hawiye), many of whom settled in the city as state officials and employees during the 1960s and 1970s, along with members of southern Somalia's minority groups, particularly the Bantu and Bajuni.⁶ Unarmed and unprotected by government security actors or informal militias, the latter two groups have experienced some of the worst violations and abuses at the hands of warring parties. Traditionally marginalized by the dominant pastoral communities, they remain socially marginalized and exploited, and are among the poorest inhabitants in Kismayo today.

Kismayo's population has expanded and contracted in response to the dynamics of the war, changes of leadership and control over the city. With the collapse of the state in 1991, historical and new rivalries erupted, leading to communities that manifest tense and at times violent inter and intra-clan relationships. Large numbers of Kismayo inhabitants have sought refuge in neighbouring countries (such as Kenya) and many others have remained internally displaced in the region. The city has also attracted internally displaced persons (IDPs) from other parts of Jubbaland and beyond, including Mogadishu.

⁴ Up to date accurate population figures are unavailable. This figure is from AMISOM 2013; see: <http://amisom-au.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Sector-II-Kismayo.pdf>. Kismayo's population has fluctuated dramatically over the last two and half decades as a result of conflict and al-Shabaab control of the city, with many internally displaced persons (IDPs) coming into the city since its liberation from al-Shabaab. At present, the population of Kismayo is thought by residents to exceed 200,000.

⁵ For historical background on the clan wars in Kismayo, see Bradbury, M. (1994) *The Somali Conflict: Prospects for Peace*. Oxfam GB. Accessed 11 December 2017, <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/the-somali-conflict-prospects-for-peace-122751>.

⁶ These are only two of Somalia's minority groups. 'Bantu' is the collective name adopted since the persecution of this group during the civil war. The Bantu consist of members of Somalia's large population and subculture of citizens who identify as (or are identified as) being descended from migrants and slaves originating from ethnically Bantu communities in Kenya, Tanzania and possibly further south. They are mainly agriculturalists and inhabitants of the fertile riverine areas in the south and have been traditionally exploited by plantation owners. The Bantu are marginalized on social, economic, cultural and political levels of Somali society. The Swahili speaking Bajuni community are thought to be the original inhabitants of Kismayo. Numerically, they are a small group and reside along the coastal areas that straddle Kenya and Somalia. Fishing is a traditional source of income. Throughout the violent conflicts since 1991, neither the Bantu nor the Bajuni have formed or been members of armed groups, and both have suffered hugely at the hands of clan militia.

Between 1991 and 2012, the population of Kismayo has experienced multiple regime changes as control of the city has been won and lost by more than nine different groups, including clan warlords and al-Shabaab. The identity and motives of the protagonists have changed over time – from inter-clan fighting between the Darood and Hawiye in the early 1990s; to intense and protracted violent conflict within and between the Darood sub-clan families that have historical claim to the city; moving to more ideologically driven conflict in the late 1990s and 2000s within and between diverse non-state armed groups, including al-Shabaab and clan militias, as well as foreign forces.

Once al-Shabaab were finally ousted from Kismayo by the Kenyan Defence Forces and Ras Kamboni Movement militias in September 2012 after 11 months of fighting, Kismayo came under the control of African Union (AU) troops from Kenya, Ethiopia and Burundi, along with Jubbaland forces and the Somali National Army (SNA). On 28 August 2013, the Somali federal government and the interim Jubbaland administration reached a peace agreement in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to end the conflict between the new Jubbaland interim administration and those who opposed the new administration. The agreement promised the opposition more political representation in all institutions (especially parliament) and the reintegration of armed militias into the Jubbaland security forces.

In 2017, prolonged drought combined with conflict between al-Shabaab fighters and the federal member state forces, backed by AU troops and the SNA, is driving another exodus of people from rural areas, abandoning their farms, livestock and homes to seek refuge in the town.

1.2 THE STUDY⁷

This study is conceived to generate important new insights into the gendered nature of conflict and peace dynamics, as well as shed light on the way in which power is exercised through gender norms, and thus expand the scope of existing conflict analysis in the Kismayo (and broader Jubbaland) context.⁸ The study seeks to identify new options for greater inclusion and participation of women in the region's informal and formal peace and reconciliation processes.

The study timing coincided with the series of Kismayo-based women's peace dialogues facilitated by LPI and SWSO, the first such women-centred dialogues LPI has supported in Somalia. Twelve intra-clan women-to-women dialogues had been held by the time the study was undertaken in October–November 2016.

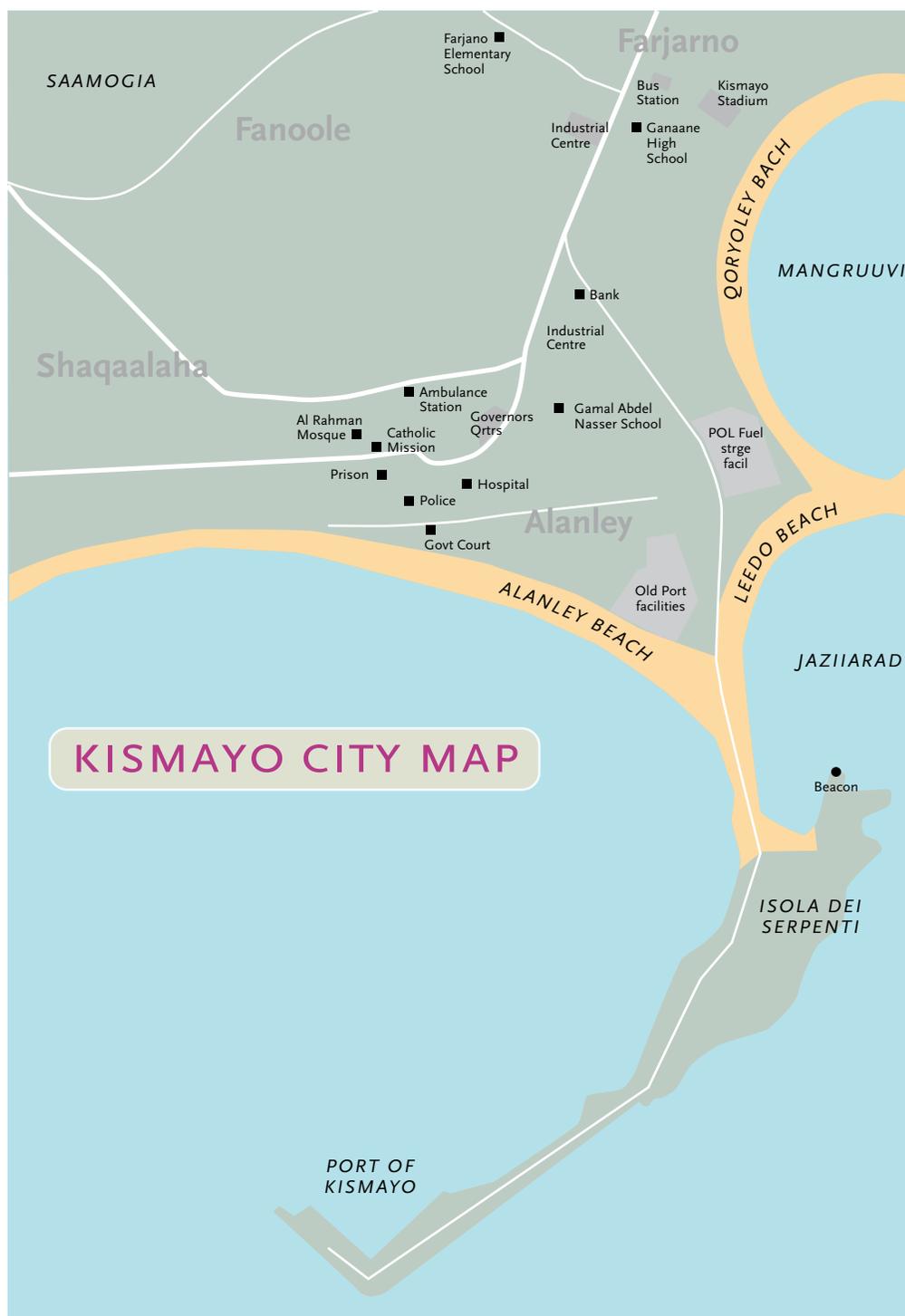
Key concepts

The study is premised on an understanding that conflict is a gendered experience; i.e. how people are involved and affected differs depending on whether they are identified or identify as male or female. Analysis of study findings is informed by insights from gender and conflict studies that show how violence is seldom, if ever, completely anarchic or random but rather is part of a continuum – it happens and is anchored in a gendered, ordered structure.⁹

⁷ This study is the result of a collaborative endeavour between LPI, Peace Direct, and their respective local partners in Kismayo, SWSO and SADO. In Kismayo, SWSO and SADO identified potential local researchers and focus group discussion (FGD) facilitators aged between eighteen and twenty-five years old, six of whom were subsequently recruited – four women and two men. The selection of local researchers took into account the significant local intra and inter-clan tensions and sensitivities, representing the Darood (Mareehan and Ogadeen), Hawiye, Digil and Mirifile groups. The data collected was translated from Somali to English. It was processed and then analysed by LPI, Peace Direct and SWSO team members in a workshop facilitated by the consultant gender and conflict advisor.

⁸ Area-specific literature is limited, as there is little previously published material on Kismayo relevant to the primary research questions. The dearth of material on these topics adds to the value of this research and opens up opportunities for further investigation. For existing literature, see the work of Lee Cassanelli, Catherine Besteman and Ken Menkhaus for vital reading relevant to Jubbaland, and the people and conflicts of southern Somalia more widely.

⁹ See, for example: El-Bushra, J., Myrtilinen, H. and Naujoks, J. (2014) *Rethinking Gender in Peacebuilding*. International Alert; and Cohn, C. ed. (2013) *Women & Wars. Contested Histories. Uncertain Futures*. Polity.



Map 2. **Kismayo Districts**

In the same way, the study design is informed by and offers ground-truthing for an understanding that the term ‘peace’ is a gendered concept. How women and men define, experience and measure security and peace is shown in other contexts to be discernibly different. This is thought to link back to factors such as the gendered norms and practices in the society in which they live.

Core to the study approach is a concept of gender as relational rather than synonymous with women and girls. A relational approach to gender understands that both males and females are gendered beings with socially constructed gender identities and that these identities are constructed in relation to each other. Both are also subject to and agents of power relations. A gender analysis of power relations

UNSC Resolution 1325, passed on 20 October 2000, mandates UN member states to increase the participation of women in decision-making, pay attention to the specific needs of women and girls in conflict, provide a gender perspective in post-conflict processes, as well as in UN programming, reporting and missions, and in peace support operations. It marked the first time the Security Council addressed the unique impact of armed conflict on women.

is an important tool in peacebuilding because it looks at relations between men, between men and women, and between women. It also examines the interrelationship, or intersectionality, between gender and other identity markers and axes of power, such as age, social class, sexuality, disability, ethnic or religious background, marital status, urban or rural location and others. Intersectionality reveals the gender order in a given context or society. That is, it discloses the hierarchies of power that exist both between men and women, and, importantly, between men and between women.

This examination of power and hierarchy (helpfully) complicates understanding of who the more powerful or more powerless are in a given situation. For instance, due to their ethnicity or age, some men may be less powerful than some women, in contrast to the usual assumption that women are less powerful than men. Among women, some may

be more disempowered than others due to factors such as illiteracy or displacement. Understanding of the gender order in any particular context challenges essentialist assumptions such as *women are peace loving* or *men are violent*.

Such holistic gender analysis expands understanding of women and men, and how women and men live together in society. Such knowledge can therefore contribute to more effective and sustainable programme design and policy formation that may help improve the status of women and conditions for all,¹⁰ and contribute to strengthened social cohesion and sustainable peace writ large.

Global framework: gender, peacebuilding and political settlements

Located within a feminist theoretical framework, this study draws on learning from the increasing body of literature on gender and peacebuilding practice and analysis, critique of the impact of the Women, Peace and Security Framework (WPS)¹¹ and research underlining the interconnections between gender equality, conflict reduction and more sustainable peace.¹² Review of existing literature confirms that Somali women are no different to women across the globe: despite the WPS framework, in particular UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), the picture worldwide is of male-dominated peace processes and political settlements. Although women are increasingly acknowledged to be an important resource for peacebuilding, especially by international actors engaged in supporting peace

¹⁰ El-Bushra, et al (2014).

¹¹ For further information, see: www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/women/wps.shtml; and Goetz, A., and Treiber, A., (2012) 'Gender and Conflict Analysis', in UN Women Sourcebook on Women, Peace and Security 2nd edition. UN Women.

¹² See, for example: Hudson, V., Ballif-Spanvill, B., Caprioli, M. and Emmett, C. (2012) *Sex and World Peace*. Columbia Press.

processes, they remain remarkably unrepresented at the peace table, where key decisions about the post-conflict period, recovery and governance are being made.¹³

A gendered analysis of political settlements to date shows that there is no easy access for women – participation in peace processes and political settlements has to be won.¹⁴ At the same time, when women are included in peace processes, the resulting agreements are found to show that measures have been included to make provisions, such as:

- Support to victims of sexual violence during the conflict
- Services for widows and displaced households
- Ensuring that health and education are included on the policy agenda
- A shift of post-conflict public spending away from military toward social and economic programmes
- Establishing greater chances for women to attain their rights to political participation and representation in the post-conflict period, which is crucial for greater gender equality¹⁵

Over the past few years, extensive statistical analysis has been undertaken to examine correlations between gender inequality and conflict.¹⁶ If evidence is needed (to convince those with the power to act) that women’s inclusion in peace processes is not only just and good for women but in the best interests of global society more generally, then this research appears to provide it. A clear connection is indicated between greater gender equality and a reduction in violent conflict. Furthermore, greater gender equality appears to impact significantly on the chances of sustainable peace. Figure 1 summarizes the main findings and milestones observed by researchers.

13 El-Bushra, J. and Gardner, J. (2013) ‘Expert Analysis. From the forefront of peace and reconciliation: Women Building Peace’. ACCORD Insight. Conciliation Resources.

14 See: Bell, C. (2016) ‘Text and Context: Evaluating Peace Agreements for their “Gender Perspective”’. Report 1, Political Settlements Research Programme. University of Edinburgh.

15 Bell, C. (2016).

16 See: Hudson, V. M., et al (2012).

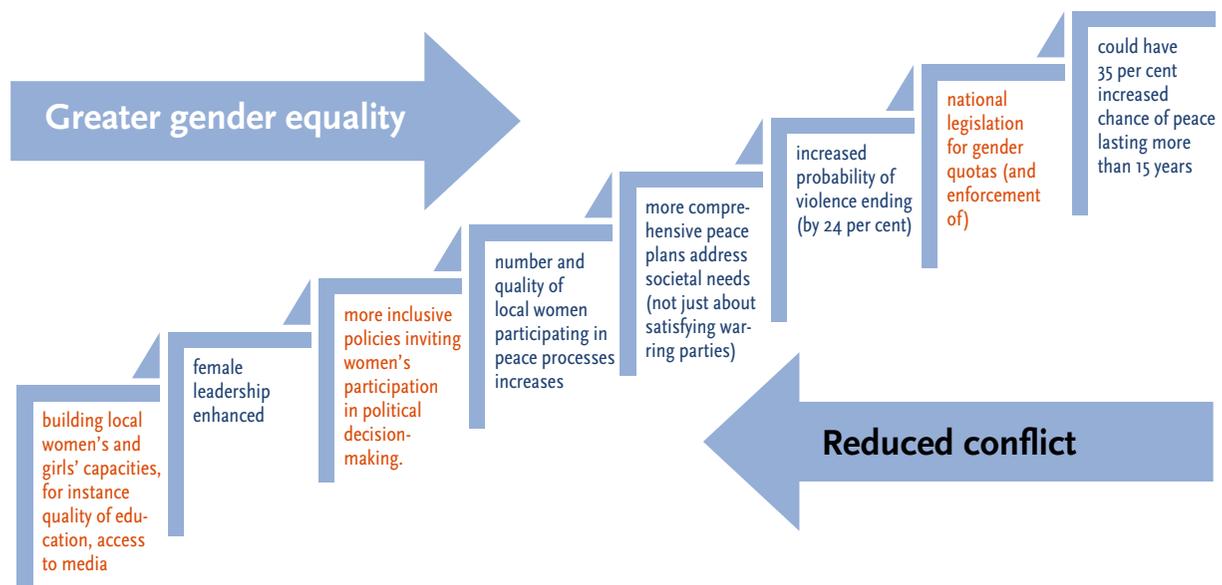
A brief summary of findings about women and peace processes since 2000

- UNSCR 1325 appears to have resulted in more references to women in peace agreements, especially in cases where the UN has been involved in the peace process; however, progress has been limited.
- Only 92 out of the total 585 – 16 per cent – of the peace agreements reached since 2000 (that have been examined by the PSRP) include specific references to women.
- These 16 per cent correspond to the peace agreements where women have been part of the process.
- Worldwide, very few women are appointed as negotiators or mediators in peace processes.
- Only 4 per cent of negotiators and only 2.4 per cent of chief negotiators have been female.
- Gender-sensitive mediators appear to make a big difference to the outcomes for women.
- Pre-negotiation deals are crucial to framing final political settlements: parties come to talks aware of what will be formally demanded and agreed but research finds that these talks are usually held in secret and inaccessible to women. Therefore, issues that women might have brought to the table are not included.

Sources: UN Women, Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the Political Settlements Research Programme (PSRP) at the University of Edinburgh.

Figure 1. **Main milestones and observations**

Source: Hudson et al, 2012; diagram J. Gardner 2017



Women and peacebuilding in the Somali context – the gendered nature of clan identity

This study joins a growing body of literature on gender, conflict and peace in the Somali context, and more specifically on Somali women and peacebuilding.¹⁷ In Somali society, women are considered symbols of peace and the new life that comes with peace and stability. Hence young women are traditionally exchanged by warring clans who have reconciled. Exchanged to be married to one of their own clan's former enemies, these brides are said to seal the peace – a traditional custom that has reportedly re-emerged since 1991 and is mentioned by study respondents.

That women have been at the forefront of canvassing for local, regional and national-level peacebuilding across South Central Somalia, Puntland and Somaliland since 1991 is fairly well known. In addition to symbolizing peace, it is also well known that taking actions to build peace and end conflict is a traditional gendered role for women, not something that takes them outside of their prescribed gender identity. Female agency and power is acknowledged by Somali men in this regard.

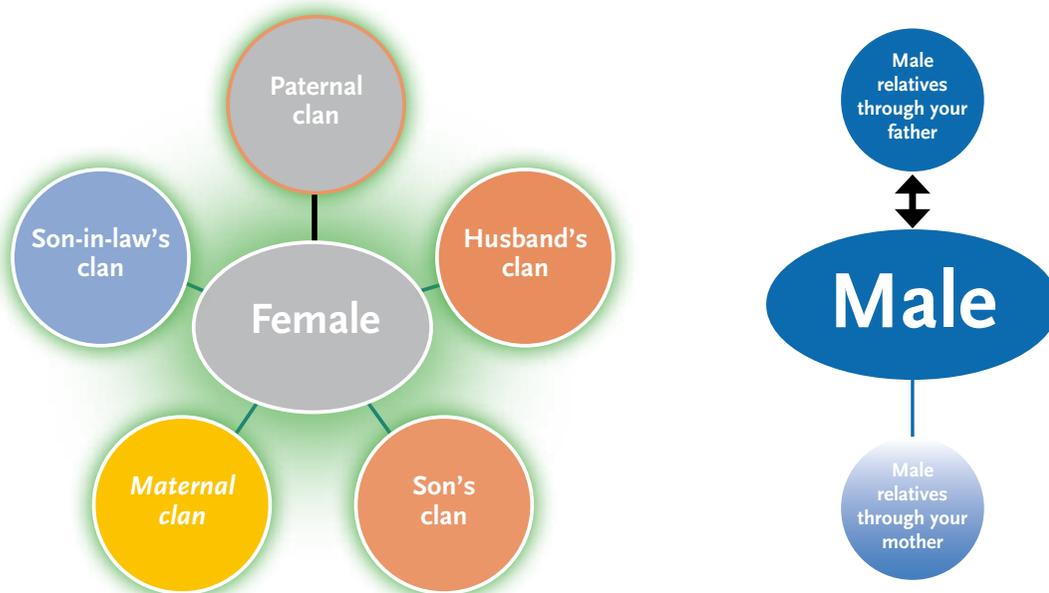
In Somali culture, women cannot bury the dead. In the same way, there are firmly prescribed male and female gender roles and responsibilities relating to peace and ending conflict, which is summed up in this saying, '*Women can build peace but only men can make peace*'. This is also used to explain the exclusion of women from traditional peace processes.

What makes women so well placed and primed to intervene to end intra and inter-clan conflicts is the gendered nature of clan identity, combined with an exogamous marriage preference. Figure 2 shows that through both maternal and marital links a woman is strongly connected to kinship groups beyond her primary one with her patrilineal clansmen.¹⁹ Men, by contrast, have only one strong kinship relationship

17 See, for example: Mohamed Hassan, Z. and Harir Ismail, S. (2004) 'Women and Peacemaking in Somaliland', in Gardner, J. and El-Bushra, J., eds. (2004); and Jama, F. (2010) 'Somali Women and Peacebuilding', in Bradbury, M. and Healy, S., eds. (2010).

18 For details, see: Gardner, J. with Warsame, A. (2004) 'Women, clan identity and peace-building', in Gardner, J. and El-Bushra, J., eds. (2004).

19 Use of the term 'clansmen' (as opposed to 'clansmen and women') here and elsewhere throughout the text is intentional. It indicates that a woman's connection to her patrilineal clan family is primarily through male relatives.

Figure 2. **Diagram to show the gendered nature of clan identity**Source: Gardner and Warsame (2004)¹⁸

to maintain: their blood ties with their patrilineal family. When a woman marries outside of her patrilineal group, for instance through an exogamous marriage, she is helping to extend her father's relationships, along with those of his close kin. If conflict breaks out between the two clans or sub-clans of an exogamous marriage, however, it puts women *'at the centre of suffering'*.²⁰ In this case, a woman may find her father and brothers at war with her husband, sons or maternal uncles. At the same time, this agonizing position affords women unique (and in theory) safe access to the warring parties. Hence their value and importance to their clansmen as peace envoys and builders of peace.

In this way, through exogamous marriage, a woman may facilitate important alliances for her father's clan; she may also be lost to them and her offspring may also become their enemy. This eventuality is conveyed in the Somali proverb: *gabar waa cadow aad korineysid* [a daughter is the enemy you are raising]. This paradox helps to explain why women can operate successfully as peace negotiators in a conflict but are excluded from the peace talks per se.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

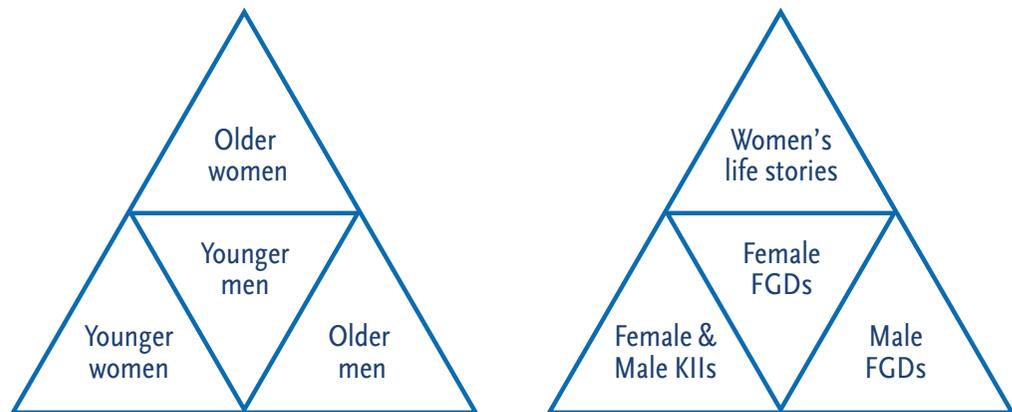
The study applies purposive sampling, qualitative research methods and triangulation to generate and analyse its findings. A total of 149 women and 53 men are consulted through 16 focus group discussions (FGD; 12 with women and 4 with men), 10 key informant interviews (KII) and 10 women's life stories (LS) collected in Kismayo in October–November 2016.²¹

²⁰ These are the words used by women in Erigavo to describe their situation in 1994 as documented in Chapter 7 of Somalia – the Untold Story (2004)

²¹ In all cases, respondents remain anonymous to protect their identity.

The sampling frame allows analysis according to: female and male, age group (younger or older), overall clan family, social group and some specific occupations (see Table 1 for details). The methodology seeks to disaggregate findings at a clan family level but does not attempt analysis at the sub-clan level. Women from the different Darood sub-clans that had at various times been in conflict were invited to participate together in the same focus group discussion, for example. This allows any significant clan family differentials to be identified along with female-male comparison and triangulation (see Figure 3). As with all questions, interpretation

Figure 3. **Methods used to triangulate findings**



Social groups in Kismayo represented in the sample

- Women from the major clan families in the city that have been the main protagonists in the conflicts in Kismayo: the Darood (including the lineages: Ogadeen, Mareehan and Majerteen) and the Hawiye
- Women from clan families that can be considered to hold minority status in Kismayo, including the Digil Mirifle and Dir (in particular the Biyomaal sub-clan)
- Women from Jubbaland's traditionally marginalized ethnic minority groups, the Bantu and Bajuni
- Younger women (under thirty-five years old) and older women (over thirty-five years old)
- Elite women; e.g. local civil society leaders and political actors
- Women involved in business, and the supply and sale of khat*
- IDPs and returnees; many of the marginalized and minority women consulted in the study live as IDPs

*Khat is a mildly narcotic plant (*catha edulis*) native to the Horn of Africa.

takes account of a potential bias and assumes that what respondents are prepared or want to say in public, for instance in a focus group discussion, may be different to what they might think or say in private.

The FGDs are structured around the topic guide developed during the research planning workshop. Female researchers facilitated the discussions with women and male researchers worked with men. All discussions were held in the same venue, a large hotel in Kismayo selected for security reasons and accessibility, on the advice of the Jubbaland administration, which granted permission for the study. The study team notes that the topic guide questions inspired substantive participation by the respondents.

FGD respondents are self-selecting from among the women and men mobilized by SWSO and its partners. They come from five districts in Kismayo, including Fanoole, Farjano, Alanley, Shaqaalaha and Gulwade. These districts were targeted to obtain a cross section of social groups, IDPs and host communities. Consultations were held separately with groups of women from the different sections of the community and across different age groups. This arrangement is designed to capture any significant variations or similarities that exist along these variables. Researchers were also cognisant of the residual intra and inter-clan tensions that might exist between the respondents.

Tables 2 and 3 provide details of the female and male FGD categories and numbers of respondents who participated in each FGD. Numbers are disaggregated by clan for the purpose of showing the representation achieved. Darood women and men make up the largest proportion of respondents, reflecting their numerical dominance in Kismayo today. In the Darood, effort was made to ensure roughly equal sub-clan representation across the Ogadeen, Mareehan and Majerteen.

Table 1. **Number of women consulted by clan family**

Focus group categories	Darood	Digil Mirifle, Dir Biyomaal	Hawiye	Bantu and Bajuuni	Totals
Older women	12	12	12	12	48
Younger women	12	12	12	12	48
Businesswomen	7	3	2		12
Religious women	7	3	2		12
Local and central government	8	2	2		12
Khat sellers	5	4	3		12
Key informant interviews (all women with combat experience)	2	1	2		5
Total consulted	53	37	35	24	149

Table 2. *Description of female respondents*

Older women	Age range: 35 and over
Younger women	Age range: 18–35 The team notes that some groups include women who would have been more appropriately placed in the older women’s groups.
Businesswomen	Mix of Kismayo businesswomen from different clan backgrounds
Religious women	Mix of women from different religious groups in Kismayo, including sufi , aliti had , hisbul islah and salafist schools of thought. No one formally represented al-Shabaab but it is possible that the group includes former sympathizers. As the researchers note, unlike the other groups of women that were convened, religious women do not appear divided along clan lines but clearly are divided by sects.
Local and central government	Originally, researchers had planned to consult women from the diaspora who are currently living in Kismayo. Those approached said they had ‘come for the seats’; namely, to stand for the women’s quota of seats in the upcoming election at the time of data collection. They apologized for not being available to participate ²² Instead, the team convened a group of women who work in the administration as chairwomen and treasurers at district and central level.
Khat suppliers and sellers	In Kismayo, women control the supply and sale of khat and SWSO identified them as an important group for consultation. The FGD included both suppliers (the women at the top of the chain) and street sellers.
Key informant (former combatants)	These five women were identified by SWSO for their first-hand experience as women who have taken part in both conflict and peacebuilding.

As men’s perceptions and experiences are not the main focus of the study, the number of male respondents consulted is significantly smaller than the number of women consulted. Consultations with diverse men had three main purposes:

- i) As a validation mechanism; i.e. a means to identify congruence or difference between women’s accounts of women’s experiences and men’s accounts of the same
- ii) Generate comparative findings on ideas and thoughts about peace and test the notion that peace is a gendered concept

²² Diaspora women remain an important group to consult on the topic of how women contribute to conflict and peace.

- iii) Positively engage with men to direct their attention to questions of gender, conflict and peace, both as a precursor to future work and to obtain insights into their responses

By default (rather than design), the fieldwork coincided with the height of the intra-clan women's dialogues being implemented by SWSO and LPI. The dialogues had attracted a high profile in the city. As it was the first time for such a process, care was taken to ensure that men were also consulted and brought on board. In this study, too, explicitly engaging men is deemed highly relevant.

Table 3. *Number of men consulted by clan families*

Focus group categories	Darood	Digil Mirifle, Dir Biyomaal	Hawiye	Bantu and Bajuni	Totals
Traditional elders	6	2	2	2	12
Religious leaders	7	3	1	1	12
Young men (under thirty years old)	5	2	2	1	10
Civil servants	8	1	2	1	12
Key informants	2	1	1	1	5
Total consulted	28	9	8	6	51

Table 4. *Description of male respondents*

Traditional elders	Ugas , sultans and nabadoon [senior elders from different groups] based in Kismayo.
Religious leaders	Those who preach in the community, teach at the Qur'anic schools [dugsi quraan] and teach women. This is a mixed age group, with the youngest being thirty years old. The group includes imams, who are the most influential and powerful religious men in Kismayo.
Young men	Under the age of thirty, participants in this group are convened by the youth organization's chair
Civil servants	Men working in the administration.
Key informants	Men identified as local experts on conflicts and peace.

Women’s Life Stories: LPI was able to collect in-depth life stories from ten women: six who were adults by the time the war reached Mogadishu in 1991 (they are now in their fifties or older) and four who were born after the collapse of the state and who are in their early twenties today. Some of these women took part in the FGDs and all were involved in the women-centred dialogue process. The older women are all currently involved in trading, mostly as petty traders. They identify with the Darood, Hawiye and Dir clan families. The younger women are still in education and all come from the Darood. Their stories provide powerful first-hand accounts illustrative of how women are impacted by conflict, how women help shape conflict and how women drive and participate in peacebuilding. The women readily and voluntarily told their life stories, in anonymity and with consent for their publication, in full or in part. Extended extracts are included in this report. The full life stories are published separately.

Reflection: what is and is not captured in the findings

Almost all the study findings relate to people’s experiences of intra and inter-clan violence, which is the main type of war and conflict experienced since 1991 and the primary focus of this study. It is notable that the vast majority of respondents choose not to touch on their experiences during the period when they lived under the authority of al-Shabaab. In Kismayo, this was between 2010 and 2012. At present, al-Shabaab still control the countryside immediately outside of town. The fieldwork questions do not define temporal parameters other than ‘since 1991’. Respondents decide for themselves what information to share or withhold.

No men and just 8 out of 149 women share details that relate to al-Shabaab. Of the findings generated, the most explicit evidence comes from two one-on-one interviews,²³ in which both of the women concerned make it clear that they are talking about al-Shabaab. Other evidence is given more by inference, as contributions during FGDs, when the points respondents make are unattributed to but understood by the researchers as describing experiences related to al-Shabaab.

Several factors are believed to explain this gap:

- Fear and suspicion: al-Shabaab no longer controls Kismayo but it is likely that citizens remain very wary of who among them might be a sympathizer or supporter; this could extend both to the researchers and participants in an FGD
- Protection: many may have relatives who have been recruited and fear jeopardizing their safety if they are known to speak out about al-Shabaab
- Methodology: the use of FGDs is clearly not conducive to eliciting information about experiences relating to al-Shabaab
- Conceptualization: perhaps conflict and violence under al-Shabaab is not thought about in the same way as it is in relation to clannism and warlordism; al-Shabaab’s violence may have been more structural than explicit

²³ These two one-on-one interviews refer to a life story session and a key informant interview.

Validation of findings

In October 2017, the findings presented in this report were shared with groups of women and men in Kismayo in a validation process. Four validation events were held with the following groups:

- Elders and religious leaders (15 men, including 3 respondents)
- Women (28, including 23 respondents)
- Government and civil society representatives (15, including 5 females and 10 males)
- Female and male youth (15, including 6 females and 9 males)²⁴

The aim of these validation sessions is to feedback what had been heard during the fieldwork, share the analysis and test the findings that had been discovered and, if possible, deepen understanding on particular issues. Participants were invited to give their reactions to clarify points, agree or disagree with the findings and add detail. The process resulted in an unequivocal validation of the findings presented here though they will be further validated through presentation to a wider audience.

1.4 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Security

Fortunately, no major security incidents occurred in Kismayo during the research period. Security, however, remained a concern throughout the course of the fieldwork. Researchers initially had aimed to conduct research in Kismayo and one or two other locations in Jubbaland. This plan was scaled down due to envisaged security constraints. Therefore, the study was conducted entirely in Kismayo town.

The fieldwork coincided with the national federal government pre-election period (October to November 2016), a time of heightened tensions in Kismayo. During the fieldwork, the research team describes the population of Kismayo as focused on the upcoming elections. As noted above, women from the diaspora were occupied with the election process and consequently unable to participate in the FGDs. Also, movement within the town was sometimes disrupted due to security-related road closures, with authorities being concerned about possible al-Shabaab attacks. The team took extra security precautions as part of an overall risk management strategy, including in the selection of the venue for the consultations, keeping the consultations relatively low profile and assisting respondents with transportation. The elections had a low impact on research activities. All validation meetings were held in one hotel, which had strong security arrangements in place.

During the research design workshop, it was noted that the study design needed to take account of how the various violent conflicts that have been played out has created hostile divisions between women in the city. The workshop heard, for instance, how relationships between women from the Darood and Hawiye clans, and between the different Darood sub-clans, living in the city were particularly tense

²⁴ Disparities in the representation of male and female participants in the last two validation groups are due to scheduling conflicts and lack of availability among potential female participants.

and at times could be described as having been toxic. These relationships reflect and directly relate to their clans' and sub-clans' relative positions of power in the competition for supremacy and political dominance.

Halima Godane, the founder and director of SWSO, gives the following feedback on the fieldwork process:

At first there were a lot of questions and suspicions but the objectives were very well accepted and valued. ... They were happy to participate, especially knowing that something could come from it. People who did not know each other got to know each other and participate in other activities. For youth who did not have a voice, businesswomen and the elders who benefitted, this research was eye-opening. ... People learned to tell the truth. They realized that it is not a problem to talk, that it is not harmful and it is confidential. And they ended up talking more easily. [5 December 2016, Nairobi]

Breaches in the data collection process

Although the intention had been to allocate a female-only team to undertake the research with the female respondents, in practice this did not always occur. Any presence of male researchers needed to be minimized to allow younger women to speak openly. The research team reflects that in terms of accessing and facilitating discussions among the younger female respondents, fieldwork would have benefitted from having a female coordinator to work with the local researchers who were women.

In one FGD, the facilitators and enumerators hear but do not document respondents' graphic accounts of sexual violence. Because of the level of detail and kind of language used, they say they did not feel comfortable and were unable to record the content of the conversation. This represents a regrettable loss of data. The reasons this data is lost may have less to do with secondary trauma and be more motivated by religious, cultural or clan-related concerns, or a combination of all these factors.

1.5 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The consultations for this study focus on the questions below. They were developed with the team during the research planning process and elaborated through the topic guides (see guide questions inserted in boxes accompanying each section of the Findings).

The research team expected these questions to generate evidence that would nuance, productively complicate and effectively interrogate the dominant essentialist narrative that Somali women are always and only victims in a conflict; and that they are apolitical and natural peacebuilders.²⁵ The research team also aimed to better understand the role that gender plays in the creation of intra and inter-clan violence, and the extent to which this violence takes place within a gendered, ordered structure.

²⁵ Based on her findings from field research conducted in Sierra Leone, MacKenzie (2012: 138) observes, 'Understanding how women experienced war cannot be determined solely by examining the ways in which they have been victimized.' See: MacKenzie, M. H. (2012) *Female Soldiers in Sierra Leone: Sex, Security, and Post-conflict Development*. New York University Press. In *Gendering Global Conflict: Towards a Feminist Theory of War* (2013), Sjoberg argues for the need to complicate the prevailing (gender essentialist) picture of war and conflict with more empirical and gendered research.

Research Questions

- How do women describe the ways they have been impacted by conflict in Jubbaland? And how have they responded?
- In what ways do women think they contribute to conflict? *
- In what ways do women think they contribute to peace? *
- How has the conflict impacted relationships between women and between women's groups? *
- What do women think would bring an end to or help reduce violent conflict in their communities and in Jubbaland more widely? What do individual women think they can do to reduce conflict and influence peace?
- What capacity (and interest) do women in Kismayo currently have to engage in peacebuilding? What supports or hinders their involvement?
- Do women in Kismayo share the same vision of peace? What would it look like?
- What are men's views on what would bring peace? What would it look like? *

* Indicates the inclusion of men's views on these specific topics.

Chapter 2. Women and Conflict in Kismayo

The study generates a rich volume of qualitative findings. The next two chapters present the main findings as these are structured around the research questions. Significant variables are noted under each question, along with salient findings from the consultations with both female and male respondents. Study material in the form of respondents' recorded and translated words, including extracts from the ten life stories, is also incorporated throughout these chapters.²⁶ The aim is both to evidence the findings under discussion and to listen directly to women and men's experiences and perspectives in order to deepen learning about violent conflict in Somalia.²⁷

2.1 HOW WOMEN HAVE BEEN IMPACTED BY CONFLICT

How women describe the ways they have been impacted by conflict (female respondents only)

Have you ever been affected (positively or negatively) by a conflict in your area?

If so, how were you impacted?

Do you know how other women were affected?

'We have been through so much pain that cannot be summarized here. ... Many bad things happened.' [FGD 12]

The findings evidence how women across all clans and socio-economic groups have experienced violent events as a result of the protracted conflicts that have affected southern Somalia since 1991. Many have had multiple traumatic experiences, sometimes over a prolonged period, including forced displacement, separation from children, beatings, looting, loss of loved ones (husbands and other close male relatives) and rape or attempted rape. Some of the most notable findings relate to experiences of rape and attempted rape, and the extensive loss of loved ones, especially brothers and husbands.

Table 5 details female respondents' descriptions of the ways conflict has impacted them. These findings are organized into a broad typology. **Bold** indicates that the type of impact is mentioned by women in all 12 FGDs. Underlined indicates that the type of impact is mentioned by women in at least 10 out of 12 FGDs. The right-hand column contains short illustrative quotes extracted from FGD records.

²⁶ Direct quotes from the fieldwork material are referenced with the relevant FGD code or life story (LS) from which they are drawn. Use of the letter 'M' (i.e. FGDM) denotes that the source is male. Material that is generated as a result of the post-fieldwork validation meetings held in October 2017 is referenced by VM, followed by the code for the particular group. All sources appear in [square brackets]. As with all respondents who participated in this study, individual respondents who share their life stories are referred to as Respondent A, B to J to protect their anonymity.

²⁷ MacKenzie (2012: 138) also notes, 'War impacts individuals in complex and variable ways. Listening to these multi-faceted experiences helps to disrupt dominant—and often oversimplified—narratives of warfare.'

Table 5. *Multiple traumatic experiences recounted by women respondents*

Type of impact	Detail	Illustrative examples
Personal physical and emotional injury	<u>Ambushed, attacked, beaten or injured</u>	<i>He beat me up. ... I was pregnant and started labour there and then. I still remember the pain of that day. [FGD 7]</i>
	<u>Rape or attempted rape</u>	<i>I was raped. [FGD 3, 5, 6, 7, 10]</i> <i>I was raped in a village. ... I had a really bad time in Kismayo, too. [FGD 7]</i> <i>I was almost raped, if not for one of the men through whom I survived. [FGD 5]</i> <i>I was one of many women who have been treated badly. [FGD 12]</i>
	Tortured	<i>We were tortured. [FGD 12]</i> <i>We were ambushed, shot at, tortured; many bad things happened. [FGD 12]</i>
	Exploited	<i>I used to wash clothes to earn money and when I finished I would not be paid. [FGD 7]</i>
	Stress, sorrow, trauma	<i>It has negatively affected me so much. [FGD 7]</i> <i>I saw so many women become overstressed and lose their minds because of the conflict; the mortar shells and the horrible things they saw. [FGD 1]</i> <i>It affected me so much. [FGD 1]</i>
	Loss of education	<i>It demoralized me. [FGD 6]</i>
Personal material injury or loss	Robbery and looting	<i>I was robbed. [FGD 8]</i> <i>Gold has been stolen. [FGD 3]</i> <i>They looted our money and clothes. [FGD 7]</i>
	Food looted	<i>A larger clan invaded our village and took our food provisions. [FGD 3]</i>
	Livestock stolen or killed	<i>My cattle were looted. [FGD 1]</i>
	Home attacked, invaded or destroyed; land taken; forcibly evicted	<i>My house was destroyed by a mortar shell. [FGD 3]</i> <i>There was an explosion at my house and many were wounded because of it. [FGD 6]</i> <i>They took over houses. [FGD 7]</i> <i>They forcibly took farmland. [FGD 7]</i> <i>Our houses were burnt. [FGD 12]</i> <i>My piece of land was stolen. [FGD 9]</i>

Personal experience of humanitarian crisis	Hunger and thirst	<p>Children died of hunger. [FGD 2]</p> <p>My children were afflicted by hunger. [FGD 10]</p> <p>There was a lack of water. [FGD 8]</p> <p>Hunger struck us during the conflict. [FGD 7]</p> <p>When the bandits attacked us, I was cooking and they took the food; at the time there was no food. [FGD 7]</p>
	Displaced internally or abroad	<p>We were displaced to the countryside. [FGD 8]</p> <p>We fled to Kenya. [FGD 1]</p> <p>I was displaced from my home in Mogadishu [to Kismayo]. [FGD 5]</p>
Family life	<u>Children injured, separated, lost or killed</u>	<p>I was separated from and lost my children [as they fled]. [FGD 9]</p> <p>We fled, got attacked and my youngest daughter died. [FGD 5]</p> <p>I have lost four children. [FGD 7]</p> <p>My three children were injured. [FGD 11]</p>
	Husband, son, other close male relatives targeted, fled, lost or killed	<p>My husband fled. [FGD 10]</p> <p>My husband was killed. [FGD 9, 10]</p> <p>My husband, who used to be an elder, was killed and we fled. [FGD 1]</p> <p>My son was killed and I could not collect his dead body. [FGD 1]</p> <p>My father has had his eyes blindfolded and our male guest was shot. [FGD 3]</p> <p>Sons and fathers were killed. [FGD 5]</p> <p>My brothers were killed. [FGD 9]</p> <p>Many women were widowed. [FGD 9]</p>
	<u>Daughters and sisters injured, raped or abducted</u>	<p>My sister was hit, beaten and raped. [FGD 7]</p> <p>My sister was shot with a stray bullet while bathing her six-month old baby. [FGD 2]</p> <p>They beat my sister up, who still has injuries. [FGD 2]</p> <p>We fled, got attacked and my youngest daughter died. [FGD 5]</p> <p>Our girls were taken away. [FGD 3]</p>
Community level: what happened to clan relatives and neighbours	Clansmen killed	<p>Boys were killed and no compensation paid. [FGD 3]</p> <p>Sons, husbands and brothers were killed. [FGD 2]</p>

**Women and girls
abducted, raped or
killed**

Our girls were taken away. [FGD 3]

Female neighbours were raped. [FGD 1]

I witness that two of my female neighbours were both raped. [FGD 1]

My female neighbour has been raped and she was recovering from having given birth. [FGD 12]

The study material shows how the wars that have affected Kismayo residents since 1991 appear to spare no one. The material shows how negative impacts of conflict have been felt by females of all ages and backgrounds.²⁸

Female respondents also add to existing evidence on how the traditional rules of war under which specific groups (including women and children, religious men and the elderly) are customarily protected – spared from the spear [*biri ma geydo*] – have been disregarded.²⁹

Impact on marriage and family relationships

This study confirms and adds to existing knowledge about the impact of violent intra and inter-clan conflict on family, marriage and gender relations.³⁰ The break-up of families and marital relationships is particularly highlighted. Two reasons are given. First, when partners find themselves on opposing sides in the conflict – a common phenomenon due to the traditional preference among many groups for exogamous marriages – this can result in family and marital separation. Second, families and marriages are also negatively impacted due to changes in gender relations, whereby women have had to take on the role of family breadwinner in the absence or incapacity of the husband. As this speaker explains, ‘*Somali women are devastated. Men and women divorce because the man cannot provide for his family.*’ [FGD 3]

Less well documented but mentioned by respondents in this study is how war also brings families from opposing clans together – at least symbolically through the re-emergence of a traditional peacemaking practice. That is, in order to end a conflict and seal a peace deal, girls or young women are formally exchanged between the two warring parties, marrying and bearing children with men of their clan’s former enemy. How commonly such marriages have occurred since 1991 is not yet known. According to Somali scholars,³¹ such marriages are traditionally considered an honour for the chosen women and men, and their offspring symbolize new life and peace. Such marriages carry the hope that having so completely sealed the peace and bound their futures together both sides will refrain from further conflict.

Evidence has also emerged of second form of arranged marriage undertaken to end or prevent further violence. In these instances, the arrangement seems to be made between an individual family and an individual fighter or leading militia member. A girl or young woman is offered in marriage to armed aggressors or potential aggressors in the hope that she and other family members will gain

²⁸ For evidence of how men have been affected by war, see: Gardner, J. and El-Bushra, J. (2015) *Impact of war on Somali men: an inception study*. LOGiCA study series. World Bank Group.

²⁹ International Committee of the Red Cross, Somalia Delegation (1998) *Spared from the Spear – Traditional Somali Behaviour in Warfare*. International Committee of the Red Cross, Somalia Delegation.

³⁰ See, for example: testimonies from Habiba Osman, Amina Sayid and Halima Elmi’s, in Gardner, J. and El-Bushra, J., eds. (2004); and Abdi, S. (2002) *The Impact of the War on the Family in Somaliland*. Academy for Peace and Development.

³¹ See for example: Ahmed, S. (2004) ‘Traditions of Marriage and the Household’, in Gardner, J. and El-Bushra, J., eds. (2004).

protection from further violence. By creating such a marriage bond, the aggressors become protectors of the wife's family.³² A woman explains, *'I gave my daughter in marriage to the opposing clan to save her from sexual violence during the conflict between XX and YY.'* [FGD 1] Another woman, herself given in marriage, says, *'I was sacrificed but I do not regret it today because I now have so many children and I helped to save my family.'* [FGD 5]

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV): rape and attempted rape

Respondents testify to the extensive use of SGBV as a weapon of war in the violent conflicts in southern Somalia since state collapse in 1991.³³ Women in all of the discussions – from across all clans and socio-economic groups – indicate that they have experienced rape or attempted rape, or have witnessed or known about such attacks on other women or girls.³⁴ Some of their accounts recall vivid details of how women and girls are abused by male perpetrators, including the frenzied nature of some attacks. One respondent recalls, *'I saw a girl who was raped and when she [needed] water, they started pissing on her.'* [FGD 7] Several FGD participants recall the rape of women who had just recently given birth, as well as the helplessness of family members during the assault. As this woman remembers: *'Some men raped my mother-in-law, who had just given birth, and my father and other women had their eyes closed.'* [FGD 3] Respondent memories testify to brave and sometimes catastrophic attempts to avoid capture and rape, as these respondents indicate:

'I remember a female neighbour who jumped out of the second floor of the apartment to escape rape.' [FGD 2]

'I remember a girl who threw herself into a well because she was afraid of being raped, out of fear. And she finally died. We took her out of the well at the next prayer time and the armed group saw us. We did not ask for help but called other people to help us bury her.' [FGD]

Their accounts also testify to the attempts parents made to protect their daughters from attack, such as the father in this account: *'When the conflict started, a sheikh brought his daughters to a house to save them. And some neighbours brought him their money so he could [use it to pay off the attackers and] protect them. As he started praying, an armed group entered, killed the sheikh and took the money.'* [FGD1]

In her life story, Respondent J recounts her six-year-old self, who witnessed the brutal and ultimately fatal attempted rape of her mother. Her account locates what happened to her mother, and the subsequent years of cruelty and abuse that she herself endured, firmly in the context of intra and inter-clan conflict. The attack on her mother is motivated by clannism during an inter-clan conflict that erupted after 1991:

'Because they were looking for my mother, we went into hiding every night. That night they found us. They made us sit and the women looked at my mother [to identify her]. ... They [the bandits] told her to stand and follow them. She asked, 'Where are you taking me to?' ... They beat her with the butt of their guns. They

³² In Mogadishu, this type of marriage as a survival strategy was forced by Hawiye militia leaders (also known as 'black cats') onto the unarmed and highly persecuted minority Rer Hamar community. It is known locally as a 'black cat marriage'.

³³ This is in contravention of the Geneva Conventions 1949, limiting the barbarity of war. For more information, see: <https://www.icrc.org/eng/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/geneva-conventions/overview-geneva-conventions.htm>.

³⁴ The research team reports that women respondents from the marginalized groups are notably less inhibited than women from the other groups when asked to identify impacts of the war, especially in speaking openly about personal experiences of sexual violence. In fact, the researchers report surprise at just how candid the women are in describing their experiences of rape and other forms of sexual violence and abuse.

dragged her and took her away. I was looking at her, with the gun pointed at my head. In fact, I am not even seeing that there is a gun to my head; I can only see my mother. When I jumped up, they beat me with the gun. I told them, 'Hit me!' I was still young; I was six or so. They brought my mother in front of the mosque. They argued a bit. Then they wanted to rape her there, so that all the men there would rape her. My mother said, 'You better kill me instead of raping me. There is no way you will rape me. No way you will make me suffer. Kill me here!'

My mother was dragged. They battled, beat her; they struggled. She was someone very tall and had a lot of strength. ... And the man was short but he had a lot of strength, too. As they were struggling with her, I was watching. I am sitting and I am crying. At some point, I run as they hold that gun on me. I ran to an older man who is from their clan. We used to be neighbours. I told him, 'Uncle, they will kill my mother! Uncle,³⁵ they have finished us! Uncle, they will kill my mother!' He remained silent and he didn't stand up.

They kept struggling with my mother. And at some point, the man turned his gun and fired at her. Bagagac! [sound of gunfire] and cut her apart with it. All of this part was ripped from the rest. Her flesh fell to the ground. The gun shot perforated her. She fell on the floor like jelly. ... My mother died there. The old man who used to be our neighbour was there. He heard it all. He was looking at it, standing around the wall. He didn't come to us, didn't say anything to us, and my mother died. [LS 10; Respondent J]

Whatever the reasons for the inaction of the adult onlookers in this account, other accounts suggests that in the context of violent clannism every incident and action (or inaction) carries potentially grave ramifications for the individuals involved, even bystanders. As discussed below (see Clannism), the clannism and clan dynamics that are used to drive some of the most egregious violence of the conflict involve or require female collusion and cooperation.

Death and loss of close family members

The majority of respondents report having experienced the death of loved ones due to the war. The killing of women and girls is mentioned in nearly every FGD, though rarely are those killed described as close family members of the speakers:

'I remember a woman who used to work at the market. She came back home and saw her daughter being raped. She started screaming and she was shot and killed. [FGD 1]

'A girl whose father was killed was told to come and get her father's dead body. When she took him to the countryside, they killed her, too.' [FGD 7]

'Many women were killed.' [FGD 3]

In contrast, in every single group, there are some women who indicate that they had lost husbands, sons and brothers, or had lost husbands because they had fled to escape death.³⁶

³⁵ The interlocutor uses the word 'uncle' not because he is a relative of any kind to her father but because this term is commonly used as a way to express respect and closeness. The uncle here is basically an older man, a neighbour, who saw her grow up. He is also from the same sub-clan as the militias.

³⁶ No figures exist yet to calculate the number of Somali males and females killed through war and conflict since 1991.

'My husband was killed.' [FGD 9, 10]

'My husband, who used to be an elder, was killed and we fled.' [FGD1]

'My son was killed and I couldn't collect his dead body.' [FGD 1]

'My father had his eyes blindfolded and our male guest was shot.' [FGD 3]

'My brothers were killed.' [FGD 9]

'I was widowed.' [FGD 5]

'My children were orphaned.' [FGD3]

'My husband fled.' [FGD 10]

Almost all of the respondents who give details indicate that the deaths of their male loved ones are linked to issues of clan identity, either in revenge killings, targeted male assassinations or during intra or inter-clan combat. As this woman who lost her husband explains:

I was an ordinary woman from Beledweyne. I used to work with my pen for the government. My husband was a young man who worked when the USC [United Somali Congress] and this kind of suffering started. ... We were targeted for being Darood.³⁷ That is how my husband, the father of my children, was killed. When he died, our eldest son was eight years old. That was really a big loss to me. [LS 2, Respondent B]

Recounting how she became part of a militia group, Respondent C, now in her sixties, describes the capture and murder of her favourite brother by members of the clan she had married into. Her account not only testifies to the targeted killing of males through systematic and tit-for-tat retribution as part of intra and inter-clan warfare, it also conveys the untenable situation in which many women in exogamous marriages find themselves when the clan of their birth family and their in-laws are at war with one another:

The men used to go fight and then come back to where we [the women and girls] were hiding. One day, my brother came back to hide. He arrived at home at sunrise and greeted my mother. Then a clan militia group arrived at our house and entered from the back. They took my brother by the trousers, blindfolded his eyes and took him away. We were nine children in the household, a mix of the children of my father and my paternal uncle. ... There were no differences between us. We loved each other without distinction. But my brother was the man I loved the most in my family. He was the eldest and only son of my mother. They took him away. ...

I had just given birth to a little girl to the clan family that had taken him. I went to ... the place known as the office of the clan community that took him. When I arrived, the guard asked me, 'What do you want?' I told him, 'Brother, my brother came here but we haven't had any news from him.' The place belonged to the clan community into which I was married – those who were holding my brother

³⁷ The interlocutor refers to United Somali Congress (USC) and their attack on Beledweyne in 1991.

captive. [Hence she was able to approach them.] ... [H]e told me where my brother had been transferred. Three cars arrived and I quickly got into one and set myself about getting my brother. ... He was killed inside the [place] at 5 p.m. ... The people who lived there told the man [her husband] whose daughter I gave birth to what had happened. He was staying in another town. He came to where I was and tried to reason with me. I told him, 'You better not try to reason with me! This conflict stands between us. Only God will keep me away from [fighting with] you. And today is the last time we see each other!' [LS 3, Respondent C]

Sex-selective massacre of males, a form of gender-based violence, is also evidenced by the study. One older female respondent recalls how she gave birth to a son at a time when males from her clan family were being hunted down and massacred: 'I gave birth to a baby boy (at a time) when men were being killed – even the newborn males were said to be killed. ... I was fearing for my baby until a woman suggested that I should tie something [a religious talisman] around his neck [for spiritual protection].' [FGD 5]

The systematic killing of males on the basis of their clan identity is a feature of the civil war. This practice also predates the downfall of Siyad Barre in 1991. Such is the extent of the massacres that have taken place that they are described as 'clan cleansing'.³⁸ Selectively killing males of an enemy clan or sub-clan undermines a clan's honour, its present and future strength, and future supremacy. It also depletes the warrior class (i.e. the male youth in a clan). Men embody clan honour and clan identity according to patrilineal lines of descent, or those inherited from a son's father. A lineage is only considered as strong as its male numbers; hence the customary celebration of the birth of male children as opposed to female children.

2.2 HOW WOMEN RESPOND TO THE IMPACTS OF VIOLENT CONFLICT

How women say they have responded to impacts of violent conflict (female respondents only)

How did you respond or react?

Has any violent conflict in your area had a positive effect on you? If yes, how?

Do you know how other women have been positively affected?

Women across all groups identify ways in which they respond to the needs and crises triggered by the conflicts they have experienced. The range of their responses and illustrative examples are detailed in Table 6.

³⁸ See, for example: Kapteijns, L. (2012) *Clan Cleansing in Somalia: The Ruinous Legacy of 1991*. Pennsylvania Studies in Human Rights, University of Pennsylvania.

Table 6. *Type of action in response to impact of violent conflict in their communities*

Type of action	Detail	Illustrative examples
Physical or medical assistance	Collecting and seeking help for the wounded	<i>We went out to the rescue of those crying for help. [FGD 10]</i>
	Nursing the injured (usually from their clan) [FGD8]	<p><i>I took a girl to hospital who was injured; took wounded to the hospital. [FGD 4, 6, 7, 8, 10]</i></p> <p><i>I raised an alarm in the hospital to get blood donated for those taken to hospital, despite the resistance I have faced. [FGD 10]</i></p> <p><i>I paid for the medication of the injured. [FGD 8]</i></p> <p><i>I tried to save lives at all cost, depending on my ability. [FGD 10]</i></p> <p><i>I used to cook and bring food for my injured neighbour. [FGD 4]</i></p> <p><i>I was looking after the children of injured neighbours, while she was absent. [FGD 4, 10]</i></p>
Protection	Sheltering the displaced	<i>Displaced people came to me and I sheltered them, gave them food until they were able to fend for themselves. [FGD 8]</i>
	Sheltering and concealing those who were being pursued	<p><i>I have hidden women when my clan was in control of the area; when there were house searches; or hidden girls whose clan [militia] had left the area. [FGD 3]</i></p> <p><i>Women who have fled, live with us—even now. [FGD 11]</i></p>
	Support for rape survivors	<p><i>We had a bank account and we as women contributed money into that account each month and so supported our fellow women whose rights had been seriously violated. [FGD 1]</i></p> <p><i>We tried to gather money and clothes for raped women and we sent her somewhere away from where she has been raped. [FGD 11]</i></p>
	Protecting one another from rape	<p><i>We used to gather as women to support and help each other, to be stronger, to bring daughters together so they are not harassed sexually and can be at peace. We used to collect money among ourselves and other important resources. [FGD 1]</i></p> <p><i>I used to have a gun. ... When I saw a group of militiamen who wanted to rob and rape my fellow women, and even me, I came out with my gun and climbed up the stairs and shot at them and chased them away. It was a registered gun. I used to be a guardian. [FGD 1]</i></p> <p><i>We tried to be together. [FGD 11]</i></p>

Charity	Fundraising to help those in need	<p><i>We help orphaned children by collecting money or selling animals. [FGD 8, 9]</i></p> <p><i>We gathered money to support a woman and her children, who is without husband and was starving. [FGD 3]</i></p> <p><i>We collected money to help the affected. [FGD 8, 9, 11]</i></p> <p><i>We gathered money to support other women. [FGD 1]</i></p>
	Helping bury the dead	<p><i>We used to prepare women for burial. [FGD 3]</i></p>
Moral support	Counselling the injured, fearful or traumatized	<p><i>I would say to show patience. We will overcome this. [FGD 6]</i></p> <p><i>I would share their sorrow. [FGD 9]</i></p> <p><i>I would recognize those who are right and tell the others they are guilty. [FGD 7]</i></p> <p><i>We would advise girls who had been looted to remember God and let things go. [FGD 11]</i></p>
Using personal agency	Safeguarding their own or others' assets and belongings	<p><i>When two clan militias fought in the town, I remember I spent the night among the armed groups to protect the belongings of the defeated clan. [FGD 1]</i></p> <p><i>I organized a military group from my clan community to guard our properties. [LS 1, Respondent A]</i></p>
Powerlessness	Older women from traditionally marginalized groups	<p><i>Sometimes we could not do anything but look with our eyes. [FGD 7]</i></p> <p><i>We were poor and could not help. Only Allah could help. [FGD 10]</i></p> <p><i>We could not do anything. We were afraid for our lives. [FGD 7]</i></p>

Female respondents only

As Table 6 shows, most of the actions women describe having taken could be classified as humanitarian, in the sense that they are undertaken to relieve the suffering of others. Some actions are also strikingly proactive and preemptive, such as those described by the two respondents who say they were armed and used their weapons to protect themselves and others.

The women who speak about taking collective self-help actions in response to sexual violence all came from one major clan family. Gaining more understanding of what these women did, how their actions helped and in what way they were limited would be a relevant subject for further research because there is little known about community-level responses to SGBV. Due to the given conflict dynamics, it is assumed that those they helped were from the same clan or sub-clan; however, this requires verification.

In her life story, Respondent A [LS 1] provides another example of female agency, this time in response to the widespread looting of the early conflicts:

I was a trader back then [before the war]. I used to sell clothes that I imported from Mogadishu. I used to bring them to local women who sold them on. When the conflict started, other traders and I gathered our belongings together and arranged for a militia protect them. I organized a militia group from my clan community and together we paid for their lunch, khat and accommodation. We told them ... in exchange they would guard our property. For seven days and nights, I was on stand-by, sleeping among the militia in front of the store to protect our property. By the grace of God, that is how we safeguarded our property. [LS 1; Respondent A]

In contrast to these accounts of women finding ways to hold onto or recover some control over their lives, the bottom of Table 6 shows responses collected from older Bantu and Bajuni women. This is the only group in which women speak in terms of a complete sense of powerlessness in the face of violence. Their responses seem particularly significant when matched with the magnitude of the impacts they describe as having experienced. They highlight how power inequalities in Somali society exist not just between men and women but between women themselves.

Not only do the women in these marginalized groups find themselves powerless in the face of the crises that befall them but their extreme poverty prevents them from participating in collective female actions, including peacebuilding. Explaining why she did not participate, one woman simply says, *'I had nothing to give.'* [FGD 7] That is, she could not offer even a mat to sit on in a meeting. According to the local researchers, being a part of collective action always requires person to make some kind of contribution, however small. This finding is of direct relevance to inclusive peacebuilding with women.

It was not mentioned during the fieldwork (hence is not detailed in Table 6) but during the validation event held in October 2017, several elders note how women have come to the rescue of their menfolk: *'Women took care of the displaced, the orphaned... They took the initiative. ... Men became dependent on women economically. We were seated in our houses fearing for our lives...'*³⁹

³⁹ Similar findings in which men describe how women have stepped in to become the family breadwinner when violence and the nature of the conflict have rendered the husband helpless are documented elsewhere. See, for example: Gardner, J. and El-Bushra, J. (2015); and Halima Elmi's testimony in Gardner, J. and El-Bushra, J., eds. (2004).

2-3 HAVE ANY WOMEN GAINED FROM VIOLENT CONFLICT?

By asking women if they feel they have been positively impacted by violent conflict in any way, the study seeks to explore how the term ‘conflict’ is understood and perceived by women. Is violent conflict always seen as negative or is it sometimes understood to bring opportunities? The study further seeks to understand if there are any significant differences or generalizations that can be made along the lines of age or social group, including clan.

‘Conflict is always negative’

Asked about their personal experiences, only a few women (mostly younger rather than older) indicate that they have gained from violent conflict. These are minor, mostly material acquisitions, as these respondents explain:

‘I found money in a bag.’ [FGD 4]

‘I have acquired 50 kilos of khat.’ [FGD 1]

‘We found furniture on the road and took it.’ [FGD 6]

In contrast, the majority of young and older women, across all of the social groups, are clear that they believe there are no positive gains from violent conflict:

‘No, there is nothing positive...’ [FGD 9]

‘There is no such thing as positive things in conflict, only negative.’ [FGD 7]

‘There is nothing positive. What benefit do we get from looking at bad things?’ [FGD 6]

In the course of the discussions, however, some women observe that the truth is more complicated. Even if they are losers, others are winners. For example, during the Bantu and Bajuni group discussion, women comment on how *‘people took advantage of us but we haven’t seen anything positive’*. [FGD 7] This reality is also recognized by women in other groups. One older woman notes, *‘When my clan captured the town, we benefitted a lot.’* [FGD 11] Another older woman in a different group says, *‘I was positively affected only a little, while other (women) gained a lot.’* [FGD 1]

The question that followed asks if respondents know of any women who had benefitted from violent conflict in their areas. This approach elicits a more consensual set of responses, as is summed up by this woman, who replies, *‘Yes, there are many women who benefitted.’* [FGD 1] Acknowledging that everyone on the winning side somehow expects to gain, one respondent wryly comments, *‘Some are still looking for a position because they have not benefitted from the conflict.’* [FGD 11]

Table 7 provides details of women’s responses and shows how gains are perceived to fall into two categories: political or material.

Table 7. *Ways women have benefitted from conflict*

Type of gains	Detail	Illustrative examples
<i>Political advantage from being on the winning side</i>	Gained access to positions of relative power in the administration	<i>There are some who became leaders in the government thanks to the conflict. [FGD 7, 3, 6, 9, 11]</i>
<i>Material gains through looting, stealing or being on the winning side</i>	Gained valuables, assets and other items as a result of looting other people's houses and shops [FGD 6, 9, 11]	<i>Women whose clan captured a town and took the valuables of people who fled. [FGD 2]]</i> <i>Some stole golden ornaments and sell or use them. [FGD 8]</i> <i>I saw many of them loot shops and break into houses. [FGD 7, 8, 10]</i>
	<i>Food</i>	<i>I saw people take food where the conflict was happening. [FGD4]</i>
	<i>Vehicles</i>	<i>Vehicles were stolen. [FGD 10]</i> <i>I once captured a vehicle full of goods and ammunition and gave it to my kinsmen. [VM 1]</i>
	<i>Land and houses</i>	<i>Some women moved from the countryside and built themselves houses in the city. [FGD 1]</i>
	<i>Livestock</i>	<i>Some stole livestock. [FGD 8]</i>
	<i>Weapons</i>	<i>A girl found a gun and sold it for USD 1,000. [FGD 4]</i>

Relevant subtopics appear in italics (middle column); female respondents only

Some women go further and identify the kinds of women who they think benefitted most from conflict:

'Women who support their clan.' [FGD 2]

'Women who used to encourage and create conflict.' [FGD 6]

The findings discussed below appear to show that the women who 'support their clan' and those who 'encourage and create conflict' overlap. At any given time, the decisions and actions that these women take depend on their personal circumstances and their clan's position at the time. They can be the majority of women or just a few. They can also become the women who are at the forefront of promoting peace. Again, this depends on the context and circumstances at the time.

Chapter 3.

How Women Contribute to Violent Conflict

Ways women think they contribute to violent conflict

(female and male respondents)

What roles, if any, do women and girls play, for example, in promoting, supporting or prolonging violence? Do women ever lead others into violence?

Do you personally know any women or girls who have taken part in violence in some way? What do you know about what they did and what motivated them?

Are there any things that women and girls cannot or do not do when it comes to fighting or helping make war?

Is there anything they are usually asked or expected to do, for instance by their clansmen?

What kind of women and girls are most active in supporting a fight?

3.1 THE MAGNITUDE OF WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF WAR

Somali women, like Somali men, are expected to further their clan's struggle for supremacy. In the words of one respondent, *'Everyone participated. No one is clean. Even if you did not support by holdi ng guns or help during the fighting, you were supporting in your heart.'* [LS 1, Respondent A]⁴⁰ Some go as far as to say that women *'are responsible for conflict'* [FGD 2, 11], which is a view that is also put forward by men. An elder notes that women *'have big role in heating the conflict'*. [FGDM 1]

Women of all ages and social backgrounds identify multiple ways that women promote and mobilize for violent conflict. Their responses are detailed in Table 8. They show that women's involvement ranges across both non-combat and combat roles.

⁴⁰ This claim echoes the words of environmentalist and former peace activist, Fatima Gibreel. When speaking to women at a peace conference in 1997, Gibreel is reported as saying, *'Let us not pretend innocence. ... Women have empowered and encouraged their husbands, their leaders and their militia to victimize fellow countrymen.'* Cited in Bryden, M. and Steiner, M. (1998) *Somalia between peace and war: Somali women on the eve of the 21st century*. UNIFEM, African Women for Peace Series.

See Table 8 on next spread

Table 8. *Roles women have played in conflict*

Type of action	Detail	Illustrative examples
Financing	Fundraising and mobilizing resources for conflict	<p><i>They finance it.</i> [FGD 3, 8, 10]</p> <p><i>They collect money among themselves.</i> [FGD 7]</p> <p><i>They sell their gold.</i> [FGD 5]</p> <p><i>Some finance the war because they want their clan to win and take over the city. ... They invest their wealth.</i> [FGD 1, 6, 7]</p>
Mobilizing men and male youth to fight	Humiliating, invoking fury and shame or using negative narratives	<p><i>They inflame, heat, encourage and celebrate fighters.</i> [FGD 7, 8, 9, 10, 12]</p> <p><i>They beat the drum.</i> [FGD 12]</p> <p><i>They send their sons to fight.</i> [FGD 2]</p> <p><i>Some women insult men telling them 'you are a woman' and abuse them to incite them into fighting.</i> [FGD 11]</p> <p><i>Some say, 'Give me the gun and wear my dress.'</i> [FGD3]</p>
	Cheerleading and motivating	<p><i>The men from the rival clans cannot fight unless accompanied by women. ... They ululate and motivate the men to fight.</i> [FGD 5]</p> <p><i>They sing war songs and recite poems.</i> [FGD 4, 8, 10]</p>
	Canvassing for conflict to continue or restart	<p><i>They say, 'We must have revenge over this clan.'</i> [FGD 7]</p> <p><i>They advocate for violence.</i> [FGD 2]</p> <p><i>They call and gather people who live both in rural and urban places.</i> [FGD6]</p>
Humanitarian and welfare activities	Caring for the wounded	<p><i>They carried and nursed the injured and bring them clothes.</i> [FGD 1, 8, 12]</p> <p><i>They wash their clothes.</i> [FGD 8]</p>
	Protecting clan members	<i>They hide the wounded.</i> [FGD 6]
Logistical support	Cooking food and providing milk for combatants ⁴¹	<i>They bring [food and] milk to the fighters ... bake biscuits ... bring water ... miraa [khat]... airtime</i> [FGD 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12]
	Arming the fighters, concealing weapons and ammunition	<i>They buy and provide the weapons.</i> [FGD 1, 4, 6, 8]

41 Picking up on how cooking and food provision fall within the remit of the gendered roles and responsibilities expected of females, Weber (2011:365) describes this kind of logistical support as 'mothering violence' and sees it as a highly significant way in which women are involved in the construction of violence. See: Weber, A. (2011) 'Women Without Arms: Gendered Fighter Constructions in Eritrea and South Sudan', in *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, Vol. 5/2 (2011): 357–370.

		<p><i>They buy ammunition. [FGD 8, 9]</i></p> <p><i>They carry guns for the militia. [FGD 3, 7, 12]</i></p> <p><i>They hide and bring weapons to fighters. [FGD 8, 9, 10, 11]</i></p> <p><i>They steal ammunition for the men. [FGD 5]</i></p> <p><i>They loot. [FGD 6]</i></p> <p><i>Some girls were drivers. [FGD7]</i></p>
Intelligence	Messengers and spies	<p><i>The men from rival clans do not suspect women; hence they carry information regarding the number of fighters and the militia strength. [FGD 5]</i></p> <p><i>They share information with the militia. [FGD 8]</i></p> <p><i>They lead the men to the homes because they know each home and resident. [FGD 9]</i></p>
	Counting the dead and wounded	<p><i>They keep the injured and count them. [FGD 4]</i></p>
	Directing militiamen towards specific houses or people	<p><i>They give advice about which houses to attack and which women to rape. [FGD 2]</i></p>
Armed combat	Taking up arms and joining a militia group or acting as lone combatants	<p><i>There are women who used to fire guns, wear uniforms and go to war... board vehicles armed to face the enemy. ... They were not afraid. [FGD 4, 6]</i></p> <p><i>I know some who died fighting. [FGD 6]</i></p> <p><i>I was myself part of it. [FGD 1]</i></p> <p><i>I took part. [FGD 4]</i></p> <p><i>I was one of them. [FGD 7]</i></p> <p><i>I knew a woman who was a warlord who used to even kill men; she was with the militias. [FGD 3]</i></p> <p><i>I know women who killed people for their clans. [FGD 9]</i></p> <p><i>They can wound and injure. [FGD3]</i></p>
Other direct engagement in violence	Killing wounded men	<p><i>There are those who used to finish the injured ... by cutting them with machetes. [FGD 1, 12]</i></p>

Female respondents only

These findings indicate that the magnitude of women and girls' involvement is significantly greater than has been previously acknowledged or understood by third-party observers. All respondents, female and male, emphasize the critical role played by women in producing and sustaining the intra and inter-clan violence and conflict that has plagued southern Somalia since 1991.

Male perspectives

Overall, men's responses largely concur with those of the women respondents. The discussion among young men highlights the logistical, financial and intelligence gathering roles women and girls play, as well notes their part in mobilization. Emphasizing the extremes to which women go to mobilize men, one male respondent notes that women *'show their nudity to cause the men to fight'*. [FGDM 3] This is also a point made by religious men. This exposure usually begins with women threatening to remove their headscarves, a threat that may be sufficient to mobilize most men. This is reflected in a popular Somali adage: *'If a woman shakes her hair loose, it is worse than being hit by a spear.'*

With the exception of mobilizing fighters, male respondents say the roles women identified (see Table 8) are all roles that conform to clansmen's expectations of their clanswomen. On mobilization, they say that women are expected to give encouragement but it is their own decision to *'recite poetry celebrating men'* [FGDM 1], *'sing motivational songs'* [FGDM 3] or *'choose whatever is appropriate to support their men'*. [FGDM 1] In addition to these roles, women are clear that they are expected to *'send her son, brother or husband to fight'*. [FGD 6] Perhaps male and female differences of opinion on this point may be due to male reluctance (unconscious or otherwise) to admit the need for mobilization by women (referencing war's deep association with masculinity). Whatever the reasons, the question of gendered roles and responsibilities around mobilization is worthy of deeper investigation.

Among elders, who are themselves former combatants, and religious men, discussions focus almost entirely on how women *'have a big role in heating up the conflict'* [FGDM 1], either directly or indirectly. This is also a view shared by women.

Financing and investing in war

Both male and female respondents say clan members expect women to contribute to the war chest by *'giving away their ornaments to finance conflict'*. [FGDM 3] Women appear to comply voluntarily and *'invest their wealth'* [FGD 1, 6, 7] individually as well as raise money by mobilizing far and wide among themselves. No evidence emerged suggesting any explicit coercion is involved, although the clan imperative to contribute may be considerable.

That Somali women have been financiers, promoters and mobilizers of conflict since 1991 is not a new finding.⁴² Somali women's pre and post-independence poetry, for example, provides testimony about how women helped finance the 1950s independence struggle.⁴³ This study contributes to existing evidence by detailing the scale and significance of women's roles in post-state collapse violence.

Women have personally bought weapons and armed their clan militia: *'I know a businesswoman who buys guns and went into debt to buy them. ... Her kinsmen finally reimbursed her.'* [FGD 2] And when deemed necessary, women *'sold their gold to keep the conflict burning'*. [FGD 7] According to male respondents, *'There were women who sold their houses to fund conflict.'* [FGDM 2]

⁴² See, for example: Bryden, M. and Steiner, M. (1998); and testimonies in Gardner, J. and El-Bushra, J. (2004).

⁴³ For an example of such a poem, see: Hawo Jibril's 'Sisters You Sold Your Jewellery' in Gardner, J. and El-Bushra, J. (2004: 175).

Apparently, advisory and command roles have been held by women in some of Kismayo's conflicts. It is not clear, however, whether these women who *'organize the clan'* [FGD 3] and *'campaign for war'* [FGD 9] are the same women who are substantial financiers. Understanding the financing and dynamics of violence and peace promotion is beyond the scope of this study but findings to date suggest that a gendered political economy analysis would be worthwhile. The extent and dynamics of female financial resources for conflict (and for peace) would also be a relevant topic to explore. For example, which clan members do women support – patrilineal family members or those of her husband and sons, or both? Male respondents are clear that women primarily support their patrilineal clansmen but female respondents do not directly comment on this point. Nonetheless evidence from the ten life stories suggests that it is the case that women mostly offer their support along patrilineal lines. Additional anecdotal evidence also indicates that women can be inspired to provide support for their patrilineal clansmen even when they are hundreds of kilometres apart.⁴⁴

Women as causal agents

Many female and male respondents believe women have been causal agents in the violent clan conflicts since 1991. They cite provocation, warmongering and the social norms that require men to rise to the defence of their sisters. This is an unexpected finding that is validated with respondents and confirmed to be a widely held perception. This raises questions. If women have been causal agents, then what part are men believed to have played in producing and sustaining the violent conflict that has affected this part of Somalia for so long? And, to what extent do women and men share similar visions about the purpose of violent conflict conducted along clan lines?

Women are largely of the opinion that they have had a causal role as warmongers, or agents of violent conflict. They describe how *'they spread propaganda'* [FGD 7], *'they are snitches who work to create strife'* [FGD4], *'they turn people against each other'* [FGD 4], *'they start endless disputes'* [FGD 4], *'at times they incite couples against each other and that can transform into a clan conflict ... without them inflaming it, a conflict never starts.'* [FGD 12] An older female respondent sums this up, *'I used to provoke another family so that conflict starts.'* [FGD7]

Men have similar responses. In the group of male civil servants, for example, one notes that, *'Women have a big role in conflict'*; he further recalls, *'There was a conflict which was initiated by women where 1,600 people lost their lives.'*⁴⁵

In their discussions, men analyse the issue in the context of the cultural practice of exogamous marriage, whereby among the major clans a woman is likely to be married to a man who is from a different lineage or clan family to her own. They also look at gendered social norms and ideals, in particular social expectations of manhood. Elders (who are all former combatants), reflect on social norms that are part of family life, especially the relationship a brother has with his sister. That is, a brother is expected to protect and defend his sister (or close clanswoman) from

⁴⁴ This was discussed by researchers during the findings analysis workshop, Nairobi, December 2016.

⁴⁵ This statement has not been verified, either during the study or afterward. It is therefore not included here as a statement of fact but rather to illustrate male thinking and perspectives on female involvement in violent conflict.

harm or offence caused by males. When the harm comes from males within the family lineage group, the mechanisms for dealing with it are necessarily non-violent – a solution must be found that does not threaten the equilibrium of the group. When the harmful action comes from a man who is from another lineage group, then according to the respondents the right response is violent, sending a clear message not only to the individual aggressor but all of his kinsmen: no one should harm this group's women and girls: *'If your sister's husband beats your sister, you will start a fight (i.e. you come to her defence)'* [FGDM 1]; *'If your sister says, "a man has insulted me or beats me", you will go fight straight away'* [FGDM 1]; or *'If a crying woman enters this room, all men will immediately start a fight.'* [FGDM 1]

Proverbs cited by elders and religious men provide an explanation of how conflict that begins in the home can spark long and bitter conflict between clans. In these proverbs, women are named as the causal factor for the protracted nature of this type of conflict: *'fighting that starts with a woman rarely ends'* [FGDM 1]; *'a man being driven by a woman and a he-camel chased by a she-camel never turn'*. [FGDM 4] In her life story, a woman in her sixties appears to be referring to this almost never-ending cycle of conflict when she says, *'Even big clans lose and they can be negatively impacted. They are not spared from injuries, killings and revenge. ... That newly powerful clan in town says, "Women of this clan should be killed just as our women have been killed."'* [LS 1; Respondent A]⁴⁶

The elders' discussion evidences how in the post-1991 war context, a domestic altercation between husband and wife can become a catalyst for perpetuating or pursuing violent conflict, with repercussions that may extend lineage wide and beyond. This point is confirmed by both female and male respondents during the study validation process. Based on this validation, as well as drawing on other studies,⁴⁷ it seems that several factors need to converge to produce this kind of violent chain reaction, including:

- i) A context in which clan dominance or supremacy is being asserted through violence that involves undermining the opposition's manhood; e.g. through attacks on women and girls, including sexual assault⁴⁸
- ii) The absence of mechanisms for the (perceived) fair resolution of disputes through non-violent means
- iii) Context at the time: the availability of weapons and men; an absence of functioning government and security services; the momentum of revenge; clannism, grievance and competition for resources and domination
- iv) Allegations or evidence of mistreatment and injury by male(s) from another clan or sub-clan (through an exogamous marriage relationship or a quite different scenario); a man is not likely to succeed in starting a violent conflict over a fellow or close clansman with whom he shares obligations and responsibilities
- v) Mobilization of males through conscious appeal to the gendered norms and expectations of manhood and clanship

⁴⁶ Whether the systematic killing of females has taken place (and if so, on what scale, when, where, why and how) remains to be verified. No evidence on this topic is generated by this study.

⁴⁷ See, for example: Gardner, J. and El-Bushra, J. (2004; 2015); and Bryden, M. and Steiner, M. (1998).

⁴⁸ This implies that the manhood of a given group may be undermined by the vulnerability of that group's women. Further research is required to confirm this.

Overall, the evidence suggests that women are largely unaware of how they are instrumentalized, as well as instrumental, in clan conflict. As one religious man says, *‘[Women] have a major role because they are used as the benzine [petrol] to conflict. If you touch a match to the benzine, it’s dangerous.’* [FGDM 2]

Violent conflict, then, does not emerge as a result of random malicious and careless actions by women, although this is the kind of scenario women’s responses suggest. Women’s words and actions, just like men’s, are uttered and take place in a highly gendered social and political system. A man’s demonstration of manliness is important for the honour of his clan and is partly measured by his ability to protect his womenfolk. One result of this combination of gendered structures and relationships is that women and girls are vulnerable to attacks, as violating them means emasculating their menfolk and weakening the clan’s prestige. Revenge, through reciprocal violent action, not only promises to recoup lost manhood but reasserts clan strength and, presumably, has the potential to fulfil the interests (male and female) that ride on clan supremacy. Findings show that women play an instrumental part in summoning up the financial, physical and emotional resources required to pursue this revenge.

Women are also critical in breaking the vicious and violent cycle of conflict (see Chapter 4). Their dual agency and significance is summed up by an elder, who says, *‘If there are problems, women have brought them; and if there is peace, they have brought it, too.’* [FGDM 1]

Mobilization, motivation and logistical support of male fighters

Women say a woman is expected to *‘send her son, brother or husband [to fight]’*. [FGD 6] Their responses, shown in Table 8, illustrate how women encourage men and boys to take up arms. They persuade and cajole those who are reluctant, sometimes by humiliating them in public and or in private. One way women can humiliate men and boys is to accuse them of being women. By insulting their manhood, it is expected that men will comply and fight. This strategy is mentioned by both men and women, and is well documented elsewhere.⁴⁹

These study findings suggest many men are not eager to fight. Male youth note that women and girls have to go to considerable lengths to keep them on the battlefield. For example, respondents refer to fighters needing women’s vocal support and ‘beat of the drum’. Male respondents offer accounts of how some women judge and humiliate men unwilling or unable to fight. As this man recalls, *‘I saw in this city many women grabbed a man and forced him to wear a woman’s dress because he didn’t participate in the conflict.’* [FGDM 2] The same man elaborates, *‘The women mark the men who do not fight with red or green ink to mark them as cowards.’* [FGDM 2]⁵⁰

Violent intra and inter-clan conflict appears to be the product of considerable effort – a joint effort by women and men. As mobilizers and critical players in sustaining the fight, women work to produce or co-produce the required violent masculinities. They goad men with words weighted with gendered symbolism and meaning, selected for the humiliating punch they carry. For example, women speak

⁴⁹ See Habiba Osman’s testimony in Gardner, J. and El-Bushra, J., eds. (2004).

⁵⁰ See Cohn (2013) on the effort needed to get men to be willing to kill and risk death.

of spurring on exhausted fighters by challenging their manliness: ‘They say, “Give me the gun and wear this dress!”’ [FGD 3] Others describe how ‘the men from the rival clans cannot fight unless accompanied by women. ... They ululate and motivate the men to fight’. [FGD 5] This supports the observation that violence is far from a natural male state, or war an entirely masculine endeavour. Rather, violent conflict needs to be produced and reproduced, in this case with the help of women and the use of symbolism, poetry and song.⁵¹ A significant gap in understanding the gendered nature of the manufacture of clan violence is knowing what role men play in mobilization for the fight.

Women and clanship

Describing how she supported conflict, a woman who is now a civil servant recalls:

During the years of the state collapse, I supported the militias of my clan. You know, to take part, you do not have to necessarily take up a gun. You can take part in many ways. You can take part by supporting your clan community when it is fighting against another clan community. You can contribute financially. I personally contributed financially by buying and bringing milk and water to the fighters. I also used to nurse the wounded, help carry them and bring them inside the house. I used to give information, too. I’d say, ‘These people are there! Defend us!’ or ‘Beware! They are coming! They are going to attack!’ That is what I used to go and tell the men. I wasn’t scared at all. I used to walk among them in the battlefield, while they were shooting at each other. I became like plastic. Like plastic. I didn’t feel anything at all. I did a lot, in fact, to support the conflict and I also used to encourage it. A lot, in fact. [LS 9; Respondent I]

Along with the other study findings, this respondent’s account belies any notion that Somali women are apolitical and transcend clan divisions. It demonstrates that women can be equal to men in terms of operating in their clan’s interests. Whereas for a man the lifelong demonstration of clan loyalty is a must, for women, demonstrating clan loyalty is more of a voluntary act. Women seem to be able to choose when and how to support their clan without risking recrimination, as long as they do not extend support to the opposition. What determines where an individual woman positions herself at any one time during a conflict is unclear but a pragmatic sense of survival seems to be a factor, as this woman’s account illustrates:

Until my clan community lost, I participated in the conflict by bringing fighters water, food or ammunition. I even remember that I was seven months pregnant when I carried water to the fighters. I was on the way to a fighter when my clan community lost. I was doing this, while my friends took a car to run away to Kenya. I swear in the name of God, I was carrying a pot of water, small water bottles and a whole package of cigarettes. When I heard that they lost, I threw them away and quickly ran back home. [LS 1; Respondent A]

In describing how she helped to collect the wounded from the battlefield, the same woman offers an insight into how, in the context of war, clanship both unites and

⁵¹ See Ingiriis & Hoehne (2013: 313-333) for example, who cite evidence from Luling and Kaptjiens, plus a video of a Somali poetess, “exhorting two notorious warlords, General Mohamed Said Morgan and General Gabyow, to fight for the honour of the clan”.

divides – with horrendous consequences. She explains how, by evoking the kinship that unites them, women are able to negotiate safe passage for themselves and wounded clansmen through enemy-held territory:

The war impacted us women but we also played an active part in the fighting. We had a big role, to be honest. We carried the wounded to get healthcare or carried the dead so they could be buried. If you look at it, people who were fighting are relatives. Despite the grudges we hold against each other, we are all Darood. So, during the fighting, we called the youth who were our neighbours and told them, ‘Brothers, there are many of our men who were killed in the countryside, and so many men are injured. We want to collect these people and put a stone on them [i.e. bury them], and bring all those who are wounded to the hospital.’ A very good man, an Ogaden/Darood, of the clan we were fighting against, gave us a car and a technical⁵² so that we could bring the wounded to the hospital. [LS 1; Respondent A]

3.2 WOMEN AND GIRLS IN COMBAT ROLES

‘So many died from my gun.’ [VM 1; former female fighter]

Female fighters

Somalia’s female fighters are a rarely mentioned phenomenon of the conflicts since 1991. Their existence and actions are anecdotal rather than documented.⁵³ This study is a small but important step in bridging a significant knowledge gap about the role of female combatants. The findings chart new territory and help shed light on how, why and on what kind of scale women and girls in southern Somalia have been active fighters in the conflict. This evidence can help expand thinking about demobilization, disarmament and reintegration, as well as contribute to shaping and achieving sustainable peace.

Female fighters who have joined up fight alongside male counterparts or operate independently, as snipers, assassins or armed guards.⁵⁴ The study findings show no evidence of collective female combatant action (unlike the collective agency women exercise to build peace). Commenting on this, a male respondent observes, ‘*If there is fighting, women do not have the power to join men with their own (female) militia.*’ [FGDM 1] Age and marital status are also apparently no barrier: ‘*Girls fight*’ [FGD 10, 12]⁵⁵ and so do women, married and mothers; single and childless. The deciding factor seems to be individual circumstances (see below, Tipping Points).

Some men who had been combatants refer to those women who had fought and who were also taking part in this study as ‘*the tank women*’, which is understood to mean these women had ridden on armed combat vehicles (or technicals). Among the male civil servants, one notes, ‘*There are those [women] who fire guns, giving support to the men. ... They take part in fighting wearing trousers.*’ In describing her experiences as a fighter, this woman explains how she and other female combatants considered themselves indistinguishable from their male counterparts:

⁵² This is a reference to a vehicle that is mounted with a machine gun or rocket launcher.

⁵³ One of the only previously documented interviews with a female fighter is cited in Bryden, M. and Steiner, M. (1998: 45).

⁵⁴ Unlike the former Somali National Defence Force, the Somali National Movement (SNM), the post-1991 clan militias operating in southern Somalia, have not had female wings, nor do they seem to have actively encouraged female recruits. Despite a public drive to attract girls to its ranks in 2012, and its use of female suicide bombers, there is currently little known about al-Shabaab’s military use of female recruits.

⁵⁵ Although female respondents talk about girls’ roles in combat, they do not indicate an age range.

I used to have my own AK. Me, who is talking to you. I was part of the fighting. I got involved even before some men did. When male fighters were on the street defending, I ran there and arrived before other men. Upon arrival, I was told to fill the empty spot [i.e. the gap in the firing line]. You know, we used to switch places. So one of them told me to replace someone. I was part of them, like normal – switching places with men like any other male fighter. [LS 1; Respondent A]

Another woman also describes how she was easily assimilated into a militia group:

I didn't even know that I was a woman. Who would look at me specifically and notice I am a woman? I am holding a gun. I shaved my hair and wore a hat. No one noticed I was a woman. Maybe I was also youthful. Joining every fight, running to it, to take people away from each other. ... You know this kind of arrogance. The arrogance when you are young. I wore a sweater, a jacket, trousers, boots and my gun. And that is how I walked around with the militias. [LS 3; Respondent C]

Once in the militia, the study findings indicate that women and girls were treated similarly to male militia members and could be asked to undertake any duties. Their combat target was typically male, with one exception: *'When the militia wanted to target a specific woman – maybe she was a mobilizer or financier for her clan – then they would send a woman to do it.'* [VM 1]

How many women and girls have taken up arms throughout the course of the war is unknown. The exact numbers seem likely to be quite small. One former female fighter, for example, said that in her battalion, *'We were around 15 women, among 600–800 men.'* Many female respondents believe, however, that the scale of their contribution is significant. *'They have a big role', says one woman.* [FGD 7] Another says, *'I know so many girls who were in the forefront of conflict.'* [FGD 11] And yet another claims, *'I know some who are soldiers now.'* [FGD 9] One former female combatant is clear on this point:

We are not so few women who took up the gun. We are not. There is only little understanding or knowledge that there are many females who took up guns and actively fought alongside men. Women participated in the war, and the same rules [as for men] applied to them, too. They took guns, went on technicals, fired guns, injured, killed, finished the wounded. Some women used guns; others slashers or big knives. [LS 1; Respondent A]

Speaking about attitudes towards female fighters, this woman who fought for six years says, *'The men in the militia were so happy to have women alongside them.'* [VM 1] Of civilians, the same woman notes, *'Women were very happy. They see me as a hero. When you are carrying a gun, you feel very powerful and walk with a swagger – like a man!'* [VM 1] Admitting that this is not always the case, she reflects, *'When defeating the enemy [i.e. engaged in battle], we were very happy. ... Only later I felt bad.'* [VM 1]

Whatever the proportion of female fighters to male, that they have tended to go largely unnoticed and unremarked by third-party observers fits a global pattern. Based on a global study of gender and conflict, Cohn (2013: 23) observes how *'women's roles [in war] have consistently been either unacknowledged or represented as*

tangential in order to protect war's "masculinity".' Cohn (2013: 22-23) notes 'war's deep association with masculinity' but goes on to say that, 'War's masculinity can be seen not as "natural fact" but rather as a carefully produced and policed social construction'. One of the factors Cohn (2013: 23) cites in support of this conclusion is, 'how much work it takes to get men to be willing to kill and to risk their own deaths'. Findings from this study in Kismayo support this idea. As Cohn (2013: 24) proposes, 'Manhood, rather than being the prerequisite for a soldier, can be seen as its reward.' This, too, is a concept that might resonate with the women and men involved in this study.⁵⁶

This study finds no evidence that women are coerced to take up arms. Rather, this is a personal decision women make, at least insofar as their involvement in clan-related conflict is concerned.⁵⁷ Unlike males, women and girls who engage in combat are not complying with gender expectations, nor have they been conscripted by their clansmen.⁵⁸ On the contrary, when asked what roles their clansmen expect them to play, women list everything shown in Table 8 – except armed combat roles. Men say the same.

Gender and combat: the limitations on women and girl fighters

Female and male respondents are asked if there are any roles in war that women or girls could not undertake. Their responses are similar and provide insight into perceptions and realities of the gendered nature of clan militia and warfare since 1991. Most of the limitations mentioned are related to stereotypical images of women and girls as the weaker sex. The following examples are illustrative:

'They cannot get involved in a conflict because mothers are very sensitive.' [FGD 11]

'Most of them flee when a conflict starts.' [FGD 12]

'They (females) can't fire big guns and heavy artillery.' [FGD 2, 8]

'They do not fight on the frontline of battle.' [FGDM 1]

'Women can't do much of the horrible things men do.' [FGD 7]

'Because women are softer, most of the time they don't have the strength to do these things.' [FGDM 1]

Respondents in two groups – one male, one female – also think that committing acts of sexual violence is beyond a woman's capacity, noting, *'It doesn't happen that a woman rapes another woman.'* [FGDM 1, FGD 9]

At the same time, other women assert that, *'We can do everything men do.'* [FGD 3] In fact, younger women from two groups are very clear that women: *'can go to a conflict area too'; 'they can carry guns'; 'there is nothing we can't do'; 'women have a lot of abilities and can do everything'; 'if they [males] can carry guns, we can, too; if they have training, we can, too'; 'we are able to do everything'.* [FGD 2, 4] An older respondent proudly recalls how in her battalion, *'One woman managed to disarm five men!'* [VM 1] The findings from the former female combatants' life stories support these claims. They show that as fighters, women live beyond the constraints of female gender identities, apparently unimpeded (see below). Thus it appears that female roles in conflict are less prescribed than might be imagined, even by some of

⁵⁶ See Cohn (2013) 'A Conceptual Framework'. In her conceptual framework, Cohn's analysis draws on her own her work, as well as that of other eminent gender experts, including Cynthia Enloe, Cynthia Cockburn and Raewyn Connell.

⁵⁷ This may be different in relation to al-Shabaab, an issue that requires research.

⁵⁸ Whether this is true in the case of all young female combatants needs to be verified.

the respondents themselves. Male respondents concur, with religious men saying, *'They don't bury the dead but [they] do all the other things.'* [FGDM 2] Young men assert, *'They are capable of doing anything done by men'* [FGDM 3] and *'[they cannot bury the dead] but they have a big part in everything else'*. [FGDM 4]⁵⁹

The clan-related wars in Somalia are typically presumed by international observers to be male projects, promulgated to further male interests, with women and girls being the victims, the collateral damage. The key actors brought together in internationally sponsored peace processes are the male protagonists. Since 2000, efforts have been made to include women but this has been in response to UNSC Resolution 1325, rather than from an analysis of the conflict that sees women to be political actors and equally important players in clan-related violence.

Evidence from other contexts shows how framing conflict as male has gendered consequences: determining who participates in peace processes, how political settlements are shaped, what they contain and what they leave out.⁶⁰ The findings from this study offer insights for Somalia that could helpfully reframe the conflict as one in which women play a significant role and are known to be as capable of violence as men.

Non-combatant women's violence: 'finishing off the wounded'

Calculating and agreeing compensation for those killed or wounded is a crucial part of clan conflict resolution. Women help their clansmen by counting casualties. Women also note that they *'hide the wounded'* [FGD 6] on their own side – from rival clanswomen.

According to female respondents, *'finishing off the wounded'* [FGD 1] is one way that women contribute to conflict.⁶¹ A female former fighter explains, *'Not all women are armed but others are more dangerous. They carry pangas [large broad-bladed knife] and kill the wounded.'* [VM 1]⁶² She describes how such women do not fight alongside militiamen but *'during armed conflict, when one militia has defeated the other, women come behind their victorious men' to 'finish off' the rival men injured in battle.* The same respondent describes seeing women, *'put detergent (soap powder) into wounded men's mouths, cutting them with knives and finishing them off'*. She says, *'It happened everywhere. ... There could be 30–50 women involved.'* She adds, *'Several times I shot at those women [above their heads, to frighten them away].'* She also recalls one time when armed women stood outside the hospital and prevented family members from reaching their wounded loved ones, who were subsequently killed.

One life story narrator recalls an incident (validated by other women) that illustrates how openly women carried out such killing, indicating perhaps the general lawlessness of the time and implying their sense of immunity from condemnation or retribution:

A man was killed in front of [the hotel where these meetings were held]. He was a young man, a kid, just twenty-two years old. He was XX. When he was injured, he ran away to find protection in the hotel. Some women in the YY community caught him while he was still in the street, and I swear, he was cut with slashes. Like this – horizontally. [LS 1; Respondent A]

⁵⁹ Both male and female respondents mention numerous times that women cannot bury the dead and that this religious taboo has been upheld throughout the war.

⁶⁰ See, for example: Cohn (2013); Bell (2016).

⁶¹ Whether women do this in other regions of Somalia is unclear. Nothing is documented (yet) to suggest that they do or do not.

⁶² Please note: all the extracted quotes in this paragraph are drawn from this source.

Referring to the killing of wounded fighters, women are clear that *'men don't do it'*. [VM 2] A male respondent from a separate LPI study in Middle Shabelle (April 2017) verifies this: *'Here are women who are very active and who even went to the frontline fighting. They take milk, water and other things to the armed men who are fighting. They also killed the wounded men from the other clan. Some women are so tough.'*⁶³

Male attitudes to the practice of their clanswomen killing wounded men from other clans are unclear. Study findings suggest that it is not condemned by militia leaders and even may be factored in to their battlefield tactics. On one level, this would make sense. Killing wounded males reduces the numerical (male) power of a clan and thereby serves clan interests at this level. Questions about whether this has been practised by all parties (clans), has its roots in traditional inter-clan warfare practices or has emerged as a response to the brutality of the post-1991 conflict all require further research.⁶⁴

3.3 WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT IN CONFLICT

Motivations and tipping points

The main reason given for why women are motivated to engage in or support conflict is to defend or promote their clan-based interests. In group discussions, the vast majority of female respondents say the women and girls who engage in and support conflict do so because their clan is involved and *'They want their clan or clan militias to win the war.'* [FGD 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12] As one woman puts it, *'I took part because I wanted my clan to succeed.'* [FGD 4] Winning in the context of Kismayo apparently means, *'They wanted (their clan and family) to remain and rule the town.'* [FGD 6, 7, 11, 12] In other localities, however, this could mean *'to capture land'*. [FGD 12] Male responses concur: *'Most of time, it is because of clan and clannism.'* [FGDM 1]

It is mentioned (albeit far less frequently) that some women take part in conflict to gain or increase their social and political power in their kinship or clan network. Although engaging in conflict can also be a result of ideological motivation in relation to jihadism (a reference to al-Shabaab), this is indicated by only one or two respondents.

The women fighters who tell their life stories have a critical tipping point in common (although it is not necessarily the sole motivation in each case). That is, they indicate that they took up arms to avenge the violent loss of a male loved one. This motivation is also mentioned by some women who participated in the focus group discussions:

'I took part because my brother was killed.' [FGD 1]

'Their brother had been killed, and she thought if her brother was killed she would not be spared.' [FGD 4]

One woman recalls the thoughts that she had both when she took up arms and when she laid down her weapons:

⁶³ LPI interview with a religious leader in Middle Shabelle in April 2017.

⁶⁴ Along similar lines, see: African Rights and Leggat-Smith, Y. (1995) *Rwanda Not So Innocent: When Women Become Killers*. African Rights.

My brother had been killed by XX who came from Mogadishu. They killed him in Marerey. So I thought a clan invaded us and killed my brother, and that's how everyone saw it, too. And I was fighting for my clan. Also, I guess I had done enough for my brother. I sought revenge for him over a nine-month period and divorced the man who was from the clan community that killed my brother. I also came to realize that there were people who had gone through worse than me. [LS 3; Respondent C]

Recounting the killing that drove her to engage in violence, this woman, now in her sixties, explains:

Why did I encourage [clannism and conflict] so much? Let me tell you why. There was a man, the son of my paternal uncle. He was twenty years old when the conflict started. He was taken away from my house. We were all there when they took him. They told us, 'We will kill you, and you, too!' Then, 'Dhac!' [sound of gunfire] They shot at the stomach of a boy standing there, who was doing nothing. And he died because of clannism.

I thought, 'We have fled. We are displaced. And even here they are running after us?' My paternal uncle was killed, his son was killed and they were searching for the other boys. People are killed in front of you. Our wealth is looted. So, we thought, let's join the fight from our side. That is what made me join the conflict. When people are killed in front of you and you can't defend them. So when it is your turn, you carry on the fighting from your position. ... So that is what forced us into conflict – that all of our people were killed in front of us. [LS 9; Respondent I]

Stunned by her brother's death, a woman describes her uncontrollable desire to gain revenge against his killer, another woman (a desire she apparently fulfilled) and how this triggers her to become a clan militia fighter:

When my brother died, I didn't think of seeking peace with those who killed him. Instead I thought I should seek revenge. I shaved my hair. The man who snitched on my brother, a YY was among them. A man among the militia was carrying my brother's gun. ... I shaved my hair, by God's command. The woman who killed my brother was shot five days after she killed my brother. 'Tshak!' [sound of the bullet] She died instantly. I shaved my hair, wore trousers and a shirt. I went after the man who had snitched on my brother. I looked for him. I didn't find him. He ran away. The gun of my brother was brought to me. That was a gun! Like a pistol, you know. ... For six months, until we arrived in H, I was with the militia. Every night when we were told, 'They are hiding there!', I would be among those who would run there to get them. [LS 3; Respondent C]

Although this respondent's brother had been a member of a clan militia (a combatant), she tells us, *'My brother has been killed without reason. He was killed because of his clan.'* [LS 3; Respondent C] Her narrative suggests that at some level a paradox exists, whereby clannism is a sufficient reason to mobilize for war but is not really seen as a sufficient reason to die.⁶⁵ Another former female combatant

⁶⁵ Individual, collective, customary, religious and legal notions and narratives about concepts such as 'responsibility', 'culpability', 'guilt' and 'innocence' in the context of violent conflict may be an avenue for future exploration as part of reconciliation and peacebuilding.

describes the loss of her brother as a life-changing trauma but indicates that her decision to take up arms was a last resort, not a means of revenge:

The man that I loved and trusted the most was killed. He was the eldest and only son of my mother. When my brother was killed, I stopped all forms of business. I liquidated all my property, too, because the conflict intensified. I wanted to do like all of my friends and neighbours and join the diaspora. Many times, I tried finding papers so I could leave the problems of the city. But God didn't write it for me.⁶⁶ So that's how I stayed in the city, and took part in the conflicts in Jubbaland. [LS 1; Respondent A]

These accounts resonate with how male respondents describe the protective and interdependent relationship between sister and brother.

A woman, now in her early fifties, explains her motivation for joining her clan militia:

I joined the militia when my clan were driven out of Mogadishu (in 1991). I was at secondary school. Three brothers and my father had died. It was a personal decision (to join the militia). My family members were mostly in the military. My father was a high-ranking police officer and among the first killed. After we lost power, my clan couldn't stand the humiliation and decided to regain their glory. Initially I was just carrying ammunition and food. Then I realized that I could also fire a gun. [VM 1]

The findings from this study do not mean that every woman who loses a brother to war will potentially take up arms. They do suggest, however, that the killing of a brother, husband or close male relative is a significant factor in the decision to do so.

Even when it does not provoke female engagement in violence, the loss of adult male relatives is often personally catastrophic in the context of clan conflict. This is also validated by the life stories included in the study data. Other studies indicate that women who are married to men from outside their patrilineal clans can feel extremely vulnerable during conflict.⁶⁷ Their most reliable source of personal protection is their paternal kinsmen, most especially their adult brothers and paternal uncles.

3.4 CLANNISM AND CLAN LOYALTY

Women describe a context permeated with clannism for which they consider themselves responsible, which is also a view men put forward. It seems evident from the study findings that women have a strong but ambivalent relationship with clannism. Moreover, it is through clannism that women's political agency in conflict is most apparent. Taken in combination with study findings on their roles in building peace (see below), it seems that the same women can be the guardians and agents of clannism, as well as a collective bulwark against it.⁶⁸ What position they take at any particular time seems to depend on what is happening: how their kinsmen are faring, how much power their clan has attained or ceded, how they are individually being affected by the violence, how safe or under threat their children

⁶⁶ A literal translation from Somali; conveys the Muslim belief that one's fate is decided by God, as in 'it is written'.

⁶⁷ See, for example: Halimo Elmi's testimony in Gardner, J. and El-Bushra, J., eds. (2004).

⁶⁸ For an example from Erigavo of how women's peacebuilding activism involves transcending clan divisions and presenting a collective bulwark against it, see Gardner, J., and El-Bushra, J. (2004).

are, along with other factors that guide their actions and motives, such as spiritual belief, ideology and so on.

Women's accounts describe a context in which all actions, including humanitarian gestures, carry political ramifications because they either confirm or cast doubt on their clan loyalty. The extent to which this matters depends on context. Accounts show that victimization and even death can befall those who fail to fall in line and instead demonstrate independent thought and behaviour (see Section 3.5, Women-on-Women Violence). Accounts testify to clannism's compelling rationale and the catastrophic scenarios it can inspire; e.g. a midwife intentionally performing a lethal post-partum repair on a newly delivered mother because she thought she was from a rival clan; revenge killings triggering further killings; women directing militiamen to the doorways of other women from rival clans in order for them to be raped in revenge; purposely '*creating conflict between a couple so as to start a conflict*' [FGD 4] or '*finishing off the wounded*' [FGD 1] from the rival clan.

The vicious circle of clan-related conflict is summed up by this former female combatant:

Whenever clans fight, be they big or small, some lose and others win. Even big clans lose and they can be negatively impacted. They are not spared from injuries, killings and revenge. ... That newly powerful clan in town says, 'Women of this clan should be killed just as our women have been killed.' [LS 1; Respondent A]⁶⁹

That women suffer terrible consequences from the dynamics of this vicious circle is evidenced by study findings, yet they also play a critical role in completing and perpetuating the circle.

3.5 WOMEN-ON-WOMEN VIOLENCE

Women have targeted and killed or injured other women in the course of the conflict, as well as killing or violating them by proxy. All the cases respondents mention are apparently motivated by violent clannism and revenge.

One woman recounts her near fatal experience at the hands of her midwife shortly after the war had reached Mogadishu:

This neighbourhood was divided into two back then [because of the war]. I used to live on the XX side. I found a good midwife. ... She lived in the opposite camp, in the YY area. When my labour started at 2:00 a.m., I went to her. ... I came from the XX side to the YY side and she had seen this [i.e. she thought the narrator was from her sub-clan's enemy]. After she helped me give birth, she sewed me up wrongly ... really wrongly, so wrongly that no blood could not come out. When I left her house, I hadn't realized what she had done. ... Shortly after arriving home, I became very sick. I started shaking [and] my relatives covered me with blankets. ... I kept shaking. I reached a state when I was vomiting on myself.

My mother went to see the midwife. ... [and] said, 'The daughter of M.G. gave birth here today. ... The girl you helped last night is really sick.' ... [When she heard

⁶⁹ This study does not explore male motivations for engaging in conflict, although as this extract suggests this would be a highly relevant follow-on study. As women appear inspired to fight to revenge the loss of male loved ones, do men, as this quote suggests, either individually or collectively, respond to the loss or violation of female kin?

my father's name], the midwife was shocked and scared because this meant that her husband and I are from the same family. We are XX and she is YY. She was shocked... [and said] 'Mother, I did her wrong!' ... Then the midwife came to me to open the sutures with her scissors. She had stitched me up with the blood blocked inside. Since then, [I am scarred and]... I can't squat. That is one of the ways the conflict between clans has affected me. Although I didn't take part because I didn't belong to any of the clans in conflict, this is how she fought with me. [LS 8; Respondent H]

Some male and female respondents suggest that when it comes to violence, what separates men from women is that only men rape and sexually violate women and girls. Evidence has emerged, however, that shows how women have been complicit and even instrumental in the rape of other women. They help identify who to target and urge their menfolk to fight because *'they want other women to be raped'*. [FGD 7]⁷⁰ A former female fighter describes having witnessed the actions of a high-level female militiawoman, infamous for her use of torture in dealing with both the men and women she encountered. [VM 1] One form of torture she deployed is the forced penetration of women's vaginas with foreign objects, such as batteries. Recalling how much violence has been perpetrated in the name of clannism, the same respondent describes how, upon their clan's victory in gaining control of Kismayo, a group of her own clanswomen killed a woman from the rival clan. [VM 1]

Evidence also emerges of other ways that clannism is felt and demonstrated by women. Recollecting an experience from her childhood after her mother had been killed, for example, this woman describes how being from the wrong clan resulted in the violation of her most basic right to water:

There is no one who God created who has helped us. Even after they killed my mother, the problem did not leave us – until we moved away. The attacks at night carried on. My grandmother was beaten up 24 hours a day. Since then, she still suffers from the beatings. She is lying down now; old and tired. My maternal uncles have almost all been exterminated with guns. They were killed. Some of my maternal aunts have been raped. If we weren't kids, they wouldn't have left me and my little sister alone. But we had to deal with other problems. For instance, when I was sent to fetch water at the well, the women kept the plastic bottles I took to carry water. They would beat me, forbid me to fetch water. Sometimes, I would go early in the morning and leave at sunset without water. In the end, we were evicted from my grandmother's farmland. And because of all these problems, we ran away. You know, when you are putting your life in danger by staying. Only a few of us survived and we ran away. [LS 10; Respondent J]

Once its momentum is underway, the compelling logic of clannism infects even those of a young age, as is conveyed by the same woman when she recalls an encounter with a terrified man seeking refuge from enemy militia:

A man came to me. He was hiding and he told me, 'Daughter, don't tell them I am hiding here. They are after me. They are chasing me!' I thought, 'You [your clan

⁷⁰ For discussion of Sierra Leone, see: MacKenzie, M. H. (2012).

family] have killed my mother, persecuted us and you dare to call me “daughter”? Wait and see. Today, it is your turn.’ I told him, ‘Alright uncle, come and hide here.’ He must have felt I wasn’t sincere and he couldn’t trust me because he left.
[LS 10; Respondent J]

3.6 RESISTANCE TO CLANNISM

International community engagement in the Somali conflict and peacebuilding tends to assume clannism is a masculine characteristic and that Somali women naturally resist it to transcend clan divisions.⁷¹ This study disproves this assumption, as is evidenced in previous sections of this report. At the same time, the findings demonstrate that it is possible for women to resist or turn from clannism, even at the height of war, although to do so can carry considerable risk.

One woman elaborates this risk. Originally from Beledweyne, she is widowed and displaced with her surviving four children to Kismayo early on in the war. She tries to help a stranger and is badly victimized for it. Later on, at a different stage in the conflict, she herself is helped by strangers. As with the other life stories, her account helps productively complicate and deepen understanding of life during conflict:

... people were fighting in the name of their clan. I was a religious woman and I didn’t want to participate in any way in this conflict. I stayed at home. ... One day, I saw an old man, who also was a religious man. He was attacked ... They approached him and killed him. I thought, ‘This old man has been killed. You can’t do much for him, so let’s just take his dead body out of the street.’ Because we tried to take his dead body from there, we were beaten up and our store was looted and destroyed. Nothing was left. ... I didn’t know the city, nor did I have anyone [there to help me]. ... I sat at home, desperate. ... I had nothing to flee with. I didn’t have enough money to run away with my children. All the money I had in cash was in my store, which was looted. ... I was sitting with nothing in my house. I had nothing.

Then one day, the women who work at the market called me. They were traders. They were four women working at the market. One of them was a religious woman, too, and the elder one called me. They told me, ‘Come work at the market for your children. Your children are young. They are orphans. Although you were looted, and treated this way, you shouldn’t sit. We will give you this money as a loan. Accept our loan. Do your best at this table and when you make a good profit, pay us back little by little.’ Thank God, this is how these women helped me; how I returned to selling things. Since then, to this day I still sell clothes at the market in Kismayo.
[LS 2; Respondent B]

Another woman also explains that she intervened in a neighbourhood dispute involving women who are both from a marginalized group. She sides with one of them, her friend. Women who support the other woman are incensed and begin to abuse her verbally; *‘horrible abuse’*. [LS 8; Respondent H] They accuse her of

⁷¹ This insight is based on the personal experience of the lead author of this report, Judith Gardner, while researching the Mbgathi Peace Process in 2004.

faking her clan identity to pretend to be one of them, an accusation that hurts and infuriates her. In response, she composes a poem that she sings in front of her accusers. She says in her poem that she ‘*reminded them of my clan, and my relationship to [theirs]*’. In what seems to be a metaphor about clannism, she notes that ‘*in [the final verse] I have added:*

I am a black beast that grows.

You should not start abuse or sinister rumours.

Or I will come after you, spreading like a disaster!

As she goes on to explain, ‘*This tells them, “If you don’t leave me alone, Somalis [meaning whatever your clan], I will come after you.”*’ [LS 8; Respondent H]

The poem is apparently:

... a cry of despair rather than a threat, and she recounted the story to illustrate tensions that emerge among women who live in the same neighbourhood. The first two verses of the poem do not appear here but illustrate that women identify foremost, without doubt, to their father’s clan. That’s why it is both used as an insult – to accuse someone of pretending to belong to another clan – and felt as a humiliation to be accused of such a thing.⁷²

Speaking about the impact of her poem, the respondent says, ‘*My poem made the other women react and understand my pain.*’ In response, as she further explains, another woman says, ‘*We should help this woman. We are the ones who are in conflict. This woman is a Somali woman. Moreover, she is our sister. She can support whatever side she wants and we shouldn’t abuse her.*’ [LS 8; Respondent H]

Somali poetry and oral history is rich with powerful compositions and aphorisms that warn against the dangers of clannism and call for it to be resisted. As the above example demonstrates, women are composing new poetry and metaphors, which can have a powerful impact.⁷⁴

⁷² Personal communication with the researcher who collected her story, 12 April 2017.

⁷³ Personal communication with Mohamed Barud and Dr Adan Abokor, Hargeisa, 28 September 2017.

⁷⁴ The use of cultural and traditional forms of resistance to clannism, including poetry, would be a worthwhile topic for future research.

Chapter 4. Women and Peacebuilding in Kismayo

'Women are the backbone of peace.' [FGDM 1]

Women as agents of peace (female and male respondents)

In what ways do women think that they contribute to peace in Jubbaland?

What can women do that men cannot and vice versa?

Which kinds of women and girls are most likely to be involved in peace promoting activities?

What factors influence their decisions to get involved in peacebuilding?

4.1 HOW WOMEN CONTRIBUTE TO PEACE

Women across all age and social groups identify ways that either they themselves or other women and girls contribute to ending or preventing conflict and promoting peace.⁷⁵ Table 9 captures the range of responses and offers related detail on the roles and actions that women respondents identify. As Table 9 shows, and as elders note, *'Women have so many roles in peacebuilding.'* [FGDM 1] For the most part, these roughly fall into three types of action: women acting autonomously as individuals; women acting as individuals but part of a collective strategy; and women and girls acting collectively.

Table 9. *What women do to promote peace*

Type of action	Detail	Illustrative examples
Individual action	Persuade males in one's life or household not to continue to fight	<i>We should look for peace saying, 'My son, put down the gun. My husband, put down the gun. My brother, put down the gun.'</i> [FGD 9, 1] <i>By saying, 'If you are going to war, divorce me first and take your kids.'</i> [FGD 1]
Women-to-women reconciliation	Talk and (re)build bridges across clan lines	<i>Peace can be reached if women from the opposing communities try to meet looking for peace.</i> [FGD 11] <i>[You] can prevent [further conflict] by reconciling women</i> [FGD 11] <i>We organize ourselves and unite to prevent conflict.</i> [FGD 4]
Assisting elders	Take peace messages to the enemy	<i>By creating awareness and carrying peace messages.</i> [FGD 5]
Prevention	Adopt a type of Do No Harm approach	<i>You avoid doing anything that can lead to violence.</i> [FGD 10]

⁷⁵ Eighty-three per cent of the respondents in this study are also involved in the SWSO-LPI women-to-women dialogue process. However, this study does not differentiate responses between those who are and those who are not involved in these dialogues.

		<i>Businesswomen gather to prevent the conflict. [FGD 11]</i>
Women's collective peace activism	Undertake collective actions designed to prevent or end conflict and promote peace	<i>[Women] set up committees that stand and do things for peace [FGD 12] ... and be identifiable as a group working for peace. [FGD 3] They are the organizers of peace and peacebuilding. ... Women are good at organizing, hence can promote peace. [FGD 5]</i>
Proactive prevention	Follow what happens in their clans to anticipate conflict and act to lower tensions	<i>Before conflict starts, they can talk to people at all levels. ... Talk about peace and tell them peace stories. [FGD 5] We have to bring them to talk with one another when we see the first signs of conflict. [FGD 2]</i>
Direct action	Place themselves physically between the warring parties	<i>They stand in front ... [FGD5]</i>
Protest	Demonstrate in public	<i>During the fighting, they can say, 'Let's stop the fighting. We want peace.' [FGD 4, 6]</i>
Canvassing combatants	Talk to male combatants	<i>They can talk to the men who are fighting to persuade or beg them to withdraw from conflict. [FGD 5] We say, 'We don't want our sons, brothers and husband to die. So stop the fighting.' [FGD 6]</i>
Spreading peace messages	Raise awareness for peace	<i>They create awareness of the importance of peace ... from village to village and town to town. [FGD 2, 5, 6, 11, 12]</i>
Finance	Mobilize funding and resources	<i>[Women] borrow money from friends or seek money from other people outside and inside Somalia to promote peace. [FGD 5] [Some women] spend their wealth for peace. [FGD 6]</i>
Advocacy	Meet politicians	<i>We have to meet with male politicians to seek peace. [FGD 9] Men normally listen to women. [FGD 5]</i>
Call on mediators		<i>Women can call upon religious leaders to talk to the conflicting parties. [FGD 7]</i>
Logistical and symbolic support	Provide venues for elders to meet and for peace meetings between warring parties	<i>The house where the meeting happens belongs to her and that is where the peace is built. [FGD 3] They set the mat [gogosha] where peacemakers sit. [FGD 3, 6, 8, 10] They can lay peace mats for conflicting parties ... this facilitates negotiation. [FGD 5]</i>
	Give one of their livestock for participants to eat	<i>[Women] slaughter animals purposely for peacebuilding. ... This can be used to convey peace messages. [FGD 5]</i>
Cultural peace symbolism	Girls may be exchanged (by their fathers) to seal the peace between clans	<i>Girls bring families together. [FGD 1]</i>

Women respondents only

The study also finds evidence of the revival of the custom of exchanging women or girls in arranged marriages between former warring parties to seal the peace, although how often this occurs is unclear.

4.2 PROMOTING PEACE WITHIN THE FAMILY

Women have contradictory but pivotal family-level responsibilities when it comes to conflict and peace. On the one hand, they are expected to mobilize their sons and husbands for war. On the other, women are expected to intervene to disarm, teach and parent against violence. Summing up this paradox, one woman explains, *‘Women can bring peace because they allow conflict by accepting their sons to die.’* [FGD 3]

As one respondent asserts, *‘Peace is built at home.’* [FGD 1] It is achieved through two main courses of action: persuasive intervention to end family members’ support for ongoing conflict; and through parenting for peace – raising one’s children to be peace loving and refrain from violence. Both routes are the responsibility of women, who are considered *‘the centre of peace’* [FGDM 1], with mothers described as *‘masters’* or even *‘the president of the house’*. [FGD 3, 1]

Parenting for peace

In Somali culture, both fathers and mothers have specific normative roles and responsibilities for bringing up their children. With the war and state collapse, however, many children have grown up in families with absent fathers or fathers who, for one reason or another, are not fulfilling their normative parenting roles. In many such cases, mothers are responsible for family survival and adult males live dependent on female income.⁷⁶

According to a number of male respondents, part of the solution to violent conflict lies in parenting or, more specifically, maternal filial parenting; i.e. how a mother brings up her sons. Young men say, for example, women can prevent conflict by *‘warning their sons [away from violence] from a very young age’* and *‘bringing up their children as peace loving persons’*. [FGDM 3] Older men say that a woman’s role is *‘to stay at home and teach their children ... what peace is’* because *‘if any mother advises or warns her son about the problems, they would end’*. [FGDM 1]

Many women say that once their menfolk are engaged in violence, as wives and mothers they can exhort them to “put down the gun” (see above), but female respondents, offer little evidence to suggest that women identify with the idea proposed by men, that mothers can parent young children in ways that will prevent them engaging in violence in the future. Nor is it evident that they think this is a likely way to prevent future violence. They likewise do not indicate that parenting for peace, at least in the ways men outline this idea, is a relevant area of female responsibility. Though one respondent, a former female fighter, however, did express strong aspirations for her children in this regard:

I want my daughters to stand at the table of peace. I don't want them to do like I did. ... I want them to take my courage to stand for peace. That they stand for

⁷⁶ On normative expectations of men, see: Gardner, J. and El-Bushra, J. (2015).

their country, their people, their women. And never participate in any fighting. I want them to never ever take the gun for a war of ignorance; a war of clan. [LS 1; Respondent A]

In contrast, women are keenly aware of the expectation that they mobilize their sons to fight, as discussed above. They are also confident of their power to persuade them to disarm. As one woman says during the validation process, *'We are aware that those who kill and who are killed are our sons.'* [VM 2]

As fathers, men have normative responsibility for core aspects of male children's upbringing, including moral guidance. Males grow up as lifelong members of a *diya* group [a male kinship-based fraternity built on principles of collective and shared responsibility and conflict management]. The notion that men put forward – a mother's influence throughout a boy's childhood could carry more weight than a father's or a brotherhood of kinsmen – may or may not be true. If this sentiment about the potential influence of mothers is found to be widely true, it could have considerable implications for how to build sustainable peace.

Persuasive intervention

Women are clear that when they want an end to conflict, they start by persuading their closest menfolk to disarm. As one respondent explains, *'Conflict begins at home. So after you solve it [there], you can participate in peacebuilding activities.'* [FGD 3]

Both men and women believe that it is within a woman's power to *'build peace by making her husband and son lay down their guns'*. [FGD 1] As one woman explains, *'She gave birth to the boy who is going to fight, so if she tells him not to go [he will stay].'* [FGD 3]. Echoing the proposition in the previous section, this suggests a mother's influence over her sons is perceived to be considerable, at least once her sons are old enough to fight. Likewise, wives are said to have remarkable power over their spouses, with male respondents claiming, *'Now if my wife tells me "you will not go to war", to be honest, I will stay [home].'* [FGDM 1] Forms of persuasion include *'talk[ing] to their husbands and telling them to choose between stopping the war or divorce'* [FGD 12] and *'standing in front of them'*. [FGD 6]⁷⁷

It is necessary to better understand the dynamics of how and when a woman has influence and exerts agency in her marriage and immediate family in relation to violence, clannism or violent extremism.⁷⁸ Some insights are available as to what may influence her behaviour and thinking vis-à-vis conflict or peace but presumably it is seldom straightforward to achieve desired results. Whatever her message, what other factors need to be in place in order for any individual woman to be listened to by her husband, sons or brothers? To what extent, and on what kind of matters, might a woman really have more influence than a man's own clansmen? What sanctions, if any, does a man face if, in following his wife's bidding, he crosses his clansmen?

Along with other findings, this highlights the present-day relevance of understanding better the nature and dynamics of the gendered power relations that form the social fabric through which the clan system of identity is maintained, and the resources mobilized for violent conflict.

⁷⁷ Based on insights from other studies (e.g. Gardner, J., and El-Bushra, J., eds. [2004]), for example, women's powers of persuasion can include a refusal to fulfil typical feminine roles in the home, such as cooking or sex.

⁷⁸ This is mentioned because of the assumption among policy makers and donors that Somali women are vehicles of countering or preventing violent extremism.

4.3 ENDING CONFLICT THROUGH WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE ACTION

Female respondents know their agency for peace is greatest when it is collective. To explain why, some cite the Somali proverb, *gacmo wadajir ey wax ku qabtaan* [hands can do great things when working together as compared to each working on its own]. [FGD 3, 9, 10]

Women note that they lack the collective social institutions available to men. They ‘don’t have a council of elders’ [FGD 6], for instance, or a female version of the *diya* group⁷⁹. Instead, women describe a process in which they construct their peace institutions as they go along, while simultaneously working to end conflict. A picture emerges of a complex, step-by-step process that requires leadership, strategy, conflict sensitivity, endurance, negotiation and mediation skills, as well as courage – all qualities and characteristics associated in Somalia with male leadership.⁸⁰

On one level, the components are similar to those of an internationally sponsored peace process, except that the whole enterprise is self-funded. A critical first step in this broader process is building reconciliation among women in Kismayo.

Women-to-women reconciliation

For women in Kismayo, one of the first steps to building peace has been (and still is) to overcome the internal hostilities, clan divisions and clannism that have built up and left a deeply divided and conflict-ridden female community. As one woman explains, women can do a lot for peace ‘if they go beyond clannism or reconcile [clans]’. [FGD 3] Reconciliation is not described as easy. As another woman explains, ‘We are sleeping with a lot of anger’ [VM 2] but in ‘uniting they let go of the bitterness in their stomach for each other’. [FGD 9]

Forms of women-to-women reconciliation are ongoing and appear to be widely welcomed. The SWSO–LPI facilitated women’s dialogues for peace are built on joint analysis of the conflict in Jubbaland, along with lessons learnt from LPI’s work in other regions of South Central Somalia, which focuses on negotiating space for women of different ages and men in traditional male peacebuilding domains.

This respondent, formerly a conflict agitator, describes how SWSO has played a vital role in women-to-women reconciliation. The enthusiasm conveyed in her account is not unique. Other women, especially young women, speak with similar feeling. This respondent’s comments are included here at some length for the valuable insights they provide on how this particular reconciliation initiative is working by reaching a relational and emotional level. Even though this reconciliation process only targets women, this participant’s account suggests its actual reach is wider, with potential (presumably positive) impact on other family members and the broader community:

This kind of programme is the first of its kind to have women as leaders and put its focus on women. We benefit a lot from it, honestly. It is in these seminars where even women from the same clan community got to know each other. This really shows you how little communication and contact there was between us. We got to know each other in these seminars. ... We didn’t know each other before, although we are

⁷⁹ In Somali culture, the *diya* group is the collective social institution with the most day-to-day relevance for men because it is at this level that collective action takes place and collective accountability is realized. It is also the level at which the political and social implications of clan membership are most clearly defined, and from which collective security derives. A single group may comprise several hundred families who are united through genealogy and marriage ties. Such groups are obliged to protect one another and to pay and receive blood compensation (*diya*) for murder and other injuries.

⁸⁰ For details, see: Gardner, J. and El-Bushra, J. (2015).

related [from within the same clan family]. That was the first thing. That women from different clan communities... got to meet each other. The second is that we are happy with one another. We meet here, and then when we see each other in other places, we happily greet each other and remember each other's names. The women who yesterday were in conflict are coming closer to each other with joy; that each of us gathers in a good and dignifying way. We are at this stage now and I would love to reach out this happiness to other women, especially in the regions. And the third thing is that beside this happiness, when we leave in the afternoon, we transfer this happiness to our children. ... And we do our daily activities without bitterness inside. [LS 9; Respondent I]

Her enthusiasm is shared by other respondents, including some of the men. What this account evidences is a remarkable appetite among many women for some kind of new beginning for which they are ready to overcome grievance, cast out bitterness (a word used frequently) and (re)build relationships. For some women, the dialogues appear to be a form of healing for trauma or an opportunity to shed feelings, such as guilt and shame. This former female fighter, who is now a peacebuilder, notes how *'In the first days of the women's dialogue, I used to cry. Now I feel cleansed. ... Now I can talk about my experiences and preach the uselessness of war.'* [VM 1] Also using the image of purification and speaking about the futility of the war, another former fighter says of the dialogues that they have *'cleaned minds from dirty ethnic hatred'*. [VM 2]

Examples of collective peace activism

Respondents share examples of how they had personally reconciled and joined forces with other women to end or prevent conflict. Their stories range from intervention at the local level to the regional level.

In the context of intra and inter-clan hostilities, it seems true that *'conflict begins at home'* [FGDM 1], particularly within households where the husband and wife are from different clan and sub-clan families. In such scenarios, *'If your sister's husband beats your sister, you will start a fight.'* [FGDM 1] All too easily, the incident escalates to violent conflict between armed militia groups. Women know they have collective agency to prevent such scenarios before they fully ignite. It is equally the case, however, that they can deploy their agency to escalate the situation in order to inflame violence. Women and female youth who have taken the decision to stand for peace see such preventive actions as critical. According to this eighteen year old woman, it can take many women working together to bring calm:

The other day, a man and his wife started a dispute in the neighbourhood I live in. She [the wife] was angry at him. That day, we were a lot [of women] gathered [in that place to promote peace messages]. We went to them and talked with them. The mothers were talking, and we were asked to support them and walk with them. We became a lot of people in the end. Because one or two people cannot do much, you know. So, we just walked with them. We walked among the mothers. And we have succeeded. We calmed them down. So you see, you have to do the things you can do. [LS 7; Respondent G]

A woman who describes herself as a trader and religious woman explains how during the years of intra and inter-clan conflict she had gathered together a group of like-minded women and used religion and ‘good words’ to try to encourage peaceful coexistence:

I used to go among people and talk to them with good words. I used to motivate other religious women, raise awareness among people who are in pain – those who raise orphans, those who were in need, those who have had relatives killed and the people who start disputes. As the women of the market, we were united. ... We would hold talks in women’s houses to tell them to hold their children back from engaging in conflict or from supporting conflict. We reminded them that the conflict was only about worldly concerns. And that the hereafter is more important. All the time, there was one group that took control of the city, then it was another one. But regardless, that is how I participated. Giving peace speeches and educating about religion. [LS 2; Respondent B]

Working collectively, women also have targeted warlords and politicians, whose violent pursuit of power so often leaves the population of Kismayo in conflict. Resonant of the Do No Harm philosophy of international agencies, women speak of the need to ‘ensure we do not start a conflict’. [LS 4, Respondent D] When ready, ‘women from two rival clans should meet and discuss, then each side goes to talk to their men’ with the aim of bringing ‘the conflicting parties to dialogue’. [FGDM 1] This may involve the ‘need to meet factional leaders and open dialogue with them and reconcile with them’. [FGD 6, 7] Women say, ‘If we don’t succeed in our talks with our men, then we should involve a third party. ... [We can] call upon religious leaders.’ [FGD 7]

A woman, who was a militiawoman until she voluntarily demobilized, describes taking part in a major effort by women to bring the warring parties together to negotiate for peace:

But after a year, political instability erupted again and gunfire started. Each of the five Jubbaland presidential candidates had an army. Their soldiers started firing at each other, with each candidate proclaiming, ‘I am the president! I am the president!’ The conflict lasted 64 hours. After that time, women of the region, we took mats and microphones to the football stadium and we gathered there. We said, ‘We are the Somali women. We don’t want conflict. There was conflict for 25 years. Here are the peace mats.’ We called all of the five presidential candidates to join us. We kept calling their names and finally after three months they came together and started a dialogue. We went to them. We welcomed them. What we did there was not something easy. [LS 3; Respondent C]

Identifying herself as a peacebuilder, another woman gives this detailed account of how, with the help of other women, she averts a crisis that could have been the end of the newly established Jubbaland administration:

During the early stage of the administration, there was a conflict with a clan dimension [over representation in the administration]. The president was away when 150 men deserted from the army and went out of Kismayo. I mobilized

women from all the clans concerned and we went after them, spending four nights in the cold bringing them back. We couldn't allow one clan to rule. We needed all of them. Eighty out of the 150 came back. The rest went to join al-Shabaab. I communicated with their clan elders to get them back. When I talked with them, I was the only one from a different clan. I threatened to undress in front of them unless they returned. I started to pull off my scarf but they replaced it! I got them all back (to Kismayo). [VM 3]

4.4 TIPPING POINTS TOWARD PEACE ACTIVISM

Some of the young women respondents observe: *'Peace activists are women who have suffered most from the conflict.'* [FGD 2] Young men and elders both say that peace activists are *'women who don't want their sons ... to die'*. Indeed, among women who say they engaged in conflict – whether through fundraising, mobilization and logistical support for the fighters, or more directly, by taking up arms – the tipping points that move them from conflict toward peace come only after years of intra and inter-clan violence. The final realization of the futility of violence is similar: the loss of multiple family members.

A woman who describes herself as having played a significant part in sustaining conflict explains, *'We saw in the end that the losses have increased, and there was no benefit at all to it ... at last, the conflict forced us to seek peace.'* [LS 9; Respondent I]

In her late forties, a woman who had not played any role in supporting violence, elaborates the shared pain that brings women together as peace activists:

[The conflict] has wounded us way too much. The reason why we are running and seeking reconciliation is because we know what we have been through. We know that the one who died is our husband; that it was our child; that it was our brother; that it was our father. We also know that the ones left to go through it, and who bear the pain, are women. Having lived through it, we decided that where once we used to train with the gun, now we should train with the book and the pen. That the encouragement we gave to our husbands to fight becomes the strength we find to lay down the peace mat. [LS 8; Respondent H]

Asked if there are specific types of women who become involved in peace activism, respondents identify two common characteristics:

- i) Having education and being literate: this is mentioned by almost all women and men, with the notable exception of religious men, who list education among the characteristics they associate with women who promote conflict.
- ii) Being a member of an organized group or association, including youth associations: this is mentioned by all woman but not mentioned at all by any of the men.

A significant number of women and men also note that being a businesswoman is a common characteristic among women who support peace (although responses are generally somewhat mixed on this issue). It is notable, however, that neither women nor men identify female politicians, women with political agendas or female *khat*

sellers and traders as among those women most likely to promote peace. Along with businesswomen, these groups of women are identified as among those most likely to support conflict.

The Bantu and Bajjuuni women who participated in the FGDs raise another important issue. As they explain, it is only possible to engage in collective peace activities when an individual has sufficient resources to be able to share or bring something to the meetings. This suggests that access to (some) resources is another characteristic shared among women who promote peace. It is, then, a point to consider when engaging women in peacebuilding work.

From fighters to peacebuilders

It is not yet known how many former female fighters have become active peacebuilders, such as the women who share their life stories for this study. These women appear to have enthusiastically transferred their energy for battle into a force for peace. For the most part, they seem remarkably sanguine, though how representative they are in this regard of female former fighters in general remains unknown. Speaking about how she deals with the traumas from her past life as a fighter, one woman says that it helps when she sits and talks with others like herself.

One respondent who describes herself as having played a significant role in promoting violence over many years expresses her enthusiasm for peace: *'But now that I have become clean, I like to encourage peace. Now, whatever happens I like to stay patient, prevent conflict and rise above it. Now, I love peace anytime. I love the dignity and the good it gives us'*. [LS 9; Respondent I]

Another former fighter and now a peacebuilder, explains how her spiritual belief has helped her reconcile her traumatic experiences:

And even after all I have been through, I am not bitter and don't hold grudges. I now eat with those who killed my brother. I came to terms with his killing. I reminded myself that my brother died because it was written; it was destiny. And that is it. He would not have had more time. His time ended then. It was necessary for me to remember God. If one remembers God, the conflict in them leaves. If the person remembers God, and it becomes clear that the dead person is in paradise, then the person will remember the good. [LS 1; Respondent A]

This same woman, who operated as a sniper for her clan and provided armed protection for her neighbours, is ardent about the new role she embodies:

Today, I have exchanged my spot in the battlefield with a loud voice at the table of peace. You saw the white veil I was wearing this morning when I arrived? I am standing for peace. ... I have many flags – the Somali flag, the Jubbaland flag, the one for peace. They are all at my place. All of them are there. And it is obvious I stand for peace. [LS 1; Respondent A]

Earlier in her interview, this same respondent describes the public fear and dislike she attracted as a fighter.⁸¹ Perhaps for this reason, as well as for political purposes, she feels it important to publicly demonstrate that she is now a woman of peace.

⁸¹ On this point, the study generated contradictory views, thus suggesting it would be relevant to explore in more detail how female fighters are publicly perceived and treated, both during their time as fighters and when they decide to reintegrate into society.

A former militia member, this woman recalls how she gave up the fight by eventually succumbing to family pressure:

After a while, my father told me, ‘My daughter, please get my blessing by quitting the fighting.’ I told him, ‘I will not stop.’ I kept on being in the conflict. After the day my father called to talk with me, my family started organizing ceremonies for me in which sheikhs read the Qur’an in my name. My father said we should do this because ‘This one has become crazy’.⁸² So, they read the Qur’an in my name – all of the 114 surah [chapters]. My father begged me to stop fighting. So, I stopped. The day I put down the gun was also the day the killings started between XX and YY, within the XY clan community.⁸³ That afternoon I came back from Barawe with the militia. Upon return to town, I saw a dead body under the bridge in Harare. That same afternoon, I sold my gun and went home. [LS 3; Respondent C]

This same woman, who had taken up arms to revenge her brother’s murder, reflects: ‘I guess I had done enough for my brother. I sought revenge for him over a nine-month period and divorced the man who was from the clan community that killed my brother.’ [LS 3; Respondent C] Her account of revenge and the self-sacrifice it entailed suggests revenge can be finite, at least on an individual level. This raises interesting comparisons with customary calculations of compensation and revenge, and whether revenge is a gender-neutral concept.

Demobilization of female fighters

Some female fighters (albeit a small sample) suggest that they have been relatively able to slip in and out of combat basically at will. At least in part, this is presumably the case because combat is not an expected gender role of women or girls. It may not always be that easy to switch such roles, however. A former militiawoman who ended up fighting for her clan for six years, for example, describes how she tried several times to demobilize herself but was each time persuaded back, apparently through a form of emotional blackmail. As she explains, she would ‘feel very happy’ but ‘later on you would feel bad inside your heart. ... There were times you’d see 50 dead and feel so bad. Several times, I left them (the militia) and was brought back. They said, “You’re demoralizing the men by leaving us.” So I returned.’ [VM 1]

Asked whether male fighters were free to demobilize from clan militia when they got tired of the fight, she goes on to explain how a young man’s best chance of survival is to remain with his clan militia: ‘Being in the militia, it was voluntary so you could leave. But he’d be killed by the rival clan. If clan X were defeated and left the town, any young man from that clan would be killed if he stayed in town. Even the women would leave if their clan was defeated.’ [VM 1] In other words, for a young man it seems that the best chance of survival is to remain with the clan militia. This study finding requires validation but it could hold relevance for better understanding the motivations of clan militia foot soldiers, along with retention and desertion dynamics in groups known for forced recruitment and coercion, such as al-Shabaab.

⁸² Reading the Qur’an in this way is believed to counter mental illness.

⁸³ This indicates that the war had transformed from inter-clan to intra-clan conflict.

4.5 MAKING PEACE: THE LIMITATIONS OF WOMEN'S PEACEBUILDING

Women's peacebuilding efficacy depends on multiple factors, not least timing. Women note that they 'cannot do peacebuilding when situations turn worse or when the conflict is at its peak'. FGD 9] This is also a point men make: 'When the conflict is intense, women cannot interfere.' [FGDM 1] These men believe, however, that women notice the signs that signal when conflict is brewing before they do, although it is unclear as to how they think women know this – through intuition or house-to-house and family-to-family conversations. As a result, men believe that women have the chance to take preventive action before conflict breaks out. These men also say that this can work the other way, too, and be a reason why a woman might urge her men to fight.⁸⁴

Female and male perceptions and cultural gender norms about what women can and cannot do to bring about peace are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10. *Gendered limitations of women in peacebuilding*

Type of action	About women: <i>Women can do what a man can do but ...</i>	About men
Use of violence as a route to peace	Most of the time women cannot appear as a threat or danger to men. [F]	Only men can bring peace by force. ... Men can bring peace by engaging in extreme violence and firing heavy weapons. [F]
Conflict resolution institutions and mechanisms	Women don't have a council of elders or traditional elders. [F] In magga [dialogues], women have no voice. They cannot argue with men because men are worth 100 camels and women 50. [F]	If a boy is killed, men gather and take compensation but women can't do that. [M]
Payment of compensation	Unlike men, women cannot pay a huge amount of money to reconcile men (in conflict resolution). [M]	The men give out cattle to reach peace, or daughters, but women can't. [M]
Physical stamina	[Women] cannot walk long distances for peacebuilding. [M]	Men can travel a long distance on foot [to reach peace meetings]. [F]
Cultural gender norms and stereotypes	Very few take part in peacebuilding because they are not trusted with this delicate issue. ... It is also inappropriate for them to attend meetings with traditional elders. [M]	Men can make peace. [F]
State-building	Women are not part of creating states ... and are missing when a government is created. ... A woman cannot be president. [F]	
Sealing the peace	When a girl is being given away [to a rival clan] for marriage, men give them away. Women can't do that. [M]	

⁸⁴ For example, during a validation session, male respondents note that 'conflict is first spotted and recognized by women which is why if she tells him to fight he'll go'. [VM 1]

The letter 'F' denotes responses given by female respondents and the letter 'M' denotes those given by male respondents

As well as deepening understanding of gendered roles and expectations in relation to indigenous Somali peacemaking practices, study findings provide insight into the gendered nature of the concept of peace. These findings also raise questions about the relationship of violence to peace and the practical (and gendered) material cost of making peace.

Violence as a means of ending conflict or making peace

A number of women link violence to ending conflict. They describe how peace is literally achieved by using heavy enough violence to extinguish the opposition's capability for violence, which results in a state of nonviolence that can be described as peace.⁸⁵ To illustrate, one woman explains how she ended her support for violence when she saw that her side had secured 'enough power'. [LS 1, Respondent A] Women are clear, however: this is how men can achieve peace, not women. They say women do not pose a significant enough physical threat to men to be able to pursue peace through violent means. Although some women fight, it is largely men who control and deploy the machinery, weaponry and force required to 'enter the violent conflict' [FGD 4] that they see as needed to achieve peace by this means. Notably, none of the male respondents raise this as a particular limitation on women nor do they discuss peace in this way.⁸⁶

The material cost of making peace

The material cost of making peace is uppermost in men's minds. In the Somali context, the material costs of peace refers to the number of livestock or amount of money needed to be paid in compensation once elders have agreed the count of the dead from both sides. On this point, older men are quite clear that they blame women for the high costs incurred. In their minds, women are the ones who started the conflicts that they, as men, then have to pay to end.⁸⁷

Women say that they 'cover the cost of whatever is required to bring peace', including the transportation of elders to peace meetings but note that their lack of camels is a constraint when it comes to settling the compensation required to make peace, as 'men can pay a hundred camels to peace but women cannot'.⁸⁸ [FGD 1] Women cannot provide the camels because in Somali society camel ownership is a male privilege and responsibility. The forum of elders in which compensation is calculated is male-only. Unlike men, women also have no institutions of their own to represent their collective interests. Men hold all the cards when it comes to making peace settlements a reality, which is a result of gendered social norms and traditional practices.

To illustrate the situation from a male perspective, a religious man recounts his experience:

A man had killed another man. He was sentenced to death. He tried to run away and so [the elders insisted that] another man had to [be brought] to die in place of him. So, [this caused] two groups of women to come. Some tried to reconcile [the women of the clan of the dead man and that of his killer], others cried even and

⁸⁵ On access to power through violence, with reference to conflict in South Sudan and Eritrea, see: Weber (2011).

⁸⁶ The notion of 'enough power' and whether men, too, consider violence as a way to achieve peace merit further exploration.

⁸⁷ This equation appears to conform with the traditional view of women as overgrown irresponsible children and men as the responsible adults who take care of them. This is one of two dominant narratives about women, in which women are referred to by derogatory descriptions, such as 'children with big feet'. The other contrasting narrative acknowledges women's equal, if not superior intellectual capacity, and reminds men that a clever woman is a man's most valuable asset.

⁸⁸ This refers to the customary calculation whereby 100 camels are sought in compensation for the loss of one man's life.

others took off their clothes [an act to shame men into changing their minds in order to force them to find another solution that did not involve a revenge killing]. The two clans of the women fought. I paid SOSH 8 million [approximately USD 13,000] to reconcile them!

According to this account, if the matter had been left to the men alone to settle, then only one killing would have taken place. Instead, women from each side intervened, resulting in a costly inter-clan conflict. This appears to illustrate a couple of key points. First, women have political agency among their clansmen, insofar as their actions: a) are tolerated; or b) can be catalytic. Second, despite having clear-cut rules to which men especially are expected to comply, in reality customary justice is a messy and contested business, at least as it currently operates in the present fragile-state context of Somalia.

Another example that illustrates the power of female intervention comes from the group of Digil Mirifle Dir women. This time the intervention succeeds in averting death or at least prevents its facilitation:

A family killed an XX boy. His mother cried and said this woman should have her XX boys killed as compensation. My husband lived in Kismayo, so he received a call to send the money to buy the weapon that would serve to revenge the killed boy. I dissuaded my husband to send the USD 300 because it would serve to kill people and create more conflict. [FGD 3]

Both accounts demonstrate that when it comes to customary justice, in some cases women – as mothers – have a voice in deciding what form justice should take. Whether a mother’s voice carries more or less weight than a father’s is unclear. The above example also demonstrates the power of a woman – as a wife – to intercede with her husband. In other words, women exercise political agency not only as mothers but also as wives.

Chapter 5

Women and the Future of Peace in Kismayo

5.1 YOUNG WOMEN BUILDING PEACE

Little work has yet been done to look at how male and female youth perceive and engage in peacebuilding and ending conflict in Somalia.⁸⁹ This study generates some findings on these questions pertaining to young women and the Kismayo context, with young female respondents asserting, ‘youth have been very important’ players in peacebuilding.⁹⁰ [LS 7; Respondent G] Four young women share their life stories, offering some insight into young female perspectives and experiences of peace activism. In particular, the stories of these young women disprove the notion that one needs to experience peace to be able to understand and promote it.

All four young women have had some education but none beyond high school level. All have spent their lives in southern Somalia and experienced violence to varying degrees. One has experience of refugee life in Kenya and another is married. Their stories attest to a strong sense of motivation, female youth agency and political awareness, as well as realism about the scope and limitations of their activities:

Me, personally, if I talk in the name of youth, we have a great role to play in building peace. I am sure of that. For example, if there is a fight, we – as part of the youth committee or the youth community – we tell them to stop the fight, if they are willing to listen. If they do not listen to us, of course this would go further to the leaders, right? So that is how we can try our best to avoid conflict as youth. [LS 5; Respondent E]

This young woman, who describes herself as a youth activist, explains what drives her and other young people to work for peace:

Youth are those who want peace for their future. Those who are older have seen what life is about. They hold that, ‘We will leave this world whether it gets better or not.’ But what youth want is a future that is bound to peace. And that is our most important priority for youth and their love of peace. If they had the power to bring peace, they would. And they plan to, God willing. [LS 4; Respondent D]

She goes on to describe the range of her work as a member of a youth association that is linked to the local administration:

I am part of the youth associations and I also work with women’s associations. I like to work with civil society. We do a lot of peace awareness raising programmes and work hard to stand against things we see that are not right. ... For example, ... if we see things that cause problems to girls, such as the pharaonic form of female genital mutilation [FGM], we raise awareness against it in the neighbourhood. We also talk to older women to change their minds [about performing FGM]. ... We also contribute what we can to support the refugee camps. ... We work to clean the city and whenever the administration needs help, to cut trees, help decorate halls

⁸⁹ For one of the few studies that examines the topic of youth and peace, see: Interpeace and SONYO (2015) ‘Somaliland Youth Violence and Youth Role in Peacebuilding: A Baseline Survey’. SONYO.

⁹⁰ They have also been significant in carrying out violent conflict, with young men forming the bulk of fighting forces. According to respondents, however, girls also fight and play support roles to warring parties. The youth sample is drawn from youth associations, so the data generated from FGDs with young women may not be representative of the wider youth population.

or welcome leaders. We take part in all of this. ... Most Somalis are not convinced that they can do things for themselves. But if we unite, we can do it. The youth in particular have to try to change things. [LS 4; Respondent D]

Other salient points emerging from the findings related to the views of young women include the following:

- Older and younger women have similar ideas about the ways women can prevent violence and promote peace, and their limitations. These conform with the traditional scope of women's peace actions.
- Among females, youth is not a barrier to participation in peace activism,⁹¹ though it seems that older and younger women's collective peace activism take somewhat different forms. Both are highly context and time specific. The extent to which there may be mutual communication, planning and action is unclear.

For young women, membership in a youth association is seen as an important factor and means of engaging in peace activism. As one respondent in her early twenties explains, *'I am part of the youth association. I share my views there. I go when they need me. ... I joined the youth association because I want to be part of those who build peace here.'* [LS 5; Respondent E].⁹²

- Young women have much to say on this question: What is peace and what does peace look like for you? Their responses refute the notion, held by some older Somali men who participated in the study,⁹³ that one needs to have experienced peace in order to be able to help shape and promote it. Explaining how she can be useful as a peacebuilder, a young woman explains, *'I am still a girl. Yet I can tell young people like me that peace is like sweet milk.'* [LS 6; Respondent F] And as another puts it, *'Anyone with a mind can feel what peace is. Anyone with a bit of intelligence knows what brings conflict. Even us, as youth, have seen what conflict is and can feel what can bring conflict.'* [LS 5; Respondent E]

The life stories from young female peace activists richly illustrate this point. Two excerpts are given below. The first is from the story shared by a young woman who is a member of a youth association. One of the activities in which she has taken part is cleaning the streets for peace, a collective activity undertaken to clear away the evidence of war and visually underline the message of peace:⁹⁴

To me, somewhere where there is peace is somewhere beautiful. And a place where there is conflict is a place that has burned down. Peace is the beautiful, it is nasheeda [sweet song lyrics] to the heart of the human being. It is good to their eyes. If there is no peace, your eyes see bad things but if there is peace, your eyes see security, beautiful people, with nice clothes, a city that is moving forward, associations and you will see many things. But if there is no security, then there is no life. That is why the proverb says, 'There is no life without peace'. [LS 4; Respondent D]

The second excerpt is from a young woman who does not identify herself as a member of a youth association but does describe taking part in peace promotion activities:

⁹¹ It is necessary to clarify whether this is the same for young men.

⁹² Somalia's modern history testifies to the power of formalized youth associations, which date back to the Somali Youth League of the 1940s and 1950s, an institution established to oppose colonial power and call for independence. Organized youth were also critical during the 1980s civil response to government persecution of the Isaaq community. The student protests at the arrest and death penalties handed out to the Hargeisa Group Hospital self-help activists in 1980 is said to have triggered the formation of the SNM. Bradbury, M. (2008) *Becoming Somaliland*, Progressio, James Currey & Indiana University Press notes how youth associations hold an ambivalent position in Somali society; i.e. while they have been instrumental in political change and human rights activism, youth groups are also feared as harbingers of civil unrest and violent disruption.

⁹³ Asked to identify which type of women they believe most likely to be involved in promoting peace, none of the male groups identified young women per se. One group, however, specifically singled out young women as unlikely peace activists: *'the young women cannot take part in peace. ... They don't know what peace is.'* [FGDM 2] That discussion does not investigate what respondents mean by the phrase 'they don't know what peace is'. It is possibly more so a literal reflection on the fact that those born after 1991 have no experience of peacetime, rather than related to gender.

⁹⁴ Ostensibly a benign activity, at the current time to be involved in street cleaning in Kismayo is actually to make a highly political statement. Resources from the administration are made available and those who do the cleaning are provided with military protection because they are a perceived target of al-Shabaab attack (personal communication with the author from a source who wishes to remain anonymous, December 2016).

Anyone, old or young, who lives in the region, knows what peace is and can feel it. The people hate the gunfire and the chaos. They don't want it any longer. When gunfire is heard, everyone runs away. We want peace and security. So, everyone in Kismayo can feel how sweet peace is. Everyone in Kismayo knows it and wants it. Everyone can feel the sorrow and the problem [conflict] has brought, so everyone in this city loves peace. To me, peace is something precious. If a man [sic] has peace, there is nothing else lacking in his life. To have something to eat, to drink, and to wear – you won't think of any of that if you have peace. Peace is something important. To me, if I have peace, I don't feel like I am missing anything in the world. Some people say, 'I don't have anything', 'I want something to wear' or 'I want something to eat'. I stand by the fact that I don't lack anything as long as I have peace. [LS 7; Respondent G]

5.2 BUILDING FOUNDATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE

One of the consequences of the wars in Kismayo is a breakdown in relationships between women. This has occurred to the point of extreme hostility. According to a female key informant, bitterness and grievance between women arises from how power and control of Kismayo has been contested and changed hands since 1991. At any one time, women belonging to the group in control of the city can expect to enjoy greater access to resources and opportunities. This leaves other women, their rivals, dislodged or marginalized from power. The fight for resources plays out between the women's groups and associations that women have established, which as several respondents points out, are *'divided along clan lines'*. [FGD 12]

Broadly speaking, then, the breakdown of women's relationships has two major fault-lines: between women who are members of the different sub-clans and lineages within one clan family; and between women who are members of a particular clan family versus women who are not. The study therefore includes questions designed to explore relationships between women with the twofold aim of generating findings that would help assess the following questions:

- How do hostilities between women affect women's peacebuilding efforts and contribute to conflict?
- To what extent does a sense of common purpose or solidarity and collective vision exist among women and women's groups in Kismayo?

As a result of women-to-women dialogue and reconciliation efforts, relationships are reported to have improved by the time the fieldwork was undertaken, from October to November 2016. At the same time, however, evidence emerges that confirms the gravity of the previous situation. For instance, some men note, *'The conflict that took place in Kismayo badly affected women. There used to be a time when women carried machetes because there was conflict between them.'* [FGDM 3]

Across all social groups, women share positive examples of the reconciliation that is taking place in Kismayo. They largely attribute this to *'trainings and dialogues'*

that ‘have brought progress and brought women together’.⁹⁵ [FGD 5, 1] Examples of this progress include:

‘Women and girls who are neighbours who used not to greet each other but now do.’ [FGD 10]

‘They have a good relationship now. They go to weddings and funerals together now.’ [FGD 8]

‘Women love each other now.’ [FGD 3]

‘We have forgiven each other.’ [FGD 7]

‘We are better than before.’ [FGD 1]

‘Many changes are happening. ... People meet each other now. ... There is intermingling. ... People are coming together.’ [FGD 9, 10, 11, 12]

Although clearly much improved, some respondents are more cautious, noting, ‘Relationships are not good. ... There is still mistrust among girls and women.’ [FGD 5] Another respondent says, ‘Their [improved] relationship is not standing on solid feet and [it is] without a long history.’ [FGDM 2]

Further improving relations between women

To further reduce hostility and improve relationships between women, female respondents identify two primary means, as is indicated in Table 11.

Table 11. **Means to reduce hostility and improve relationships between women**

Constraint	Women’s responses	Men’s responses
Male relatives	<i>If my husband refuses, I cannot participate; their fathers prevent them.</i> [FGD 2, 3, 8, 9]	<i>Women can’t go without permission from their husband.</i> [elders, youth]
Cultural and social norms	<i>You are dismissed as a woman; some men look down on women.</i> [FGD 4, 6; young women]	
	<i>Men who took the issue of peacebuilding; elders; some elders say women do not have anything to do with peace.</i> [FGD 3, 8, 12]	<i>The elders and religious leaders prevent them.</i> [youth]
	<i>Men who have wrong thinking; some men who say women cannot participate; men say ‘stay home, you are better there’.</i> [FGD 3, 4, 6]	<i>No chances are given to them.</i> [youth]
Religion	<i>See below</i>	<i>We are Muslim and Islamic laws do not allow them [to participate].</i> [religious]

⁹⁵ The study avoids asking any direct or leading questions about what had brought about (positive or negative) changes in relationships. The questions posed are: How would you describe relationships between women here in Kismayo? What kinds of positive things have happened? And any negative things?

Illiteracy and lack of education	<i>I can't write when I attend seminars. [FGD 8]</i>	Illiteracy [youth]
Insecurity and conflict	<i>There are many unresolved disputes that keep me from [participating]; insecurity would prevent me. [FGD 1, 9]</i>	
Physical constraints	<i>If I am pregnant or a disabled person, I can't participate. [FGD 11]</i>	Women giving birth or pregnant cannot go. [elders]
Early marriage of girls		<i>Immediately after college, they are married off at a young age and become busy with the upbringing of children. [youth]</i>
The constitution		<i>The constitution does not favour them. [youth]</i>

Female respondents only

According to some young women, people need to ‘practice concession’ and ‘negotiation’ and politicians need to change their attitudes. [FGD 2] On the latter point, one group of older women point out, ‘Leaders should not treat their positions as their personal property.’ [FGD 5] Analysis from a group of young women goes further: ‘Leaders should try to relate to their followers more.’ [FGD 2] A couple of respondents identify structural issues that need addressing, notably education and justice.

Male respondents’ responses focus mainly on provision of more training on peacebuilding and increased knowledge generally. Male youth also think it would help to make links with youth groups and to involve more literate women and female change agents.

5.3 WHAT WOULD BRING PEACE?

Asked what they thought would bring peace to their community and the wider region, the ideas most frequently mentioned from female respondents are shown in Table 12.

Table 12. **Female respondents: most frequently mentioned ideas about bringing peace to the community and wider region**

Who?	<i>Men, women, elders, everyone works for peace. ... All households encourage and support peace. [FGD 3, 5]</i>
	<i>Women can bring peace. ... Organize an army of women to campaign for peace. [FGD 1, 6, 9, 12] the one who suffered protected. [FGD 2, 3, 7]</i>

What? Dialogues, critical reflection and reconciliation	<p><i>Organizing meetings and dialogues for people to get to know one another. [FGD 2, 4, 10, 12]</i></p> <p><i>We need to forget the past and the experiences we went through. [FGD 3, 1, 7]</i></p> <p><i>People need to love and support one another. [FGD 3]</i></p> <p><i>We need to promote understanding of one another. [FGD 4, 8]</i></p> <p><i>We need to forgive each other. [FGD 7]</i></p>
Behavioural and attitudinal change	<p><i>We need to abstain from clannism [FGD 2,4,6]; share the benefits [FGD 3; all young women]; encourage solidarity. [FGD 4, 7]</i></p> <p><i>Promoting negotiation, collaboration and compromise for each other. [FGD 4, 6, 10]</i></p>
Good governance and justice	<p><i>To have state laws ... so the one who caused problems is caught and the one who suffered protected. [FGD 2, 3, 7]</i></p>

Female respondents only

It is notable that avoiding or overcoming clannism is mentioned by three out of four groups of young women but is not mentioned at all by older women or any men.

In general, male respondents have less to say than women and their discussions and responses are less wide ranging. The greatest number of ideas is put forward by the group of male youth respondents. Only one idea is put forward by male respondents in more than one group: the importance of respect for Islam, which is mentioned by an elder and by a religious man. Otherwise, among male respondents in general, the ideas generated in response to this question may be characterized as ‘one man–one idea’ responses.

Male respondent answers are presented in Table 13, including details about the group in which the idea is raised.

Table 13. ***Male respondents: most frequently mentioned ideas about bringing peace to the community and the wider region***

Spiritual guidance	<i>Respect for Islam and Islamic teaching [elders, religious men]</i>
A functioning state, good governance and justice	<p><i>A system and a state [elders]</i></p> <p><i>Education [youth]</i></p> <p><i>Respect for human rights [youth]</i></p> <p><i>Justice [youth and religious]</i></p>
	<p><i>Make laws for the militia and make sure they are respected [religious]</i></p> <p><i>Make the clans equally powerful and the government or administration share resources equally and justly [religious]</i></p>
Restoration of relationships between clans and sub-clans	<i>Intermarriage [youth]</i>
Arms control	<i>Restriction of the use of arms to law enforcement officers [youth]</i>

Male respondents only

As Table 12 and Table 13 show, there is a striking difference between the kinds of ideas that women discuss and those men mention. The facilitators are different in the men's groups than the women's groups but the same questions are asked across all groups. Women's thoughts largely focus on how to rebuild relationships and change damaging behaviour, while men (of all ages) are preoccupied with formal institutional needs and interventions; i.e. the distribution of power, plus rules of engagement for militia groups.

5.4 VISIONS OF PEACE

What would peace look like for you? How would your life be different? Female responses, from both older and younger women, to these questions are summarized in Table 14, starting with those that are most frequently mentioned. Quite a number of women also cite well-known Somali proverbs to express their thoughts, such as: 'peace is sweet milk'; 'peace is both father and mother'; 'peace is the tree under which people rest'; and 'peace is the best bed'.

Table 14. **Female respondents: what would peace look like for you?**

Health	<i>With peace my blood pressure would not be a problem. ... People would be healthy; without peace, there would be no doctors in the hospitals. [FGD 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 10, 12]</i>
Education	<i>A fearful teacher cannot teach and a fearful student cannot learn; peace would change my life because I could get education. [FGD 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 12]</i>
Development	<i>Peace brings many types of resources; improves public services. [FGD 1, 3, 4, 8, 12]</i>
Prosperity and employment	<i>I would gain profit from my business. [FGD 1, 2, 9, 10, 12]</i>
Absence of fear	<i>I won't be afraid to wear my gold jewellery; you can freely walk any time day or night; when there is peace, I don't worry for my children when I am not with them; I would sleep very well at night. [FGD 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9]</i>
Freedom, happiness and tranquillity	<i>I will live freely; I will be happy; I will enjoy dignity; independence. [FGD 4, 6, 7, 8]</i>

Female respondents only

The words 'dignity' and 'independence' are mentioned by women in the Bantu and Bajuni FGDs. Otherwise, the kinds of responses mentioned by women show no significant differences between social groups. In terms of intergenerational variation, the most notable finding is the numerous and wide-ranging responses given by younger women. They generally align with the sentiments of older women, except in one regard. Only younger women speak about peace in terms of ideas such as 'freedom' and 'happiness'.

When asked the same questions, the most frequently mentioned male response is *'peace is life'*. This is a well-known Somali proverb that women also reference in their responses. Additional responses from men are shown in Table 15, in which only two are mentioned by more than one respondent.

Table 15. **Male respondents: what would peace look like for you?**

Development	<i>Peace brings development, prosperity; poverty will reduce.</i> [FGDM 2, 3]
Education	<i>We will be able to find education for our children; I will get education.</i> [FGDM 1, 3]
State governance system	<i>I will know peace when we see a regional administration; when law and order are seen.</i> [FGDM 1]
Health	<i>Health centres would be available.</i> [FGDM 1]
Justice and equality	<i>Peace brings justice, equality.</i> [FGDM 2]

Male respondents only

These responses counter any notion that peace is simply an absence of violent conflict. They show how even though expectations of peace can shrink to seize the moment, both women and men experience all kinds of daily shortfalls and insecurities in a city that ostensibly has been free from sustained violent conflict for over four years.⁹⁶ As one woman in her sixties says, *'If there wasn't peace here in Kismayo today, no one would take a pen and paper to interview me or organize these projects. Because you would say, "I won't go there. It is too dangerous."*' [LS 10; Respondent J] But for another respondent, a young woman, the opposite seems true: *'If there was peace, we would not gather here today.'* [LS 6; Respondent F] And another young woman yearns for the comfort of a more permanent peace when she says, *'Now there is peace but I would love to have a more complete kind of peace. A sweeter one. Sometimes we hear news such as "gunfire has started in this region". I would really love to rest from this news so that my heart calms down peacefully.'* [LS 4; Respondent D]

These last two sets of study findings seem to provide evidence that just as experiences of conflict are understood to be gendered, so too are ideas about peace.⁹⁷ Combined, the female and male responses above present a holistic set of ideas for overcoming and reducing conflict. If discussions are left only to men (or only women), however, these responses suggest that the range of thinking and ideas generated around peace would be incomplete or limited. Just as women do not identify equitable power distribution as part of securing peace, men make no reference to the social reconciliation that for women is so obviously vital to future peace.

This illustrates a gendered difference that is noted in conflict contexts elsewhere. It is also further evidence of the critical importance of women's inclusion in peace processes and political settlements. For it demonstrates that to achieve good outcomes for the whole community (rather than just a part of the community),

⁹⁶ Mackenzie (2012: 143) makes a similar point.

⁹⁷ For discussion about gendered visions of peace and their relevance, see: Kilmurray, A. (2016) *Community Action in a Contested Society: The Story of Northern Ireland*. Peter Lang.

peacebuilding requires both female and male perspectives, interests and ideas to be heard, as no one group possesses all the answers or a complete perspective on a conflict (even if Somali normative gender ideals say they [i.e. males] should).

5.5 WOMEN'S INCLUSION IN PEACE PROCESSES

To gauge the level of women's interest and capacity to participate in peace processes, female respondents are asked, 'If you had the chance, would you choose to participate in the current or future peace processes?' The answer from all women who respond is 'yes', regardless of social groups or age.

When men are asked for their opinion about women's participation, there is consensus among elders and youth: '*Yes, they can.*' As one youth observes, '*Men have been on the task for long with no progress but given the chance women can do a lot.*'

The responses detailed below show a discernible difference between the male age groups, with younger men acknowledging women's right to participate, while older men associate women's participation with the value their participation can bring to men:

- *Women are the eyes of men* (a Somali proverb meaning women are useful as spies in the enemy camp) [elders]
- *Men who are friends with intelligence consult with their women* (a Somali proverb meaning smart men seek advice from the women in their lives) [elders]
- *They may be more knowledgeable than men* [youth]
- *Their voices can be heard now because of their representation* [youth]
- *They can do a lot* [youth]

The group identifying themselves as religious men are more circumspect, stating that women cannot participate now '*but later yes*', although they do not explain what is meant by the word 'later'. Earlier on in their discussion, the religious men note that women's role in peacebuilding is to '*raise awareness among neighbours and in their neighbourhood ... and finance peace initiatives*'. Asked what prevents women from participation in peace processes, they say, '*Religion. We are Muslim and Islamic laws do not allow them [to participate].*'

All groups are asked to identify what, if anything, prevents women from participating in peace processes. Their responses are shown in Table 16.

Table 16. **Constraints faced by women in peacebuilding**

Constraint	Women's responses	Men's responses
Male relatives	<i>If my husband refuses, I cannot participate; their fathers prevent them.</i> [FGD 2, 3, 8, 9]	<i>Women can't go without permission from their husband.</i> [elders, youth]

Cultural and social norms	<i>You are dismissed as a woman; some men look down on women. [FGD 4, 6; young women]</i>	
	<i>Men who took the issue of peacebuilding; elders; some elders say women do not have anything to do with peace. [FGD 3, 8, 12]</i>	<i>The elders and religious leaders prevent them. [youth]</i>
	<i>Men who have wrong thinking; some men who say women cannot participate; men say 'stay home, you are better there'. [FGD 3, 4, 6]</i>	<i>No chances are given to them. [youth]</i>
Religion	<i>See below</i>	<i>We are Muslim and Islamic laws do not allow them [to participate]. [religious]</i>
Illiteracy and lack of education	<i>I can't write when I attend seminars. [FGD 8]</i>	<i>Illiteracy [youth]</i>
Insecurity and conflict	<i>There are many unresolved disputes that keep me from [participating]; insecurity would prevent me. [FGD 1, 9]</i>	
Physical constraints	<i>If I am pregnant or a disabled person, I can't participate. [FGD 11]</i>	<i>Women giving birth or pregnant cannot go. [elders]</i>
Early marriage of girls		<i>Immediately after college, they are married off at a young age and become busy with the upbringing of children. [youth]</i>
The constitution		<i>The constitution does not favour them. [youth]</i>

Female and male respondents

It seems notable that religion is only mentioned as a constraint by respondents in two focus groups – religious men and religious women. This is despite the fact that reformist Islamist groups and militant Islamist groups, such as al-Shabaab, have been present and active in Jubbaland over the past two decades. Religious women's responses are the most proscriptive and basically would prevent women's participation in any public forum. These women describe their responses as based on codes of conduct from Islamic teaching on the matter; namely that:

'Women are not supposed to leave the house without permission.

Women are mostly at home.'

'They cannot be involved in decision-making but they can serve and cook.'

'Women are not allowed to talk to men, except indirectly.'

It is notable that these codes of conduct are not referred to in any way by the religious male respondents who appear to represent less conservative religious schools of thought than the women. Overall, the study findings suggest that it would be valuable to better understand the particular perspectives on peacebuilding of women and girls who identify themselves as religious, including the extent to which conservative fundamentalist views influence or have traction in Kismayo today.

Almost all the groups of women identify men, or culture and social norms that favour men over women, as constraints. Importantly, not all women (in particular, not older women) see culture or men as insurmountable obstacles. This question evokes strong and powerful declarations by many older women, including:

'Nothing discourages or prevents me from participating.' [FGD 8, 12]

'We can participate.' [FGD 12]

'Nothing prevents me (from taking part) in peacebuilding activities, however small. ... We will work for coexistence.' [FGD 1]

'We will mobilize. ... We will say, "We don't want war, anymore and forever."' [FGD 7]

'We will take part in peace as much as we did in conflict.' [FGD 7]

'Their husbands will hinder them but they will fight back to ensure there is no hindrance.' [FGD 5]

'Their level of education is lower compared to men's ... but they will use their intelligence.' [FGD 5]

'There is male dominance but we will say, "no" and move on. ... Elders will say women can't make decisions. We will prove them wrong.' [FGD 5]

Perhaps it is this sheer determination to which one young woman refers when she observes, *'Cultural norms [dhaqan] can prevent them but Somalis do not have manners. They will ignore etiquette.'* [FGD 2] This seems to be a vital characteristic when it comes to women fighting for equality and political inclusion in Somalia's future.

Women's equality and political inclusion

Although respondents' views and experiences on women's equality and political inclusion are not explicitly explored in this study, a number of respondents nonetheless volunteered impassioned statements. These expand from women's participation in peace processes to the wider, longer term goal of peace, including political settlement, governance and rebuilding a new (fairer and more equal) society. It seems fitting to end this section on peace processes with what these respondents have to say.

To me, there cannot be peace without justice. If the state would not behave justly, there would be many things missing from it. Justice is about having justice as the head of the people; that Jareer and Jileec [literal translation: kinky hair and soft hair, respectively; this is an expression meant to refer to all clans] are

equal. That people have equal access to employment. That they can have equal opportunities in life. That they can go to the same schools. If you cannot give justice to the people and you are the leader of the government, you cannot have a state. Justice should be our first priority.

Then there should be a state that works for the security of the people, justly. ... So, without a state that governs the schools, how would people learn about respect and put aside the clan? That is injustice! If girls and boys who graduate from school are told, 'The girl is from this clan so give her this job', that is injustice. That is done by a man who refuses life. The state governs the people. It should work with the people and the people should work with the state. That is how we will reach justice. [LS 2; Respondent B]

We have been through everything. But today, by the grace of God, we have a state. And it is important that women seek their rights, and by the grace of God we are ready to seek our rights; to take part in peace and to run where conflict erupts [to stop it]. [LS 8; Respondent H]

Everyone understands our strength. Because we also carried guns, we took part in the conflict and we helped give birth to peace. What prevents us from sitting at the table, too? Nothing forbids it. I will beat the table and sit firmly. He was born in nine months and I was born after nine months; nothing forbids it. We are not rejecting our religion. We will not take off our veil, or wear a shirt and trousers. It is with our hijab that God sees us – as mothers, too; that we are ready to sit at the same table as men. [LS 1; Respondent A]

... I personally am not ready to be involved in the parliament. Somali women have suffered a lot. When we get free schools for our children, free doctors, safe schools, safe transportation, good places where children can receive their education, I might enter politics. But if your children are waiting for you to earn money so they can go to school, to Qur'anic school, and you have to take care of their health, can you join a party? No, you can't. Because you have to first build your house. Because of the conflict, the problems, and the lack of independence, women cannot have a political party. We have to hide behind men. But we will eventually get there, with the younger generation. ... We are really going forward now. [LS 3; Respondent C]

Conclusions: Implications for the Inclusion of Women in Peacebuilding Processes

Conclusions

Passed in 2000, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 enjoins member states to provide protection for women and girls in war, and to ensure the full participation of women in humanitarian, conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and post-conflict reconstruction initiatives. In practice, little has changed to date. Peace processes and political settlements remain elite bargaining scenarios involving mainly male actors in a conflict. In the Somali context, women are simultaneously highlighted as victims and as peacebuilders by the international community. Unlike their male counterparts, however, women are never assumed to be protagonists in conflict who warrant measures to be taken to ensure they are not left out.

This study of women's experiences of conflict and peace in Kismayo seeks to shed important new light on options and strategies for increasing women's participation and inclusion in peace processes in Jubbaland. It is conducted with a view to identifying potential opportunities and entry points for women-centred conflict transformation and effective involvement by women in peace processes.

In addition to fulfilling these aims, the study data brings to light important aspects of the intra and inter-clan conflict that previously have not been researched. These have an important bearing on understanding more fully why it is necessary and how to achieve women's participation. They include, first, the extent to which women have been instrumental in producing and sustaining the violent conflict in southern Somalia since 1991. In particular, the study discovers the part they play in (co)producing and sustaining the violent masculinities and clannism that are vital for the successful pursuit of this particular form of collective violence. What emerges from these many accounts is how intra and inter-clan conflict is seemingly a joint effort – between men and women.

Second, the study material deepens understanding of the multiple ways women are affected when conflict is played out along clan lines, and on such an unprecedented scale and intensity. It helps clarify women's motivations and tipping points (toward or away from violence) and shows that one consequence of clan conflict in Kismayo is the breakdown of relationships between women. The study findings contradict any normative notion of women's solidarity during conflict, revealing instead how clannism plays out between women, adding a dangerous momentum and vicious undercurrent to the violence. This creates an extremely hostile and challenging terrain upon which to sow the seeds of peace. Where a woman stands, or chooses to deploy her agency, on the spectrum of conflict to peace promotion is seen to depend both on context at the time and her individual circumstances. Through their life stories, respondents demonstrate how in clan-related conflict, the political is personal and vice versa. These life stories also indicate that all women are necessarily political actors, as are all men.

Third, while not all women have directly supported the conflict, their contribution is of sufficient magnitude for women to describe themselves and be described by men as responsible for conflict. As well as being fundraisers, mobilizers, and (co)producers of violent masculinities, women can also be combatants and killers. Whatever causal role Somali women may have in clan-related conflict, this study captures just a partial picture of the reality of clan conflict. There is clearly much more to be understood about the relationship between gender and conflict in the Somali context. One of the largest knowledge gaps at present is understanding female roles and responsibilities in clan-related violent conflict and its transformation into peace.

It would be relevant to explore the extent to which women and men share similar visions of the purpose of violent conflict when it is conducted along clan lines. Based on these study findings, in the long-term women appear to benefit little, if at all, from the investments and sacrifices that they make for war. Rather, despite their roles and responsibilities in and for aspects of the conflict, as a group it ultimately seems that women only stand to lose. Except for the fact that both women and men assert women's liability for conflict, it is not at all remarkable to conclude that the winners of clan-related conflicts appear to be mainly men and patriarchy. Perhaps this illustrates how patriarchy operates through women, as well as men – whereby women internalize cultural norms and stereotypes that benefit and reassert male hegemony and the patriarchal foundations of society.⁹⁸

Linked to this is a need to better understand if, when and how women's agency and voluntary support for violent conflict is in any sense engineered, or at least made use of, by those (male or female) directing war in the name of their clan.⁹⁹ A political economy analysis can map out how the clannism that drives much of the conflict in Somalia in general, and Kismayo in particular, is rooted in a continuum of violence marked by historical grievances, fuelled by present-day geopolitics and serving elite (largely male) interests.¹⁰⁰ The study findings shed light on the gendered social structure giving rise to the person-to-person dynamics of clannism. As a result of their position within this structure, women are instrumental to clannism's success but at the same time suffer terrible consequences.

This seems to beg a question about the extent to which women are both instrumental and instrumentalized in the pursuit of clan-related conflict. The answer seems likely to be a combination of both. In either case, what seems important for conflict transformation is that women do have a breaking point when it comes to violent conflict. As these findings appear to suggest, once female suffering reaches a sufficiently high collective scale, it becomes the social fuse that blows, altering the trajectory from one of violent conflict to the pursuit of peace. In the case of Kismayo, it seems this has taken many years and perhaps an unprecedented amount of violence to come about. This begs another question: why did it take so long and why were unprecedented levels of violence necessary to create this tipping point?

Support for women-to-women reconciliation emerges as a key opportunity and entry point (at least in Kismayo) for women to make a significant contribution to ending violence. Remarkably, despite the depth of hostilities accumulated over the

⁹⁸ Thanks to Kate McGuinness for articulating this possibility; personal communication, 3 January 2018.

⁹⁹ It is known that women's public support was harnessed by General Aideed, for example, during the intra-clan wars in Mogadishu of the 1990s. Anecdotal evidence exists of individual women war strategists and generals (personal communication with Yussuf M. Barre, who witnessed a female general operating in Mogadishu in the mid-1990s). What is not understood, however, are the gendered power dynamics of such relationships and the implications, if any, for women more widely, as well as for brokering peace.

¹⁰⁰ For example, see: Hagmann, T. (2016) and Hoehne, M. V. (2010).

years of conflict, women who have finally reached their tipping point and become peace activists have found the wherewithal to reach out to one another in a collective effort to rebuild relationships and construct pathways to peace.

Conflict transformation in the Kismayo context is shown to be a risky and painstaking process. In part, this process has required the collective action achieved through women-to-women reconciliation and consensus building. Reconciliation is needed both within and across clan divides. The LPI and SWSO women's dialogue initiative appears to have accelerated reconciliation efforts and led to much positive feeling among those women who participate. Reflecting on their achievements and the challenges that lie ahead, these women appear cautiously optimistic. Women are the custodians of clan-based conflict but with violent contest for clan supremacy (currently) abated, if they can reconcile, then a critical component in the cycle of violence since 1991 can perhaps be broken, helping to make sustainable and potentially transformational peace more likely.

This study disproves the notion that the only important protagonists in Somalia's intra and inter-clan conflict are male. In so doing, it highlights how the inclusion of Somali women in resolving violent conflict and achieving political settlements should not be seen as an optional aspiration but rather a vital ingredient for sustainable peace. It shows that their continued systematic exclusion from, or tokenistic inclusion in, peace processes only helps to ensure that the continuum of violence is never fully broken. This is an outcome that arguably only serves the interests of the largely male elite.

Finally, although data is limited, the study suggests that educated female (and male) youth and youth-based organizations are enthusiastic and important sources of peace activism and may have potential to provide innovative solutions to certain types of conflict or conflict drivers. This study does not provide evidence to say that, unlike their parents' generation, young people are not so bound up with traditional or even accepted forms of conflict prevention, management, resolution and transformation. Nonetheless, study findings do suggest that it is reasonable to speculate that this may be the case. Among these young people are the future leaders of the country and for this reason alone their enthusiasm as peace activists deserves positive attention and encouragement.

Recommendations

These recommendations are tentative, not exhaustive. They focus on how, moving forward, insights garnered from the contributions of the respondents to this study might be applied in policy and practice. This would help ensure that peace processes and political settlements include and take as full account of women's diverse and common experiences and grievances, interests, perspectives and ideas for shaping the future, as they do of men's. The men consulted in this study voice unanimous support for women's inclusion. Despite this, patriarchy remains resilient. It seems unlikely that doors will open easily for women, even if studies such as this one prove beyond a doubt that sustainable peace depends on the inclusion of women.

Organizations undertaking development and peacebuilding interventions at community level

Action or participative research with communities based on the study findings

Feed the key findings of this study into the women’s dialogue process and use the study as a mirror to hold up to participants in the expectation or hope that the findings will inspire new conversations, critical reflection and insights among women, and among men and between the two together.¹⁰¹

LPI and SWSO specifically

Scale up the dialogue processes

Women and men strongly confirm the relevance of the peacebuilding work that LPI and SWSO have initiated through the women’s dialogue process. It is recommended that this model is scaled up to enable people to benefit beyond the current locations. It may also be appropriate to make broader efforts to bring diverse women together to (re)build relationships and help them overcome trauma. Men-to-men reconciliation should also be explored.

Engage with youth peace activism

Explore or trial extending the dialogue processes to male and female youth communities. Investigate other ways to support male and female youth engagement in peacebuilding.

Policy makers

Value and make space for women-to-women reconciliation processes

The study highlights the importance of reconciliation as a precursor or parallel process to peacebuilding. Women-to-women reconciliation is vital in the Kismayo context and is likely to be relevant wherever conflict has driven divisions between families and clans.

Policy makers and peacebuilding practitioners

Help envision new or supplementary processes that bring women to the table

Respect for cultural norms and practices (for instance, female exclusion from peace processes) has long been over privileged by international and Somali organizers alike. Traditional clan peace conferences are all-male domains and use a language of eldership and conflict resolution that women are not usually taught or required to apply. With imagination and sufficient resolve, however, it should be possible to envision new or supplementary processes that afford women equal voice in the future of their community and wider society.

All parties engaging in Kismayo

Encourage and value inclusion

At a more fundamental level, the relative equanimity among women witnessed recently may be quite fragile and require careful handling. Adopting an inclusive approach in terms of resource allocation with women and women’s groups

¹⁰¹ The validation process provided an opportunity to test out this theory, albeit in a very limited and nonanalytic way. In the process, three meetings were convened to share and validate the findings: one with men, one with women, and one with both men and women. These meetings are the first formal opportunity men had to hear what women discussed during the course of this study. The discussions that followed suggest there is a hunger to share and reflect on what has happened in the past in order to find ways to move forwards in a constructive way, hopefully more resilient to the calls for clan violence. Some men who participated in the validation process call for a similar study of men’s experiences, talking about the need for a men-to-men reconciliation process. No one refuted the study findings. What is said by some men suggests that the material collected by the study has the potential to help deepen awareness and insight into people’s current and past predicaments. Two male respondent comments bear mention in this regard: We need ‘lots of awareness raising and community cohesion. If people are not constantly cleansed of ethnic hatred, it will come back’ [VM 3]; and ‘It needs to go beyond women and start dialogues with men, as there is still conflict between them’. [VM 3]

⁹⁹ It is known that women’s public support was harnessed by General Aideed, for example, during the intra-clan wars in Mogadishu of the 1990s. Anecdotal evidence exists of individual women war strategists and generals (personal communication with Yussuf M. Barre, who witnessed a female general operating in Mogadishu in the mid-1990s). What is not understood, however, are the gendered power dynamics of such relationships and the implications, if any, for women more widely, as well as for brokering peace.

¹⁰⁰ For example, see: Hagmann, T. (2016) and Hoehne, M. V. (2010).

is advisable in this context. Above all, it is essential to avoid the possibility of inadvertently feeding the past mentality of winner-takes-all that has defined clan-related conflict. This also includes imaginative approaches to ensuring that poverty and social marginalization do not remain excluding factors.

Questions for further research

- Male responsibility for violent conflict: explore male roles, responsibilities and motivations in clan-based conflict and peacebuilding efforts, including a comparison of male and female experiences.
- The gendered dimensions of clannism and gains from violent conflict: deeper investigation into the proposition that women are responsible for conflict.
- A gendered political economy analysis of the Kismayo conflict: for instance, relationships between male and female elites; the control and generation of wealth by women and men in relation to power; financing and material resourcing (including quantification) for violence and for peace.
- The price of peace: the gendered cost of making peace and its implications for conflict resolution.
- Collective female suffering: examine how this notion – and the possible role it may play in peacebuilding – reproduces patriarchal social relations, given that women’s oppression (suffering) is a key objective of patriarchy. How does this idea challenge patriarchy; e.g. in stimulating women’s sense of agency to act for peace and justice?¹⁰²
- Individual and collective tipping points toward peace and away from violence: for men and women, including use of conflict for personal gain and what such gains are.
- The circumstances in which women embrace clannism: while all women are affected by violent conflict, not all women actively promote clannism or engage in it. What might characterize or prompt those who do promote clan-related conflict?
- Revenge as both a consequence and driver of clannism: how revenge is a gendered idea and activity.
- Religion and spiritualism: the role, scope and importance of spiritual and religious beliefs for individual and collective social reconciliation and for peacebuilding, including attention to gendered differences.
- Loyalties: in what circumstances a woman married across clans would act as an intelligence gatherer for her father’s or brothers’ clan, using her connections across to her husband’s clan to gain or share information.
- Parenting for peace: perceptions and realities around paternal and maternal responsibilities, along with youth perceptions of these roles.
- Youth and peacebuilding: explore the range of experiences, modalities, generational, gender and other power dynamics of today’s female and male youth peace activism.

¹⁰² Thanks to Kate McGuinness for raising this issue; personal communication, 3 January 2018.

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Women, Conflict and Peace: Learning from Kismayo

Life & Peace Institute and Peace Direct share a commitment to supporting local civil society in Somalia, with a focus on promoting active roles by women in peace and governance. In particular, the two organizations seek to increase understanding and analysis of women's contributions to conflict and peace, in support of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda as part of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

In 2016, Life & Peace Institute launched a women-centred transformative dialogue-to-action project in Kismayo, later expanding to other areas of Somalia, in partnership with Somali Women Solidarity Organization. Through this initiative, women shared their experiences, attitudes and solutions to the conflict through spaces in which participants from different identity groups were brought together. Women-to-women reconciliation and relationship-formation has led to practical joint peacebuilding work across clan divides, and women-led collective advocacy on critical issues associated with the peace and statebuilding process in Somalia.

Building on this work, Somali Women Solidarity Organization, Life & Peace Institute and Peace Direct undertook this study, in order to amplify local insights and experiences of violent conflict in Kismayo and wider Somalia. The findings show that intra- and inter-clan conflict requires efforts by both women and men, through processes in which women are critical – by supporting and engaging directly in violence. It also evidences that women are able to construct unique pathways to peace, often taking exceptional risks to do so.

The study demonstrates, primarily, that the inclusion of women in transforming the drivers of violence in Somalia, and in peace processes and the achievement of political settlements, is not only a policy aspiration but a fundamental requirement for sustainable peace.

