

Kaitlin Wendel
Columbus East High School
Columbus, Indiana
Somalia, Factor 14

Climbing Above the Rubble

During the day, nobody leaves and nobody enters. Prisoners in their own homes, the Somalis are terrified to take a step outside for fear of coming face to face with the predators. With no protection, Somalis cannot even farm anymore. Cloaked in red head wraps and carrying weapons, "The Youth" are seen prowling the streets looking for anyone to interrogate. Without warning, these savages will shoot for no apparent reason. Running into al-Shabaab agents is truly a life or death situation; with the latter being the most common. Citizens ask themselves: Why are these terrorists still here? Why has our government allowed them to enter this long? The answers are simple: because they are a land without a government or unity.

Ever since the complete decimation of the Somali government in 1991, the lurking presence of al-Shabaab has been a frightening yet common sight to see in Somalia (Okere). Although much of southern Somalia resembles more of a war zone than a residential area, the country is primarily rural. As of 2004, 69% of the economically active population participates in subsistence agriculture. It was also estimated that 43% of that population lived on less than \$1 a day ("Irrigation in Africa in Figures"). Having to maintain an eight to nine acre plot of land requires a larger family size than that in America. The family consists of a father; to be the head of the household and to discipline, a mother; to instruct, raise and assist the children, and five to eight children to tend to the fields, get water, and to take care of each other. The two most grown crops are corn and sorghum (Hejleh). The family makes a living by growing and selling any excess crops to a local market.

In order to beat the heat, the family's day starts around 5 a.m. Being primarily an Islamic country, morning prayers take place during this time as well as breakfast. Breakfast is a simple and small meal consisting of a flour-made patty; similar to our pancake ("Somalia," CultureGrams). Subsistence farming families diets mainly consist of corn and sorghum products (Hejleh). Because of the primitive agricultural practices; such as slash-and-burn, a subsistence family is also slightly nomadic. They drink the milk from the animals they herd, such as cows and goats. They are considered nomadic because they have to move in order to have enough pasture for their animals and to get new fertile planting grounds. Because of a lack of safety and education on crops, only 1.6% of Somalia's land is cultivated and 69% is permanent pasture (Advameg). After prayers and tending to the animals, lunch is served. Lunch is considered the most important meal of the day, as well as the biggest. Lunch consists of rice or millet with milk, a banana or mango, and ghee; Somali butter. Vegetables are slowly making their way into the diets of Somalis, but the scarcity of them makes them a novelty to own.

Despite the nomadic and hard-working lifestyle in Somalia, education is very valued. However, because of the dangers that the al-Qaeda affiliate, al-Shabaab, pose on the people, education is much harder to come by. Lack of laws and protection from al-Shabaab has left destitute families hoping that their children are part of the meager 30% that get educated. As of 2011, Somalia has the lowest education rate in the world (Espisu). For fear of being killed, kids and families are leaving to live in refugee camps near the Kenyan border (Chonghaile). Due to the famine in 2011, it was reported that over 200,000 school-going children had to drop out so they could move to one of the many camps in search of food. The camps' primary reason is to get food to the families, not to provide education ("Somalia's Education Sector Further Threatened by Famine Exodus, UN Warns"). Naturally, as the political instability and famine continue to increase, the education rate will continue to dwindle.

Similar to the education system, Somalia's healthcare system is non-existent. Somalia currently has no real government at this time, so the only health assistance received is from international relief workers. Somalia has no modern hospitals or modern equipment and medicine. It has no government to support it. According to an interview with a Somali resident, Madar, 27, "If the local hospitals cannot cure you then you will die," (CultureGrams Interview, 2009). Though there are health clinics run by the international community, the work of these places are very often disrupted. Al-Shabaab acts violently towards any assistance, especially after refusing any help from the world ("Somalia," CultureGrams). Therefore, access to any health care for anyone in Somalia at this point in time is not very promising.

Because of the lack of order and law in Somalia, it is very difficult to obtain any type of valid education and knowledge; especially about agriculture. It is clear that their farming techniques are not up to par to get a successful harvest every year. Their agricultural practices mainly stem from two origins; indigenous and European. Traditionally, crops were watered by rain-fed, dry-land farming or it is complimented with irrigation from the Shabelle and Jubba rivers (Advameg). However, because of recurring droughts, the farmers have had to turn to slash-and-burn. Slash-and-burn is a major land degrader. Slash-and-burn is when a farmer cuts down all vegetation and then burns the remaining vegetation to drive away pests and provide a burst of nutrients for planting (Stief). When insufficient practices are added to drought-prone land, the only outcome is disaster.

It is near impossible for any Somalia family to access a market or grow their own food without any type of protection from the al-Qaeda affiliate; al-Shabaab. Lack of law and safety hinders accessibility to productive agricultural practices and markets. People in some cities controlled by al-Shabaab are prisoners in their own homes by choice. They feel it is too dangerous and risky to even step outside (Garaad). Another barrier is education. Education is rare due to the dire condition of Somalia. Technology and education on farming is even rarer. Practices are simply passed on inside the clans and therefore spreading the unproductive ways. The six major clans; Darod, Dir, Hoawiye, Issak, Digile, and Mrifle do not take to outsiders very easily. This makes it hard to establish new ideas and practices among them from outsiders (Advameg).

In order to get a good grasp on Somalia's situation, one might look at their government. In the 1990's, Somalia's government completely collapsed. Civil wars and piracy has been on the rise ever since. After the collapse, the Transitional National Charter was adopted in 2000. It was the first attempt to re-establish a governmental function for a constitution. This charter expired in 2003 and was replaced by the Transitional Federal Charter. It expired on August 20, 2012 (Okere). Though the world viewed the Transitional governments as a good start, their affect was anything but that. They were not technically a government system at all. No beneficial laws were enforced or safety provided from al-Shabaab. However, the rest of the world was not aware of this. The Transitional government also imposed many taxes on the people, even during the terrible famine in 2011. It was reported that over 70% of state revenues were stolen; not by pirates or desperate citizens, but by the government officials themselves ("Somalia Approves New Constitution after Foiled Suicide Attack"). Money that could have been put into new markets or better quality seeds for farmers was spending it's time in some official's pocket instead.

With a population of 9.5 million, laws need to be enforced to help unite the people rather than separate them. Their lack of government has everything to do with their food insecurity. The situation is a very sad, never ending cycle. No government means no law, no safety, no funds and a lot of fear. Between clans, there has always been a lot of conflict. Conflicts are even worse with al-Shabaab. Al-Shabaab has almost complete control over southern and central Somalia; excluding the capital, Mogadishu ("Is Somalia's Al-Shabab on the Back Foot?"). Farmers in occupied areas say it is too dangerous to farm. They also stated that al-Shabaab agents would dress as Somalia militants and demand food from the farmers. If they declined, they would be shot and killed ("Somalia: Al Shabaab Battle with Government Forces in South Central Somalia").

Because there are no laws or trustworthy leaders, it makes it difficult for the world to assist the country with their agriculture. People would not want to send millions of dollars' worth of food, medicine, and funds into a country partly run by terrorists and the other by a lying government. They would conclude it would be done in vain. Because people have had to abandon their infertile land, they have often turned to the sea. They make their meager income by raiding ships coming into the harbor ("Somalia: Al Shabaab Battle with Government Forces in South Central Somalia"). These violent pirates make it hard for foreign ships to come in with supplies because it is too dangerous. If there was a government, then the laws and police could get rid of the pirates.

One major detail people tend to forget is that all of the hospitals, schools, police officers, stores and news technology are funded by the government. The government is also in charge of communicating with the international community. Lack of government is preventing Somalis from purchasing more advanced seeds for agriculture or learning new ways to grow crops. For example, in 2010, Zambia discovered new ways to effectively grow and use sorghum. This discovery greatly helped out the smaller-scale farmers. Somalis could get the seeds from Zambia and everyone could help each other (Theobald). At this point any new agriculture practices would be beneficial to Somalia.

This problem needs to be resolved in the shortest amount of time possible. A country without a government for a long period of time could develop the mindset of anarchy. Living without laws would make the people reluctant to follow a prospective government.

Because the government is essential to everyone in a country, everyone is disadvantaged without it. Women virtually have no rights or protection from Muslim traditions such as female circumcision. This practice has tried to be outlawed but without a government to enforce it the mutilation continues. This practice makes birth extremely painful and makes going to the bathroom a dreaded ordeal. When asked, nearly 98% of the female population said they had been circumcised (Harper). Almost everyone in Somalia is considered a poor rural individual except for a select few elite people in Mogadishu. Farmers are disadvantaged because they have no assistance or subsidies from the government for new productive seed or machinery. Therefore, there is not very much hope for making a living by farming.

Though the situation in Somalis seems hopeless, there have been signs of improvement. For starters, near the end of July, a nine day conference was held in Mogadishu to discuss, vote and adopt their own constitution. With help from the UN, 625 delegates selected from all the Somali Clans and society participated. On August 1, 2012 Somalia adopted their first constitution; with 96% approval. This was a very proud day for the people of Somalia. They had never had their own constitution ("Somalia Approves New Constitution after Foiled Suicide Attack"). Fear is still very prevalent in Mogadishu. During the conference, two suicide bomb attacks were attempted. Guards stopped the terrorists before they could get into the building. Only the al-Shabaab suffered a loss on August 1, 2012. Also, on a terrorist radio group in Somalia, al-Shabaab leaders vowed to kill all of the delegates who participated in the new constitution. They claimed it was "the devil's work and it was going against the Quran," (Pelton). Ahmed Ali, an elder delegate stated, "I am more concerned with my safety rather than fixing my country; the job I came here to do." Though some Somalia's are scared to go back to their homes, they stated they would not be deterred. All of Somalia is very enthusiastic about the new start for their country. Thousands are already heading to Mogadishu to rebuild their homes and start new businesses. One citizen stated, "The entrepreneurial Somali spirit will see to it that Somalia gets back on its feet again" (Warah).

Some of the major points in the constitution include:

- All citizens, regardless of sex, religion, racial or economic status, political opinion, clan, disability, occupation, birth or dialect shall have equal rights and duties before the law
- Everyone has right to free education up to secondary schooling

- Children will not be used in armed conflict
- Children have the right to care from their parents; abuse and neglect will not be tolerated
- Child marriage for any purpose is banned
- Female circumcision is no longer allowed

(The Associated Press), (Harper). These laws were made with assistance from the International Development Law Organization. This organization stated that this constitution guarantees more fundamental rights than the U.S. Constitution (Harper).

Another glimmer of hope is the amount of help Somalia has gotten from Kenya and Ethiopia. Somalia and Ethiopia have been engaged in constant border wars for over 100 years (Lee). Although the three countries have a lot of conflicting differences, they share a common hate; al-Shabaab. Ethiopia and Kenya quickly realized that if al-Shabaab gained control of Somalia, they would be next. The three have combined their fire power and have gained control of numerous cities. One in particular made the tables turn on al-Shabaab. This was the liberation of the center of the fighting; Mogadishu ("Is Somalia's Al-Shabab on the Back Foot?"). Other battles include Afgoye. Afgoye was the main connection spot for al-Shabaab with Mogadishu. Afgoye was the central place for aid and supplies to go through to get to the capital. Backed by Ethiopia, Somali troops gained another big advantage over al-Shabaab (Garaad).

A lot of important events have occurred for Somalis this last year. Somalia has gained a lot of ground against al-Shabaab. Al-Shabaab's fire power has proven to be no match against Somali, Ethiopians, and Kenyan troops. The changes are benefitting the rural families and setting up the road for prospective urban families. By writing the constitution, it will help the government be more involved with its people. The government can then help solve the internal conflicts and trade with its neighbors for new agriculture products and gain new ways of income. For example, Idd Mohamed; a Somali diplomat, has already begun negotiating with Nairobi Securities Exchange (NSF) to establish a stock exchange for Somalia (Warah). They are already trying to make the transition from primarily rural to urban. However, the majority of Somali's economy is still in the primary sector. By gaining control of Mogadishu, a lot of families that lost their farms are wanting to move into the secondary sector; more concerned with manufacturing. It will also ensure funding for markets and assistance in farming. By pushing al-Shabaab out, farmers can gain more land that will be safe to farm.

The situation in Somalia and the solution is similar to an old question: Which came first: the chicken or the egg. Some people would argue that Somalia's agricultural practices need to be updated first, and then fix their economy. Others say it's the other way around. By repairing Somalia's government, it would give the people a foundation to fall back on if farming or manufacturing bottoms out. After the government is stable, then they engage in international affairs dealing with agriculture and nutrition. Having laws and regulations would start up schools and help people learn more about effective ways to farm without degrading the land. By having more productive harvests, then markets could be established for the families that do not farm. All of this would then lead to an economy and reduce the amount of poverty. Calming the internal conflicts would unite the country by having one central government rather than twenty clan leaders. The law could then help provide subsidies to small scale farms and give women more job opportunities.

By improving the government in Somalia, it could help meet five of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. First, it would reduce hunger and poverty by being able to create jobs and educate the people on ways to farm. It will also meet the schooling requirements. If the people really do as the constitution says, then boys and girls will be able to complete school. By establishing equal rights to everyone, it would also improve the gender equality. The constitution stated that both genders and people of all religions have equal rights. If they follow the constitution, then it states that all children cannot be used in war and child abuse is illegal. This could greatly benefit the children's health. The last MDG would be global

partnership. The only way that countries can communicate effectively to each other is by some sort of government. Therefore, a trustworthy government in Somalia would be able to establish relationships with other countries.

With answers, there are always the “what if” factors. Climate change would not affect the government, but it could affect the rural families. A positive climate change such as more precipitation and cooler temperatures would help the crops. On the flip side, if rain continues to be a scarcity then the farmers may have more trouble. With a population growth rate of 1.6%, it should not affect the government too much. However, if it increases, then the population may become too big and land may become scarce for a farm family. An increase in urbanization right now would be bad considering there are not a lot of urban jobs or housing. However, if it increased after Somalia has a stable government and economy it would be very beneficial. It would put a bigger dependency on the farmers so there would be some competition that could help spark new farming ideas.

Based on my research, the way to help Somalia reach a level of stable government is to simply assist the groups that are already helping. Three main groups working in Somalia are The African Union (AMISOM) (AU), the United Nations (UN), and the International Development Law Organization (IDLO). AMISOM has had a lot of problems with the public in Somalia and the UN. Some ask why AMISOM was even deployed in Somalia. AMISOM is not very well funded and therefore is not a very strong force when it comes to peacekeeping. However, the problem they ran into was that there was no peace to keep. Having no funds, they had to depend a lot on Ethiopian troops. Problems arose when Ethiopia pulled out of Somalia. The AU was stranded. When they were in Mogadishu, the AU became the targets of al-Shabaab (Williams). AMISOM could be beneficial if it had more instruction and funding. The public could help AMISOM by donating to them and trusting in what they were doing. This leads to how the UN could be up-scaled. The world does not always trust the UN because of their past (Treuman). However, they are playing a big role in Somalia today. They are really trying to help install a government and peace in the nation. The key to funds and support is trust. By making their actions and funding transparent with the community, then trust would be gained. However, this can only be gained with the UN doing what they say they are going to do. Another important group helping Somalia with their constitution is IDLO. They actually assisted Somalia in coming up with fundamentals for their first constitution (Harper). There are no reported issues with IDLO, so continued support and funding will be necessary.

Participation of the UN and the IDLO would be to simply oversee the constitution and the future Somalia government to make sure it is going in a good direction. Because they have a bad taste of westerners, it is important that the UN and other groups are not controlling and overbearing.

From the complete collapse of a government, to a devastating famine, terrorist attacks, and the writing their first constitution; Somalia has been through chaos and back through the last twenty years. Though al-Shabaab has destroyed a lot of their country, the fierce Somali spirit can be seen climbing out of the rubble. They have proved time and time again that they will not be defeated. In a perfect world, violence would be outlawed and food insecurity would be a lost term. However, we do not live in a perfect world. We live in a broken world of vengeance and poverty. Somalia has found itself in the middle of both. Though the violence is slowly ceasing in Somalia, food insecurity is increasing. However, with the help of their prospective government and each other, food security will be accomplished.

Works Cited

- Advameg. "Agriculture." Encyclopedia of Nations. Advameg Inc., 5 May 2011. Web. 20 July 2011. <<http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Africa/Somalia-AGRICULTURE.html>>.
- Chonghaile, Clar Ni. "Somalia Famine a Year On: Effects of Al-Shabaab Conflict and Hunger Persist." The Guardian. Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 20 July 2012. Web. 23 July 2012. <<http://m.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2012/jul/20/al-shabaab-hunger-displacement-somalis?cat=global-development>>.
- Esipisu, Isaiah. "Somalia: Massive School Dropouts As Famine Continues." AllAfrica.com. AllAfrica, 18 Aug. 2011. Web. 7 July 2011.
- Garaad, Yusuf. "Somali Al-Shabab Militant Stronghold Afgoye 'captured'" BBC News. BBC, 25 May 2012. Web. 10 Aug. 2012. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-18206856>>.
- Harper, Mary. "Somalia: Failed State or Fantasy Land?" BBC News. BBC, 08 Feb. 2012. Web. 10 Aug. 2012. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-19099442>>.
- Hejleh, Mazen. "The Country and People of Somalia." Arab Countries. Mazen Hejleh, 1 Nov. 2000. Web. 7 July 2011. <<http://www.hejleh.com/countries/somalia.html>>.
- "Irrigation in Africa in Figures." Aquastat. Ed. Karen Franken. FAO Land and Water Development Division, 2005. Web. 10 Aug. 2012. <http://www.fao.org/nr/water/aquastat/countries_regions/somalia/print1.stm>.
- "Is Somalia's Al-Shabab on the Back Foot?" Terror Free Somalia Foundation. Terror Free Somalia Foundation, 12 Jan. 2012. Web. 10 Aug. 2012. <<http://terrorfreesomalia.blogspot.com/2012/01/is-somalias-al-shabab-on-back-foot.html>>.
- Lee, Roger A. "Ethiopia-Somalia Wars and Conflicts." The History Guy. The History Guy, 2011. Web. 10 Aug. 2012. <http://www.historyguy.com/ethiopia_somali_wars.html>.
- Okere, George. "Somalia Moves to Get New Constitution." AfricaNews. Africa Interactive, 25 July 2012. Web. 1 Aug. 2012. <http://www.africanews.com/site/Somalia_moves_to_get_new_constitution/list_messages/42039>.
- Pelton, Robert. "Al-Shabaab." Somalia Report. Somalia Report, 10 Aug. 2012. Web. 15 Aug. 2012. <<http://www.somaliareport.com/index.php/topic/47/>>.
- Press, The Associated. "Somali Constitution Makes Big Promises To Children." NPR. NPR, 8 Aug. 2012. Web. 10 Aug. 2012. <<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=158414854>>.
- "Somalia." CultureGrams World Edition. ProQuest, 2010. Web. 10 July 2011.
- "Somalia: Al Shabaab Battle With Government Forces in South Central Somalia." AllAfrica.com. AllAfrica, 4 Aug. 2012. Web. 10 Aug. 2012. <<http://allafrica.com/stories/201208040686.html>>.
- "Somalia Approves New Constitution after Foiled Suicide Attack." The Daily Star Newspaper. The Daily Star, 1 Aug. 2012. Web. 5 Aug. 2012. <<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Aug-01/182952-suicide-attack-on-somali-constituent-assembly-foiled-police.ashx>>.

"Somalia's Education Sector Further Threatened by Famine Exodus, UN Warns." UN News Center. UN, 10 Aug. 2011. Web. 13 Aug. 2012. <<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=39273>>.

Stief, Colin. "Slash and Burn Agriculture." About.com Geography. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 July 2011. <<http://geography.about.com/od/urbaneconomicgeography/a/slashburn.htm>>.

Theobald, Molly. "Innovation of the Week: Locally Produced Crops for Locally Consumed Products." Nourishing the Planet. N.p., 24 July 2010. Web. 5 Aug. 2012. <<http://blogs.worldwatch.org/nourishingtheplanet/innovation-of-the-week-locally-produced-crops-for-locally-consumed-products-innovation-innovation-of-the-week-local-zambia-africa-agriculture-farmers-farming-matters-zambian-breweries-sabmiller-south/>>.

Trueman, Chris. "The United Nations and Its Problems." History Learning Site. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Aug. 2012. <http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/united_nations_problems.htm>.

Warah, Rasnah. "The Somali Spirit Will Triumph." The Citizen. The Citizen, 21 Aug. 2012. Web. 22 Aug. 2012. <<http://thecitizen.co.tz/editorial-analysis/-/25079-the-somali-spirit-will-triumph-with-or-without-an-effective-government>>.

Williams, Paul D. "AMISOM's Five Challenges." Center for Strategic and International Studies. CSIS, n.d. Web. 15 Aug. 2012. <<http://csis.org/story/amisom%E2%80%99s-five-challenges>>.

