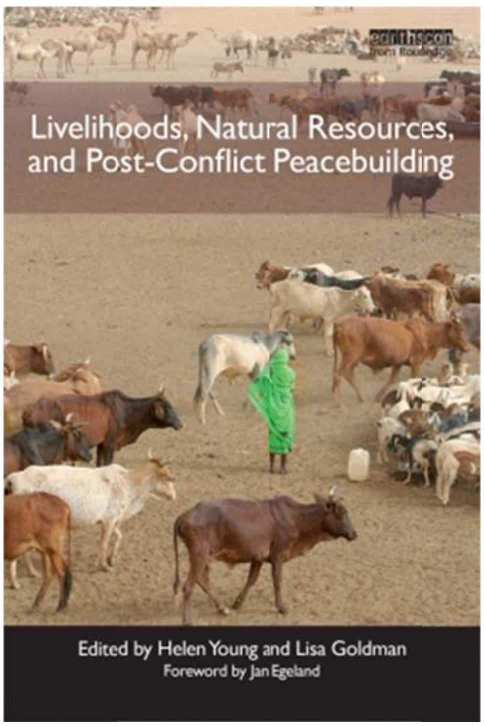

Commerce in the Chaos: Bananas, Charcoal, Fisheries, and Conflict in Somalia

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> *Some people have suggested that [Somalia] could end up looking like the tribal lands of Afghanistan. Maybe, but there is one saving factor. Unlike Afghanistan, which has opium (and Iraq which has oil), the Horn has little of economic value to fuel a war: its front-line, after all, can barely keep a cow alive.*
>
> —*The Economist*[1]

Despite the *Economist*'s gloomy snapshot of Somalia's prospects, it is wrong to imply that hope for its future lies in a lack of resources of economic value. Over the past two violent decades of Somalia's history, the production and trade of three natural resources central to what remains of the country's economy—bananas, charcoal, and fisheries—have played important roles in funding the Somali conflict. Competing militias have fought one another for control of this production and trade through control of relevant lands, waters, and ports, and used the gains to fund their activities and maintain their power. While this use of bananas, charcoal, and fisheries has contributed to Somali conflict, these resources also represent a potentially important source of nonconflict income that could help the country recover from crisis and, ultimately, strengthen the nascent peacebuilding process. This chapter will examine how, over the course of nearly twenty years, the production and trade of three natural resources has contributed to the ongoing conflict in Somalia and could ultimately contribute to its resolution.

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The background on the links between Somali fisheries, banana production, and trade and conflict discussed in this chapter builds on a paper written for the International Institute for Sustainable Development (Crawford and Brown 2008). Similarly, the end-of-chapter lessons learned and recommendations to international stakeholders reflect observations and recommendations from that paper.

[1] *Economist*, "The Path to Ruin," August 12, 2006.

Built on desk and field-based research on conflict resources in Somalia, this chapter contains four sections. The first and second sections provide background and case studies on the specific links between trade in bananas, charcoal, and fish and conflict in Somalia. The third section outlines broad lessons learned from these case studies, and the fourth section provides recommendations to national and international stakeholders.

BACKGROUND

Since 1969, when the democratically elected president Abdurashid Ali Sharmarke was assassinated and a military regime led by Prime Minister Mohamed Siad Barre seized power and declared Somalia a socialist state, the country has experienced lasting insecurity and violence. War with Ethiopia in the 1970s, followed by civil war in the 1980s, caused the deaths of thousands of Somalis and widespread discontent with national leaders—a legacy Somalia has yet to overcome. The sections that follow examine the cause and consequence of widespread violence and insecurity that have enveloped the country since the collapse of Barre's regime.

Somalia's troubled past and uncertain future

When President Barre fled Mogadishu on the evening of January 26, 1991, the state his regime had supported for twenty-two years effectively collapsed. Falling into the hands of a collection of warlords, Somalia became a country of lawlessness, perpetual civil conflict, and economic ruin. Over the next two years, 280,000 people are estimated to have died from a mix of civil strife, drought, and starvation (Hansch et al. 1994). Other estimates are higher; by some accounts, approximately 400,000 Somalis lost their lives (Bradbury 1994).

Today, Somalia barely exists as a functioning state. Within larger Somalia, Somaliland has declared itself an independent state, and Puntland has declared itself autonomous, although neither has gained international recognition as such.[2] In 2006, the Islamic Courts Union took control of most of the southern part of the country, bringing a degree of peace and stability to Mogadishu not seen for many years. By the end of 2006, however, forces loyal to the alternative and weak transitional government, backed by troops from neighboring Ethiopia, seized control of Mogadishu from the Islamists, and a surge of violence ensued.

In 2012, Somalia's Transitional Federal Government was replaced by the Federal Government of Somalia, and the country passed a new national constitution. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud was elected president, and he has pushed national reconciliation since taking office. Despite this, terrorism and piracy continue

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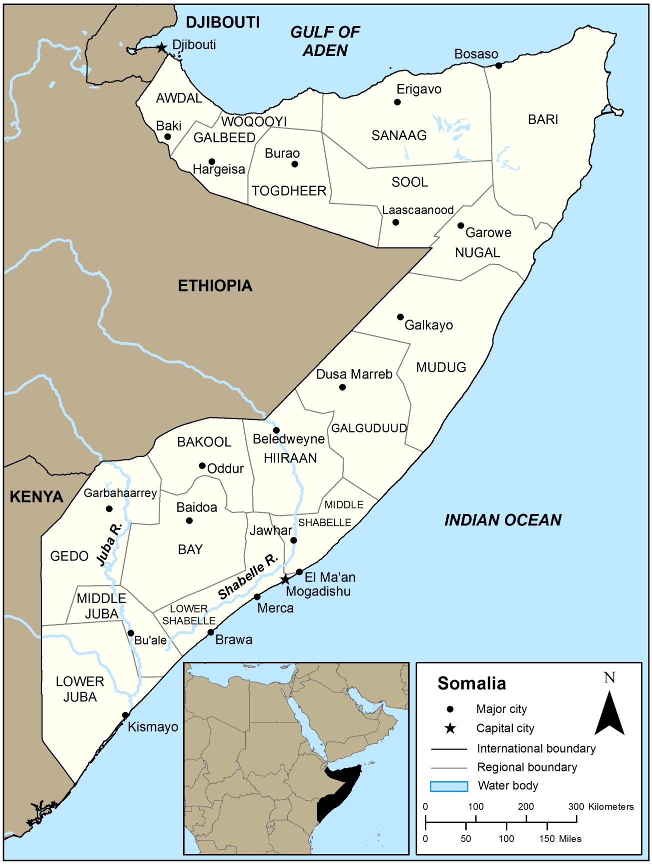
[2] Somaliland is located in the northwestern region of Somalia and extends eastward toward Laascaanood. Puntland is located east of Somaliland and extends from the northernmost tip of the Horn of Africa southward into the region of Mudug.



within the state's borders, and the humanitarian situation has remained dire. Thousands died between 2010 and 2012 as a result of drought, civil strife, and a government that is unable to protect its people from starvation (BBC 2011; Ford 2013; IRIN 2011). While the drought and famine has abated, the United Nations estimates that approximately 2.7 million people still require life-saving assistance (Smith-Spark and Elbagir 2013), and widespread violence also remains a persistent threat (Kulish 2013; Straziuso 2012).

Bananas, charcoal, fisheries, and conflict funding

Where monetary resources are lacking, natural resources are often used as a source of conflict funding. In Somalia, the militant groups predominantly responsible for the continuing violence receive funding and support from the production and sale of bananas and charcoal, and the exploitation of the country's fisheries.

Bananas

The use of banana exports as a means of funding conflict in Somalia was made possible in part by a number of factors: how easily the commodity's movement to the market can be obstructed or controlled (the crop's obstructability); the presence of reliable demand markets, including in Europe; weak or nonexistent governance; and the complicity of multinational corporations which, in the 1990s, paid export levies and taxes to warlords and their militias (Webersik 2005).

Charcoal

In the absence of a functioning government, production and trade in charcoal quickly became—and remains—a major pillar of the country's informal economy. As such, trade in charcoal has largely favored powerful businessmen and rival faction leaders while leaving local charcoal-producing communities with little but adverse environmental effects. As a result, local communities have resorted to violent means to protect their interests.

Fisheries

Somalia has rich fishing grounds and the longest coastline in Africa. The country's warlords have exploited Somalia's extensive and unregulated fisheries for profit by issuing false fishing licenses to foreign companies; in doing so, warlords and their militias have been able to raise funds to support their operations.

A new kind of conflict economy

In Somalia, the profits available from bananas, charcoal, and fisheries created a new kind of conflict economy in which trade participants had more interest in maintaining the conflict and continuing to gain from it than in pursuing peace. As David Keen noted when writing of the economic motivations for prolonging war, for Somali warlords, "the aim of war is not necessarily to win it" (Keen 2000, 29).

Livelihoods in Somalia

The long-lasting conflict in Somalia has severely disrupted livelihoods in the country (Le Sage and Majid 2002). Significant variations in social, political, economic, and environmental vulnerability exist among and within Somalia's different clans and social groups, and conflict has often exacerbated these vulnerabilities. Insecurity restricts the livestock grazing mobility of pastoralists, for example, and for riverine farmers, it can result in the depletion of fixed and immobile assets, such as grain stores or land (Le Sage and Majid 2002).

More than two decades of conflict have had a particularly stark impact on the country's livelihood resources. Political resources have disappeared, as governing institutions have collapsed or been made completely ineffectual, and political representation has been replaced by control through violence. Physical resources have been destroyed or degraded; the country's food security has been challenged both by the deterioration of irrigation systems for farming and by increasing difficulties in accessing local markets for livestock and produce. In the absence of effective management mechanisms, natural resources—including forests, fisheries, and farmland—have been systematically exploited and degraded with no concern for sustainability. Financial resources have dried up in the face of rampant inflation, criminality, and a wholly inhospitable investment climate. Social networks have either collapsed through displacement and death or have strengthened along tribal lines across warring factions. Finally, in human resource terms, schools have been destroyed, healthcare systems are failing, and educated populations are leaving the country to live elsewhere.

A different kind of resource-based conflict

How revenues from the banana, charcoal, and fishery sectors have contributed to the perpetuation of the conflict in Somalia differs from how resource revenues have contributed to conflicts in other African countries over the same period. As noted by Sabrina Grosse-Kettler, "In many war economies in sub-Saharan Africa, including the DRC [Democratic Republic of the Congo], Liberia and Sierra Leone, resources such as coltan, diamonds and gold are fuelling the conflict; control and exploitation of local assets means a monopoly on its profit. In Somalia, in contrast, there is no *strategic* resource as such" (Grosse-Kettler 2004, 14).

Somalia's natural wealth may lack strategic value as such. However, its three major natural resources are easily appropriated, as individuals and small groups can easily loot them by harvesting and transporting them to domestic and foreign markets in a way that brings in uncontrolled revenue. This revenue has then been used to perpetuate the conflict in Somalia in the same way revenues from illicit production and trade of coltan, diamonds, and gold have been used to perpetuate conflict in the DRC and revenues from the illicit production and export of diamonds were used to perpetuate conflict in Sierra Leone.

Data challenges

The existence, availability, and reliability of socioeconomic and scientific data in Somalia remain a significant challenge. In collecting socioeconomic, geographical, and historical details about natural resource management in Somalia, the authors had to rely on data generated by aid agencies, international and local NGOs, and (now-defunct) government entities. While these data served as important sources of information, many have yet to be published in the literature.

In addition, given the lack of a functioning government, basic statistical data are missing, and even pre-war data raises questions of accuracy and validity. Further, the quantity and quality of data available in Somalia is subject to bias as relates to secure versus insecure areas and secure versus insecure interview environments.[3]

CASE STUDIES

Natural resource production and exploitation have generated significant funds for militant groups that perpetuate violence. This section examines specific experiences that link banana, charcoal, and fisheries harvesting with conflict in Somalia.

Somali banana production and trade

Somali banana production is concentrated in the Lower Shabelle region in the south of the country, within what remains of the Somali state outside of Somaliland and Puntland. Italian settlers began cultivating bananas in the region in 1919, and, at first, these farmers were in a good export position due to Italian-imposed tariffs on all non-Somali bananas. This guaranteed export market may have had the unintended effect of discouraging competition and investment in the sector (Webersik 2005).

When Somalia declared independence in 1960, Italian settlers began to leave the country. After President Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke was assassinated in 1969, Barre took power and quickly moved to change the structure of the banana sector by nationalizing its production and export trade. Under the 1975 land reform program, he also expropriated unclassified and communal lands for expanding cultivation. Under these changes, production increased at first but then rapidly declined. The amount of land under cultivation and production yields began to drop for a number of reasons, including loss of plantation farming expertise as a result of the Italian settlers' departure; higher levels of soil salinity due to inefficient and poorly maintained drainage systems; and decreased use of fertilizer (Webersik 2005).

In the early 1980s, structural adjustment policies improved the banana sector's outlook. Transportation networks, market links, credit access, and fuel prices all moved in favor of banana producers, and productivity increased. Somalia became East Africa's largest exporter of bananas, with 12,000 hectares dedicated to and 120,000 people employed in the industry (Baars and Riediger 2008). At the same time, privatization of public assets under these structural adjustment

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[3] In addition to conducting their own interviews in Kenya and Somalia in 2002, the authors relied on some of the twenty-two interviews conducted in Somalia's Lower Shabelle in 2001 by the Nairobi-based Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development for the purpose of gaining access to information that had been gathered in areas difficult to access, especially south of Mogadishu.

policies bred corruption by permitting insiders and political aides close to Barre to grab land and move to control the banana sector (Webersik 2005). Nonetheless, by the end of 1990, bananas were Somalia's largest agricultural sector after livestock. In that year, the banana sector brought in US$25.6 million in export earnings (30 percent of Somalia's total) (Webersik 2005). Following the outbreak of the civil war, the banana trade came to a standstill but recovered beginning in 1994, at least until 1997. In 1997, due to changes in international trade, devastating floods, and closure of the Mogadishu port, banana production collapsed (Baars and Riediger 2008). In 2009, amid continued instability in Somalia, only 3,000 hectares were dedicated to banana production, and banana exportation no longer constitutes a significant portion of Somali export earnings (*New Agriculturist* 2009).

Conflict and the banana trade

In August 1992, less than two years after Barre had fled the country, Somalia was beset by conflict, and 1.5 million Somalis were close to starvation (Debiel 2003). The food security situation improved somewhat a few months later (by December 1992) when massive food aid interventions caused grain prices to fall below the cost of production (De Waal and Omaar 1993). Even so, by then, important banana production and export companies, including Somalfruit, a private company founded by the De Nadai family in the 1930s (*Il Mondo* 1995), had abandoned their Somali operations entirely due to conflict insecurity, and banana production was suspended.

In southern Somalia, abandoned banana plantations, large-scale farms, and irrigation systems deteriorated or were seized. Local militias took to looting abandoned infrastructure or illegally seizing land and attempting to control irrigation systems. Newcomers, often from the pastoral Haber Gedir clan, expropriated land through violence and without fair compensation but often lacked the skills needed to make the land productive, thus ruining many banana plantations. Farmers took to destroying irrigation systems to prevent losing control and being taxed for their irrigation water.

These local conflicts involving militias, Haber Gedir clansmen, and the local agrarian communities over agricultural lands had a negative effect on the rural populations of Lower Shabelle. Conflict and violence caused families to lose access to their farms, to their irrigation systems, and to work on the old plantations, uprooting a traditional way of life. As the conflict continued, productive lands went fallow, irrigation infrastructure deteriorated further, and a man-made scarcity of land and water resources set in that only served to exacerbate tensions (Webersik 2005).

Profiting from banana production and trade

Despite the ongoing conflict, Somali banana production and exports resumed in 1994 when U.S.-based multinational Dole entered the market via Sombana, Dole's locally based banana production and export subsidiary. This challenged the near monopoly of the sector by the De Nadai family's Somalfruit, which was back in operation and, despite the banana sector's troubles, was said to be worth US$100 million at the time (Webersik 2005).

Warlords learned they could profit from the sector by controlling banana production—and its export. As the UN Panel of Experts on Somalia stated, fighting in Somalia "typically centers on the control of property or income-generating infrastructure, such as harbors, airports, markets, bridges or road junctions that can be 'taxed'" (UNSC 2003c, 6). In particular, the ease with which militias could obstruct a crop from reaching its markets meant that whichever group controlled the points of export could extract significant profits from its trade, given reliable trading partners and export markets. In the case of Somalia's banana crop, the primary traditional exit points were shipping ports in Mogadishu and in the city of Merca, in the Lower Shabelle.

In 1994, General Mohamed Farrah Aideed, the warlord who drove Barre from Mogadishu, clashed with the Hawadle clan for control of Merca's port. When Aideed won control of the port, he was free to tax all bananas leaving from it. When banana exports resumed from the port in 1994, Aideed received US$.05 for every 12.5 kilograms shipped by Sombana, a rate that dropped to US$.04 in 1996, the year Dole suspended its Somali operations (Webersik 2005). Given the volume of banana exports in these years, Aideed's "tax" amounted to an estimated monthly income of US$150,000, which he primarily used to fund his militia's US$40,000 weekly expenses (Norfolk Education and Action for Development Centre 1995). In 1996, heavy fighting broke out in Merca when warlord Osman Hassan Ali Atto demanded a share of Aideed's banana-tax profits (Webersik 2005).

Insecurity leads to chaos and departure

Although Sombana and Somalfruit were competitors, operating in an insecure environment had disadvantaged them both, particularly through financial exploitation by local warlords. In addition to paying Aideed's export tax, both companies found themselves having to pay him or other warlords or militias for security. Aideed charged Sombana cash for protection in the region's riverine areas (Webersik 2005), and both Sombana and Somalfruit reportedly employed militias for securing shipments to ports. At times, these militias even clashed over access to ports (Norfolk Education and Action for Development Centre 1995). In early 1995, shots were fired at Dole's staff lodgings in Mogadishu, fighting broke out between the companies' militias at the city's port, and heavy machine-gun fire was directed at a Dole freighter anchored in the port (Webersik 2005). By late 1996, the high costs of maintaining its militia forced Dole to exit the Somali market altogether (Grosse-Kettler 2004). At the time of Dole's departure, stimulated by competition between Sombana and Somalfruit, banana production had reached 80 percent of pre-conflict production levels (Marchal 1997).

Export markets

In the absence of a functioning government, Somali warlords could continue to profit from the banana trade, but only as long as export markets remained guaranteed. For much of the 1990s, Europe was the principal export market. This began to change in 1997 when a World Trade Organization ruling reduced preferential trade agreements between the European Union (EU) and Somalia. As demand from the EU began to drop due to liberalization of import markets and repeal, in 2006, of EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States import quotas, 70 per cent of Somalia's banana trade collapsed (Webersik 2005). Despite donor support for rehabilitation of irrigation infrastructure, as of 2008, banana production in Somalia still had not recovered (Baars and Riediger 2008).

The link between the EU trade and Somali insecurity had previously been drawn by a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) spokesperson, who, in 2004, observed that the "fact that the European Union provides preferential market access to African banana suppliers makes the business quite profitable, which is why there have been recent confrontations to gain control of the area and consequently to monopolize the export market" (UNSC 2004, 26). Even the decline of the banana sector following changes in EU-Somali trade relations did not completely stop the sector and proceeds from the sector from contributing to conflict; clashes for control of the port of Merca in 2003 signaled that warlords were still trying to control trade to export markets, this time to the Middle East (Webersik 2005).

Banana production and trade summary

The banana production and trade that thrived from 1994 to 1997 did not spark the conflict in Somalia nor have these been the driving force in the conflict. However, as Grosse-Kettler has argued, the country's general anarchy has ensured that when "purchasing exports from Somalia, profit goes into private hands and not in official budgets or industrial agencies" (Grosse-Kettler 2004, 14). Typically, the private hands have been those of warlords, and the profits—some of which have come from the banana trade—have been used for the personal enrichment of warlords or reinvested to perpetuate the conflict for greater profit by warlords.

Yet, there is great positive economic potential in the banana trade for Somalia, as Somali bananas are much sought after by the United Arab Emirates and other Middle Eastern countries (Baars and Riediger 2008). Somalia's proximity to Middle Eastern markets, Middle Eastern consumer preferences for Somali bananas, and the Shabelle and Juba rivers' ability to supply irrigation water year-round for banana cultivation all point to one promising foundation for Somalia's eventual economic recovery.

Somali charcoal production and trade

The Somali banana trade's collapse in 1997 flooded the market with a large number of wage laborers who then sought jobs in the country's growing charcoal business. Weak governance, continued exercise of power through violence, and the existence of lucrative export markets (primarily in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States), as well as a high number of impoverished Somalis willing to work for very little, amounted to an opportunity for predatory elites and warlords to exploit the country's charcoal production and trade. Ahmed Mohamed Ibrahim observed that "[w]hen the banana export collapsed . . . many Somali businessmen started harvesting wood; exploiting the forests. A lot of farm labor was released due to the collapse; and there is a lucrative market in Saudi Arabia" (Ibrahim 2002).

Charcoal production in Somalia is not new; in the colonial era, Italians in Somalia harvested wood for fuel as they established the country's railway service. Since then, production has tended to vary with the season, peaking from December to March when the land is driest, weather conditions are most favorable for harvesting and converting wood to charcoal, and farm labor has been released from other pursuits.

Today, the majority of southern Somalia's charcoal is produced in the riverine zone between the two southern coastal towns of Brawa and Kismayo. The port at Kismayo is the only deep seaport in southern Somalia with proper loading facilities, and that has facilitated export of a substantial percentage of Somali charcoal to foreign markets. While Mogadishu port remained closed from 1991 to 2006 due to militias fighting, much of the charcoal was exported via natural ports, such as El Ma'an north of Mogadishu. The port then reopened under the former Union of Islamic Courts, and today is under the control of the African Union and Somali government (Gatehouse 2013).

Somali "black gold": The business

Traditionally, woodcutters produced charcoal primarily from acacia trees and primarily for local markets for use in the home for cooking. The value chain has changed in the past two decades as charcoal exports have become a more lucrative business (for some) due to increased demand from the Arabian Peninsula and the nature of Somalia's exploitable, lawless market. In recent years, approximately 80 percent of Somali charcoal is exported, largely to Dubai and Saudi Arabia (Mohamed 2012).

Warlords, local militias, and businesspeople have benefited most from the charcoal trade and the country's general lawlessness. Among the main beneficiaries in the not-so-distant past were Mogadishu-based owners of trucks used to transport charcoal and charcoal traders (Gurre 2003). In most of southern Somalia, elites from the Haber Gedir and the Abgal clans dominated the transport sector, and they, in turn, relied on local support and good relations with militia leaders. Even today, on the outskirts of Mogadishu, trucks loaded with charcoal and escorted by young militiamen must pass through numerous roadblocks manned by competing militias looking to wrestle some profit from the trade before the trucks can reach one of many beach ports (IRIN 2006).

Not all businesspeople in Somalia have supported this unregulated trade, as, in the past, it could involve great risk. In 2000, *Somalia Watch* reported that "[t]he Mogadishu charcoal Mafia must pay not only in terms of money but also lives. Militiamen and drivers have been shot at road blocks, and trucks trying to deliver the load to the beach port have sparked off fire-fights and inter-clan conflicts" (*Somalia Watch* 2000).

Although data on some aspects of the situation is lacking, it is clear that charcoal continues to finance militias. For example, Somali pirates hijacked a ship loaded with charcoal outbound from a port controlled by al Shabaab, an Islamic group opposed to the current Transitional Federal Government (Guled 2010). It is no secret that the charcoal export has financially supported the group in control of the important seaports in southern Somalia: Kismayo and Mogadishu ports. In order to cut off al Shabaab from the charcoal trade, the United Nations issued a charcoal ban in 2012 (UNSC 2012). Since then, sacks of charcoal are piling up in places like Kismayo, cutting local businessmen, traders, and laborers off from the lucrative business. Those who are now supporting troops of the African Union Mission in Somalia, such as the Ras Kamboni Brigades, an ethnic Ogadeni clan–based armed group, oppose the sanctions (McConnell 2012). The group's leader, Sheik Ahmed Madobe, an ex-warlord and former Islamist commander, is pursuing the same strategy as al Shabaab, using the charcoal trade for personal gains and ultimately using the trade to finance his armed group.

Historic charcoal costs and margins

The charcoal trade historically has engaged a range of producers, transporters, and other middlemen. Table 1 illustrates who has benefited from charcoal production and trade in the past. The table's data reflect pre-war years, so they may not reflect conditions during the conflict. Nonetheless, it is useful to consider that, in July 1989, the retail margin on charcoal was 14 percent (310 Somali shillings per 100 kilograms (kg) of charcoal) of the official price (2,300 Somali shillings per 100 kg of charcoal) (Soussan 1990). At the time, the exchange rate for the Somali shilling was 181 shillings to US$1. In order to increase this margin and bypass cooperative fees and government taxes, retailers began buying charcoal through informal markets, and the government lacked the resources to intervene.

Table 1. Official charcoal costs and margins in Mogadishu, Somalia, July 1989

Item	*Somali shillings per 100 kilograms of charcoal*
Labor	600
Supervisors	152
Transport	700
Equipment	260
Taxes	15
Cooperatives fees	169
Producer margin	80
Retailer margin	310
Official price	2,300

Source: Soussan (1990).

Moreover, the market price of charcoal was higher than the government's official price, largely due to lack of alternative fuels, which remains the case today. Alternative fuels such as liquid gas and petroleum need to be imported and paid for with foreign exchange, and these funds were—and remain—limited. Given that the wood used for charcoal production is considered a free good in most of Somalia, low producer margins (reported in 1989 to be 80 Somali shillings per 100 kg of charcoal) are unlikely to change. Moreover, the scale of production has shifted from labor-intensive methods of wood harvesting to the use of chainsaws (IRIN 2006).

Charcoal trade and export markets

Beginning in the late 1990s, the Gulf States imposed strict restrictions on their own production of charcoal due to concern over dwindling forest cover. These restrictions did not curtail demand, however, for throughout the Gulf States, charcoal was and remains a principal and preferred fuel source for smoking tobacco, grilling meat, and burning incense. To meet this demand, the Gulf States needed imports, and Somalis, desperately in need of foreign exchange, met that demand. In the face of lax domestic control over charcoal production and trade restrictions due to the general chaos that pervades the country, Somalia became—and remains—a significant source of charcoal exports to the Gulf States (*Somalia Watch* 2000).

Somali charcoal production not exported to the Gulf States is consumed domestically and typically is of lower quality. While total production and consumption figures remain elusive, charcoal remains the main form of fuel used in cooking, both in rural and urban households. As Ibrahim observed, without government oversight, many Somalis have continued "exploiting national forest reserves . . . [in an] informal trade [that] functions like a black market without regulations and no guarantees" (Ibrahim 2002).

Despite domestic demand, Somali traders have had little incentive to provide charcoal to Somalia's domestic market in the face of higher prices overseas. In 2000, the price per sack of charcoal inside Somalia was US$3 to US$4 whereas, in the Gulf, the same size sack (of better quality) sold for approximately US$10 (*Somalia Watch* 2000). In 2003, a Puntland resident confirmed these figures to researcher Ibrahim Gurre, explaining that the export trade is lucrative because "they [traders] do not pay for the trees. They sell a sack of charcoal for approximately US$10 while the cost of production and transport is less than US$3" (Gurre 2003, 51).

In sum, in recent years, a large export market, high export profit margins (due in part to illicit taxation by militias), and the fact that traders do not pay for charcoal's raw material have helped ensure that Somali charcoal production and trade will continue to focus on export markets.

Charcoal exportation has been a clandestine business, managed by the Somali business elite who, in the absence of a functioning government, have maintained

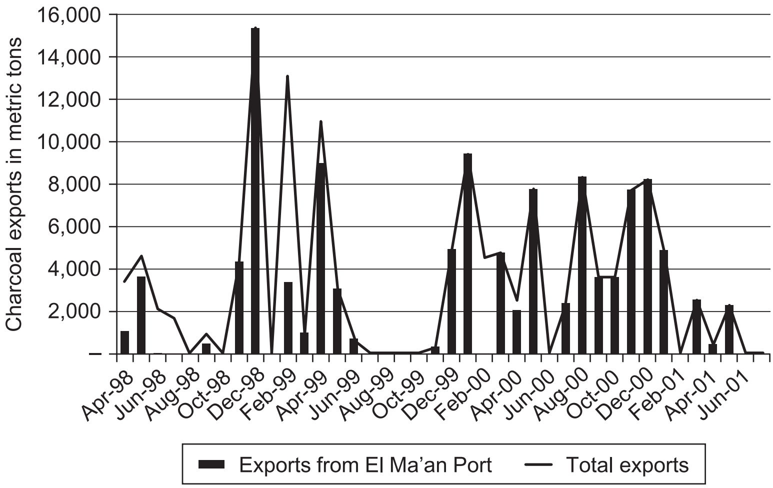

Figure 1. Charcoal exports from southern Somalia, April 1998–July 2001
Source: FSAU–Somalia (2009b).

militias to protect their interests (Webersik 2006). To the point, the collection of illicit taxes at ports and roadblocks on routes linking production to distribution has largely served to guarantee the security of the business elite's interests. For example, the chairman of the Juba Valley Alliance, Bare Aden Shire (also known as Hirale) and his former regional administration imposed a levy of US$0.40 per 100 kg of charcoal bound for export through his territory.[4] Also in 2002, the port authority at El Ma'an, north of Mogadishu, charged US$1,333 per vessel for each ship exceeding 2,000 metric tons capacity and US$333 per vessel for smaller ships (Marchal 2002). In addition, traders had to pay local militias loading and unloading fees of US$0.40 per sack of any commodity, including charcoal, in exchange for security. These security provisions have allowed the port of El Ma'an to dominate the charcoal trade in southern Somalia (see figure 1). Once again, collection of this type of tax by militias in exchange for providing security enabled these militias to maintain their power (Marchal 2002).

Charcoal production

Few of the economic benefits from the production and trade of Somali charcoal have made their way back to the rural laborers and children who collect the wood. In 2002, the daily wage for these laborers was estimated to be US$0.80 (Maykuth 2002), one reason for this being the fairly weak relationship between the riverine farmers of the Digil and Tuni clans, who produce charcoal, and the powerful and

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[4] Interviews conducted under the condition of anonymity by the authors in Eldoret, Somalia, on November 21, 2002.

armed Haber Gedir and Abgal subclans of the Hawiye clan, who dominate Mogadishu. Nonetheless, given the country's dire economic situation, for some laborers, just the promise of regular meals has been sufficient.

In southern Somalia, charcoal production has tended to complement other sources of family income and, as such, to help increase families' resilience to external stress. Typically, charcoal production requires little financial capital and only basic skills or knowledge. Most certainly, it buffers poor crop harvests and variable climatic conditions. However, in the absence of a regulatory framework, charcoal production and trade has exploited workers through low wages, has had the potential to destroy the environmental base of workers' livelihoods (for example, when fruit trees are cut down), and has funded ongoing conflict.

Main drivers of Somali charcoal production

According to Laura Linkenback, the main driving factors behind Somali charcoal production are generation of alternative income due to failed harvests, imposition of livestock export bans, devaluation of the Somali shilling, changes in land tenure, lack of or weak governance, rapid urbanization, and the collapse of the banana trade (Linkenback 2001). Many of these factors are described below.

Alternative income

In Somalia, it is typical for one in five harvests to fail. Somalia has experienced a number of droughts in recent decades, and when harvests do fail—as was the case during the inadequate rains of 1999 and 2000—charcoal production tends to increase. In Somalia, most farmers with small holdings are subsistence farmers who must buy grain from others when their own stocks are depleted, and in order to do so, they need an alternative source of income, such as from charcoal production. Drought is not the only threat, however. Major floods in October and November 1997 destroyed most of the irrigated farmland in the Lower Shabelle, freeing labor to engage in charcoal production.

Livestock bans

Bans on importing Somali livestock, imposed by Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, have also served to stimulate Somali charcoal production. Livestock has long been—and remains—the Somali economy's prime export, constituting some 80 percent of the country's annual export earnings (FSAU–Somalia 2009a). In February 1998, Saudi Arabia imposed an import ban on Somali livestock due to an outbreak among Somali livestock of Rift Valley Fever—a hemorrhagic disease potentially lethal to humans (Steffen, Shirwa, and Addou 1998). Although the ban was lifted in 2009, when it was imposed, there was a lack of foreign currency, Somali households engaged in livestock production were forced to sell livestock at lower margins, and, as a coping strategy, they resorted to charcoal production.

Devaluation of the Somali shilling

Other driving forces behind higher levels of charcoal production in Somalia include devaluation of the Somali shilling and the subsequent need for foreign exchange. As early as 1992, faction leaders began injecting large amounts of counterfeit shillings into the Somali economy (UNSC 2003a). By the end of 2000, the shilling had weakened even further due to the livestock ban. This currency devaluation continues to affect petty traders, farmers of small holdings, and wage laborers in particular, as they have always used the Somali shilling for cash and have no foreign currency savings. When relative fuel prices rise and farmers can no longer afford to hire tractors or buy fuel for their own machinery, the short-term benefits of engaging in charcoal production begin to outweigh the costs of farming and, indeed, help drive such engagement, along with the conflict it engenders.

Changes in land tenure

The Somali charcoal trade has also been linked to issues of land tenure. In the past, rural Somali communities communally managed certain agricultural and pastoral lands, primarily through sophisticated reciprocal access and use-exchange relationships. However, after Somalia's independence, the Barre regime declared these seemingly unowned or customarily held lands to be state lands. Government officials took control of the lands, and then these lands were "liberated" (taken over) by powerful clans from other (central) regions. As a result, urban Somali business elites and militia members ended up owning large areas of previously communally managed farm and pastureland that they then converted to the more profitable enterprise of charcoal production.

Weak governance and lack of regulation

Regulation of the charcoal trade requires an authority that governs production, restricts access, and distributes benefits. Given that the current government of Somalia lacks authority over its territory, Somalia lacks governmental limits on the scale and conditions of charcoal production. In recent years, large quantities of charcoal are still being exported from small beach ports out of the Transitional Federal Government's reach despite attempts at a ban in 2006 by the Islamic Courts Union (IRIN 2006). The United Nations imposed a charcoal ban in 2012, but its effectiveness still remains to be seen.

Collapse of the banana trade

Lastly, the collapse of the banana trade freed labor, which had implications for charcoal production. For some, switching from work in banana production to work in charcoal production was relatively easy, geographically, because lands suited to banana production—fertile lands with patches of forest—are also suited to charcoal production.

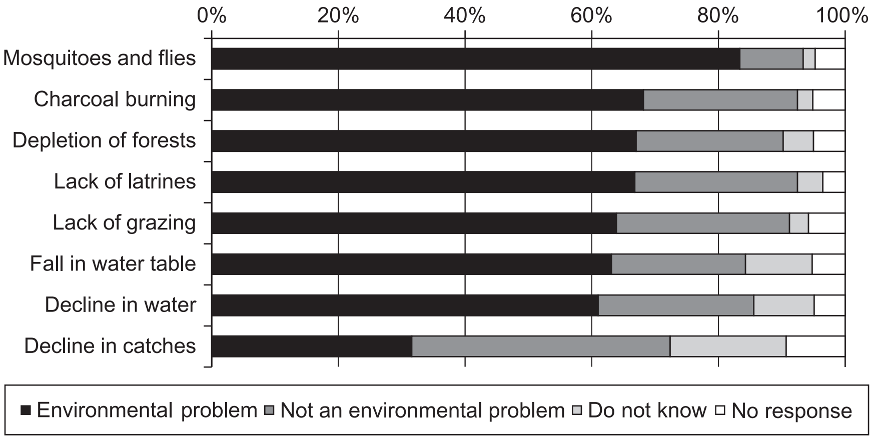

Figure 2. Perception of environmental problems in Somalia, 2002
Source: World Bank and UNDP (2003).

Charcoal and environmental problems

In a 2002 survey by the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 68 percent of Somali households identified charcoal burning as an environmental problem, second only to mosquitoes and flies (World Bank and UNDP 2003; see figure 2). Charcoal laborers also suffer. Not only do they gain little from their engagement in the trade, but they also must cope with its environmental consequences, including forest depletion and environmental health issues. Due to a lack of regulatory authority at the local level, unplanned and unregulated exploitation and clearance of forests and woodlands for firewood, crops, and charcoal production is the norm. The result is not only deforestation but, due to forest clearance, the loss of acacia tree fodder for livestock (in Somalia, the acacia species serves both as critical raw material for charcoal production and as a source of livestock fodder). Additionally, riverbanks once protected from development by government regulations are increasingly being cleared for crop and charcoal production (IRIN 2001a), leading to the erosion of nutrient-rich soil and adverse effects on river courses.

Charcoal and conflict factors

Recognizing that the charcoal trade promises high profit margins for retailers (see table 1, above) and the opportunity to earn foreign exchange even while forest clearance leads to sand dune encroachment, loss of fodder for livestock, and erosion of riverbanks, clans local to Somalia's southern coast (Digil and Tuni) have fought with newcomer clans from the central regions (such as the Haber Gedir subclan of the Hawiye clan) for control over the transport, retail, and export business of the charcoal trade (Webersik 2006).

Charcoal and clan affiliations

In an environment where force and political power is essential for engaging in business of any kind, to engage in the charcoal trade in Somalia requires belonging to a powerful clan, such as the Haber Gedir. While affiliation with this clan is particularly advantageous because it largely controls the Somali charcoal trade, as a general matter, clan affiliation has become paramount in the lives of the Somalis. As an agropastoralist explained, "The reason why people support tribalism is that maybe the clan has more weapons or more people. So if you are attacked or killed, somebody else [from the aggressor's side] will be killed in revenge. That is why people are loyal to their clans."[5]

Apart from clan affiliation, in today's Somalia, the use of force (linked to clan affiliation) is what governs the charcoal trade. Coastal clans, such as the Tuni, have little power either to resist the trade or to benefit from it. Somalia's Resource Management and Network reported in 2003 that, "for the local communities concerned with conservation, constant conflicts have erupted between the traders and their contracted laborers who apparently use force to bring down trees for charcoal burning" (Gurre 2003, 48). According to Ibrahim, "Local communities are resisting the practices of the charcoal [production] . . . and there is even evidence that mango trees are being cut down for charcoal production" (Ibrahim 2002). In addition, he noted, "In Brawa, there was conflict between the [local] Tuni and the [nonlocal] Haber Gedir because of the charcoal trade."

At the local level, then, conflict has erupted not only when local communities have resisted destruction of their fruit trees for the charcoal trade but also when local communities have felt they were being excluded from the trade's economic benefits. According to a member of the former Transitional National Government (the predecessor to today's Transitional Federal Government), the Tuni and Haber Gedir clans had clashed specifically and directly over distribution of the benefits of the charcoal trade:

> In Brawa, conflict between the [indigenous] Tuni and the [newcomer] Haber Gedir arose over the cutting of trees [for the production of charcoal]. . . . Regarding the charcoal trade, there was a reported clash between Haber Gedir and Tuni at the beginning of 2002 in Brawa district. The Tuni killed two to three people of the Haber Gedir. In retaliation, two to three villages inhabited by Tuni were burned.[6]

Several other interviewees from the Brawa region have claimed that, since the civil war, newcomer clans there, mostly of the Hawiye clan (which includes the Haber Gedir clan), have monopolized nearly all business sectors, including

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5 Agropastoralist interviewed by the Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development on April 14, 2001, in Sablale, Somalia.

6 Interview with a member of the former Transitional National Government, speaking on the condition of anonymity with the authors, late 2002.

the charcoal trade, with the result that those of different clan backgrounds, such as the Tuni, have not benefited and, in fact, have been driven from their traditional livelihoods.

Local clans seem to have been more concerned about demanding a fair share of the business than in protesting its adverse environmental impacts. "The Tuni want a cut in the charcoal business, currently dominated by the Abgal and Haber Gedir clans. It is not a question of environment but one of money" (IRIN 2001b).

Charcoal production and trade summary

Over the past ten years, trade in charcoal has become more important than ever before. United Nations investigators estimate that the Islamist organization al Shabaab earned, in 2011, approximately US$25 million from the trade (McConnell 2012). In southern Somalia, local communities belonging to militarily weaker clans, such as the Tuni, have tried, primarily for economic reasons, to build resistance to the control of the trade by families belonging to militarily stronger clans, such as the Haber Gedir. In Brawa's rural areas—and elsewhere—local communities and their clans, largely excluded from involvement in the trade at the highest margin levels, have clashed with newcomer clans, and this has led to a number of people being killed. To operate at the retail and export levels is desirable because in Somalia's charcoal trade, the raw material—wood—is mostly considered a free good and, further, the rule of force has undermined traditional ways of managing or restricting abusive land use.

Conflict fish

As the potential for the banana trade to fund Somalia's conflict dried up, those warlords and armed groups interested in perpetuating the conflict for personal enrichment and to fund operations and arms purchases looked to the charcoal trade and to Somalia's rich fishing grounds. Somalia has the longest coastline in Africa and a seasonal upwelling of nutrients that sustains huge numbers of fish, including highly profitable species such as yellowfin and skipjack tuna (UNEP 2005).

Some of the country's most notorious warlords have been funded by commercial fishing off Somalia's coast by virtue of sale of false fishing licenses to foreign fishing interests, including European companies. According to the UN Panel of Experts on Somalia, "All the attempts at managing the Somali fisheries have resulted in a great deal of money—millions [of US dollars] over the past 10 years—being paid into the private hands of faction leaders, allowing for personal enrichment and to some extent the payment and resupply of private militias" (UNSC 2003a, 44). Some of the false fishing permits involved were found to have been typed out on the previous government's letterhead, while others bore the personal seals of warlords (UNSC 2006). According to owners or operators of some of the commercial fishing vessels involved, some vessels negotiate these licenses before entering Somali waters, and some simply make their way to Somali ports hoping to make last-minute arrangements with a local warlord (UNSC 2006).

Commercial interest in Somali fish

A large number of fishing vessels potentially need these conflict-funding licenses. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimated that in 2005, 700 foreign-owned vessels from Greece, Italy, and Spain (as well as many other non-European nations) were engaged in unauthorized fishing in Somali waters (FAO 2005). In 2003, the UN Panel of Experts on Somalia referred to Somali waters as a "'free for all' among the world's fishing fleets" (UNSC 2003b, 32), and, in 2006, the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia suggested that, in any one season, some 500 international vessels could be found fishing off of the country's coast (UNSC 2006). In 2001, it was said that the lights from so many ships off some stretches of the Puntland coast resembled the lights of a city at night (Kulmiye 2001).

Over the years that Somalia has lacked a functioning government and, hence, formal authority to issue legal fishing licenses, foreign commercial vessels have caught significant annual tonnages of fish in Somali waters, principally tuna. According to the Marine Resources Assessment Group, from 1992 through 2005, the total reported tuna catch by purse seiners (a specific type of fishing boat) inside the Somali Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) amounted to 5–10 percent of the total reported tuna catch in the entire Indian Ocean (MRAG 2005).[7] The total figure for all fish caught in Somali waters (reported and unreported) in these (and subsequent) years is likely to be considerably higher.

A highly lucrative enterprise

Fishing in Somali waters has been highly lucrative. In 2001, Hart Nimrod, an offshoot of a British private military company, estimated that every international purse seiner, long-liner, and trawler plying Somali waters that year caught, on average, some US$2 million worth of tuna per month (Hart Nimrod 2001). This matches an earlier estimate from the Somali Centre for Water and Environment indicating that, in seventy-five days of fishing, each of these commercial vessels can catch up to 420 metric tons of fish worth roughly US$6.3 million (Somali Centre for Water and Environment 1999). That foreign vessels continue to fish

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[7] The 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea—which Somalia ratified on November 11, 1994—limits coastal states' claim to a territorial sea of twelve nautical miles (nm) in article 3, and establishes an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of 200 nm in article 57. Within its EEZ, a coastal state has "sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring and exploiting, conserving and managing the natural resource" (art. 56(1)(a)). For the complete text of the convention, see www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf.

Somali waters despite the need to pay for illegal licenses, not to mention the well-known risk of piracy and kidnapping for ransom, further indicates the trade's highly lucrative value.

Hundreds of foreign vessels fishing in Somali waters in high tuna season (August to November) have caught hundreds of millions of dollars worth—and possibly billions of dollars worth—of skipjack, bigeye, and yellowfin (MRAG 2005). That foreign vessels continue to fish Somali waters despite the need to pay for illegal licenses, not to mention the well-known risk of piracy and kidnapping for ransom, further indicates the trade's highly lucrative value.

Since 1991, Somali warlords have realized millions of dollars from the issuance of illegal fishing licenses. According to a 2006 UN Monitoring Group on Somalia report, a single fishing permit issued by "Jubbaland State" sold for US$80,000 in 2006, and permits for the entire year that year sold for as much as US$150,000 per boat (UNSC 2006). This has generated millions of dollars from 1993 to 2003, much of which was then used to pay private militias and procure arms and ammunition (UNSC 2003c). In 2006, the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia listed fishing licenses and charcoal as the two key revenue generators for what they euphemistically called "local administrations" (that is, warlords) in Lower Juba, Lower Shabelle, and Middle Shabelle (UNSC 2006).

One way fishing licenses have funded warlords is through a company called Africa Fisheries Management (Afmet). In 2003, the UN Panel of Experts on Somalia reported that Afmet fishing licensing profits were funneled into the account of warlord Hussein Ali Ahmed (the "Mayor of Mogadishu"), who then distributed them to five other warlords: Hussein Aideed, Ali Mahdi, Abdullahi Yusuf, Mohamed Abshir, and General Morgan (UNSC 2003b). Despite the fact that these men represented the main opposing factions in Mogadishu, Afmet succeeded in bringing them together to share in licensing revenues. According to the UN Panel of Experts on Somalia, Afmet itself admitted to generating US$600,000 to US$1 million per year in fishing license revenue from 1996 to 1998 and approximately US$300,000 in 2002 (UNSC 2003b).

Warlords operating along the coast can also gain funds through ransom. As has become increasingly apparent, Somali waters are among the world's most dangerous, and should, according to the International Maritime Organization, be considered of significant concern (Kulmiye 2001). In 2003, the UN Panel of Experts on Somalia reported that fishing along the Puntland coast at times resembled naval warfare, with fishing boats typically equipped with heavy anti-aircraft cannons and armed crews (UNSC 2003a).

Fisheries and conflict financing summary

In summary, Somalia's lawlessness and its rich fishing grounds have combined to provide the country's warlords with opportunities to raise funds for their continued war efforts. Significant revenue has been generated through the illegal sale of false fishing licenses, and padded coffers have exacerbated anarchy in and around the country's EEZ, which is increasingly marked by great risks to fishing and shipping vessels and staff from piracy. In 2005 and 2006, the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia recommended that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) impose sanctions on fish from Somalia (UNSC 2006); however, thus far, the UNSC has not acted on that recommendation. By contrast, if managed properly, for instance by holding public auctions to distribute fishing licenses, Somali fisheries have great potential to foster economic recovery and peace.

LESSONS LEARNED

In Somalia, funds generated through the production and sale of bananas and charcoal and the exploitation of the country's fisheries have been used by militias to purchase arms and perpetuate civil strife. For peace and development to occur, it is necessary to curtail the utilization of conflict resources. This section examines lessons that can be learned from Somalia and applied in other conflict and post-conflict situations struggling with conflict resources.

Trade and conflict

Trade in bananas, charcoal, and fish is not the sole cause of conflict in Somalia; the country's history, its governance structures, the easy availability of small arms, and a host of other factors have all played a role (UNSC 2003a, 2003b). However, as this chapter has shown, in the absence of a formal government and what amounts to an economic free-for-all, warlords backed by arms have profited from wartime production and trade of these resources, with some of the revenue devoted to personal enrichment, and some reinvested to perpetuate the conflict.

Peter D. Little notes that the reason "trade figures so prominently in recent events in Somalia relates to the fact that (1) its economy has always been external and market-oriented, and (2) the current statelessness promotes an excessively open and unrestricted economy" (Little 2003, 3). Political and economic instability in Somalia created an atmosphere in which profits could be made by whomever controlled the economy's access points; it is therefore unsurprising that warlords have fostered that instability to maintain their economic lifelines. With a stable government in place, individuals would not have been able to tax exports for their own gain.

The anarchic conditions that led to this situation in Somalia are unfortunately not unique to Somalia. Other, similar conditions exist elsewhere in Africa and beyond where legal as well as illegal production and trade of natural resources have contributed to perpetuation of conflict and, as a result, the deterioration of livelihoods for civilians caught in the middle. Recent history is rife with examples of this, from diamonds in Sierra Leone and coltan in the DRC to timber in Cambodia.

It would be inaccurate to say that the presence, exploitation, and trade of valuable natural resources are sufficient factors to trigger armed conflict. However, when taken in combination with the strategic and economic interests of warring parties, weak governance, and the generation of significant grievances at the local level based on the losses felt by local communities, trade in natural resources can contribute to violent conflict. Such has been—and remains—the case in Somalia. Alec Crawford and Oli Brown identify two broad lessons that can be drawn from Somalia (Crawford and Brown 2008).

1. "Taxing" the trade in agricultural and marine commodities can raise funds for the onset or perpetuation of conflict.
2. Agricultural and marine commodities, as proxies for key natural resources like land and water, can increase the risk of competition (and conflict) between groups. In the absence of strong governance and law enforcement, this can lead to conflict.

PEACEBUILDING RECOMMENDATIONS TO NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

From the experiences in Somalia, a number of policy lessons and recommendations can be made to guide national and international stakeholders in addressing future conflict in other regions. These lessons relate to understanding political and socioeconomic factors that influence peacebuilding in post-conflict situations, the importance of raising awareness of the links between natural resources and conflict, and the role that natural resources play in funding conflict.

National stakeholders

Policymakers and agencies involved in peacebuilding in Somalia as national stakeholders need to be informed of the political realities and power relations inside Somalia in order to address the country's key problems of insecurity, poverty, and human suffering. Specifically, such stakeholders should consider the following:

- Any meaningful peacebuilding effort needs to recognize the role of the Somali business class—although somewhat ambiguous—in achieving political stability.
- In order to persuade businesspeople to support the Transitional Federal Government, benefits, such as security and health services, must outweigh incentives to engage in Somalia's conflict economy. Today, automatic weapons have become a means to meet ends in all respects of life, including in the business sector.
- The economic benefits of Somalia's bananas, charcoal, and fish trade must be fairly distributed across all sections of society irrespective of clan, gender, or other social markers.
- Providing alternative livelihoods must be a focus.

International stakeholders

In order to effectively address the role of natural resources in the Somalia conflict, the international peacekeeping and peacebuilding community should consider the following actions:[8]

- The international community, particularly Somalia's major trading partners in Africa, Europe, and the Gulf, should work with and support national policy makers, local stakeholders, and local trading partners to increase the transparency of trade with Somalia to reduce and restrict trade contributions to the conflict. Efforts to do so could include (1) technical and financial support to build the capacity of local law enforcement and strengthen national legal and court systems to reduce illegal harvesting and trade; (2) monitoring key trade and transport hubs; (3) establishing regulated charcoal trading centers similar to those established by the United Nations for conflict minerals in the DRC; and (4) establishing due diligence legislation for international companies operating in or trading with Somalia.
- Neighboring countries and the international community should recognize and support local and national reconciliation efforts already underway to manage natural resources. Thus, for example, only charcoal that is certified and controlled by the African Union and the Somali government could be destined for export trade.
- The international community should support the imposition of effective UN sanctions on Somali bananas, charcoal, and fish, if the domestic sale of and international trade in these resources can be directly linked to financing the Somali conflict. If such sanctions would result in significant economic hardship for the people of Somalia, alternative sanctions, such as travel bans and asset freezes for leadership that would not affect the general population should be used instead. Further, the international community should hold to account any companies found to be operating in contravention of such sanctions (for example, buying false fishing permits).
- The international community should work to ensure that stakeholders and international entities operating in Somalia are made aware of the linkages between the trade in Somali bananas, charcoal, and fish and the conflict. UN agencies within the country should be mandated to help manage these resources in a sustainable way to mitigate the conflict and enforce sanctions, as required.
- The international community should acknowledge the importance of natural resources in Somalia—in particular, bananas, charcoal, and fisheries—for strengthening peacebuilding and economic recovery.
- More broadly, the international community should support the recommendation (by the UK-based organization Global Witness) that the UNSC define conflict resources so that it can identify cases requiring further UNSC action.

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[8] Adapted from Crawford and Brown (2008).

The definition should include less traditional conflict resources (other than diamonds, coltan, and timber) and address the money flows associated with conflict resources trade.

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