

# *Danish Immigration Service*

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## **Report of the Nordic fact-finding mission to the Gedo region in Somalia**

**15 October – 30 October 1998**

**Copenhagen, July 1999**

## List of Contents

<b>1. BACKGROUND TO THE MISSION.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>3. GEOGRAPHY, POPULATION AND ECONOMY.....</b>	<b>7</b>
3.1. GENERAL POINTS.....	7
3.2. NATURAL CONDITIONS AND CLIMATE.....	7
3.3. POPULATION.....	8
3.4. CLAN PATTERN.....	8
3.4.1. Garba Harre, Belet Hawa and Dolo districts.....	11
3.4.2. El Waq district.....	11
3.4.3. Luuq district.....	11
3.4.4. Bardera district.....	12
3.5. INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS.....	12
3.6. INFRASTRUCTURE.....	13
3.7. ECONOMY.....	14
<b>4. STRUCTURE OF POWER, ADMINISTRATION AND POLITICAL LEADERSHIP.....</b>	<b>15</b>
4.1. GENERAL POINTS.....	15
4.2. ADMINISTRATION AND STRUCTURE OF POWER.....	15
4.2.1. Development management groups (DMGs).....	15
4.2.2. Councils of elders.....	16
4.2.3. Marehan clans' ugaas.....	17
4.2.4. Political leadership.....	17
<b>5. SECURITY SITUATION.....</b>	<b>18</b>
5.1. GENERAL POINTS.....	18
5.2. RECONCILIATION PROCESS BETWEEN AL-ITIHAD AND THE SOMALI NATIONAL FRONT (SNF).....	19
5.3. AL-ITIHAD.....	20
5.4. SOMALI NATIONAL FRONT (SNF) AND THE RECONCILIATION AGREEMENT.....	21
5.5. SECURITY IN GEDO IN REGIONAL TERMS.....	23
5.6. MINE HAZARD.....	25
<b>6. HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION.....</b>	<b>25</b>
6.1. GENERAL POINTS.....	25
6.2. FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT.....	26
6.3. LEGAL SAFEGUARDS.....	26

6.4. <i>POLICE</i> .....	27
6.5. <i>POLITICALLY MOTIVATED PERSECUTION</i> .....	27
6.6. <i>ETHNIC/CLAN-BASED DISCRIMINATION</i> .....	27
6.7. <i>POSITION OF WOMEN</i> .....	28
<b>7. HUMANITARIAN SITUATION</b> .....	<b>28</b>
7.1. <i>GENERAL POINTS</i> .....	28
7.2. <i>FOOD SUPPLIES</i> .....	29
7.3. <i>HEALTH</i> .....	29
7.4. <i>EDUCATION</i> .....	30
7.5. <i>SOMALI REHABILITATION PROJECT (SRP)</i> .....	30
<b>8. REPATRIATION AND REINTEGRATION</b> .....	<b>31</b>
8.1. <i>GENERAL POINTS</i> .....	31
8.2. <i>REPATRIATION OF REJECTED ASYLUM SEEKERS</i> .....	31
8.3. <i>REINTEGRATION</i> .....	32
<b>9. INTERNAL FLIGHT ALTERNATIVE (IFA)</b> .....	<b>32</b>
<b>10. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS CONCERNING THE SPLIT WITHIN THE SNF, THE PEACE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE SNF AND AL-ITIHAD AND THE CONFLICT IN KISMAYO</b> .....	<b>33</b>
10.1. <i>GENERAL POINTS</i> .....	33
10.2. <i>SPLIT WITHIN THE SNF AND PEACE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE SNF AND AL-ITIHAD</i> .....	33
10.3. <i>CONFLICT IN KISMAYO</i> .....	35
<b>11. INDIVIDUALS, ORGANISATIONS AND AUTHORITIES CONSULTED</b> .....	<b>36</b>
<b>12. BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	<b>38</b>
<b>13. ABBREVIATIONS USED</b> .....	<b>39</b>
<b>14. LIST OF POLITICAL MOVEMENTS</b> .....	<b>40</b>
<b>15. ANNEXES</b> .....	<b>41</b>
ANNEX 1 .....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
ANNEX 2 .....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
ANNEX 3 .....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

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**ANNEX 5** ..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

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**ANNEX 8** ..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

**ANNEX 9** ..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

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## 1. Background to the mission

The Danish and Swedish Immigration Services carried out a joint fact-finding mission to the Gedo region in south-western Somalia from 15 to 30 October 1998. The mission followed on from a previous Danish and Swedish mission to the southern part of the Gedo region in the spring of 1997.

The mission was carried out as a joint Danish and Swedish operation with the participation of the Danish Immigration Service (*Udlændingestyrelsen (US)*) and the Swedish Immigration Service (*Statens Invandrarverk (SIV)*) together with representatives of the Danish and Swedish embassies in Nairobi.

The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)/Somali Rehabilitation Programme (SRP) and the UNDP, Somalia, provided the mission with logistical support during its stay in Gedo. They arranged the delegation's flights and other transport in the Gedo region and helped fix up its meetings with *de facto* authorities in Gedo.

The delegation made use of interpreters throughout the mission, but was not at any time escorted by guards. It visited the towns of Mandera, in Kenya, where the UNOPS/SRP has its head office for south-western Somalia, including the Gedo region, and Belet Hawa, Dolo and Luuq within the Gedo region.

The delegation had originally planned also to visit the town of Garba Harre, Gedo's regional capital. As the leaders of the Somali National Front (SNF) were in Belet Hawa at the time of the delegation's stay in the Gedo region, however, it was decided to call off the visit to Garba Harre.

The delegation was led by Jens Weise Olesen, of the Danish Immigration Service, and also included Christer Svan, of the Swedish Immigration Service, Henrik Larsen, from the Danish Embassy in Nairobi, and Mikael Broman, from the Swedish Embassy in Nairobi.

## 2. Introduction

A fairly large proportion of the Somali asylum-seekers in Nordic countries belong to the Marehan clans. Many claim to come from Mogadishu, but some also give the Gedo region as their home. During the civil war, members of the Marehan clans in Mogadishu suffered violence at the hands of clan militias coming under the United Somali Congress (USC), which in January 1991 seized control of Mogadishu and forced the President of Somalia, Siad Barre, to flee. Siad Barre himself belonged to the Marehan, which was one of the reasons why Marehan members in Mogadishu faced ill-treatment by USC militias.

Many Marehan lost their lives during the fighting in Mogadishu, where in a string of cases the conquering militias took over Marehan members' property in the city. This left large numbers of Marehan members internally displaced, and most fled from Mogadishu to the Marehan clans' traditional homelands in Somalia: the Gedo region and the Abud Waq area of the Galgaduud region. The vast majority, however, fled to Gedo, as the Abud Waq area was heavily affected by fighting, especially between Aideed's Habr Gedir militias and the Marehan clan, a clan-based conflict simmering away beneath the surface for generations but now heightened by the civil war. The Gedo region, on the other hand, was relatively peaceful, with large parts of it already inhabited by Marehan clans.

While the delegation was in the Gedo region it could see that, despite the presence of a relatively large, although unknown, number of internally displaced people there, the security situation was fairly stable. Several sources described the security situation as one of the best in the whole of Somalia, pointing out not least that it was possible for anyone to move throughout the region without travelling under guard, a rare occurrence elsewhere in Somalia.

In appraising the security situation, several UN sources pointed out that in the summer of 1998 the Islamic Al-Itihad organisation and the Somali National Front (SNF) had concluded a reconciliation agreement including provision for demobilisation of Al-Itihad. Steps could be seen to have been taken to establish a joint administration in the region, although this was as yet rudimentary. A Marehan-based clan and militia movement, the Somali National Front (SNF), thus held overall political and military power in the region. It was added that the Ethiopian armed forces were keen to keep the political and security situation in the region under control. There were thus an unknown number of Ethiopian troops stationed in areas bordering on the Gedo region.

The SNF could also be seen in part to be politically divided. SNF leaders disagreed over the interpretation of the reconciliation agreement with Al-Itihad. On the other hand, independent sources repeatedly emphasised that this split was hardly likely to develop into an armed conflict. It was pointed out here that the Marehan clans normally acted as one, with their traditional paramount leader, ("*ugaas*") playing a key role in local reconciliation matters. His general authority was described as crucial to a peaceful settlement of any disputes between Marehan clans. It was emphasised that there were no armed clashes between any of the clans or their militias in the Gedo region.

On the human rights front, there was reported to be no persecution of people for political reasons or on account of their clan membership.

The humanitarian situation was such that the World Food Programme (WFP), for one, did not consider there to be any question of introducing emergency aid schemes for the distribution of foodstuffs in the region. The education and health situation in the region could be seen to be very

poor by international standards, but with a number of NGOs playing a key role in those areas.

This mission report has been compiled by Jens Weise Olesen, of the Danish Immigration Service, Christer Svan, of the Swedish Immigration Service, and Henrik Larsen, from the Danish Embassy in Nairobi.

### **3. Geography, population and economy**

#### **3.1. General points**

The former President of Somalia, Siad Barre, established the region of Gedo in 1974. The Gedo area used to form part of the Upper Juba region, subsequently divided into the three regions of Bay, Bakool and Gedo. In January 1991, when the Somali government collapsed, the Gedo region consisted of six districts: Garba Harre (the regional capital), Bardera, Luuq, El Waq, Dolo and Belet Hawa. See Annex 1 for a map of the Gedo region.

Steps have since been taken to establish new districts within the Gedo region. Bur Dubo was hived off from Garba Harre and there have recently been moves in the El Ade and Ged Weyn areas to establish them as districts.

The former regional capital, Garba Harre, currently still serves as the headquarters of the Marehan clans' traditional head (often referred to as "King of the Marehan"), Ugaas Omar Ugaas Hirsi, who lives in the village of Bamba Halima near Garba Harre.

The Gedo region and its Marehan-based Somali National Front (SNF) militia movement were described by Andrew Fitzgibbon, Programme Officer for the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)/Somali Rehabilitation Programme (SRP), as a last vestige of the Siad Barre era. Siad Barre was himself a Marehan and the Marehan clan is nowadays the politically, although not numerically, dominant clan in the Gedo region.

The Gedo region is situated in the south-western part of Somalia and borders on Kenya to the west, Ethiopia to the north, the Bay and Bakool regions to the east and the Middle and Lower Juba regions to the south. It covers an area of 42 000 km<sup>2</sup>. See Annex 2 for a map of Somalia's administrative units.

The civil war destroyed all administrative structures in the region and various main towns of districts have served as headquarters for the warring factions. Luuq was for a while the headquarters of the Islamic fundamentalist Al-Itihad militia movement, while Garba Harre formed the headquarters of the Marehan-dominated SNF militia movement. During the delegation's time in Gedo, the town of Belet Hawa was acting as the SNF's headquarters, while the smaller town of El Ade had until recently provided the main venue for the latest reconciliation conference between the SNF and Al-Itihad.

#### **3.2. Natural conditions and climate**

The vast majority of the Gedo region consists of arid or semi-arid savannah, except for the farming land along the Rivers Dawa and Juba.

The main rainy season (known as the *Gu*) normally falls from April to June, with another, lesser season (known as the *Deyr*) coming in November and December, but rainfall is unevenly distributed in the region and can vary from 150 mm to 400 mm a year. The last few years have seen

considerable fluctuations in rainfall. Average temperatures range from 22 to 35 Celsius, making the area one of the hottest places on earth. Many parts have an average daytime temperature of between 35 and 40 Celsius (UNDOS 1995a). The delegation was told that the district capital of Luuq has the highest average temperature in the world. Dry winds for most of the year result in very low humidity throughout the Gedo region.

For the last two years, the Gedo region, like most of Somalia, has suffered a lengthy drought, followed by torrential rains and flooding. The drought in the winter of 1996/1997 saw the River Juba almost entirely dry up. Agricultural production and hence food supplies were seriously affected by the drought. The area was then hit by torrential downpours in the winter of 1997/1998, with agricultural production again seriously affected. Tens of thousands of farmers could only look on as their fields and crops were submerged in floodwater and many had to take refuge in higher-lying parts of the region.

### **3.3. Population**

A report from the United Nations Development Office for Somalia (UNDOS) on local administration in Gedo put the region's population in 1995 at around one million, giving it a population density of 25 per km<sup>2</sup>. Those figures make Gedo one of the most densely populated parts of Somalia (UNDOS 1995a). The same source reports the population to have increased over the last three years (up to 1995) as a result of returning refugees.

These figures, however, by no means tally with another UNDOS report, also dating from 1995, which puts the population at around 330 000 and population density at 8 per km<sup>2</sup> (UNDOS 1995b). See Annex 3 for estimated population density in 1998.

The latest UNOPS/SRP half-yearly report on the south-western area, including the Gedo region, refers to the absence of reliable data on birth rates, death rates or population flows, but assumes the population of Gedo to be around 300 000, giving a population density of 7,5 per km<sup>2</sup>. The same source points out that the population density figure for the region does not give a true picture, since the vast majority of the population lives in the farming areas along the River Juba (UNOPS/SRP 1998a).

The report by the Danish and Swedish Immigration Services on an earlier visit to the Gedo region in 1997 (US/SIV 1997) includes the comment that the Gedo region is fairly complicated just in clan terms. Firstly there are many different clans in the area; secondly there is a large Bantu community; and lastly Gedo has a very large group of internally displaced people.

### **3.4. Clan pattern**

Kenneth Menkhaus, Assistant Professor at Davidson College, North Carolina, and currently acting as a consultant for the UNDOS, is the main author of the Human Development Report, Somalia 1998, published by the UNDP, Somalia. The delegation was present when that report was presented by the UNDP, Somalia, in Nairobi on 24 October 1998 and afterwards held a meeting with Kenneth Menkhaus.

One point made by the Human Development Report, Somalia 1998, is that clan membership and clan identity lie right at the heart of the social system in Somalia. The whole of society is organised around them, as perhaps shown more clearly by the present situation, in which the lack of any government has made the clan system vitally necessary for individual protection, day-to-day survival and law-and-order security. Clan identity is not, however, the only social factor in



Somalia. In many places clan identity operates alongside other factors such as geographical background, class, gender and religious movements. This has given rise to a very fluid political landscape in Somalia. The shifting, flexible nature of clan identity or affiliation has also to be borne in mind.

Firstly, all Somalis can trace their family back for about 30 generations, giving them membership of many subclans. The level of kinship, i.e. the "clan", turned to in any given situation depends entirely on what the problem is.

Secondly, clan identities can change and be re-established according to circumstances. Clan members leaving their home area will in many cases take on the identity of the dominant clan in their new surroundings. This is referred to as *shedad* status. Where the situation so requires, however, they will be able to revert to their previous clan identity.

Lastly, people who for various reasons move around in Somalia, e.g. business people or internally displaced persons, in seeking security across clan divisions, can attempt to avail themselves of kinship on the maternal side, where considered worthwhile.

No sources would venture to comment on precise relative sizes of individual clans in the Gedo region, but all agreed that the Marehan clan was politically dominant there.

Generally speaking, the Marehan clans were considered quite tolerant towards other clans in their area but Abdishakur Othowai, Coordinator for the Nomadic Primary Health Care Programme, Mandera, did not think that the Rahanweyn and Garre clans found any great favour in Marehan eyes. At the same time, however, he made the point that they did not suffer any abuses at the hands of Marehan clans merely on account of clan affiliation. He added that the Marehan clans tended only to respect clans with a military strength approaching their own. Rahanweyn clans therefore enjoyed somewhat greater respect in Marehan eyes than did Garre clans. He also pointed out, however, that only in Bardera had problems arisen in the past between the three clans.

According to Abdishakur Othowai, extensive resettlement by Marehan clans in the Gedo region had been going on for some considerable time. Back in 1977-1980 the Ogaden war between Somalia and Ethiopia triggered large movements of people, with many Marehan members being transferred from Ethiopia to Luuq and Bur Dubo in particular.

The Somali Government at the time, headed by Siad Barre, assisted Marehan settlers in Gedo with farm implements, among other facilities, while a Japanese NGO tried to persuade the Rahanweyn clans to accept the new Marehan settlers, arguing in particular that this was a temporary arrangement. The Marehan settlers were at present still living in those areas, with the Rahanweyn and Gabaweyn clans being squeezed out there as a result.

The civil war in Somalia in the early 1990s prompted most Gabaweyn clans to leave the Gedo region and go to live in Kenya and Ethiopia. This enabled the Marehan clans finally to secure political power in the Gedo region. Abdullahi Sheikh Mohamed, of the UNOPS/SRP, regarded that seizure of power as the culmination of a long-term strategy by the President at the time, Siad Barre, with the Gedo region having been established back in 1974 in order to create a regional base for the Marehan clans.

A series of reconciliation meetings between clans have been held in various parts of the Gedo region since 1994. The first reconciliation in the Gedo region took place between the Ogadeni, Rahanweyn and Marehan clans in Bardera in 1994. The outcome was peace in Bardera and that reconciliation formed the first step towards peace in large parts of central and parts of south-western Somalia, namely the Bay, Bakool and Gedo regions as well as Lower and Middle Juba.

February 1996 saw the holding of a further reconciliation meeting between the Rahanweyn and Marehan clans in Bardera. This was an attempt to revitalise trade between the Bay, Bakool and Gedo regions. The result of reconciliation this time was free movement between the three regions. The very prickly issue of ownership of farming land remained unresolved, however, with regular reconciliation meetings on that issue taking place between the Rahanweyn, Gabaweyn and Marehan clans.

The Marehan clans currently still regard Bardera as their headquarters and do in fact dominate that area politically. Abdullahi Sheikh Mohamed, of the UNOPS National Professional Project Personnel, Mandera, was convinced that the land issue would drag on, while also not doubting that it would be peacefully resolved through reconciliation. He pointed out here that some Marehan members had in actual fact returned part of the farming land to its rightful owners, in particular to Gabaweyn members. This was especially noticeable in the Luuq district. He nevertheless emphasised that most of the Gabaweyn community had not yet recovered their land and were therefore still living as refugees in Ethiopia, in places including Dolo (i.e. the Ethiopian part of the Somali-Ethiopian border town of Dolo).

Barry Sesnan, of the UNOPS/SRP, similarly pointed out that the Gabaweyn community experienced great difficulty in recovering the land from which they had previously fled. In this connection he evidenced two appeals, of 27 April 1998 and 4 September 1998 respectively, from Gabaweyn and other Bantu communities previously living in Gedo but now refugees in neighbouring Kenya and Ethiopia. The letters in question are attached as Annexes 4 and 5.

The first appeal contains a complaint by Garre Mare, Gabaweyn and Wakh Doore elders from the Dolo district of the Gedo region that a number of members of those communities have still not had land taken over by Marehan members during the war returned to them. The appeal calls on the UNOPS/SRP to cease its activities in areas in which the land ownership issue remains unresolved. The signatories of the appeal take the view that by means of its projects the UNOPS/SRP is assisting Marehan members who have unlawfully taken over properties from the Garre Mare, Gabaweyn and Wakh Doore communities. According to the appeal, those communities are now living as refugees in Mandera (Kenya) and in Dolo and Suftu (Ethiopia).

The appeal of 4 September 1998 from Gabaweyn elders in Mandera states that the Gabaweyn lived mainly as farmers in the areas between the Rivers Juba and Shabelle and in particular in the farming areas of the Luuq, Dolo, Bur Dubo and Bardera districts. The Gabaweyn community complain that, despite having peacefully coexisted with the Marehan community before the civil war, they were forced to flee from their properties. They are currently, according to the letters, still living as refugees in Mandera (Kenya) and in Dolo and Suftu (Ethiopia). The letters state that there are around 100 000 Gabaweyn living there as refugees, without receiving any kind of international aid.

They request assistance from the UNOPS/SRP for purposes including implementation of a Gabaweyn-Marehan reconciliation agreement and enabling refugees to be repatriated to and resettled in their former homelands in the Gedo region.

However, the District Commissioner for Luuq, Mohamed Mohamud Aden, made it clear to the delegation that the land ownership issue there had been largely resolved in reconciliation between the area's Gabaweyn and Marehan clans. He explained that there were only three outstanding cases involving farming land and one case concerning a property in all of the Luuq district, emphasising that those four cases would be referred to the court in Luuq as soon as possible. He also denied that there was any "Bantu" community in the Gedo region.

Staff at the UNOPS/SRP in Mandera listed the relative positions of the main clans as follows:

1. Rahanweyn clans, including the Bantu communities of Gabaweyn and Garre;
2. Marehan clans;
3. Ogadeni clans;
4. Dir clans.

Abdishakur Othowai, Coordinator for the Nomadic Primary Health Care Programme, Mandera, however, took the view that, although the Gedo region was generally considered a Marehan one, the Marehan clans formed only the fourth largest clan group in Gedo. Both the Rahanweyn and the Bantu clans were present in far greater numbers than the Marehan. See Annex 6 as regards major Somali clans.

#### **3.4.1. Garba Harre, Belet Hawa and Dolo districts**

According to a note on the Gedo region produced by the United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS), the Marehan clan forms a majority in the Garba Harre, Belet Hawa and Dolo districts.

#### **3.4.2. El Waq district**

In the El Waq district, the UNPOS reported the Marehan and Garre clans to be roughly equal in size. Abdishakur Othowai nevertheless stated that El Waq was to be regarded as a Garre-dominated district, in which some cooperation was now taking place between the Marehan and Garre clans. The last of these were the original inhabitants of the area, but the Marehan clans nowadays enjoyed disproportionately great political influence and the town of El Waq could in clan make-up be said to fall into two parts.

#### **3.4.3. Luuq district**

In clan terms the Luuq district is divided into an eastern and a western part by the River Juba. The one side of the district capital, Luuq, is inhabited by Moalim Weine, Gobawein, Gasar Gudde, Dir, Shekal and Jiroon clans and the other side by Marehan clans. Politically speaking, the Marehan clans are in control of Luuq, with the other clans' political influence being curtailed by the Marehan clans' greater arms holdings. Further east in the Luuq district, the Marehan clans' influence declines as that of other, non-Marehan clans increases.

Abdishakur Othowai explained that, before the civil war, the Bantu community known as the Gabaweyn were in the majority in Luuq, but during the war most Gabaweyn members fled to Ethiopia. The Marehan clan, not traditionally farmers as were the Gabaweyn, had to some extent taken over farming land from the Gabaweyn community. Large numbers of Gabaweyn now worked as agricultural labourers for Marehan members.

#### **3.4.4. Bardera district**

The Bardera district in the south of the Gedo region was visited by the Danish and Swedish Immigration Services in the spring of 1997. The clan pattern in that part of Gedo is described on pages 58 to 61 of the report on the Nordic fact-finding mission to central and southern Somalia from 15 February to 14 March 1997. The Bardera district is far more complicated than the other districts of the Gedo region in its clan make-up.

In its note on the Gedo region, the UNPOS states that, before civil war broke out in 1990, Bardera was mainly the homeland of various Rahanweyn clans: Gelidle, Elay, Moalim Weine, Harin, Laysan, Shanta Alemo and Asharaf members. There were also Awlihan and Darod clans in Bardera. The Bardera district consists of over 180 villages, mainly inhabited by Rahanweyn clans. The Marehan clans traditionally, before the 1969 October revolution, formed a minority in Bardera. At that time only one village, Serinly, in the Bardera district was inhabited by Marehan clans. In the 1960s the Awlihan clan was in the majority in the western part of the town of Bardera, which like Luuq is divided into a western and an eastern part. The eastern part, containing the main section of the town, was at that time inhabited by Rahanweyn clans, with both Awlihan and Marehan clans living in the western part. From 1988 to 1990, however, Awlihan members were driven out of Bardera by the Marehan clans and since then most Awlihan members have been living in an area situated between the Sakow and Jilib districts of the Middle Juba region to the south of Gedo. In recent years a large number of Rahanweyn clans have returned to the town of Bardera. As both the Rahanweyn and the Awlihan clans are weaker than the Marehan clans militarily, however, those two clans have little political influence. Bardera is thus nowadays controlled by the Marehan clans. Abdishakur Othowai said that, before the civil war, the Rahanweyn clans formed the largest community in Bardera.

#### **3.5. Internally displaced persons**

The internally displaced people in the Gedo region come largely from the neighbouring regions of Bay and Bakool, many of them belonging to the Rahanweyn clans. A large proportion of these fled to Gedo in the autumn of 1995, after General Aideed's Somali National Alliance (SNA) militia force won control of places including Baidoa in the Bay region.

In addition there are a large number of internally displaced people belonging to various Bantu groups. Some Bantu communities are also living as refugees in Ethiopia and Kenya. The latter were forced to flee as a result of wide-scale expropriation of their holdings by Somalis not previously engaged in farming but having lost their usual sources of income during the war and therefore grabbing land owned by the militarily insignificant Bantu community.

This problem, also met with elsewhere in Somalia, has been further compounded by the fact that during the war many Marehan members originally having their homes in Mogadishu fled to Luuq and other places in Gedo in particular. Most of those internally displaced Marehan had lost all their possessions in the war and in their flight and they therefore seized farming land from the politically and militarily weaker Gabaweyn community in Gedo.

It should be noted that most of the officers in former President Siad Barre's army were Marehan members, that clan being traditionally, according to Abdishakur Othowai, a kind of warrior clan. On his departure from Mogadishu in January 1991, Siad Barre left behind him a very large group of internally displaced Marehan in Somalia. Most of them fled to the Gedo region and on to Kenya. The source put at around 150 000 the number of Marehan members living as refugees in the Kenyan border town of Mandera until the refugee camps were closed down in 1994. The Marehan

refugees were then, like large groups of Rahanweyn refugees, repatriated to the Gedo region, where they settled with UNHCR assistance. See Annex 7 for UNHCR figures on Somali refugees repatriated from Kenya since 1992.

The large numbers of internally displaced people in the Gedo region live in camps or other temporary accommodation in or around the region's towns. Many of them run small businesses or workshops in the towns and make a living in that way. The delegation visited a settlement for internally displaced people just outside Belet Hawa and was told that as a rule they were housed by clan. The delegation was shown a settlement said only to house Marehan members previously driven out of Mogadishu.

Those settlements were a hive of market activity and in spite of the primitive conditions there were many people engaged in everything from building work and well-digging to small-scale trading and carpentry. Steve Gluning, Field Security Officer for the World Food Programme (WFP), reported that the WFP did not distribute foodstuffs in Gedo or elsewhere in Somalia, as the food situation was not such as to make it necessary.

### ***3.6. Infrastructure***

Even before Somalia's civil war, the Gedo region was fairly poorly off for infrastructure. It then had just a few metalled roads, but nowadays the road network is rudimentary, with no metalled roads. For long stretches between Belet Hawa and Dolo there is no road and the delegation's cars were driving along dirt tracks almost all the way. In the 1930s the Italians built a road between Dolo and Luuq, which is now in ruins and for long stretches unusable. The delegation was advised against driving from Luuq to Bardera by car, moreover, as the road between the two towns was, if anything, in an even worse state.

When the delegation visited the towns of Belet Hawa, Dolo and Luuq, many brick and concrete buildings could be seen to be in ruins, stripped by looting or simply derelict. None of the towns had any buildings in a fit state for the authorities to consider it possible to hold meetings with the delegation in them. The meetings in Belet Hawa were thus held in the SNF Chairman's yard, the meeting in Dolo on mats in a back yard among a number of outbuildings and the meetings in Luuq at AMREF premises outside the town.

In Luuq there were a number of larger buildings built by the Italians during the colonial period, including a prison, an Italian governor's residence, an administrative building and a police station. All government buildings were very decrepit, however, and some had been bombed by Ethiopian forces in the war against Al-Itihad. The police station was partly destroyed by bombing. All buildings were largely empty of any contents, there being just a few primitive benches and tables in the district council offices, with the premises showing no visible signs of use.

The towns are thus heavily marked by the destruction wreaked by the civil war, and the vast majority of Gedo's population live in primitive huts with no water or electricity. On the whole the region has no electricity supplies, apart from generators owned by better-off private individuals. The towns have no water supplies, except for hand-operated (and a few mechanically-operated) wells.

### **3.7. Economy**

The 1995 UNDOS report (UNDOS 1995a) puts the area of the Gedo region that can be farmed by natural means at only about 20%. Of that cultivable land, 80% lies in the fertile areas along the River Juba.

According to the UNOPS/SRP half-yearly report for the first half of 1998 (UNOPS/SRP 1998a), the principal economic activities in Gedo are livestock and arable farming and trade with neighbouring regions and countries. Some of the trade with neighbouring Ethiopia and Kenya takes the form of recorded trade via official crossing-points at Belet Hawa and El Waq on the border with Kenya and at Dolo on the border with Ethiopia. Considerable unofficial trade is also engaged in across the borders with both Kenya and Ethiopia. Extensive small trading goes on in all towns and villages as well.

Kenneth Menkhaus, Assistant Professor at Davidson College/UNDOS consultant, considered the Gedo region's economy to be in reasonably good shape and described trade in the region as "booming". Traders in Gedo made more profit than, for instance, those in Hargeisa, in north-western Somalia (Somaliland). He pointed out that the Gedo region was a centre for brisk trading between Somalia and Kenya or Ethiopia. Large quantities of goods were brought from Mogadishu to Bardera by lorry. Bardera, being the largest town in the Gedo region, formed the centre of that trade, with active flows of funds both from abroad and to and from Mogadishu.

Kenneth Menkhaus explained that the vast bulk of the capital built up in Bardera was channelled back to Mogadishu in order to bring in further goods from Mogadishu (and Merka). He regarded this as a clear sign of economic health, since the money remained in Somalia, while also pointing to his own surprise how little capital there actually was in the Gedo region. Virtually all capital had left the area, with the lack of capital plain to see, not least in Luuq. Kenneth Menkhaus reported people in Luuq to be poor, with hardly any money in circulation. He made it clear that the group of business people in possession of any sizeable trading capital was very small. He also regarded the Small Loan Fund (SLF) scheme run by the Somalia Rehabilitation Project (SRP) as very important for Gedo's economy.

The vast majority of imported goods in Gedo come from Mogadishu, making the state of the roads and the security of Gedo's neighbouring regions vitally important if trade is to continue. While in Luuq, the delegation visited a transshipment centre for imported goods from Mogadishu. The centre contained a number of trucks from Mogadishu, from which goods were transferred to what were referred to as "Marehan trucks". These then took goods on to destinations in Gedo.

Luuq District Council reported that it had begun taxing trade in the area. Goods from Mogadishu and livestock transactions were taxed, with the tax revenue being used for purposes including police pay.

Livestock production, however, forms the main economic activity in Gedo. The above source explained that government figures from just before the civil war put Gedo's livestock population at around 3 million. That included camels, goats, sheep and cattle. Agricultural production was of great importance to Bantus and members of Rahanweyn clans.

Barry Sesnan, Area Manager (Gedo region) for the UNOPS/SRP, considered the population's survival strategies to have worked as intended during the flood disaster in the winter of 1997/98. Large sectors of the affected population were thus able to survive from stockpiled resources. Another effect of the flooding had been to make farming land more fertile by supplying an input of minerals. Elsewhere, however, some farming land was partly spoiled by a covering of sand.

## 4. Structure of power, administration and political leadership

### 4.1. General points

There is no effective civilian administration in operation in the Gedo region (UNOPS/SRP 1998a). There is, however, an SNF-based regional administration. That administrative structure was established in 1997 in response to the political and administrative vacuum left by reconciliation between the SNF and Al-Itihad with the subsequent disbanding of Al-Itihad. Mohamed Mohamud Aden, Chairman of Luuq District Council, explained that the Council had first been set up in a kind of "emergency situation", in the period following 12 June 1997, when Al-Itihad lost control of Luuq, its previous headquarters.

### 4.2. Administration and structure of power

According to Mohamed Mohamud Aden, district councils consisted for the time being of members not elected in traditional or democratic fashion, but generally held in esteem by the local community. This meant that the area's councils of elders had not elected representatives to sit on the district council, but he pointed out that they did have authority to put forward nominees for the district council, as well as advising it. Despite the present political and administrative situation, this gave councils of elders some influence over day-to-day administration. Abdullahi Sheikh Mohamed, of the UNOPS/SRP, however, highlighted the significance of all members of Gedo's district councils having been chosen by the SNF. Several of the region's district commissioners were former members of the SNF Executive Committee (see below).

The Gedo region's councils of elders were described by all sources as working well and playing their traditional role as an agency of reconciliation throughout the region. All sources also made the point that the core task of councils of elders, to help bring about reconciliation and compensation, i.e. payment of blood money (*diyah* compensation), was unimpaired.

#### 4.2.1. Development management groups (DMGs)

The technical and administrative role of councils of elders and district councils consists in practice of overseeing the development management groups (DMGs) set up in all of the region's districts. DMGs thus form part of the district administration. Both the District Commissioner of Luuq, Mohamed Mohamud Aden, and Sa'id Ali Mumin, the DMG team leader in Belet Hawa, said that the DMGs were established in the spring of 1997 in order to bring development at district level. They were established on the basis of needs voiced by local communities, it being councils of elders and district councils which actually set up the DMGs. According to Mohamed Mohamud Aden, there were DMGs in all of the Gedo region's districts and they each came under the local district commissioner. Sa'id Ali Mumin saw DMGs as reflecting the lack of local administration in Gedo.

DMGs were now regarded by the UNOPS/SRP as the local link through which donors and UN agencies could implement their projects on the ground in the Gedo region. The source pointed out that no DMG staff received any pay for working for the DMG.

According to Sa'id Ali Mumin, DMGs' main tasks were to:

- establish contact between international NGOs or donors and local communities;
- devise sustainable local development projects;
- bring about reconciliation between population groups locally.

The UNOPS/SRP imposed a number of requirements for local DMGs so as both to support what it termed "good governance" and also to ensure openness and responsibility in the implementation of their projects. It thus required DMGs to demonstrate an ability to:

- ensure that local disagreements were settled;
- discuss local communities' needs;
- put forward sustainable answers to local communities' needs;
- harness local resources;
- regularly monitor progress with projects.

Barry Sesnan, of the UNOPS/SRP in the Gedo region, considered cooperation between his organisation and the DMGs in Gedo to be very satisfactory and smooth.

### **4.2.2. Councils of elders**

Despite being eclipsed by local militia leaders in some parts of Somalia, councils of elders remain a dominant institution in most parts, according to the Human Development Report, Somalia 1998. In principle, all married men in a clan are entitled to speak at the clan assembly ("*shir*"). This is why the Somalia of the nomads is often referred to as a pastoral democracy.

The membership of clan councils of elders usually comprises a number of prominent figures from the clan. They may be selected in various ways, some being well-off while others are known for their oratory, their militarily or economically powerful family or their well-educated background. Councils of elders tend often, however, to be more reactive than proactive. Where a council of elders consists of socially responsible members, though, it will frequently be in a position to ensure the security of a given area's population.

In some Somali communities there is a hierarchy of elders, as in the Gedo region, where the Marehan clan has its own "king" (*ugaas*) at the head of the clan hierarchy.

The relationship between the council of elders and the local clan militia is often highly complex. At times those two "institutions" may share clan-based interests, while at other times rivalry may arise over who has the final say.

Kenneth Menkhaus highlighted the local reconciliation role played by councils of elders. In his experience, if a dispute arose within a clan, councils of elders would be best placed to resolve it peacefully. He also pointed to the importance of a rapid response by councils of elders to any disagreement. They would intervene straight away to settle the dispute and thus stop it from taking



on greater proportions. Like a number of other sources, Kenneth Menkhaus considered the Gedo region's councils of elders to be intact and working much as they were meant to.

The District Commissioner of Luuq, Mohamed Mohamud Aden, explained that the local councils of elders served as advisers to the district council, including on the selection of its members.

Barry Sesnan, Area Manager (Gedo region) for the UNOPS/SRP, and several of his staff reported what were referred to as "pseudo-elders" in some parts of the Gedo region. These did not enjoy the respect of the community and were merely looking for personal gain from the presence of NGOs in the area. They were to be distinguished from the "chiefs", who were respected as highly effective peace-brokers, putting their own lives at stake to prevent disputes from spreading. Such elders played a very important role in south-western Somalia. It was the councils of elders, moreover, which ensured that borrowers repaid loans under the UNOPS Small Loan Fund scheme.

#### **4.2.3. Marehan clans' *ugaas***

Kenneth Menkhaus explained that Ugaas Omar Ugaas Hirsi represented all Marehan subclans and was unchallenged by any clan factions within the Marehan clan. He described the role of the *ugaas* in the reconciliation process as "crucial". The *ugaas* was a kind of king of the Marehan clans in the Gedo region, enjoying the utmost authority among Gedo's Marehan clans.

Barry Sesnan, Area Manager (Gedo region) for the UNOPS/SRP, reported that the *ugaas* was indisputably an authority, adding nevertheless that young Marehan in particular often doubted his intellectual capacity as well as questioning the guidance given him. Despite this, non-one denied his authority and everyone responded to a summons from the *ugaas*.

This was confirmed by the District Commissioner of Luuq, Mohamed Mohamud Aden, who added that he was backed up by the chiefs, described as "peace lords", leading the Marehan subclans.

#### **4.2.4. Political leadership**

Overall political leadership of the Gedo region is exercised by the SNF Central Committee, which has set up an Executive Committee, also known as the Standing Committee, for that purpose. Its leadership embraces the Marehan-dominated part of the Galgaduud region in eastern Somalia as well.

The SNF, according to Mohamed Mohamud Aden, was a Marehan-based political front. However, both Andrew Fitzgibbon and Abdishakur Othowai pointed out that non-Marehan clans could also join the SNF, which was considered fully in control of the Gedo region. The SNF's top body was its Congress, headed by the SNF's Chairman, Omar Hagi, with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the SNF being appointed by its Congress.

Kenneth Menkhaus explained that the SNF Congress had not met since 1993. The SNF leadership had thus not come up for election since then. He added that in August 1998 the *ugaas* had stated that, should a meeting of the SNF Congress be held, the entire SNF leadership would risk being replaced.

In addition to exercising political leadership of the Gedo region, the SNF is also responsible for external and internal security in Gedo. For this purpose it has its own militia force.

## **5. Security situation**

### **5.1. General points**

There are two factors calling for particular attention in assessing the overall security situation in the Gedo region. The first is Al-Itihad's continued willingness to take part in the peace and reconciliation process and the second the possibility of a political division within the SNF. Wayne Long, Chief Security Adviser (UNDP), made it clear, however, that he did not see any serious risk of a resumption of armed conflict between the SNF and Al-Itihad or of a split within the SNF resulting in armed conflict.

Kenneth Menkhaus described the Gedo region as "a very safe place". He thought Gedo safer than, say, Kenya. He made the point that he travelled throughout the region by car and never made use of guards on such trips.

Andrew Fitzgibbon, of the UNOPS/SRP, also reported that it was now possible to travel throughout the Gedo region without armed guards. Another pointer to the reasonably good security situation in Gedo was that car-hire firms in the region no longer required people hiring a car to be accompanied by armed guards on their journey.

On the delegation's trips within Gedo, to the towns of Belet Hawa, Dolo and Luuq, it made use of hired cars and did not at any time call on the services of guards, either when driving between those towns or at its meetings and on its visits.

Barry Sesnan, of the UNOPS/SRP, reported that his office had not made use of guards for its staff's travel within Gedo for the last two years or more.

The reconciliation process between the SNF and Al-Itihad, the first part of which was completed in August 1998, had further improved the security situation throughout the Gedo region, according to Steve Gluning. He emphasised that the region was now to be regarded as one of the safest in Somalia, pointing out here that it was not necessary to travel under guard anywhere in the region. He also made it clear that his view of security applied to the entire Gedo region.

Wayne Long took the same attitude and considered security in Gedo to have improved greatly in recent months. Both Gluning and Long expressed optimism regarding the future security picture, although Long made the point that it was of course hard to give any long-term assessment of the security situation in Gedo. The same was in fact true throughout Somalia.

Gluning and Sesnan considered that the ability of the UNOPS/SRP to implement its projects in the Gedo region with the assistance of district-based development management groups (DMGs) could also be seen as reflecting a very favourable security situation there. Sesnan further made the point that his office worked solely with councils of elders and authorities at district level, particularly the DMGs. In implementing its projects in Gedo, then, the UNOPS/SRP did not cooperate with the SNF leadership on a day-to-day basis.

Lastly, it should be noted that the level of security in any given region was one factor behind the UNOPS/SRP's choice of where to locate its activities in Somalia.

## 5.2. *Reconciliation process between Al-Itihad and the Somali National Front (SNF)*

Over the last few years, security in the Gedo region has been affected by the armed conflict between the Somali National Front (SNF), the Islamic fundamentalist Al-Itihad militia movement and Ethiopia. Fighting was concentrated in the north of the region, with the district capital of Luuq serving as Al-Itihad's headquarters in Gedo.

On 9 June 1998 the SNF and Al-Itihad concluded a final reconciliation agreement at El-Adde (or El Ade) in Gedo. The agreement, known as the Reconciliation Accord at El-Adde, is attached in English and Somali as Annex 8. It is signed by the *ugaas* of the Sade community, Ugaas Omar Ugaas Hirsi, as well as the Deputy Chairman of Al-Itihad, Sheekh Mohamud Moallim Noor, and the Deputy Chairman of the SNF, Dr Ali Mohamed Mukhtar (normally referred to as Ali Nuur). Since that agreement was concluded, further reconciliation meetings have been held, all by way of follow-up to the agreement.

The actual reconciliation conference was chaired by the Marehan clans' traditional paramount leader, Ugaas Omar Ugaas Hirsi. Barry Sesnan stated that about 80% of all Al-Itihad members were Marehan.

The conference last met in El-Adde in July and August 1998. It received financial support, according to Barry Sesnan, in the form of a smallish sum in cash from the UN. Ugaas Omar Ugaas Hirsi was generally held in esteem in the Gedo region, being respected by all groups, although Barry Sesnan reported that some younger intellectuals regarded him as a traditional leader of more symbolic significance. This was nevertheless contradicted by the fact that Ugaas Omar Ugaas Hirsi had repeatedly been able to play a positive part in reconciliation between various clan factions in Gedo.

Steve Gluning described one of Al-Itihad's leading figures and a co-signatory of the reconciliation agreement, Sheekh Mohamud Moallim Noor, as serious, reasonable, moderate and powerful.

Barry Sesnan called the reconciliation process a success. Even the El Waq area near the border with Kenya, which had seen fighting between the SNF and Al-Itihad as recently as early 1998, was now peaceful. El Waq had at once turned into a hub of traffic between Kenya and Gedo. Wayne Long took the same view, emphasising that the security problems in El Waq had now been resolved, despite El Waq having been the last place in the Gedo region to see fighting between Al-Itihad and the SNF plus Ethiopia. He reported the SNF and Al-Itihad in fact to have become very close in the reconciliation process.

Abdishakur Othowai was less optimistic about the reconciliation agreement and thought reconciliation between Al-Itihad and the SNF to be shaky. In support of his view he argued that the SNF was divided over Al-Itihad. One wing of the SNF was opposed to reconciliation, which weakened the agreement, since clear reconciliation required a united SNF. Another weakness of the reconciliation process was that Al-Itihad had not handed over its heavy weapons to the SNF, but rather transferred them to various storage points in Gedo. Reconciliation was, however, strengthened by the fact that former Al-Itihad members had all been accepted among the Gedo region's population without any difficulties. This did not, on the other hand, mean that former Al-Itihad members had abandoned their identity.

The reconciliation agreement was described by Abdishakur Othowai as interim and not fully implemented; he also doubted whether a final peace agreement would be put into practice. He did point out, though, that Al-Itihad members no longer carried heavier weapons in Gedo, these being confined to the SNF. Al-Itihad's "technicals" had been demobilised, i.e. had the machine guns, etc. mounted on them removed. Only the SNF now had any "technicals" in the Gedo region.

Both Sesnan and Gluning confirmed that Al-Itihad had stockpiled its arms, including its heavy weapons, at a number of storage points in Gedo and only the SNF had any heavy weapons available to it.

### **5.3. *Al-Itihad***

According to the Human Development Report, Somalia 1998, the Al-Itihad movement can be regarded as a radical Islamic or fundamentalist organisation. The report adds that some Somalis are generally sympathetic towards the movement, without this actually leading them to join it. The movement holds some attraction for well-educated young men. Al-Itihad gained control of a number of towns in south-western Somalia before finally being routed by Ethiopian forces in 1997. Al-Itihad is represented in many parts of Somalia, but it is uncertain whether the movement has any particular headquarters in the country. Al-Itihad follows a long-term strategy, preferring to rely on popular education and broad-based support. Even though the movement is not clan-based, however, internal dissension between clans has proved hard to control. The movement has therefore suffered repeated clan-based divisions. (See also section 14, listing political movements.)

Abdishakur Othowai, who according to Sesnan has a detailed knowledge of the political and human rights situation in the Gedo region, was able to explain the background to Al-Itihad's presence and disbanding in that region as follows:

Al-Itihad came to Gedo in 1993. The movement fought successfully against General Aideed's forces in Luuq. As a result, the elders in both Luuq and Belet Hawa agreed to let Al-Itihad take over responsibility for security and thus replace the existing police. About 80% of Al-Itihad's members belong to Marehan clans.

After taking over responsibility for security, Al-Itihad obtained practical assistance from the UNHCR, including the supply of radio equipment. The explanation lay in the desire to improve highway security and thus prevent carjackings, etc. Often, however, Al-Itihad itself arranged covert hijackings, merely as a way of demonstrating its effectiveness.

Al-Itihad carried out a fairly extensive recruitment campaign in Gedo. As a rule this took the form of distributing food to those who enlisted with it. A "food for guns" campaign was also organised, with Al-Itihad attempting to secure control of all arms in Gedo. Within a fairly short while Al-Itihad won widespread sympathy among the population of the areas it was trying to control. Abdishakur Othowai pointed out, however, that Al-Itihad never revealed its true political objective: to establish an Islamic fundamentalist state in Somalia.

From 1993 to 1996 Al-Itihad gave its members military training, partly with the assistance of guerillas from Afghanistan, Chechnya, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the USA and other countries. The terrorist Bin Laden, of international fame, visited Gedo in 1994. At that time Luuq became the headquarters for training Al-Itihad's militiamen, who were to operate throughout the Horn of Africa. Among the movement's ambitions was gaining control of the whole of Somalia.

In 1994 Al-Itihad crossed the border into Ethiopia and clashed with Ethiopian forces inside the country, but in December 1994 it suffered defeat at the hands of the Ethiopian armed forces there. Ethiopia, however, saw that, if the risk of future Al-Itihad expansion was to be cut out, the movement had to be tackled at its heart, i.e. in Luuq.

Al-Itihad's military structure was well-developed, being described by Abdishakur Othowai as a kind of social mobilisation in which all non-members were regarded as enemies. As a result, in 1995 Al-Itihad began to pose a threat to the existing leadership in Gedo, including the Marehan clans' traditional paramount leader, Ugaas Omar Ugaas Hirsi, causing serious trouble. Al-Itihad also directly harried SNF leaders in the region, among them the SNF's present head, Omar Hagi.

An alliance was then formed between the head of the SNF, Omar Hagi, and Ethiopia. Al-Itihad encouraged the alliance by declaring Omar Hagi *persona non grata* in Gedo. In July 1996 Ethiopia launched offensives against Al-Itihad in several parts of the Gedo region, including Luuq, Belet Hawa and Dolo. Al-Itihad was defeated, but the Ethiopians held on to those towns for only three days, whereupon Al-Itihad regained control of them. Ethiopia then sought the SNF's military assistance and in June 1997 Al-Itihad again suffered defeat in Luuq, Belet Hawa and Dolo.

Since then, Al-Itihad was only to be found "in the bush", in various parts of the Gedo region's rural districts. It soon lost its international support, while first drought and then flooding resulted in the death of many Al-Itihad members from disease and a lack of assistance. Al-Itihad was generally weakened to such an extent that it agreed to enter into the reconciliation process with the SNF.

Barry Sesnan reported that, as one result of the latest reconciliation meeting between the SNF and Al-Itihad, held a few weeks earlier, Al-Itihad had in practice ceased to exist as an independent organisation in Gedo, it being planned to make Al-Itihad an integral part of the SNF.

Kenneth Menkhaus pointed out that anyone identifying with Al-Itihad did so not so much for strongly-felt ideological reasons as rather in a gesture of political opposition to the dominant SNF leadership or in pursuit of pragmatic business interests, or possibly out of subclan identity. He described Al-Itihad sympathies as "a veil lightly worn by Marehan", who in both lending and looking for support alternated between Al-Itihad and the SNF, according to where their own interests lay. Al-Itihad and the SNF were thus seen by many Marehan members as merely two sides of a political divide.

#### **5.4. Somali National Front (SNF) and the reconciliation agreement**

The reconciliation agreement between the SNF and Al-Itihad has sown a measure of division among the SNF leadership, with some leaders disagreeing over the demobilisation issue, i.e. whether Al-Itihad should hand over its arms instead of merely stockpiling them. The SNF Chairman, Omar Hagi, considers that Al-Itihad should disarm completely, whereas the Deputy Chairman, Ali Nuur, takes a more conciliatory line towards Al-Itihad.

An anonymous source in Gedo told the delegation, however, that disagreements between the two SNF leaders ran deeper than just the issue of Al-Itihad's demobilisation. The source explained that the Marehan-based SNF was made up of Marehan clans from both the Gedo region and the Galgaduud region. The latter region contained a sizeable proportion of Somalia's Marehan community in Abud Waq and partly inside Ethiopia (see Annex 6 for major Somali clans). According to the source, Marehan from Abud Waq regarded themselves as more distinguished than the Marehan in Gedo, particularly because Galgaduud Marehan were especially widely employed in

the Siad Barre administration in Mogadishu. The SNF Chairman, Omar Hagi, was from Abud Waq in the Galgaduud region, with the Deputy Chairman, Ali Nuur, being from the Gedo region.

Babafemi A. Badejo, Senior Political Adviser at the United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS), explained that the SNF Chairman, Omar Hagi, belonged to the Marehan subclan of Rer Dini, as did Ugaas Omar Ugaas Hirsi and ex-President Siad Barre, and the SNF Deputy Chairman, Ali Nuur, to the Marehan subclan of Rer Hassan. Omar Hagi, however, came from the Galgaduud region in central Somalia, whereas Ali Nuur was from the Gedo region, Omar Hagi therefore being seen as an outsider in Gedo, while Ali Nuur was regarded as a local.

Kenneth Menkhaus confirmed that some Marehan members from Abud Waq tended to dominate the SNF in the Gedo region. He described them as constituting as outside element. It had therefore actually been popular for some Marehan members in Gedo to express support for Al-Itihad against the SNF, as a kind of outlet for feelings of aversion towards the outsiders. There was even a term for this: "*guri*" as opposed to "*galti*", meaning locals as opposed to outsiders. Kenneth Menkhaus therefore considered the role of the *ugaas* crucial to any reconciliation process between factions within the SNF.

He added that there was a tendency for long-established Marehan in Gedo to be more sympathetic towards Al-Itihad than Marehan newcomers, who seemed to feel greater sympathy for the SNF. He thought this one possible reason why some SNF leaders dissatisfied with the reconciliation agreement with Al-Itihad had tried to mislead the Ethiopians into believing that the peace agreement with Al-Itihad would result in Al-Itihad becoming part of the SNF. One of the points agreed between the SNF and Al-Itihad was in fact that Al-Itihad members could join the SNF and Kenneth Menkhaus pointed out that incorporation of Al-Itihad into the SNF meant dividing up the cake, as he put it, with some SNF leaders having to face up to the fact that their positions within the SNF might be under threat from senior Al-Itihad members.

Both Steve Gluning and Barry Sesnan regarded Ugaas Omar Ugaas Hirsi's powers of reconciliation as a safeguard ensuring that any dispute within the SNF over this issue would not flare up, but would be conciliated towards a solution.

Babafemi A. Badejo, Senior Political Adviser at the UNPOS, confirmed that the *ugaas* enjoyed powers of reconciliation, but only where not compromised by political issues. He added that the

Marehan clans' *ugaas* represented all such clans' common interests and was regarded in between them as their "nominate authority". Having said that, however, the source emphasised that the word of the *ugaas* was not law and he should rather be regarded as a symbolic leader of the Marehan clans. The political influence of the *ugaas* was therefore symbolic and in some situations he would not have any real influence. The *ugaas* could not be seen as an actual protector of the Marehan clans, it being only the clans' military forces which could protect members from outside threats. The source went on to make it clear that any dispute within the SNF would in all probability end in the leader with the greatest military muscle finding most support among Marehan members.

Babafemi A. Badejo also made the point that leadership among the Marehan clans (like other clans in Somalia) could at times soon ebb and flow. He referred to the situation in north-eastern Somalia (Puntland), where the balance of power between the two SSDF leaders, Mohamed Abshir Muse and Abdullahi Yussuf, had proved fluctuating.

Babafemi A. Badejo reported that the first signs of division within the SNF emerged at the end of 1996. Up to then the SNF had been a homogeneous, cohesive clan movement. A fairly small group from the SNF leadership then broke away from the SNF and entered Aideed's "national" government in Mogadishu.

According to Abdi Yussuf Dirir, Chairman of Soma Action, it was two senior SNF members who broke away from the SNF: the Deputy Chairman at the time, Mohamed Abdi, and another senior member, Khalif Sherer. He added that both returned to El Ade in Gedo in June 1998 for the reconciliation conference held between the SNF and Al-Itihad.

Babafemi A. Badejo explained the background to the division within the SNF as follows:

Ethiopia launched its first offensive against Al-Itihad in Gedo on 8 and 9 August 1996, when Ethiopian forces attacked it in Luuq, Dolo and Belet Hawa. He pointed out that the attacks on Al-Itihad were the only ones for which Ethiopia acknowledged responsibility. Unnamed NGOs in the Gedo region, however, had claimed that Ethiopia was subsequently responsible for further attacks on targets in the Gedo region, but the UN was unable to confirm that any such attacks had taken place.

Omar Hagi was politically weakened as a result of the breakaway at the end of 1996, although his co-signing of the Sodere declaration in January 1997 strengthened relations between Ethiopia and the SNF. Ethiopia was hoping that cooperation with the SNF in Gedo would pave the way for the elimination of Al-Itihad from that area.

The attacks mentioned above weakened the SNF, however, as one wing of the SNF was opposed to cooperation with Ethiopia, cooperation resulting in Ethiopian attacks on Al-Itihad within the Marehan clans' own territory, in the Gedo region. The upshot of the attacks was thus that many Marehan members sided against Ethiopia's presence in Gedo and Al-Itihad in fact gained greater support in Gedo than it had previously enjoyed. Many Marehan were currently still concerned at the presence of Ethiopian armed forces on the Gedo region's doorstep.

The peace agreement between Al-Itihad and the SNF had sown division within the SNF, but a deterioration in relations between Al-Itihad and the SNF could not be confirmed. On the other hand, Babafemi A. Badejo saw a real leadership problem in the SNF. The SNF Congress, scheduled to meet on 15 October 1998, had been postponed. He thought it possible for Omar Hagi to prevent it from meeting at all at present, which would secure Omar Hagi's political future for a while to come. Should the Congress nevertheless meet, there was a prospect of new political leaders being elected. This would probably not prevent Omar Hagi from continuing to claim to be the SNF's political leader. Kenneth Menkhaus also pointed out that Omar Hagi was politically weakened and therefore working to secure greater political influence.

### ***5.5. Security in Gedo in regional terms***

Babafemi A. Badejo, of the UNPOS, explained that destabilisation as between the Ogaden province of Ethiopia and the Gedo region had started back in 1993 and 1994, when Al-Itihad claimed responsibility for the attempted assassination of an Ethiopian Minister, Abdil Majid. This strained relations between Ethiopia and Al-Itihad. Even before that incident, however, relations between Al-Itihad and the SNF were already strained in the Gedo region. In spite of cooperation between UNOSOM and Al-Itihad on administration and establishment of district councils in northern Gedo, Al-Itihad was responsible for a number of threats against the SNF in the area.

Abdishakur Othowai thought the stability of security in the Gedo region also to be affected to some extent by developments in neighbouring areas, i.e. the SNA-controlled regions of Bay and Bakool to the east and the SPM-controlled region of Kismayo to the south, as well as relations with Ethiopia, bordering on the Gedo region to the north.

Abdishakur Othowai added that the SNF now took the attitude that it had won outright the battle for control of the Gedo region. The SNF assumed continuing support from Ethiopia, but the impending conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea might possibly cause Ethiopia to concentrate on its own problems. He explained that Eritrea had concluded a peace agreement with Yemen and thus emerged strengthened in any confrontation with Ethiopia.

Steve Gluning, like Abdishakur Othowai, thought that, in the event of a war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, Ethiopia would probably redeploy its troops stationed near Gedo to the war zone.

Steve Gluning reported there to be Ethiopian soldiers in Dolo and possibly elsewhere in Gedo. He therefore advised the delegation to exercise caution on its visit to Dolo and steer clear of Ethiopian soldiers. It should be noted here that a follow-up meeting arranged between the delegation and the authorities in Dolo was not held, as at the time of the meeting the authorities had crossed the border into Ethiopia to meet the Ethiopian armed forces there. The delegation had, however, held a first meeting with the authorities in Dolo the day beforehand.

Relations between the SNF leader, Omar Hagi, and Ethiopia were, according to Abdishakur Othowai, somewhat strained. The Ethiopian armed forces thus no longer distributed food to SNF troops. The explanation for the tense relations between Omar Hagi and Ethiopia lay in Ethiopia's anger at the conclusion by the SNF of an alliance with Aideed's SNA forces against General Morgan's forces in the Kismayo area to the south of the Gedo region.

Steve Gluning told the delegation that he had recently visited the area to the north of Kismayo, where a considerable force made up of SNF and SNA militia units was positioned, poised to strike at Kismayo. He had noticed that the SNA and the SNF between them had around 700 militiamen and from 30 to 35 "technicals" in the area north of Kismayo. The reason behind the SNA/SNF's desire to inflict a defeat on Morgan in Kismayo lay in the SNF's wish to control the port of Kismayo. Being landlocked, the Gedo region needed a port. The SNA, on the other hand, sought control of the rich farming land along the River Juba between Kismayo and Jilib.

Babafemi A. Badejo thought one cause of the impending conflict between the SPM/Morgan and the SNF/SNA to be the Marehan clans' resentment at previously having been pushed out of Kismayo. They would probably resort to violence to get back into Kismayo. However, he was in doubt as to what the SNF/SNA actually intended to achieve with a direct attack on Kismayo. He pointed out that the Majerteen clan in Kismayo had nowhere else to live apart from Kismayo, although past bitterness between Omar Hagi and Morgan might be one of the reasons for the impending conflict.

Kenneth Menkhaus, however, doubted whether the SNF was interested in seizing control of Kismayo. He also pointed out that it would be almost impossible for the SNF to take the town on its own, although by joining forces the Marehan clan and the Absame clan might together be able to take Kismayo. In his view, however, even a successful attack would be no more than a show of force by the SNF.



## **5.6. Mine hazard**

Barry Sesnan reported that, during the conflict between Al-Itihad, the SNF and Ethiopia, mines had been laid in several parts of the Gedo region. He believed only Al-Itihad to have laid mines in that conflict.

One tangible result of the reconciliation agreement between the SNF and Al-Itihad was that, immediately after the conclusion of the agreement, Al-Itihad completely cleared Gedo's highways of mines. Al-Itihad had laid mines in a number of places in Gedo, not least along the region's highways. It was thus now possible to travel by car on all of the region's roads without any risk of striking a mine.

However, Andrew Fitzgibbon thought that the delegation ought not to visit the town of Garba Harre in central Gedo, as according to his information there was still a risk of striking the odd mine in that area.

Steve Gluning and Barry Sesnan, Area Manager for the UNOPS/SRP in the Gedo region, were subsequently able to report, however, that the mines around Garba Harre had now also been cleared by Al-Itihad. Barry Sesnan considered the mine hazard on the region's highways not generally to have been very serious, with the number of mines probably being very small. Nevertheless, mining had of course severely affected freedom of movement within the region. The continuing potential risk of striking a mine in Gedo was pointed to by Wayne Long, who advised the delegation against leaving the roads on foot while driving around the region. The delegation found, however, that its drivers often drove across the countryside without any visible sign of actual roads, since in many places the roads faded into the countryside, as it were, later re-emerging again as clear tracks.

Abdishakur Othowai also took the view that reconciliation had brought a distinct improvement in the security situation in the Gedo region. He reported that mines had now been cleared, without any kind of assistance from international organisations. Al-Itihad did the job itself, without in fact any reported casualties among the mine-clearers.

Babafemi A. Badejo, of the UNPOS, considered the mine problem in the Gedo region to go back to Siad Barre's time and the civil-war years, when mines were laid time and again in the area. The problems later on were due not to newly-laid mines but rather to displacement of mines already laid. There were confirmed reports of accidents involving mines, but it was not known with any certainty who was responsible for the mines concerned. He was unable to confirm stories that Al-Itihad had cleared all mines, following its peace agreement with the SNF. He made the point, however, that any certainty as to all mines having been cleared would first require reconciliation between all of the area's clans.

## **6. Human rights situation**

### **6.1. General points**

There are few sources of information on the human rights situation in the Gedo region, but the UN, some NGOs in the area and a few private individuals do concern themselves with such issues in part. One of the latter is Abdishakur Othowai, who thought in particular that any human rights problems arising in Gedo were the same as those experienced elsewhere in Somalia. In his view, Gedo's Marehan clans often showed greater tolerance towards non-Marehan clans present in the area than was the case between many other clans elsewhere in Somalia. He instanced Aideed's Habr Gedir clan being able to do business in Gedo without any problem, whereas it would often be

difficult for a Marehan member to do business in the Habr-Gedir-controlled part of Mogadishu or other Habr-Gedir-controlled areas of Somalia.

Kenneth Menkhaus did not consider there generally to be any human rights violations in Gedo such as to cause people there to fear ill-treatment, apart from the Bantu population, who had historically always come under the yoke of the Somali clans. He pointed out that clans did not ill-treat one another, nor did they engage in armed conflict with one another. Clan councils of elders were in operation and played a key role in protecting the rights of individual clan members.

Abdi Yussuf Dirir, Chairman of Soma Action, reported that the SNF leader, Omar Hagi, had been imprisoned for about two years in Siad Barre's time. He was released in 1987 following pressure from the Marehan clans. Omar Hagi was a general in Siad Barre's army, but disagreed with the President's hard line towards Somalia's other clans. The point was made that Omar Hagi had not been responsible for what could be described as heavy-handed or extreme treatment of Al-Itihad members in the Gedo region. Abdi Yussuf Dirir was not aware of Omar Hagi having been responsible for torture or similar ill-treatment of Al-Itihad members. He pointed out, however, that Al-Itihad had alleged Ethiopia to be responsible for ill-treatment of its members.

### **6.2. Freedom of movement**

Barry Sesnan noted that individual freedom of movement in Gedo might be curbed by people's financial constraints and also possibly by some, albeit limited, security risk. Abdishakur Othowai reported there in practice to be freedom of movement for any clan member throughout the Gedo region. This also applied to members of clans not normally regarded as resident in Gedo. He emphasised that members of the Bantu community could also move around in Gedo without any difficulty.

### **6.3. Legal safeguards**

Abdishakur Othowai reported instances of criminals having been detained for lengthy periods before being brought to trial. He found it difficult to assess legal safeguards in Gedo, however, while pointing out that the Marehan clans' general tolerance towards other clans did as a rule ensure a fair trial for members of non-Marehan clans. Anyone belonging to a less influential clan in the area might nevertheless face disproportionately heavy punishment in comparison with someone from a more dominant clan.

The SNF Chairman, General Omar Hagi, explained that the region did have courts, although they were not yet fully operational and were therefore not yet a key factor in upholding legal safeguards in the area. He added that the development of an effective judicial system depended solely on financial resources.

The District Commissioner for Luuq, Mohamed Mohamud Aden, explained that the area's clans on the whole resolved their disputes in accordance with principles of their own. Such disputes were settled by payment of *diyah* compensation. If a council of elders did not find it possible to resolve a dispute, the case was passed to the police. The police then referred the case to the Sharia court, which gave judgment on it.

Mohamed Mohamud Aden reported that a chief justice had been designated at each district Sharia court, but no chief justice had yet been designated for the region as a whole, although one was to be in the near future. This was confirmed by Abdishakur Othowai, who added that the SNF had designated someone from each district council to act as a magistrate in the district.

Abdullahi Sheikh Mohamed, of the UNOPS/SRP, and Mohamed Mohamud Aden, Luuq's District Commissioner, pointed out that the SNF was responsible for appointing district magistrates in the Gedo region. There was no regional court. The district magistrates were all members of district councils. Abdullahi Sheikh Mohamed did not consider the district magistrates to be representative, but nor did he think they could be regarded as showing bias. He reported that magistrates usually judged cases without regard to clan membership.

Barry Sesnan and Steve Gluning made the point that, in addition to councils of elders, each district in Gedo had its magistrate. The magistrates heard cases which councils of elders had been unable to resolve. Steve Gluning added that in some instances councils of elders would set up more permanent *ad hoc* committees to deal with especially thorny disputes and reconciliation tasks.

#### **6.4. Police**

Steve Gluning and Barry Sesnan explained that there were police forces in all districts of the Gedo region. Steve Gluning added that he had visited all of the region's police stations, finding records kept everywhere of incidents in the district.

Isaq Aden Abdi, Luuq head of police, reported that Luuq employed about 30 police officers, who received irregular, token pay from the district council.

#### **6.5. Politically motivated persecution**

According to Steve Gluning, there was no persecution on account of political views held. This was confirmed by Abdullahi Sheikh Mohamed, who did not know of any instances of, say, Al-Itihad members being arrested or imprisoned by the SNF. He made the point that politics in Somalia, including Gedo, was confined to the clan, so that political differences could be freely discussed within the clan. There were examples, however, of people being killed as a result of political disagreements. He was not sure of the precise figure, but from two to four people had been killed for political reasons over the last three or four years.

There had in the past been some political disagreements between the Marehan and Rahanweyn clans in Bardera, in southern Gedo. However, Abdullahi Sheikh Mohamed stated that since 1996 there had not been any kind of politically motivated persecution as between the Rahanweyn and Marehan clans.

Abdishakur Othowai was able to report that, about six months earlier, SNF militia units and Ethiopian troops would not, in those parts of Gedo controlled by them, allow men to wear a full-length beard. The SNF and the Ethiopians regarded men wearing a full-length beard as attempting to show their support for Al-Itihad.

#### **6.6. Ethnic/clan-based discrimination**

Steve Gluning stated that nobody in the Gedo region suffered persecution merely on account of their ethnic background or clan membership.

As mentioned above, Gedo's Marehan clans are considered quite tolerant towards other clans. Abdishakur Othowai made it clear that no clan member in the Gedo region would experience discrimination merely on account of clan membership. He did point out, however, that members of the Bantu community had historically always been discriminated against by the other Somali clans.

Abdishakur Othowai regarded it as a downright infringement of human rights for a member of the authorities to deny the existence of a Bantu community, as happened when the delegation met the authorities in Luuq. Only as between the other Somali clans and the Bantu clans could Abdishakur Othowai see any examples of abuses, committed against the Bantu community, e.g. Bantu-owned farming land being taken over by other Somali clans during the civil war. On the other hand, he could report that many Bantus were active in business in Gedo. In Belet Hawa, for instance, the best shops were usually owned by members of the Bantu community, who did not suffer any abuses on that account.

Barry Sesnan, too, regarded ownership of farming land as a key issue in relations between the Bantu community and the other Somali clans.

As regards the position of the Midgan clans in Gedo, Abdishakur Othowai explained that there were two such clans in Belet Hawa: the Hararsane and the Habr Yaqub. Members of those clans never married members of the Marehan clans, but they formed an integral part of the Marehan clan structure and did not face any kind of ill-treatment or discrimination. They owned land and property and on the whole supported themselves. There were many examples of Hararsane and Habr Yaqub members of both the SNF and district councils in Gedo.

### **6.7. *Position of women***

Steve Gluning reported there to be few examples of women active in politics but a number of women members of development management groups (DMGs). According to Abdullahi Sheikh Mohamed, there were two women in the Luuq DMG, two in the Garba Harre DMG and one in the Bardera DMG. No women sat on any of the region's district councils.

Abdullahi Sheikh Mohamed stated that reconciliation meetings were an all-male affair, although women were often able to press men into advancing women's interests, e.g. as regard peace and reconciliation moves. He referred to instances of women organising political demonstrations, such as a women's demonstration held in Belet Hawa in the summer of 1998 in support of the reconciliation process between Al-Itihad and the SNF.

Abdishakur Othowai reported examples of Ethiopian troops in Gedo and local SNF militia units ill-treating veiled women, following the defeat of Al-Itihad, when former Al-Itihad members were being disarmed. In many cases Ethiopian soldiers publicly undressed veiled women in the street, officially so as to check whether they might be armed, but in many people's opinion in order to humiliate Al-Itihad supporters. The source emphasised, however, that such abuses had largely ceased since the initiation of reconciliation meetings between the SNF and Al-Itihad. He ended by pointing out that the incidents in question had taken place six months earlier.

## **7. Humanitarian situation**

### **7.1. *General points***

As with many other parts of Somalia, the Gedo region was also the scene of armed conflict between clan militias during the civil war. In addition the region was heavily affected by influxes of refugees from other parts of Somalia. Internally displaced Marehan members came to the Gedo region from the Bay and Bakool regions and Mogadishu, in particular, although many moved on to refugee camps in Kenya. In the thick of the war both arable and livestock farming were all but ruined and in some parts of the region around 80% of all livestock is believed to have been lost, with production of food crops also hard hit.

A large proportion of the Marehan and Rahanweyn refugees have now returned to Gedo, with agricultural production resuming in most places. Barry Sesnan, of the UNOPS/SRP in Mandera, considered livestock farming not to have been as seriously affected by the civil war as was generally believed. He pointed out that clashes between clan militias were more often than not fought out in urban areas, and non-sedentary livestock herdsman therefore to some extent avoided being affected by the war to the same degree as people living in more densely populated parts.

The humanitarian situation is now relatively stable in the Gedo region and there are a number of NGOs performing a variety of tasks in education, credit supply, health care, medicine provision etc. Those NGOs include Trocaire in Belet Hawa, Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) in Garba Harre, MEMISA (Medical Mission Action (Help for All in the Third World)) in Garba Harre, the Life and Peace Institute (LPI) in several districts, the African Medical Relief Foundation (AMREF) in Luuq, the Emergency Pastoralist Assistance Group (EPAG) in several districts, Soma Action in El Waq, INTERSOS (Humanitarian Organisation for Emergency) in Bardera and Terra Nuova in Bardera. There are also UN agencies, namely UNICEF, the WFP and the UNOPS/SRP, active in the Gedo region (see Annex 9 for a regional picture of UN and NGO presence in Somalia and Annex 10 for a picture of SRP regional activities in Somalia, including the Gedo region).

In selecting a target area for its activities, besides the security situation, the UNOPS/SRP has to consider a number of humanitarian and infrastructure factors. As stated in the UNOPS/SRP annual report for 1 January to 31 December 1997, the regions chosen for the implementation of projects will have a large population of internally displaced persons and returning refugees, extensive destruction as a result of the war, environmental problems and poverty problems (Annex 11 contains the UNOPS/SRP's latest half-yearly report on its work in the Gedo region).

### **7.2. Food supplies**

Since the flooding in 1997/98, when agricultural production fell sharply, making the food supply situation very difficult, the position has improved considerably.

Wayne Long thus reported food supplies to be back to normal throughout the region.

The delegation could also see for itself that markets in Belet Hawa, Dolo and Luuq were well supplied with both imported and locally produced foodstuffs and other consumer goods. Steve Gluning, Field Security Adviser for the WFP, said that the WFP did not see any need to distribute foodstuffs in Gedo.

### **7.3. Health**

Kenneth Menkhaus considered the health system in Gedo, as in the rest of Somalia, to be in a sorry state. He reported that there was only one surgeon at the AMREF hospital in Luuq. In addition to the hospital in Luuq, there was also a smaller one in Belet Hawa, although he would not call it a proper hospital, more a kind of clinic.

According to Dr I. Tahalil, administrator of the AMREF hospital in Luuq, the hospital staff were frequently assisted by "flying doctors" from Nairobi, who during their stay of about a week performed surgical operations at the hospital.

The delegation also visited the Khalil hospital in Belet Hawa, whose day-to-day administrator, Ahmed Abdi, gave the following explanation:

The Khalil hospital in Belet Hawa covered the districts of Belet Hawa and Dolo. It ran an MCH clinic in Dolo as well. The hospital also admitted patients from Mandera, in Kenya. In addition to the hospital in Luuq, there was another one in Garbahare. All medical and surgical equipment was supplied by Trocaire, UNICEF and the WHO.

The hospital consisted of a children's ward, a women's ward, a men's ward and a maternity ward, plus an operating theatre and a medical laboratory. It had 50 beds and employed one doctor, six trained nurses, six midwives, fourteen untrained assistant nurses and three laboratory technicians.

Between 20 and 40 patients a month were admitted, unless there was, for instance, an outbreak of malaria in the area, which brought a considerable increase in the number of patients. Between 40 and 50 people a day were treated as outpatients.

Patients were charged a small fee of about 20 Kenyan shillings (approx. DKK 2) for medical treatment and 100 Kenyan shillings (approx. DKK 10) for hospitalisation. Ahmed Abdi reported that the introduction of this charge had not affected patient numbers.

The bulk of treatment given was for common respiratory diseases, diarrhoea, tuberculosis and malaria, there being many outbreaks of this last disease, especially in the rainy season.

#### **7.4. Education**

Barry Sesnan explained that education was only given at primary level (the first to eighth years of schooling) in the Gedo region. No district had any secondary schools (for the ninth to twelfth years) in operation. He reported, however, that many of the children in areas bordering on Kenya attended school in Kenya. He referred here to a recent report, entitled "Education in Gedo Region", produced by the UNOPS/SRP in Mandera.

According to that report, there are primary schools in all districts of the Gedo region except for El Waq. It confirms the absence of any secondary schools. Some of the schools receive assistance from international NGOs, such as Trocaire in Belet Hawa, while other schools operate without international aid.

The report also confirms that large numbers of school-age children living near the Kenyan border, i.e. in the towns of Belet Hawa and El Waq, are taught at Kenyan schools in Mandera and El Wak in Kenya. This holds true at both primary and secondary level. In the town of Belet Hawa, for instance, 20% of all school-age children are believed to attend Mandera Primary School in Kenya.

#### **7.5. Somali Rehabilitation Project (SRP)**

With a view to relieving poverty problems in the Gedo region, among others, the UNOPS/SRP has introduced a micro-finance programme for small traders, enabling the UNOPS/SRP to lend capital to business people trading across district borders. Such trade is considered highly important both for food supplies and for individual household incomes in districts. The UNOPS/SRP expects the project to help households achieve better standards of nutrition, housing and health and better educational opportunities. It is also hoped that the project may create more jobs and thus provide a basis for local taxation (a description of the Small Loan Fund (SLF) poverty alleviation initiative is attached as Annex 12).

In addition to the SLF scheme there is an Irrigated Crop Expansion Fund (ICEF) scheme, designed to assist artificial irrigation projects in farming areas along the Rivers Juba and Dawa.

Local DMGs supported by the SRP are responsible for administering these projects (see also section 4.2.1 on development management groups).

## **8. Repatriation and reintegration**

### **8.1. General points**

With a view to any future specific discussions with local *de facto* authorities in Gedo on repatriation of rejected Somali nationals to the Gedo region, the delegation enquired about the authorities' views on both enforced expulsion and voluntary return as well as reintegration aspects.

The delegation made it clear to the authorities that any enforced repatriation would only be carried out after prior notification by its own authorities.

### **8.2. Repatriation of rejected asylum seekers**

Wayne Long, Chief Security Adviser to the UNDP, recommended that, if rejected asylum seekers were to be repatriated to Gedo, the authority repatriating them should contact local DMGs in the Gedo region's districts.

General Mohamed Omar Hagi, Chairman of the SNF, acknowledged the SNF's duty to readmit Somali nationals from the Gedo region, regardless of whether they had previously been resident in Mogadishu but from their clan background now belonged in Gedo. "They are the same, they are brothers", he stated.

Having said that, he did not consider it possible at present for the authorities in Gedo to take in rejected asylum-seekers. The reason he gave for this was the lack as yet of a fully satisfactory security situation in the region.

Abdirizak I. Bihi, of the SNF Executive Committee in Belet Hawa, explained that anyone wishing to return voluntarily would be welcome, including those previously living in Mogadishu.

Enforced repatriation, however, would give rise to many problems and he also took the view that no repatriation of any kind should be carried out until law and order had been more extensively restored in the region.

Both Omar Hagi and Abdirizak I. Bihi made the point that nobody should be repatriated to the region without first contacting the SNF.

Mohamed Mohamud Aden, District Commissioner for Luuq, reported there to be no political obstacles to the repatriation of Somali nationals. Such obstacles as did stand in the way, however, were economic in nature. He pointed here to the poor living conditions generally and to the security problems still faced.

Mohamed Mohamud Aden stated that the district council was willing to cooperate over any voluntary repatriation. As regards enforced repatriation, he said that a decision would have to be taken later on the terms of any cooperation with this.

He added that for any repatriation it would be necessary to have details of the person's name, clan membership and former place of residence in Somalia as well as whether repatriation was voluntary or otherwise.

Isa Ugaas Abdille, of the SNF Executive Committee in Dolo, explained that the repatriation issue had to be viewed in the light of the community's lack of resources at present. He pointed here to the shortage of housing and the poor state of the health and education systems. Nor did he consider the security situation yet to be fully satisfactory.

### **8.3. Reintegration**

The UNHCR's Head of Somalia Operations, Kalunga Lutato, took the view that a rejected asylum-seeker being repatriated to Gedo should not receive any sizeable individual financial assistance, since there was a risk of such a person being regarded as privileged on returning home. This might give rise to dissension in the local community. He also feared that such assistance would give others in the area an incentive to leave Gedo and seek asylum abroad so as to obtain similar benefits.

Mohamed Omar Hagi, Chairman of the SNF, explained that the poor economic conditions in particular had to be borne in mind in assessing the region's ability to reintegrate returnees. He pointed out that quite a large proportion of Gedo's population lacked housing and many people had no way of supporting themselves. A number of those living in Gedo were before the civil war resident in Mogadishu, where they had lost their homes and other property, to which they were unable to return. He himself could not go back to his house in Mogadishu, as his life would be at risk if he tried to reclaim his property there.

Mohamed Mohamud Aden, District Commissioner for Luuq, reported that people coming from the Gedo region were basically welcome to return. At the same time, however, he pointed out that the community did not have the resources to offer returnees any kind of welfare benefits. He therefore suggested devising reintegration packages which would also benefit the community as a whole and not just the individual. On the specific form to be taken by reintegration assistance, he said that job creation was seen as far and away the best means of fostering reintegration.

Isa Ugaas Abdille, of the SNF Executive Committee in Dolo, explained that there were no resources available for reintegration, particularly as Dolo already housed sizeable groups of internally displaced people.

Kenneth Menkhaus considered that a Somali repatriated to the Gedo region should be able to return home without any kind of special financial assistance. He pointed out that anyone returning with a sum of money would in any case risk seeing it dissipated among fellow clan members.

## **9. Internal flight alternative (IFA)**

The delegation held a meeting with Kalunga Lutato, Head of Somalia Operations for the UNHCR, who explained that the UNHCR was not in a position to say whether members of clans regarded as "resident clans" in the Gedo region could enter the region and take up permanent residence there. He pointed out that there were up to about 8 000 refugees from the Gedo region in UNHCR camps in Kenya. In his view, however, a large proportion of those 8 000 could not be from Gedo, coming rather from the Bay and Bakool regions.



He was concerned at the continued presence in Kenya of a number of refugees from Gedo who had not yet returned of their own accord. Nevertheless, he pointed out that there were not many people now registering as refugees from Gedo and the most recent significant numbers registered by the UNHCR stemmed from the flooding in the winter of 1997/98. Those people had, however, been living in Kenya for some while (up to eight months) before being registered as UNHCR refugees.

He was also concerned lest any sizeable number of rejected asylum-seekers repatriated to the same place give rise to ghetto-like conditions. It would, for instance, prove difficult to provide job opportunities and housing for them. He thus saw a potential risk of such groups merely ending up as new internally displaced people in Somalia. He pointed here to the problems faced by the many internally displaced people in Bosasso, in north-eastern Somalia (Puntland), living in ghettos.

The source lastly considered that returning refugees should be able actually to go back to their former homes, i.e. those where they had been living before. On this point Kenneth Menkhaus commented that any Somali with relatives in the Gedo region who looked them up on returning from abroad would be able to obtain assistance from those relatives.

## **10. Latest developments concerning the split within the SNF, the peace agreement between the SNF and Al-Itihad and the conflict in Kismayo**

### ***10.1. General points***

Shortly before the delegation returned home, a number of sources reported that the peace agreement between the SNF and Al-Itihad had apparently been backed out of and a split arisen within the SNF. It was also reported that the SNF and the SNA had engaged in armed combat with Morgan's SPM in Kismayo.

### ***10.2. Split within the SNF and peace agreement between the SNF and Al-Itihad***

Kenneth Menkhaus reported a split to have arisen within the SNF over observance of the peace agreement with Al-Itihad. He regarded the really key issue for security in Gedo as being the relationship between Al-Itihad and the SNF, dissension within the SNF and lastly the role of Ethiopia. However, he was in considerable doubt as to what role Ethiopia might want to play in the Gedo region.

Kenneth Menkhaus made the point that he would be surprised if Al-Itihad and the SNF once again found themselves pitted against one another in armed conflict and he firmly believed that, were they to do so, it would be a sporadic, short-lived affair. In support of this he argued that the Marehan clan (the predominant clan in both movements) showed a clear tendency to want to give an outward appearance of unity. This was more marked with the Marehan clan than with many of Somalia's other clans. For that reason he ruled out the possibility of a general state of war in the Gedo region. He pointed out that the SNF's Deputy Chairman, Ali Nuur, who was behind the peace agreement with Al-Itihad, had now been politically weakened.

In general terms Kenneth Menkhaus considered that Gedo had up to now proved a relatively safe region. In his view, the Gedo region was safer than, say, Kenya.

He assessed the present security situation as follows:

- no intra-clan clashes in Gedo;
- no clashes between the Marehan and Awlihan clans;
- no clashes between the Marehan and Rahanweyn clans.

In his view, by far the most serious danger to peace in Gedo would come from an intra-clan conflict, in which Marehan clans clashed with one another. However, he saw virtually no risk of any such conflict.

Steve Gluning reported that the latest setback in the peace process in Gedo had not in itself come as any shock to the UN. He saw it as a typical problem potentially arising anywhere in Somalia and therefore expected the political disputes within the SNF and between the SNF and Al-Itihad to turn out all right in the end.

Abdi Yussuf Dirir, Chairman of Soma Action, on the other hand, took a bleaker view of the prospects for a peaceful settlement of the disagreements within the SNF and between the SNF and Al-Itihad. He pointed out that, had the peace agreement between the SNF and Al-Itihad been upheld, the SNF's Chairman, Omar Hagi, would lose political influence in Gedo to Ali Nuur. He thought the political dispute within the SNF to be due to a struggle for power in the SNF and Ethiopia's support for Omar Hagi. He noted that Ethiopia wanted to see Al-Itihad completely eliminated from Gedo. Ethiopia had never supported the peace agreement with Al-Itihad, as the Ethiopians feared that Al-Itihad was working to a hidden agenda. In short, Ethiopia was afraid that the section of the SNF supporting the peace agreement and feeling some sympathy towards Al-Itihad would be politically strengthened and at the same time be influenced by Al-Itihad.

Abdi Yussuf Dirir went on to report rumours that on 28 October 1998 the SNF Chairman, Omar Hagi, was on his way to El Waq, Al-Itihad's last foothold in Gedo. Omar Hagi was reportedly accompanied by Ethiopian forces and the source feared armed clashes between Al-Itihad and the combined SNF and Ethiopian forces, with the latter attempting to drive Al-Itihad out of the area.

Steve Gluning, who on 11 November 1998 had just returned from a stay in Gedo, reported there not to have been any clashes in El Waq as rumoured. Al-Itihad could be clearly seen to be completely disarmed and, as he described it, the *status quo* was unchanged and the situation quiet. There were, however, rumours of Al-Itihad having mined some roads in Gedo, although according to him those rumours could not be confirmed.

Abdi Yussuf Dirir gave the following account of the background to the termination of the peace agreement between the SNF and Al-Itihad:

On 20 October 1998 the SNF Chairman and Ethiopia had pressed Ali Nuur into retracting his signature on the peace agreement. At the same time Ali Nuur's bodyguards had been disarmed and he feared being arrested by the Ethiopian armed forces or possibly even killed. Ali Nuur had previously used the peace agreement to win political control of the SNF. A peace agreement with Al-Itihad and hence peace in the Gedo region had apparently earned Ali Nuur broad-based support among the population.

On the other hand, the same peace agreement had isolated Omar Hagi among the Marehan community. This was due partly to the Marehan clans' general mistrust of Ethiopia. Many people thus deep down felt the Ethiopian bombardment of Al-Itihad positions in Gedo to be directed against Marehan kinsmen.

Steve Gluning explained that the delegation was visiting Gedo at a time of political discord in the region. He considered there to be a struggle for power in progress within the SNF leadership, which in all likelihood would not prove of any significance at grass-roots level. He also expected the political situation to resolve itself within a few weeks, i.e. in late November or early December 1998.

Steve Gluning subsequently reported that the internal dispute within the SNF now appeared to have been settled. The Deputy Chairman, Ali Nuur, had returned to the SNF leadership and was said to be on "friendly" terms with the Chairman, Omar Hagi.

### ***10.3. Conflict in Kismayo***

With regards to rumours of an armed raid by SNF and SNA forces on Morgan's SPM forces in Kismayo, Abdi Yussuf Dirir could report that such a raid did take place on 27 October 1998. He explained that the purpose of attacking Morgan in Kismayo was merely to gain political leverage and a stronger negotiating position in relation to the SPM in Kismayo. He nevertheless pointed out that, if the combined SNF and SNA forces laid hands on Morgan, they would probably kill him. The source subsequently reported that Morgan had fled Kismayo and was said to be in an area between Kismayo and the border with Kenya, about 60 km from Kismayo.

Steve Gluning stated on 11 November 1998 that there was now a front line near Kismayo in the Yontoy-Gobwein area and reports had been received of heavy fighting, with casualties on both sides. The last foreigners in the area, staff of an NGO, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), had left there at the beginning of the previous week.

Kenneth Menkhaus did not consider that an armed conflict in Kismayo would have any kind of negative impact on the security situation in the Gedo region. This was subsequently confirmed by Steve Gluning, who after visiting the area reported that the security situation in the Gedo region did not appear to have been adversely affected by the situation around Kismayo, nor was it expected to be.

## **11. Individuals, organisations and authorities consulted**

**Abdi**, Hussein Hassan, National Officer, United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS), Nairobi.

**Abdi**, Ibrahim, Administrator, Khalil Hospital, Trocaire, Belet Hawa.

**Abdi**, Isaq Aden, Head of Police, Luuq.

**Abdille**, Isa Ugaas, Executive Committee, Somali National Front (SNF), Dolo.

**Abdirahim**, Development Management Group (DMG), Dolo.

**Aden**, Mohamed Mohamud, District Commissioner, Luuq.

**Ahmed**, Bulle Aden, District Council, Dolo.

**Ahmed**, Hussein, District Council, Commander of Police, Dolo.

**Ahmed**, Mahamed, Coordination Officer, Somali National Front (SNF), Belet Hawa.

**Ali**, Khalif Mohamed, Commander of SNF Militia (Gedo region), Somali National Front (SNF), Dolo.

**Badejo**, Babafemi A., Senior Political Adviser, United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS), Nairobi.

**Barre**, Abdulaziz Ali, Executive Committee, Somali National Front (SNF), Belet Hawa.

**Bihi**, Abdirizak I., Executive Committee, Somali National Front (SNF), Belet Hawa.

**Dhere**, Hussein, Executive Committee, Somali National Front (SNF), District Commissioner, Dolo.

**Dirir**, Abdi Yussuf, Chairman, Soma-Action, Nairobi.

**Fitzgibbon**, Andrew, Programme Officer, United Nations Office for Project Services in Somalia (UNOPS)/Somalia Rehabilitation Programme (SRP), Nairobi.

**Gluning**, Stephen, UN-Field Security Adviser, World Food Programme (WFP) - Somalia, Zone Security Officer (South Zone), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) - Somalia, Nairobi.

**Hussein**, Mohammed M., Field Officer (Cross-Border Operations), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Branch Office for Kenya, Nairobi.

**Ismail**, Abdullahi Shek, Commander of Militia, Somali National Front (SNF), Dolo.

**Ismail**, Eusebio, Development Management Group (DMG), Belet Hawa.

**Jama**, Osman Mahamud, District Council, Dolo.

**Long, Wayne**, UN-Security Coordinator for Somalia/Chief Security Adviser, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) - Somalia, Nairobi.

**Lutato**, Kalunga, Head of Somali Operations, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Branch Office for Kenya, Nairobi.

**Manita**, Maria, Field Officer (Middle and Lower Juba), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Branch Office for Kenya, Nairobi.

**Menkhaus**, Kenneth J., Assistant Professor, Davidson College, North Carolina/Consultant, United Nations Development Office for Somalia (UNDOS), Nairobi.

**Mohamed**, Abdullahi Sheikh, National Professional Project Personnel, United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), Mandera.

**Mohamed**, Omar Hagi, Chairman, Somali National Front (SNF), Belet Hawa.

**Mumin**, Sa'id Ali, Team-Leader, Development Management Group (DMG), Belet Hawa.

**Muse**, Hagi Yusuf, District Commissioner, Belet Hawa, Executive Committee, Somali National Front (SNF), Belet Hawa.

**Nuur**, Ibrahim Mohamed, District Council, Social Affairs, Luuq.

**Othowai**, Abdishakur, Coordinator, Nomadic Primary Health Care Programme, Mandera.

**Sesnan**, Barry, Area Manager (Gedo-region), United Nations Office for Project Services in Somalia (UNOPS)/Somalia Rehabilitation Programme (SRP), Mandera.

**Shaure**, Mohamed, District Council, Local Authority, Luuq.

**Tahalil**, I., Medical Doctor/Administrator, African Medical Research Foundation (AMREF), Luuq.

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UNOPS/SRP (**UNOPS/SRP 1997**): Annual Report, 1 January to 31 December 1997.

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### 13. Abbreviations used

- AMREF** – African Medical Relief Foundation
- DMG** – Development management group
- EPAG** – Emergency Pastoralist Assistance Group
- ICEF** – Irrigated Crop Expansion Fund
- INTERSOS** – Humanitarian Organisation for Emergency
- LPI** – Life and Peace Institute
- MCH** – Mother and Child Health
- MEMISA** – Medical Mission Action (Help for All in the Third World)
- MSF** – Médecins Sans Frontières
- NCA** – Norwegian Church Aid
- NGO** – Non-governmental organisation
- RRA** – Rahanweyn Resistance Army
- SDM** – Somali Democratic Movement
- SIV** – Statens Invandrarverk (the Swedish Immigration Service)
- SLF** – Small Loan Fund
- SNA** – Somali National Alliance
- SNF** – Somali National Front
- SPM** – Somali Patriotic Movement
- SRP** – Somali Rehabilitation Project
- UN** – United Nations
- UNDOS** – United Nations Development Office for Somalia
- UNDP** – United Nations Development Programme
- UNHCR** – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- UNICEF** – United Nations Children's Fund
- UNOPS** – United Nations Office for Project Services
- UNPOS** – United Nations Political Office for Somalia
- US** – Udlændingestyrelsen (the Danish Immigration Service)
- USC** – United Somali Congress
- WFP** – World Food Programme
- WHO** – World Health Organisation

## **14. List of political movements**

(The information below comes mainly from the Human Development Report, Somalia 1998, published by the UNDP.)

**Al-Itihad:** a mainly Marehan-based Islamic movement, funded from abroad. It uses its resources to support schools, social causes and Sharia courts and to buy arms. Al-Itihad has managed to secure control of some towns in the north of the Gedo region. In 1997 Al-Itihad suffered a serious defeat when Ethiopian forces and the SNF launched an offensive and drove it out of a number of towns in Gedo. In the summer of 1998 Al-Itihad and the SNF concluded a peace agreement.

**SNF:** the Somali National Front is a Marehan-based clan movement represented both in the Gedo region and in Abud Waq, in central Somalia. The SNF is headed by General Omar Hagi. Its military wing is relatively well-organised and has a trained standing militia. In the summer of 1998 the SNF and Al-Itihad concluded a peace agreement, following pressure from elders representing the Marehan clans. The SNF is working with the SNA with the aim of securing control of the port of Kismayo.

**SNA:** the Somali National Alliance was founded by General Aideed in 1992 in an attempt to form a multi-clan alliance. In 1993 the SNA was Somalia's most influential political clan movement, but it became weakened in its attempt to form a national government in Mogadishu. The SNA split when Aideed's own subclan began internecine feuding.

**SPM:** the Somali Patriotic Movement is also known as the SPM/Morgan to distinguish it from the SPM/SNA. Technically speaking, the SPM is led by the Awlihan General Aden Gabio, but the movement is controlled by and structured around General Mohamed Hersi "Morgan", a former Defence Minister under President Siad Barre. Up until 1997 Morgan drew support from the Harti coalition in Kismayo, parts of the Marehan clan and some Absame subclans. Since 1997 Morgan has drawn his support from the Harti coalition. The SPM is now allied with the new regime in north-eastern Somalia (Puntland) and with the Ogaden militia in Jubaland.

**RRA:** the Rahanweyn Resistance Army is a politico-military resistance group formed by Rahanweyn members in response to the occupation of Baidoa by General Aideed's SNA militia units in 1995. The RRA is led by Hassan Mohamed Nuur "Shanti Gadood". It has carried out a number of minor but successful attacks on SNA militia units in Hoddur and Baidoa, in central Somalia. Despite claims by leaders of the Somali Democratic Movement (SDM) that the RRA forms a military wing of the SDM, the RRA remains adamant that it is independent of the various SDM groups. Kenneth Menkhaus reported that the RRA was on peaceful terms with the SNF and had an office in Dolo, in the Gedo region. Steve Gluning explained that the towns of Luuq and Bardera were traditional Rahanweyn areas and the SNF accepted the RRA's presence in the Gedo region and lent the RRA moral support. Steve Gluning also pointed out that there tended to be some degree of cooperation between the SNF and the RRA in northern Gedo, whereas cooperation between the SNF and the SNA was found in southern Gedo. It should be noted that the RRA is in conflict with the SNA in Hoddur and Baidoa.



**Annexes** (not available electronically)

1. Map of the Gedo region (UNOPS/SRP, Mandera)
2. Administrative units of Somalia (UNDOS)
3. Estimated population density 1998 (UNDOS)
4. Appeal from the elders of the Garre Mare, Gabaweyn and Wakh Doore communities, 27 April 1998
5. Appeal from the elders of the Gabaweyn community, 4 September 1998
6. Map of major Somali clans (no source indicated)
7. Somali refugees repatriated from Kenya since 1992 (UNHCR - Kenya Branch Office)
8. The Reconciliation Accord at El-Adde/Heshiiska Nabadeynta Ee Ceel-Cadde, 9 June 1998
9. United Nations presence in Somalia (UNDOS)
10. Somalia Rehabilitation Programme activities – February 1998 (UNDOS)
11. Somali Rehabilitation Programme, South-West Area, Half-Yearly Report, January-June 1998
12. United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)/Somali Rehabilitation Programme (SRP), the Small Loan Fund (SLF), a poverty alleviation initiative