Refugees Country Briefing

SOMALIA

This document was developed in the framework of the EU-funded project "Refugees and Recognition – REACT" by the ENIC-NARIC centres of Norway, Italy, the Netherlands, Ireland and the Germany.

This country briefing – especially developed to help with the evaluation of credentials of refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation – should give orientation on the education system in Somalia in the light of recent political and economic developments in this country. It presents a systematised overview on its higher education system and links to the available information sources that are useful for the evaluation of qualifications of refugees coming from Somalia, even in cases where candidates present insufficient or lack of documentation.

SOMALIA

Source: CIA World Factbook

Location: Eastern Africa, located in the Horn of Africa bordering the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, east of Ethiopia and Kenya

Population: 11 million

Ethnic groups: Somali 85%, Bantu and other non-Somali 15% (including 30,000 Arabs). Somalis share the same language, religion and culture, but Somali communities are divided in clans which in turn are subdivided in tribes and tribal families.

Demographic profile: More than 2 million Somalis are currently displaced. An estimated 1.5 million people are internally displaced in Somalia and nearly 900,000 are refugees in the near region, mainly in Kenya, Yemen, Egypt, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Uganda.

Languages: Somali (official, according to the 2012 Transitional Federal Charter), Arabic (official, according to the 2012 Transitional Federal Charter), English, Italian

Language of instruction can be Somali, Arabic and English depending on the school and region

1. Current situation

The overthrow of Mohamed Siad Barre's regime in 1991, the following civil war and the subsequent collapse of the central government and its public and civil institutions left Somalia one of the poorest countries in the world. Somalia was for long dubbed "the world's most failed state". After the civil war up to 90% of schools were destroyed. Even today, Somalia has one of the world's lowest gross enrolment rates for primary school-aged children.

Regional differences in geography, governance, development

Somalia is divided into three regions: the self-declared 'Republic of Somaliland' in the northwest; 'Puntland State of Somalia' in the northeast; and 'South and Central Somalia' (SCS). The state of development as well as the educational structures differ from one region to another.

Somaliland

Somaliland declared itself independent in 1991. Borders are based on the former colonial borders of British-Somalia. The last widespread fighting took place in 1995. Since then, the region is relatively stable (compared to South and Central Somalia). Though not internationally recognised, Somaliland has a working political system, government institutions (including a Ministry of Education), a police force and its own currency. The civil administration estimates that the region's population is approximately 3.5 million.

Puntland

Following a conference of local elders, Puntland declared itself an autonomous state in August 1998, in part to avoid the clan warfare engulfing southern Somalia. The population is estimated to be 2.5 million. Despite its relative stability, the region has endured armed conflicts, and was worldwide in the news for the upsurge in pirate attacks on international shipping in the Indian Ocean. Puntland is a destination for many Somalis displaced by violence in the south. The region of Puntland has its own Ministry of Education.

South and Central Somalia

South and Central Somalia is the most challenging region of the country. The seizure of the capital Mogadishu and much of the country's south by a coalition of Islamist shariah courts in 2006 prompted an intervention by Ethiopian, and later, African Union, forces.
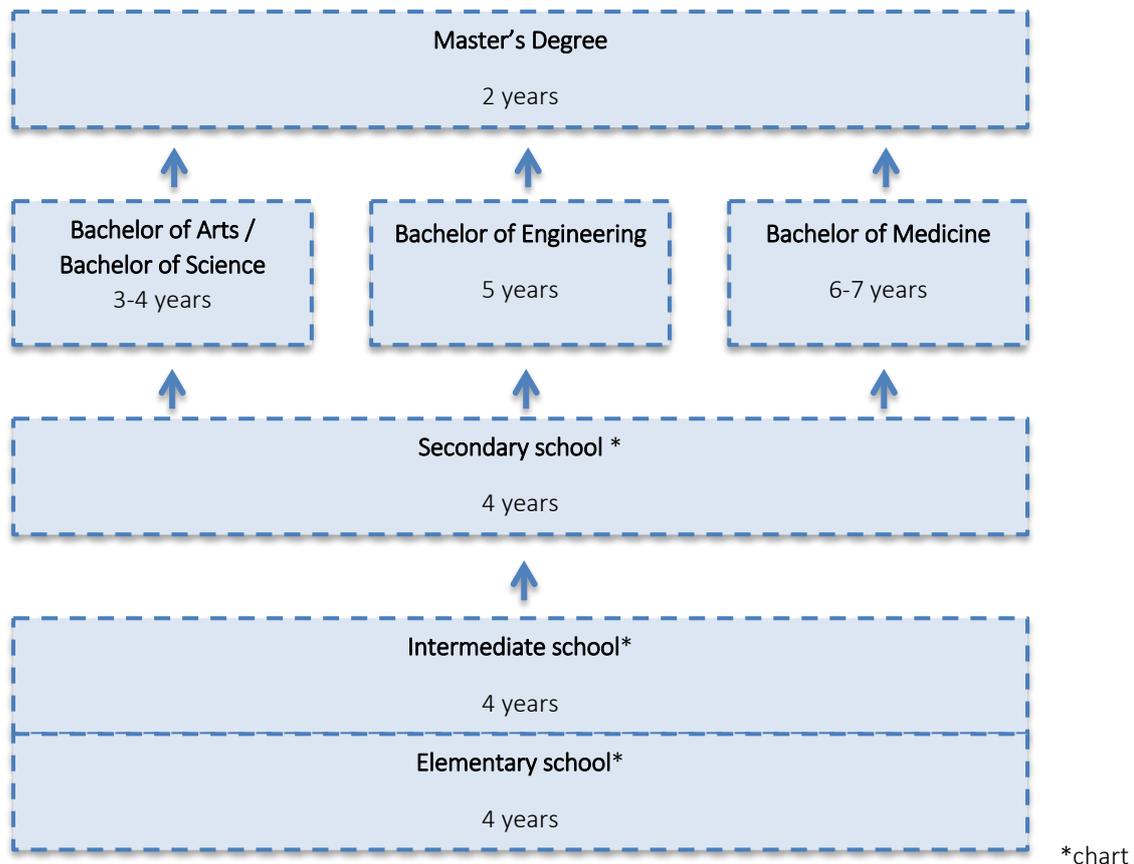
Since 2012, when a new internationally-backed government was installed, Somalia has been inching towards stability, but the new authorities still face a challenge from Al-Qaeda-aligned Al-Shabab insurgents.

The impact of the civil war still has an acute bearing on the restoration of public education. State intervention in the education has been and remains limited. There is a

Ministry of Education, but it cannot yet implement its policies all over the region. Hence, education projects are still rather private than public venture, even though progress can be seen. Efforts to unify different school systems curricula can be observed.

2. Education system

Education chart

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                          Master's Degree                             │
│                              2 years                                 │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
        ↑                          ↑                         ↑
┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐     ┌──────────────────┐
│ Bachelor of Arts /│     │ Bachelor of      │     │ Bachelor of      │
│ Bachelor of Science│    │ Engineering      │     │ Medicine         │
│      3-4 years    │     │    5 years       │     │    6-7 years     │
└──────────────────┘      └──────────────────┘     └──────────────────┘
        ↑                          ↑                         ↑
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                         Secondary school *                           │
│                              4 years                                 │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                                   ↑
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                        Intermediate school*                          │
│                              4 years                                 │
├─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┤
│                         Elementary school*                           │
│                              4 years                                 │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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*chart was drawn according recent announcements on the school system (see: https://theirworld.org/news/somalia-shakes-up-education-system-schools-after-years-of-conflict), even though it is not yet implemented

Primary and secondary school education

Following the collapse of the central government in 1991 Somalia was left with a lack of a centralized education system. Until present, there is no coherent educational system.

Educational systems in Somaliland, Puntland and South and Central Somalia have developed separately and even within South and Central Somalia might be found different school systems and curricula, depending if the school is run by a local or international NGO, both Islamic or Western. Others forms of education (ABE (Alternative Basic Education), IQS (Integrated Quranic Schools), NFE (Non formal Education)) can be found as well.

Somaliland

The "Somaliland Certificate of Secondary Education" is issued by the „Somaliland National Examination and Certification Board" (SLNECB - http://www.slnecb.org/) - earlier called Somaliland National Examination Board (SLNEB) - after having passed centralized examinations.

Somaliland has introduced free education at primary and intermediate levels in 2011, but implementation was very difficult (e.g. maintenance of infrastructures without tuition fees, getting enough teachers when salaries are very low). The following government reintroduced tuition fees.

Fees of $8 apply at state-run secondary schools in Somaliland. Private schools charge more (e.g. in Hargeisa between $10-25 monthly fees per child). In 2017/2018 thousands of school children in Somaliland have been withdrawn from schools by their parents because state-employed teachers have been imposing additional fees to bump up their salaries.

Puntland

Primary school (age 6 – 14): elementary cycle (grade 1 - 4) + intermediate cycle (grade 5 - 8): Diploma: "Puntland Primary School Leaving Examination" (PSLE)

Secondary school (age 14 – 18): grade 9 – 12; Diploma: "Secondary School Certificate"

Overall enrolment at secondary level remains low (14.73% gross enrolmenent ratio).

South and Central Somalia (SCS)

Responding to the urgent and growing education needs of the country after the civil war, privately owned education institutions were established and expanded forming umbrella organizations.

Education umbrella organizations known for operating or having operated in Somalia are:

1. Formal Private Education Network in Somalia (FPENS)

2. School Association for Formal Education (SAFE)

3. School Organization for Formal Education (SOFE)

4. Somali Formal Education Link (SOFEL)

5. Somali Formal Education Network (SOFEN)

6. Formal Education Network for Private Schools (FENPS)

7. Somali Education Development Association (SEDA)

8. Gedo Education Network (GEN)

Depending on the umbrella organization, there still are two systems of educational systems used in SCS:

a) 6-3-3 system (system followed in several Arab countries)

- 6 years of elementary school -

- 3 years of intermediate school; Diploma: "Shahaadada Dugsida Dhexe"/ "Intermediate School Leaving Certificate"

- 3 years of secondary school; Diploma: "Shahaadada Dugsiga Sare" / "Secondary School Leaving Certficate"

b) 4-4-4- system (system inherited from the post-1960 era)

- 4 years of elementary school

- 4 years of intermediate school; Diploma: "Intermediate School Certificate"

- 4 years of secondary school; Diploma: "Secondary School Leaving Certificate"

Each umbrella has its own regulation, policy, curriculum, academic year, student uniform, education system and certificate. Curricula can be based on East-African states (e.g. Kenya, Uganda), on Arab states (e.g. Sudan, Saudi-Arabia, United Arab Emirates) or on the old national curriculum before the civil war.

The language of instruction also depends on the umbrella organization and on availability of textbooks. UNESCO has produced textbooks for primary level (level 1 – 6), but these books reach only 10% of the children. Formal Private Education Network in Somalia (FPENS) produces books in Arabic language. Some schools use books from the 70's or 80's.

Since 2013 there have been campaigns to unify the Somalia national education curriculum and examinations in the South and Central Somalia regions. Progress can be observed – but very slowly. Newspaper articles state that approx. 20.000 – 27.000 students now sit for the "Unified National Secondary School Exams" by the federal government (http://amisom-au.org/2018/05/thousands-of-students-sit-for-unified-national-secondary-school-exams-in-somalia/) But there still a great number of students who only participate in the examinations organized by the umbrella organizations.

The largest umbrella organization is "Formal Private Education Network in Somalia" (FPENS). Over the past 5 years, most of the secondary school certificates from Somalia handed in for evaluation at ENIC NARIC centres were documents issued by FPENS.

Spotlight on "Formal Private Education Network in Somalia" (FPENS)

A good overview over the history, the main activities and the role of FPENS in South and Central Somalia is given in Valeria Saggiomo's article "From Charity to Governance: Islamic NGOs and Education in Somalia" (published in The Open Area Studies Journal, 2011, 4, 53-61)

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FPENS was founded by 14 Islamic organizations in 1999 as an umbrella organisation. Over the years – in absence of a functioning ministry of education - it got an important institutional role in Somali education. The services offered at present include: curriculum development, the printing of books, the establishment of examinations and certifications systems, teacher training, and maintenance of external relations with international universities.

The number of FPENS schools is about 300 in total, not only operating in South and Central Somalia, but also in Puntland and Somaliland, reaching more 120.000 students. (http://fpens.so/en/about/)

Some ENIC NARICs have already successfully contacted FPENS for authentication of school certificates. Other umbrella organizations seem to be more difficult to get in contact with.

Latest newspaper articles from August 2018 state: "Somalia's education system has been lacking a unified approach for decades. Now, there will be a single system of four years in lower-primary school, four years in upper-primary and four years in secondary. There will be a new curriculum. The language of instruction in primary school will be Somali, while Arabic and English will be used in secondary school". Implementation remains to be seen.

Higher Education

By 1996, local educators started - with the help of NGOs - initiatives for the growing number of secondary school graduates seeking higher education. This led to the establishment of the"Amoud University" in Somaliland as well as the "Mogadishu University". These were followed closely by the "East Africa University" in Puntland as well as the "Hargeisa University" in Somaliland. Unsurprisingly, Somaliland and Puntland got a head start in the educational sector due to improved stability, development and administration. Between 1997 and 2006, numerous universities were established in different parts of the country such as the "Somali Institute for Management and Administration Development" (SIMAD) and the "Puntland State University", both established in 1999 and "Benadir University", Mogadishu established in 2002 (Eno, 2015).

The most significant growth in the number of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) could be observed in the previous decade. The Heritage Institute for Policy Study (2013) conducted a study on the rapid growth of HEIs in Somalia. One of the conclusions was that 34 out of 44 HEIs had only been established between 2004 and 2012. Compared to only one university operational in the country pre-1991, the growth rate over the past decade has been exponential.

Even tough this growth rate is impressive; it does not change the fact that most HEIs in the country have no oversight, no regulation or any sort of commonly accepted accreditation system. As of today, many of the universities that offer courses do not have the facilities or necessary infrastructure to provide education or degrees that satisfy many of the hiring practices around the world. There is an increasing number of self-declared universities that offer degrees with little to no academic merit, leading to an increase of people seeking jobs,

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yet leading them to unemployment (Cassanelli and Abdikadir, 2008; Brock and Wolhuter, 2014).

Somaliland

In Somaliland, the HEI with the highest enrolment is the "University of Hargeisa" (UoH), with a reported enrolment of 4,000 students (The State of Higher Education in Somalia, 2013).

The establishment of the UoH was feasible through support from Somalis living in Kuwait, Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom and Sweden - so by engaging the diaspora worldwide. The university was founded by Swedish Expats. The computers were sponsored by Kuwait. Expats in London (UK) developed the business plan and curricula. An Internet diasporic forum raised money. So, the "University of Hargeisa" is a good example for education from the bottom up so typical for Somalia.

UoH offers bachelor's degrees in law (4 years), medicine (7 years) as well as business (4 years) and engineering (5 years) (University of Hargeisa, 2018). UoH also offers graduate programs (2 years) in courses such as international relations and diplomacy, developmental studies, public health and nutrition, ophthalmology etc.

Other than Hargeisa, universities in the region include "Gollis University" and the "Somaliland University of Technology" (SUTECH). While "Gollis University" offers bachelor's degrees in disciplines ranging from law (4 years), engineering (4 years) to medicine (6 years), SUTECH offers bachelor's degrees (4 years) mainly in engineering, technology, business administration and accounting. "Gollis University" also offers certificate courses (6 months - 1 year) and diploma courses (2 years) in English, information technology, and health sciences while SUTECH offers diploma courses (2 years) in engineering, administration and accounting as well as vocational courses (6 months) (Gollis.edu.so, 2018; Somalilanduniversity.org, 2018).

Puntland

In Puntland, the HEI with the highest enrolment is the East Africa University (EAU). With an enrolment of 2,700 students, the university offers bachelor's degrees (4 years) in various disciplines including management, administration and engineering. (The State of Higher Education in Somalia, 2013). The University also offers diploma courses (6 months - 1.5 years) in fields such as statistics and English (East Africa University, 2018). For master's programs EAU has tie-ups with other universities abroad such as Kenyetta University, Kenya; University of Science and Technology, Yemen as well as Universiti Teknikal, Malaysia.

Other universities in Puntland are the "Puntland State University" (PSU) and the "University of Bosaso". "Puntland State University" offers bachelor's degrees (4 years) in subjects such as information technology, public administration, and business management etc. PSU also offers undergraduate diploma/associate degree courses (2 years) as well as postgraduate diplomas (1 year) in development studies and public administration. Furthermore, PSU also offers

master's degrees in business administration jointly with Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Kenya. The "University of Bosaso" (UOB) meanwhile offers bachelor's degrees (3 years) in computer science, business administration and accounting as well as bachelor's degrees (4 years) in public health and education. UoB also offers diploma courses (3 years) in computer science. Furthermore, UoB offers master's degrees in English literature, computer science and education in cooperation with the Sudan Open University.

Puntland also has many community and teaching colleges like "Garowe Teacher's Education College" which offers certificate (6 months-1 year), diploma (1-2 years) and degree courses (2 years) in teaching (Puntland State University, 2018; Universityofbosaso.net, 2018; Gtecsom.com, 2018).

South and Central Somalia (SCS)

In South and Central Somalia, the HEI with the highest number of students is the "Mogadishu University" (MU).

"Mogadishu University (MU)" was founded in the 90's by former staff of the "Somali National University". The university started with 5 lecturers in rooms of a secondary school. When these rooms were destroyed they moved to a hotel. In 2005/06 a campus was built in the outskirts of Mogadishu.

With an enrolment of 5,240 students, it is the university with the highest number of students in Somalia (The State of Higher Education in Somalia, 2013). It has campuses in Mogadishu, the capital city of Somalia, but also a campus in Bosaso, in Puntland.

MU has now 9 faculties. It offers diplomas (1-2 years) and bachelor's (3-4 years) degrees in disciplines including information technology, journalism and media and nursing. MU also offers post-graduate degrees in education (diploma, MA and PhD) through the Umu Durman Islamic University, Sudan as well as master's degrees in business administration in collaboration with the Open Malaysia University and the Asian University.

Two other HEIs in the South Central region are "SIMAD", which offers bachelor's degrees in disciplines like medicine (6 years), law (4 years), engineering (4 years) and public administration (4 years) and the "University of Somalia" which offers bachelor's degrees in medicine (6 years), engineering (3 years), business administration (4 years) and accounting (4 years). SIMAD also offers master's programs through the Open University Malaysia (Gtecsom.com, 2018; SIMAD University, 2018).

Qualification of lectures

The Heritage Institute for Policy Studies reports that the total number of lecturers across all Somali universities was at 2501 in 2013. Accordingly, the total ratio is about 21 students per lecturer. The number of lectures varies depending on the university. Student-lecturer ratio is a poor indicator of students experience in various faculties, because the number of lecturers is not broken down by faculty.

HEI	Students	Lectures	Student/lecturer ratio
Mogadishu University	5240	292	18:1
University of Hargeisa	4000	200	20:1
University of Somalia	3912	134	29:1
Amoud University	3887	212	18:1
SIMAD University	3765	165	23:1
Gollis University	2778	25	111:1
East Africa University	2700	91	30:1
Plasma University for Science & Technology	2693	105	26:1

Table 1: Number of lecturers in the eight largest institutions, Heritage Institute for Policy Studies, 2013

39% of the total lecturers were reported to have a bachelor's degree, 50% were reported to have a master's degree, and the remaining 11% were reported to have a PhD. None of these have been reportedly involved in any research activities. *The quality of teaching varies greatly depending on the institution, as there are no prescribed standards*. There were significant regional differences in the regard to lecturers qualifications: universities located in Somaliland have proportionally fewer lecturers with PhDs compared to institutions in South-Central and Puntland (HIPS, 2013).

HEI	PhD	Master Degree	Bachelor Degree	% with PhD
Mogadishu University	46	181	65	13%
University of Hargeisa	3	10	187	10%
University of Somalia	4	86	44	5%
Amoud University	10	146	56	6%
SIMAD University	16	99	50	7%
Gollis University	8	11	6	5%
East Africa University	11	52	28	4%
Plasma University for Science & Technology	15	40	50	10%

Table 2: Distribution of lecturers' qualifications in the eight largest institutions, Heritage Institute for Policy Studies, 2013

Grading System in Higher Education

There is no data on a standardized grading system. In recent years, various grading systems have evolved in parallel.

	Range	Grade	Letter	Points
1.	Above 95	Excellent with honor	A+	4.5
2.	90 to 94	Excellent	A	4.0
3.	85 to 89	Very good (high)	B+	3.5
4.	80 to 84	Very good	B	3.0
5.	75 to 79	Good (high)	C+	2.5
6.	70 to 74	Good	C	2.0
7.	65 to 64	Pass (high)	D+	1.5
8.	60 to 64	Pass	D	1.0
9.	Less than 60	Failure	F	0

Benadir University Grading System

The grading system of the "Benadir University" is just an example. When evaluating degrees, one has to check each HEI individually, always keeping in mind that there is neither an official accreditation system nor a standardized grading system. Conclusions on authenticity and the quality of the study programs remain difficult and have to be drawn case by case.

TVET

TVET remains largely project driven, with NGOs providing short training courses to target beneficiary groups. While some limited centre based provision does appear to exist, the TVET sector remains largely undeveloped, with no substantive national qualifications scheme. TVET, if existing, is rather non-formal.

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3. Education institutions

- Mogadishu University: http://mu.edu.so/
- University of Hargeisa: http://www.uoh-edu.net/
- Golls University: http://gollis.edu.so/
- Somaliland University of Technolgy: https://www.somalilanduniversity.org/
- East Africa University: http://eastafricauniversity.net/
- Puntland State University: http://puntlandstateuniversity.com/
- University of Bosaso: http://universityofbosaso.net/

4. Evaluation tips and recommendations

- In general: Paper based verification for Somalia is difficult / unsure!
- It is recommended to ask for all educational documents, not just Bachelor, but always secondary school diploma (and intermediate school diploma - even though only few seem to be able to deliver both intermediate and secondary school diploma) and CV of the applicant

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