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## Education from the bottom up: UNICEF's education programme in Somalia

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## WIDER Working Paper No. 2013/127

### **Education from the bottom up:**

### UNICEF's education programme in Somalia

James Williams and William Cummings\*

November 2013

#### **Abstract**

The failure of the Somali state from 1993 to 2012 represents one of the world's most profound and prolonged cases of state collapse. Initially, education and other government services came to a standstill. With the halt of fighting in some areas, local communities with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other agencies began to provide education and other critical services. Since then, slow progress has been made in providing educational services to increasing numbers of children, developing community capacity to manage schools in the absence of government support, and developing regional and national administrative systems to continue development of the education system. UNICEF played a central role in these developments. This case study looks at UNICEF's education programme in Somalia between 1991 and 2010. Highlighted are the contexts in which the programme operated, the challenges it faced, and the ways it adapted and learned.

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Keywords: Somalia, education, conflict, UNICEF

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Of central importance was the agency's sensitivity to local context, its flexibility in programme responses, its willingness and ability to partner with available groups and agencies, its focus on helping the larger system get running, and its commitment to inclusion.

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## 1 Introduction

Twenty-eight million children, 40 per cent of the world's total number of children not in school, live in countries affected by current or past armed conflict (UNESCO 2011). Most recent conflicts are within rather than between states, and the average duration is 12 years (UNESCO 2011). With such increases in intra-state conflicts, an escalating number of non-state actors have emerged as parties to conflict contributing to their resolution at the same time when state failure has heightened the salience of state fragility (UNESCO 2011). Agencies involved in international development have been criticized for failing to devote sufficient funds to fragile contexts and areas affected by conflict. At the same time development agencies and governments have increasingly come to realise that the assumptions and modalities of development assistance in fragile contexts differ strikingly from those effective in development contexts. The international community is just beginning to learn ways to support development in environments where governments lack the capacity or will to be effective partners (UN and World Bank 2007).

Located in the Horn of Africa, Somalia is the lost orphan of East Africa. It is arguably not a single country with a fragile state but rather several countries with varying levels of functioning statehood and fragility. Historically Somalia is the home of tribes who mainly lived a pastoral life—and who favoured Koranic education for their children. The Somalian area was colonized by the Italians (in the south and northeast) and the British (in the northwest). For some Somalis, colonization fostered an interest in the West and in the modern world economy—and hence in Western schooling. But the predominant cultural inclination was and is towards a traditional Islamic way of life, which represents diverse views toward formal schooling, especially of girls. Most children were schooled, if at all, in the Koranic schools run by religious leaders in most communities.

In 1960, Somalia was granted independence and declared a state with its capital in Mogadishu, but the actual integration of the diverse areas was minimal. The demise of the Mohamed Siad Barre regime in 1990 was followed by dissolution of a functioning central state. In its place were three different political directions. Somaliland has developed a functioning if fragile democracy. The Puntland has seen a strong leader with considerable legitimacy. And finally, the south, centered around Mogadishu, which has been a contested zone with several tribes vying for leadership, though with a recent consolidation of authority claiming a national mandate.

Two decades without a functioning central government would seem to jeopardize the provision of social services including education: unsafe schools, destruction of infrastructure and instructional materials, and vulnerable teachers. But the respective governments have devoted some energy towards formulating policies and revitalizing education. Alongside these local governments, a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations have persisted; among them UNICEF, which is generally regarded as having made considerable headway in both providing services and laying critical groundwork for the development of effective governance structures.

Effectively lacking a national government from 1991 until very recently, Somalia is a pre-eminent example of a fragile state. UNICEF remained the lead international agency supporting formal education services throughout this period. Doing so has entailed working, at different points, with diverse community organizations, government agencies, international

agencies, and NGOs. The formal education system remains among the least developed in the world. Still, it has moved from a condition of total collapse in 1991 to 2012, when over 700,000 children were enrolled in school (a primary gross enrollment ratio of 22 per cent). The majority of funding is external or community-based, yet ministries of education have been constituted in each of the three zones of Somalia and they have produced ambitious forward-looking sector plans (See Government of Somalia n.d.; Puntland State of Somalia n.d.; Somaliland Government 2012).

This case study overviews UNICEF's experience as it developed and adapted approaches to working in the pre-eminently fragile environment of Somalia. UNICEF's approach can be understood as an early and pioneering embodiment of many of the ideas subsequently articulated by the development community in, for example, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Assistance Committee's (OECD DAC) principles for good engagement in fragile states and situations (OECD DAC 1997) and more recently by the Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE) in terms of conflict-sensitive education programming.

This paper looks at UNICEF's education programme in Somalia between 1991 and 2010, considering the context(s) in which the programme operated, the challenges it faced, and the ways it adapted and learned. While its record is not perfect, UNICEF remains the primary international agency working in education that was able to operate to scale throughout the period of instability, conflict, and collapse of central authority. By 2009–10, Somalia had moved from a situation of total school system collapse to one in which more than 750,000 children were enrolled in school. By 2012, the three zones had each established an education ministry, and the country received funding from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). UNICEF played a major role in these achievements, due, in large part, to its sensitivity to local context, its flexibility in programme responses, its willingness and ability to partner with available groups and agencies, its focus on helping the larger system get running, and its commitment to inclusion.

## **1.1 Context**

Approximately 60 per cent of Somalia's population is semi-nomadic pastoralists, organized into traditional clans. The overlay of British and Italian colonial administrations did little to penetrate the daily life of the majority of people, or develop a national consciousness. Independence in 1960 and the merger of the two former protectorates led to an initial period of nation-building during the decade, assassination of the president in 1969, and a bloodless coup in which Barre assumed leadership, establishing a military dictatorship under Marxist precepts. Over time, the moral authority and popular support for the regime fell, and by 1991, the country was in a state of civil war.

Somalia experienced nearly two decades of civil unrest and war following the overthrow of Barre's regime in 1991. The civil war in Somalia and the subsequent collapse of the central government and its institutions left Somalia one of the poorest countries in the world, and the Somali people deeply divided. During the civil war and its aftermath, villages and cities were indiscriminately bombed and looted, and basic services, such as water, health care, and education, collapsed. By 1998, the average life expectancy of a Somali was 43 years and the mortality rate for children under five exceeded 25 per cent. Prior to the war, Somalia had one of the lowest adult literacy rates in the world, a situation that was further exacerbated by the

continued instability. UNICEF reported in its 1998 State of the World's Children that literacy rates for men and women in Somalia were 36 per cent and 14 per cent respectively (UNICEF 1998).

One result of the continued civil unrest has been that most skilled labourers and professionals either fled or were killed. Consequently, few of the members of the estimated four million strong workforces have any skills marketable in the formal sector. In addition, many young men and women between the ages of 15 to 25, whom in more a peaceful time, would have been learning job skills and professions, do not have any education and are illiterate. By 2007, the overall gross secondary enrollment ratio was only 7.8 per cent, 4.9 per cent for females (World Bank 2013b). At the same time, most young children do attend Koranic schools based in local communities, which function somewhat like pre-primary schools in other countries, though with Arabic and the memorization of the Koran as primary focus. Even during the height of the conflict, these schools continued to operate in many communities, as conditions permitted.

During the protracted conflict and instability, women and children have suffered disproportionately over the past two decades. Large numbers of children are orphaned, cope with physical or mental disabilities, and/or live with militia groups. Violence against women and girls is common, and female genital mutilation (FGM) remains widely practiced. Women's traditional roles in Somali society are changing, however, particularly in urban areas, as the number of female-headed and female-supported households increase. Some women are able to take advantage of these new found opportunities, but most continue to struggle within a society where the status of women remains appallingly low. Child mortality rates are high with neo-natal, child, and under-five rates estimated at 28, 113, and 328 per thousand live births respectively, and maternal mortality remains one of the highest in the world, at an estimated 1,600/100,000.

The Somali economy has been growing, despite the lack of a central government presence in many parts of Somalia. During the long period of conflict, the private sector took the lead in providing services such as water, telephones, and electricity. However, the imposition of two livestock import bans by the Gulf States since 1998 due to concerns over Rift Valley Fever, combined with an extended drought, has had a deleterious effect on the livestock sector, upon which approximately 70 per cent of all Somali households rely, either directly or indirectly. There is no animal health certification system in place and the number of trained and qualified Somali veterinarians is extremely low. In addition, although there is increased production and availability of food in the irrigated agriculture regions of Lower Shabelle, the purchasing power of rural pastoralists and urban unskilled labour has been seriously eroded over the past few years.

## **2 Regional differences in geography, governance, and development**

Somalia is divided into three regions: the northwest zone (NWZ), which is the self-declared 'Republic of Somaliland'; the northeast zone (NEZ), which is the semi-autonomous 'Puntland State of Somalia'; and the central/south zone (CSZ). During the period of the study, each region was self-governing. As of August 2012, the FRS is the official government of the nation as a whole. It is centered in Mogadishu, in the CSZ with Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as president. The central government is working to build national institutions, even as the regional governments of Somaliland and Puntland remain in place, and are more or less

active. The extent to which FRS will assume authority over the Somaliland and the Puntland remains unclear. Each region is unique, with its own individual character, challenges and constraints, as well as opportunities and possibilities.

## **2.1 Northwest zone**

The NWZ of Somalia, the self-declared Republic of Somaliland, borders on Djibouti to the west, Ethiopia to the south, the Gulf of Aden to the north, and the NEZ to the east. The civil administration estimates that the region's population is approximately 3.5 million, an annual growth rate of 3.1 per cent, and a population density of 25 persons per square kilometer, but no census has been carried out in the region. Since 1998, there has been a substantial number of Somalis returning to the region from camps in Ethiopia and Djibouti. The destination for the majority of these returnees has been Hargeisa town, with smaller numbers settling in other urban centers such as Burao and Boroma. It is estimated that 55 per cent of the population is nomadic or semi-nomadic, with the remaining 45 per cent living in urban centers or rural towns. A civil administrative structure has been established, there is a separate currency, a growing economy, and the last widespread fighting in the region took place in 1995. In December 2002, elections for local district officials took place, and in April 2003 Presidential elections were undertaken, both of which were peacefully conducted. The NWZ has a number of urban centers including Hargeisa, the political and business center, Berbera, the port on the Gulf of Aden, Boroma in the northwest along the Ethiopian border, and Burao, which has a major livestock market. A basic tax system is being established, and its revenue is being used to provide government services (Somaliland Government 2013). This zone has the most developed formal education system, even including a post-secondary teacher education institute.

## **2.2 Northeast zone**

In 1998, the Puntland State of Somalia was established in the northeast region of the country, following a conference of local elders, with Abdullahi Yusuf elected as the region's first President for a three-year term. In an effort to attract businesses and agencies into the southern sub-regions, the administrative center for the northeast was established in Garowe, while the town of Bossaso, located on the northern coast, is the primary business center and also has the region's port. There are four main urban centers: Bossaso, Gardo, Garowe, and Galkayo. The region is bordered in the west by the NWZ, the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean to the north and east respectively, and the CSZ to the south.

The NEZ was relatively quiet until mid-2001, when confusion over the leadership broke out at the end of June. Abdullahi Yusuf and the former chief justice, Yusuf Haji Nur, both claimed to be president. The controversy started after Abdullahi Yusuf, whose term was to have ended on 30 June, claimed that his mandate had been extended by the parliament. A meeting of the region's traditional elders in July 2001 rejected Abdullahi Yusuf's extension, and named Yusuf Haji Nur as acting president until an election of a new administration was held. On 14 November, the elders subsequently convened a general congress for this purpose and elected Jama Ali Jama for president. Forces loyal to President Abdullahi Yusuf travelled north from Galkayo and they eventually re-asserted Yusuf's control over the region (Puntland State of Somalia 2013).

There are no recent population figures for the zone, but in 1995, the population was estimated to be 2.5 million, with approximately 45 per cent of the population under the age of 14. There has been a limited return of the region's residents, either from other parts of Somalia or outside the country. Similar to the NWZ, livestock production dominates, with only limited agricultural production for household use or marketing in urban centers based on oasis farming. Apart from livestock, the major export of the region is frankincense, which is harvested in the mountains.

### **2.3 Central/south zone**

Only recently has the CSZ of Somalia re-established a centralized administrative structure, with an improvement in the security situation, which, nonetheless, remains fluid. In 2000, a Transitional National Assembly (TNA) was established as a result of the Djibouti-sponsored Arta Peace Process, which included broad representation from amongst the various Somali clans. The TNA in turn selected a Transitional National Government (TNG), and it was hoped that this would result in a cessation of interclan fighting. The situation remained unstable for most of the period of study, but in 2012, the TNG was unable to establish security or develop effective government institutions. This was in part due to the fact that, unlike the NWZ and NEZ, which have either a single or limited number of clans, the CSZ is a patchwork of clans and sub-clans, many of whom had been affected by the Barre regimes efforts to fragment the clans in the 1980s. In 2004, a second interim government, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of the Somali Republic was established. The transition process ended in August 2013, when clan elders appointed members to a new parliament, which elected a president and led to the current government, the Federal Republic of Somalia (FRS) (CIA 2013).

As a result of continued insecurity, there has been little, if any, widespread infrastructure rehabilitation, with roads in a state of total ruin, electricity and telecommunications supplied through private business in areas where a sufficient market exists, and water systems rehabilitated on a local basis only. The only major exception to this has been the rehabilitation of irrigation infrastructure along the Shabelle River, funded by the United States Government and European Commission. This rehabilitation resulted in an increase in agricultural production in the area, and Lower Shabelle is seen as largely food self-sufficient.

Nevertheless, the region is also characterized by a vibrant and growing economy, centered on Mogadishu, but linked to other major centers in the region. The population, which is approximately four to five million people, is concentrated along the rivers and in the urban centers. Services in smaller towns and villages, particularly in the more densely populated Middle Shabelle, Lower Shabelle, and Lower Juba regions, are more widely available than in the rural communities, particularly those in remote areas (Somaliland Government 2013). Formal education is the least extensive in this zone.

The three zones in Somalia have long been characterized as development, transition, and emergency for the NWZ, NEZ, and CSZ respectively. In the NWZ and NEZ, established civil administrative structures provide a framework for implementation that has been lacking until recently in the CSZ. Access to rural areas due to the poor conditions of the roads in all regions can be difficult, although in the case of CSZ, access is further hindered by the limited ability of agencies to effectively operate through road transport over a wide area.



The vibrancy of the business sector throughout Somalia has resulted in private interests becoming involved in providing education services, particularly in urban areas where their catchments can be quite large. Establishing education services in remote or pastoralist communities can be difficult, labour intensive, and costly to set up, and therefore, be more suited to a civil administrative structure or international agency.

### **3 Constraints and facilitating conditions for educational development**

For most of the past two decades, Somalia has been characterized by a series of conditions unconducive to educational development (UNICEF 2002):

1. Violence within many parts of the country and a fragile peace in other areas.
2. Lack of a unified government structure at the national level.
3. A dispersed population and poor infrastructure making logistics costly and complex.
4. A host of service-providing organizations with different strategies, missions, and modes of operation, leading to gaps, duplication, and competition.
5. Low levels of basic skills on the part of the population and a lack of training infrastructure, resulting in poor service.
6. Short time frames for international assistance, due to the unstable situation on the ground, and the emergency nature of much of the assistance.
7. Corresponding low level of ownership on the part of Somalis of external projects.

These issues represent the conditions identified by researchers and practitioners as characteristic of fragile contexts, often those affected by conflict, where governments lack the will and/or capacity to provide essential services to the population. The starkness of the Somalia case helped crystalize the notion of the failed state. Education, in such contexts, is both affected by fragility and a cause (or cure) of it. Such issues are the focus of recent work in conflict-sensitive programming in education (see INEE 2013) and other sectors.

At the same time, there were positive conditions as well. Somali communities have long ago wearied of conflict and have shown themselves to be eager to take part in development work when possible. The collapse of government has led to a lack of services typically provided by government. In this vacuum, a number of NGOs and private providers have emerged to provide local services. Most utilities, for example, are provided by non-state entities. NGOs in particular, are often headed by women. As a consequence, a vibrant civil society has emerged in Somalia. Such an entrepreneurial environment bodes well for sustainability of desired services. The range of civil society organizations means that services can be reached and be managed at the local level. Clans provide a strong base of mutual aid and sharing, with certain traditional protections for the vulnerable. Koranic schools, many of which operate much like early childhood education centers, continued to function through the conflict and provide a legitimate and widely-accepted institutional foundation for education. UNICEF and other agencies have had some success in broadening the curricula of such schools in collaboration with local leaders. More recently, governmental structures that have

emerged in the Somaliland and the Puntland permit longer-range planning and the possibility of sustained development. Agencies working in Somalia have long recognized the need for co-ordination and have taken steps to maximize co-operation and coverage. Conflict was neither constant nor everywhere, and there were many opportunities for local developments and initiative. And in many ways, Somalis have shown themselves quite open to innovation (UNICEF 2002).

### 3.1 Education

As in many societies, Somali children have historically been instructed through informal oral traditions and practices. Somalia is an Islamic society and Islamic educational institutions were prevalent in the past and still are. Most children attend Koranic schools instead or in addition to any formal secular schooling. During the colonial period, the British introduced an English educational system in the northwest, and the Italians introduced an Italian system elsewhere. At independence, the country had 200 primary schools and 12 secondary schools, each with its own history and standards, using various languages, different curricula, and teaching methods (UNICEF n.d.). By the early 1970s, an integrated formal school system was established with the assistance of donors with some 1,400 primary schools, perhaps as many as 60 secondary schools (some of which were boarding schools to provide access for children from rural areas), several vocational-technical institutes, a national teacher education center, and a national university. Somali became a written language using the Latin alphabet, and a large-scale literacy programme was undertaken. By the mid-1970s, however, most western assistance was abandoned when the new government developed close relations with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

In 1981, official statistics show that 152,429 students enrolled in grades one to four in 729 primary schools, 34.1 per cent of whom were female. In the same year, 87,487 students were enrolled in intermediate education (grades five to eight) in 628 schools, of whom, 38.7 per cent were female (Ministry of National Planning 1984). By way of contrast, there were an estimated 5,480 Koranic schools in the country, enrolling students from four or five years old up to as high as 14 years old, though most students, especially girls, left before then. Enrollments in the formal schools appear to have varied substantially. For example, see Table 1 for the reported range of first grade enrollments between 1975 and 1982.

Table 1: First grade enrollments from 1975–76 to 1981–82

Year	Enrollments
1975–76	133,605
1976–77	68,256
1977–78	41,631
1978–79	62,963
1979–80	48,272
1980–81	59,808
1981–82	47,507

Source: Ministry of National Planning (1984).

The Ogaden war with Ethiopia in 1977–78 drew government resources away from education and the system moved towards collapse. Enrollment dropped, schools were closed, and teachers sought employment elsewhere. By 1990, only 600 schools remained open, enrolling 150,000 children (UNICEF n.d.). The nation plunged into conflict. By 1991, when the civil

war broke out, the education system had already been severely crippled by internal conflicts that created an increasingly unstable and insecure environment. 90 per cent of the country's school buildings were destroyed, virtually no instructional materials were available, and teachers and students had abandoned the educational process, many displaced by the conflict. For two years, Somalia had virtually no formal schooling (UNICEF n.d.). In 1993, schools began to open, operated by local communities or teachers. Informal education committees were established in some areas. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and UNICEF began to reprint existing primary school textbooks and teachers' guides. UNICEF provided in-service training for teachers and distributed school kits. International agencies and NGOs provided funding, training, and supervision in some localities. Schools were rehabilitated by communities, international agencies, and NGOs (UNICEF n.d.).

Violence and instability continued to plague the country, particularly in the CSZ. Yet communities, local and international NGOs, and international agencies, particularly UNICEF, continued to offer education in pockets of stability. As stability and security has increased, there has been corresponding growth in enrolment rates. Observers report strong local interest with many communities taking initiative. Reflecting popular demand, donors are showing renewed interest in education believing it is both a force for reconciliation and an investment in the future. Donors began to pay more attention to the education sector, indicating a shift away from an emergency mindset towards a more development oriented approach (UNICEF n.d.).

Still, Somalia has the world's lowest rates of educational participation. Despite recent increases, Somalia has a primary gross enrollment ratio of 22 per cent. Approximately four-fifths of Somalis cannot read or write. Female school participation and literacy rates are half that of men (World Bank 2013b). One in eight of those who complete primary school are female (World Bank 2007).

#### **4 UNICEF's education programme**

UNICEF resumed work in Somalia in 1993, helping to rehabilitate school buildings, re-printing existing textbooks, and providing school kits (a very basic set of instructional materials enabling a teacher to begin teaching). While useful in emergency contexts, parents and communities wanted more. In 1997, UNICEF initiated an education programme in Somalia.

UNICEF's programme has emphasized formal primary education as the foundation for an education system, which is the main focus here. In addition, however, UNICEF developed non-formal educational programmes for out-of-school youth and children (UNICEF n.d.). These programmes included a non-formal education initiative targeting nomadic children using Alternative Basic Education (ABE) materials, and an integrated Koranic school project in Puntland and Somaliland.

Given the effective absence of government as partner, UNICEF used partnership-based strategies to provide services in local areas. Partnerships include work directly with communities; arrangements with local and international NGOs; contracts with private businesses; and work with various local authorities as well as zonal government structures (UNICEF 2002). Though conflict and instability have scarred the country for the past 20

years, conflict has not been uniform. UNICEF implemented its programme as opportunities opened up during periods (or specific localities) of relative peace, as regional governments developed capacity, and as new development agencies began to work in the country.

UNICEF developed, tested, and scaled-up a relatively standard package of interventions, but was able to vary the introduction of different components according to the capacity of partners and conditions on the ground. The agency administered its programmes through zonal offices in each of the three zones as well as four sub-zonal offices in the CSZ. As a result, UNICEF was able to provide services, directly or indirectly, in most areas of the country (UNICEF 2010; Cummings 2003; UNICEF 2002; UNICEF n.d.).

Initially focusing almost exclusively on delivery of services at the community level in response to the emergency situation, UNICEF increasingly began to supplement this with work at systemic levels as well, co-ordinating activities with other government structures as possible and with NGOs and development agencies working in the country (UNICEF 2010; Cummings 2003; UNICEF 2002).

#### **4.1 Components of the education programme**

Over time, UNICEF developed a number of components to its education programme, introduced at different times according to capacity, need, and access. These components included the following:

##### *School kits*

UNICEF's initial response to the conflict in Somalia was the provision of education kits in 1993. These kits contained a minimum set of instructional materials, and were designed to enable a teacher to provide instruction in any safe environment without the requirement of a conventional school building or administrative support. The school kits were both welcomed and controversial. A 1998 review found that the kits were of limited use in many circumstances and, having been sourced externally, were not sustainable. As a result, revisions were made and a teachers/school kit was developed alongside a pupil kit for 40 children (including chalk, pencils, crayons, pens, slates, and notebooks). Kits were initially distributed to all primary schools in the country in 1999 and in subsequent years. They played an important role in starting up education initiatives during the crisis phase. However, as time went on, it became obvious that additional activities were necessary (UNICEF n.d.).

##### *Curriculum and textbooks*

By 1993, few schools were standing. Instructional materials were almost non-existent. Those materials that did exist, consisted of isolated textbooks from Somalia and elsewhere, in multiple languages, and often outdated. Very few children or schools had access to a complete set of age- and language-appropriate textbooks. Initially, UNICEF together with UNESCO Programme of Education for Emergencies and Reconstruction (PEER) copied existing textbooks for distribution and use. However, with awareness of the limitations of existing materials, UNICEF initiated a complete curriculum revision process for lower primary education in Somalia. As a result, 24 syllabi and textbooks were prepared for grades one to four in six subject areas—Somali language, Arabic, mathematics, science, social studies, and Islamic studies. Curricular materials were developed, which could be used in

both Koranic schools as well as formal primary schools (UNICEF 2010; UNICEF 2002; UNICEF n.d.).

UNICEF was committed to child-centered pedagogy, gender equity, and an inclusive process where all points of view were welcomed. As a result, 40 Somali educationalists were organized into a curriculum revision team, which spent two years in a far-reaching consultative process that led to broad support for the new textbooks, which included, notably, images of girls as well as boys. UNICEF organized the effort in collaboration with UNESCO and financial support from western and international donors. Textbooks were made available to schools throughout the country (UNICEF n.d.). In 2010, for example, textbooks and school supplies reached 80 per cent of schools in the NEZ, 70 per cent of schools in the NWZ, and 47 per cent of schools in the CSZ (UNICEF 2011).

### *Training teachers*

A third major component of the education programme was the training of teachers. Working with local authorities, UNICEF organized in-service training for thousands of primary school teachers. International subject-matter experts were hired to train teacher trainers from zonal authorities around the country. A trainer's manual was developed for each subject and a 19-day course was designed to train all lower primary school teachers in the country, using a trainer of trainer's model. Teachers were trained in Somali language, mathematics, science, and social studies, as well as later in Arabic language and Islamic studies. Training included child-centered, gender-sensitive instruction, as well as other instructional management techniques and data collection for Educational Management Information System (EMIS). Gender training was a central component. The training was designed as part of a three-year package of courses that would upgrade teachers' skills, providing them with the skills and certification equivalent to completion of a teacher training college programme (UNICEF n.d.). Despite these important efforts, however, the question must be raised about the sufficiency of 19 days of training, given the weak educational base of many teacher trainees.

### *Supervision*

Teachers and community education committees (CECs) need leadership, mentoring, and support. Realizing this need early on, UNICEF, UNESCO, and a number of NGOs supervised schools when they were able. In the late 1990s, government authorities in the Somaliland and some parts of the Puntland began to place supervisors to oversee schools.

More systematically, UNICEF and Education Sector Cluster (ESC)/Somali Aid Co-ordination Body (SACB) partners began a programme of training a cadre of supervisors. The initial target was to prepare supervisors for 1,500 schools throughout the country. Supervisors were trained for a range of activities with which they were tasked, including community mobilization, collection of EMIS data, distribution of educational supplies, managing educational resources, improving school environments, and training of CEC members (UNICEF n.d.).

### *School facilities*

Most schools were severely damaged, destroyed, or looted during the conflict. Facilities were rehabilitated using whatever funds were available. Building standards varied widely. Schools often lacked latrines, making them unsanitary for all and especially unfit for girls. UNICEF developed guidelines for safe, low-cost school buildings made of locally available materials.

Construction supervisors were trained in rehabilitating school facilities. In addition, materials were developed to encourage parents, teachers, and school directors to make improvements to schools to make them safe, clean, and child friendly (UNICEF 2010; Cummings 2003; UNICEF 2002; UNICEF n.d.).

#### *Community education committees*

A key component of UNICEF's thinking about schooling in Somalia is organizing community support. This is especially important in the absence or fragility of government in parts of Somalia in recent years and the ultimate unsustainability of international support. Accordingly, communities have been encouraged to establish CECs, made up of local volunteers. CEC members may include parents, religious leaders, members of women's and youth groups, or businessmen and women. CECs are trained by school supervisors in leadership, school management, and administration. The running costs of schools are seen as the responsibility of local communities. Most schools in the country now have CECs.

As a result, communities own and/or manage almost half the schools in the country. Remaining schools are owned by local authorities and in some cases private individuals. NGOs also manage a number of schools. Community ownership has been particularly important in the CSZ, where local government structures are the weakest (UNICEF n.d.). Community management of schools and responsibility for finance helps ensure that schools can sustain themselves when government is unable to do so.

#### *Educational Management Information System*

Lack of data was one of the greatest challenges to work in Somalia's school system. There was no information on how many teachers or children there were; how many schools were in operation; what facilities were available and needed; etc. UNICEF worked with local education officials and NGOs to initiate an annual national survey of data on primary schools in all three zones. The surveys use standard instruments to collect data on pupils, classes, and schools. All primary school teachers, head teachers, and supervisors have been trained in use of the forms, and successful surveys have been carried out for several years.

UNICEF has also worked with regional officials to provide computers and training in the compilation of data and its use in planning and policy making (UNICEF n.d.). UNICEF and UNESCO have used the data to plan textbook distribution and teacher training.

In terms of provision of educational services, these efforts have largely worked. UNICEF is the largest educational provider in the country. Primary school enrollment, for example, increased from 464,780 children in 2006–07 to an estimated 763,320 children in 2009–10. 37 per cent of new enrollments were girls. 60 per cent of primary school students were reached with UNICEF-organized teaching and learning supplies (UNICEF 2010).

## **4.2 Why has the programme worked?**

The success of the UNICEF education programme can be understood as a function of several factors:

### *Role of local context*

Almost all of UNICEF's work in Somalia required adaptation of interventions to the local context. Indeed, because Somalia's central government had failed, working in the local context and with local actors was the only way to work. Still, in several particular ways, UNICEF was able to take advantage of the local context to deliver education.

*Efforts were made to respect religious and cultural sensibilities and institutions.* Curriculum developers worked to develop curricula that could be used in Koranic schools. Programmes were developed to develop the instructional capacity of Koranic schools to teach a broader range of subjects consistent with a basic education curriculum. Religious leaders were consulted and engaged in educational efforts in local communities.

*UNICEF has a longstanding presence and enjoys legitimacy due to its focus on local needs.* One reason for UNICEF's success is its extended presence in Somalia. Within its mandate, no other agency has matched the consistency, breadth, and depth of UNICEF's engagement with Somalia. UNICEF's focus on services to children and mothers has given it an unusual legitimacy. In addition to education, UNICEF works in health, nutrition, and other related areas, thus adding credibility. These efforts reinforced each other, with UNICEF attending, credibly, to the needs of the child as a whole.

### *Aid modalities*

Due to the collapse of the central government, modalities of assistance to the government were not an issue. Instead, UNICEF worked with a host of community-based organizations, international NGOs, and international agencies, often serving as the lead agency and coordinating body.

*Parallel with support to schools and communities, UNICEF provided nascent sub-zonal and zonal education systems with variable levels of support in line with their developing capacity and ability to absorb new ideas and demands.* While working to support education at the community level, UNICEF maintained close contact with regional education officials, assisting them as they assumed increased responsibilities for provision of education in their areas. Arguably, the capacity of zonal education offices supported by UNICEF enabled Somalia to receive the first federal grant to be allocated by the GPE. Indeed, the Mogadishu-based Somali government has established a central education ministry for the first time in 20 years, though the zonal education ministries are the most relevant to education in the respective regions.

*A reasonable effort was devoted to monitoring and evaluation, and subsequent correction.* Given the challenges of access, the shifting security situation on the ground and very basic conditions in most of the country for much of the period under study, UNICEF allocated resources to following the implementation of its activities and evaluating the effectiveness of its programmes. Evidence of the effectiveness of this can be seen in the ongoing revision of its programme activities, at both the level of particular support, i.e., services in such and such a community, and at the macro level of learning how to implement an education programme in a context like Somalia.

*The breadth of activities was varied; components in particular areas were added following the acceptance of earlier components.* Adopting a modular approach, UNICEF was able to

standardize components of its programme, while varying their roll out, thus maximizing scarce resources and variations and limitations in absorptive capacity.

#### *Local ownership of the programme/project*

As government had collapsed, fostering local ownership was the only way an external agency such as UNICEF could operate.

*UNICEF developed close partnerships with local NGOs and other local and regional organizations, which were able to reach diverse communities.* Driven presumably by the absence of a functioning government with which to partner, UNICEF had no choice but to form partnerships directly with communities, local and international NGOs, and sometimes Koranic schools as well as religious leaders. In addition, the agency developed contracts with private businesses, and worked with various local authorities, as well as emergent zonal government structures. Through these partnerships, UNICEF was able to engage a range of available partners and to provide services to children, families, and communities who would otherwise be beyond reach. These organizations provided a kind of civil society infrastructure to support schooling and other services in the absence of formal national government. As nascent regional and sub-regional government structures emerged, UNICEF was able to partner with them to lay the foundation for a larger co-ordinated government effort. These multiple options allowed UNICEF and its international partners to take advantage of opportunities offered by the variety of organizations Somalia produced in the absence of government, building on Somalia's vibrant civil and private sectors.

*Communities were given responsibility (and provided training) to assume a primary ownership and management role in schools.* After the collapse of the government education system in the civil war of 1991, various community entities, such as NGOs, parents, teachers, businesses, and others, assumed responsibility for starting and running schools. Whatever schooling was offered was a result of some sort of community initiative. Even now, the vast majority of schools in Somalia are owned by a private individuals or groups. While such a radical (unintended) decentralization does ensure community ownership of schooling, the challenge is to ensure equity, quality, and access across varying circumstances. At the same time, it allows for considerable resilience in the system when government is absent or unable to provide support or when security conditions permit only local activity.

*Co-ordination was central to the success of UNICEF's programmes.* Co-ordination was critical and time-consuming as programmes and funding were co-ordinated with international agencies and NGOs working in education and other sectors; with the more than 100 partner agencies UNICEF worked within Somalia; with zonal and sub-zonal governments; and with bi- and multi-lateral funding agencies. Without active co-ordination these multiple efforts would have led to chaos, and the contributions partners have made at the local level would be unlikely to have manifested themselves as coherence at the system level.

Under its co-ordination, UNICEF has helped to channel funds from a variety of funding agencies to support education in Somalia. Of recent note is five-year funding from the European Union (EU) and a grant from the GPE. The EU funding is particularly welcome because it provides longer-term support than past two- and three-year funding cycles, a consequence of instability.



### *Programme/project design*

Given the collapse of the government, UNICEF assumed many of the responsibilities of a functioning education ministry, ensuring that a full complement of complementary inputs were provided, sufficient to enable effective, if basic, classroom instruction.

*In the emergency phase, the best technology available at the time—school kits—were deployed to support instruction.* As noted, the conflict had destroyed virtually all school infrastructure and supplies. School kits provided a basic set of supplies so that teachers could begin teaching almost anywhere.

*Later, a foundational curriculum was developed, its content carefully negotiated with stakeholders for use in both secular and Islamic schools.* UNICEF supported development of a new curriculum for grades one to four in Somali schools. The curriculum, which became the de facto official curriculum of Somalia, covered basic concepts in the six core subject areas (Somali language, mathematics, science, social science, Islamic religion, and Arabic). It was presented in such a way as to promote child-centered teaching and learning as well as gender equity. Content and presentation were developed and negotiated with a broad range of stakeholders by a cadre of 40 Somali educators who travelled the length of the country in a two-year consultative process. Once developed, the curriculum was widely disseminated and used to train teachers. Key here is the appropriateness of the curriculum for the context, for learners, and for the multiple stakeholders of education at national and local levels. In preparing and negotiating the curriculum, UNICEF arguably leveraged its legitimacy to promote values of child-centered education, gender equity, and inclusion, doing so in a culturally-appropriate manner.

*A capacity development, i.e. training, strategy was developed to prepare teachers, head teachers, supervisors, and CEC members.* Local actors involved in primary education—those in school, providing supervisory support to the school, and in the community—were trained in the curriculum and their responsibilities vis-a-vis education.

*A basic data collection system was established early on.* Prior to UNICEF-supported data collection, no information existed on the numbers and locations of schools, the numbers of teachers and students, overall or by grade, gender, etc. The collection of data, and development of EMIS in regional education offices in the Somaliland and Puntland have allowed for better planning and targeting of services and helped in establishing the credibility of a *system* of schools in major parts of Somalia. The training teachers receive covers EMIS.

*UNICEF programming supported linkages between emergency provision and long-term development.* Programming provided support to the system at four stages on the continuum of crisis to sustainable development: 1) emergency responsiveness; 2) access to and delivery of quality services; 3) development of institutions and system capacity at local, regional, and recently, national levels; as well as 4) participation and empowerment of users. These efforts, along with the systemic elements of curriculum, training, information, etc., provide conditions conducive to development of appropriate policy, legal frameworks, and administrative offices (UNICEF 2002).

## *Timing*

In contrast to contexts of development, conditions shifted rapidly during the protracted conflict. Reverses were common and cumulative progress slow. As a result, UNICEF had to operate with unusual flexibility in its programming.

*UNICEF varied the level and nature of its activities according to the capacity of the partner and the stability of the area at a particular time.* UNICEF had sufficient information on varying conditions on the ground and sufficient flexibility in its programming that it was able, successfully, to modulate its support according to opportunity, need, and capacity. This flexibility meant that windows of opportunity could be exploited and partners mentored as conditions as their capacity developed and as conditions changed.

Much of the work on education in emergencies and fragility assumes the presence of a working authority, even one with low capacity or ill will. In refugee contexts, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) may assume authority. In other contexts, there is often some governmental authority to work with. Parts of Somalia represent a case of complete government collapse for much of the period of study.

## **5 Principles for working in crisis, conflict-affected, and fragile contexts**

Bi- and multi-lateral development assistance is premised on the existence of discrete functioning national states. International development, as carried out by intergovernmental and international agencies, does not work very well when states fail, as in Somalia, or their effectiveness is undermined by fragility. Yet the development and humanitarian needs of people living in such contexts are generally greater than of people living in developing states. Humanitarian assistance is used to respond to crisis situations, but longer-term strategies are needed to deal with protracted crises and with building a foundation for development when the state is ready. Those foundations are best laid early, during periods of substantial fragility and even conflict, before the state is ready to build on them. The development community has been learning how to do this, on the job so to speak, in part through the work of UNICEF and other agencies in Somalia and other fragile contexts.

The INEE was established in 2000 to advocate for, generate and share knowledge about how to ensure the rights of children to education ‘regardless of crisis or conflict’ (INEE 2013). INEE has developed a comprehensive set of minimum standards for provision of education in emergency contexts along with guidance notes and other materials. The INEE working group on education and fragility has, among other things, worked to establish the concept of Conflict Sensitive Education (CSE) programming (INEE 2013), and has recently articulated a series of principles, which may help in understanding the ways in which UNICEF’s education programme worked in Somalia. It should be stressed that as an emergent set of ideas, UNICEF’s Somalia work was as more of a precursor to the principles rather than a guide UNICEF had available to organize its work. Nonetheless, their formulation and compilation of these principles helps illustrate some of the ways UNICEF responded to the unique situation it faced from 1993 on. In many ways, the principles sum up much of the wisdom in UNICEF’s approach.

Table 2 summarises INEE’s principles for CSE. Beside each point, we indicate whether, based on available information, UNICEF’s education programme appears to have adopted

this principle<sup>1</sup>. These criteria are meant to be illustrative rather than a checklist of requirements for conflict sensitivity. We indicate here whether the information reviewed for this paper provided evidence of this.

Table 2: INEE guiding principles on integrating conflict sensitivity in education, policy, and programming in conflict-affected and fragile contexts

Extent to which UNICEF's education programme followed this principle	Comment	INEE criteria
1 ASSESS: Conduct an education and conflict analysis or assessment to review:		
?	In emergency context, extent of analysis is unclear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The broad conflict status or risk of conflict and the historical links between education and conflict</li> </ul>
?	"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How conflict affects education</li> </ul>
?	"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How education might contribute to conflict</li> </ul>
?	"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How education can mitigate the conflict dynamics</li> </ul>
2 DO NO HARM: Education interventions in conflict-affected and fragile contexts are not neutral: They may reduce or increase the risk of conflict. Ensure that:		
?	Extent of conflict analysis unclear, though clearly programme staff understood situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy priorities, plans, and programmes are based on a comprehensive conflict analysis</li> </ul>
+	Unclear how explicitly providers were aware	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All education providers apply conflict sensitive programming</li> </ul>
++	Great effort to help all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programmes do not intentionally favour one group over another</li> </ul>
+	Major efforts to include all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education is not manipulated to promote exclusion and hate</li> </ul>
+++	Major efforts to foster gender equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education does not reflect and perpetuate gender and social inequities</li> </ul>
+++	Strong aspect of programme, by necessity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education programmes respond to diverse local priorities and take account of the particular context</li> </ul>
+++	By necessity an inclination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community participation is prioritized</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the principles were articulated after UNICEF implemented its Somalia education programme. The attempt here is to use principles of best practice subsequently articulated to retrospectively assess UNICEF's programming.

<b>Extent to which UNICEF's education programme followed this principle</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>INEE criteria</b>
<b>3 PRIORITIZE PREVENTION</b>		
?	Unclear, extent which UNICEF could act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect teachers and students from attacks and recruitment into armed forces</li> </ul>
?	"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect learning environments from attacks</li> </ul>
?	"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on safety for students and teachers</li> </ul>
+	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support policies to protect girls and boys, young women and men from abuse and exploitation</li> </ul>
++	Yes, later in programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide alternative education for youth, including life and employability skills</li> </ul>
?	Unclear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate on risks such as landmines and unexploded ordnance</li> </ul>
?	Unclear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build emergency preparedness and readiness through Conflict and Disaster Risk Reduction</li> </ul>
<b>4 PROMOTE EQUITY AND THE HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD AS A CITIZEN</b>		
++	Major effort to reach all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote equitable distribution of services across identity groups (ethnic, religious, geographic, gender)</li> </ul>
++	"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid pockets of exclusion and marginalization</li> </ul>
?	Unclear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on the re-integration of out of school children and youth</li> </ul>
+(+)	Efforts made to develop good basic curriculum and buy-in from all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver teaching and learning for peace through pedagogy, curriculum, and materials that are free of gender and social prejudices and build competencies for responsible citizenship, conflict transformation, and resilience</li> </ul>
?	Unclear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide psycho-social protection for children</li> </ul>
+++	By necessity and inclination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve parents, communities, civil society, and local leadership</li> </ul>
<b>5 STABILIZE, REBUILD, OR BUILD THE EDUCATION SYSTEM</b>		
+++	Explicit strategy, as possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen institutional systems; staffing capacity and competencies</li> </ul>
++	Major component	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen the process of supplying and training teachers (and teacher trainers)</li> </ul>
++	EMIS a major component	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen the Teacher Development Management Information System, the EMIS, and teacher salary systems</li> </ul>
++	Efforts to increase female teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure adequate number of trained teachers who reflect the diversity of their societies (different ethnic and religious groups, as well as gender).</li> </ul>
+	As possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide safe, relevant, appropriate, continuous education to children and youth in accordance with the INEE minimum standards, aligned with national priorities</li> </ul>
+	Through CECs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Favour fairness, transparency, and accountability</li> </ul>

Extent to which UNICEF's education programme followed this principle	Comment	INEE criteria
6 ACT FAST, RESPOND TO CHANGE, AND STAY ENGAGED BEYOND SHORT-TERM SUPPORT		
+	Ongoing effort	• Develop flexible education financing mechanisms to adjust to contingencies
+	Attempts to foster sustainability, reduce dependence	• Be ready to adjust assistance programmes to eliminate negative impacts on the context and to improve contributions to peace
+++	By necessity	• Respond to changing conditions on the ground such as displacement or attacks
+++	Strong effort, by necessity; UNICEF was lead in education	• Co-ordinate with existing education co-ordination structures (e.g., the education cluster and/or local education group)
+++	Handover strategies a critical component	• Respond to national priorities and jointly prepare exit strategies for handing over of emergency education interventions to longer term education systems development
?	Implicit in programming	• Ensure that existing commitments are respected
?		• Recognize the links between education, development objectives, state-building and security

Notes: +++ major characteristic of intervention; ++ important principle underlying intervention; + utilized in intervention to some extent; ? extent to which utilized in programming intervention is unclear.

Source: INEE 2013.

Examined in this way, UNICEF's education programme in Somalia exemplified many of the principles later articulated by INEE. The programme was particularly careful, it seems, in terms of principles 4, 5, and 6, i.e, promoting equity and holistic development of the child; stabilizing and rebuilding the education system; and acting fast, responding to change, and staying engaged. UNICEF also devoted considerable effort to principle 2, to do no harm, particularly in not favouring one group over another and paying close attention to cultural values. Less clear is the attention given to systematic analysis of the conflict situation.

In addition to the existing principles, our overview of UNICEF's work in Somalia might suggest additional principles, as follows:

1. *Work at two levels*, as necessary, to support both service delivery at the local level and development of administrative capacity at aggregate levels of the education system.
2. *Bridge the gap between crisis/fragility and development*. To the extent possible, short-term activities should lay the groundwork for longer-term sustainability.
3. *Organize programming for flexibility*; the capability to capitalize on opportunities; to deliver variable combinations of programme components; to establish and nurture partnerships; and to make changes according to shifting conditions on the ground.

Also the importance of co-ordination is highlighted. Co-ordination was both necessary and challenged by the number and complexity of organizations operating in or on behalf of Somalia and the posting of UNICEF/Somalia staff in Nairobi.

## 6 Scaling-up

Looking at its low scores on social indicators of development, Somalia between 1991 and 2011 was surely one of a handful of the world's least hospitable environments for education. The country lacked a central government and the education system had collapsed. Enrollment and gender equity ratios were among the lowest in the world. It was and is a conservative society, and the majority of the population still leads a pastoralist lifestyle.

There are surely many ways in which UNICEF could have done more or better, many of which remain in the realm of the counterfactual. Still, UNICEF managed to support educational services to varying extents throughout the country, capitalizing on windows of opportunity afforded by the shifting security situation and vibrant public culture of Somali locality.

Rather than a model to replicate, UNICEF's education programme in Somalia offers a series of principles for consideration in designing education programmes in contexts of extreme state failure. While few states have failed as thoroughly as Somalia did, most countries have more or less substantial pockets of persistent state failure, where the state does not or cannot extend its reach. The extreme case of Somalia forced UNICEF and its partners to develop new strategies for educational development under the most adverse of circumstances. The principles from the Somali experience may be more generalizable than to state failure at the national level, but may apply, in varying degrees, to residual pockets of failure to provide locally.

Uvin suggests that scaling-up is a matter of widespread impact at a low cost:

Increased impact is a function of the *coverage* of a population, program *effectiveness* (quality of implementation and efficacy of interventions employed), *efficiency* (cost per beneficiary), *sustainability* (continuity, ownership), and *equity* (reaching the hardest to reach, usually the poor) (Uvin 2005: 5).

Success in providing education in emergency contexts may be less a matter of defining an effective model of provision and then replicating it widely. UNICEF's school kits were useful only to a point. However, its modular approach to educational components appears to have worked rather well. The trick may be to organize providers for flexible provision, sensitize them to the variable needs of local contexts, and keep an eye on both the local and the systemic, the short-term crisis and long-term development and sustainability.

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