

**SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS
AFFECTING VULNERABLE GROUPS IN THE
RURAL AND URBAN CENTERS IN LIBAN ZONE**

**ETHIOPIAN SOMALI
NATIONAL REGIONAL STATE**



nineteenth century engraving: youths guarding calves in the south

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1. GENERAL

1.1 Objective and methodology

This socio-economic examination of Liban zone in the Ethiopian Somali National Regional State, is primarily based on field data the author collected during a 13 day study tour to the area starting 9 January 1996. General observation of the conditions prevailing in all the districts of the zone, supplemented with information elicited from informal interviews held with local leaders, agro-pastoralists, nomads, and district officials, provide the bulk of the primary data.

The study is the second in a series of planned research activities that aim to cover all the 9 zonal units that make up the administrative framework of the Ethiopian Somali National Regional State, a little known and often misrepresented predominantly pastoral region at the eastern periphery of the country. The study seeks to generate basic socio-economic data that is vital for regional planning and development, and also critically examines the conditions affecting the survival of vulnerable groups in the urban and rural areas of Liban zone. For comparative purposes the previous study on Gode zone will be frequently referred to in the present study.

1.2 Zonal administration

Liban zone constitutes one of the 9 units forming the structure of administration of the Ethiopian Somali National Regional State (see map), formerly known as 'Region 5'. It is located at the south-western part of the region, which, after Oromia, is the second largest autonomous federal unit of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Certainly one the largest if not the biggest zone in the region, the study zone is divided into 3 districts (weredas): Liban/Filtu, Doollo Addo, and Mooyaale. The last two commonly bear the names of the largest towns in their respective districts- Doollo Addo, and Mooyaale.

Liban district is located at a frontier line between the traditional territories of the Somali and Oromo groups occupying the south western part of Ethiopia. Accordingly, local groups of both Somali and Oromo nationalities have a vested interest in the control of the relatively rich pastoral resources in the district and therefore advance opposing claims.

Ambiguities arising from its location at an ill-defined border area between rival and predominantly nomadic groups of distinct ethnic origin, is compounded by being home to three often antagonistic and large Oromo groups: Guji, Arsi and Borana. These diverse Oromo groups certainly compete for the control of Liban district, but unanimously agree its status as an Oromo constituency and administrative unit under the Borana zone, whose zonal capital and district town is Negelle.

Similarly, Liban/Filtu district is the home area of diverse Somali clans. The southern part of this socially mixed district adjoining Doollo district is an extension of Digodia territory, while the northern part starting from Xey Sufto village as far as Negelle town and its surroundings form the traditional territories of four Somali clans: Mareexaan (displaced since 1992), Gurre (dispossessed of its stocks), Ajuran and Karanle. Like their Oromo counterparts, these Somali clans consider Liban district as their land, and entertain the desire of it becoming a Somali administrative unit under Liban zone, whose zonal and district center would be Negelle town.

Liban zone has an extensive border with two neighboring countries: Somalia and Kenya. The two important district administration seats and trade centers in the zone, Doollo Addo and Mooyaale, are strategically located at important border points with Somalia and the

predominantly Somali Northeastern region of Kenya respectively. As will be shown later, the border towns in Doollo and Mooyaale districts have become important gateways for the movement of goods and people. In contrast to the link with Somalia and Kenya, long-time contact between the Somali camel herding clans in the zone and the neighboring cattle rearing Borana and Arsi Oromo groups resulted in cultural exchanges but failed to create harmonious relationship between them. The policy of regionalisation along ethnic lines introduced by the transitional government further aggravated this traditional hostility between independent Somali clans and the Borana after 1992.

Two perennial rivers, Gannaale and Daawa, traverse Liban zone, and define the eastern and western boundaries of both Doollo and Liban/Filtu districts, which are wedged between these two water systems. Gannaale river marks the boundary between Doollo district and the neighboring Afdheer zone, while the Daawa marks the boundary between Doollo and Mooyaale districts. The border district town, Doollo, is located at the confluence of these two rivers (see map).

In addition to Negelle town in Liban/Filtu district, the control of Mooyaale district town is also disputed between the Somali Garri clan and neighboring Oromo Borana. These disputes have not been officially resolved, although there have been a number of neutral missions launched by the central government. In practice, a Garri administration is firmly established in Mooyaale town and district at present, while an Oromo administration is in place in Negelle town of Liban district. Such facts lead one to think that Mooyaale town and district is likely to be considered as a Garri (Somali) domain, while Negelle town as Oromo.

Due to differences of interest, the Somali clans in Liban zone tend to disagree over the potential capital of the zone. The Garri are the dominant group in Mooyaale district and therefore regard Mooyaale town as appropriate to become the headquarters of the zonal administration, while the rival Digodia are the largest group in the remaining district of Doollo, are also strongly represented in Liban/Filtu district and so want Filtu to assume the same status. The Digodia rightly claim that the relatively cosmopolitan town of Mooyaale lies at the far western fringe of the zone and is therefore not centrally placed in the zone. It is also located at an unstable buffer zone of hostile Garri and Borana. At the south-eastern part, Doollo town is also not centrally located and hence not suitable to become the capital of the zone. The diverse Somali clans in Liban/Filtu district also advance their own interest by suggesting Negelle to become the zonal capital.

The selection of a suitable zonal capital is a matter still awaiting a solution. Despite the mentioned disadvantages, Mooyaale town contains more facilities than either Doollo or the small rural village of Filtu. For example, it has piped water, hotels and a branch of the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia. Moreover, it is also the only center connected to Addis Ababa by an all-weather road. Negelle town is also ideal since, as the former administrative center, it has inherited a well developed infrastructure; however, it is also a disputed location.

The relatively smaller Filtu is located at the northern part of the zone, more than 360 km from both Mooyaale and Doollo town. It is the least disadvantaged and lacks essential facilities compared to the other districts in the zone. The dominantly nomadic economy of Filtu area is also relatively less prosperous than the more diversified agro-pastoral economies of other districts.

Like the other local clans, the Digodia seek to enhance their social status and economic standing by striving to raise the status of the small village of Filtu, controlled by their clansmen, as the future capital and district town of the zone. Nevertheless, this tendency has also wider political connotations. Non-Digodians suggest that what this clan perceives as Filtu

district does not correspond with the idea of others on the issue. It is said that they regard Filtu district to cover Digodia areas; according to them, it excludes outlying land inhabited by different clans.

Several reasons have been suggested to explain the peculiar allegation relating to the lack of Digodia interest in seeking to incorporate all the traditional territories of the different Somali clans into Liban/Filtu district. First, is the advantage accruing from the development of their small village as the capital of the zone. Second, is to expand the frontiers of its sphere of influence by forming Filtu district whose frontiers coincide with that of the Digodia territory outside Doollo District. Excluding other clans from the district is said to be a concession to the Borana clan which has interest in the disputed areas of Liban zone inhabited by other clans -- the Digodia is the only Somali clan which has a treaty of alliance and economic cooperation with the Borana, the arch rival of other Somali clans in the zone.

The unresolved administrative center for Liban zone and disagreement between Somali clans over the issue had the effect of delaying the formation of a working zonal administration. Therefore, the Ethiopian Somali Regional administration decided that Filtu should function as temporary district and zonal center. To impart vigor to the moribund zonal administration, an external zonal head was assigned as chief of the administration during the field work.

1.3 *Clan composition and territorial distribution*

Liban and Gode zones show remarkable similarities with respect to clan composition and distribution. Both zones are traversed by perennial rivers, whose banks form an 'agricultural belt' surrounded by an overwhelming pastoralist economy. These 'agricultural corridors' are settled by primarily cultivating groups of heterogeneous origin living in permanent agricultural villages. The physical appearance of these localized farming groups is distinct from that of the nomadic Somali, for they resemble Bantu minority groups living along the Webi Shabelle and Juba valleys in Somalia.

The Garri Maro, the counterpart of the Rer Bare, form small agricultural groups along the banks of the rivers traversing Liban zone. Outside this 'farming corridor' are the grazing regions frequented by Somali clans practicing a traditional livestock husbandry. Two large independent clans control the range lands outside the farming belt, in the districts of Doollo and Moyaale: the Garri and Digodia.

The predominantly pastoral Digodia clan forms the largest group in Doollo and it is also strongly represented in the mixed district of Liban/Filtu. Smaller groups living with the Digodia in district Doollo are the sedentary Garri Maro found along the lower courses of the perennial rivers and the now displaced Mareexaan pastoralists whose traditional territory lies in Liban/Filtu district.

Mooyaale district is acknowledged as the customary land of the predominantly pastoral Garri clan. A comparatively small nomadic group, the Gabra, live with the Garri in this district. The Gabra are probably an Oromised camel herding Garri group with some of its clansmen living with Oromo Borana. The Garri Maro, Mareexaan, and Gabra, and others in Liban district (Gurre, Karanle and Ajuran) all act as independent groups who are collectively responsible to pay and receive the blood compensation *dia*.

Table 1: Distribution of clans in the districts of the Liban zone

Name of the district	Largest groups	Smaller groups
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1. Mooyaale	Garri	Gabra
2. Doollo	Digodia	Garri Maro
3. Liban/Filtu	Digodia, Gurre Mareexaan	Ajuran, Kranle

II. POLITICS

2.1 *Segmentary lineage politics*

As the distribution of local clans in the districts indicates (see Table 1), land tenure is based on social organisation. Local clans in Liban zone and elsewhere in the region reproduce their segmentary social formation on this basis. Therefore, each clan is associated with a particular territory, which may or may not coincide with the boundary of the district administrative unit. In the present case, the entire district of Mooyaale is generally regarded as the traditional territory of the Garri clan, while those of the remaining Doollo and Filtu districts as the domain of the Digodia clan. Segments of the land-holding clan tend to occupy distinct parts within its customary land. The boundaries of adjacent clans are commonly defined by reference to the names given to distinct landmarks. Nevertheless, such boundaries, in practice, act no more than buffer-zones, and are therefore often a source of contention and conflict between neighboring pastoral clans.

In the pastoral areas, clans defend their grazing regions with force if necessary, particularly at difficult times, when range and water resources are scarce. However, as pastoral exigency makes necessary, often scarce and variously distributed primary nomadic resources have to be shared between herders from different clans for the well-being of the wider nomadic society.

The social organization of farming communities along the banks of the rivers in Liban zone differs from that of the powerful pastoral clans. Settlement in permanent farming villages has led to the development of ties to a particular territory. Thus, social solidarity and economic cooperation, which are determined by membership and loyalty to kin groups among the pastoral groups, here are also by membership of a settled community and common interest ensuing from cooperation in farming. Like those found along the Shabelle valley in Godey zone, most of the permanent agricultural settlements in Liban zone are territorially well defined.

Competition for access to prime agricultural land between the large Digodia clan and the riverine Garri Maro, as well as the desire of the Digodia to maintain lordship over the other, explains their often strained relations. Before the change of government in 1991, successive governments exploited this difference. Thus, the Garri Maro were regarded as loyal subjects and were given priority in the distribution of government posts and development resources. In return they were expected to support the government's stringent control over Digodia clansmen whose loyalty to Ethiopian administration was considered suspect.

Competition for access to pasturage and water, between the two largest nomadic clans in the zone (Garri and Digodia) is chiefly responsible for the strained relations and hostility between them. This is aggravated by competition for access to government resources and external assistance. Despite such inter-clan rivalry, security in Liban zone has remarkably improved over the last years.

Although relations between the Digodia and the Garri Maro are strained mainly because of competition for access to prime agricultural land, relations between the Garri and other minority groups in the zone is harmonious. The Garri and the Garri Maro appear to be united in opposition to the Digodia, the same way the Garri and the Gabra are united against their powerful arch rival, the Borana Oromo.

2.2 Current politics

Despite their outward antagonism, the Garri and Digodia are united by remote kinship ties. Both are members of the Dir clan-family, the highest level of kin grouping in the elaborately segmented social formation of the Somali society. The Gadabursi and 'Iisa in the northwest Somalia and Eastern Hararghe of Ethiopia, are the most important Dir groups. Membership of a clan-family is usually symbolic and has no political significance, but it has acquired importance in the politics of the Ethiopian Somali National Regional State, where the dominant political movement, the Ethiopian Somali Democratic League (ESDL), comprises a Dir-centered coalition of more than a dozen local clans.

The widespread support for the ESDL by the clans in Liban zone is illustrated by the results of the last parliamentary election, in which the ESDL won all seats for both the regional (10) and the federal parliaments (1). The seat for the federal parliament went to the Mooyaale constituency, which falls under the sphere of influence of the Garri clan.

III. ECONOMY

3.1 Food production

As mentioned earlier, two distinct ecological zones representing different economic traditions dominate the physical landscape of the zone. The most prominent geographical feature is made of sparsely populated pastoral range lands supporting the overwhelming nomadic majority of the zonal population. The rugged and barren pastoral country of the Digodia in Doollo and Liban areas, for the most part is covered with acacia trees, low shrubs and scarce surface grass. This is broken by the 'agricultural belt' along the banks of the perennial rivers growing, in some places, thick vegetation and palm groves.

The Garri country in Mooyaale district offers a marked contrast to the rugged country of the Digodia stretching between Gannaale and Daawa rivers. It largely consists of well wooded and relatively rich grasslands. The natural vegetation in the Garri land had been spared from intensive exploitation and ensuing environmental degradation by scarcity of water.

As elsewhere in the region, the dominant pastoral economy in Liban zone does not produce all the food required for the subsistence and the well-being of herding clansmen. The traditional nomadic diet of mainly milk and meat is in modern times becoming increasingly supplemented with grains purchased from the local markets of Negelle, Doollo and Mooyaale. From 1977 to the 1980s, large-scale relief grain delivered to the camps in Somalia and the former Eastern Hararghe region of Ethiopia was widely traded in this linked economic zone to satisfy the pastoralist grain demand.

Cultivation over a period of time along the banks of Gannaale and Daawa rivers led to the development of permanent agricultural settlements. The temporary nomadic encampments in which herding groups continue to move with their herds between wet and dry pastoral regions, provide a marked contrast to the localized agro-pastoral tradition. The agricultural

riverine village population is relatively dense, compared to the vast outlying rangelands that usually support a scant nomadic population. The collapsible nomadic hut is the main dwelling for the pastoralists, while the durable mud and wattle hut with a conical roof is the common dwelling for the farming families in the agricultural area.

The raising of cattle and sheep and goats constitutes an essential supplement to the agricultural economy. The riverine Garri Maro are the prototype cultivating community in Liban zone where they obtain harvests twice a year, coinciding with the peak flood periods of jiilaal (December-March) and xagaa (July-September). In the wet seasons, gu' (April-June) and deyr (October-December) the Garri Maro abandon their permanent settlements along the banks of the rivers and retire one or two kilometers inland to dry areas less infested with mosquitoes. They construct temporary shelters similar to the collapsible huts of the pastoralists and grow cereals and beans under rain-fed conditions. Thus, the Garri Maro are able to cultivate in all seasons of the year with maize being their principal staple crop. Other important crops grown in the area for both consumption and sale are: sorghum, cow beans, pumpkins and cucumber.

The Garri Maro also supplement their agro-pastoral life style with hunting and fishing, activities regarded as lowly by the conservative pastoralist population. Although opportunist production of staple crops by pastoral families has been carried out in the zone over a long period of time, most of the local grain traded in the markets in good years is produced by the Garri Maro.

Over the last three decades, agriculture has been expanding to the rangelands in Liban zone. The development of trade villages facilitated this process and, when travelling through the region, one can usually observe enclosed land planted by individuals living in these villages. This transformation of the collective pastoral ranges to private agricultural land, is a process that was accelerated by the exodus of returnees who fled to Ethiopia in large numbers starting in 1991. Agro-pastoralism is the desired activity for the majority of these individuals who are now engaged in actively reconstructing their lives. Some returnees who had the means also introduced irrigated agriculture and the production of cash crops, e.g. fruits and vegetables, in commercial farms established along the banks of the rivers. In Doollo district, for example, irrigated commercial farms are now able to produce sufficient fruits and vegetables (papaw, banana, lemon, tomatoes, etc) for local consumption and for sale in the neighboring urban centers across the border in Kenya, most importantly, Mandhera.

Many individual returnees in Doollo district have water pumps, which were either brought from Somalia by the owners, or purchased from Doollo market which sold a lot of goods looted from Somalia in the years 1991-1993. The owners use water pumps for irrigating their commercial farms, rent them to poor farmers, or else enter a share cropping arrangement with agricultural laborers and land holders. Although private property, irrigation pumps are not accessible to the majority of the ordinary farmers, their over-all effect is fruitful in the sense of enhancing production of food crops, particularly fruits and vegetables.

3.2. Factors constraining crop production

If an enterprising farmer manages to realize a large income from the sale of agricultural products, livestock, or both, he is most likely to replace the income with one of the following forms of desired investment: women, cattle, trade and guns. Also, although traditionally nomadic, Somalis carry weapons, and since the collapse of state in Somalia at the beginning of 1991, possession of a Klashnikov has become a legitimate defensive weapon that is vital for the protection of one's life and property. Nevertheless, the deadly Klashnikov and other

modern weapons tend to be misused by irresponsible people, and pose a problem that will not go away until a viable rule of law is established in remote areas of the region.

In addition to the prestige associated with having more than one wife, having numerous children is desired as they are a potential labor force on the farm and since the nuclear family is the main unit of production. Given the labor intensive farming practiced in the zone, shortage of labor constrains crop production, particularly in the case of newly married couples and families who have not been able to produce sufficient sons and daughters. The traditional ox-plough, which is employed in the peasant production in the highland regions of the country, in the Jigjiga plains in former Eastern Hararghe and in the northwest agricultural region of 'Somaliland', is not known in the riverine farming areas of the zone. Therefore, the most rudimentary agricultural implement, the hand hoe, is still used for tilling the land.

Beyond the perennial rivers, water is scarce in Liban zone. Though rain-fed farming is seen as an important alternative method of producing crops, the normally erratic rainfall is a major constraint on further development. Also, a constraint to food production along the 'farming corridor' is that the perennial rivers that traverse the zone follow a course usually embedded in steep rocks and rugged cliffs. This reduces the potential to utilize river water for crop irrigation. Even at peak periods, rivers flow below ground level, which prevents inundation essential for flood recession agriculture. Despite these constraints, the application of motorized irrigation is an appropriate method of expanding riverine agriculture in the zone. However, it was noted that only 59 of the 169 motor pumps found in Doollo district were functioning at the time of the visit. Lack of spare parts in the zone and surrounding areas is primarily responsible for more than half of the pumps remaining idle. The Norwegian Church Aid, which provides repair assistance to the farmers in Districts Doollo and Liban has been able to repair 110 pumps, but its service is short of the required demand.

Apart from the technical problem relating to lack of spare parts, there is a sociological problem affecting effective utilization of the existing pumps. Most of them are owned not by the actual producers but by absentee individuals, some of whom are not directly engaged in agricultural production. Therefore, in the case of break down, the owner may not try hard to repair it rapidly unless there is an urgent need to do so, e.g. a threat to his interest in the planted crops.

3.3 Distribution of goods: markets and trade

A mosaic of independent, often antagonistic clans, or an unstable association of allied clans, fairly depicts the present political landscape and social life of the Somali nation found in drought and war-ravaged countries of Horn of Africa. In such a fluid social situation, cooperation and common interest across clan fiefdoms takes place through mutual promotion of an organized trade network linking the Somali speaking districts of Ethiopia to neighboring Somalia, "Somaliland", Djibouti and Kenya. This 'trans-clan' and 'trans-national' trade network allows free movement of people and also effectively distributes imported manufactured goods and local produce across this connected economic and cultural zone. The extensive economic and social interaction in the region is more important to the well-being of clansmen in Liban zone than it is for other zones of the Ethiopian Somali Region and reflects the minimal link the region has had with the relatively developed highland areas of Ethiopia.

Liban zone is favorably located to have important social and economic ties with Somalia and the adjacent Somali populated Northeastern region of Kenya. The Gannaale and Daawa rivers merge at a confluence near Doollo town, and then continue to flow across the border into Somalia. Minority farming groups live in permanent agricultural villages along the banks of these valleys. The two largest clans in Liban zone are both 'trans-national', having clansmen

living across artificial colonial boundaries. The traditional territories of the Garri and Digodia clans extend to adjacent areas in northeastern region of Kenya. Moreover, Garri land extends further to southern Somalia.

In addition to the ecological and social ties between Liban zone and neighboring Somalia and Kenya, the zone is also economically tied to a trade network linking the region to external markets, most importantly the Gulf states. Thus camels produced in Liban zone, are exported to Arabia through ports in southern Somalia, most importantly Mogadishu. The proceeds from exported live animals are used to purchase manufactured goods and food commodities which, in turn are imported from Arabia through ports in Somalia -finally entering Liban zone via local trade centers, as exemplified by the border town of Doollo. Thus, Doollo town is located at a transshipment point for manufactured consumer goods that are imported through the port of Mogadishu and from there transported by trade trucks over land via the interior town of Baydhawa.

While camels raised in Liban are exported through Mogadishu, cattle and small ruminants, are taken across the border and traded in livestock markets located in Kenya. The most important of these are Mandhera and the Kenya side of Mooyaale, although Doollo village on the Somali side is also a locally important livestock market. In effect, Kenya replaces Somalia as the major market for the livestock produced in Liban zone. This pattern is distinct from trade in north eastern and central (Ogaden) zones of the region where livestock are exported Somalia and 'Somaliland'.

Pastoralists living further away from the large livestock markets in Kenya, where the main merchants are based, sell animals in small retail centers that are scattered throughout the zone. The most significant of these are: Filtu, Doollo, Saddey, Leh and Kadaduma. Middle men operate in these small markets by purchasing animals gradually over a time. After they collect a sufficient number of animals they usually drive (both truck or on hoof) them to Mandhera or Mooyaale.

Despite the crucial link with Somalia and Kenya, Liban zone is integrated to some extent to the highlands of Ethiopia, unlike isolated areas like Godey zone which are very isolated and economically more closely linked to Somalia and 'Somaliland'. The all-weather road between Mooyaale town and Addis Ababa provides a valuable physical link with the highland areas. Doollo town is also linked to the highland areas but by a barely passable rough track via Negelle town. Thus, except particular goods imported from Kenya, such as cosmetics and plastic containers, Mooyaale town receives most manufactured goods and imported food from Addis Ababa; while Doollo receives such goods from Mogadishu or, at least did, until September 1995 when, 'Cali Mahdi forcibly closed the sea port in Mogadishu.

The link with the highland areas is crucial in terms of food security. At times of food scarcity, such as the present time, when food deficit is affecting a large part of southern Somalia, the staple diet of maize is only available from the highland areas. The economically active groups in Liban zone: nomadic, urban and rural; are able to obtain relatively cheap maize from the highland areas at times of food deficiency. Inhabitants in isolated areas of the region, such as Godey zone, cannot access staple food available in the highland areas regardless of the demand. This explains the large difference in the price of maize in Doollo and Godey towns. At the time of the field trip (15 January 1996) the price of one quintal of maize was Birr 120 in Doollo town, while it was Birr 200 at the beginning of December in Godey town.

Also because of the all-weather road link, *chat* (a mildly narcotic leaves of a plant, *Catha edulis*) grown in Sidamo is available at a relatively cheap price in Mooyaale town. Conversely in Doollo most of the supply is the relatively expensive *chat* produced in Kenya (*mirra*) and

imported from the nearby town of Mandehera. Other goods, such as coffee, alcoholic drinks and teff, which are mostly consumed by the urban population in the zone, are brought from the Ethiopian highlands. Due to religious beliefs, Somalis do not generally consume alcohol and prefer very sweet tea to coffee. The zone also receives vegetables, mostly potatoes and onions, produced in the mainly fertile rift valley close to Shashamani. Potatoes in particular are exported to Somalia through Doollo.

Under prevailing circumstances, it is doubtful if the zone can produce a sufficient amount of staples to feed the local population. Local grain production has been reportedly lean this year, due to poor rains. Somalia which acts as a source of surplus grain in good years is experiencing a deficit at present further compounding the problem. If the maize currently received from the highland areas is exhausted, or becomes expensive and beyond the means of ordinary people, serious food shortages will affect the majority of the people in Liban zone.

3.4 Cash economy

Mooyaale and Doollo markets operate on a number of currencies. The Somali Shilling, Ethiopian Birr and Kenyan Shilling are freely exchanged by local traders, usually shop and store owners. There are no specialized money dealers comparable to those found in Harta Sheik town in Jigjiga zone (a refugee camp which dramatically developed to become a significant trans-shipment center for manufactured goods entering the region) exchanging Birr, Somali and "Somaliland" shillings with United States Dollar. Even though Mooyaale town has a bank, exchange of different currencies in Liban zone generally takes place informally through the parallel money market. Thus, private business people who run enterprises and *chat* traders, deal with the exchange of money as a supplementary activity, or to acquire the right currency for trading in Somalia or Kenya. Merchants also undertake another important banking function, acting as a repository of money deposited by their customers who are mainly kinsmen. Some traders also use the money deposited with them to invest in business, and offer credits to trusted kinsmen.

Given the informal nature of commerce in Liban zone and in the region in general, banks, including that in Mooyaale, have little control over the flow and exchange of currency. This reduces their major activity to transferring government funds for state projects and salaries of government employees. In spite of the fact that some Somali traders have Birr accounts in the bank, it is more common among business people from the highlands to have bank accounts.

Business people from the highlands dominate the commercial life of Mooyaale town on the Ethiopian side. In addition to the bars and restaurants which sell alcohol and Christian food, highlanders own most of the shops and stores which sell a wide range of manufactured goods: clothes, utensils, food (both imported and local) and condiments, detergents, perfumes, and lots of other essential goods. Hostility of past administrations towards Somalis resulted in an exodus of merchants from Mooyaale Ethiopia to the Kenyan side. The return of Somali traders from Kenya has been hampered by disputes between the Somali and Borana Oromo over the control of this border town since 1991.

Unlike Mooyaale, domination of trade by highlanders has to a large extent been challenged by Somali traders in the market town of Doollo. The absence of a paved road connection with the highlands and the Somalization of the district administration, has reduced the number of highland traders with business interests in the town.

While highlanders dominate the trade in goods from central Ethiopia, Somali merchants dominate import of manufactured goods from Somalia. It is very difficult for non-Somalis to be involved in this trade, because it is both risky, given the absence security forces of a

central authority, and also because kinship ties play an important role in business transactions among the Somalis.

Security of the life and property of a Somali trader, or that of any Somali, is ultimately guaranteed by his corporate kin group. Fear of reprisal from his kinsmen ensures the security of trucks and goods moving outside the sphere of influence of a merchant's kin group. In addition, the Somali customary law and the sharia strongly sanction the inviolability of private property. In contrast to the respect afforded by the Somali to private property, there is a remarkable lack of similar cultural sanction protecting public property which makes it easy for miscreants to vandalize and abuse it. This implies that NGOs and government organizations working in unstable remote areas of the Ethiopian Region have to take precautions to protect vehicles and other valuable assets, or else obtain the trust and cooperation of the beneficiary groups. If convinced that a development agent is doing good work, the beneficiaries take interest in the safety of the vehicles and property of the external agent.

IV. CONDITIONS AFFECTING RETURNEES AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS IN LIBAN ZONE

4.1. Displaced Groups in urban centers of the zone

A large number of displaced people fleeing from Somalia's civil strife, which followed the downfall of Siad Barre's despotic regime at the beginning of 1991, congregated at Doollo. Doollo attracted this exodus because it previously had acted as an official entrance point to Ethiopia from Somalia. The Doollo bridge constructed by UNHCR to facilitate its repatriation program for the Ethiopian refugees in camps in Somalia, enhanced the status of Doollo as entry border point.

The failure of the Somali state, shortly before the change of government in Ethiopia in 1991, led to an unprecedented liberalization in the movement of goods and people between the Ethiopian Somali region and neighboring countries. The congregation of a large number of displaced people and opening of borders led Doollo to become an important trade center.

The majority of the displaced population that camped at Doollo consisted of Ethiopian returnees, who fled from refugee camps in Somalia. Many 'invisible' Ethiopian refugees, who over the years became absorbed into Somalia's formal and informal sectors, also came with returnee exodus, including ex-soldiers and their families. In Mooyaale district, a large number of returnees also settled at the periphery of the town of Mooyaale. In this district, other places with large returnee population are: Ley, Jallanqo, Kadaduma, Dhukiso.

The bulk of the original returnee population left Doollo during the period 1991-1994 and voluntarily returned, with little or no assistance to their home areas, including Afdher zone, Bali and Sidamo. In 1994 a joint government/UN/NGO Technical Implementation Group (TIG) embarked upon a collaborative program seeking dispersal of the residual population. Thus, trucks and repatriation packages were provided for the final relocation of the repatriants to their home areas. This organized program was abandoned because the beneficiaries started to manipulate it to their advantage. Some of the relocated returnees returned to Doollo to claim multiple assistance.

The social fluidity of the displaced population aggravated by the abundance of ration cards circulating among the returnees in Doollo, Mooyaale, Negelle, and other places, made it difficult for the humanitarian organizations to provide effective rehabilitation and emergency

assistance. On its own, UNHCR was not able to provide all the necessary assistance to the number of bogus or genuinely affected population. And since the returnees were generally indistinguishable from locally displaced and other needy groups, UNHCR felt that it was beyond its mandate to support all the affected population. The complex nature of displacement and the need for innovative approach, led UN, NGOs and the government to search for alternatives and led to the subsequent adoption of what has been dubbed as the 'cross-mandate' approach- the provision of assistance to distressed communities on the basis of need. The 'cross-mandate approach' replaced individual assistance on the basis of entitlement, which was perceived as perpetuating the camp based system with community assistance, placing an emphasis on participation and collective responsibility.

The cessation of the relocation scheme of the TIG due to unexpected abuse marked the withdrawal of humanitarian assistance to returnees remaining in urban centers in Liban zone. This, together with pre-existing tension between Somali and Oromo groups in the area, encouraged further self-repatriation of some of the remaining returnees.

Anticipation of humanitarian assistance seems to have been a crucial factor responsible for the concentration of displaced population in urban centers in the zone, in particular Doollo and Mooyaale. The desire to obtain regular humanitarian assistance had been frustrated by shortage of relief assistance and prompted a large scale spontaneous repatriation of the returnees to their home areas. The better-off and those who thought opportunities would be better at home, were the first to leave. This was followed by reluctant returnees who had to go home finally because they could not survive on the assistance they received and were unable to find a means to supplement this.

The majority of those who dispersed early originated from areas that are located at a distance from centers of returnee concentration. Thus, the bulk of those still languishing in these centers belong to the locally dominant clans. This residual population, however, contains a small number of kinsmen belonging to Somali clans living outside Liban zone, e.g. Gurre, Gariire, Karanle, Gadsen, Sheekhaal, Isaq, Xawadle, Gabra and Ogaden.

Regardless of whether they are locals or outsiders, most of the residual returnee population in Liban zone have developed an urban inclination as a result of prolonged stay (14-15 years) in generously supported camps in Somalia. Therefore, they are reluctant to return to the rigors of traditional livestock husbandry as practiced by their rural clansmen. Nevertheless, because of economic links and co-operation with members of the extended family living in the rural areas, many of the relic population belonging to the local clans (Digodia and Garri) are able to manage a bare subsistence in urban centers of the zone. In this sense, they are better-off than the small number of outsiders who lack access to the primary community resources that are necessary for the reconstruction of their lives.

The largely returnee relic population in the urban centers of the zone, Doollo and Mooyaale district centers in particular, continue to face a precarious economic situation. Although external factors, such as poor rains and the breakdown of trade with Somalia, aggravates their plight, the present food deficiency basically derives from the fact that they have not yet been able to successfully or completely reintegrate to the local economy to become self-supporting.

Most of the residual returnee population in the urban centers in Liban zone were poor even before their return from war-ravaged Somalia in 1991-1992. First displaced from Liban and other neighboring zones by the 1977/78 war between Ethiopia and Somalia over the control of the 'Ogaden', some sought refuge in refugee camps, while others were absorbed into the Somali economy, engaging in low income activities. Although many had previously herded stocks in grazing regions in the lowland areas in southern Ethiopia, they developed an urban

inclination as a result of prolonged dependence upon a generous welfare support system provided by the government of Somalia with the assistance of UNHCR and the international community.

4.2. Causes of Food Deficiency

Godey zone is economically and culturally linked to Somalia and 'Somaliland', while Liban zone is tied to Somalia and the Somali inhabited northeastern region of Kenya. In this economic region, goods and people move freely across porous and practically notional borders. The regional export economy depends heavily on live animals. Camels produced in Liban zone are exported mainly via Mogadishu seaport, while cattle and small ruminants go to Kenya, presumably for domestic consumption. The proceeds from exported live animals are used to purchase food and manufactured consumer goods that enter the region mainly through Doollo, and are widely distributed throughout the region by an effective trade network linking a mosaic of independent and often antagonistic clans.

From 1977/78 large-scale relief food delivered to refugee camps in Somalia sheltering Ethiopian refugees became an important source of wheat grain and other food commodities, e.g. cooking oil, to both nomads and other economic groups in Somalia and the Somali region in Ethiopia. After 1988, camps in what was Eastern Hararghe, sheltering Somali refugees from northern Somalia and Ethiopian returnees, replaced refugee camps in Somalia as a crucial source of traded relief grain in the region.

Since 1994, the flow of relief grain, which had the effect of sustaining the lives of card holders in the camps and making available subsidized food to nomads and the poor urban population, has been drastically reduced. In collaboration with EPRDF forces, The Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA), the UNHCR national counterpart organization in Ethiopia, conducted a snap revalidation exercise in the camps in Jijiga and Shinniile zones in September 1994. This reduced the number of beneficiaries from a disputed and rather inflated number of about 800,000 to roughly 184,000. As of July 1995, the number of beneficiaries assisted by UNHCR has been estimated at about 275,189. Out of this, 90,289 were described as new arrivals, an exodus from Somaliland's latest round of violence which erupted in October 1994 between forces loyal to the government in Hargeisa and the opposition Garhajis.

In addition, emergency assistance to the displaced in Liban, although always irregular ceased finally in 1994. This happened in response to improved nutritional status of the beneficiaries and in accordance with the policy of the government to shift emphasis to long-term rehabilitation and development.

Returnees, or "urbanized poor" in urban centers in Liban zone have been facing food deficiency problems for the last couple of months. Indeed, MUAC screening carried out by the health staff in Doollo clinic during the field trip indicated the existence of malnutrition among the children aged 0-5 years of age.

Several factors are responsible for the present food deficiency affecting the urban poor in Liban zone as well as those in Godey zone as shown in the situation report and analysis prepared by the EUE in January 1996. Most important, the closure of the port of Mogadishu as a result of the capture by SNA armed groups of the strategically important interior towns of Baydhawa and Xudur in October 1995 and January 1996 respectively, disrupted trade between Liban zone and southern Somalia. This contributed to an increase in the price of imported and local food in Liban after October 1995.

As indicated in the above cited report, the price of the staples in Godey town, local sorghum and maize, witnessed price increases of 30 Birr and 80 Birr per quintal respectively, in no more than 4 weeks. In the same period, the price of imported rice jumped from Birr 380 to Birr 500 per quintal. These significant increases are largely a result of a breakdown in trade following the closure of the port of Mogadishu. The author has not been able to obtain market data to substantiate the increase of the price of food in the Liban zone after September, following military operations by the SNA faction in southern Somalia. Nevertheless, this has been confirmed by SCF (US) staff in Doollo and District administration officials.

Those most affected by the rise of food prices since October 1995, are the urban poor who are still existing in urban centers of Liban zone. Their vulnerability to market fluctuations largely derives from the fact that some of them are not engaged in crop production at all, while others were not able to produce sufficient food to support themselves this year. The former group are not locals, they belong to clans whose clansmen live outside the districts of the zone, and therefore have no rights of access to agricultural land.

In Doollo most of the local returnees have not been able to produce enough staples because most of the good agricultural land has been taken by local clansmen while they were in Somalia. As later aspirants, they only managed to get very poor land. In Mooyaale, it was actually the returnees who started farming in the previously nomadic Garri district of Mooyaale. Since 1993, Garri returnees established prospective dry farming settlements in Dokiso, Arda Wala and other areas.

The tendency to settle and start farming is also shown by Garri returnees who concentrated at the periphery of Mooyaale town. But severe competition for scarce land near the town very much reduced the size of family plots. The pattern here is of settlements of returnee huts surrounded by small enclosures giving rise to family plots that are used for crop production and raising milch cattle. In Mooyaale district, the small size of agricultural plots held by the returnees, and not the quality of land, appears to be the main factor hindering production of sufficient staples for the returnee family.

Opportunities for the urban poor to practice a self-sustaining agro-pastoral economy are much better in Mooyaale district than in Doollo district. Mooyaale district has been previously a pastoral area whose rangelands were little exploited due to a shortage of water. It has fertile valleys with good potential for dry farming. However, after the change of government in 1991, the returnees have been displaced more than once from Mooyaale town and neighboring areas because of historical rivalry and land conflict between the Garri and Borana. This undermined the ability of the Garri returnees to attain self-sufficiency and prevented the delivery of effective external assistance from NGOs, UN and other organizations. Previous assistance from UNHCR intended for this refugee and returnee impacted district, went to Oromo areas because past administrations were hostile to the Garri.

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The problem of the urban poor in Liban zone as elsewhere in the region, is a legacy of past internal and external wars. Their problems have been further aggravated by prolonged civil strife in Somalia, unrest that will most probably persist for some time to come. The fate of the residual returnee population in urban centers in Liban zone much depends on the return to normality in Somalia and adjacent areas of the linked Ethiopian Somali Region. In order to relieve the present food deficit affecting vulnerable urban poor in the zone, some short term intervention seems to be required. However, any wider distribution of relief assistance through food-for-work or employment generation schemes must target the most needy

regardless of category-farmer, urban poor or dependent returnees and be delivered on a community, not individual basis. Such an approach could help reduce demand and stabilize the price of staples until the next harvest is fully gathered.

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