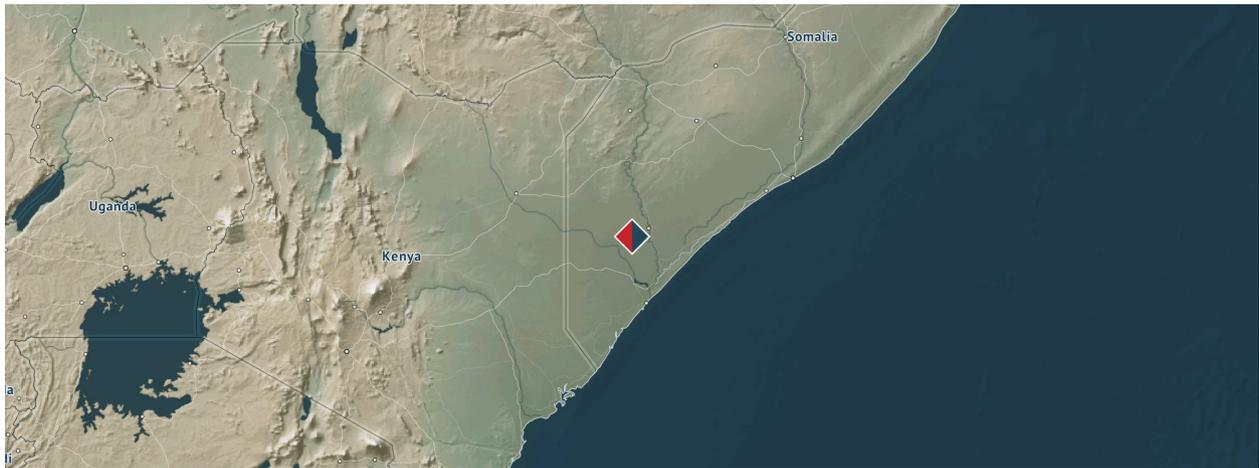




Conflict Factsheet

### Climate Change, Charcoal Trade and Armed Conflict in Somalia

Type of conflict <b>Main</b>	Intensity <b>4</b> 
Conflict Locality <b>Eastern Africa</b>	Time <b>2008 –ongoing</b>
Countries <b>Somalia</b>	Resources <b>Forests, Resilience of the environment</b>



Local resource competition



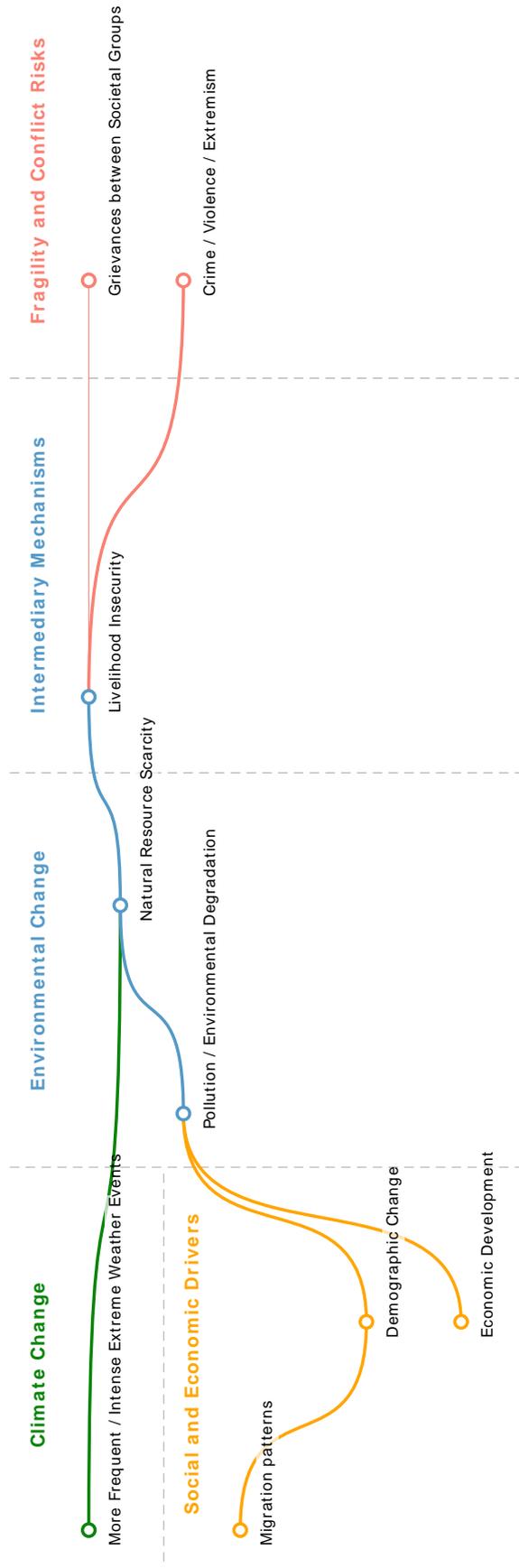
Livelihood insecurity and migration

### Conflict Summary

As a result of frequent droughts, civil war and disrupted livelihoods, pastoralist communities in Somalia increasingly turn to charcoal production as an alternative source of income. Charcoal production in Somalia is not only an important source of deforestation, environmental degradation and communal conflict, but provides also steady revenues for rebel groups such as al Shabaab, who control the distribution of the resource.



### Conceptual Model



### Context Factors



Forests, Resilience of the environment

History of Conflict  
 Lack of Alternative Livelihoods  
 Low Level of Economic Development  
 Weak Institutions



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## Conflict History

Since the 1970s, charcoal is one of Somalia's principal exports, along with livestock, hides and bananas. Charcoal and firewood are the primary sources of energy for the majority of households in Somalia and charcoal production provides a considerable amount of employment in rural areas (Mohamed, 2001; Ismail, 2011). Despite several attempts to ban charcoal production because of its detrimental environmental effects, the industry has increasingly grown following the collapse of the Somali state in the 1990s (Baxter, 2007; Gaworecki, 2015). The consequences for the environment are dramatic: Whereas forests represented about 13 percent of Somalia's land area in 1990, they only covered about 10.7 percent in 2010, with signs for accelerating deforestation rates in recent years (UN, 2011; Bolognesi et al. 2015). But the growth of the industry has also provoked conflicts between woodcutters and rural communities, whose livelihoods are threatened by deforestation and soil erosion, and increased the revenues of armed groups such as al Shabaab (UN, 2011; UNDP, 2013). It has been estimated that al Shabaab earns between \$38 and \$56 million annually from charcoal exports and \$8-\$18 million annually from taxing charcoal traders at roadblocks and checkpoints. This makes charcoal one of the group's main sources of income, but also a matter of conflict with rival rebel groups (Nellemann et al., 2014; Ward, 2014; UCDP, 2015).

### Illegal charcoal trade continues despite bans

Charcoal exports have been banned by successive Somali administrations, including the actual federal government. Yet, high demand for Somali charcoal in the Gulf States, due to their strict laws on preventing local deforestation, acts as a strong incentive for Somali traders to continue to export the country's natural resources. This is further encouraged by the absence of effective government structures in Somalia, who could restrict the activities of woodcutters and charcoal traders (Baxter, 2007; Mohamed, 2012). Forest management and environmental protection is further hampered by unclear property rights regimes: Communal land, which had been nationalized during the military regime of President Siad Barre (1969-1991) became de facto 'ownerless' after 1991 and has been exploited since by different communities and armed groups (Mohamed, 2001).

On the supply side, charcoal production has become an important source of income for rural populations affected by environmental hardship, displacement and conflict. Especially in the southern part of the country, increasingly frequent droughts and floods have combined with overgrazing, desertification and soil erosion to deplete pastoralist livelihoods. This dynamic is further accelerated by continuous fighting and mass displacements of rural populations. Left with little alternatives, more and more pastoralists turn to charcoal trading in order to survive, which further exacerbates local communities' vulnerability to extreme weather events (Mohamed, 2012; Ismail, 2011).

### A vicious cycle

Charcoal trading in Somalia does not only contribute to communal tensions and the military activities of rebel groups such as al Shabaab, it is also at the heart of a vicious cycle of environmental degradation, depleted livelihoods and further cutting of trees, accelerated by- and exacerbating the local impacts of climate change. In order to tackle these issues, the federal government, the UN Security Council and other



organisation are not only trying to restrict charcoal exports from Somalia, but also to reduce local charcoal consumption and promote alternative livelihoods.

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## Resolution Efforts

Alarming deforestation rates in connection with charcoal production already led to the ban of charcoal exports under the Siad Barre regime and also under the rule of General Muhammad Farah Aideed, who exerted control over much of Southern Somalia from 1992 to 1996. However, general Aideed's son and successor, Hussein Muhammad Aideed, did not impose such restriction, leading to an increase of charcoal production after 1996. The ban was re-imposed in 2000 and has been in effect, albeit poorly enforced, under changing transitional administrations. In 2010 the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia succeeded in diminishing charcoal exports from a number of ports, including Mogadishu and Marka, but the trade continued unabated in ports controlled by Al Shabaab, such as Kismayo ([Baxter, 2007](#); [UN Security Council, 2011](#)).

### Actions against illegal charcoal exports

In 2012, the United Nations took note of the charcoal trade and its ramifications with the military operations of Al Shabaab. The UN Security Council issued Resolution 2036, urging UN member states, presumably the Gulf States through which the charcoal trade flows, to take the necessary measures to prevent the import of charcoal from Somalia. The same year, Somali and African Union troops were able to re-capture Kismayo. Yet, according to a group of UN monitors, Somalia's illegal charcoal trade and corruption have continued unabated, securing a steady income for Al Shabaab ([UN Security Council, 2014](#)). In 2014, the UN Security Council issued resolution 2182, which authorises the naval inspection of ships bound for Somalia, in its territorial waters and on the high seas, including the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf ([Keatinge, 2014](#); [Yoon & Gridneff, 2014](#)). The success of this measure has yet to be evaluated.

### Reducing charcoal consumption and promoting alternative livelihoods

Efforts to ban charcoal exports have been accompanied by programmes aiming at reducing charcoal consumption and promoting alternative livelihoods. UNEP, UNDP and FAO support the Somali government in a programme led by the Ministry of National Resources to enhance regional cooperation, establish regulatory instruments and enforcement mechanisms, introduce alternative sources of energy, and most importantly, help charcoal producers and traders to find alternative livelihoods. It is estimated that the adoption of more efficient stoves and kilns for charcoal production could result in a total 50% decline in charcoal consumption and 80% decline in wood cutting ([UNDP, 2013](#)). These programmes are complemented by the work of numerous grassroots initiatives in the domains of environmental protection, awareness raising and promotion of sustainable livelihoods. Among these, Fatima Jibrell, a female Somali environmentalist, recently rose to prominence by winning the 2014 UNEP's Champion of the Earth award for her continuous fight against illegal charcoal trade in Somalia ([Hiiraan, 2015](#)).

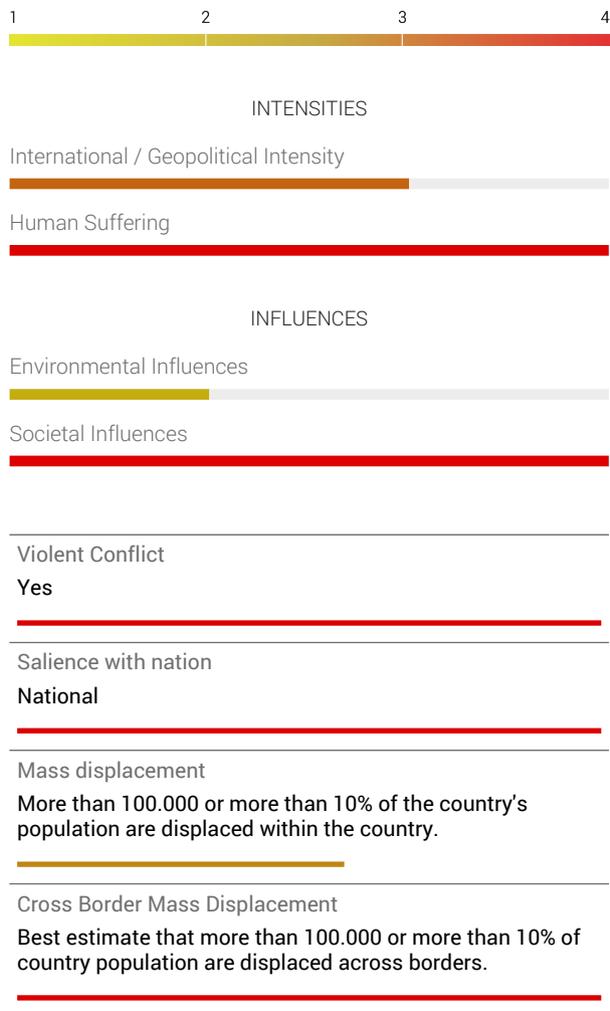
### Remaining challenges

Despite these efforts to curtail the sources of rebel finance and promote sustainable livelihoods in Somalia, there are still major challenges. The effects of Resolution 2182 have yet to materialise. Controlling the



inland trade is also difficult. Different sources have revealed the implication of the Kenyan contingent of the African Union Mission in the illegal charcoal trade and profit-sharing agreements with Al Shabaab (allAfrica, 2014; Ward, 2014). Most importantly, Somalia has been lacking a comprehensive framework for environmental protection, resource governance and drought preparedness for many years. Corresponding legislations need revision and more effective enforcement. The ambitious charcoal use reduction programme of the Somalian government and its partners is set to change this. It remains to be seen in how far it will succeed.

### Intensities & Influences



### Resolution Success

- Reduction in Violence  
There was no reduction in violence.

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- Resolve of displacement problems  
Displacement continues to cause discontent and/or other problems.

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- Reduction in geographical scope  
There has been no reduction in geographical scope.

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- Increased capacity to address grievance in the future  
There is no increased capacity to address grievances in the future.

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- Causal Attribution of Decrease in Conflict Intensity  
There has been no reduction in intensity



## Entry Points for Resilience and Peace Building

### Strengthening legislation and law enforcement 2

After a charcoal ban was imposed in 2000, the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia succeeded in diminishing charcoal exports from a number of ports after 2010. However, trade continued unabated in ports controlled by al Shabaab. The UN Security Council issued resolutions urging Gulf States to prevent the import of charcoal from Somalia, and authorised the naval inspection of ships bound for Somalia.

### Promoting alternative livelihoods 2

Various international organisations, as well as grassroots initiatives have worked to reduce charcoal consumption and promote alternative livelihoods for charcoal producers.

### Coping with uncertainty 0

A comprehensive framework for environmental protection, resource governance and drought preparedness would help address socio-environmental challenges in Somalia.

## Resources and Materials

### References with URL

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- [UCDP \(2015\). UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia -- Somalia](#)
- [UNDP \(2013\). Breaking the cycle of charcoal production in Somalia](#)
- [Ward, G.F. \(2014\). The Somali charcoal industry: Strange bedfellows](#)
- [Yoon, S. & Gridneff, I \(2014\). UN orders ship searches to find Al-Shabaab's charcoal](#)



Further information

<https://factbook.ecc-platform.org/conflicts/climate-change-charcoal-trade-and-armed-conflict-somalia>