



## Acknowledgement

The *Youth Baseline Survey* study is a nationally representative study, undertaken for the first time in Somaliland, to establish the status of Somaliland young people. The study covers the six officially recognized regions of Somaliland; namely, Maroodijeex, Sahil, Awdal, Togdheer, Sanaag and Sool. These six regions were purposely selected to represent the different geographic and socio-cultural contexts of the country's young population. This summary report presents consolidated findings from all six regions and covers multiple dimensions of young people's situations, ranging from education, health, employment, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, girls/young women, sports and recreation, and political participation.

The *Youth Baseline Survey* study has benefited immeasurably from the contributions of many. We take this opportunity to thank Mohamed Farah Hersi—senior researcher at the Academy for Peace and Development and Zaam Omer Ghedi—a statistician expert at the Ministry of Fishery, Coastal Resources and Ports Management, for their enormous efforts in directing, guiding, compiling and analyzing the data (both primary and secondary). Their contributions and experiences have shaped this study into meeting international standards. Moreover, much appreciation to the efforts and inputs of Mr. Saeed Mohamed Ahmed—the Executive Director, SONYO, Mr. Stephen Mwalo—the Development Worker and Adviser, and SONYO secretariat, particularly the staff members of the Research, Capacity-Building and Documentation department lead by the Project Officer, Mr. Mubarak A. Maal. In addition, we are grateful to the Government of Somaliland represented by the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture (Mr. Mustafa M. Qodax and Sayid Omer Mohamed), Ministry of National Planning and Development, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education and Higher Studies, Ministry of Health and the Presidential Advisor on Youth Affairs for their support and endorsement of this study from its inception up to its finalization. We must be very grateful to the enumerators who participated in the collection of the primary data, putting up with harsh conditions in the field. Without their honesty and commitment, this study would not have been successful. We also take this opportunity to extend our appreciation to Mr. Mohamed Omar Arteh who had given us guidance and professional advice.

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The study would not have been possible without the financial and advisory support from Oxfam-Novib, Nairobi. We are grateful for the moral support, as well as the useful and constructive comments provided by Mr. John Kolff, Mrs. Joyce Muchena and Mr. Abdiwahab.

The Project Steering Committee members offered valuable guidance, which ensured the study did indeed address all the key issues that require policy and programme attention.

It may not be possible to mention all who contributed to the study, but let it be known to them that their efforts and support are greatly appreciated and that this survey is a dedication to them, in show of solidarity with the youth of Somaliland.

# **About the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture and the Somaliland National Youth Umbrella**

The Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture was established after the former late President of the Republic of Somaliland, Mohamed I. Egal, expressed the importance of having a state agency to specifically address youth issues, in view that they formed the majority of those who bore the brunt of the many years of conflict and also are the hope and future of Somaliland. Previously, youth issues were addressed at the departmental level within the Ministry of Interior.

The ministry envisions a Somaliland where youth development, sports and culture promote nation building, economic growth and create sustainable livelihoods through ensuring skilled, active and healthy communities.

The mission of the ministry is to positively contribute to the overall development of Somaliland through:

- Empowering the youth to develop hope, self-confidence, creativity and pride in the nation's heritage.
- Developing young sport and artistic talents for youth development.
- Promoting a culture of democracy, good governance, and rule of law to foster youth participation in decision making.
- Supporting safe, secure and happy communities through the implementation of integrated & sustainable sports at the community level.
- Advancing sustainable livelihoods for youth through education, training and employment creation.

SONYO Umbrella is the nationwide youth umbrella, established on 5 June 2003. To date, SONYO has a membership of 54 youth organizations from the six regions of Somaliland. SONYO's work since establishment has focused on capacity building, advocacy, networking and information sharing for and with youth/youth organisations, to promote their political/civic, economic, social and cultural rights.

SONYO envisions a democratic and peaceful Somaliland that upholds basic human freedoms and rights, enabling its youth to live free from poverty, illiteracy, disease, and discrimination. SONYO's mission is to work towards the creation of a democratic, inclusive, representative and participatory youth umbrella organization. Its goals include:

- To create a strong, sustainable national youth umbrella organisation that will become a vehicle for strengthening relationships between youth organisations in Somaliland.
- To actively advocate for youth issues in development, human rights, civic dialogue and citizenry.
- To improve the economic, social and political status of the youth in Somaliland.
- To forge links of partnership and cooperation with various stakeholders, such as government agencies, UN and international development actors.

Minister's  
Photo

## Message and a Statement of Endorsement

As the Minister of Youth and Sports, I am pleased and gratified to present my appreciation and endorsement for the recently conducted Somaliland Youth Status Survey. The Report which is the product of the conducted survey has gone through the analysis and authentication processes of the Ministry and has, as a result, been endorsed as a report with relative evidences and significant information about the situation of our youth in Somaliland.

The Government of Somaliland is committed to addressing the multiple needs of young people. Effective implementation of policies and programmes, however, has been difficult and there has been a lack of comprehensive evidence on young people's situations and needs.

On the basis of the evidences found out through the youth baseline survey, this report is providing relevant an enormous amount of information—much for the first time—on almost every major dimension of youth life: education, employment, political participation, family life, marriage and sexual activity, health and substance abuse, etc. It provides the magnitude and the patterns of youth unemployment. Therefore, as our ministry has analysed the quality of this report, Findings from the study provide important base-line indicators against which the long-term impact of programmes may be measured and will certainly go a long way in guiding policy, programmes and advocacy on youth issues. Information provided will be valuable to policy makers, programme implementers in government and non government sectors, rights advocates and researchers alike who are committed to addressing the needs of Somaliland's next generation.

MOYS&C appreciates the efforts put in by SONYO, Oxfam Novib and the other stakeholders for contributing to the quality and the resources called for by the implementation of the study.

It is apparent that in order to give young people possibilities to a positive development there is a need for cooperation between different actors, both on national and international level. What is important is how the key players participate in responding to the identified needs and empowering the youth in Somaliland for a peace, stability, development and a better tomorrow.

Regards,

Abdi Saeed Fahiye

Minister for Youth, Sports and Culture  
MOYS&C  
The Republic of Somaliland

# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Encompassing an area of 137,600 square kilometres and sharing borders with the Republic of Djibouti to the west, the Federal Republic of Ethiopia to the south and Somalia to the east, Somaliland is a state that adopted the colonial borders of the Somaliland British Protectorate of 1884—1960 and broke away from the unity of the Somali Republic, which fell in 1991. The decision to withdraw from the Somali Republic was made by the Congress of Council of Clan Elders held in Buroa from 27 April to 15 May 1991. Constitutionally, Somaliland is a democratic nation-state with a multi-party political system.

The population density of the Somaliland Republic has been estimated at 28 persons per square km in 2009<sup>1</sup>, with an annual population growth rate of 3.14%. This figure is calculated from the average crude birth rate of 4.46% and crude death rate of 1.32%. Life expectancy at birth is between 49 and 60 years.

The Somaliland National Youth Organization, in partnership with Oxfam-Novib, conducted comprehensive research on the situation of youth in Somaliland. In December 2010, a team conducted field visits to collect data on a number of parameters on the socio-economic, cultural and political status of youth in order to understand the current situation of Somaliland youth.

The term “youth” in this survey includes males and females in urban and rural areas between the ages of 15 and 30.<sup>2</sup> The survey covers the six regions of Somaliland, namely Hargeisa, Sahil, Awdal, Togdheer, Sool, and Sanaag. A brief overview of the demographic, socio-economic and political situation in the country as a whole and the six regions in which the youth study was undertaken suggests that while distributions of the population in these regions were on the whole similar to that of the national population, there was considerable diversity across regions.

## 1.2 Rationale

Somaliland has undergone considerable demographic change, whereby her population’s segments exhibit varied socio-economic and political conditions. Although there are no national statistics published by the government of Somaliland regarding the current youth population in Somaliland, several studies, including the youth situational survey, suggest that 65—70 percent of the population is below 30 years of age. The absence of specific disaggregated data detailing the situation of a major segment of the population presents not only a planning inadequacy, but also subjects the country to potential insecurity, inequality, and injustice. This situation has had major implications for Somaliland’s socio-economic and political development, including unclear labor market opportunities, unequal youth access to public and family resources, and alienation from the mainstream political leadership of the country. The increasing unemployment rate in Somaliland and the rapid growth of young people entering the labor force pose social, economic and security challenges to the country.

Constituting the majority of the population, youth in Somaliland face numerous social economic and political challenges. Due to scarce resources, youth have resorted to immigrating to Arab countries, North America and Western Europe to find jobs and a better

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<sup>1</sup> Somaliland in Figure, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2011. The Ministry of National Planning and Development has issued this book and made these figures regarding the profile of the Somaliland population.

<sup>2</sup> The median age of the study population is 21 years of age.

future. Of the thousands that emigrate illegally, only a few are lucky enough to set foot in their desired destinations. The majority of them face immense challenges including legal problems in transit countries, getting detained and being subjected to degrading and inhuman conditions, and transportation hazards such as perishing in the Mediterranean Sea as they travel in dug-out canoes or starving to death in transit. One of the causes of youth marginalization is the lack of comprehensive policy and legislation frameworks targeting the development and advancement of youth and their socio-economic and political participation. The youth who stay in the country join extremist groups, get addicted to chewing khat or even seek to join the illegal and dangerous but lucrative business of piracy. Critically insufficient social services and amenities provide youth with no alternatives but to seek survival via means that are degrading, inhuman, and illegal.

The lack of adequate recreational facilities contributes to the severity of the situation that the youth in Somaliland largely live in. In addition, though the primary, secondary and tertiary education services and facilities have significantly grown, there are still a large number of youth populations (girls, youth with disabilities and those in rural areas) who do not have access to education and training.

The lack of credible, reliable and up-to-date data exacerbates the situation of comprehensively understanding the needs and priorities of youth, and putting in place measures to address them.

In view of the above, SONYO found it decisively important to undertake a baseline survey on the status of youth in Somaliland, which could also be a very crucial step in planning development processes in Somaliland. This national study combines qualitative and quantitative research in its findings on the challenges of youth with regard to employment, education, health, HIV/AIDs, substance us, girls/young women, sports and recreation, political participation and Information Communication and Technology. In addition, the study makes specific and pragmatic recommendations for stakeholders about what real challenges on the ground need to be addressed.

### **1.3 Overall Objective of the Study (YSS Survey)**

The main purpose of the survey was to obtain statistical and descriptive information about the status of youth in Somaliland, for design and planning of better policies, projects and programmes on youth empowerment and development.

This study was expected to produce statistical and descriptive information as an output, which could then be used in planning interventions designed for the empowerment of the youth in Somaliland. `

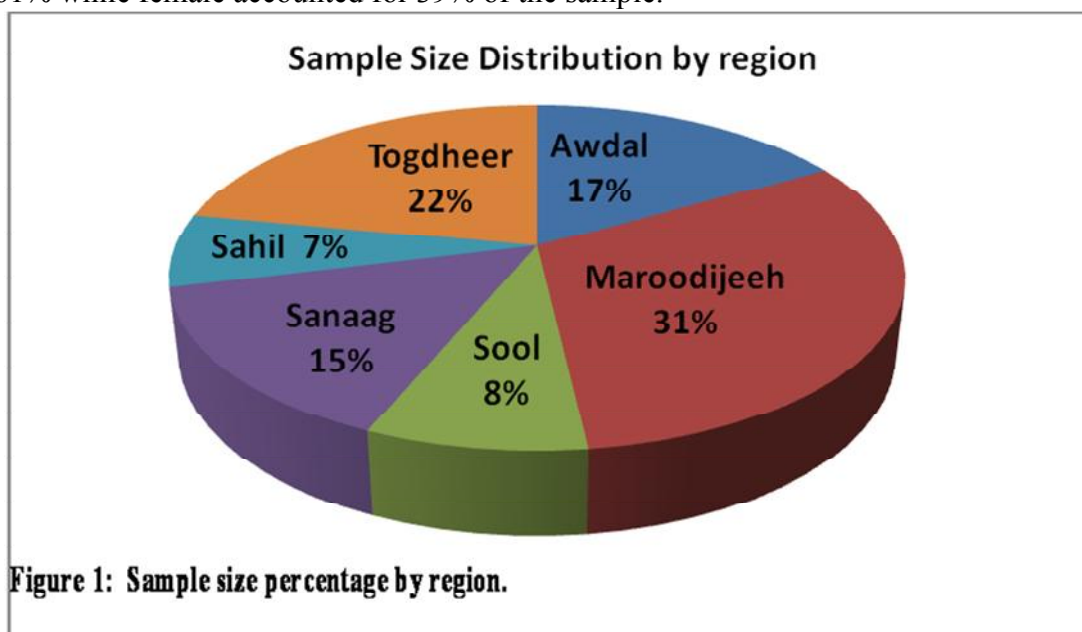
### **1.4 Survey Design and Methodology**

In line with the project scope, Somaliland youth between 15 and 30 years of age were the target population of the survey. The survey was conducted throughout the entire regions of Somaliland. Identifying a sample size that was fairly representative was challenging, particularly in view of a lack of an official population census. Consultations with established researchers and statisticians led to determination of a sample size of 800 respondents. The

method of sampling used for the survey was two-stage stratified sampling. The 6 regions of Somaliland constituted the universal population strata. Each stratum was divided into two sub-strata, urban and rural areas. This division was relatively straightforward with urban areas defined as national, regional and district capitals irrespective of size and other characteristics. A single youth person represented the sampling unit in both urban and rural areas.

Due consent and the rights of respondents was put under apis. Parental consent for youth participants under 17 years of age was sought.

Coming up with fair sample size distribution presented another challenge. Therefore, the researchers and the consultant did emphasize the need for determining a fair distribution of sample size by region, urban vs. rural, as well as female vs. male. In the sample, urban and rural represent 51% and 49% of the sample respectively. On the other hand, male constituted 61% while female accounted for 39% of the sample.



### 1.5 Study Limitations

- Lack of a national population census (disaggregated by age) to enable development of representative sample frame.
- Inadequate and/or scarce secondary data on the situation of youth to enrich the qualitative data information, and/or identification of a specific focus for research needs.
- Difficulty in obtaining information from respondents aged between 15-19 years (they were fearful and hesitant). This was experienced both during the administration of questionnaires and Focus Group Discussions.

## **2.0 Summary of findings**

### **2.1 Youth Situation**

The youth in Somaliland constitute 70% of the population as stated in the recently developed draft National Youth Policy of Somaliland. UNDP Human Development Report 2010 describes the situation of Somaliland youth to be better in comparison to their counterparts in Somali South/Central and Puntland. Though educational opportunities are inadequate qualitatively and quantitatively, over 70% of youth are able to access basic education services. The youth live in a situation presenting no immediate intimidation or threat given the relative peace and stability prevailing in the country. The percentage of the national budget allocated for education, sports and physical fitness is below 10% of the total national budget, thus inadequate for fostering the expected youth educational and training development. Persistent patriarchal traditional attitudes and idiosyncrasies against youth as immature and volatile people, lacking in leadership skills and knowledge continue to be the major barriers of youth involvement in decision making. The accrual of structural and situational factors affecting youth has largely hampered their energies for innovation, creativity, industriousness and ambition, rendering them a generation doomed and hopeless.

The spirit of volunteerism and patriotism are alien characteristics for Somaliland youth. This has been escalated by the fact that there is no appropriate curriculum for civic education. Unemployment stands out as the most pressing problem being encountered by Somaliland youth. Youth unemployment stands at 75%. Over 50% of the unemployed have some skills they can use to earn livelihood.

Most of the youth interviewed were unmarried, with a median age of 21. Economic reasons, education and training are some of the reasons attributed to the status of being unmarried.

### **2.2 Education**

Despite the growth of availability of education/training facilities and services, formal or informal, there is still need to extend and promote the availability and accessibility to formal and vocational education. 76.6% of the respondents reported to have attained some education, 81% of them having attained primary school education. The findings show that 23.4% of the youth never attended any type of school. The main reason is that most of these youth were economically disadvantaged and thus unable to attend school. Those who are unable to attend school indicated that they work instead of going to school. This could be because the majority of this group lived in rural areas. Of the group that never attended school, 83% of respondents are illiterate, but almost all of them indicated a willingness to go to adult education if they are given the opportunity. Other reasons for not attending school mentioned by the respondents, particularly those in rural areas, are that schools are situated in far away locations and that they do not see any benefit for going to school (contrary to the view held by urban youth).

### **2.3 Health**

88.4% of the surveyed youth indicated that they do not have major health problems<sup>3</sup>. Among the respondents who indicated that they did have health care problems, rural residents were less, at 30%. The availability of health care facilities in rural areas is limited and sometimes totally unavailable. In urban settings, despite the low quality of the health services, health care facilities are available. The fact that most of the people cannot afford medical care expenses adds to the inaccessibility of health services. This inaccessibility to health services

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<sup>3</sup> Have not been in-patients for the last three years; do not suffer from terminal illnesses e.g. heart problems, diabetes, blood diseases.

results in deaths from treatable diseases such as pneumonia, typhoid and TB. The study found out that there is a gradual rise in the mortality rate of youth aged between 15 and 25. 60% of respondents reported having witnessed the death of a kin or friend (between 15 to 25 years) as a result of respiratory system-related diseases or kidney failure. These are diseases most associated with khat chewing and smoking [tobacco].

## **2.4 Perceptions about HIV/AIDS**

81% of the respondents noted that HIV affects people regardless of their clan, sex, age, colour and religion. In contrast, 17% of the respondents believed that HIV affects only non-Muslims. Asked whether HIV/AIDS is curable, 88% stated that the virus/syndrome cannot be cured while 10% thought HIV/AIDS is curable. 2% do not know.

Asked about preventive mechanisms of HIV/AIDS, 86% mentioned that being faithful is the only preventive mechanism. 12% stated that using condoms can prevent them from being infected. The majority of youth, at 86%, affirmed that they have received some kind of information on HIV/AIDS. Only 10% noted that they know their status. Stigma and discrimination against PLWH among youth stands at 76%.

## **2.5 Girls/young Women Affairs**

### **2.5.1 Female Genital Mutilation:**

57% of the respondents supported the legal banning of the practice of FGM in the country. 35.3% of the respondents believed that FGM should be upheld and maintained as it is a Somali traditional norm. 62% of the respondents stated that FGM was still practiced among their residents. At the same time, 37% of the female respondents mentioned that FGM was an old tradition and custom which was out-of-date and should be stopped. The majority of both male and female participants (76%) agreed that more education and awareness is necessary to reduce/eradicate the practice.

### **2.5.2 Sexual Violence**

Only 4% of the female respondents stated that they have been victims of sexual violence. 96% of the female respondents revealed that they had not experienced sexual violence throughout their lives. This area needs to be researched further because the cases of rapes in Somaliland have gradually increased (as reported by the hospitals, police stations and courts) The 4% does not reflect the real picture, since most respondents, especially the females, were reluctant to answer fully, given the stigma associated with involvement in sexual activities before marriage.

## **2.6 Employment and Livelihood**

On the issue of employment, youth were asked if they had any type of employment, paid or unpaid and 75% indicated that they had none. This is quite logical, because youth between the ages of 15—22 could still be engaged in school or university. This is a cultural phenomenon that youth who go to school are not expected to work while on the other hand there are no adequate job opportunities for youth including those who go to school. Only 25% of the youth stated that they had some employment. 43.1% of the employed group was engaged in business, while 40.6% were employed in the private sector<sup>4</sup>, whereas 14.4% were employed in the public sector. Of those employed, 77% were confident that they had job security. Because the business sector of Somaliland is the biggest employer of youth and is

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<sup>4</sup> In this context, when we are referring to the phrase Private Sector, we mean the voluntary and entrepreneurial sectors excluding the UN agencies and INGOs.

not yet well formalized and regulated, the youth who work for this sector are not mostly satisfied with the remunerations they obtain in comparison with the bulk of the duties they fulfil. 69.1% of the unemployed youth have been unemployed for more than 3 years, despite the fact that 53.2% of them have skills for different trades<sup>5</sup>.

60% of the youth interviewed responded that they owned or rented (though irregularly) the houses they live in. 15% of those who owned houses stated that they inherited them. 37% of the respondents indicated they were living with their parents.

As for the source of water for the youth, only 41.1% had piped water, while the rest (58.9%) were getting their water from ponds, berkads, shallow wells and boreholes.

## **2.7 Sports and Recreation**

The survey results indicate that 58% of the youth have access to football grounds but no other facilities. Asked how they spend most of their spare time, 17.2% play football, 15% chew Qat, 11.6% attend mosques, and 45.1% spend their time in other activities not specified. Only 1% indicated knowledge of a library in their residences.

## **2.8 Substance Use (Drugs)**

The study shows that 24% of youth chew Qat, of which 48.7% chew every day. In addition, 63.2% of the group of Qat consumers stated that they pay for the cost of the Qat they consume, whereas 31.6% rely on friends to pay Qat costs. When asked about what induces them to chew, 60.6% pointed fingers at their friends, while 16.6% said they chewed as a matter of curiosity. 24.1% of respondents replied they smoked cigarettes. The majority (52.2%) smoke for pleasure, while 29.2% smoke to ease stress. The study found out that 98% of the respondents do not consume alcohol while 1.25% stated that they had consumed alcohol. 0.75% refused to respond to this question citing religious rules.

## **2.9 Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**

63.25% of the respondents stated that they knew computers<sup>6</sup>. Of this group, 98.8% viewed computers as very important. When asked if they could operate computers, only 53.8% replied they could. Furthermore, 58% of this group affirmed that they used computers in internet cafés, which implies they did not have computers in their homes or offices. 19.4% had computers in their homes and 9% used computers at their places of work. Asked whether they used internet or not, 86% stated they did out of which 73% had access to internet from the internet cafés.

## **2.10 Political Participation**

In regards to youth views of national politics and elections in particular, 57.5% think that youth are allowed to stand for election while 41.2% believe that youth are not. Asked why they are not allowed, 53% of them believe this is due to legal obstacles. Therefore the majority of the 41.2% consider the age limitation to be the biggest challenge preventing youth from taking part in elections as candidates. Culture is deemed as another problem facing youth. When asked if males had greater chance to be elected than their female counterparts, 73.8% believe that they do.

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<sup>5</sup> The persisting high unemployment rate could have negative impact upon our security and socio-economic conditions.

<sup>6</sup> In this context, *that they knew computers* indicates that *they have heard of computers*.

## 3.0 Recommendations

- It is recommended that a program be set up with immediate impacts in provision of basic education to the large number of Somaliland youth who are illiterate. Target groups for such rapid result initiatives should focus on youth in the rural areas and female youth. Enhancing quality and accessibility of basic primary education is vital to foster the attainment of universal primary education by 2015.
- Increase of health facilities, health personnel and supplies should be prioritised by government and stakeholders. Reproductive health services should be increased for both urban and rural youth. HIV education and support services should also be available to all youth in Somaliland. The availability and the quality of water must be improved in order to improve the health status of youth in general and to reduce water-borne diseases. Education on FGM for the community is also vital to reduce/eradicate the vice. General health education in schools, communities, and through mass media is vital.
- The ever increasing number of unemployed youth, particularly the number of graduates in the streets, is a major concern and should be addressed as soon as possible. Credit schemes and Small Grants Systems to finance the establishment of small businesses is one practical solution. The possibility of building more vocational technical schools with a formalized national vocational training framework as an alternative to the formal ordinary secondary schools should also be explored. The government, together with stakeholders, should think about the development of a national youth employment strategy by emphasizing entrepreneurial sector development.
- Increase of sports facilities and resource centres friendly to both boys and girls is recommended in addressing the problem of Qat addiction. It would also contribute to the health and the physical fitness of youth, and development of their mental capacities.
- Youth should be given the chance to express themselves in the press and in the media. Youth newspapers parallel to the mainstream newspapers could be considered. This would boost the exchange of ideas among youth and would eliminate the misconception that youth have no chances of being elected and that males have a better chance to be elected than their female counterparts. Situational and structural barriers should be addressed in order to provide youth with an environment in which they can contribute to political and socio-economic development. This will be through the establishment of legal and policy frameworks friendly for youth participation in local, municipal and national elections and governance processes.
- It is highly recommended that follow-up youth surveys be carried out periodically (preferably once every two years) for availability of reliable, credible, up-to-date information. It would be very wise and strategic, if this youth baseline survey project is kept on as a longitudinal study that investigates the youth situation in every year.
- Of immediate national importance is an actual census undertaken to ascertain the socio-economic, political and cultural status of the people of Somaliland.
- SONYO Youth Umbrella should be further empowered and given the technical and financial capacity by which it could institutionally sustain and promote its affiliate

youthful initiatives (member organizations). SONYO Umbrella should manage to group its member organizations into thematic groups which can respond to the various identified needs. To make this practical, it is recommended that key stakeholders particularly development partners take supporting the institutional capacity-building and service delivery of SONYO's member organizations into account and empower both the headquarter and the member organizations of SONYO in order to extend the development initiatives to the regions and districts of Somaliland.

- The Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture should also be empowered for enabling it to fulfil its duties up to the desirable standard. The ministry needs to be reformed. This transformational and promotional goal calls for significant assistance and direct support from the stakeholders in general and the development partners in particular.



This report is the result of a national study undertaken by Somaliland National Youth Organization in partnership with Oxfam-Novib and the Somaliland Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture. The study combined qualitative and quantitative research methods to collect data on the status of youth with regard to education, employment, health, HIV/AIDs, drugs, girls and young women, recreational facilities, political participation and ICT. It is remarkable to note that this research is the first of its kind conducted in Somaliland. The regions visited during the study include, Maroodijeex, Sahil, Awdal, Togdheer, Sanaag and Sool.

SONYO is a youth initiative that unites more than 50 youth member organizations based in the different regions of Somaliland and is mainly engaged in the advocacy, coordination, networking and capacity-building of youth in Somaliland.