



# INDEPENDENT QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ON SOMALI PIRACY

**M&CSAATCHI**  
WORLD SERVICES

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POSÉE PRISON, SEYCHELLES  
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**Figure 1.** A Somali prisoner at Montagne Posée Prison, Seychelles. Source: Kate Holt



**Figure 2.** The Montagne Posée Prison, situated at the top of the mountains in the central region of the main Seychelles island of Mahe. Source: Patrick Joubert / Seychelles News Agency

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- This report would not have been possible without the considerable support of the Government of Seychelles
  - Minister for Home Affairs
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- Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia
- Special Projects Officer of The Sir James Mancham International Centre for Peace Studies and Diplomacy, University of Seychelles



# Table of Contents

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<b>1.Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.Introduction .....</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 Research objectives.....	8
2.2 Research methodology.....	8
<b>3.Background .....</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1 Current situation .....	10
3.2 Limitations of the Study.....	11
3.3 Demographics of incarcerated pirates .....	12
<b>4.Findings .....</b>	<b>14</b>
4.1 Awareness of events in Somalia .....	15
4.2 Drivers of piracy.....	15
4.3 Perceived benefits of piracy.....	16
4.4 Perceived disadvantages of piracy.....	16
4.5 Perception of counter-piracy activities and messaging.....	17
4.6 Reaction to counter-piracy product: poster .....	18
4.7 Media access and preferences.....	18
4.8 Prison and piracy .....	18
4.9 Is piracy an organised crime? .....	19
4.10 Community engagement with pirates .....	20
4.11 Piracy and Al-Shabaab .....	21
<b>5.Analysis of Study Findings.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>6.Future Projection .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>7.Recommended Solutions .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>8.Conclusion .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Annex A: Poster Design .....</b>	<b>30</b>

# 01 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Piracy has been a recurring problem off the coast of Somalia since 2008, peaking in 2011 with 237 ships attacked and 28 ships hijacked at a total economic cost of over \$7 billion.<sup>1</sup> However, following coordinated international naval patrols, deployment of armed private security on ships and onshore counter-piracy campaigns, piracy-related activity had experienced a sharp decline in the region by 2015. Nonetheless, as three incidents during March and April 2017 (including the first successful hijacking since 2012) demonstrate, piracy continues to present an international challenge.

Given the recent incidents and apparent resurgence in pirate-related activity, and the general acceptance that the underlying drivers of piracy remain, there is a requirement to understand how to prevent Somali men from becoming pirates in the first place.

M&C Saatchi World Services has been studying the problem in East Africa and by interviewing incarcerated pirates, has gained invaluable insight into the motivators behind the choice to become a pirate. Unfortunately, the picture is very bleak.

Respondents listed severe socio-economic problems in Somalia and a subsequent near-total lack of opportunity. Taking into account the potentially life-changing financial rewards of piracy, there can be little surprise that the survey respondents could see few alternatives but to return to piracy in order to secure their future and that of their families. In order to prevent a near-inevitable return to piracy, international actors should apply resources to study this problem further, and identify and implement effective solutions.



**Figure 3.** Capturing suspected pirates off the coast of Somalia. Source: EU NAVFOR / Flickr

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1. Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP) 2016 Annual Report  
[https://www.unodc.org/documents/Reports/GlobalMaritimeCrimeProgramme\\_AnnualReport2016.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/Reports/GlobalMaritimeCrimeProgramme_AnnualReport2016.pdf)

## 02 INTRODUCTION

## 2. INTRODUCTION

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As part of its wider global approach to counter piracy work, M&C Saatchi World Services (MCS WS) undertook a research project interviewing incarcerated Somali pirates in Seychelles in March 2017. MCS WS partnered with University of Seychelles (UNISEY) on this project, and operated with the permission and consent of Seychelles Ministry of Home Affairs and the Superintendent of Prisons.

Seychelles is a partner of the United Nations office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)'s Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP) alongside Mauritius, Kenya and Tanzania. Since 2009, these countries have provided political and infrastructural support in prosecuting Somali pirates captured by international navies patrolling the Somali coast. The island nation has since tried 152 suspected pirates in 13 cases.<sup>2</sup>

There are currently 15 Somali pirates serving sentences in Montagne Posée Prison, Seychelles ranging from 12-24 years. Generally, there are no set tariffs associated with piracy convictions. Somali pirates have been prosecuted in nearly 10 countries across four continents.<sup>3</sup>



**Figure 4.** View of Montagne Posée Prison, Seychelles.  
Source: UNOPS/Trevor Sway

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2. Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP) 2016 Annual Report  
[https://www.unodc.org/documents/Reports/GlobalMaritimeCrimeProgramme\\_AnnualReport2016.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/Reports/GlobalMaritimeCrimeProgramme_AnnualReport2016.pdf)

3. Kontorovich, Eugene, "The Penalties for Piracy: An Empirical Study of National Prosecution of International Crime" (2012). <http://scholarlycommons.law.northwestern.edu/facultyworkingpapers/211>





**Figure 5.** M&C Saatchi Researcher was assisted by the University of Seychelles Senior Project Management Team

## 2.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the exploratory research were to identify prisoner attitudes towards piracy and identify and discuss effective deterrents.

Specifically, the research aimed to:

- Explore the perceptions of piracy among Somali men
- Understand the socio-economic drivers of piracy
- Examine possible lines of argument to deter potential pirate recruits
- Investigate the validity of counter-piracy activities
- Understand perceptions regarding the efficacy of counter-piracy messaging

## 2.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and six In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) were held over four days in an informal setting with 15 individuals currently serving sentences as a result of being convicted of crimes relating to piracy. Whilst participants of the first FGD were older than those in the second set to provide us with a wider data base, the IDIs consisted of a mix of young and old inmates with variances in levels of education, clan, experience at sea and area of origin.

The IDIs and FGDs were conducted under the security guidance of the Seychelles Prison Service. FGDs were held for an hour and half, while IDIs ran for an hour each. All sessions were audio recorded and content anonymised to protect the identities of participants. All IDIs and FGDs were conducted in Somali and hosted by an MCS WS representative.

## 03 BACKGROUND

## 3. BACKGROUND

### 3.1 CURRENT SITUATION

Piracy related activities off the coast of Somalia peaked in 2011 at a high of 237 attacks in one year according to the International Maritime Bureau.<sup>4</sup> It did, however, experience a sharp decline by 2015 as a result of coordinated international naval patrols, use of private armed security on ships as deterrents and on shore counter-piracy communication campaigns.

Illegal Unreported and Unregulated fishing<sup>5</sup> (IUU) and the subsequent loss of livelihood for local fishermen were some of the earliest narratives presented by proponents of piracy to justify their activities. Latterly, opportunistic businessmen, criminals and modern-day buccaneers took over and turned piracy into a highly coordinated and lucrative business. Somali pirates are believed to have accumulated ransoms of approximately USD \$400 million between 2005 and 2012 according to a 2013 World Bank report.<sup>6</sup>

Deployment of naval assets in the form of European Union Naval Force (EU NAVFOR), European Union Capacity "Nestor" (EUCAP NESTOR), NATO's Operation Ocean Shield and Combined Maritime Forces' CTF-151 strongly contributed to reduction of piracy off the Somali coast. This response was further supported by assistance from China, Russia, South Korea, India and Japan, as well as the creation of the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC). However, the naval patrol mandate does not extend to tackling IUU fishing along Somalia's 3,300KM coastline, meaning the issue remains

unresolved and continues to act as a key driver behind piracy and criminal activity as fishermen bid to find an alternative source of income. This is supported by reporting that suggests that nearly \$300 million worth of sea food is stolen from Somali waters every year.<sup>7</sup>

In November 2016, NATO's Operation Ocean Shield ended its 8-year-mission to protect shipping from pirate attacks. Although Somali pirates have been deterred, the problem is far from over.



**Figure 6.** Source: IMO Collection / Flickr

On 13 March 2017, pirates hijacked a Comoros-flagged oil tanker, the Aris-13, in their first successful foray since 2012. The pirates released the tanker after learning that a Somali businessman had hired it to transport oil from Djibouti to Mogadishu, and following the intervention of the Puntland Maritime Security Forces. Since then, there has been a flurry of pirate attacks, including the hijacking of a

4. International Maritime Bureau (IMB) Report  
<https://www.icc-ccs.org/index.php/news/836-piracy-falls-in-2012-but-seas-off-east-and-west-africa-remain-dangerous-says-imb>

5. Oceans Beyond Piracy Report  
<http://oceansbeyondpiracy.org/publications/illegal-unreported-unregulated-fishing-somalia>

6. Paper Trails, 2013 report by World Bank, Interpol & UN Crimes Unit  
[http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2013/images/11/02/infograph\\_pirate\\_trails.pdf](http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2013/images/11/02/infograph_pirate_trails.pdf)

7. Tharoor, Ishaan. How Somalia's Fishermen Became Pirates. TIME Magazine. 18 Apr. 2009.  
<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1892376,00.html>.

Pakistani boat (Salama 1) and an Indian-owned boat, MSV Alkausar, both anchored near the village of El Hur in Harardhere district.

By design, the Somali piracy model is unique. Pirates focus on ransoming hostages rather than cargo. The proceeds estimated between \$30,000-\$80,000 per pirate, are a major windfall and continue to be an incentive to illiterate and jobless youths in Somalia, who account for more than 70% of the total population.<sup>8</sup>

Twenty-five years of civil war destroyed Somali government institutions and left a political, institutional and economic vacuum, allowing criminal groups such as pirates to flourish. Formation of federal member states was completed in 2016 but the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) does not have the money or capacity to address unemployment or provide alternative sources of income that can compete with piracy. Improving security and the eradication of the extremist group Al-Shabaab (AS) continues to be a higher priority for both the government and those international partners meeting the significant shortfalls in the Somali budget.



**Figure 7.** *Illegal fishing devastates the marine environment and challenges social and economic well-being of the coastal communities who depend on fish for their way of life. AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti*

Conditions that had originally contributed to the rise of piracy still exist. What next? With reductions in naval patrols, onshore community support and counter-piracy engagement, will dormant pirates reactivate their cells? Will the continued IUU fishing trigger a resurgence of an otherwise manageable maritime crime?

This exploratory research examines in detail prisoners' attitudes towards piracy and explores effective deterrents and community-owned sustainable solutions to piracy. From the onset, inmates were made aware that this was an independent research project. This helped establish rapport and collect unbiased and neutral feedback.

### 3.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In group settings, the prisoners were less forthright in their feedback. Often, the notion of 'groupthink', the psychological phenomenon that occurs within a group of people in which the desire for harmony or conformity in the group results in an irrational or dysfunctional decision-making outcome, would play out on questions that sought to unearth, for example, their experiences in piracy, recruitment and other personal issues. IDI participants were, on the other hand, more forthcoming and provided a rich seam of insight. Save for a few, prisoners declared their innocence, identified themselves as fishermen, and totally rejected the label of 'pirate', perhaps for fear of influencing their appeal process.

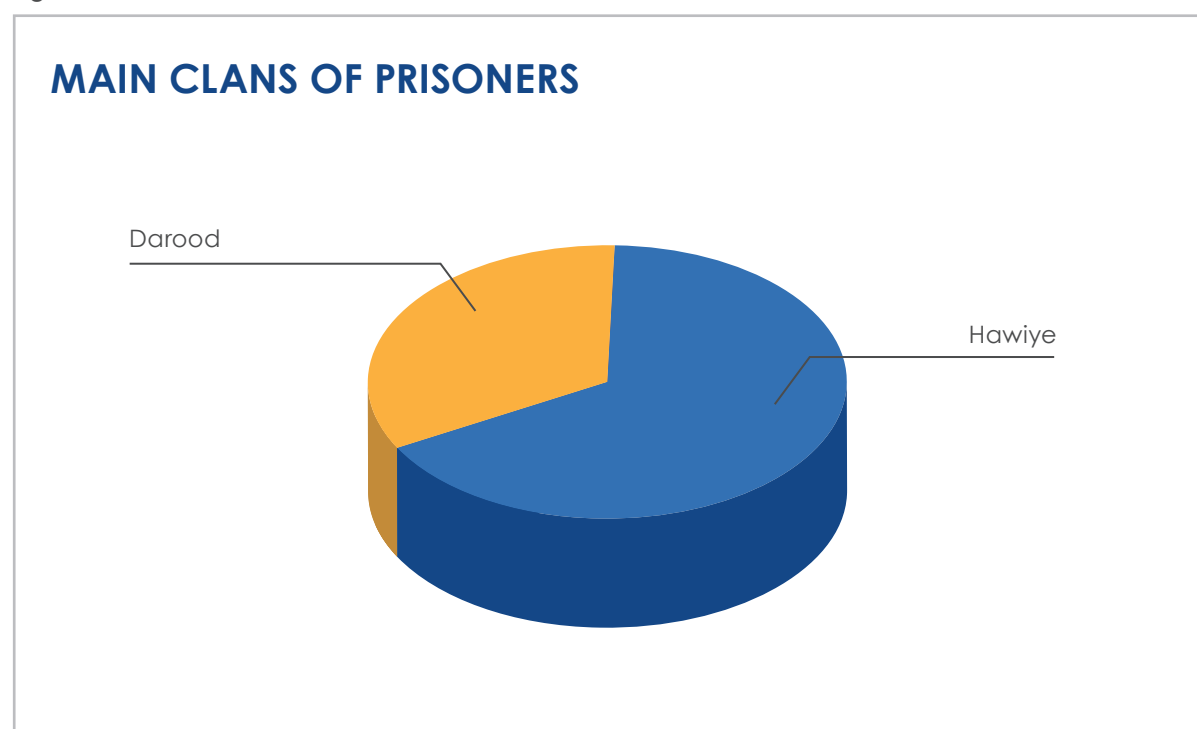
8. Paper Trails, 2013 report by World Bank, Interpol & UN Crimes Unit  
[http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2013/images/11/02/infograph\\_pirate\\_trails.pdf](http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2013/images/11/02/infograph_pirate_trails.pdf)

### 3.3 DEMOGRAPHICS OF INCARCERATED PIRATE



- Gender: Male
- Age: 17-40 years old
- Basic education: Reading and writing Somali
- Married: With a minimum of 1 child and maximum of 10
- Regional administrations: Mostly Puntland and Galmudug, small number were from Jubbaland and Mogadishu
- Home towns: Mainly Eyl and Harardhere.<sup>9</sup> Others include, Galkacyo (North & South), Hobyo, Garacad, Mogadishu, Garowe, Bosaso and Kismayo
- Clans: Mainly Hawiye and Darood sub-clans of (Habargidir, Abgal, Murusade, Shekhal) and (Majeeteen and Dhulbahante)
- Previous employment: Fishing or none
- Jail terms: 12-24 years
- Religion: Muslims

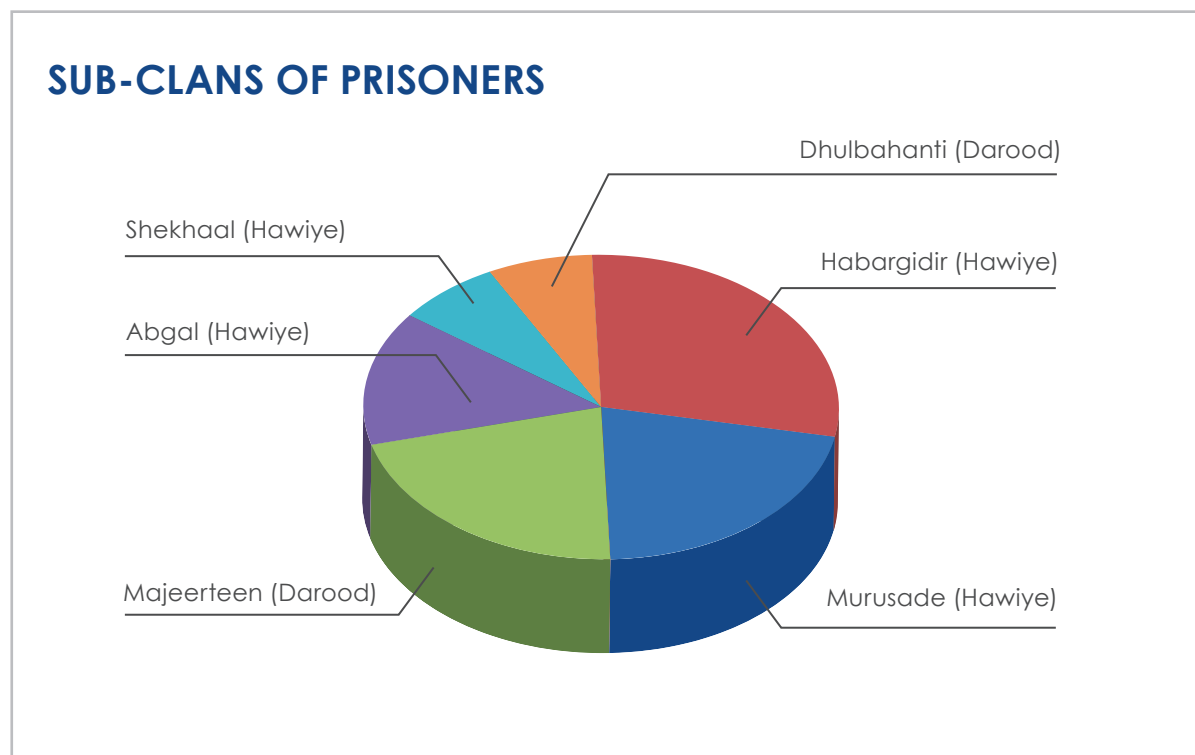
**Figure 8.** Main Clans of Prisoners



<sup>9</sup>. Location of main pirate networks in Puntland and South Galmudug respectively



**Figure 9.** Sub-Clans of Prisoners



**Figure 10.** Home towns of convicted pirates



# 04 FINDINGS

## 4. FINDINGS

### 4.1 AWARENESS OF EVENTS IN SOMALIA

The prisoners demonstrated considerable understanding and awareness of recent events and issues in Somalia. Piracy was mentioned spontaneously as one of the issues affecting their communities and home towns. Other issues identified were AS, the drought affecting Somalia and the wider East Africa region, negative politics, poverty, unemployment, poor governance, clannism and foreign interference.

**FG:** *"Piracy is a problem in my community but it was caused by conditions on the ground and I believe it will end. The bigger problems are AS, corrupt leaders and destructive politics."*  
- Male, late 30s, South Central

**IDI:** *"I'm a prisoner so I might not be up-to-date on all happenings in Somalia but I heard there's a drought and AS is still an issue that's affecting my people. I haven't heard much about pirate attacks lately. Even so, I believe young fishermen attacked illegal fishing boats to protect their livelihood and then criminals interfered and turned the whole cause into a business."*  
- Male, late teens, Mudug

**Analyst's Comment:** It was evident that prisoners endeavour to stay up-to-date with events in Somalia, including recent pirate attacks.

### 4.2 DRIVERS OF PIRACY

All participants cited poverty as the main driver in pushing them to join pirate gangs. Sudden improvements in the income and wellbeing of peers, and the obvious absence of a competing source of livelihood were identified by prisoners as some of the push factors. Concerns about illegal fishing and toxic waste being dumped along the Somali coast were also raised by almost all participants. However, some inmates revealed more personal reasons for joining piracy.

It is important to note most prisoners did not directly state their involvement in piracy and would always 'report' occurrences in their home towns and among people they knew.

**FG:** *"Somali youth are unfortunate. We have not seen order or peace in our lives. We were born into the war and grew up without a functioning government. We have no opportunities, we are vulnerable to so many organised groups like AS. Poverty is what is driving young men into activities like piracy."*  
- Male, mid-twenties, Mudug

**IDI:** *"Two of my uncles were killed by illegal fishing trawlers owned by an EU member state while they were on a fishing expedition in 2003. I lost my cousins too and we still don't know whether they are alive or dead. Piracy was created by the illegal fishing trawlers and ships dumping toxic waste. My grandfather was poisoned by the toxic waste and he is now blind. I'm defending my livelihood, I'm not a pirate... pirates are the EU NAVFOR and illegal fishing trawlers under their protection."*  
- Male, mid-twenties, Mudug

**Analyst's Comment:** Nine participants cited economic motives as a reason for joining piracy. Others commonly mentioned the key drivers were lack of alternative livelihood, illegal fishing and peer influence.



**Figure 11.** Traders wait to sell their fish inside Mogadishu's fish market in Xamar Weyne district of the Somali capital.  
Source: AU-UN IST / Stuart Price

### 4.3 PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF PIRACY

A section of participants listed a drop in illegal fishing and improved earnings by local fishermen as some of the benefits of piracy. Others noted improved livelihood for many jobless young men along the Somali coast.

**FG:** *"We are martyrs. We are SYL.<sup>10</sup> We will protect our livelihood from exploitation. Our communities celebrate us. The money we earn is Halaal."*  
- Male, late teens, Mudug

**IDI:** *"My friend got one million dollars as part of his cut so that is a decent earning in my opinion."*  
- Male, late 30s, South Central

**IDI:** *"If you are smart enough, you will re-invest and set your life up."*  
- Male, late 30s, South Central

**Analyst's Comment:** Piracy is seen by half of the participants as an unbeatable, attractive economic opportunity for poor, uneducated, young Somali men.

### 4.4 PERCEIVED DISADVANTAGES OF PIRACY

Prisoners considered themselves victims of piracy off the coast of Somalia. During FGDs, most inmates described themselves as 'vulnerable young men facing injustice for protecting their territorial waters from over-exploitation'. Death at sea, loss of future and earnings, lengthy prison sentences and time away from loved ones were some of the drawbacks they associated with piracy. Some regretted their aggressive actions at sea but in turn they blamed the government for not protecting and defending its 'sovereignty'.

**FG:** *"Many Somali fishermen have been killed at sea by the naval patrols even after they identified themselves and surrendered to the navy. There is a satellite video of men being killed at sea by nations currently involved in supporting the coordinated naval patrol along the Somali coast. So who holds them accountable? You are going after me? How about the bigger system stealing millions of dollars' worth of our resources?"*  
- Male, early 30s, Mudug

10. Somali Youth League (SYL) was the first political party established in Somalia and is credited for its role in the country's independence from British and Italian occupation. Within Somali society they often have heroic status.

**FG:** "Two wrongs don't make a right. Piracy was started by the illegal foreign vessels who disturbed the peace of our communities and then we took up arms in defence."

- Male, early 30s, Mudug

**IDI:** "I'm locked up here, my wife has remarried, so my children are without their parents. I have no life and their future is destroyed too."

- Male, mid-twenties, Mudug

**IDI:** "My son is being bullied by his friends because I'm a pirate locked up in a foreign country."

- Male, mid 20s, Mudug

**IDI:** "Piracy brought in inflation and breakdown of social order in our communities. Pirates brought with them shameful practices like drugs, alcohol abuse and prostitution in areas they operated."

- Male, late 30s, South Central

**Analyst's Comment:** Lengthy sentences and the impact of jail time in a foreign country was identified by most prisoners as a major drawback. Death at sea, breakdown of families/separation was also frequently cited.



**Figure 12.** Somali family. Source: UNICEF / Sebastian Rich

## 4.5 PERCEPTION OF COUNTER-PIRACY ACTIVITIES AND MESSAGING

Participants' opinions were divided on the subject of counter-piracy activities. Some participants welcomed initiatives in the form of campaigns to stop potential recruits. Others called for efforts to address the root causes of piracy, which they repeatedly stated as unemployment and illegal fishing.

**FG:** "Please go after the system, not the pirates. I would never have risked my life just to end up in a foreign cell. What sort of campaign would help a hungry miserable young man in Somalia when you don't have a viable, sustainable source of income?"

- Male, early 20s, Mudug

**FG:** "These campaigns are a sham exploiting our reputation for wanting money. Why is there no messaging that talks about illegal fishing even when everyone knows that illegal trawlers protected by NATO are stealing our resources in broad daylight? How about all the Somali men who were killed at sea, what about the extrajudicial killing done by countries contributing to the naval patrol? They are far better dressed pirates than us. Maybe focus should shift to them this time."

- Male, early 30s, Mudug

**IDI:** "Community support dropped after awareness campaigns were conducted. I think when done properly, campaigns help protect young men who are not aware of the risks associated with piracy."

- Male, late teens, Mudug

**IDI:** "Campaigns are essential. Young men at the coast are fooled by the quick money. Piracy is like gambling. They hardly know the length of the sentence we are serving here. I can give them my testimony."

- Male, early 20s, Mudug

**IDI:** "Employ me as a coast guard, I know the sea way too well. That is an effective counter-piracy measure." - Male, mid 20s, Mudug



**Analyst's Comment:** Notably seven out of 15 participants called for a comprehensive, community-driven approach to protect young men from becoming pirates.

## 4.6 REACTION TO COUNTER-PIRACY PRODUCT: POSTER

Prisoners were visibly emotional when they saw the poster (see Annex A). They all agreed that the Somali mother in the poster represents all Somali mothers whose lives have been destroyed by death and misery. Her posture (hands over her head) in particular was interpreted as very touching and evocative. In both the FGDs and IDIs, participants believed that the woman in the picture had lost her sons to the sea, civil war/clan conflict or to AS. They also revealed that their mothers were the most important influences on their lives. Mothers, community and religious leaders were cited as people with credible influence in the community.

**FG:** *"That woman represents my mother, my aunt, and all Somali women affected by piracy. The ship you see there killed her sons."*  
- Male, mid 20s, Mudug

**FG:** *"I don't think messages on print will be consumed much. Radio announcements will be easily understood and assimilated though."*  
- Male, late 20s, Mudug

**IDI:** *"It is very heart breaking. My mum wants nothing to do with me. I brought my family irreparable shame and damage after I went astray. She never wanted me to go down this road."*  
- Male, late teens, Mudug

**Analyst's Comment:** Half of the inmates believed the poster was a 'war cry' for young men to defend their livelihood. Almost all prisoners were touched by the emotional message and stated that their mothers were a source of inspiration and support.

## 4.7 MEDIA ACCESS AND PREFERENCES

Radio was the preferred source of information. Communities along the coast provide buy-in and local support that protect the activities of pirates. Thus, participants suggested more onshore campaigns that encouraged community dialogue and town hall meetings fronted by religious leaders and reformed pirates to better influence communities along the Somali coasts. Previous campaigns, they revealed, only targeted main commercial towns along the coast.

**FG:** *"Local FM stations should be used. But communities along the coast do not have functional FM stations so an approach using simple counter-piracy messaging strategies like community dialogues should be used."*  
- Male, mid 20s, Mudug

**IDI:** *"We do not have basic education."<sup>11</sup> A very basic grass-root community mobilization campaign would help influence communities' attitude against piracy."*  
- Male, early 30s, South Central

**Analyst's Comment:** Nine out of 15 participants advocated for using traditional media and messaging strategies.

## 4.8 PRISON AND PIRACY

Generally, participants do not believe prison is an effective deterrent because the conditions that pushed them into piracy still exist. They acknowledged that naval patrols did deter some of them from engaging in piracy but the 'will' is still there. Prison and non-standardised sentencing has only helped reinforce their understanding that counter-piracy efforts are solely 'protecting' the interest of illegal fishing companies and foreign nations.

Some participants outlined their lack of vocational skills and lack of support after

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11. Basic education is referred to here as conventional formal schooling - and the ability to read and write in Somali.



**Figure 13.** Somali coastguards on patrol. Source: Reuters / Feisal Omar

completion of their sentence as negative enablers of piracy. Limited options, they argued, would force them to take up more risky engagements.

**FG:** *"My whole life is wasted here. Nothing awaits me when I go home other than hitting the seas and getting what is mine..."*  
- Male, late 30s, South Central

**FG:** *"I have no education, I know nothing but fishing. If I go to the seas to fish, trawlers cut up my fishing nets, if go out deep but still within Somali waters, I'm locked up without any due legal process. What do you want me to do?"*  
- Male, early 30s, Mudug

**IDI:** *"I will go back and start all over again. I will re-engage with my networks as I believe my rights have been violated."*  
- Male, early 20s, Mudug

**IDI:** *"Illegal trawlers are standing in the way of my livelihood. I will rather die fighting them. This is Jihad."*  
- Male, late teens, Mudug

**Analyst's Comment:** Eleven out of 15 participants believed that their time in prison did not offer them rehabilitation or the opportunities to learn alternative skills. They noted that upon release they are likely to feel even more resentful and vulnerable to being repeat offenders.

## 4.9 IS PIRACY AN ORGANISED CRIME?

Some IDI participants made off-the-record remarks on extended networks involved in piracy. Local businessmen in Somalia, informants in the shipping industry and maritime industry experts in East Africa, Middle East and Europe were repeatedly mentioned by inmates.

The organised nature of piracy is further reinforced by the fact that the inmates reported taking part in well-planned missions, armed with GPS coordinates aiding them to locate targets. Further, participants revealed that a well-established network of enablers provide very detailed information about the ship, its crew, previous and future ports of call and other relevant details to aid their missions.

It is also worth noting that although recruitment is not necessarily clan-based, the majority of pirates do tend to be from the Darood and Hawiye clans.

**IDI:** *"This is an internationally coordinated activity. It takes about two to three months to plan and execute a mission. We used to have, before departure, precise information on the location of the ship, cargo and contacts of our support groups. Everybody gets a cut and it's a very rewarding venture for all parties."*



**Figure 14.** Somali coastguard 2011. Source: Tony Karumba / AFP

**IDI:** *"At sea, our networks alert us to possible attacks by the navy. We get up-to-date information on the ship's movement or any changes to its route. We were advised to the tee basically... go east, cover certain nautical miles in every hour and the target will be on your west or something like that. Kenyans, Somali businessmen, some guys from Italy were part of the network."*

**IDI:** *"Interestingly, some countries – part of the international naval patrol – were very much friendly to us. They would help us with supplies and provide us with information when we go hunting. They would give us a low-down on the number of ships in the area, countries that owned them and in return, we used to provide them with information on the cargo etc. Our 'naval friends' used to encourage us to go after Iranian and EU-owned ships."*

**Analyst's Comment:** Seven out of 15 participants reported to have been part of a team supported by well-connected industry insiders.

## 4.10 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WITH PIRATES

Local fishing communities have frequently encountered illegal fishing trawlers in their waters. These encounters with illegal trawlers have often resulted in harassment of local fishermen, the destruction of their equipment and, even on occasion, loss of life. With no government to turn to, frustrated fishermen ally with enterprising businessmen and idle youth to attack and hijack ships, most participants stated. In return, the local community provides land-based support and a safe sanctuary.

**IDI:** *"Without a reliable working relationship with local fishermen, businessmen and elders, we cannot plan and execute our mission. They are always rewarded handsomely!"*

**Analyst's Comment:** Thirteen out of 15 prisoners noted that community support was crucial to success of their piracy missions.

## 4.11 PIRACY AND AL-SHABAAB

In Somalia, piracy organisations and Al-Shabaab have a symbiotic relationship and AS has often been known to turn a blind-eye to unlawful practices that would otherwise be considered 'haram' in Islam. Most pirate communities and anchorage points are in areas under total control of AS or where government/regional administration have a scant presence. The narrative of 'foreign illegal fishing trawlers' taking advantage of Somali waters also, plays right into AS' mantra that Somalia is under 'foreign and Christian occupation'. Thus, pirates and AS enjoy a somewhat collaborative relationship. Some participants suggested that AS are given a cut out of every ransom payment received.

**IDI:** *"We are just the same people with different tasks and dreams. We like to party, we pay them a 'protection fee' at checkpoints so it is a win-win for both parties."*

**Analyst's Comment:** All of the participants agreed that a mutual understanding and relationship exists between them and AS.



Figure 15. Somali fisherman speaks with a member of the visit, board, search and seizure team from the guided-missile destroyer USS Kidd during an approach and assist visit as part of the counter-piracy operations. Source: John Hulle / U.S. Navy

# 05 ANALYSIS OF STUDY FINDINGS



## 5. ANALYSIS OF STUDY FINDINGS

Key findings from the study are as below:

**Drivers and deterrence:** The socio-economic drivers of piracy still exist. Prison was not identified as an effective deterrent, although prisoners lamented lengthy jail terms and the impact on their families. They acknowledged that incarceration was a possible point to consider should they be encouraged to engage in piracy again. However, with no viable alternative, the opportunity to earn huge rewards far outweighs the risk of possible death and imprisonment. The challenge rests with finding a suitable alternative whose gains outweigh the rewards of piracy. Educating those susceptible so they have the knowledge to reject the lure of piracy is paramount to undermining these drivers.

**Policies and practices:** IUU fishing was one of the primary concerns and primary justifications for the inmates. IUU fishing can be addressed at the policy level as explained in the next section of this report.

**Exit strategy:** Participants in this research echoed narratives of local fishing communities that paint EU NAVFOR, NATO and other organised naval missions as 'professional pirates' that protect the interest of their nations and that of the illegal fishing networks. Any announcement of 'end of mission' will be seen as an opportunity for pirates to return to sea to redress the IUU balance. Only a comprehensive, coordinated and carefully targeted counter-piracy campaign could potentially prevent such activity.



**Figure 16.** Two fishermen at Mogadishu's fishing harbour. Photo: AU-UN Information Support

# 06 FUTURE PROJECTION

## 6. FUTURE PROJECTION

Given the imminent draw-down in naval activities, and the largely unchanged socio-economic environment, investment in piracy is likely to increase.

Young people still lack economic opportunities. Illegal and unregulated fishing continues to damage the local economies, and piracy remains a lucrative alternative. Little has been done to address local grievances and provide alternatives.

The general instability in Somalia and, in particular, the areas from which pirates originate contributes to an environment that sees violence as an acceptable means of resolving problems and injustices. The ongoing insurgency being conducted by AS also provides a near-total distraction for the of Federal Government of Somalia and its security forces, allowing piracy to remain an endemic issue, either dormant or active, as seen in recent months.



**Figure 17.** Guided-missile destroyer USS Gonzalez transits the Gulf of Aden. Source: Official U.S. Navy Page / Flickr



**Figure 18.** Suspected pirates intercepted by United States naval forces in the Gulf of Aden. Source: Jason R. Zalasky / US Navy



**Figure 19.** Somali Pirates. Source: Puntland Mirror

## 07 RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS



## 7. RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS

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Currently, counter-piracy measures deliver temporary prevention. Piracy is in stasis, but all the factors driving piracy remain. Solving the problem will require a holistic approach that includes:

- a) Sustainable and long-term community sensitisation campaigns that are generated for and conducted in the coastal settlements and further inland. All behaviour change campaigns should focus on those most likely to turn to piracy and be complimented by social change campaigns that seek to influence the local population to discredit unscrupulous businessmen toying with their sons' future.
- b) Policy changes to address illegal fishing, including an extension of the mandate of naval patrols to tackling IUU on Somali waters. Confidence in international efforts will need to be enhanced at the local level.
- c) Supporting the Federal Government of Somalia in regulating the licensing of trawlers along the coast.
- d) Investment in the Somali fishing industry and opening up of sustainable export lines to create jobs and support the local economy.
- e) Development of a centrally-managed maritime patrol force and reliable and incorruptible courts will ultimately provide local solutions to local problems.
- f) Investigating pirate networks and financiers for possible prosecution.
- g) Vocational training for convicted pirates.



**Figure 20.** A Somali family stands on Lido beach in Mogadishu, Somalia. Source: AMISOM / Tobin Jones



# 08 CONCLUSION

## 8. CONCLUSION

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Piracy in Somalia is an outcome of the breakdown of Somalia's national institutions and an absence of a functioning government.

As long as the conditions that triggered piracy remain, a return of maritime crime can be expected. Counter-piracy partners have an opportunity to deliver sustainable solutions that meet the needs of Somalia's coastal and mainland populations. They need to seize this opportunity.

Partnering with regional administrations (federal member states) through the central government to streamline on/offshore efforts in tackling piracy and its root causes would be an advisable start. Such efforts could include, investment in the fishing industry, proper regulation (and licensing)

of fishing along Somali waters, establishment of local courts that manage maritime offences in Somalia, inter-state, centrally-managed naval/maritime police forces, and sustainable community sensitisation campaigns.

A global crackdown on networks facilitating piracy and a change in counter-narratives to highlight Somalis as the real victims of this menace would earn important local support crucial to success of any counter piracy measure.

However, with no definitive exit strategy produced as yet by international counter piracy partners, pirates (and their networks) are undoubtedly waiting to return and take advantage of a largely unchanged environment.

## ANNEX A: POSTER DESIGN

Poster message:

"It is death and misery, protect your sons from piracy."

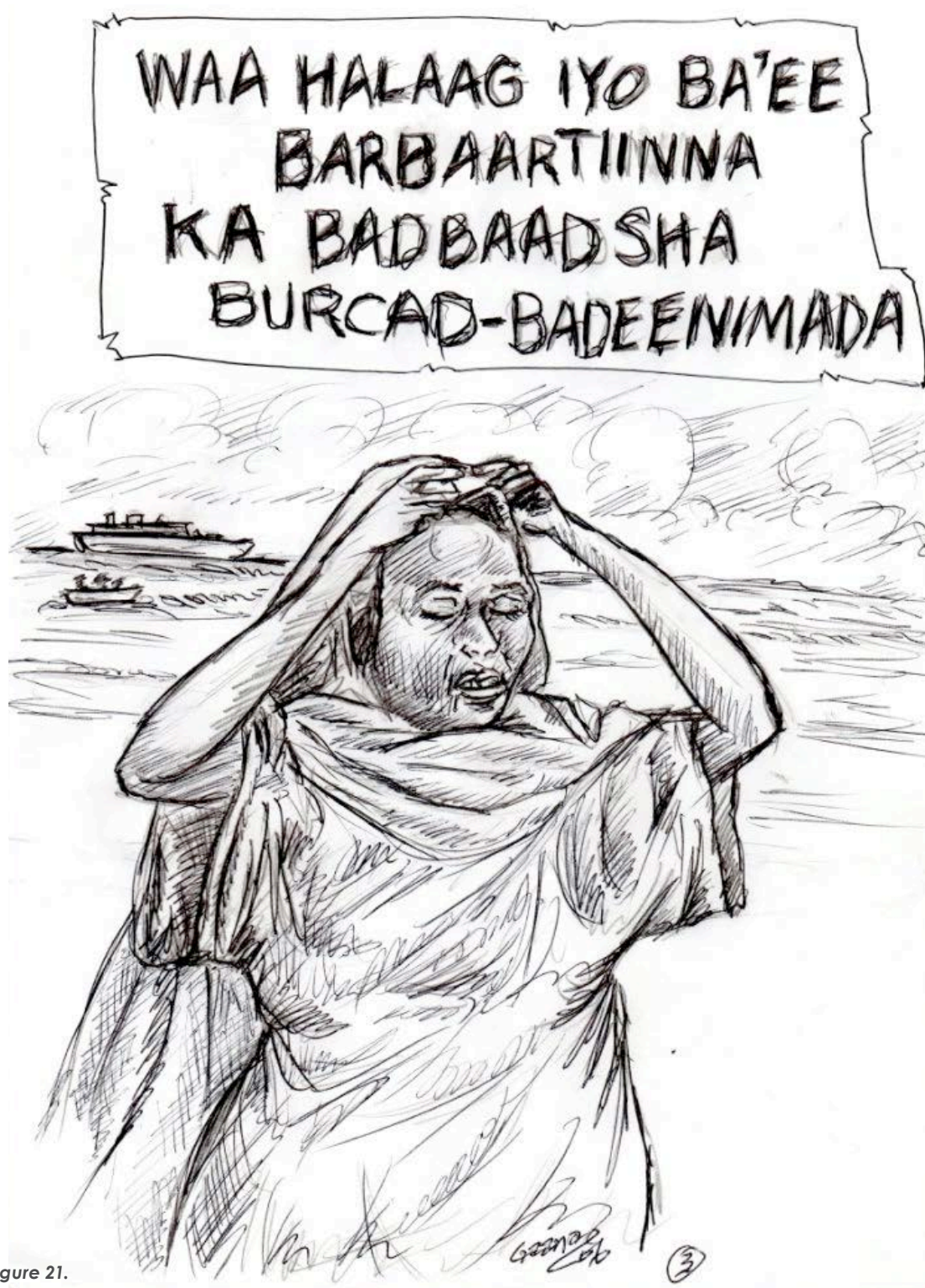


Figure 21.

# CONTACT DETAILS

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