



**PEIC**

PROTECT EDUCATION IN INSECURITY AND CONFLICT  
حماية التعليم في ظروف النزاع وانعدام الأمن

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Monitoring and Reporting to Enhance the Protection of Education  
in Situations of Insecurity and Conflict:

# MOGADISHU, SOMALIA

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## ACRONYMS

<b>AMISOM</b>	African Union Mission in Somalia
<b>CEC</b>	Community Education Committee
<b>CGCA</b>	Columbia Group for Children in Adversity
<b>CPWG</b>	Child Protection Working Group
<b>EAA</b>	Education Above All
<b>EMIS</b>	Education Management Information System
<b>ESC</b>	Education Sector Committee
<b>GCPEA</b>	Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack
<b>HEI</b>	Higher Education Institution
<b>HRW</b>	Human Rights Watch
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person
<b>INGO</b>	International Non-Governmental Organization
<b>IRC</b>	International Rescue Committee
<b>MoE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>MRM</b>	Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NISA</b>	National Intelligence and Security Agency
<b>OSRSG-CAAC</b>	Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict
<b>PEIC</b>	Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict
<b>SAF</b>	Somali Armed Forces
<b>SCZ</b>	South Central Zone
<b>SOP</b>	Standard Operating Procedure
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
<b>UNICEF</b>	United National Children's Fund
<b>UNSC</b>	United Nations Security Council
<b>UNSG</b>	United Nation Secretary-General
<b>UNSOM</b>	United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia

## INTRODUCTION

Armed violence against schools by militant groups threatens students and school personnel across the world, damaging individuals physically and psychologically, up-ending families and communities, and upsetting systems of learning. Malala Yousafzai has drawn global attention to the need for safe and equitable access to education, after surviving a Taliban assassination attempt when she was 15 and winning the Nobel Peace Prize for her advocacy in 2014. That same year, Boko Haram kidnapped 276 girls in a Nigerian school (AP, 2014; Segun & Muscati, 2014), the Taliban killed 145 people in a military academy in Pakistan (Tremblay, 2014; Walsh, 2014), and Israeli attacks on schools in Gaza killed 45 people (HRW, 2014). Although these particular events were widely reported by the news media, United Nations (UN) agencies, and human rights groups, many more like them are likely to have gone undocumented due largely to the absence of pragmatic, streamlined, and validated methods for monitoring and reporting disruptions of education by armed groups (GCPEA, 2014).

UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1612, in 2005, was a first step in creating such a system. It established the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to manage the new Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) for grave violations against children. Among the six grave violations tracked by the MRM are attacks on schools, including attacks against school personnel, and threats against these persons. In 2011, UNSC Resolution 1998 further prioritized attacks on schools by making them “trigger violations” whose perpetrators were to be listed in the annexes of the UN Secretary-General (UNSG)’s Report on Children and Armed Conflict, which publishes the official MRM data annually.

The MRM, however, operates in a limited number of countries, and the data must pass rigorous UN-verification procedures—meaning that many cases are likely to go unreported (Potts, Myer, & Roberts, 2011; Alfaro et al., 2012). Indeed, the latest Report on Children and Armed Conflict (2014), indicated that, “[a]ccess by the United Nations remained severely restricted throughout 2013, significantly disrupting the monitoring and reporting of grave violations against children.” Moreover, the MRM has traditionally limited its scope to direct attacks on schools that violate international humanitarian law, focusing less on higher education and on indirect acts that may interfere with the right to education, like the military use of schools (Karimova, Giacca, & Casey-Maslen, 2013). Recently, the Security Council has called for greater monitoring of the military use of schools with UNSC Resolution 2143 (2014), and the UNSG has asked UN member states to adopt measures to deter such use (2014).

The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA)’s Education under Attack 2014 is the most comprehensive study of attacks on schools to date, though it refrains from issuing a total number of incidents (GCPEA, 2014). Instead, the study—which covers January 2009 to September 2013—uses broad ordinal categories, including “very heavily affected” (1,000 or more incidents or victims), “heavily affected” (between 500 and 999 incidents/victims), and “other affected” (between five and 499 incidents/victims), to estimate a “minimum count” per country. The report cites a lack of adequately detailed documentation and of verification processes as critical challenges.

According to the GCPEA’s analysis, “there is still a need to strengthen monitoring and reporting partnerships between UN agencies, international and national NGOs and education ministries and district education offices [...]” In response to this need, the Columbia Group for Children in Adversity (CGCA), together with a contracted local media research agency that requested to remain anonymous, with support from the Somali Ministry of Education (MoE) and

hosted by the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), conducted a study in Mogadishu to assess the current roles and capacities of the various education and protection actors for monitoring and reporting attacks on education in the capital. The study also aimed to appraise the effectiveness of these efforts through semi-structured interviews with a sample of key informants from government, civil society organizations, and UN agencies, while exploring avenues for improving the surveillance of such incidents. Finally, the study attempted to characterize the patterns of incidents in the city since July 2013, and to identify important factors contributing to these patterns, though it did not seek to capture the global total of attacks during this period.

When the Federal Government of Somalia was inaugurated in late 2012, it became the first permanent, central authority the country had seen in over 20 years. Although security in Mogadishu has improved as a result of the government's military campaign, aided by AMISOM, the city remains a highly volatile space for education, subject to attack by any number of armed groups (Barakat et al., 2014). With over 1,000 attacks on schools estimated by Education under Attack 2014, Somalia was categorized among the most heavily affected countries. The 2014 Report on Children and Armed Conflict verified 54 attacks on schools throughout the country in 2013, and did not report any military use of schools (2014). The UNSG also noted one incident in which al-Shabaab recruited six boys from a koranic school at the beginning of 2013, though this did not constitute an MRM school attack.

## METHODS

Between late November 2014 and late February 2015, the research team conducted semi-structured interviews with key informants from 26 organizations or groups in the education and child protection sectors in Mogadishu. These informants included representatives from various government Ministries and UN agencies, as well as AMISOM, administrators from private school "umbrellas," international and national NGOs, news media organizations, university professors, and teachers. After providing their informed consent verbally, informants were asked in English or Somali if they were aware of any disruptions of education caused by armed groups in the city since Ramadan 2013, which took place in July. They were then probed on the description of the event, as well as its date or period, location (including district, area, and school name), and the group suspected of being responsible for the event. They were also asked to supply any relevant reports or databases in their organizational archives. All informants were guaranteed confidentiality.

Sometimes, interviews took place across multiple sessions, as informants needed time to review organizational archives, or call colleagues in the field. Many of the interviews were one-on-one, but a few took place in groups. "Disruption of teaching and learning by armed groups" was used as a broad phrase so as not to limit informants' responses to a narrow conception of "attack on school." The interviewers then clarified by providing examples from the following list: intimidation, threats, theft, extortion, indoctrination, recruitment, abduction, kidnapping, arbitrary detainment, injury, abuse, torture, sexual- or gender-based violence, forced labor, forced marriage, and murder, whether in school or on the way to school, as well as military use of schools (ie. for shelter), forced closure of schools, and partial or total destruction of school buildings or other facilities, by an armed group. This definition was derived from Education under Attack 2014, and was culturally tested and adapted through key informant interviews with education actors in Mogadishu at the beginning of the study. Although the MRM distinguishes between "attacks" and "military use of schools," this study considered both "attacks on education," as both can interfere with the right to education.

Reports were accepted if they included at least: (1) a description of the event that met the previous definition; (2) a date or period between July 1, 2013 and January 31, 2015; and (3) the affected school's name. Reports were excluded if the details reported for two or more of these criteria were incongruent (i.e. if an abduction of students happened during summer vacation), if there was uncertainty as to whether the event was caused by an armed group (i.e. if a school was looted at night, but there were no witnesses), or if the quality of the report was so poor as to make verification impossible.

Researchers from the local media organization triangulated a percentage of the oral reports by searching news archives and meeting with on-site informants who would have experienced the event first hand, including school principals, teachers, or professors, local chiefs, or school neighbors. Because of security restraints, some of these confirmations were made on the phone instead of in person. Reports were considered confirmed if an on-site informant corroborated the minimum details of the report (i.e. the school name, date, event type, and the fact that it was indeed caused by an armed group), if a record of the event was also reported by a reputable media organization, or if the informant experienced the event directly (i.e. received a threatening phone call). In one instance, the report was also considered confirmed when the informant supplied a YouTube video of the perpetrator admitting to the crime.

Beyond specific incidents, informants were also asked about existing or tentative legal or policy frameworks, action plans, and standard operating procedures (SOPs) concerning the protection of schools, students, and personnel. They were then questioned about protocols for documenting violent incidents, pathways for reporting such incidents, and opportunities for scaling up or creating monitoring systems, either at the national or local levels. Lastly, they were asked to identify other stakeholders that might serve as key informants.

## RESULTS

### Organization of Mogadishu's Education System

Mogadishu's education system was highly decentralized at the time of the study, reflecting greater national trends (Figure 1). The MoE officially governed public primary and secondary schools and, as of January 12, 2015, had absorbed the former Ministry of Higher Education to also govern higher education and cultural institutions (HEIs), such as universities.

According to the MoE, all but 12 of Mogadishu's public schools were bolstered by NGOs and UN agencies through the Global Partnership for Education, which the government joined in 2012, and the G-2 School Program, launched in partnership with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 2013. The MoE had no available estimate of the number of schools in Mogadishu operated by NGOs at the time of the study, but a UN report estimated that by the end of 2015, humanitarian organizations would reach 340,000 students around Somalia—up from 263,441 in 2014—leaving approximately 1.36 million children without access to education throughout the country (UNOCHA, 2014).

UNICEF and Save the Children co-lead the education cluster to coordinate this service delivery, and they appoint one inter-cluster focal point every year. There are six regional education clusters throughout South Central Zone (SCZ), with a national education cluster seated in Nairobi. Community education committees (CECs) comprised of businessmen, community leaders, and parents have also emerged in some districts representing local interests in education decisions.

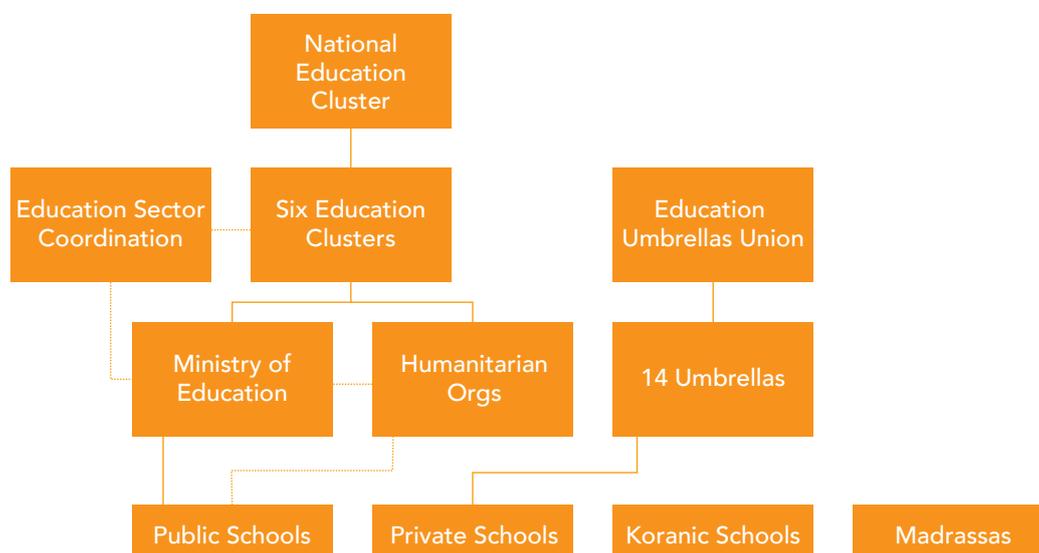
Private schools have become characteristic of urban education in SCZ, with 14 administrative “umbrellas” managing 399 schools that served 89,850 students throughout Mogadishu as of late 2014, according to the MoH’s Education Management Information System (EMIS) database. The umbrellas elect one organization from their ranks every year to lead the Education Umbrellas Union, though this was said to be an informal position, leaving many gaps in coordination among private schools. For instance, there was no coordinated inter-umbrella participation in the education cluster; instead, each umbrella chose whether or not to participate in cluster meetings. The competitive nature of these umbrellas further obstructed cooperation, sometimes leading to violent confrontation.

There were 56 HEIs throughout Somalia as of January 2015, serving about 50,000 students. Although there was no official database of HEIs in Mogadishu, informants believed there to be between 25 and 30; and a recent report estimated that about half of the country’s HEI students were enrolled in universities in SCZ, mostly in Mogadishu (HIPS, 2013). All of these institutions depend primarily on student tuition for their funding, though some receive minor government grants. Like private primary and secondary schools, HEIs are governed by umbrellas with influence from local education associations, though many HEIs belong to no greater governing authority (HIPS, 2013).

There is also a range of informal Islamic schools around the city, which neither the government nor the humanitarian sector formally recognize as education institutions or regulate. Koranic schools, which form Somalia’s most historic education system, are highly regarded community assets playing a fundamental role in the lives of young children. These are usually improvised spaces with one teacher who is paid weekly and teaches young students the tenets of Islam, basic Arabic literacy, and in some cases, arithmetic. There was no known governing authority for koranic schools at the time of the study.

Madrassas offer more in-depth religious guidance for older youth, and are often more formalized than koranic schools, with dedicated facilities, registration processes, and external funding sources. Madrassas are usually supported by Islamic charities, sometimes with ties to other Muslim governments, or international Islamic organizations. These organizations also fund many of the universities in Mogadishu, and some of the private schools, most notably through FPENS, the largest private umbrella, and SAFE.

**Figure 1. Organogram of Mogadishu’s Education Coordination System**



The Education Sector Committee (ESC), funded by USAID and co-led by the MoE and UNICEF, is tasked with “improv[ing] the engagement and coordination of all stakeholders involved in the education delivery,” though key informant reports indicated that this body was more involved in curriculum development than in efficient coordination (Directorate of Education, 2013). Moreover, because koranic schools are recognized by the government as community-based organizations instead of formal education institutions, they were reportedly not involved in school coordination groups or activities, such as the ESC or education cluster.

The UN Country Taskforce on Monitoring and Reporting, a group of relevant UN agencies, such as UNICEF, UNHCR, UNOCHA, and the UNOSRSG-CAAC, among others, is responsible for collecting regular reports of grave violations on children from around Somalia. Together with the Somali Ministry of Defence, the Taskforce leads the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, which develops policies in response to the MRM data. The grave violations include: killing and maiming of children; recruitment or use of children as soldiers; sexual violence against children; attacks against schools or hospitals; denial of humanitarian access for children; and abduction of children, all of which have the potential to disrupt teaching and learning.

## Other Actors Related to Education

### Line Ministries

The field research conducted for this study took place in the transition period between the parliamentary vote of no confidence in Prime Minister Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed Mohamed on December 6, 2014, and the appointment of the new Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Sharmarke’s cabinet on February 9, 2015. During this time, there were no ministers or deputy ministers of education, though the Director-General and his staff continued to work throughout the transition period.

### Ministry of Defence

As part of its “zero tolerance” policy on child recruitment, the Ministry of Defence co-leads the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, and houses a newly-established child protection unit which, together with UNICEF and UNSOM, conducts random monthly screenings of the Somali Armed Forces (SAF) in Mogadishu. This screening consists of spot-checking IDs and facial features to identify soldiers or recruits who may be younger than 18. At the time of the study, the child protection unit was comprised of six full-time staff, four of whom served as focal points to conduct military screenings in regions around the country, though the team had not received resources to arrange logistics or to secure training and screening facilities outside of Mogadishu.

The child protection unit’s first team leader, a general in the Ministry of Defence, had recently resigned to join the UNSOM mission. As of January 14, 2015, the new team leader had not yet received a written work-plan or dedicated training for her position, and had never been briefed on the MRM, or heard of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Her staff had not received their salaries in six months, and their office received no internet connectivity or transport facilitation. Therefore, in order to coordinate with other ministries and child protection actors, the team had to travel to unsecured hotels outside of the ministry compound to use their internet and printers. Altogether, the child protection unit did not receive enough financial support to fulfill its mission of removing Somali children from armed forces and reintegrating

them. In support of the unit, UNICEF intended to release a work-plan and train the staff in the months following January 2015.

Outside of the child protection unit, an official in the Ministry said that resource constraints had made human rights training for military personnel a low priority, despite this being a key commitment of the “Action Plan Between the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia, Somali National Armed Forces, and the United Nations Regarding Children Associated with the Somali National Armed Forces” (2013).

At the time of the study, the Ministry of Defence was looking for ways to work more closely with the MoE to improve protection of students and school personnel.

## **Ministry of Women and Human Rights**

As of early January 2015, the Ministry was in the final stages of drafting the first national 5-year child protection plan to be released in June 2015, a 3-year sexual violence plan, and a policy against female genital mutilation. Through its staff of child protection officers, this Ministry was also planning to launch the Child Protection Coordination Taskforce, which would work with AMISOM, UNSOM, the protection cluster, and other ministries, such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs, to create an integrative child protection system at the national level.

## **Other Ministries**

A number of ministries were identified as relevant to protecting schools, students, and personnel from attack, but were unable to be reached during field research.

The Ministry of National Security oversees the police and the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA), which are responsible for protecting civilians, and which were also implicated in some of the incidents documented during the course of this study.

The Ministry of the Interior governs local authorities, such as district commissioners, who are responsible for coordinating government response to local attacks.

The Ministry of Justice is responsible for holding perpetrators of violent acts accountable for their crimes, and for ensuring that the requisite legal instruments are available.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs oversees organizations and policies dealing with religious concerns, which would theoretically include religious schools, universities, and curricula.

Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation is tasked with guiding partnership between the government and international partners, and for harmonizing planning among all parties.

## **Protection Cluster**

The national protection cluster, seated in Nairobi, oversees three regional protection clusters within SCZ. Although the protection cluster did not document attacks on schools at the time of this study, it had been searching for ways to improve its collaboration with the education cluster. In the months preceding this study, the protection cluster had succeeded in creating service referral pathways with the education cluster, such that if, for example, a school required psychosocial programming, protection partners would be alerted.

## AMISOM

AMISOM's child protection office plays a supportive and advisory role in many of the mechanisms cited above, working to build local capacities for child protection, within the government, as well as civil society. Among other things, this involves conducting human rights trainings for the SAF, and developing SOPs with the Ministries of Defence and National Security that uphold and protect children's rights.

## Monitoring and Reporting

Somalia was one of the seven pilot countries selected for the rollout of the MRM in 2005. In 2010, the Taskforce contracted an INGO on a confidential basis to manage a team of local monitors spread throughout the country. In the event of a grave violation, local monitors document the incident and report it to the INGO, which serves as a quality control step, ensuring compliance with MRM protocols and case definitions before forwarding the report to the Country Taskforce. The Country Taskforce then further refines the reports before delivering them to the UNSG annually. All the reports that do not qualify as grave violations, or do not have the requisite level of detail, are housed in a database of human rights abuses, though we are unaware of any available publication that includes these reports. It is possible that these are circulated internally. According to informants, the restrictive definition of grave violations, and the degree of information needed for an event to qualify as a violation, led many incidents to go unreported.

All parties involved in this mechanism asked to remain strictly confidential, as they faced considerable risk of retaliation by perpetrators. All but two of the key informants interviewed during this study outside of the UN were unaware of the Working Group, the Country Taskforce, and the MRM. A representative of the INGO contracted by the Country Taskforce was interviewed, and denied being involved at all in the MRM.

Of the NGO representatives interviewed, only one openly claimed to work with the MRM, and identified an information pathway for reporting disruptions of education by armed groups. This organization had local offices in eight regions, which maintained regular contact with their beneficiary schools. In the event of an attack, these schools contacted the NGO, which then documented the event using an MRM form, alerted local officials, conducted a needs assessment with village elders, women's associations, imams, and youth leaders, and contacted the NGO's headquarters in Mogadishu. At headquarters, the NGO then reported the event to the protection cluster, the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, concerned umbrellas, the Parliamentary Commission, and line ministries.

While this pathway may still have existed during the time of the study, the NGO's inventory of attacks was far from comprehensive, and representatives from the organization reportedly stopped prioritizing monitoring and reporting in 2011 when they felt that UN support for the MRM had waned.

Outside of the Country Taskforce, there did not seem to be any group tasked with monitoring and reporting disruptions of education by armed groups. What's more, few informants reported systematically documenting attacks on schools, students, faculty, or staff; and of those that did, none provided evidence of such systematic reporting.

A government informant said repeatedly that “there is no concept here of protecting schools,” much less monitoring attacks. An informant from the protection cluster said it was the first time he had ever thought of monitoring attacks on school at all.

The 2013 “Interim Education Sector Strategic Plan for the South Central Zone” (hereafter referred to as “the Strategic Plan”), which laid “the basic foundation from which the education subsectors will develop” from 2013 to 2016, called for the identification of schools and locations that were vulnerable to emergencies and the development of early warning mechanisms for these schools (Directorate of Education, 2013). However, according to a contact from the MoE, who was selected as the Ministry’s point person to this study, no such vulnerability assessment had been conducted as of January 2015, nor had the early warning mechanisms been developed. On the other hand, the Ministry had succeeded in creating an Education Management Information System (EMIS), which housed an inventory of SCZ’s public and private schools—though they had no estimate of the number of humanitarian schools—along with the student body make-up, teacher qualifications, and school closures, among other variables.

## Protection Systems

### International Instruments

Somalia officially ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on January 20, 2015. At that time, the newly formed Ministry of the Constitution was in the process of creating domestic instruments for the formal adoption of the CRC into Somali law, and the Optional Protocols had been referred to an exploratory panel on the grounds that certain articles may conflict with Islamic codes.

As of January 2015, Somalia was party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ratified in 1990), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1990), the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1990), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1975), and the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights (1986); and was a signatory to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1991). Somalia had not signed the Rome Statute, which would authorize the International Criminal Court to prosecute attacks on schools and recruitment of children into armed forces as war crimes.

### National Developments

The responsibility for drafting bills on the protection of children and schools is shared by a number of ministries, though, according to a government informant, no such legislation had been drafted by the end of this study period, much less approved by parliament. As of February 2015, the government was undergoing constitutional review and a cabinet transition, meaning that any such process would likely be further delayed. The existing Somali Provisional Federal Constitution (Article 30 No. 2) obligates the Federal Government to guarantee free education to every citizen up to secondary school.

The “Action Plan Between the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia, Somali National Armed Forces, and the United Nations Regarding Children Associated with the Somali National Armed Forces,” which has been carried over into the Federal Government of Somalia, commits the government to: prevent and end the military recruitment and use of children under the age of 18 in armed conflict; ensure the dignified reintegration of children found to be

involved in armed conflict; train military personnel on child rights and protection; conduct public awareness campaigns on these issues; and make child protection an integral part of security sector reform planning (2012). As part of this action plan, AMISOM and the Ministry of Defence have developed a number of joint SOPs related to handling children associated with armed conflict. AMISOM also has an “indirect fire” policy stating that soldiers should never fire at schools, hospitals, mosques, or markets, even if drawing fire from those sites. The Government has signed an additional action plan to end the maiming and killing of children. In August 2014, the SRSG-CAAC called on the Federal Government to comply with these commitments and fully implement the two action plans (UNICEF, 2014).

## Frequency of Attacks

Table 1. Frequency of Report by District	
Name of District	Frequency of Reports
Bondhere	0
Daynile	0
Hamar Jbjab	0
Hamarweyne	0
Kaaraan	0
Kahda	0
Shangani	0
Shibis	1
Yaqshiid	1
Hawlwadaag	2
Huriwa	2
Wadajir	2
Abdulaziz	3
Waberi	3
Dharkenley	9
Wardhigley	12
Hodan	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>

Over the course of this study, 52 attacks on education were documented in Mogadishu occurring between July 2013 and January 2015. Of these, 18 began in or after July 2013 (34.6%), 30 in 2014 (57.7%), and 4 (7.7%) in January 2015.

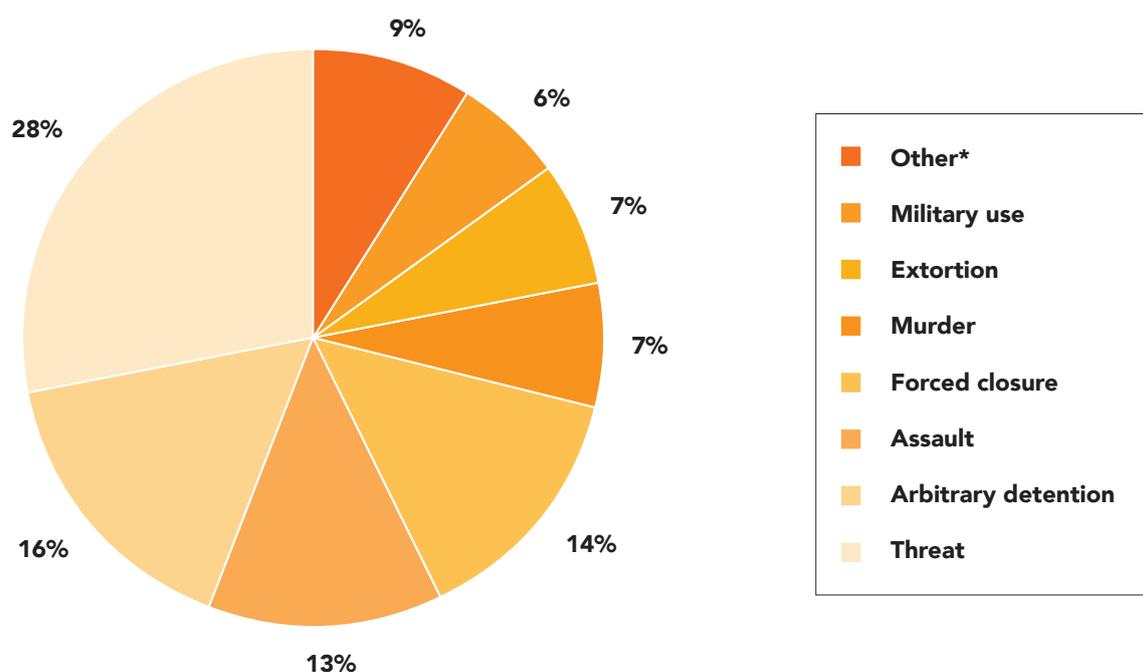
The reports came from interviews with informants from 26 organizations or groups in education and child protection based in Mogadishu, including the leaders of five umbrellas and teachers of four koranic schools. Of these key informants, 17 (65.4%) were able to provide at least one report of an attack on schools. Eight of the 52 (15.4%) events were reported independently

by more than one key informant. The attacks touched 10 of Mogadishu's 17 districts (Table 1), affecting 23 schools, four universities, and one child-friendly space used primarily for teaching.

Of these 52 documented events, eight (15.4%) were MRM events provided by members of the UN Country Taskforce (three additional reports provided by the Taskforce were not admitted because they lacked school names), and these reports had no overlap with any of the 44 incidents reported by the other key informants. None of the key informants outside of UN agencies reported completing MRM forms for any of the attacks they reported. Of the 44 incidents not within the MRM system, 15 (28.8%) had been previously reported to another monitoring authority, mostly district commissioners, of which only three resulted in help being dispatched (i.e. the district commissioners intervened). In at least four instances, attempts to receive support led to repeated violence.

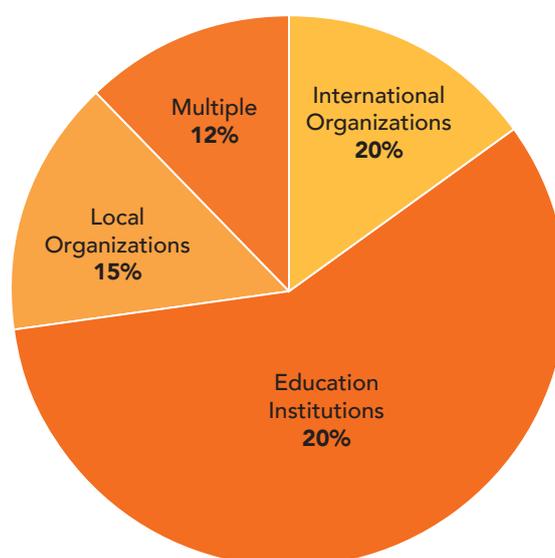
Alleged perpetrators included al-Shabaab, clan and sub-clan militias, security guards at camps for internally displaced persons (IDP), neighborhood groups, the national and local police, NISA, the SAF, and unknown armed groups. Reported attacks included rape, bombing, looting, abduction, extortion, forced closure, assault, murder, arbitrary detention, and threats, both in person and by phone, and many incidents involved multiple types of attack (Figure 2). Despite broad heterogeneity in the types of attacks reported by informants, a number of patterns were identified throughout the course of the study. Far from being incidental to the conflict, there was ample evidence that attacks on schools were used instrumentally and systematically by various groups to advance military, political, clan, and business objectives.

**Figure 2: Frequency of Reports by Type of Attack**



Education institutions had the greatest wealth of knowledge about attacks on education, with 33 reports, followed by local organizations and international organizations, each with 12 reports (Figure 3). Of the 52 reports, three were confirmed by on-site informants, two were confirmed by media reports, one was confirmed by a YouTube video in which the perpetrator admitted to his crime, and 26 were reported by people who experienced the events directly (Annex 1). Altogether, 32 (61.5%) of the reports were considered confirmed. No attempt to verify cases indicated a false report. As noted above, eight of these 52 reports were

**Figure 3: Incidents Reported per Type of Organization Reporting, Mogadishu**



confirmed by the UN Taskforce during MRM verification.

*Figure 3. Local organizations include Somali-run NGOs, community-based organizations, and media groups; international organizations include INGOs and UN agencies; education institutions include government, private, and religious school administrators, school leaders, and school teachers, including from koranic schools. Some incidents were reported by more than one type of organization. Reports from individual survivors not associated with organizations are excluded from this table.*

## Pattern of Attacks

### Threats

Clan militias, sub-clan militias, and militarized community groups shared a similar intimidation tactic of extorting money from school administrators, typically during facility construction or repair. The routine involved first obstructing construction activities without force by simply demonstrating strength in numbers and stating the terms of an agreement. Although the threat was often implicit, all informants agreed that continuing construction efforts would result in direct assault, and possibly death. Every such report documented throughout the course of this study resulted in cessation of construction efforts and either negotiation with the perpetrator or closure of the school. With the enforcement capabilities of district commissioners remaining weak in many places, school administrators had no recourse but to play into the perpetrators' demands, or stop construction indefinitely; however, in at least one school, the

district commissioner was able to settle claims made by three separate armed parties without the school umbrella having to make any payments.

This problem stems in part from weak property rights in Mogadishu. When the government collapsed in 1991 and landowners fled the civil war that followed, public schools were largely closed and their facilities re-appropriated by warring factions. In the years that followed, improvised private schools attempted to fill the gap in education but, with little money, resorted to using private homes and businesses that had been abandoned by their owners. With Mogadishu's relative stability in recent years, large numbers of these landowners have been returning and making claims on their property, resulting in mass evictions and school closures throughout the city (UNHCR, 2014).

At the same time, the influx of returnees and IDPs from less stable regions has created a high demand for land. Without a strong government presence, these areas are controlled by clan militias, who arbitrate property disputes, typically in favor of the highest bidder. In this environment, wealthy people from dominant clans are able to make false claims on land and, in parallel, the armed groups that informally protect the area are incentivized to free up land with high opportunity cost, such as schools. As a result, it is not uncommon for schools to be threatened by multiple groups, all claiming rights to the land. Moreover, to repair any damage to school buildings, administrators require official permission from district commissioners, which come at a fee, as well as the unofficial permission of clan militias, which demand yet another fee. This scheme further incentivizes those very same militias to damage the facilities, though we received no concrete reports of such events occurring. More commonly, clan militias demanded large sums of money through implicit threats of violence, thereby forcibly closing schools and sometimes evicting them from their facilities for lack of means. We documented at least one case in which an armed group dressed in police uniforms was complicit in this scheme, evacuating a school when class was still in session, beating teachers who resisted, and attempting to demolish the building.

Alleged threats by al-Shabaab worked quite differently. In a number of instances, the group reportedly sent representatives to schools dressed as students who then isolated principals or head teachers by asking for consultative meetings, and then directly threatened their lives. Following personal visits, the group typically terrorized school staff with regular threatening phone calls, sometimes leading staff to quit, or the school to close down.

The purpose of these threats was to pressure school leaders to adopt al-Shabaab's radical school curriculum, which serves purposes of indoctrination. At the same time, if teachers did accept al-Shabaab's curriculum, they then risked being arrested by the police or NISA.

With al-Shabaab's influence receding in the city, and the government advocating a standardized national curriculum, many schools located in areas that were once dominated by al-Shabaab are considering adopting curricula that are in line with the State's guidelines. These schools are also under constant threat by al-Shabaab.

## **Targeted Assault on Individuals**

With AMISOM and the SAF dominating most parts of Mogadishu, al-Shabaab has adopted a hit-and-run strategy aimed at soft targets that undermine confidence in the government and garner wide media attention (Barakat et al., 2014). As such, there have been a number of high profile assassination attempts on school faculty, especially females, foreign guests, and people

in leadership positions. In the months following the field research, al-Shabaab made the front pages of newspapers for killing 147 people at Garissa University College in Kenya and again for killing 19 at the MoE in Mogadishu (Kushkush & Callimachi, 2015; Ibrahim, 2015).

Some of the events reported to us were not formally claimed by al-Shabaab, however, leading informants to speculate about other motives. Many informants, for example, agreed that attacks could be motivated by an attempt to undermine the security or performance of competing schools, or to take vengeance on politicians, businessmen, or clans associated with the school. If a school is political capital for an opponent, an attack can reduce it to a liability.

According to informants, there also seemed to be a pattern of attacks targeting females, within and outside of education. During this study, we documented murder attempts on female lecturers and recent university graduates—women who symbolize the equalization of power dynamics among genders. These attacks can be seen as an attempt to create a counter-example out of successful women. Thus, it was reported to us that, following an abduction attempt of a female primary school student, many families in the community prevented their girls from attending school, for fear of abduction.

## Arbitrary Detention

Al-Shabaab has been known to disguise its soldiers in school uniforms when attacking government and AMISOM forces, allowing them to blend easily into the greater student population, while also drawing State forces to attack students. This strategy has had its successes, according to key informant reports. In many places throughout the city, local and national police, as well as NISA, have entered schools demanding that teachers and administrators identify all al-Shabaab students and, when they refuse, detaining scores of students by force, sometimes overnight, despite a lack of evidence. If teachers or parents accompany the students, they too risk being arrested, for interfering with the “investigation.” In some cases, the detained students are evaluated by al-Shabaab informants in jail, and those not identified as being al-Shabaab are released. In at least one instance reported by key informants, the students were not brought to jail at all, but were detained in an undisclosed facility, and money was extorted from their parents and teachers. When school leaders and parents reported the attack to the district commissioner, the police denied the allegation, claiming never to have dispatched police to the school.

## Identity Dynamics

### Clannism

Clan and sub-clan affiliations have a considerable influence on education. As seen above, the thin capacity of government surveillance, the lack of NISA and police training in human rights protection, and their lack of accountability for abuses, together with the history of property rights in Mogadishu, empower clan and sub-clan militias to claim authority over schools and the land on which they sit. Police and NISA forces are also clan members, whose prejudices or business interests may be in line with those of militias from their clans, creating a conflict of interest that explains some of the lack of government response to attacks on schools, and some of the impunity for those responsible. This clan-based authority over school lands also makes schools into zones of tactical importance for playing out clan rivalries and for settling scores. Thus, extortion of schools, direct and indirect closures, threats, and targeted assault all have potential clan motives, though clannism cannot by any means explain all attacks on schools.

## Sectarianism

Closely related to clannism, sectarian affiliations also influence violence towards school children and personnel. The most obvious instance of this is al-Shabaab's enforcement of a curriculum based on a radical interpretation of Islam. Al-Shabaab has exploited the lack of protection in some koranic schools through recruitment campaigns in the past, though all informants agreed that the group had mostly stopped open recruitment from schools in Mogadishu during the reporting period because of the military presence of AMISOM, the SAF, NISA, and the police, favoring indoctrination through their imposed curriculum, and targeted recruitment outside of school. Indeed, we documented no recruitments in schools during the research period. Part of this reduction in open recruitment is that the government has created a policy in which parents of al-Shabaab recruits can be held liable for attacks perpetrated by their children, thus further motivating parents and teachers to intervene on recruitment attempts or expose recruits.

Sufis, which represent the great majority of Somalis, are often intimidated by Salafists, creating yet another identity-based motivation for attacking—or at least failing to protect—schools. For instance, the Sufi teacher of a koranic school whose founding teacher was beheaded by al-Shabaab for his “un-Islamic beliefs” before the reporting period, was recently subjected to threats and harassments by the IDP camp chief and policemen, who were Salafists. The attackers also had a common business interest in renting the land on which the school sat to incoming IDPs.

Some of the overseas funding for private madrassas and universities related to Islamic groups is opaque, with schools often failing to document financial transactions, and alleged associations being made to organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Shabaab.

## DISCUSSION

The quantity and quality of these 52 reports, and the low rate at which they had been previously reported to any authority, not only attest to the need for an enhanced surveillance system for attacks on education in Mogadishu, but also demonstrate the feasibility, reliability, and affordability of a system based partially on key informant interviews. It is clear that actors in the city's education and child protection sectors had a wealth of knowledge about attacks on education that was not being used effectively, resulting in the probable underestimation of the risk faced by Somali children and their educators every day.

### Reasons for Lack of Monitoring and Reporting

#### Weakness of Child Protection Systems

As anticipated, much of the weakness in detecting disruptions of education by armed groups seemed to be related to the lack of legislation, policy, protocols, and training around the protection of children in Mogadishu, which in turn was related to the absence of a centralized, stable, independent, and cohesive government. When asked what could be done to strengthen the protection of schools in the city, most informants—inside and outside government—responded that no progress could be made without first strengthening the cohesion of the central government. Several parties within the government were committed to improving child

protection systems. The Ministry of Women and Human Rights, for example, was drafting a 5-year action plan on children's protection at the time of the interview, while others, such as the MoE, explored ways of improving evidence-based programming. However, between the government's tenuous and fragmentary military hold of the country, and the internal disputes among the president, different prime ministers, and parliament—which leave the ministries highly volatile—key informants felt that these initiatives were unlikely to progress quickly.

## **Normalization of Attacks**

Violent disruptions of schools, just like violence in general, is a normalized phenomenon in Mogadishu. When asked about “disruption of teaching and learning by armed groups” and given examples, most informants did not consider the murder of a university director, which was widely covered in the media, a large enough event to report. Many explained that to them only incidents with mass casualties qualified as anything exceptional. Single murders, much less death threats, arbitrary detention, and looting, were unremarkable, and thus, left unspoken.

## **Definition**

“Attacks on education” can be defined in a number of ways, and the definition used in this study (any disruption of teaching and learning by armed groups) was much more expansive than others, such as that used by the MRM. As such, many informants did not consider certain attacks on school personnel to be related to education, despite those attacks unquestionably affecting the delivery of educational services. In the case of the murder of a university director, for example, some informants related this to political motivations, and thus did not consider it an attack.

## **Fear**

According to informants, reporting attacks on education risked retaliation from the perpetrator, a fear substantiated by some of the incidents documented. What's more, there is reason to suspect that those groups responsible for receiving reports of attacks and responding to them may in some instances side with the perpetrator. In one case, for example, a koranic teacher informed the IDP camp security and the police station that he had come under undue attack by a police officer and his militia. Instead of protecting the teacher, however, these parties informed the offending officer of the report, and he returned to the teacher with a death threat.

Above the individual level, many organizations with the capacity for reporting attacks on schools, such as media organizations, had protocols against such reporting, for fear of retaliation.

## **Conflict of Interest**

Some individuals or organizations that have the responsibility for reporting attacks on schools have an interest in protecting the perpetrators, either because of clan, sub-clan, or sectarian affiliations, as well as business, political, and personal interests.

## **Lack of Prioritization**

Despite the troubling figures within the 2014 Report on Children and Armed Conflict, monitoring, evaluation, and education protection concerns in general were all given low priority in a context where an estimated 1.7 million children were out of school and the education cluster

had a 71.3% funding shortfall (Financial Tracking Service, 2014). The MoE and UNICEF's flagship Go-2 School program, for instance, could not afford protection components, despite their schools being considered targets by al-Shabaab.

All but four key informants were aware of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, and two of them were members of the Working Group who claimed that the monitoring and reporting process was not publicized among the NGOs or the government because the Working Group's members feared reprisals. The third informant who was aware of the Working Group was the director of an NGO that had stopped completing MRM forms because he no longer received support from UNICEF, suggesting that monitoring by local groups may be contingent on the priorities of the international community. The last was a member of the INGO contracted by the Country Taskforce to manage local monitors, who claimed to not be involved in the MRM system at all.

Still, the EMIS component of the MoE, which collects basic data on school characteristics and performance (i.e. teacher qualification), demonstrated a value for monitoring and evaluation-based programming, offering an important entry point for attack monitoring.

## Lacking Oversight of Koranic Schools

Koranic schools seemed to have the weakest accountability capacities, as they have no coordinating and governance body. Together with their tendency to serve the neediest communities in areas beyond government reach, this makes them highly vulnerable to retaliation.

## LIMITATIONS

This study had a number of limitations. The inclusive definition of "attacks" and the need to document the names of schools, suspected perpetrators, and precise dates of attacks limited the scale of events admitted as valid reports, likely neglecting a host of violent events that were less direct, or visible, but potentially no less consequential to the lives of students and educators. The soft indoctrination of students by al-Shabaab curricula, for instance, can be difficult to pinpoint as a single, documentable event, but no doubt contributes to the recruitment of children outside and away from school. Threats made by phone to teachers, the disruption of travel routes to school by the presence of armed groups, the presence of al-Shabaab fighters in classes camouflaged as students, videos of al-Shabaab denouncing western education, police officers detaining youth in public to screen for terrorists—these events often go unmentioned and unrecorded, and can be impossible to recall with accurate detail, not to mention that most do not even meet this study's definition of "attack," despite undoubtedly harming children's learning environment.

The concept of "disruption of teaching and learning by armed groups" is subjective, leading informants to have differing views about what events constituted a valid "attack." Probes and examples were used to reduce this subjectivity, but it was still possible that events that met our inclusion criteria were not considered valid by informants, and were therefore not reported.

The fact that this study drew primarily on recall information affected the quality of the reports in some cases, leading us to exclude events that may have actually taken place. It is also possible that informants underreported cases that took place earlier in the recall period, or misreported cases from before July 2013 as being after July 2013, thus erroneously meeting the inclusion criteria.

The research followed a number of severe security breaches, including the December 25th attack on the AMISOM compound, which resulted in crippling security restrictions, interfering with valuable data collection, and creating some bias by virtue of privileging those close to the interview facilities, with security clearance, and with a particular stake in contributing to the study. This latter bias was remedied in part by sending our Somali research staff to the offices of those who could not, or would not, cross the checkpoint outside of our interviewing facilities. Still, we were unable to meet with a number of parties that were integral to the functioning of education protection in Mogadishu, such as the Ministry of National Security and the Ministry of Defence's focal point for the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, which would have increased confidence in the comprehensiveness of these findings. We were also unable to meet with informants located in the outskirts of Mogadishu, likely leading to underreporting from those areas. Additionally, the fear of reprisals by perpetrators may have dissuaded informants from meeting with us, or prevented informants from sharing particular reports with us.

The timing of the field data collection also coincided with a transitional period in the Federal Government, while appointments for the new cabinet were not confirmed, the constitution was under review, the CRC was in the middle of domestication procedures following ratification, and the various ministries were in the midst of developing the country's first child protection policies. It is possible, therefore, that many of the findings reported here will change in the months following the end of the study period, as the new leaders of the cabinet announced on February 9, 2015 devise their own strategies and protocols.

Restricting the research to Mogadishu meant that many reports about similarly dangerous regions, such as Middle Shabelle and Lower Shabelle, could not be verified. Because of this limitation, we did not record any events that were reported outside of Mogadishu, likely missing a significant portion of attacks throughout the country, especially in places where al-Shabaab has more presence and influence. Although we received a few reports of attacks from regions outside of Mogadishu nonetheless, the majority of informants agreed that Mogadishu was the most vulnerable region in the country during the study's reporting period.

The purposive sampling frame used here limits the generalizability of these findings, as we cannot be sure that every incident relating to schools had the same likelihood of being reported during interviews. The convenience sampling of the verification procedures further limits our ability to generalize the 100% confirmation rate to the entire 52 incidents.

Despite its limitations, however, this study provides an encouraging foundation for a surveillance system in Mogadishu for monitoring and responding to disruptions of education by armed groups. The fact that, of the 44 incidents provided by non-UN agencies, none had been reported to a centralized monitoring authority, and that we were able to corroborate 32 (72.7%) of these events with a primary or reputable secondary source, suggests the need for and feasibility of a rigorous monitoring method to complement the MRM. This method can be easily replicated and adapted to various contexts, offering a tremendous opportunity to improve monitoring and reporting of attacks on education across the country.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

All informants agreed that schools and universities in Mogadishu could never be completely safe from armed groups without the federal government centralizing authority over the various organizations involved in education delivery throughout the city. In light of this, to better protect education, we recommend:

- That line ministries create an education protection taskforce together with AMISOM and the education and protection clusters to examine avenues for operational coordination and cooperation, and to develop bills, guidelines, standardized protocols, training programs, and operational materials for protecting schools, school children, and school personnel from attacks, and for responding to survivors of attacks. Part of this should involve coming to consensus on a broad definition of “attacks” that captures the full scope of risks faced by students, school and university faculty, staff, facilities, and transportation routes;
- That line ministries work with the Education Umbrellas Union, the Education Sector Committee, the national education cluster, the national protection cluster, UN agencies, AMISOM, and representatives from community education committees from around Mogadishu to create a standardized reporting template for documenting attacks on schools, to identify a systematic reporting pathway that ties the various types of schools to one central database, for instance, the Ministry of Education’s EMIS. This reporting pathway should be coordinated with the protection and response protocols established by the education protection taskforce to ensure that individuals do not face risks when reporting that are disproportionate to the potential benefit of reporting;
- Such a reporting pathway would likely involve parallel channels. For instance, private schools would report to their overseeing umbrellas, while public schools would report to their humanitarian sponsor or district commissioner. The umbrellas and NGOs could then report to the taskforce on education protection, which would alert the appropriate responding parties (i.e. the police for protection, and the NGOs for service response), document the incident in EMIS, and report the incident to the Country Taskforce for MRM consideration;
- That, with the ongoing standardized national curriculum development, the Ministries of Education, Defence, and National Security, together with the education and protection clusters and AMISOM, devise a plan for safeguarding schools from targeted al-Shabaab attacks related to curriculum adoption;
- That the Ministries of Education and Religious Affairs consider working together on a strategic plan for formally recognizing and registering koranic as education institutions, and for including these schools in the greater protection framework for the country’s education system;
- That the Ministry of Education, together with education and protection cluster partners, launch a public campaign to raise awareness about the problem of disruptions of education by armed groups to combat the normalization of such events;
- That the Ministry of Education, together with education and protection cluster partners, and umbrellas, consider creating standardized trainings for educators to instill skills and

behaviors for protecting children from recruitment and indoctrination, recognizing risks for such recruitment and indoctrination, and providing basic psychosocial support for children that have witnessed violence;

- That the line ministries, together with members of the education cluster, form a financial monitoring body to improve the transparency of investments in the private school sector, and to intervene on nefarious operations;
- That the line ministries consider mandating that schools post signage around their facilities to demarcate a neutral zone; and
- That the line ministries consider hosting a toll-free phone number for anonymously reporting violations of children, including attacks on schools.

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## ANNEX 1. VERIFICATIONS

Source of Verification	Type of Attack	Suspected Perpetrator	Year Incident Started	School District
Elder in the community and leader of a group representing IDPs	Threat, forced closure	Camp chief and camp police chief	2013	Dharkenley
Former director of school	Threat	Al-Shabaab	2013	Wardhigley
Former director of school	Threat	Al-Shabaab	2013	Wardhigley
Former director of school	Threat	Al-Shabaab	2013	Wardhigley
Reported in the news media	Assault, murder	Unknown armed group	2013	Hawlwadaag
Teacher of school and relative of a survivor of the event	Threat, abduction, extortion	Group dressed like the SAF	2014	Hodan
Perpetrators admitted crimes on camera, video available online	Abduction, rape, assault, murder	Al-Shabaab	2014	Hodan
School teacher	Assault, arbitrary detention	Clan militia and police	2014	Dharkenley
School teacher	Threat, looting, forced closure	Clan militia and police	2014	Dharkenley
Reported in the news media	Assault, murder	Al-Shabaab	2014	Waberi
Parent of a school student	Threat, forced closure	Local armed men and policemen in charge of IDP camp security	2015	Dharkenley
Parent of a school student	Threat	The camp chief and other armed men	2015	Dharkenley
Parent of a school student	Arbitrary detention, forced closure	Police	2015	Dharkenley

Friend of the survivor, reporting from the hospital	Assault, bombing	Unknown armed group	2015	Hodan
Teacher of school and survivor of the event	Threat	Police	2014	Dharkenley
Teacher of school and survivor of the event	Assault	Police man and militia group	2014	Dharkenley
Witness of the event who was a member of the organization responsible for building the school	Threat, extortion	Clan militia	2014	Abdulaziz
Former director of school	Threat	Al-Shabaab	2013	Wardhigley
Former director of school	Threat	Al-Shabaab	2013	Wardhigley
Former director of school	Threat	Al-Shabaab	2013	Wardhigley
Confirmed with nurse from hospital and two neighbors of the school	Abduction	Unknown armed group	2014	Hodan
Teacher of school and survivor of the event	Threat	Al-Shabaab	2014	Hodan
Teacher of school and survivor of the event	Threat	Al-Shabaab	2014	Hodan
Teacher of school and survivor of the event	Threat	Al-Shabaab	2014	Hodan
Teacher of school and survivor of the event	Threat	Al-Shabaab	2014	Hodan
Dean of the school	Arbitrary detention	NISA and police	2013	Hodan
Teacher at the school and colleague of the survivor of the event	Threat	Al-Shabaab	2014	Hodan
Teacher at the school and colleague of the survivor of the event	Threat	Al-Shabaab	2014	Hodan
Teacher at the school and colleague of the survivor of the event	Threat	Al-Shabaab	2014	Hodan

Teacher at the school and colleague of the survivor of the event	Threat	Al-Shabaab	2014	Hodan
Witness of the event who was a member of the organization responsible for building the school	Threat, extortion	Sub-clan militia	2014	Abdulaziz
Witness of the event who was a member of the organization responsible for building the school	Threat, extortion	Neighborhood group	2014	Abdulaziz



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