# TRANSFORMING EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

Somaliland/Somalia Hub Synthesis Report

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# TRANSFORMING EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

## Somaliland/Somalia Hub Synthesis Report



TE|SF

Transforming Education
for Sustainable Futures

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# ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| ABBREVIATION | FULL TERM |
| --- | --- |
| COVID-19 | SARS-CoV-2 Virus |
| CPD | Continuous Professional Development |
| ESD | Education for Sustainable Development |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| MEL | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| TESF | Transforming Education for Sustainable Futures |
| TVET | Technical and Vocational Education and Training |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UN | United Nations |

# 1

## INTRODUCTION

**The main research question we sought to answer was how education systems can be transformed to drive sustainable futures. We focused specifically on how education can contribute to more sustainable livelihoods, sustainable cities, and climate action.**

Transforming Education for Sustainable Futures (TESF)is a network of researchers funded by the United Kingdom (UK) Global Challenges Research Fund (Tikly et al., 2020). Through the creation of research hubs in India, Rwanda, Somalia/Somaliland[1] and South Africa, the network was able to support 67 impact-oriented projects led by researchers from the Global South with a focus on the following sustainable development goals:

1) Education and sustainable livelihoods
2) Development of sustainable cities and communities
3) Taking action to address climate change

As with TESF work around the world, the cross-cutting themes across Somalia/Somaliland projects included addressing social inequalities (Batra et al., 2023; Chege et al., 2020), foregrounding marginalised voices, and decolonising research and partnerships (Mitchell et al., 2020; Sprague et al., 2021). It is important to note that decolonising approaches stress the Eurocentric ways in which development itself has been defined, including the concept of sustainable development (Tikly et al., 2020). Decolonising approaches often argue that sustainable development needs to be understood in relation to the diverse interests, perspectives, and worldviews of formerly colonised, oppressed, and historically marginalised peoples. Decolonising research also involves empowering research participants to be active collaborators in the research process through the process of co-production (Sprague et al., 2021).

The main research question we sought to answer was how education systems can be transformed to drive sustainable futures. We focused specifically on how education can contribute to more sustainable livelihoods, sustainable cities, and climate action. We also focused on the role education plays in addressing inequalities caused by unsustainable development, such as class, clan, gender, and social status.

The TESF project adopted a broad view of education, encompassing not only formal education (early childhood, primary, secondary, technical vocational, and tertiary education, including teacher education), but also less formalised processes of social education that often take place in communities as they try to cope with the challenges of unsustainable development and realise more sustainable futures.

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1    Somaliland declared its independence from Somalia in 1991 but is not internationally recognised as a sovereign state.  Since 2013, the international community has adopted what it calls the Special Arrangement, whereby it works directly with the Government of Somaliland as a practical reality while avoiding formal recognition of it as a sovereign state. This ambiguity of Somaliland being both in and not in Somalia explains why TESF refers to Somalia/Somaliland when speaking about both territories.

## 1.1 Overview of projects

| TITLE | THEMES |
|---|---|
| Self-financing of basic education for minority workers | Sustainable Livelihoods |
| Education and sustainable livelihoods for informal traders | Sustainable Livelihoods |
| From aid to sustainability in education | Sustainable Livelihoods |
| The meaning of sustainable development in Somaliland | Climate Action |
| Climate action in context: a Somali extracurricular course | Climate Action |
| Education for sustainable development (ESD) Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for teachers | Climate Action |
| Sustainable Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) | Sustainable Livelihoods |
| Nomadic pastoralists and the path to sustainability | Climate Action |
| Model Eco-School in Somaliland | Sustainable Cities and Communities |
| Leadership towards a sustainable circular economy in Somalia | Sustainable Cities and Communities |
| Green Garowe | Sustainable Cities and Communities |
| Police-community partnership for sustainable development | Sustainable Cities and Communities |
| Promoting employer understanding of the capabilities of deaf people | Sustainable Livelihoods |
| Promoting Bravanese minority engagement with formal and informal education | Sustainable Cities and Communities |
| Girls' sport for development | Sustainable Livelihoods |



*Nomadic pastoralists and the path to sustainability: the case of livestock enclosures*

## 1.2  Approaches/methods

Fifteen projects were invited to submit their own research proposals. One of the main rationales for calling for proposals by invitation was to reduce administrative burdens on the potential funding recipients. This Somali hub was empowered to use its extensive local knowledge and contacts (Elmi et al., 2021) to scope out diverse groups, including those most disadvantaged in Somalia/Somaliland.

While there were delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all projects took place in 2022 and ran for between nine and 12 months. All research projects were based on methods of co-production, and the process involved extended discussions with stakeholders from conception, design and onwards via many meetings, online workshops, and face-to-face discussions with project teams. Data were collected and anonymised when necessary.  Somalia/Somaliland has a primarily oral culture; asking for written approval/consent could be highly problematic as not everyone within a project team is literate, and so oral consent was sought where necessary and audio recorded in the absence of written consent.

Many of the research projects used focus discussions and workshops primarily because these types of data collection works well in an oral society where the culture of participatory democracy has deep roots. Traditionally, Somalis have made decisions collectively through a process of consultation and consensus-building. This is known as *shir,* which literally means "sitting together". While the majority of the projects produced some form of written output, whether in the form of a Somali language manual, a curriculum, or a detailed research report, they all included some validation workshop or validation event to share their research with the community and all the stakeholders.

In a *shir*, all members of the community have the right to participate and express their views. The elders of the community play a leading role in facilitating the discussion and ensuring that everyone's voice is heard. Once a decision is reached, it is binding on everyone. The majority of projects felt that it was important for these meetings/workshops to be carried out in a way that meant that data was collected within a safe space. Safe spaces were different for different communities. For example, in *Education and sustainable livelihoods for informal traders*, the learning sites were in expensive hotels for empowerment, areas where they would normally be excluded in Somaliland. Other projects took place in universities, schools, community centres, on the basketball court, and in the local community, exemplifying that anywhere can be a place of learning.

Sprague et al. (2021) explained why we used co-creation as an approach to weave all the projects together in order to answer our research questions. First, knowledge co-creation approaches can help ensure that the results or outcomes are more meaningful and relevant to those they are intended to benefit by being grounded in the lived experiences of those people. These approaches often draw on different kinds of knowledge across disciplines but also local and Indigenous knowledge. This bringing together of different knowledge and foregrounding of marginalised voices and neglected knowledge can be advantageous for tackling complex problems, including problematically held indigenous views and creating context-specific solutions (Sprague et al., 2021).

In addition, knowledge co-creation can lead to increased ownership and agency in research processes. This is not research about participants but research with, by, and for participants, or, as they can often be reframed, "co-researchers". In our context, this included youth, women, minority clans, pastoralist farmers, minority workers, academics, activists, policy makers and marginalised groups. This shift in ownership and power (though far from straightforward) and recognition of participants' agency are fundamental to the democratisation of knowledge production.

Data was generated and recorded at the project level, in plenary and group discussions at national conferences, and observations and notes from thematic cluster meetings. The end of project reports and Miro boards created by the projects were also used and analysed through thematic analysis and focused on the TESF shared themes, namely education and sustainable livelihoods found in SDG8, development of sustainable cities and communities in SDG11 and taking action to address climate change in SDG13; cross-cutting themes such as tackling inequalities and foregrounding marginalised voices were also addressed in our projects. The researchers or knowledge co-producers also became 'agents of legacy', as many of their personal transformations, which will be touched on below, have

led to a transformation in the policy sphere in Somalia/Somaliland. In addition, many of the projects led to rich learning in some of the most difficult circumstances, whether due to climate injustice, intersecting inequalities or acute poverty.

## 1.3 Conceptualising sustainable development

TESF has already examined in depth the issues of sustainable development and education regarding the current situation in Somalia/Somaliland (Elmi et al., 2021). In 2020 alone, Somalia/Somaliland endured catastrophic locust infestations, extreme weather events and flooding in its southern and eastern regions. Along with the rest of the globe, it experienced the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, leading to an economic contraction of approximately 1.5 per cent (World Bank, 2020). In a recent poverty and vulnerability assessment, the World Bank (2019) found that rates of economic inequality in Somalia are, on average, lower than the same measures

of inequality in surrounding sub-Saharan countries, which is a product of the "relatively homogenous" measure of deprivation among its inhabitants. Yet, the same data shows distinct differences in economic opportunities and availability of capital for rural versus urban populations (World Bank, 2019).

In the decades before the civil war and collapse of the state in 1991, Somalia/Somaliland were already experiencing a multidimensional educational crisis with the growing belief that available educational programmes – based on educational institutions established by colonial powers – were neither relevant to local job markets nor to the specific needs of Somalia's economic development (Cassanelli & Abdikadir, 2008). Concerns among civil society about the economic relevance of Somali education existed at that time, and similar worries persist to the current day (Cassanelli & Abdikadir, 2008).

Based on the paucity of environmental data as well as data on all vital statistics in Somaliland and Somalia,



*Climate action in context: learning from the creation of an indigenous language extracurricular course*

an accurate assessment of how far the SDGs are being achieved or have been achieved is not possible. However according to the United Nations Development Programme – Somalia (United Nations [UN], 2019), Somalia/Somaliland are committed to increasing knowledge and coordination between parliament and government ministries as per the 2030 Agenda; they are also committed to deepening parliamentarians' awareness of the SDGs and of their roles in achieving the SDGs. For example, the Somaliland Government has made efforts to align enacted laws that will impact people's lives with the SDGs (UN, 2019).

Somalia/Somaliland has endeavoured to align its long-term development plan perspective and associated results framework with the 2030 Agenda. They are pursuing the same goals of a "call to action to end poverty, protect the earth's environment and climate, and ensure that people everywhere can enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030" (UN, 2017). They also recognise that the 17 SDGs are integrated and that action or inaction in one area affects outcomes in others, and that overall, development must balance social, economic, and environmental sustainability (UN, 2017). But a key question remains – to what extent is this balance being achieved?

It is important to note that the TESF Network was founded on the belief that sustainable development must be adapted to local conditions. Over time, several approaches to sustainable development have emerged, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. Some approaches focus on economic growth, while others emphasise environmental protection. Some focus on human rights, while others focus on individual capabilities. However, all of these approaches operate within the dominant development framework of economic self-interest.

Economic self-interest is often linked to the notion of economic sustainability. Within the context of sustainable development, economic sustainability refers to the ability of an economy to maintain its long-term productivity and prosperity without depleting its natural resources or harming its social fabric. Traditionally, economic development has been measured by gross domestic product (GDP), which is the total value of goods and services produced in a country in a given year. However, GDP does not take into account the environmental or social costs of economic activity.

Sustainable development, on the other hand, seeks to balance economic growth with environmental protection and social equity. This means that economic development should not come at the expense of natural resources or the well-being of people. As Cerin (2006) notes, the definition of economic sustainability depends on the focus on sustainable development. In the overlapping model, economic development does not have a negative impact on ecological or social sustainability. In the hierarchy model, economic sustainability is equated with economic growth and is considered sustainable as long as the total amount of capital increases. In the economic tool model, an economy is a tool whose structures and institutions either promote or inhibit sustainable development.

Generally, sustainability describes an economy that is in equilibrium with basic ecological support systems. From an economic perspective, the total environment includes not just the biosphere of the earth, air, and water, but also human interactions with them, with nature, and with what humans have created (Global Sustainable Development Report, 2015). However, economic development can put a strain on the ability of the natural environment to absorb all pollutants produced pursuant to development. As Cerin (2006) notes, economic growth should not be achieved at the expense of the public good. Environmental quality is limited in supply and is a very scarce resource that must be protected.

## 1.4 Conclusion

It is important to note that environmental conservation and economic development goals should reinforce each other and not conflict. A basic difference between economic sustainability and ecological and social sustainability is that the economic structures are created by humans (Kahle & Gurel-Atay, 2014). Therefore, they can be influenced directly to promote sustainable development. However, this is not the case with ecological and social sustainability. Using them responsibly is the only way to recreate social and ecological sustainability.

This may also explain why when given the option to research any of the TESF themes, whether sustainable livelihoods, sustainable cities and communities and/or climate justice, a significant proportion of projects focused on sustainable livelihoods.

*Boys from a nomadic community  - Photograph by Osman Hajji Unsplash*

# 2

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# INCLUSIVE METHODOLOGIES

## 2.1 Introduction

Fifteen projects were invited to submit their own research proposals. One of the main rationales for calling for proposals by invitation was to reduce administrative burdens on the potential funding recipients. The Somali hub was empowered to use its extensive local knowledge and contacts (Elmi et al., 2021) to scope out diverse groups, including those most disadvantaged in Somalia/Somaliland.

## 2.2 Communities of Practice

All projects in the Somalia/Somaliland hub were able to connect with each other at network-level capacity mobilisation sessions. This included capacity mobilisation and strengthening sessions on methodologies, thematic frameworks, and Monitoring and Evaluation (MEL). This was through a Communities of Practice model based on substantive concerns of

projects rather than one based on hierarchical/positional authority. National and international conferences allowed projects to communicate with one another and to a certain extent, share resources. For example, the co-investigators of the Model Eco-School in Somaliland project were able to connect with other projects related to Eco-Schools in India, Rwanda and South Africa and discuss methodologies and, later on at the legacy events, their research findings.

## 2.3 Establishing a Somali structure to support equitable partnerships and knowledge co-creation

As a hub, there were several questions we had to critique during the collaboration with the network plus partners. Firstly, before the call for research projects, we had to ask ourselves who would benefit from this collaboration and to what extent. It is not uncommon in the context of Somalia/Somaliland for researchers from the Global North to come to Somalia/Somaliland for their fieldwork before returning to their institutions to complete their academic research, whether as part of their PhD work or a bigger research project involving the national universities. The management of these projects should adhere to democratic and transparent principles, with clear separation of research responsibilities among partners. More importantly, these collaborations are not sustainable, and often research programmes end after the funding dries up, highlighting a lack of sustainability.



*Co-production with nomadic pastoralists*

> **"... a native from that community would empower those projects and ensure that their voices were accurately translated. "**

Due to the Somali hub's unique political situation, the hub had to think innovatively in order to ensure the democratisation of knowledge and the ethics of engagement. In order to ensure that all the projects included some elements of co-production, the hub actively created bottom-up feedback mechanisms across the three regions they worked in.

Regional leads were therefore appointed to ensure that projects could speak openly to their regional leaders, who understood the local context and could speak in the local dialect. The regional leaders, who worked as research associates for the hub, would then feed the information to the hub leader and to the postdoctoral researcher. As a result of this bottom-up feedback approach, all the research projects were actively engaged in the proposal, formulation, implementation, and dissemination of their research project, predominantly in the Somali language.

This allowed the hub to create safe spaces for the relevant communities by ensuring that a native from that community would empower those projects and ensure that their voices were accurately translated. This structure also allowed the projects to give a counter-narrative, using their Indigenous knowledge and scholarship, which at times conflicted with the scholarship on the area.

In terms of positionality, it is important to note that the postdoctoral scholar, the research analyst responsible for MEL, and the hub leader are all native to Somaliland but also members of the diaspora and the academic community. This brought the experiences of double

consciousness and feelings of both belonging and exclusion in the context of the Somali-speaking and the wider world. At times this could be leveraged by being the bridge between the regional leads and the wider network. At other times, it meant they had to rely on the regional leads to deal with the most marginalised communities, who at times did not feel comfortable talking to others from outside their communities, for example the minority workers, nomadic pastoralists and/ or the Bravanese communities.

## 2.4 Co-production

A central priority of the TESF project is reducing inequalities through co-production. Co-production of research and social change means doing things with, rather than for, those meant to benefit and was used in every project. Participation differed in that in some projects, it was through the co-creation of a curriculum. In others, it was the sharing of experiences of teachers, government workers, or pastoralist farmers. Co-production means that those who are meant to benefit must be able to participate in the design, implementation, dissemination and/or evaluation of the research and processes of social change.

More positively, co-production was used in every project to reduce inequalities, such as those relating to gender, poverty, literacy or rural locations. Co-production allowed us to be inclusive and to be an instrument of positive social change. For example, it became a means for deaf people to take a direct role in a project that is about improving their employment prospects and has led not only to their direct employment in project, but to their inclusion in future policy work by the Ministry of Employment of Social Affairs. It also meant that those normally excluded or who have things done for them learn skills, gain resources and have power, self-fulfilment, influence and ownership, such as the Bravanese community or the sports for development girls. In this way, we were able to move beyond research for the underprivileged that argues against inequality. Instead, the research process became a process of social change by reducing inequality in its own activities. People, such as the pastoralist farmers, were treated not as passive 'beneficiaries' but as active agents of change. Everyone has important things to offer, such as life experiences and perspectives.

Some of the practical techniques of inclusive co-production we adopted included drawing on the TS team's deep understanding of and embeddedness in the local context and managing cultural, political, social, physical, and psychological risks. One example is when one of our lead investigators sat under a tree to discuss issues related to climate change and climate action with nomadic pastoralists. He gained their trust by not arranging their transport to the cities but instead visiting them to co-produce knowledge on livestock management. This required him to consider the risks, such as exposure to the wildlife and the sun. It also allowed us to ensure participation by people in social categories that experience social exclusion in terms of representation, resources, rights and/or voice in their society due to illiteracy, gender, being a youth, being a member of a minority clan or minority ethnic group, or being a low caste worker, rural pastoralist, informal small trader, internally displaced person or refugee.
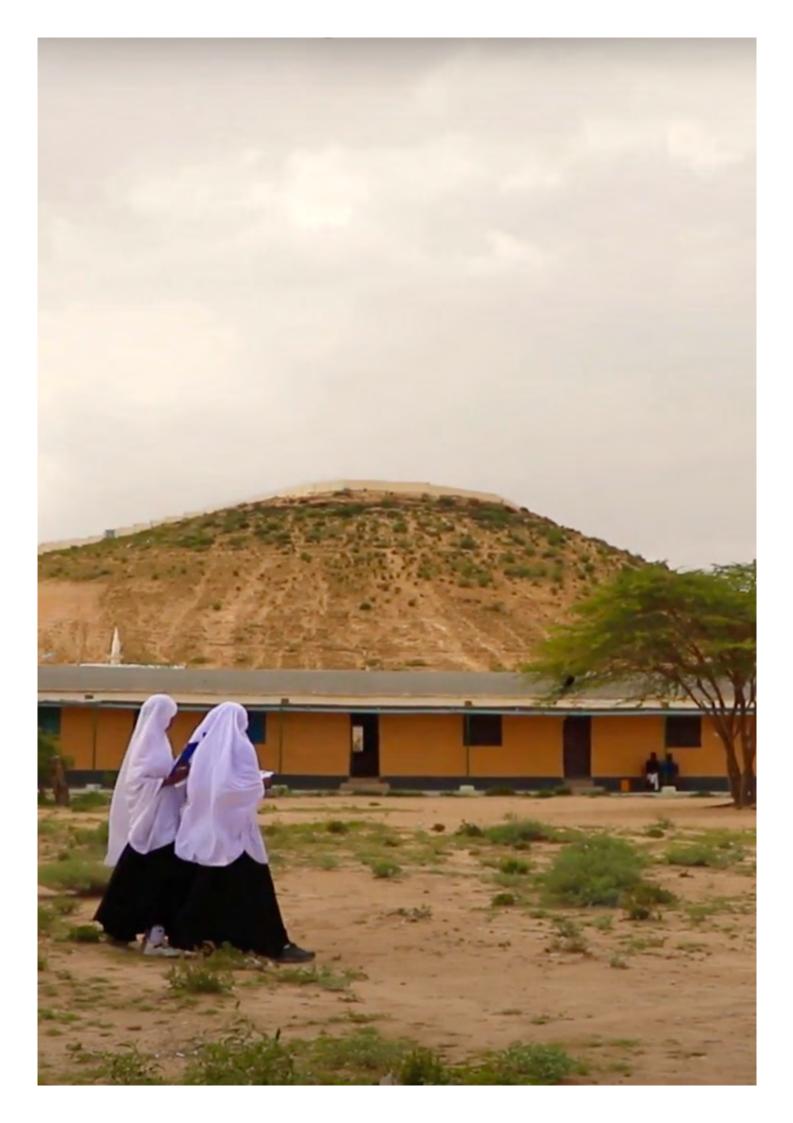
Certain adaptations had to be made, such as obtaining consent orally, which is suited to a more oral culture and to those who are not literate. We also addressed illiteracy by reading or summarising materials, including the draft report, and pitching it at the individual's level of understanding. In the context of the nomadic pastoralists, they were recorded, transcribed, and then read back to them in Somali to ensure that the information captured accurately reflected their views. We also engaged with all participants in their preferred language and dialect.

## 2.5 Conclusion

At the network-level capacity mobilisation sessions, the hub in Somalia/Somaliland successfully facilitated connections and collaboration between different projects. This included comprehensive sessions on capacity mobilisation, methodology, thematic frameworks, and MEL. A Communities of Practice model was implemented to ensure effective communication, prioritising substantive concerns rather than hierarchical authority.

To foster local engagement and understanding, regional leads were appointed to serve as intermediaries between the projects and their respective regional leaders who possessed in-depth knowledge of the local context. Acting as research associates for the hub, these regional leaders relayed pertinent information to both the hub leader and postdoctoral researcher. The TESF project places a strong emphasis on reducing inequalities through co-production. By actively involving those meant to benefit from the research and social change initiatives, co-production allows for collaboration and shared decision-making. This approach was integrated across all projects undertaken by the hub.



*Habiibo Abdi Jabrill, nomadic pastrolist*

# 3

## EMERGING THEMES

### 3.1  Introduction

Each project focused on a particular theme, whether that be education and sustainable livelihoods, found in SDG8, development of sustainable cities and communities in SDG11 and taking action to address climate change in SDG13; cross-cutting themes such as intersecting inequalities were also addressed in our projects.

Education for sustainable livelihoods (ESL) is an approach to education that focuses on equipping people with the skills and knowledge they need to improve their livelihoods sustainably. Education was framed broadly across all the projects, including community education and social learning alongside formal education, TVET, and training.  As Tikly et al. (2020, p. 1) state, "People all over the world today are subject to the pernicious effects of unsustainable development. In the global South, this trajectory is often accompanied by structural inequalities that reproduce persistent poverty, exacerbate inequalities, and leave learners with limited opportunities to create sustainable livelihoods." We have found this statement to be true across our projects in Somalia and Somaliland.

Most projects found that there is a real desire for accessible ESL, reflected by the number of people who took part in numeracy and literacy who evidenced that this has transformed their lives and communities.

### 3.2  Education and sustainable livelihoods

Several of our projects looked at the relationship between education and sustainable livelihoods. Within this theme, some focused on developing skills for the employability of disadvantaged groups, such as the Education and sustainable livelihoods for informal traders project which focused on developing basic literacy and numeracy skills among informal traders

while the From aid to sustainability in education project developed skills required for educational self-reliance working alongside a rural community.

Other projects focused on developing skills for employability for historically disadvantaged groups, for example, the Self-financing of basic education for minority workers project. TESF led this research project in collaboration with a successful grassroots, minority-led organisation which advocates and lobbies for the rights of minority clans. Due to discrimination, underprivileged minority workers in the Horn of Africa are disproportionately represented in subsistence self-employment for survival rather than entrepreneurship employment for prosperity. While most interventions in the region focus on providing minority children with basic education, this research, which is informed by co-production, creates a space for minority workers to be involved in the design of their education provision. This initiative forms part of a broader process of community-led sustainable development and would, in turn, create opportunities for the workers to attain 'decent work'.

The From aid to sustainability in education project focused on how low-income rural communities in low-income countries can transition from aid dependence to self-reliance in the education sector while also reducing inequalities and valuing Indigenous knowledge. This project found that different institutions, in their case a local NGO, can pool resources to help low-income rural communities transition from aid dependence to self-reliance in the education sector.

Similarly, the *Sustainable TVET*  project examined the context of  TVET in Somalia. The more general scholarship on TVET has at its heart the concept of just transition from the current global system to one that is more equal, fair, and in balance with the natural world. This project builds on this research by engaging critically with the research question: 'How can TVET promote sustainable development?' using a local technical school as a case study. While some participants argued that it would take a while for the impacts of TVET to be seen in the value of one's life, others argued that TVET immediately improves the quality of life for all beneficiaries as it instils ethics such as discipline and resilience. One participant explained:

*"I am currently a first-year trainee, and within the little time I have spent at the centre, I have been able to gain*

*key skills that have allowed me to conduct basic home installation for members of my local community. This contribution alone has granted me with a feeling of satisfaction that I have never felt before."*

The project found that TVET can play a valuable role in promoting sustainable development by providing people with the skills and knowledge they need to work in green jobs and live sustainably.

## 3.3  Education for sustainable cities and communities

Other projects examined education for sustainable cities and communities (SDG11). According to Elmi et al. (2021), Somalia and Somaliland are following a global trend of urbanisation with a decreasing rural population. In fact, Somalia is leading the world in urbanisation rates, and "it is expected that the majority of the country's population will live in urban centres within the next decade" (Elmi et al., 2021, p. 6). Education for sustainable cities and communities aims to address this by equipping people with the knowledge, skills, and values they need to create and sustain liveable, just,


*A student using a welding machine at the TVET College*

and resilient cities and communities. It is based on the understanding that sustainable development is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires a holistic approach.

A number of projects tackled the question of what sustainable development and education for sustainable development means and can look like in the Somali context, especially in the context of education for sustainable cities and communities. The *Model Eco-School* project sought to challenge this by piloting an Eco-School in Somaliland. As mentioned above, schools have not been spared from the effects of climate change. In an environment of ongoing and deepening climate crises, children and vulnerable families in the region are affected by water scarcity, poor water quality, poor sanitation, and inadequate hygiene practices in schools. These are disastrous for older children who need to spend long hours in school. This project sought to address these issues by piloting a model Eco-School with direct interventions in the school environment. The Eco-Schools model advocated holistic interventions that better adapt schools to the existing context and made the schoolchildren key actors in the dissemination of effective and innovative practices. It combined scientific knowledge with local knowledge and provide students with practical and relevant skills that equip them to protect their environment and adapt to climate change. The Eco-School took a broad conventional environmental education with a methodology that merges real issues with practical and theoretical learning to encourage improved attitudes and behaviours towards better use and management of the environment.

The project helped to improve the lives of children and families in the region. This project also exemplified that education for sustainable cities and communities can be integrated into formal education through the curriculum above, or it can be delivered through non-formal and informal education channels, such as community-based programmes and social movements. This is exemplified by the Green Garowe project, which was a pilot project that aimed to plant trees in a city that was suffering from drought and desertification. Through the use of consultative meetings with the city residents, different levels of government, business community, religious and traditional leaders, research institutions, women's groups, and members of civil society organisations, this project identified the most effective way of planting trees in the city despite the numerous barriers.

*Girls' sport for development co-production*


*Garowe City*


*Trees planted on the new road in Garowe*


*From aid to sustainability in education project*


*From aid to sustainability in education project*

The project made a significant contribution to the city's sustainability and led to change in the policy sphere.

In addition, The [Leadership towards a sustainable circular economy in Somalia](#) project explored the meaning, possibility, and relevance of the circular economy in the context of the Horn of Africa. It had an original empirical focus on a regional corporate entity and its potential to provide business and intellectual leadership of a just transition to a sustainable circular economy in East Africa. Similarly, *Police- community partnership for sustainable development* used co-production as a way to discover different ways of achieving police-community policing through joint partnerships with the local community. A female member of the community policing team found the following:

*"The exercise on focusing the sustainable development is already going in our context through the community policing. According to our structure, we have a communication system through the committee members to share information to be reported to the police stations and security agencies. Each of the four police stations has a hotline and a responsible officer in charge of community policing"* (Fatuma).

Based on discussion groups and observational research we also found that the community committee does not submit every case to the police station. Simple disputes, such as family matters and spousal conflicts, are solved locally through a committee of conflict resolution. According to Fatuma:

*"In cases where both the mother and father have left the homes leaving their children behind, we first attend to the children by giving them food and security. Thereafter we attempt to bring peace among the family by giving them advice, support and regular follow-up meetings and monitoring. If there are financial issues, the traditional leaders will request support from volunteers."*

## 3.4  Climate action

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 focuses on climate action and includes targets that are specifically related to education, such as improving educational opportunities, raising awareness of climate change and its impacts, and building individual and institutional capacity to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Climate change is profoundly impacting the Global South and the Horn of Africa is experiencing high levels of climate insecurity due to inaction on climate change. As mentioned by Elmi et al. (2021), Somalia/Somaliland have been experiencing more frequent and severe droughts in recent years as natural resource degradation and climate change continue to exacerbate existing challenges. Schools have not been spared; ongoing and deepening climate crises increase costs for essentials such as water, food, rent, and education. Schools are struggling to keep up with inflation, further weakening the likelihood of their sustainability, especially for schools located in deprived communities.



*Dhinowda primary school, the effects of the fast building dunes*

This has resulted in water scarcity, poor water quality, poor sanitation, and inadequate hygiene practices in numerous schools. A green and safe environment with adequate sanitation and clean water plays an important role in children's health and educational outcomes.

To move in the right direction, it is incumbent that the possible severity of climate afflictions on children's education and development is understood. Young people living in Somalia are among those most at risk of the impacts of climate change, threatening their health, education, and protection. Drought is exacerbating barriers to education. There is clear evidence that education can reduce vulnerability to climate shocks and therefore it must be prioritised. Unfortunately, environmental education is taught only in a narrow sense in Somaliland, mostly as a study of science and nature with less consideration of the impacts of human activity and the interdependence of human welfare and a healthy environment. Most learning activities are theory-based and practical activities are rare. Somaliland's education does not emphasise local environmental concerns.

Projects which examined this theme in depth include *ESD CPD for teachers* which aimed to generate new knowledge about engaging teachers in a low-resource context with sustainability issues. The project found that teachers in the Horn of Africa had a low awareness of environmental and sustainability issues and needed more training in this area. This project took an interesting approach by considering the importance of ESD CPD for teachers. The main aim of this project was to generate new knowledge about engaging teachers in a low-resource context with sustainability issues. The overall research question was: 'What is the meaning of ESD CPD in a low-resource context?' It did so through an exploration of ESD CPD with teachers in the Horn of Africa. At present, teachers in this region receive no CPD on ESD. This is partly an issue of low levels of teacher training in general due to a lack of resources. To the extent that teacher training exists in the region, it focuses only on general pedagogical skills and on the existing curriculum, which does not have an ESD component. It is also likely to be a part of a bigger picture of a generally low level of awareness of environmental and sustainability issues in the country.

Similarly, The meaning of sustainable development in Somaliland project explored the perspectives of

> **"The creation of educational materials in the local language became a valuable educational resource ..."**

graduates of the master's programme in Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability on the meaning of sustainable development. It examined what sustainable development means in the context of Somaliland, and found that the specific issues of concern were whether it is possible to maintain a clean environment in the region, what actions can be taken to reduce charcoal production in the region, and whether sustainable development can be achieved in the region. Other issues of interest were possible approaches to resolving the challenges to attain sustainable development in the region. On a very positive note, the project found that the graduates had a strong understanding of sustainable development and that they were committed to using their knowledge to make a difference in the world.

## 3.5 Sites of learning

Our projects found that sites of learning did not have to be in a specific place but could for example be made accessible through a mobile application and a website. The Climate action in context: a Somali extracurricular course project explored how to contextualise climate action in the Horn of Africa. This project took a much wider approach to climate action through the creation of an online indigenous language extracurricular course. This project sought to generate new knowledge about how to contextualise climate action in the Horn of Africa. This contextualisation is vital, because if people are to understand the climate crisis and press for action to address it, they need to be able to relate it to themselves and their situation. This project researched this issue through self-observation of the co-production of extra-curricular content on climate action in the local

language, wholly available online, via a website and on application stores. The creation of educational materials in the local language became a valuable educational resource on this topic and incorporated Indigenous knowledge on climate change and the environment. The project found that Indigenous knowledge can provide valuable insights into how to adapt to climate change and build sustainable communities. The project also found that it is important to make climate action relevant to people's lives and identities and that it is important to use local languages and cultures.

Similarly, sites of learning could be traditional sites of learning such as under a tree as exemplified by the Nomadic pastoralists and the path to sustainability project which explored the economic and environmental impact of livestock enclosures and the possible creation of alternative sustainable enclosures for nomadic rural communities in the Horn of Africa. The project found that livestock enclosures can have a negative impact on the environment and that there is a need to develop more sustainable ways of raising livestock.

## 3.6 Inequalities

All projects found that inequalities in education affect every aspect of life and are often exacerbated by other intersectional factors, whether poverty, gender inequality, clan inequality, disability, geographical location, and/or minority status. The education systems in Somalia and Somaliland are very fragmented, most likely as a result of their problematic colonial legacies, and as a result, there is no harmonised curricula. It is common for the education systems in Somalia/Somaliland to adapt/ reflect the education systems of the United Kingdom, Italy, the United States, the Middle East and/or Kenya in more recent years, whereas traditional systems of education include knowledge of livestock management, environmentalism, water and land management, historical record keeping and oral storytelling, and a "culture of information exchange and collaboration" (Seife, 2020, p. 9).

## 3.7 Poverty and economic inequality

In 2020 alone, Somalia endured catastrophic locust infestations, extreme weather events, and flooding in its southern and eastern regions, and along with the rest of the globe, experienced the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic,

leading to an economic contraction of approximately 1.5 per cent (World Bank, 2020). In a recent poverty and vulnerability assessment, the World Bank (2019) found that rates of economic inequality in Somalia are on average lower than the same measures of inequality in surrounding sub-Saharan countries, which is a product of the "relatively homogenous" measure of deprivation among its inhabitants. Yet, the same data shows distinct differences in economic opportunities and availability of capital for rural versus urban populations (World Bank, 2019).

There is little research rooted in the Somali context that explores the intersections of economic deprivation and educational inequality. Research based on data from sub-Saharan Africa points to financial access as a critical means to reach better development outcomes, including education (Asongu et al., 2020). Asongu et al. (2020, p. 5) also highlight the lack of studies and documentation of information circumferential to the "nexuses between income inequality, financial access and inclusive education in light of the SDGs in sub-Saharan Africa".

In the decades before the civil war and collapse of the state in 1991, Somalia was already experiencing a multidimensional educational crisis with the growing belief that available educational programmes – based on educational institutions established by colonial



Girls' sport for development

powers – were neither relevant to local job markets nor the specific needs of Somalia's economic development (Cassanelli & Abdikadir, 2008). Concerns among civil society about the economic relevance of Somali education existed at that time, and similar worries persist to the current day (Cassanelli & Abdikadir, 2008).

## 3.8  Social and gender inequality

While enrolment in school and access to education is low across all social groups other than the wealthy in Somalia/Somaliland, inequalities in educational opportunities are most profound for women and girls, internally displaced persons, and individuals from rural, pastoralist, and nomadic communities. For those whose identity incorporates more than one of these social descriptors, the impacts on education and equality of opportunity tend to get further compounded (Herring et al., 2020). This is especially evident in the *Girls sport for development* project, which examined gender inequality in the region from the perspectives of young women who were internally displaced, by focusing on developing sporting skills alongside the life skills of marginalised girls.

This project co-produced evidence and arguments about how sport can be a means of sustainable development for girls, as it can help to improve their physical and mental health, boost their self-esteem, and provide opportunities to learn new skills and make friends. It can also help to challenge gender stereotypes and discrimination. TESF worked hard not to recreate the intersectional barriers found in society, and tried to have gender parity across all projects which had positive results. For example, the Community policing project found that:

*"Family matters are dealt with by the female members of our committee. Women are at the frontier in all the committees with a larger proportion compared to men."* (Ibrahim)

Similarly, in areas where women are often excluded such as decision-making processing in rural areas, it was important for women's voices to be included. In the traditional *shir,* women are often excluded from holding meetings under trees. However, in the Hero project, women were able to sit down among their peers and share their views, in a way that is transforming Indigenous knowledge systems and existing power

**"... in areas where women are often excluded such as decision-making processing in rural areas, it was important for women's voices to be included."**

structures which exclude women from decision-making roles.

Similarly the *Promoting minority Bravanese engagement with formal and informal education* project researched the promotion of minority engagement with formal and informal education in the context of East Africa. The project found that minority communities in East Africa face many challenges in accessing education, including language, cultural, and economic barriers. The project also found several ways to support minority communities in engaging with education, such as providing education in minority languages, addressing cultural barriers, and providing financial assistance.

In a similar vein, the *Promoting employer understanding of the skills of deaf people* project tackled exclusion based on disability. The project found that deaf people face a number of challenges in finding employment, including lack of access to education, lack of sign language interpreters, and discrimination. The project also found that several things can be done to promote the employment of deaf people, such as providing access to quality education, providing sign language interpreters, and addressing discrimination.

*Sharing Indigenous knowledge on shrubs and trees with the community*

# 4

IMPACT/ LEGACY

## 4.1  Introduction

Research impact is traditionally measured in a number of different ways to ascertain the value and benefit associated with using the knowledge produced through research. Traditionally, various metrics can be used to assess research impact, including peer review, citations, usage, and non-traditional metrics. Much of the impact occurred during the research of the 15 Somaliland/ Somalia hub projects. At the same time, some of the impacts of the research became apparent towards the end of the projects.

## 4.2  Impact within communities

For example, the immediate impact of project is that 75 applicants successfully co-produced their own literature/numeracy curriculum and learned how to read and write. Similarly with project, informal traders, including those whose markets burned down during the course of the project, co-created their own numeracy, literacy and mobile money curriculum, and subsequently learnt how to read, write, and use mobile money which impacted their livelihoods. The specific issue that this project addresses is that informal traders who are not literate or numerate have restricted ability to do everyday transactions and perform other social and political obligations – this is almost certain to be a barrier to their aspirations, whether they be more sustainable livelihoods within the informal economy or moving into the formal economy (McGrath & DeJaeghere, 2020). It is challenging for them to run an informal or formal business in Somaliland without subscribing to a mobile money account. For example, they need help navigating hierarchical text menus and selecting numbers to enter the desired numbers (Ahmed, 2019). During follow-up discussions we found that because these women now numerate, they can keep track of the money and have formed a network of lending to each other which has significantly improved their livelihoods.

Similarly, in *Girls' sport for development*, the project examines the ways in which playing sport empowers young women who previously would have been excluded from playing group sports. This project actively problematised the concept of gender and gender expectations. These young women have been exclusively recruited from internally displaced camps, and many of them are displaced due to recurrent droughts. Many of the women who took part in the sport felt that not only did they learn about the importance of exercise for both mental and physical health, something which they have all been struggling with, but it also allowed them to gain confidence in their ability to produce research with an international reach, because the participants co-produced the research from inception to report writing and beyond.

The project [Promoting Bravanese minority engagement with formal and informal education](#) worked on bridging the gap between the community and the police by empowering and encouraging community policing. It engaged critically with the theme 'Police-community partnership for sustainable development.' One participant noted the following, when discussing the impact of the project:

*"In order to assess the impact of community policing on police-community partnership, the committee recently visited our police unit and found out that the crime rates have reduced, especially with regard to petty crimes by youth. The arrest of the accused is also made easier due to the daily information we receive and pass on to the police. We are vigilant of drug and alcohol dealers in the district and reported two such cases in the month of September. Another case of the formation of a criminal gang was also reported."*

Similarly, many projects were a collaborative effort; for example, two schools engaged with NGOs in order to address climate change by pooling their resources. One was through the creation of Eco-Schools. The project introduced the Eco-School concept to Somaliland for the first time, providing a sustainable environmental protection and livelihood development approach that started in the classrooms of a secondary school and expanded into the community. The student-led initiative resulted in the formation of new networks and encouraged different stakeholders to collaborate on developing an improved sustainable environmental schooling education programme, encouraging action-based learning using indigenous methods.

The project created an umbrella network of youth, parents, teachers, community society organisations, local authorities, educational institutions, and people who had an interest. They shared and co-created knowledge on the relevance of adopting an appropriate schooling model to encourage long-term environmental development for sustainable futures. Although Somaliland is falling short in its educational capacity compared to many parts of the world, the local desire for relevant education is real and shared by many. Therefore, the link between a holistic schooling approach and strengthening environmental development and livelihoods has not been a challenging concept to grasp for the majority. Rather, the sustainability of such an approach is what requires extensive analysis. The lack of resources in many aspects is hindering development and sustainability. The absence of central pillars such as access to adequate water has negatively impacted community engagement and positive climate actions. With Somaliland entering its fifth failed rainy season, the gap between reality and possibility has a further part in the eyes of many citizens. A holistic educational approach is a great tool to harmonise this gap and help children see beyond the current environmental situation. The lack of resources for sustainable development is an obstacle to practical learning. Candlelight's Blue Schools programme found that 91.67% of schools supported with access to adequate water, seeds, school gardens, hygiene and sanitation, and relevant environmental education and training succeeded in providing engaging holistic education relevant to this climate. The programme further strengthened positive climate actions, community engagement, and sustainable development.

In a similar vein, the [From aid to sustainability in education](#) project is a project that was implemented in Somalia by a local NGO in collaboration with a local school, with the objective of promoting the sustainability of education in their region. The Community Education Committee initiated the water well project early in 2021 to reduce the school's reliance on water trucking and to generate extra income for the school.

The water well project was divided into three phases, namely:

1. Drilling of the water source, installing the water pump and storage system, and distributing water to the households in the community. By the summer of 2021, drilling of the water source of 275 metre well had been completed, an activity that is estimated to have cost around $50,000. This money was donated by a generous African donor who had close ties with the region.

2. The second phase involved installing a storage tank to store water needed for distribution and a 450-barrel tank was installed.

3. The third phase involved connecting water to the different users. Under this project, three users (customers) were identified and these included
   - The schools
   - The livestock farmers and
   - The residential areas

The project has yielded a number of benefits to the community of the school in the following ways:

1. The project has increased the attendance of girls in the school. Before the installation of the water project, girls chose not to attend school due to the lack of hygiene facilities[2]. This project has increased their attendance and participation in schools. Hand washing is now encouraged and could help address the spread of diseases in the school.

2. The farmers have embraced the community with open arms. The project has been welcomed by the livestock keepers who use the water troughs to give their animals water. It is expected that over 1,000 animals currently use this water supply and this number is expected to increase.

3. The project is expected to create some employment opportunities through the local water company. The establishment of this project has already started creating jobs for the residents and it is expected to create more jobs. The project also provided jobs to the youths during the water tank's construction. More jobs could be created in the form of truck managers, maintenance engineers, plumbers, and customer service agents, and more jobs could be created in the form of drivers, pump attendants, cashiers, and security for the local water company.

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2   *Follow up discussions have found that this is due to period poverty, coupled with the lack of facilities for girls when menstruating*

4. The project is expected to enhance the hygiene and sanitation of the community. The extension of water to the school premises and the community households will enhance the hygiene and sanitation of the community because water is easily accessible.

## 4.3  Impact on the policy sphere

Other projects led to similar successes, mainly because TS was able to act as a bridge between the policy sphere and marginalised communities. For example, the *Promoting employer understanding of the skills of deaf people* project co-created an employability information booklet containing the educational achievements, professional skills, talents, and other abilities of deaf individuals. It included case studies of successful deaf employees and case studies of employers who are happy with their deaf employees. The booklet was then distributed to both small and large businesses including banks, communication, hospitality, and service providers throughout Mogadishu. The booklet was also presented at the at Mogadishu Employment Convention for the Deaf by the deaf designers. During this convention, we discovered that the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has a department (which was not functional) that promised to actively engage with the deaf community and encourage accessibility in the workplace.

Similarly, the Ministry of Education is now looking to expand its online learning programme, after tracking the usage of the open-access online learning platform which was co-created in Somalia, and include Indigenous knowledge systems. They also witnessed the success of the teacher training project, which was based on a combination of coursework and teacher reflections derived from the World Wildlife Fund Teacher Development on Education for Sustainability. Public school teachers used co-production/participatory action research to answer the research question: 'How can the hidden curriculum of unsustainability be challenged in a low-resource country?' The teachers from different communities then shared their experiences with the Ministry of Education. The Ministry promised to highlight the sustainability agenda within the curriculum of Somalia as the resources were publicly available. In addition, they are now considering ways to scale the project across the country, as all the teachers shared that it was a valuable project in terms of their own CPD (although resources are always a factor in decision making).

Another example of TS bridging the gap between the policy sphere and marginalised communities is best exemplified by a planting project, which became such a success after engaging the whole community, including the local council, that a policy was passed by the city council which stated that for every road built, a tree needs to be planted.

# 5

## CONCLUSION

This project has allowed us to learn across different cultural contexts and during difficult times. In order to not reproduce the institutional and unequal structures often found in the contexts of the Somali-speaking world, we had to set rules grounded in indigenous, cultural, and religious practices. These ground rules, founded on universal rules of ethics and justice, allowed us to address some of the most challenging and complex issues facing the Horn of Africa. We are especially proud of the following achievements:

- Being able to work across different regions with challenging histories of injustice and violence; despite all this, our participants were able to showcase to a broader audience how resilient and resourceful they are.

- Challenging the narrow neo-liberal approach to measuring progress in financial terms (such as GDP) and introducing alternative measures of progress using environmental and human well-being.

- Addressing the challenges of socially conservative and colonially inspired frameworks and values that maintain injustice and exclusion and introducing a more inclusive and empowering framework. This was most evident during the ethics process, which initially used a very Eurocentric and rigid structure. This was later changed to adapt to the Somali context, for example, by allowing oral consent, as many research participants are illiterate.

- We worked to reform rigid, top-down educational systems that do not empower teachers to be creative and to adapt to different needs. This includes creative ways to provide ESD teacher training when there are limited resources.

In addition to the projects that focused on these challenges, we have also been creative in our approach to sustainability education. We have:

- Found a balance between modern science and traditional learning, as most of our projects included some form of traditional knowledge systems.

- Focused on the co-production of educational approaches, involving communities in socially acceptable ways.

- Designed education specifically for marginalised, discriminated groups for social justice, including minority workers, women and girls, persons with disabilities, and nomadic pastoralists.

- Developed a new ethic of research that respects and includes those studied, using safe language, intersectional approaches, and the importance of diverse voices and two-way learning.

However, there were several challenges. Every project questioned the sustainability of TESF and the ways in which they remain connected with each other and the communities of practice. During the project, a considerable amount of resources went into accessibility and access to translating services. This was addressed in the legacy conference, where many projects exchanged contact details and created WhatsApp groups which covered their individual themes, whether that is tackling inequalities, sustainable livelihoods, climate action, and/or sustainable cities and communities. It is important to note that the unwavering dedication and active participation from multiple local stakeholders in these projects are clear indicators of genuine commitment to creating sustainable education approaches for marginalised and discriminated groups. From minority workers to women and girls, individuals with disabilities to nomadic pastoralists, everyone is willing to work together and pool resources to achieve transformation.

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