



MAKING RESEARCH USEFUL AND USED

Lessons from a Mixed-Methods Evaluation in Somalia

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Policy Relevant Research



“...research that can **influence** how policymakers and stakeholders make **decisions**”

But...*how* do we do it?

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The Big Idea

Making research policy-relevant requires:

Evidence + Relationships

Motivations

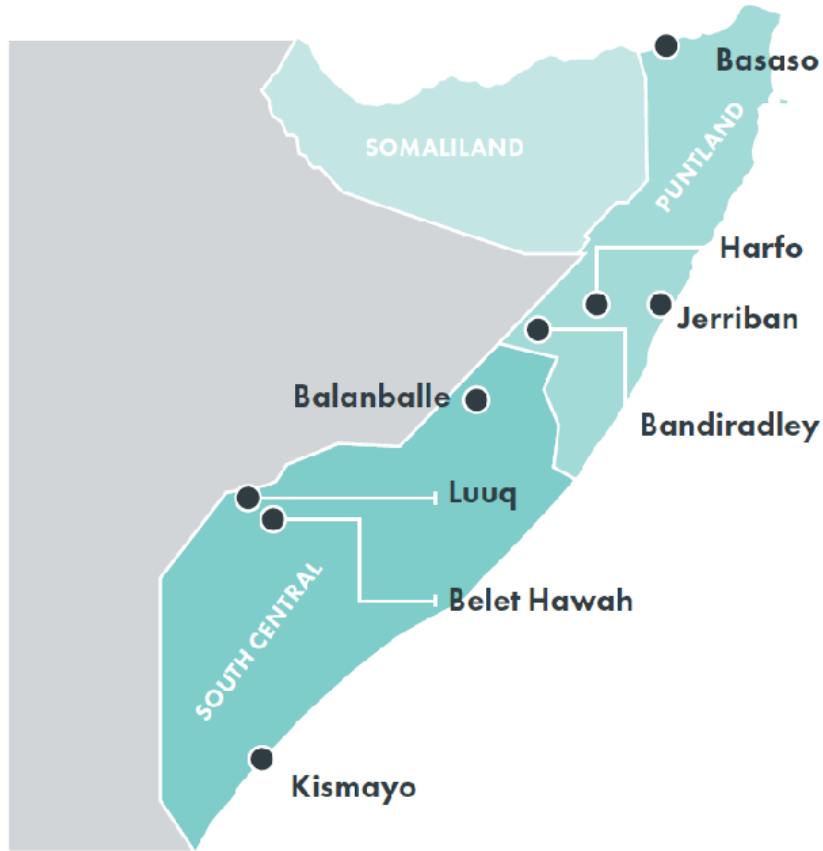
- Addressing evidence gaps
- Part of a broader research agenda on Youth and Conflict
- Accountability
- Using applied research to end cycles of violence

Research Design

- Question: *What is the impact of secondary education and vocational training on youth propensity towards violence in Puntland and parts of South Central Somalia, previously under the control of Al Shabaab?*
- Challenges
 - Limited access
 - Need to use matching strategies
 - Social desirability bias/sensitive questions

Research Design (cont.)

Figure 2. Overview of Study Participants by Treatment Group and Location



SOMALIA

SAMPLE SIZE BY TREATMENT GROUP

Untreated: 283 respondents

Treatment 1 (Education Only): 215 respondents

Treatment 2 (Education and Civic Engagement): 722 respondents

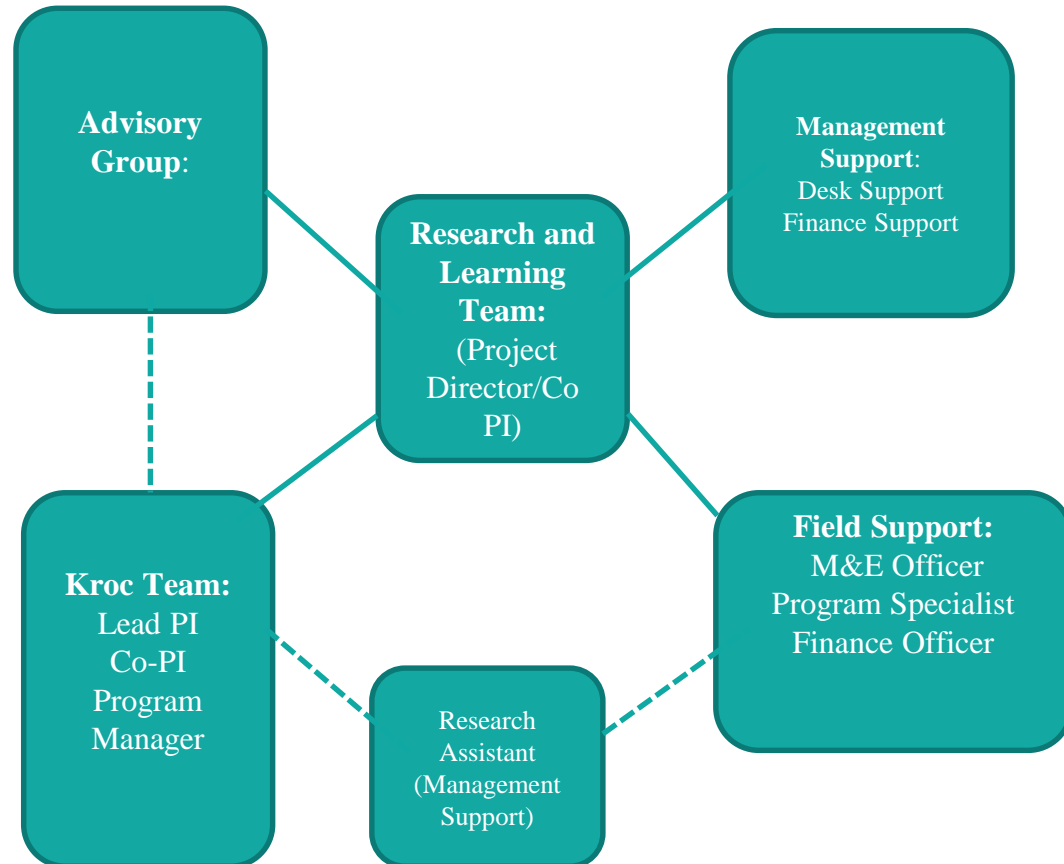
Total Study Participants: 1,220

Research Design (cont.)

- **Qualitative Research: Key Informant Interviews**
 - 40 interviews in four locations
 - Interviews used a combination of semi-structured questions and storytelling strategies.
 - Purpose was triangulation and developing a richer understanding of the dynamics being studied.
 - Example: Interaction between medium and short-term dynamics.

Implementation

- Inclusive structure that brought together multiple teams
- Ongoing consultations/collaborative process
 - Co-design workshop
 - Regular check-ins
- “Sense-making” opportunities



External Feedback and "Sense-Making"

- **Internal and External Sense-Making Processes**
- **Examples of Places it Was Needed**
 - Why were there divergent impacts in Somaliland vs. Puntland and South Central Somalia?
 - Education can clearly push in two different directions – what are the data telling us regarding these complexities?
 - How did levels of violence and insecurity impact the findings?
 - How do we make sense of anomalous findings?

External Feedback and "Sense-Making"

- **Three Sense-Making Processes**
 - Research Team
 - Washington DC Policymakers
 - Global Networks
- **Hybrid Process: Research + Dissemination**

Meetings: Examples

- Practitioners focused on peacebuilding
- Policymakers focused on CVE.
- Policymakers focused on education in conflict areas.
- Somalia and East Africa Analysis area expert

Key part of this process - Helping them find and understand the results of the research most relevant to them.

Example of Feedback

- Question: *Why did we see divergent impacts in Somaliland vs. Puntland and South Central Somalia?*
- Feedback Received:
 - Suggest that we look at the strength of the intervention, as a possible explanation for the differences (one way to examine strength, is duration of implementation).
 - Disaggregate between more and less secure areas
 - Describe in more detail the enabling environment for civic engagement

Internal Dissemination

- Best Practices
 - Target key internal influencers (grant-writers, regional and country leadership)
 - In-country visit to share findings with local stakeholders
 - Internal “sense-making”
- Challenges
 - Staff turnover
 - No follow-on program to incorporate learning

Launch and Dissemination of Research

- Two purposes:
 1. Circulate final results.
 2. Build credibility for next iteration of research.
- Research is a *process* – not a single report.

Five Key Takeaways

1. It was important that research was part of an ongoing learning and research agenda.
2. It was important to engage experts of all kinds as part of the research process and particularly as part of the “sense-making” process.
3. Balancing clarity and nuance is a central challenge.
4. For large organizations, internal engagement strategies are as important as external ones.
5. Formal dissemination strategies should be seen as opportunity to disseminate findings *and* establish relationships and credibility for next iteration of research.

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