



PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENTS IN SOMALIA: ANALYSIS ON SOME MAJOR SECTORS

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Abstract

This paper aimed to present the recent situations of private business sector in Somalia. The study selected some major business sectors including telecommunication, financial, transport, trade and manufacturing. The main reason beyond selection of these sectors is the fact that these sectors were the lead of goods and service sector growth and economic contribution to Somalia in general and urban areas in particular. The study utilized two data collection methods; firstly, an interview method of data collection is utilized through asking questions to business experts including business practitioners as well as academic business experts and secondly, an observation method was also employed while the authors have been witnessing the growth of these sectors in Mogadishu, the capital city, and all other states. The study reveals the pressing challenges in Somalia's business environment and different ways private sector contributes to the economy. This paper recommends for both public and private sectors of Somalia to take part the growth and investment on new and existing businesses through technology since it is good for the country's economy.

Keywords: *Telecommunication, Financial, Transport, Trade, Manufacturing, Private Sector, Development, Somalia*



INTRODUCTION

During the challenging and almost three-decade-long conflicts of Somalia, private sector has grown, shown resistance and remained as key driver of the economy. Financial services, trade, telecommunications, transportation and construction (IMF, 2019). These sectors rapidly grew and partially invested through diaspora remittances. However, lack of regulations, presence of anticompetitive factors and pressing security conditions still posing adverse effect on the business communities and hinder expansion of the existing investments in the entire country (World Bank, 2015).

For instance, (Leeson, 2007) wrote that there was a progress in business sector of Somalia in the period of stateless. Light manufacturing goods were invested in Somaliland, Puntland and Southern regions. Hospitality and services grown, a progressed telecommunications sector and locally owned as well as international companies joined the transport industry. He concluded that some indicators, including business variables have been improving even in the civil war era.

Somalia's business community optimally served the people and struggled to provide essential goods and services through offering basic services including health and education. However, the private sector has not achieved some positive outcomes due to absence of regulatory (Nenova, 2004).

Businesses have been doing better in pre - and post –colonial eras and regulations in place have been differently enacted and implemented. The colonial administration was seeking a consumer market for their companies' products while the military regime – with a command economy - from early seventies nationalized the private business through establishing about thirty state owned enterprises which later on turned into aggressively leakage source of public funds and were not properly taxed.

The private sector's contribution to poverty reduction and economic growth has been globally recognized in recent decades. In many and different ways, it injects to the economy an investment, build infrastructure, employs labor force and produce goods and service both for public and private consumptions (Miyamoto & Chiofalo, 2017).

In Somalia, private sector greatly contributes to the economy in different ways. It provides job opportunities to labor force as well as being a key source of livelihood to a huge number of households, participation of facilitating trade, contribution to the economic recovery and is a source of revenue to both national and subnational levels. This paper aims to presents the current status of some key private businesses in Somalia. This incorporates: the roles private business sector played in the economy, the existing challenges and formulating possible solutions and recommendations to the concerned bodies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Situation of Somalia's Some Selected Private Sectors

Somalia's business communities have been struggling to cover the demand of the society either by importing the supplies (mostly) or by locally producing it (rarely). The following sections will demonstrate some related issues touching the selected sectors for the study.

Financial profile of Somalia

Somalia has been without a formal financial institutions and commercial banking sector since the military regime has been overthrown the power in 1991. Before the civil war, Somalia has strong formal financial sector and which were entirely owned by the state including State Insurance Company, Somali Development Bank, Central Bank of Somalia and Commercial and Saving Bank. Upon the collapse of the central government, private companies started running and operating basic financial services such money transferring (earlier) and later on invested in banking sector and insurance. However, the financial sector was very weak in this particular time and all individuals and entities including international organization had no alternative option rather than accepting the poor quality services. Any way, it significantly contributed the diaspora remittances reach the local society and also facilitated partial needs of humanitarian organizations working in the country. Oversight by an active government entity was lacking, resulting an informal financial services happening without government knowledge while this is more agile and more widely used than more formal and bureaucratic financial institutions.

After the civil war, the financial sector has grown up and they currently cover private remittance companies, commercial banks and insurances while the central bank is the regulator. The investment on these services was a job opportunity to many local graduates in either by employment or by providing lower level credits to run small scaled investments. They also provide medium term investments on building, land, real estates and other types of goods purchases.

Although there are many challenges facing the financial sector of Somalia including lack of an effective formal banking sector, absence of staff skills, the insecurity as a result from civil war, weak regulatory framework and security exchange. The Central Bank of Somalia is taking crucial steps to modernize national payments systems. Supported by the international partners such as World Bank.

According to a literature, the payment systems process contributes to the improvement of modern financial sector and market while this facilitates the process of transmitting and confirming transactions prior to settlement and the process turns the promise of payment. Digital payment requests into the actual movement of money from one account to another with speed,

lower cost, reliability, and convenience and settlement will contribute to financial stability in Somalia and evoke domestic and foreign trust in Somali financial institutions.

The expectation is that this development will have a positive impact on economic activity, management of monetary aggregates, transaction costs, and development of new financial products which can become important sources of fee income for financial institutions. These developments also bring Somalia one step closer to the standards of international financial systems. In general Somalia's banking system has got new era after the civil war, the entire financial institutions have been rebuilding from scratch. The financial sector has gradually improved over the last couple of years. And the local private banks established micro investment department, which provide direct loans and grant with the aim of encouraging local entrepreneurs and job creation of the young graduates. The Federal Government of Somalia now reiterated to implementing critical reforms to strengthen the functioning of the Central Bank of Somalia, its governance and to promoting financial sector development. One of the main challenges facing the current government is currency reform, after the civil war the country's currency has been depreciated overtime and its value was under contraction process, the purchasing power party of the country is lower than neighboring countries. Reform involves two phases. In the first, the Central Bank of Somalia will replace the existing Somali shillings in circulation with the new currency issued in small denominations (1,000, 2,000, 5,000, and 10,000). In the second phrase, after strengthening its institutional capacity and developing independent monetary policy instruments and reserve management guidelines, the central bank of Somalia will inject larger denominations of Somali shilling banknotes. Introduction of the new banknotes will mark the first time the bank will have issued currency since 1991. The new notes will help the authorities end widespread counterfeiting but will require increased capacity in the CBS to manage.

Transport Sector

Somalia is located horn of Africa and has a climate in which to support easy construction and facilitates operation of transportation infrastructure and provide abundant natural availability of construction materials inputs although after the civil war broke out in Somalia all local industries were closed.

In the recent years, small industries have been reopened and produced construction materials those cheaper than imported materials from outside countries and this participated to starting new buildings in the whole country specially the main cities like Mogadishu, Kismayo, Baidabo, Garowe, Hargesia and Dhusamareb all these cities have been utilized security stability and based on Federal members of state and Federal Government and continuously they have

getting new investment in every year and the construction of roads, Airports, Ports and Markets are increasing unexpected way. The overall governance and thereby structure of government in Somalia is emerging. Ministry of Public Works, Housing and Reconstruction (MPWHR) is mandated to undertake the planning, design and construction of government buildings, infrastructure such as national roads and bridges, flood control, water projects and other public works; and to promote standards in the construction and housing industries. Currently, the ministry does not have the organizational depth and capacity to undertake or even effectively monitor the large-scale investments proposed in the road sector. At the federal level, a road authority is planned but is not yet functional. The ministry also seems to have the dual role of policy and regulation.

The federal Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation controls the airports, airstrips and airspace in Somalia. It is responsible for all regulatory functions, policy, planning and operations of the aviation sector. However, the ministry and the Somali civil aviation authority (SCAA) are constrained by a shortage of experienced professionals. The SCAA has a regulatory and enforcement mandate and should be separated from all operations as this is a conflict of interest. The MPMT includes offices of the Somali Shipping Agency and the Somali Ports Authority manager. Again, its control and mandate is severely restricted. Several of Somalia's autonomous states have set up highway and port authorities.

In general Somalia has a lot of airports but main airports are eight and 18 other important airstrips across Somalia and key ports in Somalia including both major ports like Mogadishu, Berbera, Kismayo and Bosaaso. Three of these are deep water ports, and all four operate throughout the year. Despite the vagaries of war and time, the infrastructure at the major ports appears to be in reasonably good condition. However, operating performance is poor with low handling speeds. they vary according to the port and cargo but are generally high. The published handling charges are low, but there are excessive additional terminal handling charges imposed on importers by the shipping lines, implying many hidden costs. The ports are vastly over-staffed: Mogadishu has 5,000 workers, and Berbera has around 2,000. Government also uses the ports as the main revenue collection points (customs duties and other fees and taxes). This also contributes to delays and perceived excessive port costs trader is unable to clearly distinguish border and inland revenue costs from real/pure port services related costs. There has been some progress towards adopting a landlord port model at some of the major ports. In particular, the ports are bringing in private operators for cargo handling.

Mogadishu now has Turkish operator (Al Bayrak), and Simatech has been contracted to expand and run the container terminal with a huge investment. Berbera is also considering occasioning a container terminal. Trade corridors contribute significantly to regional integration

and economic development. Currently, the only established corridor connecting Somalia with the rest of Africa is the Berbera-Addis Ababa Corridor. It links Addis Ababa to Sudan in the north and to Mombasa via Nairobi in the south. However, Djibouti offers an alternative destination for Ethiopian exports. Kismayo, in southern Somalia may provide a competitive route to Nairobi and Kampala. Although routes from Somalia to other African countries in the region may not appear rewarding, it is the closer distances to ports in the Middle East, Pakistan, and India and beyond that could add value to these corridors through Somalia. Trade routes between Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia are critical, as improving the transport corridors between these neighboring countries to Somali ports should lead to further growth in regional trade.

In the side of airports Somalia also has four big airports includes Aden international Airport in Mogadishu, Egal in Hargeisa, Garowe and Kismayo. However, there are others in Bosaso, Galkio, Berbara, Baidoba, Dhusamareb and so on. Together, these are major airport and everyday use Domestic and international flights after 2012th every year Somalia gradually increasing the number of international flights arriving and first flight from Turkish airline arrived on March 2012 and later on, many international airlines has announced to starting flights to Somalia and while some others have already started doing so such as: Ethiopia airways, Djibouti, Kenya airways and lastly Qatar airways started a direct flight from Doha to Mogadishu and back and also to other global cities. Uganda flights are expected to commence on late 2019. All these international flights have shown that the country's security getting stable and economically will improve gradually and will create job opportunities as transport businesses tend to open offices inside Somalia for service delivery through employing labor forces while other sectors are gradually growing. Increasing international flights into country also will increase the number of foreigners coming to the country and this can lead to investments.

Telecommunication Sector

After the civil war, some Somali citizen entrepreneurs set-up new businesses including telecommunication companies, to spring up the country and competed to provide missing service, (Abdinasir M. & Sarah C., 2010). Somalia now offers some of the most technologically advanced and competitively priced telecommunications and internet services in the world.. Funded by Somali entrepreneurs and backed by expertise from China, Korea and Europe, these nascent telecommunications firms offer affordable mobile phone and internet services that are not available in many other parts of the continent. Telecommunications, internet, radio and television in the nation are largely concentrated in the private sector. Somali telecommunication companies also provide services to every city, town and hamlet in Somalia. There are presently around 25 mainlines per 1,000 persons, and the local availability of telephone lines (tele-

density) is higher than in neighboring countries; three times greater than in adjacent Ethiopia. Prominent Somali telecommunications companies include; Golis Telecom Group, Hormuud Telecom, Somafone, Nationlink, Somtel, and Telesom. Hormuud Telecom alone grosses about \$40 million a year. Despite their rivalry, several of these companies signed an interconnectivity deal in 2005 that allows them to set prices, maintain and expand their networks, and ensure that competition does not get out of control (Abdinasir M. & Sarah C., 2010). Although this interconnectivity agreement lasted shortly after immediate conflict against certain companies in some areas.

In 2008, Dahabshiil, a multinational money transfer and banking company, acquired a majority stake in Somtel, a Hargeisa-based telecommunications firm specialising in high speed broadband, mobile internet, and mobile phone services. The acquisition provided Dahabshiil with the necessary platform for a subsequent expansion into mobile banking, a growth industry in the regional banking sector.

Investment in the telecom industry is held to be one of the clearest signs that Somalia's economy has continued to develop despite civil strife in parts of the country (Abdinasir M. & Sarah C., 2010). The sector provides key communication services, and in the process facilitates job creation and income generation. On March 22, 2012, the Somali Cabinet unanimously approved the National Communications Act, which, for now, paved the way for the establishment of a National Communications Authority, a national regulatory agency for broadcasting and telecommunications sectors. The bill was passed following consultations between government representatives and communications, academic and civil society stakeholders. According to the Ministry of Information, Posts and Telecommunication, the Act is expected to create an environment conducive to investment and the certainty it provides will encourage further infrastructural development, resulting in more efficient service delivery. Currently the National Communications Law is effective, operational and signed by the president at the end of 2017.

The Somali Telecommunication Association (STA), a watchdog organization that oversees the policy development and regulatory framework of Somalia's ICT sector, reported in 2006 that there were over half a million users of internet services within the territory. There were also 22 established internet service providers and 234 cyber cafes, with an annual growth rate of 15.6%.

In December 2012, Hormuud Telecom launched its Tri-Band 3G service for internet and mobile clients. The first of its kind in the country, this third generation mobile telecommunications technology offers users a faster and more secure connection.

In November 2013, Somalia received its first fiber optic connection. The country previously had to rely on expensive satellite links due to the civil conflict, which limited internet usage. However, residents now have access to broadband internet cable for the first time after an agreement reached between Hormuud Telecom and Liquid Telecom. The deal will see Liquid Telecom link Hormuud to its 17,000 km (10,500 mile) network of terrestrial cables, which will deliver faster internet capacity. The fiber optic connection will also make online access more affordable to the average user. This in turn is expected to further increase the number internet users. Dalkom Somalia reached a similar agreement with the West Indian Ocean Cable Company (WIOCC) Ltd, which it holds shares in. Effective the first quarter of 2014, the deal will establish fiber optic connectivity to and from Somalia via the EASSy cable. The new services are expected to reduce the cost of international bandwidth and to better optimize performance, thereby further broadening internet access. Dalkom Somalia is concurrently constructing a 1,000 square mile state-of-the-art data center in Mogadishu. The site will facilitate direct connection into the international fiber optic network by hosting equipment for all of the capital's ISPs and telecommunication companies.

Manufacturing

Manufacturing sector is very vital for developing countries. It is considered as a source of employment and positive spillovers (Tybout, 2000). In Somalia, the history of manufacturing was brilliant before the civil war era and there were fifty-three small, medium and large enterprises which were running the sector. The country had an opportunity to produce juices, textiles, canned meat, fruits and fish, food stuff, sugar, alcohol, some cosmetics, beverages and candies and so on. However, currently it is very low and so few compared to the past history and also to the countries in the region. The data from Somalia customs indicate that capital machines for manufacturing and raw materials have been increasingly imported to Somalia since last three years. This is an indication of that the future of manufacturing is brilliant for Somalia as a result the society's entrepreneurship characteristics.

However, manufacturing yet remains slow due to insecure and harsh environment with a limit of private investments. These threats made it difficult to attract a modern technology investing (World Bank, 2018). There are several light manufacturing factories surrounding Mogadishu. These factories produce foams, plastic elements, soft drinks and beverages, napkins, furniture, hand-made clothes, aluminum, bricks and interlocks, cement, shampoo and some cleaners, plastic bags. For their encouragement, the government grants customs duty relief for their establishment machines and tools and they are given a 50% of duty reduction importing on raw materials Mogadishu Port. However, manufacturing can be classified as a

small and early stage since it can only produce some light items that cannot significantly contribute to economy.

In other regions such as Somaliland and remaining states do not produce more than aforementioned products and even they do less.

Trade (Export and Import)

In the last three decades Somalia did not have an active government institution which could assist the business community and as a result, the country has lost its trade alliances. However, the private sector did not wait for this, and struggled to overcome all these challenging factors. The pressing challenges included political instability, lack of security, absence of financial and credit support to the business community and weakness of the government institutions (Hassan, Mohamed, Isak, & Mohamed, 2018). Another research by (Mohamed, Isak, & Dr. Ali, 2015) has revealed that agricultural products including the livestock had excelled the export sector of Somalia. Business communities tried to solve the domestic demand of the society by either in a trade means (for importing) or in a domestic supplying through local productions. Furthermore, exports of Somalia depends on mainly living livestock such as camels, sheep, and goats, their products of hides and skins, butter, bananas, sesame, sesame oil, natural gum, different types of fish and aquatic particulars and so on. These are main export items in Somalia. While Somalia's main imports consist of as follows: construction materials, food stuff, textiles and footwear, vehicles, Khat, fuel and petroleum products, pharmaceuticals and hospital materials, electrics and electronic items, cosmetics and so on. The main ports for trade entry and exit of the country are Mogadishu, Bosasso, Kismayo and Berbera (Somaliland).

The country's import was almost three billion US Dollar in 2017 with main trade partners of China, India, United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, Kenya, Turkey and Oman while the export was almost half a billion US Dollar which mostly destined to Oman, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and other gulf countries.

Somalia's private sector has grown considerably, particularly in the spheres of trade, commerce and infrastructure and number of Somali areas have established favorable business environments that have facilitated investment in sectors including livestock, telecommunications, and remittances. But this remains limited to address the extreme poverty facing the country and its people.

METHODOLOGY

An interview methodology is used while deeply questioning ten business experts in the selected sectors. Five of these experts are business practitioners while others are academic business

experts who have been teaching and consulting the above mentioned fields of businesses and investments. The authors have also an experience to witness the evolution of recent business developments in Mogadishu, the capital city and other three different states of Somalia which are Southwest, Galmudug and Hirshabelle.

RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

Current Roles of Private Sector

Businesses have been playing critical roles in the Somali community. These roles are deeply discussed below:

1. **Provision of Goods and Services:** private sector in Somalia has been satisfying the demand of the society in last three decades. In the goods market, it provides light domestically manufactured goods while importing non-locally-produced goods to Somalia; however, there are few exporting items to mostly gulf countries. And in the services market, it has been providing to the society financial - money transfer & banking – services, local and abroad transportation, logistical, freight and shipment services, telecommunications and e-money, construction, hospitality, health, education and technology requirements. These business activities have been vital and key drivers to the country's informal economy as also reported by (IMF, 2019).
2. **A Source of Livelihood & Job Creation:** businesses in Somalia create economic opportunities and greater wealth and also act as the biggest employers in urban areas. However of having informality in the labor and production market, private sector employs a huge number of skilled labor forces either through working in others' business entities or self-employment in their own small businesses. In Somalia, micro and medium scale shops form a vital source of livelihood to many families in urban areas while in rural, agriculture and livestock resources act this role. Businesses assist the society to continue in a welfare living through creation of employment opportunities.
3. **Contribution to the reconstruction, peace building and recovery:** business sector are actively participating the reconstruction and peace building in Somalia in general and Mogadishu in particular. They participated in rehabilitation of the roads, construction of business centers, resorts, hotels and investing numerous viable businesses. Not only the physical construction, they have also contributed to building a technological infrastructure, ICT solutions and building human capital since the education and health services were privately provided in last two to three decades. Private sector has also contributed to conflict resolution while encouraging parties to skip from conflicts pursuing their own business development and creating a safe environment for their activities.

4. **Enhancing and Facilitating Trade:** traders have been taking goods to and from Somalia since long time. For satisfying the society demand that exceeds the domestic production, traders have been importing goods from global accessible markets; also named as trade partners. The key importing goods have included food stuff, Khat, petroleum products, vehicles, electronics, textiles, cosmetics, construction materials and plastics while exporting items are livestock, few agricultural products, incense, precious stones and metals. Top important partners are United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, India, China, Kenya and Oman while key export partners are Saudi Arabia, Oman and United Arab Emirates.
5. **A Revenue Source for the Government:** in the last six years, businesses have been paying different types of taxes to the governments in both national level and subnational level. However, of that their revenue funding to governments were lower than legally required, their contribution is significant compared recent history of the civil war. The government wishes to continue domestic revenue mobilization and increase collecting taxes from the businesses through expanding the tax base in both horizontally and vertically. See (Isak, 2018) and (Mohamud & lask, 2019).

Current Challenges

There are some pressing challenges in which the private sector has been operating. These, among others are some existing challenging factors:

1. **Weak legal and regulatory framework:** In almost two decades of the civil war period, there were weak governments which were characterized with a limited power and significantly weak institutional capacity. This has caused inability of the governments to balance the market through regulations and businesses to informally work in the market without government involvement in almost the entire business activities. The regulatory framework could also manage to overcome the massive violations against property rights.
2. **Existence of monopoly in some sectors:** a monopoly market system exists in Somalia, as a huge number of the population can buy goods and services only from few sellers in the market and so; a barrier to the market entry significantly exists. A self-established monopoly or oligopoly type of companies dominated the goods and service markets based on the access to power in the environments of performing their businesses. Due to absence of competition, the monopolistic featured market poses consumer exploitation, poorly provided services, discriminated or higher prices and also a wide production of inferior goods.
3. **Working in a challenging environment:** Somalia has been in an environment of having a challenging security and political instability as found also by **Invalid source specified..** The business sector has also been working in such pressing challenges as stated by the study of

(Hassan, Mohamed, Isak, & Mohamed, 2018). They stated that the private business communities invested some African and Asian countries due to lack of secure environment in their land of Somalia. The country is characterized by vulnerable economy, in which most of activities are happening out of government framework, a political fragility and a limited security power of the federal government are still significant sources of risk to the expansion of the investments outside urban areas and business developments in general.

- 4. *Doing business at high cost:*** Compared to other countries in the world and also the region, Somalia had the lowest score of annual doing business report by the World Bank (2019). Private sector meets huge challenges in their way to establish, get necessary legal documents to operate and provide goods or services to the market. This also exists most of Sub-Saharan countries. The absence of credit provision, high cost of electricity, risk of trading across borders with possibility of multiple payments and presence of insolvency in small scale businesses create high level sustained constraints threatening the developments of the private sector.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper aimed to explore the recent developments of private business sector in Somalia. The study has selected some major business sectors including telecommunication, financial, transport, trade, manufacturing and infrastructure. The main reason beyond selection of these sectors is the fact that these sectors were leading the growth and economic contribution to Somalia in general and urban areas in recent period of time.

The study revealed that private sector contributed to Somalia economy in several ways such as: enhancing and facilitating trade, contribution to the economic recovery, a source of livelihood & job creation and provision of goods and services.

Somalia is on its way to economic recovery and is huge potential market for most of modern services. The country is aiming to exploit the natural resources of petroleum and fisheries while the agriculture and livestock require a very sophisticated production activities and huge investment in both domestic and international levels. Based on this aspect, business related legal reforms and establishing an attractive environment will create a good opportunity to investors and business sector.

This paper is recommended for both business and private sectors of Somalia to take part the growth and investment on new and existing businesses through technology since it is good for the country's economy. The study recommends to competent authority, to better manage the business sector and strongly institutionalize the necessary government organs to regulate the market while pursuing a proper policy reforms to maintain the market in economically

equilibrium and avoid of consumer and labor exploitation and to keep rule of law is an important factor that could encourage the business creation. It also recommends creating a safe and secure environment for both domestic and foreign investment, improve country's infrastructures, develop an effective market policy and government regulations towards market while targeting eliminating the challenges. While we have not seen a similar study in Somalia only this study is not enough in the area and we recommend further research on the Private Sector Developments in Somalia as we see this sector makes daily improvement compared to previous time and we wish many studies related to this area will come up solutions about the challenges of the Somali's business and will facilitate to attract foreign investment.

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