The Ogaden conflict (1977–78) resulted in a large influx of refugees into Somalia from the neighbouring Ethiopia. A feasibility study, carried out in 1980–81 by DANIDA on behalf of UNHCR and approved by the Ministry of Education (MOE), led to the creation in 1981 of the Institute of In–Service Teacher Training (IITT). From 1981 till 1990 when Civil War started, IITT was engaged in:

In–service teacher training for primary school teachers in refugee camps

Refugee Adult Education (RAE)

Teachers’ upgrading course in preparation for the Teachers Qualifying Exam which included secondary–level subject examinations together with a professional education examination.

All the above programmes were designed and executed using in–service and distance education (DE) methods.

Existing situation of DE in Somalia

The only DE activity that is going on now in Somalia is SOMOLU (Somali Open Learning Unit). It is a UNESCO–Somalia initiative and forms part of UNESCO's overall strategy for the rehabilitation of the education sector in Somalia. It seeks to provide in–service training to teachers who need it. Using DE techniques, it offers to teacher trainees sound pedagogic and administrative training spread over 4 Units (40 Assignments).

As an integral part of SOMOLU, an adult literacy programme has been launched. Two other components of SOMOLU, on which UNESCO writers are currently working, are: an English as Second Language (ESL) course and a
secondary education DE package. Table 1 presents the beneficiaries of these programmes.

Table 1
SOMOLU Beneficiaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programmes</th>
<th>Beneficiaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Training</td>
<td>Practising untrained teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>Teachers, adults and adolescents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary education</td>
<td>Teachers, adults and adolescents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>Adults, women's groups, students of technical institutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOMOLU Objectives**

1. *To staff adequately all primary schools in the country with well–trained teachers in a short period of time.*

   Rationale: Even before the Civil War, as teacher salaries did not keep pace with increase in consumer prices, many teachers quit teaching. A World Bank–UNESCO report estimated in 1987 that "the wastage rate of regularly established teachers, at around 25% per annum could well be the highest in the world." 1 In the wake of the Civil War there was a massive migration of professionals including teachers. Today, in Somalia's schools, the untrained and unqualified teachers outnumber certified teachers (CTs).

   UNESCO–Somalia addressed this problem on a short–term basis by organizing workshops for headmasters, head teachers and regional trainers to introduce them to the proper use textbooks and teacher guides it had printed. They, in turn, introduced these curricular and pedagogic materials to their teachers. Thanks to this short–term strategy, throughout the country, schools are not only open, but more important, maintain acceptable academic standards.

   While UNESCO's short–term strategy did prove effective, it was obvious that the problem of untrained teachers could not be solved except through a large–scale, crash, in–service teacher training programme.

2. *To provide secondary–level distance education to adolescents and adults.*

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Rationale: The education of tens of thousands of young Somalis was interrupted by civil war. They have been deprived of their right to secondary education and prospects of career advancement. SOMOLU teacher trainees, too, need to upgrade themselves and acquire a secondary school leaving certificate.

3. To provide to illiterate adults, women's groups and students of technical institutes literacy and numeracy related to their life and occupation.

Rationale: The Ministry of National Planning (1990) and WFP–Somalia (1991) estimated the population of Somalia at 7,500,000. Current estimates range from 6,000,000 to 8,000,000. Even in pre–civil war days less than 1% of GNP was spent on education and the country never attained more than 24% literacy rate. The vast majority of adult Somalis are unlettered and a literacy campaign related to life and occupation is very much needed. This is true, particularly, in the case of women. In the wake of the civil war, there has been an increase of female–headed families in Somalia and women as bread–winners need basic literacy and numeracy. Also, adolescents who are getting enrolled in the technical institutes now starting in several places in Somalia are in need of basic education. The training in trades they get must go hand in hand with literacy and numeracy.

Main activities carried out and means used

Teacher Training

The SOMOLU teacher training package consists of five Units. The first three Units (30 Assignments) deal with teaching methods at the primary level. On completion of this First Phase, each trainee is required to appear for an examination of basic academic proficiency in subject matter areas covered at the primary level before being given a Diploma in Basic Teacher Training. This Diploma and the successful completion of the English as Second Language course (Phase Two) are the requirements for proceeding to the Third Phase which consists of one Unit (10 Assignments) dealing with educational administration and supervision. The trainees who successfully complete these 10 Assignments will receive a Diploma in Educational Administration and Supervision.

As SOMOLU is an open learning package, each trainee can set his own pace and complete the training in 12 to 18 months.

At the time of this writing, two SOMOLU centres are operational—the one in Mogadishu from April 1, 1994 and the other in Baidoa from July 19, 1994. There are altogether 250 students. The centres are attached to NGO–run schools sharing the same facilities. In each centre, two resident tutors distribute curricular materials, conduct tutorials for individuals and groups, give out, collect, correct and evaluate assignments. In the absence of a working postal system, radio or television only
those who are in the vicinity of the UNESCO Education Development Centres (EDCs) in Mogadishu and Baidoa are able to register for SOMOLU. In the coming months, SOMOLU centres are scheduled to start in Garbaharey, Garoe, the Somali refugee camps in Dadaab (Kenya) and Djibouti.

In addition to tutors, each UNESCO–Somalia EDC has its SOMOLU Coordinator—the one in Mogadishu having the ultimate responsibility for the programme wherever it is offered.

All but three of SOMOLU Assignments have been prepared. The printing is done in-house in the low-cost printing facility attached to each of the EDCs. In addition to the course materials, work-sheets and evaluation forms for each Assignment have been prepared.

Both in Mogadishu and Baidoa, regular study group meetings and face to face tutorials are held once a week. Lecture method is not used. Even physically the classroom is set-up in such a way that it discourages lecturing. Trainees set their own pace and complete Assignments not all at the same time.

Trainees are charged SoSh 30,000 per Unit. This is paid by the trainees themselves or by sponsoring NGOs.

**Literacy**

Seven primers and a teacher guide have been prepared. To prevent neo-literates from lapsing back into illiteracy, a modest post-literacy provision has been made in terms of three Somali storybooks, a series of health education textbooks and a booklet on cholera and diarrhoea prevention. Several occupation-related primers, teacher guides and storybooks are in different stages of preparation. The programme is being piloted in Baidoa and Bardera in collaboration with two women’s groups. It will be extended to other parts of the country.

Currently, UNESCO is working with NGOs engaged in imparting technical skills to ex-gunmen or potential gunmen. The idea is to supplement the acquisition of these skills with basic literacy and numeracy.

**ESL and Secondary Education**

Work on these two SOMOLU components is yet to start.

**Problems and constraints**

*Funding:* IITT was totally funded by external donor agencies but for the secondment, on full salary, of a number of senior staff from the MOE. This was the case with a functioning government and it is easy to see the need today for donor support for
SOMOLU. Yet, one witnesses donor fatigue and reluctance to help Somalia. A rapid expansion of SOMOLU is highly desirable but not possible owing to financial constraints.

Fees: One way of making the programme partially sustainable was to levy fees. Fee-levying is not unknown in Somalia. Koranic schools, language training institutes, private primary schools etc do charge fees, some of them as much as SoSh 20,000 a month. Yet, many SOMOLU trainees find it difficult to pay SoSh 30,000 per Unit as they are not remunerated adequately or just receive Food for Work from WFP (World Food Programme). Moreover, in Somalia, there has been the tradition of paying trainees a daily subsistence allowance for attending vacation courses, training workshops, etc. The transition from being paid to having to pay has been difficult for many teacher trainees.

Teacher salaries: As mentioned above, teachers teaching in several schools have no remuneration other than WFP’s Food for Work. Some of the international NGOs had been paying salaries up to $150 a month but they have been cases lately of salary reduction and abrupt winding up of operations. Teachers have not been able to support their families and many have found other means of augmenting their meagre income. Teacher absenteeism and lack of application to work are noted in schools. In this context, it is safe to assume that the SOMOLU diploma will become attractive only when there are chances of qualified teachers being remunerated adequately for their work.

Government: In Southern Somalia there is no government while in the North West, UNESCO educational programmes are not enjoying an acceptable degree of operational and professional autonomy due to the interference of the "Government of Somaliland."

Worsening security situation: SOMOLU enrollment is high and tends to increase except when security situation deteriorates and there is a drop in attendance. In Mogadishu, particularly, there has been a drop in SOMOLU attendance owing to the continuing clan warfare.

Transportation: Roads are not safe. In many parts of the country all vehicular movement depends on the availability of escorts or convoys. With the imminent UNOSOM pull-out, transportation is likely become even more difficult and costly.

Fragmentation and growing regionalism: In Somalia, nationalism has given way to regionalism. While short visits, running of workshops etc are still possible for educationists, permanent employment outside of one's region is becoming difficult.

Need to generate and revise materials: Almost all of the valuable materials prepared by IITT have been lost except a few samples kept in the International Extension College, Cambridge. All SOMOLU materials were generated in a hurry and hence in need of improvement.
Printing machinery and supplies have to come from abroad. Establishing and maintaining a printing facility in each of the EDCs has not been easy.

Audio cassettes are extremely popular among Somalis but facilities for recording and duplicating audio cassettes are primitive; facilities for servicing equipment are non-existent.

Communication: There is no national telephone network. Television stations do not exist. Radio stations are controlled by warring factions. There is no postal system and correspondence assignments and work-sheets cannot be mailed to Mogadishu to be marked by tutors.

Lab facilities: Secondary-level subjects involve lab experiments. The available alternatives are to bring trainees together periodically in urban centres or devise experiment kits. Financial support is yet to be found and logistics of bringing trainees together for annual vacation courses are yet to be worked out.

Trainees: The entry-level qualifications of trainees are not uniform with adverse consequences for training, certification etc.

Teaching methods: Movement from lecture method to tutorial system was accomplished but the transition was difficult. In Somalia, there is the Koranic school tradition of teacher dominance, repetition and rote learning as opposed to discussion and participation.

Understaffing: SOMOLU staff are not able to concentrate exclusively on the programme as they have other administrative and academic commitments in UNESCO EDCs. No separate administrative support is provided to the SOMOLU programme and no centralized record-keeping has been possible so far.

Evaluation: We have not been able as yet to evaluate the effectiveness of the SOMOLU learning materials or of the teaching methods.

Unresolved policy matters: There many unresolved policy matters like the choice of a medium of instruction, community involvement, sustainability of schools, etc. Owing to security-related problems, UNESCO’s plans for a Somalia Education Conference have not yet materialized.

Needs Assessment

The necessary pre-requisites for solving the above problems are:
1. National reconciliation and formation of a stable government.

2. Continued donor interest and support.

SOMOLU's own needs in terms of improving the quality of its intervention are:

1. Funds and

2. Consultancies in the areas of distance education, English as second language and adult education related to life and occupation.

SOMOLU's growth needs are:

1. Expansion of the in–service teacher training programme to cover the whole country and meet its full requirements for trained teachers.

2. Speedy completion of the DE secondary–level, ESL and adult education curricular materials and launching of these programmes.

Proposals for Cooperation

In country, SOMOLU programme has been heavily dependent on the cooperation of NGOs, both local and international.

SOMOLU draws its inspiration from IITT (Institute of In–Service Teacher Training, Somalia) and SOLU (Sudan Open Learning Unit). Almost all of the SOMOLU material has been adapted from SOLU (Sudan Open Learning Unit) and made culturally sensitive to the Somali context. Some material came from the International Extension College (IEC) whose experts had been instrumental in the planning and execution of the commendable work done earlier by IITT.

Within the next few months, within the next few months, will be offered in the Somali refugee camps of Kenya, Yemen and Djibouti and Ethiopia.

SOMOLU is very much interested in cooperating with sister institutions abroad in research, co–production and exchange of materials, information exchange, documentation, staff training and technical cooperation.