**SOMALIA**

**Location**

Somalia is a coastal nation located in Eastern African at the Horn of Africa, which consists of Somalia, Ethiopia and Djibouti. Its’ northern and mid-west region is bordered by Djibouti and Ethiopia. Kenya is at its southwest border and the Gulf of Eden is located north of Somalia. The Indian Ocean makes up its eastern border. Somalia is located between 11.55N and 1.39S and approximately 40E and 51E. Somalia has an area of 637,657 square kilometers. The coastline is 3,025 km. long, which is the longest in Africa. The country is divided into eighteen different regions. The largest city is its’ capital, Mogadishu.

**Geography**

The northern region of Somalia is hilly, and in many places the altitude ranges between 900 and 2,000 meters above sea level. The southern and central areas are flat, mostly plateaus, with an average altitude of less than 180 meters above sea level. The lowest point is the Indian Ocean at 0 m, and the highest point is Shimbiris, which is 2,416m. The Shebelle and Juba Rivers rise in Ethiopia and flow south across the country, towards the Indian Ocean. The Shebelle only reaches the sea during seasons of high rain. Somalia makes up Italy’s former Trust Territory of Somalia and the former British Protectorate of Somaliland, which is now trying to become recognized as a free state.

**Climate**

The climate in Somalia is predominantly desert. It has a year-round hot climate, with seasonal monsoon winds, depending on the region. Somalia has irregular rainfall patterns with recurring droughts. The range of daily temperature is 85-105 degrees Fahrenheit, except for areas of higher elevations and along the coastline. Here the range of daily minimum temperature
is 60-85 Fahrenheit. The southwest monsoon seasons takes place in the months of May-Oct. The northeast monsoon season occurs during Dec.-Feb. The periods between the two monsoon seasons is termed tangambi. Tangambi is Oct-Nov. and March-May. During this time, the weather is very hot and humid.

Most of the country receives less than 500 mm of rain annually. A large area in the north receives 50-150 mm per year, except for some higher areas. The southwest, on the other hand receives 330-550 mm annually.

**History**

Between the 7th and 10th century, immigrant Muslim Arabs and Persians established trading posts in Somalia. Then, during the 15th and 16th century, Somalia warriors regularly joined armies of Muslim Sultanates in their battles with Christian Ethiopia. The British, French and Italian imperialism began to play an active role there in the 19th century. The French controlled the northernmost region, the area now known as Djibouti and the British colonized some of northern Somalia, naming it British Somaliland, while the Italians governed the Southern regions, calling its area, Italian Somaliland. Ethiopia controlled the inland region of the Ogaden, and Kenya controlled land on its northern border inhabited by Somalis, called the Northern Frontier District (NFD). Somalia finally gained independence from Britain and Italy on July 1, 1960. In 1969 the military government assumed power following the assassination of President Shermarke. Recurrent civil war has gone on in Somalia since 1977. In 1991, the northern portion declared its independence, and declared its name Somaliland. This was not recognized by the foreign government.

Civil war and the worst African drought of the century created famine in 1992, creating 300,000 deaths. There were multiple floods in 1997. Somalia was severely affected by the tsunami which hit in 2004. Entire villages were destroyed and approximately 300 people were
killed. In January 2006, disputing factions agreed to convene the Parliament in Somalia, but did not specify where.

**Important Dates**

- July 1- Independence Day
- August 4- Dabshid
- Wajina starts constantly on November 3rd but varies in length from 1 to 30 days, completing the lunar month in which November 3rd falls.
- Dhair Dambesama is a Moslem lunar month in November to December. The variation in data of its beginning is 25 days in the period 1944-51 shown in the Calendar.
- Hais is a Moslem month in December to January varying in starting date up to 25 days. The Gregorian Calendar's New Year's day is always in Hais.
- Mehrjan Hais is one to two months in January to February, to complete the six months of the Jilal half-year. Any rain falling in this Mehrjan is included in Hais.
- Todob (the month of Dirir Adi Asseye) is a lunar month in February to March, varying in starting date up to 25 days.
- Daido is a lunar month in March or April, varying in starting up to 25 days. (The Christian Easter Sunday is always the Sunday after the full moon of Daido.)
- Sermawedo is a lunar month in April to May, varying up to 25 days. Most stock-breeders try to mate sheep so that lambs will be born in September. The 25 days variation (according to the Solar Calendar) is the best date for the birth of the lambs, is reminiscent of the custom of planting potatoes about Good Friday in parts of Britain.
- 'Aul is a lunar month in May to June varying up to 25 days.
- Sagallo (or Sakaro) is a lunar month in June to July varying up to 25 days.
Mehrjan is the balance of days, if any, between the end of Sagallo and the beginning of the Karan (Samalaho) on July 15th.

From July 25th the Somali rain seasons are constant by the Solar Calendar, til the end of the Dhair on November 2nd.

**Population**

The population count for Somalia is hard to accurately survey due to the Somalis political situation and nomadic life style. The closest estimate is 8,863,338, figured out by a census taken by the Somali government. Eighty five percent of the people in Somalia are Somali in ethnicity. The other 15% are Bantu or some other non-Somali ethnicity. There are six major clans: Daarood, Isaaq, Hawije, dir, rahanwayn, and digil.

The population growth rate in Somalia is 2.85%, and the life expectancy is 48.47 years on average. The infant mortality rate in this country is 115 deaths for every 1000 live births. Sixty percent of the population are of nomadic nature, raising cattle, sheep, goat, or camels. Another 25% of the population are farmers, living mainly between the Juba and Shebelle rivers where the land is more fertile. The rest of the population is urban.

**Currency**

The currency in Somalia is the Somali Shilling (SOS). One SOS = 100 cents. The SOS has been the currency in this country since 1921. Coin usage here is unknown. In the north, the 500 SOS and 1000 SOS notes are still in circulation, while in the south, only the 1000 SOS note remains.

**Education**

In Somalia, the literacy rate is 37.8% of people over the age of fifteen. They have primary schooling for those ages 6-14, and secondary schooling is for kids 15-18. Their one principal institution of higher education is the Somali National University located in Mogadishu.
There is a UNICEF program in Somalia which works with children both inside and outside of the school system. Its focus is to re-establish and expand the formal primary schooling system within Somalia that had basically been destroyed during the years of civil war.

**Language**

One hundred percent of the Somalis speak the Somali language. Most of the Somalis also recognize or understand Arabic, mainly because of their religious ties in the country due to Islam. The Somali language consists mostly of many Arabic vocabularies. Until the 1970's, education was conducted in the language of colonial rule, therefore older Somalis from northern Somalia are conversant in English and those from southern Somalia are conversant in Italian.

**Religion**

Most of the Somalis are Sunni Muslims, so in Somalia, attitudes, social customs and gender roles are primarily based on the Islamic religion. Many religious holidays involve the ritual killing of a goat or lamb. Loyalty to Islam reinforces distinctions that set Somalis apart from their African neighbors who are mostly either Christians or followers of indigenous African faiths. Less than 1% of ethnic Somalis are Christians.

**Agriculture**

One of the world's poorest and least developed countries, Somalia has few resources. Moreover, much of the economy has been devastated by the civil war. Agriculture in Somalia is its most important economic sector. It constitutes for 40% of its GDP and 65% of its export earnings. Only 1.6% of Somalia’s total land area is cultivated, and 69% is permanent pasture. The Somalis have traditionally engaged in rain-fed, dry-land farming or in dry-land farming complemented by irrigation from either the waters of the Shebelle and Juba rivers or collected rainwater. Corn, sorghum, beans, rice, vegetables, cotton and sesame are grown by both methods. Somali and Italian farmers operating the banana farms practice the more modern
European-style techniques, as do some of the newly created Somali cooperatives. A system of state administered farms grew rapidly in the early 1970s. Bananas constitute the nations major commercial crop, yet Somalia is the world’s leading producer in frankincense. Livestock raised in this country are sheep, cattle, goats, and camels.

**Trade**

The money Somalia earns from their exports is $110 million. The products exported are livestock, bananas, hides and skins, sugar, sorghum, and corn. The major markets are Saudi Arabia, Yemen, United Arab Emirates, Italy, and Pakistan.

The imports are worth $314 million. These consist of food grains, animal and vegetable oils, petroleum products, and construction materials. The major suppliers of these imports are Kenya, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, and India.

**Food**

Southern Somalia has a large agricultural and international trading component to its society, therefore the diets here are richer in green vegetables, corn and beans. Also in southern Somalia, especially the areas in the cities, are more familiar with Western foods such as pasta and canned goods. The nomadic lifestyle of those living in northern Somalia supports a diet heavier in milk and meat, as well as rice and cereals obtained through trade.

Some of the national specialties in Somalia are lobster, prawn, squid, crab and fresh tuna, as well as Somali bananas, mangoes, papaya, roast kid and spiced rice. During times of peace, restaurants in the major cities serve Chinese, European, Italian and Somali foods.

**Landmarks**

The Bakara Market is a central market place more predominantly referred to as “Black Hawk Down,” due to its role in the Somalian war battles, although there were also other incidents which make this marketplace well known. Shanghai Old Village is a former
playground for the wealthy which is now controlled by warlords. It is not open to the public but still remains one of the area’s most scenic spots.

Sarah Sunderhaus