

# Family (Kinship) in Somali Culture



# Essential Question:

How does family life shape community life in Somalia and in Somali-American communities in the U.S.?



## Learning Targets:

1. I can explain the importance of family life and kinship in Somalia.
2. I can describe how families are structured in Somalia.
3. I can explain how Somali cultural values affect family relationships and responsibilities.

# Importance of Family

- **Central Aspect of Life:**  
Family is the most important aspect for Somalis.
- **Support Networks:**  
Relatives are mutually reliant on one another.
- **Expansive Kinship Network:**  
Includes extended family members and clan affiliations.



# Clan and Ancestry

- Each family belongs to a broader **clan and sub-clan** based on shared ancestry.
- All clan affiliations are inherited through the **father's lineage**.
- “Family” refers to an expansive kinship network, including extended family members.



# Somali Tribes



# Family Dynamics

- **Collectivist Nature:**  
Communal responsibilities are emphasized.
- **Child Rearing:**  
The whole family and community are responsible for a child's upbringing.
- **Discipline:**  
It is accepted for children to be disciplined by any adult in the community.



# Resource-Sharing

## Pooling Resources:

Families often combine resources to meet collective needs.

## Support from Wealthier Relatives:

Those in better economic positions support less fortunate family members.

## Remittances:

Somalis abroad send money back home, comprising nearly one-fourth of household incomes in Somalia.

# The Remittance Dilemma

There is heavy demand for wiring funds to Somalia, which derives more of its income from international money transfers than any other source ...



... but U.S. banks worry the funds they transmit could land in the wrong hands because of conditions in the African country

- Informal economy, with little government oversight
- No anti-money-laundering laws
- No due diligence, SARs for money transmitters
- Terrorist group Al-Shabaab gets donations from domestic and foreign sympathizers

Sources: "Challenges for the Somali Money Transfer Sector" by Anna Lindley and Jason Mosley; U.S. State Department, 2014 report on narcotics control strategy

# Respect for Elders

**High Respect for Parents and Elders**

**Influence on Decisions:**

Most decisions, especially for women, continue to be influenced by parents in adulthood.

**Care for Elders:**

Children and grandchildren care for elder family members into old age.



# Household Structure

**Large, Multi-Generational Households** traditionally consist of three generations:

- The eldest couple
- Their sons, sons' wives, and unmarried daughters
- Grandchildren from married sons



# Venn Diagram Activity

Shared Traits

Somali  
Family Traits

Your Family's  
Traits

