

# Effectiveness of Community-Centred Approaches in The Establishment of Local Governance Structures in Somalia; A Case of Formation of District Councils in Jubaland, Hirshabelle, Southwest, and Galmudug States

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## ABSTRACT

After Somalia emerged from civil war, she adopted a federal system of government. This arrangement and the subsequent formation of federal member states created room for the formation of local district councils through an indirect electoral process, mediated by traditional elders. Following the 2013 parliamentary legislation for the administration of the districts, Federal Member States (FMS), in conjunction with the federal government adopted the National Framework for local governance, better known as the “Wadajir Framework” in 2015 that tied democratisation, decentralisation and reconciliation to the formation of local district governance structures. NDP-9, articulated district councils as an indispensable organ of government for both poverty reduction and service delivery, a bridge to connect the public with the process of state-building. The country’s NDP-9 supports this by stating that the local government is an essential organ for the stabilisation of the country. From the federal government’s point of view, strengthening local government across Somalia is a national priority because “communities rely on local government for the bulk of their services”. Currently, the provision of public services by the state remains minimal, and local governments are not yet fully re-established across the country. City mayors and district commissioners are still largely appointed by the presidents of FMS. The goal of the WNF is to establish local governments where the citizenry participates in elections. At the societal level, these elections at the local level create avenues for reconciliation. Politically, the local government is a vehicle for long-term stability and a means to decentralise both authority and services, connecting the Somali public to the process of state formation and grassroots reconciliation and peacebuilding. The Local Governance Support (LG) project was aligned to the reconciliation, peacebuilding, inclusive governance and stabilisation priorities of both the federal and state governments in Somalia. In particular, it supports the realisation of aspirations in the Wadajir Framework for Local Governance (2015) whose inherent logic is to link strategic objectives at the federal level to the operational objectives at the state level. While the project built on some existing governance and partner efforts, deeper collaborations remained largely superficial due to inherent coordination limitations between diverse stakeholders like government agencies (FGS and FMS), community platforms, clan structures and external partners. Structural integration of project initiatives into intersecting governmental, sociocultural and gender networks would further reinforce outcomes through synergistic planning, implementation, and impact sustainability. Across the beneficiary districts, the study found evidence of successful implementation of interventions aimed at strengthening the administrative and operational systems. The study applied a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection strategies. The quantitative method entailed a survey of the beneficiaries (Households) based on the approved questionnaire while the qualitative approach employed KIIs, FGDs, and human interest/change stories. Findings from desk review, diverse actor views, experiences and opinions have been triangulated in arriving at objective and evidence-based conclusions and recommendations. The study adopted outcome harvesting principles to analyse the project theory of change and judge actual project impact along the key study questions (as outlined in the OECD DAC criteria).

**Key Words:** Local Governance; Decentralization; Stabilisation; Inclusive Governance; Social Reconciliation; Civic Dialogue.

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

#### National Context

Since the rebirth of what some scholars termed as the “third Somalia republic” in 2000, the country has been making slow but steady progress towards political stabilisation, adopting federalism as its system of governance in 2004. The country adopted the provisional constitution in 2012. Although it has not been ratified by a popular national referendum, the constitution has laid the basis for the proliferation of what is now referred to as the federal member states. Article 1 of the federal provisional constitution stipulates that “Somalia is federal” while article 48 of the provisional constitution specifies that the “state is composed of two levels of government,” the federal and the federal member states. Although it does not elaborate its roles and responsibilities, the provisional constitution recognises local government as a structure of governance in a federated Somalia.

Initially, proponents lauded federalism as the political pathway to decentralised authority and as a means to social reconciliation while opponents equated federalism to a ‘balkanization’ of what used to be the post-colonial Somali Republic. However, the federal arrangement and the subsequent formation of federal member states created room for the formation of local district councils through an indirect electoral process, mediated by traditional elders. Following the 2013 parliamentary legislation for the administration of the districts, federal member states in conjunction with the federal government adopted the National Framework for local governance, better known as the “Wadajir Framework” in 2015.

The Wadajir framework tied democratisation, decentralisation and reconciliation to the formation of local district governance structures. In real terms, the formation of local district councils presented an opportunity to devolve power and deliver services to the people. The main challenges to the realisation of decentralised authority have been threefold; political instability, insecurity, and to a certain degree, the absence of political will at the federal member states level. Critics argue that federal member states became another layer of centralized power and thwarted the formation of local district councils.

Nevertheless, the importance and dire need for a functioning local district council is not lost. Somalia’s Ninth National Development Plan, abbreviated as NDP9, articulated district councils as an indispensable organ of government for both poverty reduction and service delivery, a bridge to connect the public with the process of state-building. The country’s NDP9 states that the local government is an essential organ for the stabilisation of the country. From the federal government's point of view, “strengthening local government” across Somalia is a national priority because “communities rely on local government for the bulk of their services.” The prioritisation of local government as a pathway to stability and a means to reduce poverty is a promising national plan to be built upon.

#### Local Governance Context

In the post-colonial political history of Somalia, 1969 marked the last time that local government representatives were nationally elected. This was followed by 21 years of military rule. Under this militarized dictatorship, representatives of local government were appointed, and power was heavily centralised. Local governments provided very few services since people traveled to Mogadishu for almost all the basic services such as passports, birth certificates, and drivers’ licenses until the violent disintegration of the state in 1991. In the following decades, state-provided services became non-existent both in urban centers and remote districts. Even now, the provision of public services by the state remains minimal, and local government is not yet fully re-established across the country. City mayors and district commissioners are still largely appointed by the presidents of federal member states. In Mogadishu, the mayor is for example appointed by the seating president of the day, and the mayor in turn appoints all the district commissioners. Puntland is now an

exceptional case in the sense that it conducts direct, one-person, one-vote elections, an experiment that has been carried out in 33 districts. Somaliland too, has been holding one-person, one-vote elections in the last twenty years. For the rest of Somalia, a hybrid system, direct appointment, and indirect elections have been deployed in the formation of local governments.

To begin with, Southwest has been the leading example in the formation of district councils through indirect election in what used to be referred to as south-central Somalia which comprises Galmudug, Hirshabelle, Southwest, and Jubaland. Since 2017, stakeholders amplified the call for district council formation through indirect elections, mediated by elders. These indirect elections took place in Hudur, Bardale, Wajid, Barawe, Burhakaba, and Dinsoor. Research indicates that the formation of district councils is a means to both political and social reconciliation if the process is not manipulated by politicians at the federal and state levels. Despite limitations coming from the lack of security, especially from al-Shabab, Southwest seems to be the leading state in the formation of local governments as a means to political stabilisation and bringing services closer to the people.

In Galmudug, the formation of the district council in Adado in 2020 (supported by the FCA LG project) has been lauded as an example of political progress and a means to stabilisation. This was replicated in South Galkayo, a city that has previously experienced more violence than Adado Abudwaq, Dhusamareb, Balanballe, Guri'el, and Herale. For now, the structure of local government is in place in 14 districts. It must be pointed out that Guri'el and Herale are post-1991 districts. In other words, these two districts have been made possible with their formations after the formation of Galmudug state was finalized and operationalised.

In Jubaland, the formation of district councils has been successful only in Afmadow and it was equally praised as an epitome of devolution in a federated Somalia. In Hirshabelle, the formation of the district council has only taken place in Warsheikh and Jowhar districts out of the region's total 14 districts. Like Galmudug, Warsheikh, out of these 14 districts was established as part of post-1991 political arrangements.

At the societal level, these deliberations and indirect elections at the local level create avenues for reconciliation. Politically, the local government is a vehicle for long-term stability and a means to decentralise both authority and services, connecting the Somali public to the process of state formation. In summary, therefore, actors agree that district councils' formation through indirect election is by far more effective, more accommodating, and more appealing to the public than the previous practice of handpicking mayors and members of the district council.

In Somalia, a lot of work has been done over the past two decades towards supporting peace-building initiatives in Somaliland and Puntland. Over time, these efforts expanded to other regions in South Central Somalia, transitioning from community-level peacebuilding to state-building and formation activities at both the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and Federal Member States (FMS) levels. Many Partners including the European Union (EU) have implemented projects to strengthen local governance structures, supporting the Wadajir National Framework. The current Case Study is a local governance support project that aimed to contribute to the successful establishment and election of district councils in Hudur and Berdale, part of the Southwest State of Somalia. The goal was to establish and institutionalise local governance structures for more accountable and inclusive Federal Member States, in alignment with the Wadajir National Framework – Phase II. Specifically, the project would enhance the capacity of the Federal Member States (FMS) to establish functional local councils and administrations. This is critical because past conflicts and autocratic rule have weakened government institutions and disempowered communities in the targeted areas. Rebuilding these institutions, particularly local governance, is a priority for the governments during this period. The project focused on four key areas: social reconciliation, civic dialogue, district council and administration formation, and strategic communication, as outlined in the Wadajir Framework of 2016. The primary goal was to create a more inclusive local governance system, initially in Jubaland, Hirshabelle, Southwest, and Galmudug States of Somalia. The project's overall objective was to promote stability in Somalia by establishing district councils and authorities inclusively, with a specific emphasis on gender and youth representation. This was achieved through three key results: (1) Increased legitimacy and awareness of social reconciliation in targeted districts by strengthening gender and youth-inclusive governance, (2) Formation of district councils and administrations

with gender and youth participation, and (3) Support for nationally standardised working processes and systems following district formation.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study applied a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection strategies. The quantitative method entailed a survey of the beneficiaries (Households) while the qualitative approach employed KIIs, FGDs, and human interest/change stories. Findings from desk review, diverse actor views, experiences and opinions have been triangulated in arriving at objective and evidence-based conclusions and recommendations. The study adopted outcome harvesting principles to analyse the project theory of change and judge actual project impact along the key study questions (as outlined in the OECD DAC criteria) as articulated in the tables below. More specifically, the project study adopted the following specific techniques for the data collection;

- The perception survey used non-probabilistic sampling methods like quota sampling and purposive sampling. Quota sampling method was used to generate quantitative data from community groups and members of the community across the 5 districts. In total, 144 persons were interviewed (as outlined in table 1.2.). This sampling method was appropriate for diverse group with specific traits and qualities like age, gender and community representations etc.
- Purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents. The district council and community members were mobilized to participate the survey.
- Qualitative and quantitative data was analysed, cross-referenced with project reports such as training reports, pre- and post-training study.
- Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with 30 individuals drawn from the district council members and key community members including youth, women, elders, religious leader, businessmen/ women, local politicians, and government officials. The main tool was KIIs with community members
- Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with key community members (8 persons from the assessed districts) including youth, women, elders, religious leader, businessmen/ women, local politicians, and government officials.

An in-depth review of the theory of change was also conducted to establish weaknesses in the causal pathways. This report analyses the extent to which community-centred approaches can lead to formation of stable local governance structures that promote social cohesion and sustainability.

Table 1: Summary of Study Approaches; Field Techniques, Sources and Target Groups

Data collection Method	Details of the Method	Target Group & data collection approaches
Extensive Desk/ Document Reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An extensive synthesis of relevant literature and EU-LG project data was undertaken. This included technical reports, log-frames, project proposals, Project agreements, financial and narrative reports among others.</li> <li>- The desk review results have been triangulated with quantitative and qualitative findings from key informant interviews, FGDs, as well as other field observation reports collated by our field teams.</li> </ul>	Project proposal, project reports (progress reports, monitoring reports, etc) and datasets, baseline report, midterm review report, minutes of meetings, results framework, perception survey report, policy framework for participatory federalism and decentralisation in Somalia, NDP-9, Wadajir Framework, Financial reports, among other relevant documents

<p>Theory of Change Review and Reflections on impact causal pathways</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Causality links and pathways were analysed to explain how community-centred approaches can be used in the formation of functional local governance structures</li> <li>- The analysis also examined the role of context, risks, and assumptions in explaining the observed or documented impact/ changes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extensive desk review of project-related data and reports as described above.</li> <li>- Thematic analysis of interview data to identify patterns and trends for the observed or claimed changes.</li> </ul>
<p>Survey</p>	<p>Questionnaires were administered at the beneficiaries'/community level to collect information regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased access to public services from the established district councils</li> <li>• Inclusion and participation of community in governance at the local level.</li> <li>• Perceptions about enhancement of government legitimacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Households in the benefiting districts</li> </ul>
<p>Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A total of over 30 high-level key informants' interviews were conducted. Physical interviews were the preferred mode of engagement. For respondents who were physically unreachable due to a variety of reasons, virtual platforms were used.</li> <li>- Our local field teams supported one-on-one interviews. The consultants will lead high-level virtual interviews with the various target respondents at the FGS and FMS levels, implementing agency, donor reps, and the private sector.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- KII respondents comprised key government officials, FMS Ministries of Interior, FGS Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs, and Reconciliation (MoIFAR) and the FMS' Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) Implementing Partners, District Councils representatives, relevant FCA/SC staff, Private Sector, community leaders, and representatives of other relevant actors involved in the interventions.</li> </ul>
<p>Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- FGDs were used to assess access to government services at the community level and issues of government legitimacy. Groups comprised of about 8 members each drawn from the project's target populations. The objective was to provide a forum to tease out common themes around public services (access, participation, inclusion, perceptions about legitimacy) supported under the project components. The findings have enabled triangulation with results from the desk review, survey, and KIIs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Households (minority and marginalised groups, women and youth)</li> <li>- District Peace Committees</li> </ul>
<p>Human interest stories and Case</p>	<p>Success and impact case studies were considered to capture EU-LG project success, outcomes and impacts where possible. Documentation encompassed the key impact aspects targeted by the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extensive review of project literature, reports and field documentation to identify possible success story areas and</li> </ul>

Studies	<p>project including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased access to public services</li> <li>• Community increased participation and inclusion in government</li> <li>• Perceptions about government legitimacy</li> </ul>	<p>related information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- KIIs were used as an entry platform for identifying possible success case stories and use the interviews to probe, and collect relevant data/information for the case story-the beneficiaries will be a key source of information here.</li> </ul>
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The survey was conducted among urban areas across the five districts. The households interviewed were beneficiaries of the local governance program who were identified through the liaison officer at the mayor’s office of each district who guided the team on their locations. They were distributed as illustrated in the table below.

Table 1. 1: Distribution of Survey Respondents

Respondents Distribution	Male	Female	Total
Galkayo	8	12	20
Barawe	18	12	30
Adado	20	10	30
Jowhar	21	12	33
Afmadow	22	9	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>144</b>

### Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Key respondents were mapped and provided their details including names, their organisation, positions, contact information, and role in the project. With respect to the sampling of key informants, purposively sampled respondents comprising government representatives, community leaders, donors, and partners, were interviewed. Selection of the KIIs upheld representation values to ensure representation of youth, women, and minority/marginalised communities. Table 1.3 provides a sample distribution of the KII respondents (tools are annexed at the bottom of this report).

Table 1. 2: Distribution of Key Informants and FGDs

Category	KII Respondent	Key informant interviews		
		Male	Female	Total KIIs
<b>Implementing Partner Technical Staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project and Technical Director</li> <li>• MEAL Unit Manager</li> <li>• Finance Manager</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>

<b>Donor Rep</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU</li> </ul>		<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Partner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNDP</li> </ul>		<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Barawe</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Council Representative</li> <li>• Community leaders</li> <li>• Private Sector</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Afmadow</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Council Representative</li> <li>• FMS Ministry of Interior</li> <li>• Community leaders</li> <li>• Private Sector</li> </ul>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Galkacyo</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Council Representative</li> <li>• FMS Ministry of Interior</li> <li>• Community leaders</li> <li>• Private Sector</li> </ul>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Jowhar</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Council Representative</li> <li>• FMS Ministry of Interior</li> <li>• Community leaders</li> <li>• Private Sector</li> </ul>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Adado</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Council Representative</li> <li>• Community leaders</li> <li>• Private Sector</li> </ul>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>19</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>23</b>

### Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Twenty (20) FGDs were conducted targeting women, youth, marginalised communities, and DPCs. That summed up to 4 FGDs in each of the five Districts of Galkayo, Barawe, Adado, Jowhar, and Afmadow as illustrated in Table 1.4. below.

Table 1. 3: Distribution of FGDs

<b>District</b>	<b>FGD Categories</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total FGDs</b>
<b>Barawe</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women</li> </ul>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth</li> </ul>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marginalised community</li> </ul>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Peace Committee</li> </ul>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	
<b>Afmadow</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women</li> </ul>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth</li> </ul>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	

	• Marginalised community	5	3	
	• District Peace Committee	3	3	
<b>Galkacyo</b>	• Women	0	8	<b>4</b>
	• Youth	3	3	
	• Marginalised community	4	4	
	• District Peace Committee	5	1	
<b>Jowhar</b>	• Women	0	6	<b>4</b>
	• Youth	4	4	
	• Marginalised community	5	3	
	• District Peace Committee	5	2	
<b>Adado</b>	• Women	0	8	<b>4</b>
	• Youth	5	2	
	• Marginalised community	2	4	
	• District Peace Committee	2	4	
<b>Total # of participants/FGDs</b>		<b>62</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>20</b>

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Relevance

The Wadajir Framework for Local Governance (2015) recommends that as much as possible, service provision should be devolved to the lowest levels of government with the requisite capacity to function and deliver services to the citizens. Formation of the District Councils decentralises governance and administration and therefore directly responds to both the Wadajir Framework and the draft constitution (adopted in 2012 by the National Constitutional Assembly) that demarcates governance into decentralised units. The government acknowledges that the establishment of legitimate and functional local governance structures is a prerequisite to the stabilisation efforts. The establishment of districts in Somalia is a very complex process and often requires the support of multi-sectoral stakeholders. To illustrate this point, the Wadajir Framework envisages the formation of 68 districts but so far, only 14 have been formed.

*As reported by an FMS Ministry of Interior Senior Staff interviewed, “Overall, the importance of local governance and local administration in terms of service delivery, in terms of improving social cohesion, in terms of improving civic dialogue on community peace and security is crucial for countries like Somalia.”*

Additionally, local governance support projects are anchored on an appreciation that in Somalia, social reconciliation is widely recognised as the foundation for lasting peace. The interventions implemented gave prominence of place to reconciliation, particularly in the bottom-up approach where community dialogues are bolstered through involvement of marginalised groups and support for community structures like the District Peace Committees. This commitment aligns with the NDP-9 which emphasizes the achievement of “more open politics and reconciliation”.



*A Jowhar DPC member interviewed stated that “Through the local governance project, we have addressed the priority of making communities understand good governance and roles of communities in local governance.”*

To ensure the LG project addressed the priorities of the communities, FCA first engaged with the community leaders. These engagements established that there are political, social, and economic incentives for all communities in strengthened local governance structures and attendant social reconciliation interventions. Emerging from the decades-long civil war, these structures had been erased. The Federal Member States lacked local governance laws to guide community-level reconciliation efforts. Communities were left badly fractured with many harboring grudges that fueled never-ending cycles of revenge and violence. This environment fostered clan and community-wide violence that opened the doors for extremist groups like Al-Shabaab (AS). All indications are that the communities were and are still strongly invested in pushing out AS and establishing the rule of law. The establishment of districts in the newly liberated areas have filled the glaring gaps in governance that acted as pull factors for the extra-government actors in the first place.

### **Inclusive Formation and Establishment of District Councils (Mainstreaming of Women and Youth)**

The study has established that five districts were formed with a keen focus on mainstreaming gender and youth into the formation processes. Activities under this outcome area are indicative of progress, particularly in the inclusion agenda. The formation process was very rigorous and inclusive as illustrated in the paragraphs that follow. As envisioned in the Wadajir Framework, there is ample evidence that the project set out a threshold of 30% for the inclusion of women in the DCs. While the target was not achieved in most of the districts except for Galkayo, progress has been made. All the DCs now have some level of women representation as shown in the tabulation below. Additionally, through the project activities, discussions about women's participation in governance and administration have now become mainstream. The implications are that women will henceforth expect and be expected to play central roles in discussions on issues of governance. Findings from the household survey indicate that while there are still disparities, the representation of women in governance is making gradual gains. 47% of the sampled respondents affirmed that women are being represented in local government while 53% opposed as illustrated in the chart below:

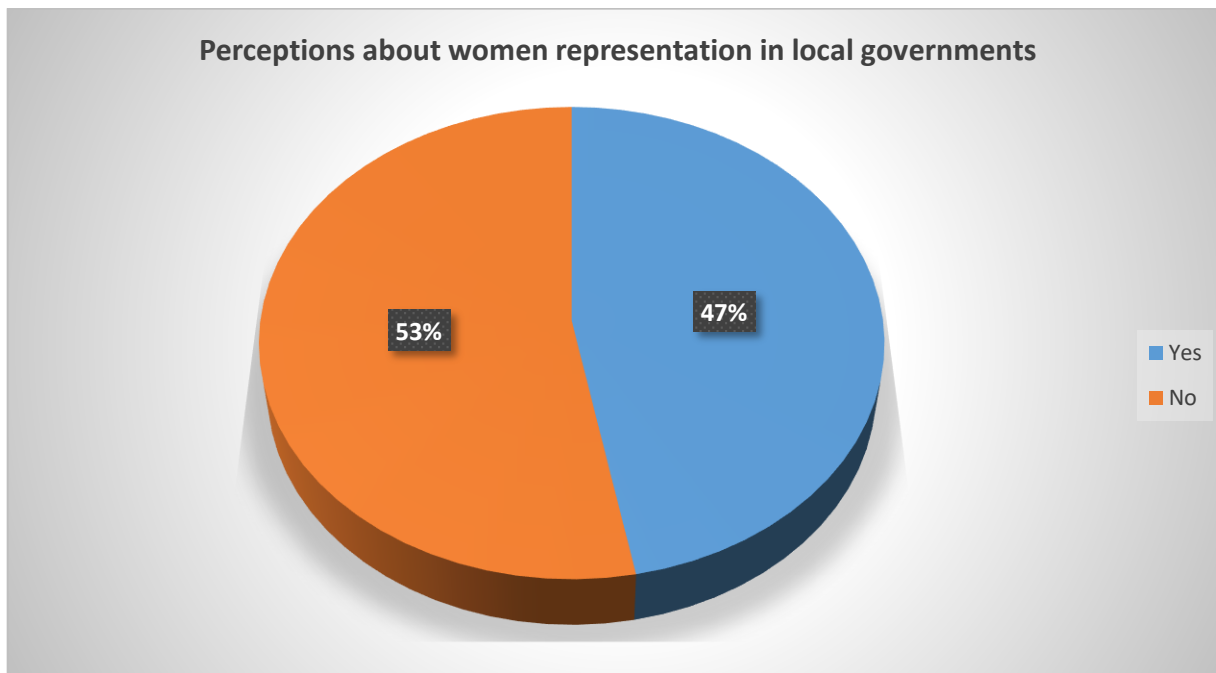


Figure 1: Representation of women in local government

These findings indicate that while women may have been fully involved in the political processes leading to the DCs establishment, their actual representation still fell short of expectations. These findings are in tandem with the other findings presented in this report that indicate the targeted quota of 30% for women election into the DCs was missed.

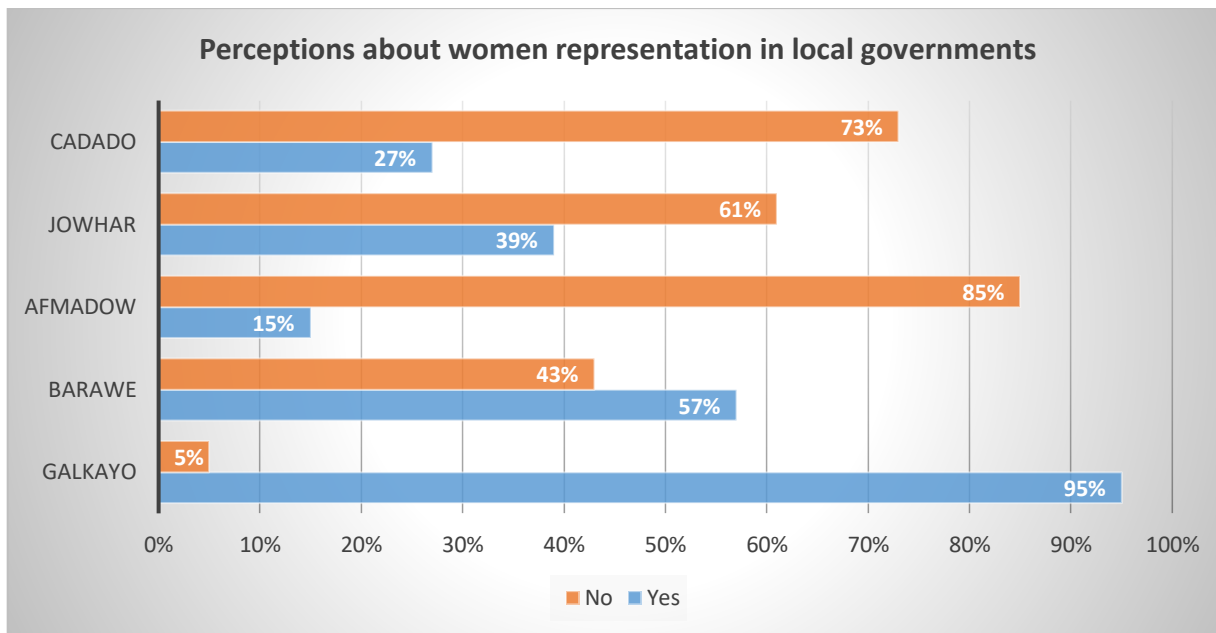


Figure 2: Perceptions about women women's representation in local governments.

### Increased Legitimacy of Established Districts and Social Reconciliation Processes

Central to the success registered in the establishment of the DCs, the study has established that social reconciliation efforts that were undertaken formed a crucial foundation. These efforts were both in the form of community-level sessions and reconciliation action plans that guided the DC establishment process. These sessions helped bring out and address underlying and intractable historical grievances held by communities against communities. They offered a platform where the grievances were voiced, and forgiveness/reconciliation sought and/or given. The findings against these activities indicate remarkable levels of achievement as illustrated in the table below:

As captured from one of the case stories: *“In Galkayo, a power-sharing deal on DC seats was agreed upon in June 2020 (among the majority and minority clans) at the end of a social reconciliation training of 204 elders.”*

### Systems Strengthening

Interventions aimed at strengthening the administrative and operational systems enabled the application of nationally standardised working processes across all FMSs and established districts. Discussions with the government representatives, and implementing partners and a review of project documents established that numerous plans, manuals, guidelines, and SoPs, among other administrative and operational documents help to support functionalization of the local governance structures as outlined below:

**District Reconciliation Action Plans:** The preparation of the action plans was preceded by the development of the district conflict profiles. The process involved several rounds of engagement between the political class, community leaders, women, and youth groups, representatives from religion and academia, and diverse other special interest groups. This was followed by the community healing sessions again bringing together the broadest actors’ representation. Implementation of the action plans was spearheaded the line FMS ministries and supported by the DPCs in the districts where they were already established. Reconciliation sessions were organized that resulted in the power-sharing agreements.

*As quoted by a community leader, “As a result of the reconciliation sessions and the resultant power-sharing agreement in Afmadow, a minority clan representative was elected as the deputy mayor of the district”.*

**Standard Election Protocol** – This tool provided guidance for the election of the mayors, deputy mayors and DC members in the newly established districts. The protocol supported capacity building of the electoral team and helped institutionalise good governance practices in the conduct of elections.

**District Council Formation Manual:** The manual was developed as a live document that charted the roadmap for the establishment of new districts. Provisions were inbuilt to allow it to evolve with new lessons as the DC formation process unfolded. It collated contemporary knowledge on decentralisation and local governance and contextualized it to the target FMSs'. It clearly outlined the DC formation steps, and planning processes as well as provided a stakeholder mapping. The guidelines strongly referenced the WNF, the Provisional Constitution, the National Reconciliation Framework (NRF), and the district formation process in Southwest State. In developing the manual, FCA targeted the FGS and FMS officials, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), development partners, academics, and the general population as the ultimate beneficiaries. Our study has established that while the manual has served its purpose in removing ambiguity and standardising the process, it is at the same time sufficiently flexible to accommodate variations across FMSs and districts.

### **Enablers of an Inclusive District Council Formation**

- The remarkable levels of youth participation and inclusion were made possible by the high appetite for involvement in governance among youth.
- The process of DC formation has been cited as a key enabler to the success that has been registered. Federal government favored establishment of District Peace Committees as precursors to district establishment. This provided a peace dividend to actors and allowed for more in-depth engagement that eventually led to the DCs formation.
- Secondment of technical advisors to the MoIFAR at FGS and MoIs at FMS level improved implementation efficiency.

### **Barriers to an Inclusive District Council Formation**

- Security challenges especially in in some states particularly Southwest and Jubbaland affected the project due to the influence that AS has over large areas of the FMSs.
- A manual/guideline was developed for the standardisation of processes-most of these processes is ad hoc, things are taken on the go.
- At FMS level, government is very transactional and transitional-senior staff move.
- Intergovernmental relationships. Misunderstandings between FGS and FMS many times affected progress.
- Funding gaps for the newly established DCs have hindered them from immediately rolling out the provision of social services.
- Inter-clan conflicts and lengthy resolution/reconciliation processes hindered progress of DCs establishment.
- Lack of funds to provide technical and financial support for the implementation of the Reconciliation Action Plans after the DCs were established.
- There was a high turnover of the project managers-the current one is only one-year-old. Every new manager had to re-learn and therefore lose on networks built.

## **CONCLUSION**

There is ample evidence that community-centred approaches have contributed to the entrenchment of government powers through working with the communities at the lowest levels which helped assert the **authority and legitimacy** of a very nascent government. Current interventions have contributed to the establishment of governance structures at the local level. This involved the formation of local government bodies, the development of administrative procedures, and the establishment of mechanisms for citizen participation and accountability.

As reported by one of the government staff from FMS MoI, *“the project activities such as the district council formation process is much appreciated by the local government and community members. The district township is peaceful and community members are going about their businesses and establishing small businesses such as shops and restaurants.”*

As highlighted by one of the FGS MoIFAR actors interviewed, *“We have 14 newly established districts which are now able to provide services such as building roads, waste management services, and education.”*

Findings from the household survey indicate healthy levels of confidence and trust in the established local governments, which is a prerequisite for legitimacy. From a situation where the district councils were non-existent, the registered trust levels are encouraging and are *proof of early impact*. 30% of the respondents had high levels of trust in the DCs while 41% had some trust. There is, however, a sizable proportion of respondents (21%) who had little trust and 8% with no trust whatsoever. This implies that the DCs still have lots of work ahead to fully win the trust and confidence of the people and eventually legitimacy.

Evidence of improvements in service delivery across the established districts indicates the interventions are already bearing public benefits in the communities. The perception study findings showed that most respondents indicated marked improvement in; the quality of services provided by the DCs (68.5%), level of confidence in the new DCs (88%), DCs’ response to problems (86.5%), transparency of the new administrations, conflict resolution efforts, and gender and youth inclusion. Further support for improvements in service delivery is provided by findings from the impact study household survey where an overwhelming majority across all 5 districts indicated satisfaction with the availability, access, and quality of public services like health facilities, schools, water and sanitation, and transport infrastructure.

There is evidence that community-centred approaches contribute to building inclusive local governance through the establishment of the DCs, rule of law, democratisation, and state building. The DC establishment (both the result and the processes) has supported democratisation efforts through the DCF process with notable improvement in the roles of women and youth in decision-making and overall changes in governance. These interventions inbuilt robust mechanisms to promote citizen participation in decision-making through community engagement processes, such as participatory meetings or community forums, allowing citizens to have a voice in local governance and decision-making.

Community-centred approaches have contributed to a change in administrative and functional capacities in the supported FMSs in Somalia. They promote inclusive governance and decentralisation through the strengthening of governance structures and institutions. This has led to improved administrative processes, decision-making capabilities, and service delivery at the local level. They have also played a role in the development and adoption of targeted policies and procedures in the supported FMSs. Through focus on inclusive governance, these projects encourage the formulation of policies that promote participation, accountability, and transparency. A case in point is the four Operational Guideline Manuals and ToTs that were developed and adopted by the new districts. Improvements in functional capacities were designed to improve the effectiveness of the DCs in the conduct of their functions. Evidence of this has been established from the household survey findings where 31% of the respondents said the DCs are very effective and 45% said they are somewhat effective. However, 24% of the respondents opined that the DCs are not effective which again should concern the DCs.

Also crucial to local governance in both the established DCs and for future DCs formation is the streamlining of the election processes through the development and adoption of the electoral protocols. These efforts will strengthen the local governments’ capacity to guarantee free and fair elections, further strengthening their legitimacy.

Even in areas where the formation of districts was not successful like Dinsoor, the preliminary community consultation processes have been hailed as important first steps in supporting reconciliation and stabilisation efforts. The processes brought together political actors who have lived in discord and made the first steps towards community-wide reconciliation. Respondents from the household survey lend credence to the reconciliation and conflict resolution efforts under the DCs.

## LESSONS LEARNT

- Need for highly adaptable programming for local governance projects in volatile contexts. Discussions with the implementing partners and review of documents reveal that operating in Somalia requires high levels of contextual awareness and flexibility particularly when implementing interventions that are political in nature. The country has a highly dynamic environment with multiple moving parts as a result of factors including; a politically charged atmosphere as a result of decades of mistrust with communities that are ready to “take up arms” against one another at the slightest provocation; mass migration due to conflicts and natural disasters thus eroding the traditional governance systems; new constitutional dispensation where jurisdiction between federal and state governments often overlap and cause tensions; communities that have very few economic lifelines and therefore desperate; and a critical mass of the adult population with little to no formal education. These factors combined mean that no plan on paper can be implemented exactly as designed. Rigidity would therefore almost certainly spell the death of a project.
- Ability to customise operations to prevailing contexts. Related to the first lesson, the experience of the implementing partners is that the political and security circumstances in Somalia are so fluid that they can shift from stable to dangerous in an instant. Political temperaments among the political class are just as delicate. In sensitive discussions around power-sharing agreements, the implementing partners have learnt that the most indispensable asset is patience, sensitivity to different perspectives and readiness to adjust positions rapidly. This flexibility also means that as opposed to a straightjacket approach where a one-fits-all protocol/plans/guidelines are applied across board, there is need to approach each district formation process as unique.
- Successful implementation of interventions that are political in nature (like the district council formation) particularly in deeply fragmented contexts (due to protracted conflicts) like Somalia requires a solid foundation of broad coalitions with all the relevant political actors. This can be achieved through the consensus building processes and highly participatory approach that involved all key actors across political, religious, community, private sector and other development partners. This provided political goodwill to the process and output which is a conditional necessity for success.
- Involvement of community structures is paramount to successful implementation of complex local governance initiatives. Actors opine that breakthrough in establishment of the DCs and reconciliation efforts work through partnering with local actors through community level structures like district preparatory committees, technical committees, district peace committees.
- Embedding technical advisors in the line ministries at MoIFAR at federal and MoIs at state level was an enabler to success. Their advocacy, lobbying and technical advisories allowed for efficiency in the implementation of project activities as they acted as back-stoppers to the ministries.

## REVIEWED MATERIALS

- Project proposals
- Project reports (progress reports, monitoring reports, etc)
- Datasets
- Baseline report, midterm review report, minutes of meetings
- Results framework
- Perception survey report
- Policy framework for participatory federalism and decentralisation in Somalia
- National Development Plan-9 (NDP-9)
- Wadajir Framework
- Financial report