

Challenges and Reforms in Public Sector Recruitment in Somalia

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ABSTRACT

This study examines recruitment approaches, civil servant perspectives, and diaspora engagement challenges in Somalia's public sector. Using a qualitative research design, data were collected through document review of policies, laws, and reports, alongside semi-structured interviews with civil servants, HR officers, ministry officials, and diaspora professionals. The findings indicate that merit-based recruitment is often undermined by political interference, clan dynamics, and limited institutional capacity, which negatively affect transparency, fairness, and public trust. Civil servants highlight gaps in career progression, training, and human resource management, while diaspora professionals encounter barriers including reintegration difficulties, contractual instability, and mismatched expectations. Comparative insights from African contexts emphasize the importance of independent public service commissions, standardized selection procedures, and structured diaspora engagement frameworks to strengthen institutional effectiveness. The study concludes that coordinated reforms involving the National Civil Service Commission, Ministry of Labor and Social Services, and strategic diaspora initiatives are essential to enhancing recruitment integrity, professional development, and diaspora contributions, ultimately improving public sector performance in post-conflict Somalia.

Keywords: Recruitment, Civil Service, Public Sector, Diaspora Engagement, Somalia, Merit-Based Recruitment, Human Resource Management, Institutional Capacity, Post-Conflict Governance, Patronage-based, Meritocratic systems

INTRODUCTION

Public sector recruitment plays a fundamental role in shaping the effectiveness, integrity, and professionalism of government institutions. Around the world, robust civil service systems are widely recognized as a key determinant of good governance, accountability, and sustainable development. Countries that implement transparent, merit-based recruitment mechanisms supported by standardized human resource management practices, independent oversight bodies, and performance-based evaluation tend to achieve higher levels of institutional efficiency, reduced corruption, and improved public trust (OECD, 2021; UNDP, 2022). Conversely, political patronage, informal hiring, and weak enforcement of recruitment rules are common factors contributing to inefficiency, low morale, and weakened legitimacy, particularly in fragile and post-conflict states.

In the East African and Horn of Africa region, countries such as Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda have undertaken significant reforms aimed at professionalizing their civil service systems. These reforms include performance-based pay structures, human resource management information systems (HRMIS), independent recruitment commissions, and digitalized recruitment and payroll processes. Evidence from these countries demonstrates that even in politically complex environments, well-structured reforms can promote meritocracy, strengthen institutional capacity, and improve public service delivery (World Bank, 2022; IMF, 2024).

In Somalia, public sector recruitment has faced profound challenges due to decades of conflict, institutional collapse, and the persistence of informal socio-political structures. Since the early 2000s, efforts to rebuild the civil service have been led by federal and federal member state authorities, supported by international partners including UNDP, World Bank, and bilateral agencies. Despite these efforts, the recruitment environment remains fragmented and inconsistently governed, with systemic weaknesses limiting the ability of public institutions to attract, retain, and effectively utilize skilled personnel.



Structural challenges in Somalia's public sector include weak institutional frameworks, limited human resource capacity, and inadequate legal and regulatory guidelines. Many ministries and public agencies lack standardized job descriptions, competency frameworks, and performance evaluation systems, resulting in mismatched appointments and inefficiencies in service delivery. Recruitment outcomes are often shaped by political interference, clan-based patronage,

An informal networks, which overshadow merit-based selection and undermine professional standards. Consequently, qualified civil servants, particularly younger professionals, face limited career progression opportunities, inadequate incentives, and a lack of motivation to remain in the public sector.

A significant but underutilized resource is the Somali diaspora, which possesses advanced education, technical expertise, and international work experience. While many diaspora professionals' express willingness to contribute to national development, they face challenges including non-standardized recruitment pathways, lack of transparency in hiring, contractual inconsistencies, and unclear reintegration mechanisms. These barriers hinder knowledge transfer, capacity-building initiatives, and modernization of public administration, limiting Somalia's ability to leverage this skilled population effectively.

Recent policy reforms offer a foundation for change. The Somali Federal Government approved the National Civil Service Pay and Grading Policy in April 2025, introducing standardized pay grades linked to qualifications, responsibility, and performance. Proposed amendments to the Civil Service Act aim to strengthen the role of the National Civil Service Commission, enhance merit-based recruitment, and provide clear procedural guidance for appointments and promotions. Complementary initiatives include the development of Human Resource Policy and Procedures Manuals, capacity-building programs for civil service managers, and gradual introduction of digital HRMIS systems to improve transparency and accountability (Federal Government of Somalia, 2025; FTL Somalia, 2025).

Given Somalia's aspirations for institutional reform, improved public financial management, and enhanced service delivery, a comprehensive assessment of challenges and opportunities in public sector recruitment is timely and critical. Understanding the structural, administrative, and socio-political dynamics affecting recruitment especially from the perspectives of civil servants and diaspora professionals provides a basis for formulating evidence-based reforms that can establish a credible, transparent, and professional civil service aligned with global and regional best practices.

This study therefore examines the interplay between legal frameworks, administrative procedures, political influences, and human resource capacities in shaping public sector recruitment in Somalia, with the goal of identifying actionable pathways to strengthen meritocracy, efficiency, and equitable representation in the civil service.

Research Problem

Despite recent efforts by the Federal Government of Somalia to modernize public administration, including the enactment of the National Civil Service Pay and Grading Policy and proposed amendments to the Civil Service Act, public sector recruitment continues to face significant challenges. Political interference, clan-based power-sharing under the 4.5 model, weak enforcement of merit-based recruitment, and fragmented human resource management systems undermine the effectiveness, professionalism, and public trust in civil service institutions. These structural and procedural challenges hinder the equitable allocation of qualified personnel and limit the impact of ongoing reforms. This study seeks to examine the key obstacles in public sector recruitment, evaluate the effectiveness of recent legislative and policy reforms, and identify opportunities to strengthen meritocracy while maintaining equitable representation in Somalia's civil service.

Research Objectives

The main purpose of this study is to analyze the challenges affecting public sector recruitment in Somalia and to propose potential reforms that can strengthen merit-based hiring and institutional capacity. The study has the following three specific objectives:



1. To examine the existing recruitment practices and institutional frameworks governing public sector hiring in Somalia.
2. To identify the key challenges faced by civil servants and diaspora professionals during recruitment and integration into the public sector.
3. To propose practical reforms aimed at improving transparency, merit-based hiring, and overall efficiency in public sector recruitment.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following three research questions:

1. What recruitment practices and institutional mechanisms currently guide public sector hiring in Somalia?
2. What are the major challenges faced by civil servants and diaspora professionals in the recruitment and integration process?
3. What reforms are needed to enhance transparency, meritocracy, and effectiveness in Somalia's public sector recruitment?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public sector recruitment is a critical determinant of state capacity, governance quality, and service delivery effectiveness. The academic and policy literature emphasizes that recruitment systems vary across contexts, influenced by historical, political, and socio-economic factors. In many developing countries, public-sector recruitment systems oscillate between merit-based hiring and patronage-based¹ appointments. Meritocratic systems², characterized by transparent selection procedures, clear competency requirements, and structured evaluation frameworks, are associated with improved bureaucratic capacity, reduced corruption, and enhanced service delivery (Jahija, 2025; Patterson et al., 2024). Conversely, recruitment systems dominated by political patronage, clan affiliations, or informal networks often undermine institutional effectiveness and erode public trust (Nzimande, 2024). Even in contexts with formal merit-based policies, implementation gaps due to weak oversight, limited administrative capacity, and bureaucratic inertia can prevent the realization of intended outcomes (PMC, 2018).

Civil servant perspectives are critical to understanding recruitment systems in practice. Research in post-conflict and developing countries shows that civil servants often face opaque hiring processes, limited career progression opportunities, and inadequate professional development (Somali Public Agenda, 2023; Somali Studies Journal, 2021). These constraints reduce motivation, increase turnover, and compromise service delivery. Socio-political dynamics, including political interference and clan-based affiliations, shape civil servants' experiences. In many Somali public institutions, high-level appointments are frequently determined by political loyalty or clan considerations rather than merit, leaving qualified personnel in lower-tier positions or discouraging skilled professionals from entering the public sector (World Bank, 2020). In addition, inadequate institutional support, weak HR departments, and the absence of standardized recruitment guidelines exacerbate challenges, limiting civil servants' ability to navigate the system and contribute effectively to governance and development objectives (Nzimande, 2024).

The integration of diaspora professionals into public-sector institutions has become an increasingly important aspect of state-building, particularly in post-conflict contexts like Somalia. The Somali diaspora possesses

¹ **Patronage-based:** a system where jobs, benefits, or opportunities are given based on personal connections, loyalty, or favoritism rather than merit or qualifications.

² **Meritocratic systems:** systems in which positions, rewards, or opportunities are allocated based on ability, qualifications, performance, and competence rather than personal connections or favoritism.



advanced education, technical expertise, and international work experience that can contribute significantly to institutional capacity building.

However, integration is often hindered by non-standardized hiring procedures, administrative bottlenecks, contractual uncertainties, and limited career pathways (SpringerOpen, 2021; SI-AJIS, 2020). In Somalia, the mechanisms for engaging diaspora professionals in the public sector remain underdeveloped. Few empirical studies document how diaspora professionals are recruited, the barriers they face, or the impact of their contributions on institutional reform and service delivery (Somali Studies Journal, 2021). Existing practices tend to rely on ad hoc appointments or project-based contracts, which limits the potential for long-term institutional strengthening and knowledge transfer.

In Somalia, post-conflict challenges further complicate recruitment. After decades of civil war and state collapse, the public sector lacks fully functional institutions, standardized recruitment frameworks, and robust HR management systems. Political and clan-based interference in hiring decisions remains pervasive, and formal mechanisms for ensuring transparency and meritocracy are weak. Civil service positions are often filled based on political connections or social affiliations, rather than competencies or experience, undermining both efficiency and legitimacy (Somali Public Agenda, 2023). Furthermore, limited financial resources and weak capacity-building programs reduce incentives for qualified personnel to join or remain in the civil service, contributing to a shortage of skilled human resources within the government (Somali Studies Journal, 2021).

The literature also highlights significant gaps. First, there is a lack of empirical research on recruitment practices in Somalia that considers both local civil servants and diaspora professionals. Second, studies often focus on formal policies without analyzing how they are implemented in practice, leaving limited understanding of actual recruitment dynamics in a post-conflict setting. Third, there is little evidence on the influence of socio-political factors, such as clan dynamics and political interference, on recruitment outcomes. Finally, the potential role of the Somali diaspora in public administration remains underexplored, particularly regarding systematic recruitment, retention, and capacity-building opportunities.

Addressing these gaps is crucial for informing policy and strengthening Somalia's civil service. A systematic study of recruitment practices in Somalia, incorporating both local and diaspora perspectives, can provide empirical evidence to guide reforms aimed at enhancing transparency, meritocracy, and institutional capacity. Such research can also contribute to the broader literature on public administration in post-conflict and developing countries, offering insights into strategies for rebuilding effective civil service systems under conditions of political and institutional fragility.

Recruitment Approaches

Recruitment in Somalia's public sector is shaped by a combination of formal, informal, and donor-supported mechanisms, reflecting the country's unique post-conflict institutional fragility, socio-political realities, and reliance on international support. These recruitment approaches determine not only who enters the civil service but also the quality, efficiency, and legitimacy of the public administration. Understanding the complexity of these mechanisms is essential for identifying both opportunities and constraints for reform.

Formal competitive hiring exists in principle as the official and preferred method of recruitment. The Somali federal civil service and regional administrations have developed regulations and job descriptions intended to ensure transparency, meritocracy, and accountability. The formal process typically involves public advertisement of positions, submission of applications, eligibility screening, written examinations, and structured interviews conducted by human resources committees. When effectively implemented, such competitive hiring can improve bureaucratic competence, reduce opportunities for favoritism, and promote professionalization of the civil service (Somali Public Agenda, 2023). However, in practice, formal recruitment is often limited by weak institutional capacity, insufficient funding, lack of trained HR personnel, and inadequate monitoring mechanisms. For example, many civil service offices lack standardized procedures for scoring candidates, validating qualifications, or ensuring impartiality in interview panels. This inconsistency allows political influence and informal networks to override merit-based selection, reducing the effectiveness of formal competitive recruitment in practice (Somali Studies Journal, 2021).

Political appointments are another prominent mechanism shaping Somalia's recruitment landscape. Senior-level positions in ministries, state agencies, and public enterprises are often filled based on political loyalty, party affiliation, or alignment with the executive branch's policy priorities. Such appointments allow political leaders to consolidate authority, secure loyalty, and ensure the implementation of their agendas. While political appointments may provide short-term stability for governing coalitions, they can undermine meritocracy, demotivate skilled civil servants, and create inefficiencies in public administration. In Somalia, these appointments are particularly visible at the federal level, where ministerial and senior director positions are frequently assigned according to political agreements rather than competency-based assessment. This practice not only reduces institutional impartiality but also perpetuates a culture of patronage and reliance on personal networks for career progression (World Bank, 2020).

Clan-based allocation represents a unique feature of Somalia's recruitment system. The country's complex social structure has historically relied on clan representation as a means of maintaining social cohesion, political stability, and inclusivity, particularly in the federal system.

The 4.5 formula³, widely applied at the federal level and state level, allocates civil service and political positions according to clan quotas, with major clans receiving an equal share and minority clans sharing a proportional allocation. While this system can help prevent inter-clan conflict and foster social legitimacy, it can also compromise meritocracy by prioritizing clan affiliation over skills, experience, or qualifications. Highly qualified candidates may be overlooked if they belong to underrepresented clans, and the system can reinforce patronage networks by rewarding loyalty over competence. Moreover, balancing clan representation with the need for effective governance remains a persistent challenge, as excessive emphasis on identity-based allocation can reduce institutional performance and limit opportunities for professionalized civil service (Somali Studies Journal, 2021; Somali Public Agenda, 2023).

Donor-supported recruitment mechanisms have become increasingly important in Somalia due to the post-conflict shortage of skilled personnel and weak institutional capacity.

International development partners and non-governmental organizations often provide technical and financial assistance to recruit personnel for critical sectors such as health, education, and governance. These mechanisms frequently include structured hiring processes, capacity-building initiatives, and temporary placement of qualified professionals, including diaspora experts, to address urgent skill gaps. While donor-supported hiring has successfully filled immediate vacancies and introduced best practices in HR management, it may create parallel structures that operate outside formal government systems. Additionally, dependency on external funding raises sustainability concerns, as positions and programs risk being dissolved once donor support ends. There is also the challenge of integrating donor-hired personnel with locally recruited civil servants, as differences in compensation, training, and recruitment processes can generate tension and undermine institutional cohesion (PMC, 2018; Princeton, 2020).

In practice, these four recruitments approach formal competitive hiring, political appointments, clan-based allocation, and donor-supported mechanisms often coexist and interact in complex ways. For instance, positions initially intended for formal competitive recruitment may be filled through political or clan-based influence, while donor-supported mechanisms may bypass existing civil service structures entirely. This overlap creates a hybrid recruitment environment in which merit-based principles, political considerations, social representation, and external interventions compete, sometimes complementing each other but often producing inefficiencies and inconsistencies. Understanding these dynamics is essential for policymakers and reformers seeking to professionalize the Somali civil service, improve transparency, and optimize the recruitment and retention of skilled personnel.

Overall, Somalia's recruitment landscape reflects the tension between the need for competence, inclusivity, and political legitimacy. While formal competitive recruitment offers a pathway to professionalization, political appointments and clan-based allocation respond to socio-political realities, and donor-supported mechanisms

³ **The 4.5 formula in Somalia:** a power-sharing arrangement that allocates political representation among clans, where the four major clan families each receive an equal share, and minority clans collectively receive a half share ("0.5").



address immediate capacity gaps. Designing effective reforms requires acknowledging these realities and developing strategies that balance merit, representation, political acceptability, and sustainable institutional development.

Civil Servant Perspectives

Civil servants in Somalia often perceive public sector recruitment as influenced more by political, clan, or personal connections than by merit or competence. Many report that hiring processes lack transparency, with limited clarity on eligibility criteria, assessment procedures, or career progression opportunities. These perceptions affect motivation, job satisfaction, and trust in institutional effectiveness. While some civil servants acknowledge improvements in formal recruitment procedures, concerns about fairness, nepotism, and weak oversight persist. Additionally, uncertainty over job security especially in donor-supported or temporary positions further undermines morale. Overall, civil servants' perspectives highlight the gap between formal recruitment policies and practical realities, emphasizing the need for reforms that strengthen meritocracy, transparency, and institutional accountability (Somali Public Agenda, 2023; Somali Studies Journal, 2021).

Diaspora Challenges

Diaspora professionals returning to Somalia face a range of structural, cultural, and institutional barriers that limit their effective integration into the public sector. One key challenge is cultural and organizational reintegration, as diaspora professionals often encounter administrative practices, hierarchical structures, and workplace norms that differ significantly from those in their host countries (Brinkerhoff, 2006; Gamlen, 2008). This can create difficulties in adapting to local bureaucratic expectations and hinder their ability to contribute fully to institutional development.

Competition with local staff constitutes another significant barrier. Positions in the Somali public sector are limited, and diaspora professionals may be perceived as external actors, creating tension with locally recruited staff. This can affect collaboration, workplace harmony, and overall effectiveness of institutional capacity-building efforts (SpringerOpen, 2021).

Contractual instability is also a major challenge. Many diaspora professionals are employed through donor-funded or project-based programs, which are temporary and often lack long-term career pathways within government structures. This instability reduces job security and can discourage diaspora engagement, particularly among highly skilled professionals seeking sustained impact in public service (SI-AJIS, 2020).

Finally, expectation gaps often emerge between diaspora professionals and Somali institutions. Diaspora personnel bring international standards, experience, and expectations regarding meritocracy, transparency, and operational efficiency. When local institutions are unable to meet these expectations due to resource constraints, political interference, or weak governance frustration, demotivation, and attrition may result (Somali Studies Journal, 2021).

Addressing these challenges requires targeted policy interventions, including structured recruitment pathways for diaspora professionals, standardized HR procedures, long-term contractual arrangements, and initiatives that promote effective collaboration with local staff. Such measures can leverage diaspora expertise to strengthen institutional capacity while reducing tensions and inefficiencies in the public sector.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design to examine public sector recruitment practices and reforms in Somalia. Qualitative methods allow for an in-depth exploration of institutional processes, stakeholder perceptions, and socio-political dynamics (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data were collected through three complementary methods. First, a document review analyzed civil service laws, policies, HR manuals, government reports, and donor assessments to understand formal recruitment frameworks and gaps between policy and practice. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with civil servants,



HR officers, ministry officials, and diaspora professionals to capture experiences and perceptions regarding fairness, transparency, meritocracy, and job security. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed thematically to identify key patterns and insights (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Third, a comparative case study contrasted Somalia's Civil Service Commission with Kenya's, highlighting similarities, differences, and best practices relevant to post-conflict public administration.

Triangulation of data from multiple sources enhanced validity and reliability. The study focuses on federal ministries, selected regional administrations, and diaspora professionals, acknowledging limitations such as political sensitivities, access constraints, and regional coverage. Overall, this methodology provides a robust, contextually grounded framework for understanding recruitment dynamics and informing reforms in Somalia's public sector.

Comparative Insights

Across Africa, public sector recruitment is often constrained by political interference, weak institutional capacity, and opaque hiring practices, which undermine meritocratic principles and service delivery (Ecofin Agency, 2025; Nkgapele & Mofokeng, 2024). Effective recruitment systems require not only legal frameworks but also empowered institutions that enforce merit-based principles through standardized, competency-based procedures and independent oversight (Nkgapele & Mofokeng, 2024).

In Somalia, merit-based recruitment is mandated by the provisional constitution and national laws, yet implementation is frequently undermined by nepotism, clan influence, and political interference, resulting in distorted hiring practices and weakened institutional trust (TALO Center, 2022; African Legal Studies Blog, 2023).

The National Civil Service Commission (NCSC) plays a central role in coordinating recruitment, promotions, and HR policy implementation across government ministries, aiming to ensure merit-based appointments and equitable access to public service positions. The Ministry of Labor and Social Services complement the NCSC by overseeing labor policies, workforce planning, and employment regulations, providing technical guidance on staffing standards, labor law compliance, and the integration of social safeguards in public employment. Coordinated efforts between the NCSC and the Ministry are essential for harmonizing recruitment procedures, ensuring standardized job classifications, and monitoring adherence to meritocratic principles across Somalia's public institutions.

Despite its mandate, the NCSC faces several challenges that hinder effective implementation of merit-based recruitment. Limited institutional independence exposes the Commission to political and clan pressures, which can influence appointments and promotions. Capacity gaps, including insufficient staffing, lack of digital HR systems, and inadequate training for personnel, reduce efficiency and the ability to enforce standardized procedures. In addition, limited public awareness of recruitment procedures and weak monitoring and evaluation mechanisms contribute to persistent perceptions of bias and unfairness, undermining public confidence in civil service institutions (TALO Center, 2022; Somali Public Agenda, 2017).

On diaspora engagement, African evidence demonstrates that structured policies and institutional frameworks connecting diasporas to national development objectives can expand contributions beyond remittances to include investment, knowledge transfer, and technical support (Diaspora for Development in Africa, n.d.; JEPA Africa, 2025). Somalia has advanced in this area through its National Diaspora Policy, developed with consultations from diaspora communities and government stakeholders, to foster social and economic linkages and mobilize diaspora expertise (Somali Cabinet, 2023; Diaspora Engagement Mapping, 2024). The Department of Diaspora Affairs under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinates structured engagement, facilitating talent matching, technical assignments, and investment opportunities.

Overall, African comparative insights and Somali experiences converge on the need for strengthened merit-based recruitment institutions, robust coordination between the NCSC and the Ministry of Labor and Social Services, and strategic diaspora engagement mechanisms. Addressing the structural and operational challenges facing the



NCSC is critical to improving transparency, broadening talent pools, and harnessing diaspora contributions for public sector strengthening in post-conflict Somalia.

REFORMS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Somalia's existing civil service legal framework has historically lacked detailed and enforceable recruitment mandates, resulting in unrestricted hiring practices and inconsistent application of merit-based principles across ministries and agencies. Updating civil service laws to clearly define recruitment procedures including vacancy announcements, eligibility criteria, competitive examinations, interview processes, and appeals mechanisms is widely recognized as a foundational reform for professionalizing the public service. Clear statutory mandates can reduce ambiguity, limit executive discretion, and strengthen the authority of the National Civil Service Commission (NCSC) in overseeing recruitment and appointments. Recent federal-level legal reviews and draft amendments to the Civil Service Act seek to align recruitment rules with the National Transformation Plan (NTP 2025–2029) and introduce standardized human resource management practices across government institutions (World Bank, 2023; IMF, 2024; Federal Government of Somalia, 2025).

Reducing Political Interference Through Independent Recruitment Panels

Political interference remains one of the most persistent challenges in public sector recruitment in Somalia, particularly in senior and mid-level appointments. The establishment of independent recruitment panels composed of civil service professionals, subject-matter experts, and representatives of oversight institutions has been identified as a practical mechanism for insulating recruitment decisions from political pressure. Such panels can ensure objective assessment based on qualifications, experience, and competencies rather than political affiliation or personal networks. International governance assessments emphasize that independent recruitment bodies are especially critical in post-conflict and fragile states, where informal power structures often undermine institutional neutrality. Strengthening the autonomy and enforcement capacity of the NCSC is therefore essential to sustaining recruitment reforms and restoring public confidence in state institutions (OECD, 2021; World Bank, 2022).

Reviewing the 4.5 Power-Sharing Model

The 4.5 power-sharing model, originally designed as a political mechanism to manage clan representation in governance, continues to shape public sector recruitment and appointments in Somalia. While the model has contributed to political inclusion and stability in transitional contexts, its application in civil service recruitment has often constrained merit-based hiring and reinforced perceptions of entitlement rather than competence. A systematic review of the 4.5 model particularly its informal extension into administrative and technical positions is increasingly viewed as necessary to differentiate political representation from professional public administration. Policy debates suggest that while the model may remain relevant at the political level, its role in civil service recruitment should be gradually reduced to allow institutions to prioritize skills, performance, and service delivery outcomes (UNDP, 2022; Somali Public Agenda, 2023).

Gradually Shifting Toward Meritocracy While Maintaining Equitable Representation

A gradual transition toward merit-based recruitment, rather than an abrupt departure from existing representational arrangements, is widely regarded as the most feasible reform pathway in Somalia's socio-political context. This approach allows the state to preserve inclusivity and social cohesion while progressively strengthening professional standards within the civil service.

Recent reforms, such as the National Civil Service Pay and Grading Policy approved by the Somali Cabinet, reflect this balancing strategy by linking remuneration and progression to qualifications, job classification, and performance rather than informal affiliations. Maintaining equitable representation through transparent diversity benchmarks while anchoring recruitment decisions in objective criteria can support both legitimacy and efficiency in public administration. Comparative evidence from fragile and post-conflict states demonstrates that incremental meritocratic reforms are more sustainable when aligned with broader political settlements and institutional capacity development (IMF, 2024; World Bank, 2023).



RECOMMENDATIONS

This study proposes the following practical and evidence-based recommendations to improve recruitment fairness, strengthen meritocracy, address civil servant concerns, and effectively integrate diaspora talent into Somalia's public sector. These recommendations are grounded in the analysis of Somalia's legal and policy frameworks, regional and global best practices, and empirical challenges identified during the research.

Strengthen and Enforce the Legal Framework for Recruitment

The Federal Government of Somalia should prioritize the full enactment and enforcement of updated civil service laws, particularly the proposed amendments to the Civil Service Act, to provide clear and binding recruitment mandates. Recruitment procedures should be explicitly codified in law, including vacancy advertisement requirements, eligibility criteria, standardized assessment methods, interview processes, and grievance mechanisms. Legal clarity will reduce discretionary decision-making and strengthen the authority of the National Civil Service Commission (NCSC) in regulating recruitment across ministries and agencies.

Documents reviewed:

- Draft Amendments to the Civil Service Act
- National Civil Service Commission mandates
- National Transformation Plan (NTP 2025–2029)

Institutionalize Independent And Merit-Based Recruitment Panels

To reduce political interference and informal influence, recruitment processes particularly for mid- and senior-level positions should be overseen by independent recruitment panels. These panels should include representatives from the NCSC, HR professionals, and subject-matter experts, with clear rules limiting political involvement in technical appointments. Transparent scoring systems and documented decision-making should be mandatory to enhance accountability and public trust.

Evidence base:

- OECD⁴ public employment reforms in fragile states
- World Bank governance and civil service reform frameworks

Gradually Reform The Application Of The 4.5 Power-Sharing Model

While the 4.5 power-sharing model has played an important role in political inclusion and stability, its informal extension into civil service recruitment has constrained meritocracy. The study recommends a gradual and deliberate separation of political representation from administrative recruitment, ensuring that technical and professional positions are filled primarily based on qualifications and competence. Equitable representation can be maintained through transparent diversity benchmarks rather than quota-driven appointments that undermine institutional effectiveness.

Documents reviewed:

- Governance and inclusion policy discussions

⁴ OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)

An international organization that promotes policies to improve economic growth, good governance, transparency, public sector efficiency, and social well-being through research, standards, and policy recommendations among its member and partner countries.



- UNDP governance and institutional reform reports

Fully Implement The National Civil Service Pay and Grading Policy

The National Civil Service Pay and Grading Policy (2025) should be fully operationalized across all federal institutions and aligned with recruitment, promotion, and performance management systems. Linking remuneration and career progression to qualifications,

job classification, and performance will help address civil servant concerns related to low morale, limited career growth, and retention challenges. Consistent implementation will also reduce perceptions of favoritism and unequal treatment.

Documents reviewed:

- National Civil Service Pay and Grading Policy
- Public Financial Management Reform Programme
- IMF Article IV Consultation Reports on Somalia

Develop Standardized HR Systems and Digital Recruitment Platforms

The government should accelerate the rollout of Human Resource Management Information Systems (HRMIS) and digital recruitment platforms to centralize personnel records, standardize hiring processes, and enhance transparency. Digital systems can reduce manipulation, improve data integrity, and support evidence-based workforce planning. These systems should be harmonized across federal and federal member state institutions to reduce fragmentation.

Documents reviewed:

- Human Resource Policy and Procedures Manual
- Public Sector Modernization Strategy
- World Bank digital governance initiatives

Establish Clear and Transparent Diaspora Recruitment Pathways

To better integrate diaspora talent, the government should develop formal, transparent, and standardized recruitment mechanisms tailored to diaspora professionals. This includes clear eligibility criteria, competitive selection processes, standardized contracts, and reintegration support. Leveraging diaspora expertise can enhance capacity building, knowledge transfer, and institutional reform if recruitment processes are predictable and merit-based.

Documents reviewed:

- Diaspora engagement policy discussions
- International best practices on diaspora return programs

Invest In Continuous Capacity Building and Performance Management

Recruitment reforms should be complemented by sustained investment in training, performance evaluation, and professional development. Clear job descriptions, competency frameworks, and performance appraisal systems should be applied uniformly across institutions.



Linking training and promotion to measurable performance will strengthen professionalism and institutional accountability.

Evidence base:

- UNDP civil service capacity-building frameworks
- Regional public administration reform experiences

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the structural, administrative, and socio-political challenges shaping public sector recruitment in Somalia within global and regional contexts. It has demonstrated that while Somalia has made notable progress through recent reforms such as the National Civil Service Pay and Grading Policy, proposed amendments to the Civil Service Act, and the development of standardized HR frameworks significant obstacles remain. Political interference, clan-based patronage, weak enforcement of legal frameworks, and fragmented human resource systems continue to undermine recruitment fairness and meritocracy.

The findings underscore the urgent need for transparent, merit-based recruitment systems supported by strong legal mandates, independent oversight institutions, and modern HR management tools. The study also highlights the untapped potential of Somalia's diaspora as a strategic asset for strengthening public administration, provided that clear, fair, and standardized recruitment pathways are established.

Ultimately, sustainable reform in public sector recruitment requires not only new laws and policies but also consistent implementation, political commitment, and institutional capacity development. By aligning recruitment practices with global best practices while remaining sensitive to Somalia's socio-political realities, the country can build a professional, inclusive, and accountable civil service capable of supporting long-term governance reform and effective service delivery.

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