

PROMOTING **INCLUSIVE** **LOCAL GOVERNANCE** IN SOMALIA

“Looking Back – Looking Ahead”



FCA

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The dataset used to inform this publication was a combination of program documents, focus group discussions, questionnaire responses as well as key informant interviews. A significant portion of the data was gathered before and during the *Joint Reflection Workshop on Inclusive Local Governance in Somalia* arranged in Mogadishu and online during June 21–22, 2021. The participants of this publication process represent the government from the federal, member state and district levels, donors, and the broad range of local governance stakeholders, including those from the civil society organizations and key UN agencies. The persons and organizations, who responded to the pre-workshop questionnaire, participated in the workshop and acted as interviewees, sharing their experienced knowledge and providing invaluable insight to the theme of supporting local governance in Somalia deserve particular credit. These inputs bring the topic to life,

provide depth of perspective, and will hopefully support stabilization actors in planning the path ahead.

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Mr Tomi Järvinen
Deputy Executive Director

Executive summary

This publication brings together existing knowledge and current insights on promoting inclusive local governance in Somalia, covering the District Council formation process, community participation, and the inclusion of women, youth, and marginalized groups. The publication includes a description of the context and background of the program, its results, successes, and lessons learned and best practices of over a decade of work on local governance. Finally, it explores dreams and visions for the future of Somalia's local governance and presents a set of recommendations for a way forward.

The insight of the publication is drawn primarily from the local governance program carried out by FCA in partnership with the government and a consortium of local actors. It is based on a review of key program documents, a joint reflection workshop held in Mogadishu from June 21–22, 2021, with more than 42 key local governance actors, including FCA's team, partners, government and key stabilization actors, pre-workshop questionnaire responses, and interviews with selected key informants.

The intended key audience includes practitioners in local governance, including national and local governments, local councils and administrations, civil society organizations (CSOs), development partners and others who have an interest in local governance and peacebuilding in Somalia.

Successful district council formation (DCF) serves as a key milestone in building inclusive local governance structures in Somalia. As a result of the programs with FCA and partners' assistance, not only were four local districts councils formed according to the Wadajir National Framework, but these structures were also inclusive, marking significant progress in overcoming the manifold barriers that the marginalized groups, women and youth face in reaching decision-making. While many barriers continue to exist, the achievements in women's political participation are particularly significant.

The major results are broken into changes in governance structures and policies; inclusivity and women's political participation in local governance; setting up mechanisms for dialogues, negotiation and information sharing; securing buy-in and commitment for inclusive local governance and finally; the importance of conflict resolution and reconciliation. These results can be seen as mutually re-enforcing elements.

This publication also seeks to unpack the lessons learned and factors behind these achievements and provide action-oriented recommendations to support the state building process in Somalia with a specific focus on inclusivity and broadening participation in local governance efforts.

Building inclusive local governance is a complex and time-consuming process that requires a holistic approach that is genuinely Somali-led and -owned. A solid understanding of the context is needed to agree on the locations for the DCF process as well as to identify the key stakeholders within, including and importantly the previously marginalized and excluded groups. As DCF is based on a power-sharing agreement between the clans, conflict resolution, reconciliation and social healing efforts lay the foundation for successful local governance. Setting up spaces and mechanisms for information sharing and dialogue enables clear and consistent communication with different stakeholder groups and the ability to adapt to changes

within the context. Another important foundation for local governance efforts is having a broadly accepted policy framework as a common ground. Quotas for women has proven important in securing women's political rights. In addition, linking broad-based advocacy and awareness raising on gender equality to comprehensive support to women's participation in decision-making, enabled women's participation in the newly formed decision-making structures. Securing political will and commitment, as well as coordination among relevant stakeholders, are yet other factors perceived as being crucial for success in ensuring inclusivity in local governance. Lastly, attention to security concerns is a critical enabling factor for all local governance work.

Visions and dreams related to the future of Somalia's local governance include implementing district council formation processes in all the remaining districts across Somalia; good relations and collaboration among different levels of governance across the country; community ownership of district council formation, and having resources for it allocated by the central government; a democratic and inclusive Somalia with systems in place and all basic services attended to by districts; realized national reconciliation as a foundation for trust building, unity and stronger governance institutions; a shared vision of a common future leading the way to a new social contract and social cohesion; political stability, justice and an improved security situation at large.

The recommendations for a way forward are discussed under the following themes:

- I. Base development of local governance on solid contextual understanding to ensure conflict sensitivity and strong local ownership**
- II. Prioritize security, trust building and reconciliation**
- III. Develop and implement legislation and policies on inclusive local governance**
- IV. Continue support to established district councils and emerging DCF processes throughout the country**
- V. Ensure comprehensive support to women's political participation**
- VI. Cultivate a shared understanding of the "why" through increased civic education and awareness raising**
- VII. Agree on advocacy goals to ensure strategic approach & political will and commitment**
- VIII. Produce new information based on research and develop knowledge products and communications materials**
- IX. Improve coordination and collaboration**

List of Acronyms

CRD.....	Center for Research and Dialogue
COPESA.....	Conflict, political, economic, security and gender analysis
CSO.....	Civil Society Organization
DC	District Council
DCF.....	District Council Formation
DPC.....	District Preparation Committee
EISA	Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa
EU.....	European Union
FGS.....	Federal Government of Somalia
FMS.....	Federal Member States
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IIDA.....	Somali Women's Organization
Mol	Ministry of Interior
MolFAR.....	Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation
MolLG.....	Ministry of Interior and Local Governments
MoP.....	Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development
MoWHRD	Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development
NRF.....	National Reconciliation Framework
R2P.....	Right to Peace
RBA.....	Rights-based Approach
SSF.....	Somalia Stability Fund
TFG	Transitional Federal Government
UN JPLG.....	UN Joint Programme on Local Governance
UNPOS	UN Political Office for Somalia

“Having a governance structure, when we haven’t seen any form of governance in Somalia in decades, has been the most outstanding aspect of the local governance work for me personally. On top of this, local communities now also understand what local governance means to their respective localities.”

Questionnaire response on the most significant change for the Joint Reflection Workshop (June 21-22, 2021).

“One of the things I observed was how local elders are in verbal agreement with the women included in the [district council formation] process. However, there is a long way to go; but there is still light in the back of the tunnel. Local Governance practitioners must look and find a mechanism for ensuring women’s inclusion meaningfully. Secondly, the local community engaged [in the program] have learnt about and embraced elections, whereby they have a say in their pressing issues.”

Questionnaire response on the most significant change for the Joint Reflection Workshop (June 21-22, 2021).

“The WHY debate is important. We assume that we have the same answer to the why, but we don’t. We have different interpretations [...] so we ... need to come to a consensus of the why, before a yes or a no [concerning the decision to intervene in a certain area or not, and the question of gender equality]. From the traditional Somali perspective, the aim for equal representation of genders doesn’t make sense. But we also have a logic for why gender representation is important. This is what needs to be discussed, and evidence needs to be presented to create common ground ...before moving on to implementation.”

Key Informant Interview, June 29th, 2021.

1. Introduction

This publication brings together existing knowledge and current insights on promoting inclusive local governance in Somalia, covering the District Council formation process, community participation, and the inclusion of women, youth, and marginalized groups. The insight is drawn primarily from the local governance program carried out by FCA in partnership with a consortium of local actors since 2016, recently including the Center for Research and Dialogue (CRD) and the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA).¹ All projects within the broader local governance program have been implemented in close collaboration with the Federal Government of Somalia, particularly the Ministries of Interior, and Women and Human Rights Development at federal and state levels.

Following this introductory chapter (1), Chapter 2 provides a general overview of Somalia as an operational context, followed by a brief presentation of the background to FCA's work on supporting inclusive local governance in Somalia. The focus of the publication is on results and successes (Chapter 3) as well as lessons learned and best practices (Chapter 4) of over a decade of work by FCA and its partners. This publication also explores dreams and visions for the future of Somalia's local governance and presents a set of recommendations for a way forward (Chapter 5).

The intended key audience of this publication includes practitioners in local governance in national and local governments, local councils and administrations, civil society organizations (CSOs), development partners and others who have an interest in local governance and peacebuilding in Somalia. The publication serves both internal and external learning purposes. FCA will use it to support program development in collaboration with other stabilization and peacebuilding actors in Somalia.

The dataset informing the publication process includes two research articles and key program and project documents of interventions led and implemented by FCA, focus group discussions and input² from a hybrid (face-to-face and online) workshop organized during 21-22 of June 2021 in Mogadishu with stabilization and peacebuilding actors, responses to a short questionnaire sent to 42 workshop invitees and participants, and interviews with 2 key informants. The main methods used for analyzing the data and writing up this report were thematic analysis and retrospective narrative reconstruction.

¹ Previously partners include Somalia Women's Organization and Somalia Youth Development Network (SOYDEN)

² The workshop was arranged in hybrid format and on an online platform ([Howspace](#)), which was also used for the questionnaire, as well as transparent and interactive documentation of workshop inputs.

2. Context & Background

This chapter provides a general overview of Somalia as an operational context, shedding light particularly on factors that enable and/or challenge inclusive local governance in the country at large. The description of the context is followed by a brief presentation of the background to FCA's work on supporting inclusive local governance in Somalia.

Somalia as an operational context: historical characteristics, administrative structures, and current dynamics

Somalia has a **background of over three decades of conflict**, with much of its infrastructure destroyed during the war, and a large part of its recent past marked by poverty, famine, protracted humanitarian crisis and recurring violence. Somalia's history makes it a complex operational environment both politically as well as in terms of security and development. The multi-layered, protracted crisis continues to have a profound impact on Somalia, increasing the vulnerability of the population at large. Ongoing political instability, insecurity and armed conflict exacerbate the effects of periodic natural disasters and climate-driven shocks, such as droughts, flooding, and desert locusts. The compound and complex situation continues to influence displacement patterns and constrain the availability of resources, while the presence of armed groups impedes the level of access and support provided by humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actors. Women have borne an unequal share of the many hardships in Somalia brought on by decades of conflict, poverty, and human insecurity; a situation that remains unchanged.

The **history and traditions of decision-making** in Somalia are particularly important for understanding and developing local governance. The overall decision-making in Somalia is largely in the hands of clans, carrying on traditions from the patronage-based and patriarchal system that has flourished in the country for decades. The conflict and tensions among clans make attempts at ensuring democratic processes difficult, starting from the electoral process including the ambitious vision of one-person-one-vote for the national elections, to the promotion of a shared vision of the Somalis, and to the sharing of resources at the local and grassroots level. The clan-based decision-making processes, dominated by male elders, have excluded active participation of a significant part of the population, including women, youth, and marginalized groups such as minority and traditionally marginalized clans. A particular challenge to women's participation is the perception among clans that females do not have the right to represent their clan after marriage, as their clan-related identity changes with marriage.

Women continue to be under-represented in politics on both national and local levels. In addition to being excluded from major decisions in a country where gender parameters reflect significant inequalities, women's exclusion and marginalization are further exacerbated by their lack of education and knowledge about their rights and opportunities to participate in decision-making. Women do not see it as their role to

be in the role of decision-makers. Fear of breaking the norms of what is considered acceptable in society is also a decisive factor in disabling women to claim space and take a more active role in the community and society. All these factors combined significantly limit women's possibilities to engage in decision-making and local governance. The deeply rooted clan-based culture promotes strict male hierarchy and authority, as well as the subordination of women. These features further limit the possibilities for Somali women to claim their right to participate as fully-fledged members and decision-makers in society. Women continue to be marginalized in virtually all spheres of society, and deeply rooted gender inequality prevails in the country.

At the same time, Somalia has made significant progress in its recovery from conflict. **Federalism** was established as an agreed principle of statebuilding and decentralization for Somalia already during the Mbagathi process in 2002–2004 (the Somalia National Reconciliation Conference) led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Federalism began to take concrete form following a process of national dialogue and consensus that led to the establishment of the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) on 20 August 2012, with the adoption of the Constitution³, and replacing the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of Somalia. This enshrined the decentralization of powers to the Federal Member States (FMS), comprised of an FMS government and parliament. It also encouraged cooperation among various administrative levels, with the aim of harmonizing political and economic power and institutional balance between the center and smaller units of governance. The system is largely based on consensus-building between leaders at all levels of government, as stipulated in article 51 of the 2012 Provisional Constitution.⁴ There are 5 Federal Member States (Puntland, Galmudug, Hirshabelle, South West State, and Jubaland), and Somaliland and Banadir Regional Administration, which together form the current Federal Government of Somalia.⁵

The FGS is today the internationally recognized government of Somalia, and the first attempt to create a central government in Somalia since the collapse of the Somali Democratic Republic. The Federal Government is comprised of 3 branches, including the executive branch of government, the judiciary branch, and the parliament serving as the legislative branch. The President of Somalia acts as the head, to whom the Council of Ministers reports through the Prime Minister. Somalia has entered a new period with this structure and is moving toward the consolidation of peace, democracy, and long-term sustainable development after decades of conflict and instability.

Somalia is divided into 13 official **administrative regions** and 5 claimed but uncontrolled regions in Somaliland. The northern part of Somalia is de facto divided among the autonomous region of Puntland, (which considers itself as an autonomous state) and Somaliland (a self-declared but unrecognized sovereign state). These **regions are further divided into districts**, which are demarcated territorial areas. There are respectively 72 districts in the 13 official administrative regions and 18 districts in the claimed but uncontrolled districts of Somaliland.⁶

District Councils refer to the legislature at the district level, which is at the heart of the support to local governance work discussed in this publication. The functions of District Councils are to 1) represent and serve the interest of the local population in the state and regional governments, 2) be accountable to the people of the district by regular

³ The national constitution lays out the basic way in which the government is to operate. See <https://villasomalia.gov.so/en/constitution/> (accessed 21 July 2021).

⁴ For more information on decentralization as conflict resolution as well as an account on federalism in Somalia, see Saferworld (2020), 7–9.

⁵ <http://mop.gov.so/index.php/the-ministry/directorates/planning/federal-member-states-fms/>, accessed 21 July 2021.

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Administrative_divisions_of_Somalia#Regions_and_districts, accessed 21 July 2021.

reporting on their performance in the area they represent, 3) encourage and ensure public participation in the work of the local council, and create a sense of belonging to the local government administration, 4) establish policies and ensure the performance of the objectives established for local governments, 5) provide public services as permitted by law, 6) allocate resources to carry out local government activities, 7) comply with national and state policies, 8) cooperate with other levels of government to ensure the protection of the law and public order, and to achieve good governance in the public interest, 9) protect the constitution and other laws of Somalia, and 10) prepare and approve an annual budget for the local government.⁷

Decentralization can be seen as most needed in conflict-affected areas, such as Somalia, as a way of reducing national-level political tensions by granting governance power to the sub-national and local levels. It is also understood as a way of reducing inequalities among regions through the consistent and predictable allocation of resources from the central government to the sub-national levels, as well as equipping local communities with authorities that are accessible and more proximate – and ideally more efficient and accountable in terms of service provision. A further idea behind decentralization is that it promotes inclusion and enhances the participation of marginalized groups in political decision-making and governance. Simultaneously decentralization is often most difficult to implement in conflict-affected countries where it may be resisted by ruling elites when it threatens their wealth and power. Decentralization has also been seen to raise fears that it would strengthen instead of alleviating separatist claims.⁸

The **process of peacebuilding** through federalism and decentralization in Somalia **remains fragile**. Despite political election violence and a dispute following allegations that the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) had interfered with the free and fair election process, the 2018 regional presidential elections brought in a new government with a new impetus in redirecting the context by creating broad ownership of the country's political system. The new government set in motion a challenging reform agenda focused on improving governance, reconciliation, and inclusive politics, economic growth, social development, and inclusion. Nonetheless, political tensions have heightened again since early 2019, when all Federal Member States (FMS) announced political differences with FGS. The parliamentary and presidential election processes started in various Member States in late 2018 have also contributed to escalating tensions across the country. Dialogues between the FGS and the member states, supported by interventions from various national and international actors have, however, alleviated the situation somewhat.

The national presidential and parliamentary elections envisioned for 2020/2021, with the ambitions of a one-person-one-vote system, have been repeatedly delayed. Election timelines from the Federal Government have been unclear and the whole process resulted in a broader political crisis after the FGS Prime Minister was ousted by the parliament in late July 2020. A draft agreement on the election model was eventually reached in September 2020, following several rounds of discussions by the Somali Federal Government, and the Federal Member States, coupled with pressure from non-state actors and the international community.

In late April 2021, after months of political tensions, the Federal government forces (Somali National Army, the National Intelligence Agency NISA and the Somali Police Special Unit) and pro-opposition support forces exchanged gunfire in Mogadishu. This

⁷ FCA (2020), 6-7.

⁸ Saferworld, 8.

escalation of the political crisis was rooted in the dispute related to FGS's determination to stay in office for 2 years beyond its term in February 2021. Following intense domestic and international pressure FGS gave in and agreed to back away from the controversial resolution on the extension of term passed by the Lower House of the Parliament, and instead allowed Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble to hold talks to broker a settlement. The Prime Minister invited regional leaders to attend a consultative meeting at the end of May 2021, resulting in an agreement signed by all regional leaders, and a decision for the Prime Minister to lead the election process. Following the agreement to hold parliamentary elections within 60 days, the Federal Government and Member States further adjusted timelines and scheduled elections for the Upper House to be held on 25 July 2021 and for the Lower House between 10 August and 10 September 2021. According to the schedule, both houses are to subsequently convene on 10 October to elect the President. Meanwhile, Al-Shabaab has continued to launch deadly attacks throughout June resulting in over 90 deaths, with the army launching offensives against Al-Shabaab, claiming to have killed hundreds by the end of June 2021.⁹

In the meantime, decentralization efforts at the district level have also been challenged. Almost all district commissioners, the majority of whom are men, are appointed by the Federal Government and/or by the Federal Member States. This has led to perceptions among the public that the commissioners are more accountable to the federal and state governments than to the people. These top-down approaches have lost legitimacy, trust, and confidence among the broader public in recent years. They have also failed to guarantee the active engagement of communities and to address ongoing, unresolved conflicts and historical inter-clan grievances. This, in turn, may be seen as constituting further obstacles on the road toward more inclusive local governance.

The uncertainty of the Somali political environment and the anticipated tensions around the coming elections have resulted in the deprioritization of the District Council Formation (DCF) process for some of the key actors across the Federal Member States, including in the target areas of the FCA and its partners' local governance program in the states of Southern Somalia (Galmudug, Hirshabelle, Jubaland, Southwest), and the regional administration area of Benadir. The situation overall is likely to impact the planning and implementation of further programs aiming to support inclusive local governance, which relies heavily on the mutual understanding, strong political wills, and commitment of the government institutions and authorities at different levels.

As a final remark on the general operational context in Somalia, the global Covid -19 pandemic has further complicated inclusive local governance efforts.

Background to the local governance program

Rooted in the rights-based approach (RBA), FCA's work on local governance in Somalia spans over more than a decade of support to Somali-led and owned peacebuilding and statebuilding efforts beginning in 2007, during the period of Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG). All FCA's work, since the beginning, has had the Rights Based Approach as a foundation, with programs stressing the imperative of local ownership, highlighting the importance of strengthening accountability between rights-holders and duty-bearers and emphasizing the importance of Somali-led and owned process.

⁹ This section on current events feeds off of The New Humanitarian article: *The New Humanitarian: Back from the brink? Somalia's political crisis explained*, (20 May 2021), and the International Crisis Group update of June 2021.

Through supporting the positive role of elders, as well as through support to the Somali Federal and State governments in their efforts at statebuilding and promoting inclusive local governance, FCA's work has contributed to the ending of the political transition phase. Building on this foundation, FCA's work resulted in the formation of Galmudug State and the formation of 4 District Councils, with significant representation of women, youth, and marginalized groups (in South West State, Jubaland, and Galmudug). Further, the work has resulted in facilitating dialogue and cooperation among grassroots, national and international actors including the UN and other donors.

A crucial aspect of the early phase of FCA's work on local governance was the support given to the elders equipping them with the tools, skills and platforms to participate in the Somali peace dialogue and preventing them from being exposed to corruption. The elders were also informed through civic education about the process of ending the transition period as well as their role in it. A further key element of FCA's work in Somalia in this early phase included the promotion of gender equality and advocating for better inclusion of women into Somali politics. This entailed working with women's rights groups advocating for gender equality. A central aim in this regard was to see the fulfillment of a 30% quota for female representation in the new Federal Parliament of Somalia, introduced as part of the roadmap for Somalia and constituting a noticeable feature of the Garowe Principles¹⁰. The elected parliament after the 2012 elections did not meet the quota, amounting only to 14% of female representatives, but FCA saw its project as having sown important seeds of change for bringing about more inclusivity into the governance of a traditionally male-dominated, patriarchal society. FCA's embedded assistance through the secondment of a specialist was also considered a success mainly due to its indirect presence at the core of the transition process. This positioning made it possible to simultaneously support Somali ownership and the capacity of the Transitional Federal Government. The intervention supported elders as duty-bearers in the transition process, providing them with access and agency in the Somali peace dialogue. It also gave the elders the opportunity to offer their indigenous peace mediation expertise for use at the national level. The initiative also took FCA's own learning about operating in fragile contexts forward in leaps and bounds.

With the transition period finalized in August 2012, FCA Somalia extended its support to other parts of the country, with a focus on Galmudug, Southwest State, Jubaland, and Hirshabelle states in 2013 through continued 'embedded'¹¹ support to statebuilding at the levels of Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and Federal Member States (FMS). Through this work, FCA Somalia supported the state formation process between 2014 and 2015, which eventually resulted in the formation of the Galmudug State.

Since 2016, FCA has led the implementation of several Right to Peace (R2P)/local governance projects as part of its country program in Somalia. The projects have been carried out by FCA in partnership with a consortium of local actors, including the Center for Research and Dialogue (CRD), the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA), Somali Women's Organization (IIDA), and Somali Youth Development Network (SOYDEN). All projects have been implemented in close collaboration with the government, particularly the Ministries of Interior, and Women and Human Rights Development at federal and state levels. The projects have been funded by the European Union, USAID/TIS+ (Transition Initiatives for Stabilization), and Somalia

¹⁰ The Garowe Principles refer to a set of agreements between the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of Somalia and various Somali stakeholders outlining a framework for the interim administration's scheduled political transition in August 2012 to a permanent, representative government. The agreements were signed during the Somali National Consultative Constitutional Conference held in Garowe, the administrative capital of the autonomous Puntland region.

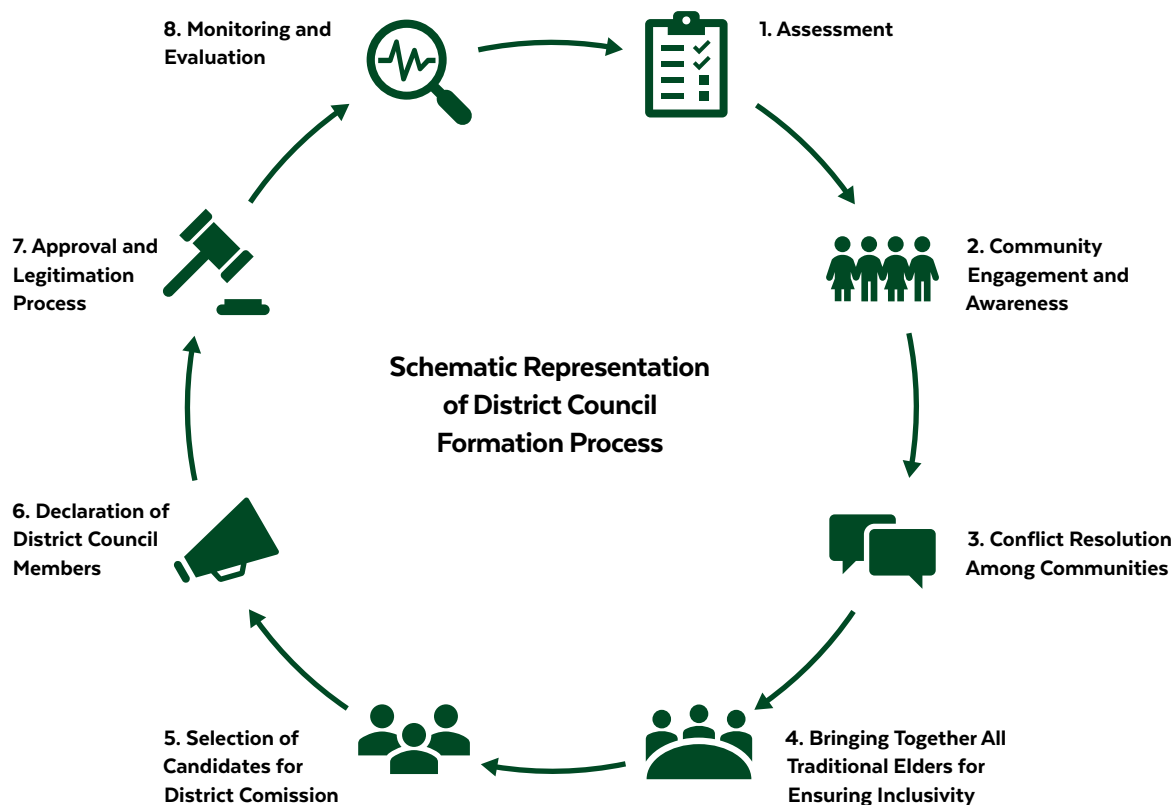
¹¹ Lepistö et al 2015. Embedded support refers here to a form of technical assistance in which external advisers are supported within government ministries.

Stability Fund (SSF). The overall aim of the local governance program has been to i) strengthen local governance structures for more accountable and inclusive district council formation across four FMS (South West, Jubaland, Galmudug, and Hirshabelle), following the Wadajir National Framework for Local Governance, and to ii) promote women's participation in political and decision-making processes in three districts of South West, Baidoa, Berdale and Hudur. It is in reference to these projects that this publication discusses the successes and results, best practices and lessons learned, as well as visions, dreams, and recommendations for a way forward in supporting inclusive local governance in Somalia.

The Wadajir National Framework for Local Governance

The formation of district councils is prescribed in the Wadajir Framework for Local Governance, established in March 2016 by the Federal Ministry of Interior and Reconciliation Affairs. The framework integrates various aspects of the Federal government's Stabilization Strategy, such as community social healing, reconciliation, and support to peace. It also provides a sequence and prescribed steps for establishing permanent functioning local government councils and administrations and aims thereby to ensure the sustainability of peacebuilding and statebuilding activities. A further aim of the Framework is to harmonize all stabilization programs in the areas of Somalia liberated from Al-Shabaab¹.

¹ Al-Shabaab, (Somali: "the Youth") also spelled al-Shabab, Arabic in full Harakat al-Shabāb al-Mujāhidīn, Somali-based Islamist militant group. Beginning in 2006, the group waged an insurgency against Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG). Al-Shabaab originated as a militia affiliated with the Islamic Courts Union, a federation of local and clan-based Islamic courts that had been founded in southern Somalia in 2004 to combat the lawlessness and banditry afflicting the area since the collapse of the government of Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991.



District Council Formation (DCF) in a Nutshell¹

The Wadajir Framework for Local Governance, established in March 2016 by the Federal Ministry of Interior and Reconciliation Affairs, prescribes the formation of district councils.

Establishing community-owned, functional local governments responsible for delivering services to their population supports the legitimacy of government and fosters relations between government and local communities. It allows citizens to prepare, participate and take ownership of the process of establishing permanent district councils and administrations and enhancing their functionality through a relevant capacity building program.

The **Ministries of Interior and Local Governments of states are responsible for the portfolio of local governments.** This includes responsibility for district councils' formation, establishing systems for local governance structures, and strengthening their capacity to promote democratic and accountable local governments that provide better basic services for stability and enhanced peace.

District Councils are the legislative bodies on the district level. They are responsible for representing and serving the interest of the local population in state and regional governments. They establish policies and ensure the performance of the objectives of local governments, provide public services, and allocate resources to carry out local government activities. They also protect the constitution and other laws of Somalia.²

Criteria for candidate selection. To become selected as a member of a district council, one must be a Somali citizen with a clean criminal offence record for the previous seven years before candidacy. The minimum age of a District Council Member is 25, and candidates must be 'of good character' and have 'a sound mind'. Candidates must have at least a high school level education or equivalent knowledge and experience.

The **Federal Government of Somalia has pronounced the formation of district councils a priority.** The District Council Formation (DCF)

process is a new phenomenon to Somalia and one that has gained broad acceptance and triggered interest, along with some suspicions, depending on the political situation and experiences of past grievances in each given district. So far, seven district councils have been formed according to the sequencing outlined in the Wadajir Framework: Hudur, Berdale, Wajid and Diinsoor of South West State, Warsheikh of Hirshabelle, Afmadow of Jubaland and South Galkacyo of Galmudug.

The **community led DCF process** entails creating a conducive environment among the target area's population for resolving their conflicts. The process uses a bottom-up approach culminating in target communities (s)electing their representatives in the council. The DCF process has proven to be riskier and more challenging than other local governance activities carried out in the districts so far. This is due to the formation processes entailing politics and sensitive power-sharing agreements, which often resurface historical tensions, insecurities, fear, mistrust, and rivalries.

"In the minds of local communities and clans, power-sharing equals either prohibition or validation of their presence in the districts."

Interview July 8, 2021.

The Ministries of Interior and Local Governments of states provide **capacity building to established district councils** on governance, structures, functions, roles and responsibilities, service delivery, and by-laws for the first month after their inauguration. In the second month after the inauguration, the councils receive capacity building on revenue collection, expenditure, planning, financial procedures, and management, as well as transparency and accountability.

¹ This section is based on the FCA (2020) District Council Formations Implementation Handbook for South West State of Somalia.

² The functions of District Councils are presented in Chapter 2, under the section on Somalia as an operational context, p. 9.

3. Reconciliation and a Shared Understanding of the “Why” at the Core of Successes and Results

“Major changes include elections of the councils that are built on the wills and active participation of the people, which is against the normal appointment / clan-based political system. The representation of women and youth as the elected council across elected districts and also in the state assembly e.g., SWS is another milestone for local governance in Somalia.”

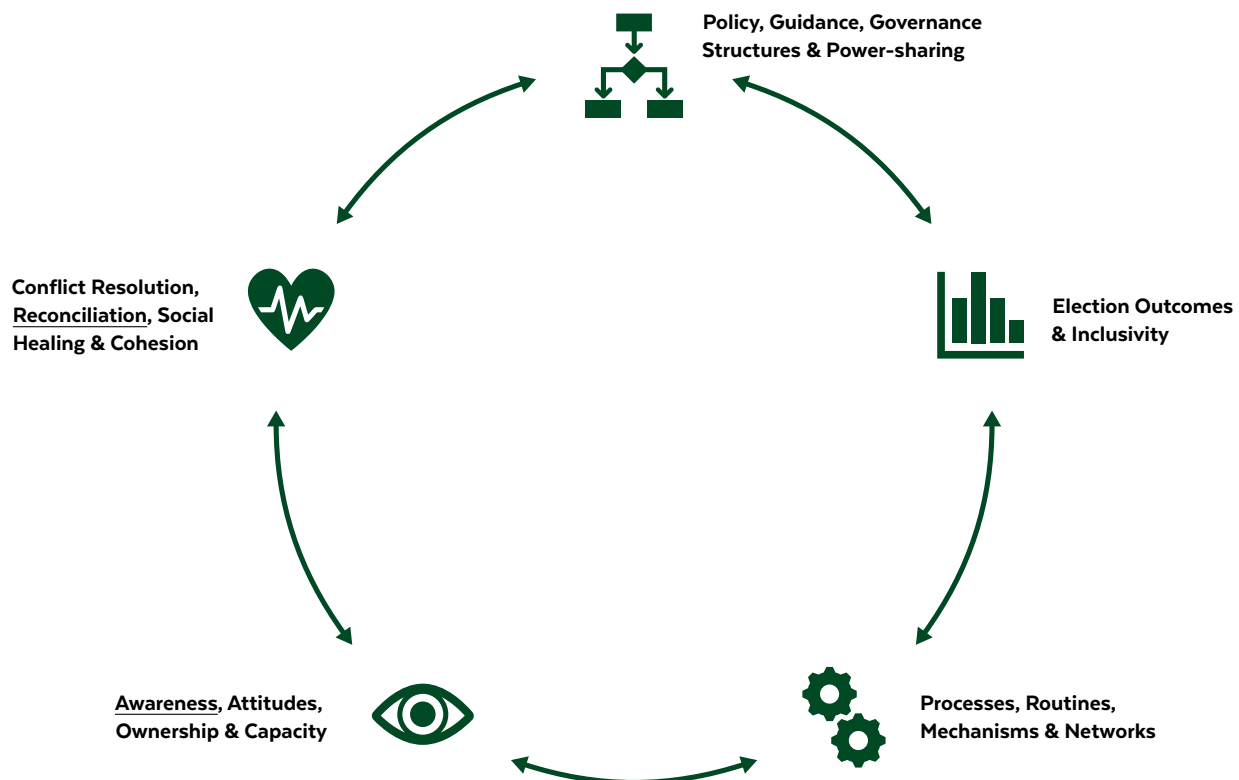
Questionnaire response on the most significant change for the Joint Reflection Workshop (June 21-22, 2021).

“1. Reconciliation among the communities. 2. Civic education. 3. Formation of district level preparatory committee(s). 4. Youth and diaspora support for the process. 4. Inclusive engagement for all, including key political actors from the state and federal government who are from the district.”

Questionnaire response on the most significant change for the Joint Reflection Workshop (June 21-22, 2021).

This section discusses the successes and results of the local governance programs carried out by FCA since 2016 in partnership with its partners and the government. For this publication process, successes were defined as proactive or reactive accomplishments of local governance programs and activities. In other words, they are understood both as positive outcomes of planned activities, as well as any adaptive and agile solutions that may have been applied successfully in response to unforeseen situations. Results, in turn, were defined as intended and/or unintended consequences of the local governance program and its activities.

The efforts of the FCA-led local governance program have yielded tangible and concrete successes and results **regarding governance structures, policy and guidance; inclusivity and women’s political participation in local governance; safe spaces and mechanisms for dialogues, negotiation and information sharing; buy-in and commitment for inclusive local governance; and conflict resolution, reconciliation & social healing and cohesion.** Overall, the successes and results under these five broad themes can be seen as forming a mutually reinforcing set of elements, where each set of successes and results is linked to and in interaction with the other four identified sets of successes and results. Awareness and a shared understanding of the “why” of inclusive local governance emerged consistently, throughout the dataset, as being fundamental to everything else that takes place in the process and efforts to make it a reality. Closely linked to this, is reconciliation. Reconciled differences and improved social cohesion provide a window of opportunity to discuss questions of power-sharing and governance. On the other hand, a shared understanding of the reasons, needs, and means for equitable political participation across genders, age groups, clans, and ethnicities provides an avenue for the resolution of historical tensions and conflicts between community groups. Reconciliation enables and nourishes inclusive political participation and vice-a-versa.



Five-pointed star image of interconnected sets of successes and results in the promotion of inclusive local governance in Somalia

The main successes and results for each of these broader themes portrayed in Figure 1 are presented in the following, with anecdotal examples from projects. The successes and results listed here can all be either directly or indirectly attributed to the FCA-led local governance program.

Governance structures, policy and guidance

Formation of four district councils: Hudur and Berdale of South West State in 2017 and 2018 respectively, and Afmadow of Jubaland and South Galkacyo of Galmudug in 2020. Through contribution to strengthened internal cohesion and unity among local clans within the program districts the DCF processes were found to be highly relevant not only to the communities within the districts but also to the state governments more broadly.¹²

Establishing related committees and supporting existing ones (Technical Committee, District Preparatory Committee, District Election Committee, District Peace and Reconciliation Committee), including supporting their capacity and composition to include a fair representation of women, youth, and marginalized groups. This is seen as crucial to the overall success of the program.

Formalization of a quota system for women in policy and legislative frameworks. The lobbying efforts supported by FCA and its consortium members led to a decision of the National Leadership Forum to adopt the 30% quota in national parliamentary elections (FGS) in 2016, and to the integration of the 20% quota system for women in local government law of South West State and into key District Council Formation processes.

¹² There are to date 7 district councils, which have been formed following the Wadajir Framework. These include 4 districts formed by FCA, 2 districts (Diinsoor and Wajid) formed by S2S, and Warsheikh district formed by SSF.

Development of National Gender Policy for South West State by the Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development (MoWHRD) The policy has been brought to parliament several times. Approval of the policy is pending at the time of writing this publication (July 2021).

A new way of sharing power among clans regarding seats in the District Council in all project areas. An example of this is the facilitated, in-depth social reconciliation process in Galkacyo, which led to the successful revision of the District Preparatory Committee in 2020. The process entailed a chain of meetings to discuss, re-negotiate and agree on a new formula of sharing power in the district. The initial nominees of the committee appointed by the state’s previous president were all male. After an intervention of the MoI and the consortium members, 2 male members were replaced with 2 female members. The process took over a month, but it yielded positive results. In El-berde, district, in turn, despite failure to complete the DCF process, progress was nevertheless made in July 2020 toward advancing the power-sharing stage of the DCF process.

Guidance for DCF Implementation. The District Council Formations Implementation Handbook published in 2020 provides tools to guide South West State and the other Federal Member States in Somalia through a step-by-step process leading to the formation of an inclusive DCF according to the Wadajir National Framework.

Civic Dialogue Operational Guidelines for inclusive District Council Formation. The guidelines provide operational procedures to facilitate civic dialogues across villages and towns for inclusive district council formation. Civic dialogue adopts a participatory approach that provides citizens open spaces for engagement and dialogue around emerging local governance structures.

Establishing seven policy manuals to help the MoWHRD to deliver its mandate regarding gender mainstreaming in all spheres of its work across the SWS administration. The manuals were focused on human resources, financial management, human rights, and supply chain management.

Inclusivity and women’s political participation in local governance

Strengthened **inclusivity and participation of all community groups, including women, youth, and marginalized groups, in the DCF process, as well as engagement in reconciliation as part of the statebuilding process. Previously excluded and marginalized groups including women, youth and minority clans’ participation in local governance was significantly improved.** This result is attributed to community awareness raising sessions, civic dialogues, social healing, and reconciliation activities, as well as power-sharing discussions, negotiations, and agreements facilitated by local governance program actors. Moreover, community leaders were found to be a driving force behind facilitating community engagement and organizing community meetings, serving as focal points, and paving the way for the electoral committee to fulfill its role successfully. In addition, elders played a key role in broadening participation.

“The most important aspect of the project was to engage the elders and religious leaders who never felt the need to even talk about women in leadership, engaging them as change agents ensured that their perception on women in leadership changed.”

Quote of Bay Women network member from Endline Assessment of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Investment in South West State of Somalia by Researchcare Africa & Somalia Stability Fund.

Comprehensive and long-term capacity-building programme in South West State improved **the capacity, confidence and skills for women to effectively participate**. As a result, **more than 700 women leaders from local universities, government institutions, CSOs, cabinet ministers, MPs and journalists were trained on leadership and other skills**. As part of the mentorship support, numerous advocacy platforms, community dialogues and interface mechanisms were established to provide opportunities for the trained women to practice their skills, air their concerns and raise their voices, as well as to enable them to actively participate in political and decision-making processes.

Women's network established as a convening platform for mobilizing grassroots women and for safe dialogue, interaction and advocacy. Bay Women Association Network (BAYWAN) in South West State was established in March 2019 to create support circles for women, address gender issues across sectors, and advocate with the government, civil society, and traditional and religious leaders for the promotion of the 30% quota system for women in political and decision-making structures. The formation of BAYWAN also led to positive unplanned spill-over results: the network quickly became a central point for campaigns supporting female candidates, providing a platform from which women were able to draw credibility, courage, and confidence to challenge the strongly held traditions that had kept them to the side of political and decision-making arenas for decades. One of the effects of this was in Dinsoor district, where BAYWAN's efforts led to the election of 10 women to the newly formed District Council. The network also drew on peer support and organized successful debates with various stakeholders, including highly esteemed, feared traditional and religious leaders, challenging them on the view that Islamic faith barred women from political participation. Further unplanned results of the establishment of BAYWAN included the network members engaging voluntarily to raise the awareness of other women and marginalized groups of IDP camps in Baidoa, equipping them with knowledge and skills to defend their fundamental rights. The BAYWAN members also got involved in charity work in support of the poor and most marginalized women and children in the Baidoa IDP camps. Alongside their civic campaigns, the network members became engaged in policy advocacy and lobbying activities in collaboration with the MoWHRD, for the enactment of the Sexual Offences Bill for the SWS.

Seven groups of the BAYWAN network received Small Quick Impact Projects (SQUIPs) to promote income generation of the members, and to support the sustainability of the network. The secured financial security of beneficiaries of the SQUIPs enabled them to meet the basic needs of their families and thereby get time off for engaging in advocacy for gender equality and social inclusion. The knowledge and skills acquired by these network members receiving SQUIPs enabled them to start fundraising events to support their advocacy efforts.

"We believe that the formation of the Bay Women Network is the best thing that has happened to us in the last two years; we as women feel like we have just realized the importance of our role and the position in society."

Quote of female beneficiary in Baidoa from Endline Assessment of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Investment in South West State of Somalia by Researchcare Africa & Somalia Stability Fund.

Securing a 30% representation of women in key DCF Committees at the FMS level (Technical, and District Preparatory Committees) leading the formation of district



councils.¹³ These committees are seen as mirroring the DCF process as a whole, and it is for this reason that local governance support actors advocate the observation of women’s meaningful participation in the committees vis-à-vis the government and local elders.

Enhanced political participation of women in district councils. 2 women were elected as district council members in Berdale in 2018, 2 in Afmadow, 5 in Galkacyo, and 10 in Dinsoor¹⁴ in 2020. The total number of district council members in these districts is 21, apart from Galkacyo where the number of council members is 27. Despite efforts, the targets of enhancing women’s political participation in Hudur district were not reached and no women were elected.

Increased youth representation in district councils. In Afmadow 18 out of 21 district council members represent youth, two of whom are female, under the age of 35. Similarly, in Galkacyo, 17 out of the 27 elected members are youth. These results are attributed largely to the dissemination of information through local FM radio broadcasts, capacity building and mentorship support as well as to awareness raising sessions where youth were encouraged to contest and try to influence their clan elders by showcasing their ideas of how to bring about change through their education, experience, and fresh minds.

Women elected as members of the Federal Member State parliament. Advocacy efforts by the Bay Women Association Network (BAYWAN) in South West State led

¹³ Of a total of 30 members in Technical Committees for 4 FMSs, 6 (20%) were women, and 24 (80%) were men. Of the total of 70 members of District Preparatory Committees of 5 FMSs (Galkacyo, Afmadow, Jowhar, Barawe and Elberde), 21 (30%) were women, and 49 (70%) were men.

¹⁴ The formation of the Dinsoor District Council was supported by UNDP through Support to Stability (S2S). The Gender Equality and Social Inclusion project led by Somalia Stability Fund also had a role in Dinsoor, with active lobbying carried out by the BAYWAN womens’ network supported by the FCA led program.

to 16 women being elected as members of parliament out of a total of 95 seats, with one woman being appointed as Deputy Speaker of the parliament in the March 2020 South West State Assembly elections.¹⁵

Safe spaces and mechanisms for dialogues, negotiation and information sharing

Increased dialogues and interface mechanisms between state and non-state actors and among different community groups. An example of this was the opportunity arranged by the program for women to meet with the most influential elders and discuss the quota system for ensuring their political participation in the district council in 6 districts¹⁶. Further, despite the disagreement and failure to negotiate a deal among the key clans in El-berde on power-sharing, the elders there expressed satisfaction in the consultations and dialogues facilitated by the program, which enabled them to come together and share their views on the distribution of council seats.

A safe space for interactions among different groups and actors, including marginalized groups to share their views for example in reconciliation and healing sessions, negotiation on power sharing arrangements, as well as interaction with the government. This entailed having separate and safe spaces for women to voice their concerns and develop recommendations for inclusivity in local governance. In addition, separate youth dialogues and issue-based debates were organized to discuss the participation of youth, with a special focus on young women.

Social media, radio and television utilized to raise awareness on civic rights and opportunities to participate in political processes, with a focus on previously excluded and marginalized groups including women, youth, and minority clans. As an example of results, 93% of people surveyed for a media monitoring exercise were aware of the district council formation process and the importance of community engagement. Public education and engagement through various communication channels highlighted the importance of women's participation in local and national decision-making, and in elections as voters and candidates. In a survey conducted by FCA and partners in SWS, the majority of all the respondents (59%) knew of women in a leadership role in their community (in comparison to a baseline of 13%).

Established routines of weekly consultation meetings, including timely information-sharing and the possibility for voicing opinions via letters. After the DCF process supported by FCA in Hudur was completed, the routine of weekly meetings established between the district and community was praised for facilitating and solidifying community ownership of district institutions and decreasing the need for separate clan meetings. Overall, widespread sharing of information on the internet through social media (Facebook and Twitter), SMS messaging, and radio and TV broadcasts enabled rapid and transparent information-sharing of the consultation meetings.

¹⁵ The BAYWAN womens' network was supported through the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion project funded by the Somalia Stability Fund.

¹⁶ The 6 districts include Jowhar and Buloburde of Hirshabelle, South Galkacyo and Adado of Galmudug, Afmadow of Jubaland, and El-berde of South West State.



Buy-in and commitment for inclusive local governance

“This project has [...] taught us that no one cares about the silent, therefore we learnt that the more you advocate for and push our agenda as women, the higher the chances of succeeding in our endeavours.

Quote of female CSO representative from Endline Assessment of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Investment in South West State of Somalia by Researchcare Africa & Somalia Stability Fund.

High-level buy-in, ownership, and commitment of political elite and senior government officials to support inclusive district council formation improve the capacity of the government in leading the DCF process. The strong commitment has been observed both at the national level within the Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation (MoIFAR), and within the Ministries of Interior in Federal Member States as well as among Presidents of the Federal Member States. An example of this is the Ministries of Interior using their leverage in situations of power-sharing deadlock, which paid off in some of the program districts, paving the way to improved community participation in local governance.

Increased community awareness, acceptance, and positive attitudes toward inclusive local governance and women’s political participation. Community engagement and awareness raising activities in program areas led to a shared understanding and acceptance within communities, including among clan elders, of the reason and need

to enable political participation of women and youth, as well as to have fair and inclusive representation of all groups and clans in district councils and administrations. Even in program areas such as El-Berde, where the formation of a district council was unsuccessful, and the project was put on hold due to unsurpassable operational challenges, the program was successful in increasing awareness among women, youth, and marginalized groups. This is seen by program actors as a solid base for any future programming efforts of the same nature.

Conflict Resolution, Reconciliation & Social Healing and Cohesion

"In-depth social healing and several reconciliation meetings among the communities (women, youth, elders, and religious leaders) that were held by FCA have really helped the communities to discuss and solve most of the issues connected to clan disputes, and their different views about the DCF process."

Questionnaire response on the most significant change for the Joint Reflection Workshop (June 21-22, 2021).

Successful resolution of historical grievances and conflicts leading to social healing from traumatic effects of the past conflict era and strengthening cohesion among clans. Reconciling differences between communities who had been at odds with each other for years, eased the final process of ensuring community participation in local governance. In El-berde, where the DCF process as such did not produce results, the successful reconciliation of grievances between the Ogaden and Hadame clans resulted in a peace agreement on blood compensation without risking any more innocent lives. The agreement was seen as fundamental to the entire community through its promotion of social healing and cohesion as well as a positive contribution to stability in the whole district. As a follow-up, FCA has recently expanded its education program to El-berde and is seeking opportunities to resume the DCF process.

Increased availability and enhanced culture of inclusive dialogues and conflict resolution mechanisms based on Somali culture and the Somali-led approach **led to a non-violent manner of resolving conflicts.** The program uses a traditional Somali mechanism of conflict management called Xeer, which is based on dialogue and non-violence.

The mapping of clan dynamics as well as the assessment of district level conflict, economic, political, gender and security situations through the conflict, political, economic, security and gender analysis (COPESA) framework were found to be important steps on the way to formulating the district reconciliation action plan, undertaking social reconciliation and civic dialogues in villages.

Renewal of trust among stakeholders enhanced an efficient working spirit to achieve the common goal of **ensuring community participation in local governance.**

Effective engagement of elders contributing to improved relations between the community and government. The engagement of elders has been important as they are considered central to community structures, political dynamics, and conflict resolution and dispute settlement.

Creation of crisis/peace management committees in areas where there was no such mechanism in place. The peace committees act as a neutral ground for solving



of disputes that occur, for example in connection to the process of power-sharing. The committees are also active in developing reconciliation action plans for their districts. The creation of new peace committees was an unplanned positive outcome of the program that emerged in response to contextual needs. The program consortium members subsequently facilitated training to these new committees, thereby boosting their capacity to ensure effective conflict mechanisms throughout the process of developing inclusive local governance.

4. Lessons Learned & Best Practices:

The DCF process is complex, time-consuming, and worth the effort of a holistic approach – and sometimes it is wisest to put things on hold

“[The] DCF formation process was extremely complex, it took a long time. But it has been worth it, and now all community [is] involved. The DCF formation process has been a unique experience, and the way in which all districts in Somalia should aspire to move.”

Questionnaire response for the Joint Reflection Workshop (June 21–22, 2021).

This section provides an account of the best practices and lessons learned of the FCA led local governance programs since 2016. Best practice refers here loosely to possible sets of guidelines, ethics, ideas, or ways of doing things, which represent the most efficient or prudent course of action in terms of promoting inclusive governance. Lessons learned, in turn, refer to realizations among program stakeholders where they had either grasped something positive and meaningful about the process of supporting inclusive local governance in Somalia, or when they had realized that some aspect of the program or process could have been done better. The content of this chapter is largely based on data collected during the workshop held in June 2021. Workshop participants often expressed lessons learned as best practices and vice versa, and sometimes as both or as being closely inter-linked. This chapter is therefore presented as a narrative constructed along thematic lines as opposed to a clear division between lessons learned and best practices.

Holistic approach key to promoting inclusive political participation in local governance

The elusive nature of the highly politicized context – including interference of politicians and external actors, the lack of trust and sensitivities related to past grievances between clans, and limited awareness of governance issues in general among communities – pose significant challenges to the DCF process, making it extremely complex. This has been an overall observation of the program, which has led to the realization that work promoting inclusive local governance requires perseverance and ample time. Participants of this publication process perceived the persistent and holistic approach adopted by the program as key to promoting inclusive political participation. Inclusive political participation refers to securing balanced representation of different groups and actors. Following the power-sharing agreement between the clans on distribution of seats between the different majority and minority clans, inclusivity also refers to ensuring participation of women and youth within the parameters set in the power-sharing agreement between clans. They explained that when a district council is successfully

formed, with increased inclusivity in political participation, the time-consuming and often arduous process is considered worth all the effort. The holistic approach refers to a combination of elements within the intervention, seen as best practices, including:

- Ensuring solid contextual understanding for feasible selection of target areas, and appropriate operational approaches
- Prioritizing the resolution of ongoing conflicts and making space for reconciliation and social healing
- Emphasis on the power-sharing process among clans
- Capacity building and mentoring support tailored to the needs of the program's target groups and different groups of women, and organizing training in a series of events to avoid a one-off training approach, combined with follow-up and mentoring sessions
- Creation of regular dialogue platforms for trained women, youth, marginalized groups, and elders
- Support a strong women caucus to advance women's rights
- Systematic advocacy vis-à-vis key political actors, with a particular focus on clan elders and state leaders to ensure political commitment to the DCF process and inclusivity
- Broader awareness raising and media campaigns, which have proven to be effective in tackling gender issues and dynamics of marginalization in the Somali political and governance context.

Contextual understanding as a basis for selecting locations for DCF and identifying key stakeholders

Before launching the district council formation process, an in-depth understanding of the context as well as securing strong political buy-in is required. The experience of failing to form a district council in EI-berde due to the highly politicized environment causing unsurpassable operational challenges has taught the program important lessons in humility, the significance of contextual understanding, and the need to update tools and criteria for the selection of districts used by the program. The thinking behind the identified need for refining and further developing tools and criteria is that it would support program actors and stakeholders to make contextually sensitive, informed decisions on the selection of program target areas and beneficiaries, as well as to improve stakeholder management. After 18 months of extensive efforts on the part of all the above-mentioned elements identified as key factors for success in other areas, the decision was made in June 2020 to put the program in EI-berde on hold to avoid exacerbating tenacious existing tensions related to the power-sharing deadlock between the clans in the area. A similar challenging point concerning the targeting of the program was pointed to in project documentation, which noted that the program had had to deal with Inter-Ministerial conflict related to beneficiary selection that had affected the progress of activities.¹⁷ One workshop participant also commented on the challenges related to targeting, claiming that “some partners unintentionally target/engage the same clans, which lead[s] to unintended bias toward these groups/clans.”¹⁸

¹⁷ SSF (2020) The inter-ministerial conflict was between the MoWHRD, Ministry of Commerce and Trade, and the Ministry of Information.

¹⁸ Input from workshop participant, June 22, 2021. This refers to the DCF process.

Conflict resolution, reconciliation, and social healing lays the foundation for local governance

Reconciled differences and improved social cohesion within communities provide a window of opportunity to discuss some of the more challenging questions related to rethinking and re-organizing governance, as highlighted in the previous chapter. In looking for best practices and lessons learned of the local governance program, the work on conflict resolution, reconciliation, and social healing emerged as one of the most valued aspects of the program. Emphasis on reconciliation emerged in the dataset as a practice, which had been helpful during the challenging power-sharing processes related to district council formation.

“The district council formation process in Galkacyo took seven months due to clan disputes, but with the help of [the program] the...community managed to overcome those challenges through several social healing and reconciliation meetings.”

Input from workshop participant, June 22, 2021.

“Facilitation of various social healing sessions yielded positive results. The long-standing internal wounds were healed efficiently through these sessions...”

Questionnaire response for the Joint Reflection Workshop (June 21–22, 2021).

“... the division of local council seats between different clans can cause issues. Reconciliation helped elders to sit together... [and decide] how to share the seats, including among minority clans, and also to consider ensuring broader inclusivity.”

Questionnaire response for the Joint Reflection Workshop (June 21–22, 2021).

Reconciliation efforts in turn have opened an avenue to awareness raising and advocacy among key stakeholders. Taking the time to stop and provide accurate information on the principles of local governance, and to advise stakeholders of the reasoning behind the need for inclusion: the “why” – backed up by both state and federal level actors – was perceived as another valued practice. The importance of ensuring a shared understanding about inclusivity, local governance, and the district council structure was explained by one workshop participant through the communities’ mindset needing a shift away from the focus on power-sharing, and the fact that communities in Somalia do not necessarily know what the benefit of a district council is. Two other workshop participants explained this referring to the power-sharing process in Warsheikh:

“...two competing [majority] clans were disputing how to divide the seats of the council, ignoring the rest of the minority clans - so in the process these two clans were advised on the notion of inclusivity...and eventually they were convinced to make room for minority clan representatives in the council...the [program] actors and government used clan and religious leaders to convince the clan elites to accept inclusivity.”

Input from workshop participant, June 21, 2021.

“The DCF process in Warsheikh was one of our best practices, as the state and federal ministry jointly facilitated it, which made the process very smooth.”

Input from workshop participant, June 21, 2021.

Effective awareness raising on all societal levels had been observed by program stakeholders as having caused a so-called multiplier or trickle-over effect to regions and areas beyond the immediate program context. Reaching out to communities, explaining to them how the DCF process works and why it is important, had been found to spill over and spread awareness outside of the immediate program contexts, to other districts, in other states. An example of this is the case of Dinsoor, where the BAYWAN womens’ network had an active independent role in advocating and raising awareness on women’s political participation in the district without additional support from the program partners as it was not part of the target areas for the program.

Clear and consistent communication with different stakeholders throughout the DCF process & adaptiveness to context are necessities

In addition to the planned civic education and civic dialogue activities, the ability of program actors to communicate consistently and clearly, also in an agile way, for example in response to possible misperceptions, was considered another important lesson learned of the program. One program actor shared a story of council candidates expecting external aid organizations to pay for their salaries once elected. This was an example of a misperception that was quickly corrected by explaining to contestants that the income for the expenses of the council needed to be generated by the new council itself through the collection of taxes. A similar observation based on past program experience was the need for the program to be flexible and adaptive to contextual realities in the implementation of the program:

“The government has laws indicating how the [DCF] process should be, but the mechanism and the implementation differ from district to district, so we [are] obliged to follow and show flexibility of the process depending on the circumstances during the process.”

Input from workshop participant, June 22, 2021.

Consultations with key stakeholders (elders and religious leaders, women, youth, and business groups) and consultative sessions with representatives of all clans, sub-clans, and minority groups of the districts were identified as further good practices of the program. The consultations had reinforced clarity in communication by providing time and space to discuss and explain the DCF process. This, in turn, had been a way of ensuring community participation and inclusion of women, youth, and marginalized groups from the beginning of the process.

Broadly accepted policy framework to lean on in the development of local governance

Using the Wadajir National Framework as a documented and established guideline to lean on in the DCF processes was highlighted by participants of this publication as a good practice, which can also be seen as supporting the efforts of better coordination and aligned activities. This was explained through a story shared by a workshop participant about a high-level official attempting to intervene in the power-sharing process of one district to secure extra seats for a certain clan. The attempt was met by the Ministry of Interior convincing this person to withdraw the plan by referring to the established bylaws and framework of the DCF process, which should not be overlooked. With the support of other stakeholders and international partners supporting the process, and committed to the framework, the official had eventually been convinced to adhere to the guidelines. The story describes well the lesson related to the role and significance of a broadly accepted policy framework as the common ground for supporting local governance, as well as that of the power of the majority versus individual influence.

Advocacy and awareness raising on gender equality and inclusive political participation on all societal levels, coupled with coordinated and targeted support for women

While there is progress in women's political rights, there is also continuous resistance and barriers to their leadership role and participation. Several persons participating in this publication process stressed the need for a shared understanding and commitment to the right to political participation by women, youth, and marginalized groups across all levels and actors of society at large. A representative from the Ministry of Interior of South West State emphasized the need for cooperation among various actors as a lesson that was learned from the DCF processes in Berdale and Hudur:

“...[equal] participation can be secured if the government and other actors all collaboratively engage the communities [with the same message] ... in Berdale and Hudur we first started discussing the women's quota and their right to participate in the process. Once [a shared understanding] was secured of women's right to participate, we proceeded in the process.”

Input from workshop participant, June 22, 2021.

Despite the proactive efforts to ensure a shared understanding of women's political rights and the existence of quotas, the district council seats in Hudur eventually all went to male candidates. The result speaks to the profound challenge of bringing about change to the long-standing history of male-dominated and patriarchal culture, which needs “huge awareness raising and change of mindsets”, as one program actor put it. A learning point here was that the changes in political culture sought by the program would have required more efficient advocacy and awareness raising efforts within the Federal Government, Members of Parliament, Ministers, and other high-ranking politicians from the area or district, in addition to advocacy and awareness raising on the community, clan elders, and Federal Member State levels. This broad support on all levels was missing in the case of Hudur, thus leading to a lack of female candidates running for the council seats and ultimately to a much weaker outcome in terms of

inclusivity than intended and compared to other districts where progress was made. A further learning point related to the example from Hudur was that in addition to advocacy and awareness raising local governance programs need to include targeted interventions to build the capacity and confidence of women to run for political office and create appropriate space for dialogue, interaction, and advocacy. This had helped the program actors in developing a holistic approach in subsequent project development.

The concrete example of having a holistic approach to programming is the outstanding achievements from the SSF funded Gender Equality and Social Inclusion project in South West State, which led to the election of 16 women as the state MPs and the building up of more than 700 women leaders across Bay region. The project emphasized not only advocacy and awareness raising to challenge the social norm and promote the positive profile of women leaders but also targeted support through capacity building and mentorship, enabling environment and safe platforms for dialogues, interaction and networking, and institutional support to the state led gender machinery (e.g., MWHRD) on the formulation of gender policy and law, and advocacy on 30% quota system for women.

The value of quotas in securing women's political rights

The importance of quotas for ensuring women's political participation was a learning point reflected upon several times throughout the dataset used for this publication process. The federal constitution's 30% quota as well as the 20% quota in the states' local governance laws have been vital in advocacy and lobbying efforts for women's political rights. One of the good practices related to this was filling the female quota seats in the district councils as a priority, which had been a positive experience in the formation of the Wajid district council of South West State. Another identified best practice related to quotas was using conditional funding allocations as an incentive leading to inclusive governance. An example of this was the system introduced by the UN Joint Programme on Local Governance whereby the districts that manage to put in place the women's quota got a 10% increase to their budgets.

Political will and commitment are crucial for success

Political will and commitment from all levels are crucial to the success of the DCF process. This is an important lesson for the local governance program, which is directly related to the points on advocacy and awareness raising discussed above. Support from state leaders will provide a boost and fast-track the process. However, if this support is missing, and state leaders fail to push the agenda onward, the formation of district councils is impossible. An example of the latter is the case of Jubaland state, where a key state leader was not supportive of the process, which prevented district councils from being formed. Eventually, in 2020 the same leader was convinced to support Afmadow. This led to the rapid completion of the Afmadow DCF process, in just one month. A similar situation has been ongoing in Hirshabelle state, where the lack of state level political will to support the DCF process is missing, and the program has therefore been unable to make progress in the district council formation efforts for some three years.

Similarly, high-level political support is often critical for reaching the quota for women. In South West State, joint advocacy efforts between the MoWHRD and the

Bay Women's network resulted in the SWS president nominating 30% women of the electoral committee members.

Coordination is important but remains a challenge

Coordination among all actors involved in supporting inclusive local governance emerged in this publication process as a challenge experienced by the program. The learning on this point has been that broad-based partnerships are a necessity. At the same time, program stakeholders pointed to collaboration and coordination between and among governmental and non-state actors on all levels of governance, as well as domestic and international CSOs, and stabilization actors in Somalia, as needing improvement in view of ensuring better complementarity and coherence between the activities by different actors.

Attention to security concerns is critical

Finally, safeguarding the security situation and safety of program actors in program areas through stabilization components, and with the support of security agencies was seen as a necessity and highly valued practice within the program, which had helped to ensure non-interference by militia groups in the DCF processes.

5. Visions, Dreams and Recommendations for a Way Forward

This final chapter first explores visions and dreams for the future of Somalia's local governance. It then presents a set of recommendations for a way forward in further efforts to promote successful DCF processes and more accountable and functioning districts in the remaining districts of Somalia, with inclusivity as part of the picture. The visions and dreams are a collection of thoughts and ideas expressed by participants of this publication process in the questionnaire and during the June 2021 workshop. The recommendations are derived mainly from the workshop inputs and from interviews of two key informants, building additionally on previous suggestions in the program documentation reviewed for the drafting of this publication.

Visions & Dreams

In sharing their thoughts and ideas for the future of Somali governance, participants of the June 2021 workshop spoke of both short-term and long-term visions and dreams. **Implementing district council formation processes in all the remaining districts** across Somalia in line with the Wadajir National Framework is a vision shared by several participants. Securing at least a 30% representation of both female and youth members in district councils was expressed as part of this dream for the immediate future. Following from the above is the dream of effectively functioning district councils, which can provide basic services to the communities.

A vision for both the shorter and longer term of supporting inclusive local governance is the aspiration to have **good relations and well-functioning collaboration among different levels of governance across the country**. Related to this, one dream that was expressed is to have an environment whereby the Federal Government of Somalia, the Federal Member States, as well as the regions and districts would all be able and willing to work together to achieve good governance, based on a shared understanding of what that means.

In the longer term, the impact of district council formation processes spreading across Somalia is envisioned as having the potential to initiate change to the Somali governance system, through a bottom-up approach. The idea here is that it would gradually move the country onward from a clan-based political system to an initial stage of democratization, in the preparation of the long-term vision of a one-person-one-vote system.

"The process we are now implementing is the best approach to go through, and in the future, it will form a part of our entire governance system...we have a bright future ahead of us, there will be more promising elements in the DCF process."

Workshop inputs, June 21, 2021.

A further dream related directly to the DCF processes, concerns enlarging **community ownership of district council formations, and having the central government commit to allocating resources** for it. This is seen as ensuring the sustainability of the structures created and their continued ability to serve the communities, instead of “just waiting for resources from the donor.”

On a higher level of long-term dreaming, participants shared their aspiration for a **democratic Somalia** that would be inclusive and attentive to its communities’ wants and needs:

“Local people in communities should have a say in the pressing issues of their lives, in what matters most to them. And they should have the opportunity to come up with their own plan for developing their districts.”

Workshop inputs, June 21, 2021.

Part of this vision is the existence of democratic, well-governed, inclusive, and transparent structures on all levels of governance, leading to improved security, sustainable peace, and economic development. In concrete terms: Clear decentralization of services/ taking services to the grass root levels; direct elections with a one-person-one-vote system, supported by civic education; well-defined systems of accountability between electees and their communities; the possibility to elect representatives of youth, women, and marginalized groups without fear and favor; and **systems in place with all basic services attended to by the districts.**

National reconciliation as a foundation for building trust, unity, and stronger governance institutions was expressed as a further long-term dream that would help **to build a shared vision of a common future among Somalis.** This was portrayed as **leading the way to a new social contract and strengthened social cohesion.**

Political stability, justice, and social cohesion as well as an improved security situation for Somalia at large were also expressed as **unique visions and dreams.** Participants also shared their visions of a strengthened security system, which could be achieved “by liberating all the occupied districts from Al-Shabaab.”¹⁹

Enhanced inclusivity in governance at all levels in Somalia was another long-term dream shared by several persons.

“Women, youth and minority/marginalized groups should be brought onboard to decision-making tables. They should be given a platform to enhance their representation and participation in decision-making in the issues that affect their lives.”

Workshop inputs, June 21, 2021.

Steps necessary for making enhanced inclusivity a reality were also mentioned as dreams to be actualized soon: addressing various barriers preventing the access of women, youth, and marginalized groups to political decision-making; provision of enough civic education sessions and awareness raising across all the districts; affirmative action and enforcement of the quota system; and finally prioritizing girls’ education: primary education, scholarships, and training on how to increase the number of educated girls and women. “This is the responsibility of everyone!”²⁰

¹⁹ Workshop inputs, June 21, 2021

²⁰ Workshop inputs, June 21, 2021.

Recommendations for a Way Forward

I. **Base development of local governance on solid contextual understanding to ensure conflict sensitivity and strong local ownership**

State and non-state actors involved in local governance work need to carefully assess the situation and needs in the intended program context before starting interventions.

This is a call to carry out appropriate analyses and mapping exercises for identifying closely what is in the context that should be taken into consideration in the planning and implementation of future programs: the number and composition of clans in the district; the dynamics and possible historical unsolved issues or tensions among clans and communities; identification of possible spoilers of the planned new governance structures and the DCF process, or inclusive political participation at large; the financial resources, administrative capabilities, willingness and commitment of the districts selected for interventions; previous attempts at conflict resolution, and the possibility to solve existing conflicts as part of or even before starting up program activities. The COPESA framework for analyzing the conflict, political, economic, security and gender situation of the context provides one possible structure for conducting such assessments, as outlined in the District Council Formations Implementation Handbook for South West State of Somalia (2020).

A strong explicit conflict sensitivity approach should be streamlined into all future work on local governance. This refers to the ability of programs and organizations involved in any type of intervention in fragile and conflict-affected contexts to a) understand the context in which it is operating, and in particular to understand intergroup dynamics, tensions, and divisive issues with the potential to exacerbate or create conflict, and the factors in the context that have the potential to mitigate conflict and strengthen social cohesion, b) understand the interaction between a planned intervention and the context, and c) to act upon that understanding to avoid unintentionally feeding into further division, and to maximize the potential contribution to strengthen social cohesion and sustainable peace.²¹ As part of enhancing a systematic conflict sensitivity approach, the tools and criteria applied by program actors should be refined and further developed to support program actors and stakeholders to make contextually sensitive programmatic choices and informed decisions e.g. on the selection of program target areas and beneficiaries.

Increase dialogue and in-depth interaction with the target communities. This is recommended to be able to strengthen a sense of local ownership in the change process already at the design phase of interventions, leading to the ability to respond appropriately to the specific needs, wants, and capabilities of the people and systems within the intended local program contexts. This can be done, for example in collaboration with existing structures such as district peace committees. In addition to providing a way to ensure local ownership and participation, this can open an avenue for collaborative development and effective implementation of local reconciliation action plans to address existing conflicts and grievances. Further, it can help to keep abreast of the understanding of evolving conflict dynamics and support in finding appropriate and timely ways of addressing them.

International CSO actors should operate with a low profile, concentrating on their facilitative role and letting the government and local actors take the driver's seat

²¹ The recommendation for a strengthened conflict sensitivity approach was voiced in an interview on July 8, 2021. The definition of conflict sensitivity used here draws on a KOFF/Swisspeace Factsheet on conflict sensitivity (https://www.swisspeace.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/KOFF/KOFF_Documents/KOFF_Factsheet_Conflictsensitivity.pdf, accessed July 8, 2021).

and own their process. External actors supporting the development of inclusive local governance may unintentionally assume the role of duty bearers and accountable bodies in the eyes of local communities due to the resources they bring to the process. This easily generates additional expectations toward external actors in the target communities. A concrete suggestion of a way of allowing for strong local ownership is to provide funds for local governance development through the government and to leave the government to be accountable to the public as the de facto duty bearer.

Further, **CSO actors and the government need to join forces and engage local communities in unison for the benefit of the district.** They need to coordinate well, seek complementarity in their respective programs and activities, and stay on the same page to ensure a coherent and solid collective outcome of their efforts. Furthermore, a clear definition of roles, responsibilities, and division of labor should explicitly be agreed upon before starting any process of local governance development.

II. Prioritize security, trust building and reconciliation

Stabilization efforts and improvement of the security situation in Somalia need continued support. A fundamental challenge to all future efforts to promote inclusive governance in Somalia is the prevailing security situation and the current security arrangements in the Federal Member States. Part of the districts continue to be fragile on many levels and suffer from severe security problems, which prevent advancing local governance. Stabilization of the security situation and safeguarding the safety of programs requires collaboration among all stakeholders, including the Somalia National Army, and local authorities.

Trust building and reconciliation within and among communities as well as between local communities and government institutions should be prioritized. One of the main barriers challenging the development of local governance systems in Somalia is related to the lack of trust within society at large. Without inter-communal trust, there can be no will to change traditional power sharing mechanisms, and without a will, there is no way forward in creating democratic and inclusive local governance. In terms of building trust between communities and government institutions, the trust gained from communities toward government is seen as increasing the legitimacy of governance structures, such as district councils and administrations, thereby contributing to mending broken relationships and social fragmentation. Further, there is a need to align the reconciliation efforts of the local governance with the overall objectives of the National Reconciliation Framework and the FMS Implementation Plan that are led by MoIFAR and Ministries of Interior at the FMS level. This is to ensure coordinated interventions, follow-up, and sustainable impacts.

In programmatic terms, national reconciliation and local governance are closely linked. 'Genuine reconciliation' is a key foundation to building a better social contract and a renewed sense of national unity, which leads to social cohesion and a shared vision of a safe, peaceful and stable society. However, standalone reconciliation efforts – without an effective and inclusive governance framework, systems, structures, policies, and effective capacity of the government to lead and deliver public services – are unlikely to sustain long-term peace and stability. Suggestions for specific activities include i) effective social reconciliation activities and social healing among community groups, ii) regular interactions and interface platforms among the communities and with the government at different levels to build trust, iii) continued capacity building of the government to lead the national reconciliation framework and DCF work, and iv)

social integration programs through sport and/or exchange of arts to promote social cohesion and interactions.

Enough time should be given for healing and overcoming trauma. Giving enough time refers here to longer program implementation schedules, with sufficient time for letting new information among communities to sink in, and for old thinking and patterns to be unlearned, as well as spacing program activities out over a longer period. Related to strengthening a conflict sensitive approach, the call to prioritize reconciliation and to allow for healing time also means critically assessing the ripeness or maturity of the situation in each planned intervention context. This will help actors supporting local governance make better informed decisions on when to start work on governance, and to making context specific programming designs that are responsive to the uniqueness of each district.

III. Develop and implement legislation and policies on inclusive local governance

The Wadajir Framework for Local Governance needs reviewing and revision based on what has been learned from previous rounds of its implementation. This would enable its applicability to future DCF processes to ensure flexibility and adaptability to the needs and realities of the DCF processes.

The 30% quota should be enforced and integrated into existing local governance laws of the Federal Member States, and state laws should be harmonized to ensure that all states are using the same frameworks to implement the DCF process. This would help to avoid confusion within the country and maximize the potential of peer learning between states. Related to this is the recommendation to facilitate the sharing of information on best practices and lessons learned for peer learning between districts and regions. Further, **the importance of gender policy needs to be highlighted as a priority at the state level.**

Guidance for power-sharing and a strategy for rolling out the existing commitment to the 30% quota system for ensuring women's political participation **should be developed** as part of the DCF process. These should be aligned with the local governance laws of each state. Key actors here are the MoIFAR and the MoI at the state level. Other non-state actors that should be involved are NGOs and the UNJPLG, as well as SSF as a key stabilization actor. The recommendation also calls for close coordination between Ministry of Women, Human Rights and Development, and Ministry of Interior in the overall DCF process. Further related suggestions include the nomination of female candidates to council membership, before male candidates, as well as integrating a specific quota for women in the elected councils, thereby establishing a link to the Wadajir Framework and local governance laws across the FMSs. A final recommendation is for the local governance program to ensure appropriate sensitization and advocacy on inclusivity and related provisions on the quota system in local law among clan elders who have power in decisions related to power-sharing vis-à-vis district council seats.

One of the challenges in past district council formation processes has been the difficulty of **defining marginalized and minority groups**. A specific suggestion related to this, brought up in one of the workshop sessions, was that the government together with key stakeholders in the areas should have a role in this through creating criteria, and assessing and identifying minority and marginalized groups in the locations where new DCF processes are being planned.

IV. Continue support to established district councils and emerging DCF processes throughout the country

The fledgling local governance structures created through the DCF processes need continued support and political commitment after their establishment. This is a call to both domestic and external actors to help in securing key community infrastructure, resources, offices, and continued capacity support to ensure the sustainability of the councils. Further, it is a call for the MoIFAR and the MoI to work in a coordinated way with local people in communities and to offer them the support they need to engage in developing their local governance structures in an equitable way. Moreover, continued support to district council formation across the country requires improving coordination at both state and federal levels.

A joint action plan should be drafted in collaboration among all current stakeholders including UN agencies and donor communities involved in local governance and stabilization work to develop a shared vision and joined-up action for ensuring continued funding and promoting peace dividends. Developing inclusive local governance in Somalia is still in its infancy. It is time-consuming and labor-intensive work with a variety of costs and high risk involved. With several more districts in the country to cover, the need for sustainable financial solutions is apparent.

Peace dividends should be promoted as the fruit of local governance. Striking a balance between local governance work and the provision of basic key services such as health, education, water, sanitation, and infrastructure development is necessary for creating community level buy-in. The rationale for this recommendation stems on the one hand from ideas related to a hierarchy of needs, where the request for people to be willing to think about governance may seem unjustified if their basic human needs for food, shelter, and security are unmet. On the other hand, the call for a balanced approach is based on the notion of building trust toward governance structures and public authorities through the provision of services by legal duty bearers to help meet basic needs, also referred to as peace dividends or the contributions of administrative and social services to peacebuilding.

Several further **specific ideas and suggestions** were presented by workshop participants **related to financing, funding, and budgeting** of future work on promoting inclusive local governance:

- District council administrations should be trained on how to secure resources locally for example through tax collection to avoid dependency on donor support
- More campaigns and awareness raising should be arranged on how to collect/raise money locally to cover the expenses needed for forming and maintaining district council administrations
- Federal Members of Parliament should work with the local administration to sustain serving the communities through collecting taxes and coming up with a transparent system, which would also enhance the trust of the community
- The top leaders of the FGS should allocate resources toward DCF processes instead of merely waiting for support from the international community, which could take several years
- The lack of female representatives at the local district level is hand in hand with the absence of gender responsive budgets, therefore special attention should be paid to gender budgeting as part of local governments' development planning.

Ensure comprehensive support to women's political participation

Affirmative action and women's empowerment are an integral part of all work aiming to promote inclusive local governance. This is a clear message from program stakeholders. The recommendation here is to aim for targeted interventions to support women through capacity building and creating space for dialogues. One of the suggested ways to further support women's empowerment is to establish women's groups to support strategic advocacy and campaigning for the inclusion of women in the district council formation process. A further suggestion is to replicate the support provided to the BAYWAN women's network in South West State to the other Federal Member States. Despite having already proved its high ambition and skills in advocacy, the existing women's network is still in a nascent stage. Further support in leadership, fundraising, donor negotiation skills, donor mapping, effective documentation of work to inform programmatic development and outcomes, fact-finding, advocacy skills and more is still called for. Finally, a pool of women peace makers and mediators should be built to contribute to the national, social, and political reconciliation and peacebuilding process in Somalia.

The operationalization of the frameworks created so far for strengthening the inclusion of local governance also calls for further technical support to strengthen institutional capacity among MoWHRD, MoIFAR, MoI, and district councils. The ministries would benefit significantly from support to fundraising skills to enable them to develop a resource base for scaling up their work. Further, their capacity should be strengthened on the Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325) agenda, to oversee the overall local governance process, and to be able to advocate and enforce the 30% quota system for women.

Workshop participants also issued **a call to top leaders of the Federal Government of Somalia to lead by example and ensure women's representation in local governance decision-making:** "Implementation of women's inclusion is needed on all levels of government institutions."²²

A final recommendation concerning empowerment and capacity building is the call for **male alliance through male change agents** to be identified and sensitized. In other words, the role of male leaders should be leveraged to champion women's rights and open opportunities and space for women as allies to the women's rights groups and actors.

V. Cultivate a shared understanding of the "why" through increased civic education and awareness raising

A broadly shared understanding of the "why" of inclusive local governance is necessary for its further development. This is one of the themes that most forcefully emerged throughout the data from interviews and workshop inputs. Breaking away from traditions, changing cultural conventions, dismantling long-standing beliefs and practices, and overcoming past grievances is a daunting task. And yet this is what is needed to take the country forward toward sustainable peace, including the aim to make inclusivity a reality of Somali local governance.

A shared understanding of the "why" is needed across all societal levels and among all stakeholders promoting inclusive local governance in Somalia. As a priority, a shared understanding is needed about the bigger picture of why, and what kind of change is needed for increased human security, sustainable peace, and for Somalia to be able to

²² Workshop inputs, June 21, 2021

rise to its full potential: To become a country where all people are treated with dignity as equals, where they can thrive and live with freedom from want and fear. A common understanding of the “why” related more specifically to inclusive local governance is part of that larger picture. That part of the “why” can serve toward the creation of a shared vision of a fair and secure future society, characterized by peoples’ trust in government institutions, structures, public authority, and legal duty bearers.

This is a **call to actors involved in developing local governance to allocate even more time and effort toward extensive civic education and to conduct more awareness raising and multimedia campaigns in future and ongoing programs.** These activities should be carried out prior to kicking off the DCF processes and moving on to program implementation, and their focus should be on the meaning and importance of the district councils and their formation, presenting positive evidence in support of inclusivity in political participation. Furthermore, there is a particular need for creating a shared understanding of the Somali legal provisions, citizenship rights (including the right of young people, women, and marginalized groups to participate in governance, politics, decision-making, and peacebuilding), democratic decision-making, elections and voting, local governance, the notion of inclusivity, gender equality, as well as reconciliation and peacebuilding in line with the National Reconciliation Framework. Civic dialogue should also be strengthened as a component of the DCF process to allow full participation of youth, women, and marginalized groups. Communities at large need to be sensitized, starting already at an early age with children and youth, and prioritizing the education of girls and young women. The latter could be an integration of civic education in the formal and non-formal education programs.

The role of male elders and their moral authority should be leveraged as part of civic education and awareness raising efforts to bring about change. Male elders are identified as key gatekeepers in terms of opening the possibility for change and breaking historical patriarchal traditions by making space for women’s voices and political agency, therefore working with them is of primary importance.

A final suggestion for cultivating a shared understanding of the reasons and need for inclusive local governance is to continuously facilitate and create interface dialogues and platforms for people to interact, share their views and concerns, and debate about key issues related to development and peace. Social integration programs, such as arts, sports, and community exchange could serve as vehicles for peer learning among communities, thereby promoting social cohesion and cultivating the common vision.

VI. Agree on advocacy goals to ensure strategic approach & political will and commitment

Advocacy and lobbying with a unified agenda and clear goals is needed to guarantee political will and commitment to developing inclusive local governance and the process of forming district councils. Ensuring a non-politicized process that follows the legal and policy framework and is freed of political interference and sabotage is equally important. There is broad agreement among program stakeholders that district councils including representation of women, youth, and marginalized groups, can only be formed in a situation of political stability, community cohesion, and most importantly with the political will and backing by leaders and key decision-makers on both Member State and Federal levels. If these elements are not in place there is a fair chance that the lack of political will, consensus, and commitment will contribute more to spoiling than securing the process.

All stakeholders, both domestic as well as international actors, must be engaged in ensuring a shared understanding of the goals to avoid confusion and to bring clarity to the overall direction of transformation, aligned with the national development policy, legislation of Federal Member States, and foundational guidance provided in policy documents such as the National Reconciliation Framework. A concrete suggestion in this regard is to make use of international diplomatic good offices to gain the attention of the FMS and FGS leaders, and in this way to advocate for the DCF agenda and women's participation in decision-making.

The importance of the quota system should be highlighted in advocacy at all levels of decision-making aiming to improve inclusivity in local governance. This is a call to develop and/or enact gender policy across the Federal Member States, and to promote the enforcement of a 30% quota system across all governance structures on national, state, and district levels.

VII. Produce new information based on research and develop knowledge products and communications materials

Exploring the opportunities, enabling factors as well as challenges and risks of promoting local governance is needed to provide local governance actors with the necessary insight to further develop and refine their programmatic approaches. This is a call to design and conduct in-depth comparative case-study research on experiences from two types of areas. On the one hand, the focus of research should be on an area where local governance work and the implementation of the DCF process have been successful. On the other hand, research should focus on an area where similar efforts to promote inclusive local governance have stalled, been unsuccessful, and faced significant challenges.

Effective advocacy, awareness raising, and civic education require up-to-date and user-oriented knowledge products and communications materials. These should be produced on themes such as Somali legal provisions, citizenship rights (including the right of young people, women, and marginalized groups to participate in governance, politics, decision-making, and peacebuilding), democratic decision-making, elections and voting, local governance, the notion of inclusivity, gender equality, Somali conflict mapping and management mechanisms, as well as reconciliation and peacebuilding in line with the National Reconciliation Framework.

VIII. Improve coordination and collaboration

Better coordination and collaboration are needed among all actors working on local governance. This was mentioned as an important learning point of the program and is a call for the creation of broad-based partnerships, improved coordination mechanisms, and collaboration between and among governmental and non-state actors on all levels of governance, as well as domestic and international CSOs, and stabilization actors in Somalia. Coordination mechanisms would aim to harmonize efforts and interventions among various actors and to promote the objectives of DCF. A concrete suggestion in terms of improving knowledge management is to arrange regular meetings and annual dialogues among DCF stakeholders (FGS, FMSs, donors, local councils, NGOs, and other stakeholders) where they can convene, share insights and experiences on progress, lessons learned, best practices and recommendations.

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