



*Youth, Elections and
Democratization:*
Beyond the National Election



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Beyond the National Election

Foreword



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AS THE MINISTER OF YOUTH and Sports, I would like to acknowledge the remarkable participation and engagement of young people throughout the Youth, Elections, and Democratization forums organized by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA). It's inspiring to witness young men and women from all corners of Somalia actively contributing to shaping the democratic future of our nation.

I am proudly among the youthful members of parliament, representing the vibrant and dynamic Somali youth population. In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of young people actively engaging in politics at both the national and state levels. Despite the many challenges facing Somali youth, including social, economic, and political strains, we are determined to make our voices heard and drive positive change in our country.

The National Youth Policy of Somalia (2022-2030), with its focus on empowering youth to

be active participants in the democratization process, serves as a guiding framework for youth engagement in politics.

It is essential for all actors to acknowledge the significant role that young people play in shaping the democratic landscape and to ensure that they have a seat at the table when decisions that affect their lives are being made. As per the recommendations of the forums, the legislature and electoral commissions must work towards actively engaging young people in the planning, execution, and oversight of the electoral process to ensure transparency and inclusivity. Traditional elders also have a role to play in supporting the elimination of the 4.5 system and granting young people equal opportunities to participate in elections.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports is committed to implementing these recommendations from the forums. We recognize the importance of empowering young people and integrating their perspectives into the decision-making processes that will shape the future of our nation. By working collaboratively with stakeholders at all levels, we will strive to create a more inclusive and participatory electoral system that truly represents the aspirations of all Somalis, regardless of age.

Let us continue to champion the engagement of young people in the democratic processes of our country. Their energy, ideas, and passion are invaluable assets that must be harnessed to create a brighter and more promising future for Somalia. Together, we can build a society where every voice is heard, every perspective valued, and every individual empowered to shape their own destiny. A better, peaceful Somalia is possible.

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Acknowledgements

THIS REPORT ON YOUTH involvement in democratization in Somalia was compiled by the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The report encompasses discussions held during a series of forums organized by civil society organizations and youth-led networks in each federal member state of Somalia between 2022 and 2023. FBA and UNFPA provided financial and logistical support for these forums, but it was the local organizations¹ in each member state that played a pivotal role in ensuring their relevance. These organizations brought together youth, government representatives, traditional elders, and national and international organizations. FBA and UNFPA would like to express their appreciation for the dedication and expertise of these organizations, which continuously strive to promote democratic values in Somalia. It is important to note that the views expressed in this report are those of the young women and men in Somalia who

attended the forums and generously shared their experiences and opinions on the barriers they face in participating in political decision-making processes, as well as their ideas on how to enhance their opportunities for political engagement. The report does not necessarily reflect the official views of FBA and UNFPA.

¹ Puntland Development and Research Center (PDRC), Puntland Youth Association Network (PYAN), Somali Youth Volunteer Organization (SOYVA), Somali Peace Line (SPL), Somali Women Solidarity Organization (SWSO), Galmudug Youth Association Network (GYAN), Horn Center, Hirshabelle Youth Leaders, Banadir Regional Youth Association (BRYA) and Elman Peace Center (EPC).

Executive Summary

IN 2022 AND 2023, local civil society organizations in all of Somalia's federal member states (FMS) organized forums focusing on youth, elections, and democratization, with an emphasis on young people's political participation in subnational elections. These forums consisted of one preparatory day for young women, one preparatory day for both young men and women, and one day of multi-stakeholder dialogue, bringing together youth and decision-makers to discuss methods of increasing youth's electoral participation. The forums were held in every FMS of Somalia, including the Benadir region, and were facilitated by local organizations, including youth-led organizations, with support from the FBA and the UNFPA. The primary objectives of this initiative were to enhance understanding and improve strategies for increasing youth political participation in Somalia, as well as foster coordination among relevant stakeholders working towards democratization in the country.

Despite representing the majority of Somalia's population (81% of the population is below 35 years old)², youth often find themselves excluded from formal electoral processes. Many of the participating youth emphasized the particular challenges faced by young women, as Somalia's political system is dominated by a political elite primarily composed of male elders who tend to marginalize young people, especially young women from marginalized communities. Additionally, participants highlighted that barriers to youth participation in elections can be further exacerbated by factors such as clan affiliation, gender, age, education, and socio-economic background.

²Somali National Youth Policy (2023 – 2030)

To address these challenges, forum participants developed recommendations aimed at increasing youth electoral participation and presented them to various stakeholders. They called upon government actors to reduce registration fees for young individuals seeking political positions, reserve specific seats for youth in district councils and parliament and include youth in advisory boards of electoral management bodies. They also urged traditional elders to support the abolition of the 4.5 power-sharing system and grant young people an equal role in the electoral process. In response, stakeholders made commitments to taking action in order to enhance opportunities for youth to participate in electoral processes.

Many of the youth, elders, government representatives, and other stakeholders who attended the forums expressed appreciation for the format, considering it a unique platform where different generations could come together and discuss methods of increasing youth's involvement in decision-making processes at the local and national government levels. They emphasized that intergenerational dialogue helped foster understanding that young and older individuals possess unique perspectives and may experience life differently, despite being members of the same community. Almost all stakeholders emphasized the need for establishing additional platforms for intergenerational dialogue on issues related to inclusive decision-making in Somalia. They also highlighted the necessity for further capacity building in conducting intergenerational dialogues.



Introduction

TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES faced by young people in Somalia regarding political participation³, the FBA, in collaboration with the UNFPA and other partner organizations, organized a series of forums in every member state in Somalia, as well as in Benadir region. The forums aimed to promote youth political participation in elections and were attended by stakeholders at the

federal, member state, and district levels, as well as youth-led organizations and international actors working in partnership with these organizations.

The primary objectives of the initiative were to enhance understanding and improve strategies for increasing youth political participation and to foster coordination among relevant stakeholders involved in youth, elections, and democratization in Somalia. The focus of the forums was to emphasize youth participation in subnational and local elections, going beyond the scope of federal elections.

³ Resolution 2250 defines “youth” as people aged 18–29 years. However, Somalia defines youth as people between 15 up to 35 years old (Somali National Youth Policy 2023 – 2030). All youth who participated in the forum was above 18, and most were between 18 – 29. This report uses the terms “youth” and “young people” interchangeably and refer to young women and men.

Local organizations, including youth-led organizations, took the lead in organizing and facilitating the forums, with support from the FBA and UNFPA. The organizers held planning meetings to ensure the forums were tailored to each region's specific context and to ensure local ownership of the initiative.

This approach was important as each member state/region in Somalia is at a different stage of the democratization process.

The forums consisted of preparatory days for young women and men, as well as a day for multi-stakeholder dialogue. The separate preparatory day for young women aimed to create a safe space for them to address the specific challenges they face in electoral participation. The joint session for young men and women provided an opportunity for collective discussions. On the third day, youth, government representatives, and other stakeholders participated in an intergenerational dialogue to explore ways to increase youth participation in elections.

Around 100 young people participated in each forum, with efforts made to ensure gender balance and representation from diverse backgrounds and districts. Unfortunately, due to security

concerns, some young people from remote districts were unable to attend the forums.

During the preparatory days, participants discussed the concept of elections, explored how young people could engage in the electoral cycle (before, during, and after elections), and identified the challenges to youth participation in different contexts.

Overall, the forums aimed to empower young people and enable their leadership and participation in the political process. By bringing together various stakeholders, the initiative sought to promote coordination and collaboration towards democratization in Somalia.



Puntland forum, 19 – 21 March 2022

THE FORUM IN PUNTLAND, held in Garowe and organized in collaboration with the Puntland Development Research Center (PDRC) and Puntland Youth Association Network (PYAN), resulted in several important takeaways and commitments. Some of these takeaways include:

The commitments demonstrated a proactive approach by the government and electoral commission to address the concerns raised during the forum and create opportunities for increased youth political participation in Puntland. For more detailed information, please refer to page 29.

- The government committing to enact a bill through parliament that creates space for young people and strengthens their political participation, ensuring their involvement in the decision-making process.
- The government committing to revise and enhance the Puntland youth policy, incorporating more programs and priorities for young people, including a focus on youth electoral participation.
- The Transitional Puntland Electoral Commission (now Puntland Electoral Commission) committing to launch an advocacy and voter education campaign across Puntland. This campaign aims to advocate for the importance of young people in the electoral process and educate them about the different phases of elections.



Galmudug, 21 – 23 June 2022

DURING THE FORUM HELD in Dhusamareb, Galmudug, in collaboration with the Horn Center and Galmudug Youth Association Network (GYAN), several important takeaways and commitments were made. These include:

The commitments made aim to create opportunities for young people to contribute meaningfully and play a significant role in shaping the future of the region. For more detailed information, please refer to page 30.

- The Ministry of Youth and Sports in Galmudug committing to continue ensuring that young people are consulted and engaged in the planning process regarding any issues that affect them in Galmudug. This commitment reflects a recognition of the importance of youth participation and their inclusion in decision-making processes.
- Clan elders committing to treating youth as key actors and providing them with space for dialogue with community leaders, religious leaders, and other decision-makers. This commitment aims to enable equal representation for young people in the decision-making processes and emphasizes the importance of their voices being heard.
- The United Nations committing to supporting various government agendas and priorities specifically related to young people's participation in electoral processes. This commitment signifies the UN's dedication to assisting Galmudug in promoting youth political participation.



Jubaland, 16 – 17 August 2022

DURING THE FORUM HELD in Kismayo, Jubaland, in collaboration with the Somali Women Solidarity Organization (SWSO), several important takeaways and commitments were made. These include:

These takeaways reflect the dedication of the government, clan elders, and the UN to promote youth participation in Jubaland’s political processes. For more details about commitments and takeaways from the forum, see page 31.

- The government committing to providing more youth-friendly spaces to facilitate discussions and engagement on civic participation, democratization, and peacebuilding. This commitment recognizes the importance of creating safe and inclusive environments where young people can actively participate and contribute to these critical areas.
- Clan elders committing to ensuring that youth are given opportunities to participate in the ongoing indirect elections in Somalia. They acknowledge the leadership potential of youth and commit to engaging in intergenerational dialogues to reduce tensions between different age groups. This commitment aims to foster a more inclusive and collaborative political environment.
- The United Nations committing to allocating more resources to youth-led initiatives, specifically those that encourage active participation of young people in electoral and civic engagements. This commitment highlights the UN’s support for initiatives that empower and involve young people in decision-making processes.



Benadir region, 27 – 29 November 2022

DURING THE FORUM HELD in Mogadishu, Benadir region, in collaboration with the Benadir Regional Youth Administration (BRYA) and Elman Peace Center (EPC), several important take-aways and commitments were made. These include:

The commitments made aim to create an inclusive and participatory environment where young people can actively contribute to the development and governance of the region. For more details about commitments and take-aways from the forum, see page 31.

- The federal parliament committing to advocate for youth political participation at all levels of political leadership. This commitment reflects the parliament's recognition of the importance of youth inclusion in decision-making processes and their active involvement in political leadership roles.
- The federal government committing to working closely with youth and actively listening to their concerns. This commitment signifies the government's commitment to engaging with young people and addressing their needs and aspirations.
- The United Nations committing to continue supporting platforms, particularly youth-led platforms, that provide opportunities for young people to come together, express their opinions, and build their capacity to challenge policymakers. This commitment demonstrates the UN's dedication to empowering youth and ensuring their voices are heard in the policy-making process.



Southwest, 6 – 8 February 2023

DURING THE FORUM HELD in Baidoa, Southwest region, in collaboration with Somali Peace Line (SPL) and Somali Youth Volunteer Association (SOYVA), several important takeaways and commitments were made. These include:

These takeaways demonstrate the collaboration between clan elders, members of parliament, and the government to promote youth engagement and political participation in the Southwest region. For more details about commitments and takeaways from the forum, see page 32.

- Clan elders committing to working collaboratively with young people and treating all youth equally, without discrimination based on gender or age. They will maintain an open-door policy, allowing young people to share their concerns and participate in decision-making processes. This commitment emphasizes inclusivity and equal representation of youth in the region.
- Members of the Southwest parliament committing to strengthening the relationship between the parliament and young people. This commitment signifies their recognition of the importance of youth engagement in the political process and their dedication to fostering a closer connection between parliament and young people.
- The government committing to empowering youth by building their capacity and involving them in district council elections. This commitment highlights the government's commitment to creating opportunities for youth to participate actively in the electoral process and contribute to local governance.



Hirshabelle, 29 April – 1 May 2023

DURING THE FORUM HELD in Jowhar, Hirshabelle, in collaboration with Somali Peace Line (SPL) and youth leaders from Hiran and Middle Shabelle, several important takeaways and commitments were made. These include:

The commitments made aim to create an inclusive environment where youth have equal opportunities to participate in community affairs and contribute to the region's progress. For more details about commitments and takeaways from the forum, see page 33.

- Clan elders committing to collaborating closely with youth and treating all young people equally, regardless of their gender. They will actively mentor youth and help prepare them for leadership roles within the community. This commitment highlights the importance of intergenerational collaboration and the recognition of youth as valuable assets for the community's development.
- The government committing to conducting elections for district-level youth leaders in all districts of Hirshabelle state. This commitment emphasizes the government's intent to provide opportunities for youth to engage in leadership roles at the local level. By conducting elections, the government aims to promote youth participation in decision-making processes and empower them to contribute to their communities.



National forum on youth, elections & democratization, Mogadishu, 17 December 2023

THE NATIONAL FORUM, organized collaboratively by the FBA, UNFPA, and the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Somalia, brought together various stakeholders to discuss and explore youth political participation beyond the national elections. The planning committee, consisting of youth representatives from each federal member state and the Benadir region, played a crucial role in organizing the event.

The forum served as a platform to present the findings and recommendations from a series of forums conducted in 2022-2023 across all of Somalia's federal member states and the Benadir region. These earlier forums focused on gathering insights on the opportunities and challenges related to youth political participation and informed the discussions at the National Forum.

The National Forum brought together a diverse range of participants, including government officials, youth-led and youth-focused organizations, and international actors. The objective was to foster meaningful dialogue and collaboration among these stake-

holders to facilitate a youth-inclusive democratization process in Somalia.

By convening key actors and sharing the findings and recommendations from the previous forums, the National Forum aimed to provide a platform for discussing the prospects and strategies for enhancing youth political participation in Somalia. The event aimed to contribute to the ongoing efforts to create an inclusive and participatory political environment in the country.



Why should youth participate in electoral processes?

THE PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG people is a democratic right, and youth have historically demonstrated their capacity to drive and lead change for the betterment of society. Their participation in electoral processes is beneficial for the development of countries.

Three main reasons why youth should be included in electoral and other decision-making processes are:

1. Demographics:

In Somalia, young people constitute the vast majority of the population but are routinely excluded from decision-making processes and treated as a minority. For political systems to

be representative, all parts of society must have the opportunity to participate. If young people are excluded, it means that a big portion of the population has little or no say in decisions that influence their lives.

2. Democracy & human rights:

Inclusive participation remains a fundamental political and democratic right. It is young people's right to have their voices taken into account regarding all matters that have a direct or indirect impact on their lives and future. Several international frameworks, documents, and resolutions reaffirm this, including:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) stresses everyone’s “rights to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives”⁴
- The International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1976) in which article 25 relates to elections and states that “Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without unreasonable restrictions to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors.”⁵ Somalia ratified the ICCPR on 24 January 1990.
- There are also regional frameworks stating young people’s right to participate. For example, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance in which article 31 affirms that “State Parties shall promote participation of social groups with special needs, including the Youth and people with disabilities, in the governance process.”⁶ Somalia signed the Charter on 28 January 2013.
- Article 22 in the Somali Provisional Constitution states that every citizen has the right to take part in public affairs, including the right to form political parties and to participate in the activities of political parties` and the right to be elected for any position within a political party. It also states that every citizen who fulfills the criteria stated in the law has the right to elect and to be elected.⁷



3. Sustainability:

Youth participation in political and electoral processes can help deliver better results and increase impact, and their inclusion is crucial to building stable and peaceful societies and developing laws and policies that respond to the needs of younger men and women. The participation of youth is also important to increase the legitimacy of the system/government since it raises the likelihood that laws, policies, and peace settlements will respond to the concerns of youth, their visions, and/or their needs. Broader participation could also increase the probability of implementation, as more people might pressure to see that what they voted for is realized.

⁴ udhr.pdf (un.org)

⁵ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights | OHCHR

⁶ African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance | African Union (au.int)

⁷ Somalia-Constitution2012.pdf (umn.edu)

Status of youth electoral participation in Somalia

IN RECENT YEARS, young women and men have started to take up more political and elective roles in Somalia. However, despite some progress in terms of representation, the current political decision-making process is still dominated by a political elite, excluding young people from political participation. Many of Somalia's youth have long desired direct democratic elections but are continuously denied the right to vote and to run for office in a one-person one-vote direct election on the federal, member state, and district levels.

In Somalia, around 81% of the population is under 35 years old.⁸ Despite this, levels of youth participation in national representative structures are low to non-existent, and little has been done to specifically target youth and increase their participation in formal democratic electoral systems. Instead, youth are left to exercise power outside of formal electoral processes in situations of political, social, and economic exclusion and difficulty.

As many of the youth themselves expressed during the forums, the



Youth are innovative and smart and represent a big opportunity and resource. If the youth in Galmudug are supported and funded, they will be able to achieve a lot of things that older generations failed to achieve for decades.”

– A participant from the Youth Forum in Galmudug.

political and electoral processes in Somalia are dominated by male elders who tend to marginalize young people, and particularly young women and youth from marginalized communities. Within this system, chances for young people to participate remain low, and even in those instances where youth are participating, they have their loyalty to the clan interests, which limits young people's potential to address national youth concerns and influence policy debates.

Furthermore, in those instances where youth are participating, their participation is often limited to elite youth, such as wealthy youth and diaspora youth who, in rare instances, are given political positions. However, most of the youth, especially those from marginalized communities, are rarely given any space due to an entrenched and exclusionary clan system that favors dominant clans.

⁸ Somali National Youth Policy (2023 – 2030)

Findings

THE FINDINGS FROM the forums conducted with young people from all over Somalia highlight several challenges that hinder their electoral participation. These challenges include:

- 1. Lack of free and fair democratic elections:** The current clan-based system is seen as marginalizing youth, especially those from minority clans. The youth perceive this system as hindering their inclusion in electoral processes and emphasize the need for progress in ensuring youth participation.
- 2. Influence of clan elders:** The youth argue that reducing the influence and prominence of traditional elders in the political and electoral process is crucial for realizing the potential of young people. They believe that greater youth representation requires diminishing the influence of clan elders.
- 3. Age-based discrimination:** Young people face age-based discrimination, with several articles in the provisional constitution being considered age discriminatory. Overcoming these discriminatory provisions is seen as essential for promoting youth inclusion in electoral processes.
- 4. Lack of a clear legal framework:** National and state laws on elections are described as inconsistent, confusing, and not youth friendly. The youth emphasize the importance of meaningful youth participation in the constitutional review process to address these issues.
- 5. Insecurity:** The lack of security in many parts of Somalia poses a significant obstacle to youth participation. Young women, in particular, face security threats from groups like Al-Shabaab, making their engagement in politics more challenging.
- 6. Stereotypes:** Prevailing negative stereotypes about youth hinder their opportunities for electoral participation. The youth argue that these stereotypes contribute to young people being perceived as a problem rather than a valuable resource.
- 7. Lack of awareness/knowledge:** Limited awareness among young people about the importance of elections, democracy, and their civic duties and rights hinders their participation in electoral processes. Building awareness and knowledge is seen as crucial for enhancing youth involvement.
- 8. Lack of political parties:** The absence of political parties or youth wings makes it difficult to address the needs and interests of young people. The youth emphasize the importance of creating political platforms that represent their perspectives.
- 9. Lack of resources:** Expensive campaign costs and limited resources to seek endorsements pose challenges for young people's participation, particularly for young women and youth from minority clans.
- 10. Centralization:** The current electoral system, primarily focused on Mogadishu, leads to a sense of exclusion among youth in member states. This centralization of the electoral process results in frustration and disinterest among young people.
- 11. Unemployment:** High unemployment rates among young people contribute to reduced hopes and aspirations for political participation. Addressing the issue of unemployment is seen as crucial for enhancing youth engagement in electoral processes.

Specific challenges for young women

MANY YOUNG PEOPLE pointed out that the political system in Somalia is patriarchal and marginalizes women, particularly young women. They argued that this is due to traditional leaders favouring men over women and older individuals over younger ones, consequently excluding young women from political processes. The majority of young women emphasized that those belonging to minority clans are particularly neglected.

In Galmudug, young women raised concerns about the lack of access to education, which they argued hinders their ability to compete with men for political positions and leadership roles. They highlighted that even when educated women stand against uneducated men, the community tends to choose the male candidate. This demonstrates a significant gender disparity in political opportunities.

“ *Traditional elders are only men; when discussing topics that involve women, women need to be there. Men cannot take decisions on behalf of women.*”

– Young woman from the Youth Forum in Southwest.

“ *Cultural and societal norms that states women should just be at home and that politics is dirty and women cannot join hinders women’s effective participation.*”

– Young woman from the Youth Forum in Jubaland.

Furthermore, young women emphasized the absence of training on the importance of political and electoral participation, which negatively impacts their ability to engage in such processes. Many young women are unaware of their civic rights and responsibilities, further limiting their opportunities for participation.

Another crucial point raised by young women is the disparity in political connections and networks. They asserted that young women do not have the same access to influential political connections as men or older, more established women, which creates a disadvantage in pursuing political roles.

In Hirshabelle, as well as other forums, young women highlighted that insecurity and political violence in Somalia act as barriers to their political participation. They emphasized that insecurity disproportionately affects young women, and those who engage in politics often face security threats from

groups like Al-Shabaab. However, it is not only external security threats that concern them; they also feared societal perceptions of women involved in politics. They expressed concerns about potential consequences such as marital instability, sexual violence, and loss of dignity due to late-night meetings, interactions with men, and associating with influential figures.

Additionally, young people explained that clan dynamics play a significant role in political representation. They noted that if a woman is married into a different clan, she cannot effectively represent either her new clan or her original clan, further limiting opportunities for female political representation.

Overall, these issues raised by young women in Galmudug and Hirshabelle shed light on the various challenges and barriers they face in political participation, including educational disparities, limited training, gender biases, insecurity, and societal expectations. Addressing these concerns is crucial for promoting gender equality and inclusive political processes in Somalia.

In both Puntland and Galmudug, the youth argued that implementing the 30% women quota would ensure representation for women at decision-making levels. They acknowledged that achieving this goal requires

 *Young women are systematically excluded from electoral decision-making processes in Somalia. Clan elders and political leaders need to start supporting young women who aspire to participate in politics”*

– Young woman from the Youth Forum in Hirshabelle.

political will from leaders, and they express hope that the quota will be implemented in the national parliament and senate. They also highlighted the importance of women-led organizations in advocating for women’s political rights and empowering their participation in political and electoral processes.

To summarize, young people across all member states, including the Benadir region, have observed a systematic exclusion of women from political participation in Somalia, with young women being particularly affected. They point out that young women face greater challenges than young men in terms of accessing information, opportunities, and funding. Additionally, they encounter various security threats. These barriers intersect with other forms of discrimination, and factors such as education, socioeconomic background, religion, and clan affiliation can further exacerbate the challenges faced by young women in political participation.

Recommendations

THROUGHOUT THE FORUMS, the youth put forward several recommendations to different stakeholders, aiming to increase their opportunities to participate in electoral and political decision-making processes. These recommendations include:

Political parties should:

- Establish mechanisms to support young people, especially young women, during campaigns.
- Support young people's participation in electoral observation.
- Ensure youth participation in all phases of voter education campaigns.
- Develop political party youth wings.
- Support and enhance the capacity of young party members.

Legislature and electoral commissions should:

- Harmonize electoral laws at the member state and national levels to avoid contradictions.
- Introduce one-person one-vote elections to reflect the will of the people, including youth.
- Lower the minimum age for candidacy to align it with the minimum voting age.
- Provide initiatives to strengthen the capacity of young people and youth-led organizations in electoral participation, democratization, and civic engagement.

- Support the formation of youth political parties or youth wings to advocate for the priorities, interests, and needs of young people.
- Involve youth in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the electoral process.
- Implement the 30% women's quota.
- Reduce registration fees for youth running for political positions.
- Introduce a youth quota, such as reserving specific seats for youth in district councils and parliament.
- Include youth in the advisory board of the electoral management body.
- Support the formation of youth councils at the local level.
- Introduce campaign finance regulations.

Traditional elders should:

- Recognize youth as key actors in democratic and electoral processes, involving them in decisions that impact their lives.
- Support the abolishment of the 4.5 system and allow young people to have an equal role in the electoral process.

- Avoid supporting candidates solely based on their resources, as this marginalizes young people, particularly young women and youth from marginalized clans.
- Facilitate intergenerational dialogues to understand the needs, priorities, and aspirations of different youth.
- Acknowledge the knowledge and unique experiences of youth and provide opportunities for young men and women to take leadership roles.
- Organize forums to facilitate the sharing and transfer of skills and experiences between youth and elders.

Government actors should:

- Establish safe spaces and hold regular intergenerational dialogues with diverse groups of young people, including marginalized youth, to identify their needs and priorities.
- Develop and implement a national youth plan that incorporates provisions for youth participation in electoral processes.
- Include young women and men, representing different youth groups, in government bodies such as constitution review boards, election boards, and technical committees.
- Ensure an enabling and safe environment for meaningful youth participation, respecting their rights to freedom of opinion, expression, access to information, and peaceful assembly and association.
- Conduct civic education programs at the district, state, and federal levels to

educate young people about their civic duties and enhance their willingness and ability to participate in electoral processes.

- Provide funding for grassroots and sub-national level youth networks to participate in the electoral process and maintain engagement with the community and governments.

Youth

The youth participants also had specific recommendations for youth, national and international partners, the United Nations, and measures to increase young women’s participation:

Recommendations for Youth:

- Form a political party or youth wing within existing parties to advocate for youth agendas and priorities.
- Organize forums where elders and other stakeholders can be invited to exchange information and advocate for youth agendas and priorities.

Recommendations for National and International Partners:

- Support capacity building initiatives tailored to the specific needs of young women and men in electoral and democratization processes, providing adequate resources.
- Provide resources and support to youth networks at the district, state, and national levels.
- Establish connections with grassroots youth organizations and youth-led partners.

- Identify exclusionary practices and behaviors that hinder youth participation and develop policies that facilitate meaningful youth engagement.

Recommendations for the United Nations:

- Report on the outcomes of UN-funded projects and programs for young people.
- Provide funding for young women and men to participate in electoral processes, including support for youth-led parties or youth wings.
- Advocate for the abolition of the current undemocratic electoral system and support the government’s plan for direct elections.
- Facilitate coordination between different development partners supporting youth participation.
- Support initiatives that bring together youth and stakeholders involved in the electoral process to promote inclusive participation.
- Ensure consistent and deliberate support for youth, particularly young women.
- Hold political leaders, including the president, accountable for youth exclusion.

Specific Recommendations to Increase Young Women’s Participation:

- Provide opportunities for women, especially young women, to participate in decision-making processes.
- Encourage and receive support from families and clan elders for young women’s representation in the political sphere.
- Reserve specific seats for young women in district councils and parliament.
- Establish platforms for young women aspiring to participate in politics.
- Involve young women as members of the electoral commission.
- Advocate for a 50% women’s quota.
- Encourage financial support among young women to uplift each other.

Specific commitments per member state/region

AT THE END OF THE discussions all the stakeholders were required to make commitments that they will fulfill to enhance and strengthen the opportunities for youth to participate in electoral processes in their area of responsibility.

Puntland State:

Government commitments:

- Enact a bill through parliament to create space for young people and strengthen their political participation.
- Create an enabling environment and strengthen the democratization process, ensuring the rights and responsibilities of youth are protected.
- Provide necessary support for youth capacity building and job opportunities.
- Involve youth in planning issues that affect young people in Puntland.
- Revise and enhance the Puntland youth policy to include more programs and priorities for young people, including youth electoral participation.

United Nations and INGO commitments:

- Continue the conversation on youth inclusion in the electoral process and support projects and programs contributing to this objective.
- Engage young people at all levels to support and build their capacity in civic engagements and democratization.
- Work with the government to ensure the realization of one-person one-vote in Somalia.

Transitional Puntland Electoral Commission (TPEC, now PEC) commitments:

- Include youth in the electoral process and advocate for their importance.
- Launch an advocacy and voter education campaign across Puntland to educate young people on the different phases of elections.





Galmudug State:

Government commitments:

- Streamline all services for young people in every district of Galmudug to reach rural areas.
- Prioritize the youth agenda and provide more youth spaces for training and skills development.
- Ensure young people are consulted and engaged in the planning process regarding issues that affect them.
- Work with young people to train them in their rights and responsibilities.

United Nations and INGO commitments:

- Work with youth-led organizations and Galmudug authorities to support the needs of young people.
- Continue working with the government to ensure one-person one-vote is realized in Somalia.

- Support government agendas and priorities related to youth participation in elections.

Clan elder commitments:

- Give young people opportunities and treat them as key actors within the community.
- Provide space for young people to have dialogue with community leaders, religious leaders, and decision-makers.
- Ensure young council representatives are part of political negotiations.
- Continue intergenerational dialogues to achieve inclusivity and address young people's aspirations, hopes, views, and concerns.



Jubaland State:

Government commitments:

- Provide more youth-friendly spaces for civic engagements, democratization, and peacebuilding.
- Include young people in the establishment of a truth and justice commission.

United Nations and INGO commitments:

- Provide more resources to youth-led initiatives that encourage active participation in elections and civic engagements.
- Support the government in strengthening youth-supporting government institutions and funding programs to enhance youth capacities.

Clan elder commitments:

- Ensure young people have opportunities to participate in decision-making processes in Somalia.
- Continue intergenerational dialogues to reduce tensions between youth and older generations.
- Keep their doors open for ongoing dialogue with youth.



Benadir Region:

Government commitments:

- Advocate for youth political participation at all levels.
- Work closely with youth and listen to their concerns.

United Nations and INGO commitments:

- Support platforms for youth to gather, formulate opinions, and challenge policymakers.
- Support capacity building of young people, especially through youth-led organizations.
- Advocate for youth political participation, including young women, marginalized youth, and those with disabilities.



Southwest State:

Clan elder commitments:

- Work with young people and treat everyone equally without discrimination based on gender or age.
- Listen to the concerns of young women and keep their doors open.
- Members of Parliament commitments:
- Strengthen the relationship between the parliament and young people.

Government commitments:

- Empower youth and build their capacity through the Ministry of Youth and Sports.
- Involve youth in district council elections through the Ministry of Interior.



Hirshabelle State:

Clan elder commitments:

- Collaborate closely with young people and treat all youth equally, regardless of gender.
- Mentor youth for leadership roles within the community.

Government commitments:

- Provide sufficient coverage for youth-related issues on the state television through the Deputy Minister of Information.

- Explore the feasibility of allocating funds for youth development through the Deputy Minister of Finance.
- Support elections for district-level youth leaders in all districts of Hirshabelle state through the Director-General of the Ministry of Youth.
- Invite youth to the municipality offices to learn about the government operations through the Mayor of Jowhar city.

