



Strengthening Local Governance in South Galkacyo: Challenges and Opportunities

Farhan Isak Yusuf

Governance Brief 46 | June 2026

Summary

- » Galkacyo Local Government faces severe fiscal constraints, with monthly revenue declining from approximately USD 35,000–40,000 to USD 18,000–20,000 due to prolonged droughts and the underutilisation of several revenue streams, limiting its capacity to deliver services and implement development priorities.
- » Persistent service delivery challenges, particularly rainwater stagnation and inadequate street lighting, remain unresolved despite commitments made by the current administration during its election campaign.
- » Transparency and citizen participation remain limited, with low public awareness of the district's budget, revenue sources, expenditure priorities, and opportunities for engagement in local decision-making, underscoring the need for more regular citizen–government engagement.
- » Despite these challenges, the local government continues to play an important role in maintaining security and supporting conflict prevention and resolution in a fragile and conflict-prone environment.

About Somali Public Agenda

Somali Public Agenda is a nonprofit public policy and administration research organization based in Mogadishu. Its aim is to advance understanding and improvement of public administration and public services in Somalia through evidence-based research and analysis.

About the Author

Farhan Isak Yusuf is the Deputy Executive Director and SPA Research Director.

www.somalipublicagenda.org

© 2026 Somali Public Agenda

Introduction

Galkacyo, one of Somalia's pre-1991 districts, became the first local government established in Galmudug State in 2020. The district has experienced years of clan-based conflict, primarily between the Sacad sub-clan of the Hawiye in the Galmudug-administered south and the Omar Mohamud sub-clan of the Darood in the Puntland-administered north. Active conflict largely ceased in 2017 following a peace agreement. However, intermittent tensions persist, particularly between the Sacad and Leelkase sub-clans over rural land disputes and revenge killings.

In South Galkacyo, limited public participation in local government decision-making continues to undermine trust in the district administration. Although the formation of the District Council in 2020 aimed to promote inclusiveness, many residents still feel excluded from decisions regarding development priorities and resource allocation. This perceived lack of transparency contributes to concerns about accountability and weakens public ownership of local governance processes. As a result, even development initiatives with positive intentions may be viewed with scepticism when citizens are not meaningfully involved in their design and oversight.

Against this backdrop, Somali Public Agenda (SPA) convened an on-the-record forum in Galkacyo-Galmudug on 10 May 2026, bringing together the local government and citizens to discuss key governance issues affecting the district. This event was the third of four planned dialogue series across Galmudug and Puntland (Dhusamareb, South Galkacyo, North Galkacyo, and Qardho).

The dialogues aim to strengthen citizen participation in local governance, particularly in a context where opportunities for direct engagement between citizens and local authorities remain limited. They also seek to enhance public awareness of the roles and responsibilities of local governments while promoting transparency and accountability.

The South Galkacyo dialogue, which is the focus of this governance brief, was attended by 50 participants (21 women and 29 men), including representatives of women's groups, youth, elders, religious leaders, and the business community. South Galkacyo Deputy Mayor Eng. Mohamed Abdi Elmi also participated in the discussion.

The dialogue lasted approximately one and a half hours and was video-recorded for wider dissemination through SPA's social media platforms. Participants raised a range of issues, including revenue collection, service delivery, rainwater stagnation, street lighting, transparency, accountability, and relations between the local government and citizens.

This governance brief summarises the main issues raised during the dialogue and presents the deputy mayor's responses.

Local Government Revenue Collection

Revenue collection was the first issue raised with the deputy mayor, reflecting its importance to local governance and accountability. Participants were eager to understand the district's revenue base and its implications for service

delivery. The deputy mayor stated that the local government has 21 revenue streams, of which only 18 are currently active.

Active revenue sources include the livestock market, daily vendor taxes, small business taxes, local transport fees, and loading and unloading charges. Inactive revenue streams include utility charges on water and electricity services, land management fees, and property taxes. According to the deputy mayor, these inactive sources could generate significant revenue if effectively mobilised. He attributed the failure to collect utility charges primarily to a lack of cooperation from private water and electricity service providers operating in the city.

Despite having multiple revenue streams, the local government currently generates only USD 18,000–20,000 per month. The deputy mayor reported that revenue has declined sharply over the past three years due to prolonged droughts, which have severely affected the local economy. Previously, monthly revenue collections ranged between USD 35,000 and USD 40,000.

The decline in revenue has significantly constrained the local government's ability to cover operational costs and deliver public services. In response, the administration has adopted austerity measures, including salary reductions for staff and restrictions on vehicle use.

The deputy mayor further noted that the local government operates under an annual budget and that financial reports are submitted to the district council for review and approval. Upon learning about the administration's fiscal challenges, several participants expressed sympathy for the difficult operating environment and acknowledged the limitations this places on the local government's ability to meet public expectations.

The challenges facing Galkacyo are not unique. Across Somalia, local governments often struggle to generate sufficient revenue to perform their core functions and provide essential services. Limited revenue generation, the absence of fiscal transfers, and weak local revenue systems continue to undermine the effectiveness of local governments. Somali Public Agenda has consistently highlighted these challenges and called for reforms aimed at strengthening local government financing and service delivery.

Service Delivery and Decentralisation

Like many local governments in Somalia, Galkacyo has limited authority over key public services such as education and health, which remain under the jurisdiction of state ministries and are largely funded by development partners. Nevertheless, participants sought clarification on what the administration had achieved since taking office in 2021.

The deputy mayor cited several accomplishments, including the reopening of approximately 60 roads that had previously been blocked by households. He also highlighted improvements in local security, noting that the city has become more stable in recent years. In addition, he pointed to the administration's efforts to prevent and respond to local clan conflicts.

Participants generally acknowledged and commended the local government's contribution to maintaining security in the city. The deputy mayor emphasised that substantial local

resources are allocated to security-related activities, despite security being a responsibility that would ordinarily fall under state authorities.

Among the administration's infrastructure achievements, the deputy mayor highlighted the construction of two 800-metre asphalt roads funded by development partners, as well as several gravel roads developed through local contributions.

He also cited completed projects, including a large livestock market, schools, health centres, and an animal husbandry facility. Projects currently under implementation include the Abdullahi Isse football field and the headquarters of the Galkacyo Local Government, which is reportedly nearing completion. Additional projects expected to commence soon include the Professor Adow Training Centre and further investments in the livestock sector.

While the deputy mayor highlighted a range of completed and ongoing projects, limited information was provided regarding funding sources, implementation arrangements, or project costs. The only project cost disclosed during the discussion was the USD 250,000 invested in the two asphalt roads. Greater transparency regarding project financing and implementation would help strengthen public accountability and improve citizens' understanding of local development initiatives.

According to the deputy mayor, development interventions in the district are guided by priorities identified in the District Development Framework. These priorities include addressing rainwater stagnation, constructing the Abdullahi Isse football field, completing the local government headquarters, and improving road infrastructure. Aligning development projects with locally identified priorities is important for ensuring that investments respond to the needs and concerns of residents.

Citizen Participation in Local Government

Citizen participation in decision-making is a key indicator of effective local governance. During the dialogue, participants raised concerns about the limited opportunities available for citizens to engage with the local government, particularly given that the current administration has been in office for more than five years.

One participant asked whether the local government presents its annual budget to citizens for consultation before submitting it to the district council for review and approval. The question reflected broader concerns about transparency and the extent to which citizens are involved in local decision-making processes.

In response, the deputy mayor stated that the local government regularly presents its annual budget to citizens in the same hall where the Somali Public Agenda dialogue was held. However, he did not clarify whether citizen feedback is systematically incorporated into the budget preparation process. Equally important, several participants indicated that they were either unaware of such consultations or had never attended them, suggesting a disconnect between government outreach efforts and public awareness.

The discussion highlighted broader concerns regarding inclusivity in local government engagement. Some participants alleged that senior local government officials favour

particular groups when selecting participants for workshops and consultations organised in collaboration with the administration. According to these participants, invitations are sometimes extended selectively, limiting broader community representation.

The deputy mayor rejected these allegations, stating that the local government does not favour any group and that all citizens are treated equally. Nevertheless, the concerns raised during the dialogue point to the importance of ensuring that public engagement processes are transparent, inclusive, and accessible to all segments of the community.

The discussion demonstrated that strengthening citizen participation remains a key governance challenge in South Galkacyo. Improving public awareness of consultation opportunities and ensuring that citizen feedback is meaningfully incorporated into decision-making processes could help strengthen trust between the local government and the communities it serves.

Rainwater Stagnation and Street Lighting

Rainwater stagnation on the city's streets remains a longstanding challenge in South Galkacyo, affecting the movement of people and vehicles during the rainy season. Although rainfall is generally sporadic, poor drainage infrastructure means that even limited rainfall can disrupt mobility and daily economic activities.

Participants expressed frustration that the issue remains unresolved despite having featured prominently in the election campaign of the current administration. Several participants noted that addressing rainwater stagnation was presented as a key priority during the campaign and questioned why tangible progress has yet to be achieved.

The deputy mayor acknowledged the seriousness of the problem and its impact on residents. He argued, however, that the challenge is not unique to Galkacyo and affects many urban centres across Somalia. According to the deputy mayor, addressing the problem requires the construction of a comprehensive drainage system, which remains beyond the financial and technical capacity of most local governments.

He further noted that drainage projects are currently being implemented in Dhusamareb, the capital of Galmudug State, and suggested that similar interventions could eventually be expanded to South Galkacyo if those initiatives prove successful.

The issue of street lighting generated similar concerns. Participants complained about the limited coverage and poor condition of streetlights across the district and sought clarification on why the local government had not implemented a previously proposed community initiative. Under the proposal, households would install lamps outside their homes while electricity companies would install additional lighting on utility poles to supplement the existing solar-powered streetlights.

In response, the deputy mayor stated that most solar-powered streetlights remain operational and that the local government is working to repair those that have been damaged. He further

explained that electricity providers had been instructed to install lamps on their utility poles. However, the companies reportedly requested that the local government first provide dusk-to-dawn lamps for installation.

According to the deputy mayor, the local government subsequently purchased and installed 15 dusk-to-dawn lamps in areas considered particularly insecure. At the same time, households were encouraged to purchase similar lamps for installation outside their homes, a solution that was presented as more affordable for both residents and electricity providers.

The concerns raised regarding rainwater stagnation and street lighting point to broader challenges in urban service delivery. While financial constraints clearly limit the capacity of local governments to address infrastructure deficits, the discussion also underscored citizens' expectations for visible progress on issues that directly affect their daily lives.

Challenges Facing the Local Government

The deputy mayor identified several challenges that continue to constrain the administration's ability to fulfil its responsibilities and respond effectively to citizens' needs. These challenges include security pressures, limited public awareness, weak collaboration with the business community, the absence of fiscal transfers from the state government, and declining local revenue.

Security: The deputy mayor stated that maintaining security remains one of the administration's highest priorities and consumes a substantial share of local resources. According to him, approximately 50 per cent of the local government's expenditure is directed towards security-related activities, despite the absence of a dedicated security allocation in the district's annual budget.

He argued that the local government has assumed responsibilities that would ordinarily fall under regional and state authorities. Beyond financial expenditures, considerable administrative time and effort are devoted to conflict prevention, mediation, and community security initiatives.

The security burden is particularly significant given Galkacyo's history of recurrent conflict and its location within a fragile and often volatile environment. This context distinguishes the district from many other local governments operating in relatively stable settings and places additional pressure on already limited resources.

Limited Public Awareness: The deputy mayor identified limited public awareness as another challenge affecting the administration's ability to implement local initiatives effectively. According to him, inadequate public understanding of local government responsibilities and development priorities can reduce community cooperation and participation.

However, the discussion also highlighted the responsibility of local authorities to improve communication and outreach. Building stronger relationships between local governments and citizens is essential for fostering trust, encouraging public participation, and strengthening collective efforts to address local challenges.

Limited Collaboration with the Business Community:

The deputy mayor also cited limited collaboration with the business community as a constraint on local development efforts. He argued that local businesses have not consistently supported initiatives proposed by the administration to finance community development projects.

As an example, he referred to a proposal that would have introduced a USD 1 contribution on monthly water and electricity bills. The funds were intended to support a local development fund managed by a 13-member community development committee and directed towards projects identified as priorities by local residents.

According to the deputy mayor, while the local government contributed resources to the initiative, implementation stalled because utility providers did not enforce the proposed contribution. The case illustrates broader challenges in mobilising local resources and building effective partnerships between the public and private sectors.

Lack of Fiscal Transfers from the State Government: Like many local governments across Somalia, Galkacyo does not receive fiscal transfers from the state government despite revenue being collected within the district by state institutions. The deputy mayor argued that this situation places an additional burden on local administrations, which must rely almost entirely on their own limited revenue sources to finance operations and service delivery.

He further noted that state institutions collect revenue within Galkacyo while the district receives no direct share of these resources. This issue reflects a broader challenge in Somalia's intergovernmental fiscal arrangements and continues to affect the financial sustainability of local governments.

Declining Local Revenue: The deputy mayor reported that local revenue has declined by approximately 50 per cent over recent years due to prolonged droughts affecting the region. The livestock market, one of the district's most important revenue sources, has been particularly affected as drought conditions have reduced livestock numbers and market activity.

He further noted that the administration exempted some livestock traders from certain taxes in solidarity with drought-affected pastoralist communities. While such measures may provide short-term relief to vulnerable households, they also contribute to reduced municipal revenue at a time when local governments are already facing significant financial pressures.

Conclusion

This governance brief explored the key issues raised during the South Galkacyo town hall dialogue between citizens and local government representatives. The discussion highlighted persistent challenges related to revenue generation, service delivery, transparency, citizen participation, and infrastructure, while also recognising the important role the local government continues to play in maintaining security and supporting local stability.

The dialogue underscored the importance of creating regular opportunities for constructive engagement between citizens and local authorities. Such interactions can help improve transparency, strengthen accountability, enhance public trust, and ensure that local development priorities reflect community needs and expectations.

Policy Considerations

1. **Prioritise Regular Citizen Engagement:** The local government should institutionalise regular forums and consultations with citizens to discuss development priorities, address public concerns, and strengthen collaboration between citizens and local authorities. Sustained engagement can help build trust and improve the responsiveness of local governance processes.
2. **Enhance Transparency and Public Access to Information:** The discussion revealed limited public awareness of government revenues, expenditures, budgets, and development priorities. The local government should therefore proactively disclose key financial and administrative information through accessible channels to strengthen accountability and enable informed citizen oversight.
3. **Strengthen Collaboration with the Business Community:** Relations between the local government and the business community remain limited in several areas. The administration should work to establish stronger partnerships with local businesses to mobilise resources, support community development initiatives, and promote shared responsibility for local development.
4. **Promote Environmental Awareness and Tree Planting:** Participants expressed concern about low levels of awareness regarding environmental conservation and the practice of cutting down trees along streets and public spaces. The local government should implement awareness campaigns that encourage tree planting and strengthen community responsibility for protecting and improving the local environment.



Somali Public Agenda

- 📍 Mogadishu Somalia
- ☎ +252(0)85 8358
- ✉ info@somalipublicagenda.org
- 🌐 <<https://www.somalipublicagenda.org>>

This publication is the third output from a series of four dialogues conducted across Dhusamareb and South Galkacyo in Galmudug, and Qardho and North Galkacyo in Puntland. The dialogues aim to strengthen citizen participation in local governance and are supported by funding from the National Endowment for Democracy.