



Strengthening Citizen Participation and Accountability in North Galkacyo Local Governance: Challenges, Opportunities, and Policy Priorities

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Summary

- » North Galkacyo local government revenue has fluctuated in recent years, generating approximately USD 84,000–90,000 per month from active revenue sources. The mayor expressed optimism that this could increase to USD 300,000 per month if currently inactive revenue sources are operationalised.
- » North Galkacyo local government operates on an annual budget of approximately USD 1 million, which appears insufficient to cover administrative costs, let alone provide essential public services.
- » Citizens raised concerns about the lack of and/or poor functioning streetlights and inadequate waste collection services, urging the local authority to address these longstanding issues as a matter of priority.
- » The mayor outlined several challenges that constrain the administration's ability to fulfil its responsibilities, including recurring clan conflicts, poor road infrastructure, and persistent rainwater stagnation on the district's streets.

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.

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Introduction

North Galkacyo was among the first district councils established by Puntland in 2005. Under Local Government Law No. 7, it was designated as an A-grade district with a 33-member council. In practice, Puntland's district councils—including North Galkacyo—were largely formed through indirect (clan-based) elections under this legal framework until 2023, when North Galkacyo, alongside 33 other districts, elected its local council through direct elections.

Despite having a directly elected local council, mayor, and deputy mayor, North Galkacyo continues to face many of the governance challenges identified in Somali Public Agenda's report [Decentralising Taxation and Public Services to Local Governments in Somalia: Findings from Puntland, Galmudug, and Benadir](#). These challenges—including limited legitimacy, inadequate transparency and accountability, and weak citizen participation in local decision-making—continue to constrain the local government's ability to effectively discharge its responsibilities.

Against this backdrop, Somali Public Agenda (SPA) convened an on-the-record public forum in North Galkacyo on 12 May 2026, bringing together the local government and citizens to discuss key governance issues affecting the district. The event was the fourth of a series of four planned dialogues across Galmudug and Puntland (Dhusamareb, South Galkacyo, North Galkacyo, and Qardho).

The dialogue series seeks to strengthen citizen participation in local governance, particularly in a context where opportunities for direct engagement between citizens and local authorities remain limited. It also aims to increase public awareness of the roles and responsibilities of local governments while promoting transparency, accountability, and constructive engagement between local authorities and the communities they serve.

The North Galkacyo dialogue, which is the focus of this governance brief, was attended by 50 participants (15 women and 35 men) representing women, youth, elders, community leaders, intellectuals, religious scholars, leaders of youth organisations. North Galkacyo Mayor Hussein Abdinur Mohamed also participated.

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 broad range of issues, including revenue mobilisation, service delivery, rainwater stagnation, streetlighting, transparency, accountability, and relations between the local government and citizens.

This governance brief summarises the key issues raised during the dialogue, presents the mayor's responses, and offers policy considerations to strengthen local governance, transparency, and citizen engagement in North Galkacyo.

Revenue Collection in North Galkacyo

As in the other three districts where Somali Public Agenda convened public dialogues, participants raised several questions regarding local revenue collection, including the district's revenue sources, monthly income, and broader revenue management.

The mayor explained that the local government currently relies on several active revenue streams, including customs, vehicle-related taxes, business licences, and building permits. However, he noted that important revenue sources—particularly property taxes and taxes on businesses—remain inactive.

According to the mayor, the local government currently generates between USD 84,000 and USD 90,000 per month from these active revenue sources. He observed that monthly revenue has remained largely stagnant over the past several years, fluctuating within this range. He attributed this situation to recurring clan conflicts in and around the district, as well as institutional capacity constraints within the local government.

The mayor further noted that several other local governments in Puntland have activated a broader range of revenue sources and consequently generate significantly higher revenues than North Galkacyo.

Despite these challenges, he expressed optimism that the district's monthly revenue could increase to approximately USD 300,000 if inactive revenue streams are fully operationalised. Participants similarly argued that revenue mobilisation could improve if citizens witnessed more tangible improvements in public services and greater accountability for the revenue currently being collected.

Property tax, one of the district's most significant potential revenue sources, remains inactive despite the existence of an estimated 40,000–50,000 properties, many of which have already been registered, assigned plate numbers, and geo-referenced through GPS to facilitate future revenue collection. The mayor attributed the delay in operationalising property taxation primarily to institutional weaknesses within the local government rather than resistance from residents, acknowledging that local communities have generally been cooperative regarding taxation. He also indicated that the administration intends to activate this revenue stream, although he did not specify a timeline.

Participants also asked whether the local government prepares an annual budget, who approves it, and whether citizens are involved in the budgeting process.

The mayor responded that the local government prepares an annual budget of approximately USD 1 million, which is approved by the district council. However, he acknowledged that citizens are not directly involved in the budget preparation or approval process, arguing instead that they are represented by the councillors they elected.

This challenge is not unique to North Galkacyo. Across Somalia, citizen participation in public budgeting remains limited at both local and higher levels of government. Where public consultations do occur, they are often largely symbolic and, in some cases, appear intended to satisfy donor requirements rather than meaningfully incorporate citizens' priorities into budgeting decisions.

Moreover, even after budgets are approved, they are rarely made publicly accessible. This limits citizens' ability to understand how public resources are allocated and weakens their capacity to hold public officials accountable. Improving budget transparency and creating meaningful opportunities for citizen participation are therefore essential for strengthening trust between citizens and local government, while enhancing accountability in public financial management.

Expenditure

The second issue discussed during the dialogue was public expenditure. Similar to the discussion on revenue, participants were interested in understanding how the local government's annual budget of approximately USD 1 million is allocated and spent.

In response, the mayor explained that a significant share of the local government's limited budget is spent on staff salaries and security-related activities. He noted that security alone accounts for

approximately 20–30% of the annual budget.

According to the mayor, the local government incurs substantial costs in responding to recurring clan conflicts in and around the district. These include logistical expenses for convening elders from the conflicting parties, providing accommodation during mediation efforts, and deploying police officers to support mediation initiatives.

He further explained that the North Galkacyo local government frequently intervenes in intermittent clan conflicts beyond the district, including in other parts of the North Mudug region, despite security formally falling under the responsibility of the Puntland state government.

The mayor argued that these interventions place a considerable financial burden on the local government while also diverting officials' attention from their core responsibilities. Resources that could otherwise be directed towards service delivery and local development are instead spent responding to insecurity and mediating local conflicts.

This finding is consistent with observations from the other districts where SPA convened similar dialogues. Local government officials repeatedly highlighted the financial and administrative burden of responding to insecurity and clan conflicts, noting that these responsibilities consume scarce resources and limit their capacity to deliver essential public services.

Despite providing a broad overview of expenditure priorities, the mayor did not offer a detailed breakdown of how the remaining budget is allocated across sectors. As with the district's budget, expenditure information is not publicly accessible, limiting citizens' ability to scrutinise public spending and hold the local government accountable.

Service Delivery and Decentralisation

Like many districts across Somalia, North Galkacyo local government provides only limited public services due to the continued centralisation of fiscal authority and service delivery functions at the Puntland state level. Key sectors, including education and health, remain under the control of the state government, with few indications that these responsibilities will be devolved to local governments in the near future. As a result, district administrations continue to operate with limited authority and resources, constraining their ability to fulfil their responsibilities.

In this context, the mayor stated that the local government's most significant contribution is in the area of security, despite this formally being the responsibility of the Puntland state government. As noted earlier, the administration frequently intervenes in clan-related security incidents both within the district and in other parts of North Mudug through mediation and conflict resolution efforts.

With respect to social services, the mayor explained that primary education and healthcare continue to be managed by the Puntland government and have yet to be decentralised to the district level. Nevertheless, he noted that the local government provides modest support to public schools by covering minor maintenance costs and contributing to waste collection services.

Participants also discussed waste management, highlighting that residents currently pay private companies directly for household and business waste collection—a service that would ordinarily fall within the core responsibilities of local government. At present, however, the district administration's role is largely limited to licensing waste collection companies rather than directly providing the service.

Streetlights and Waste Collection

Participants expressed particular concern over the poor state of streetlighting and waste collection services, describing both as persistent problems that have yet to receive adequate attention from the local government.

Regarding streetlights, participants noted that many streets either lack lighting altogether or rely on solar-powered streetlights that are no longer functioning. According to participants, many of the solar lighting systems have remained inoperative for an extended period due to the theft of batteries from the solar units.

They urged the local government to address the issue as a matter of priority, arguing that poor streetlighting undermines public safety and security—an area that the administration itself has identified as one of its principal priorities.

In response, the mayor acknowledged the problem and informed participants that a new World Bank-funded project—whose name he did not specify—would soon be implemented in North Galkacyo and other beneficiary districts. He indicated that the project would install improved solar-powered streetlights to enhance lighting across the district.

Waste collection was another issue that generated considerable discussion. Participants criticised waste collection companies for using open-top trucks, which allow waste—particularly plastic bags and other light materials—to fall onto roads while being transported, contributing to environmental pollution and undermining the cleanliness of the town.

Responding to these concerns, the mayor stated that the local government has licensed only one company to collect household and business waste for a monthly fee of USD 5. He acknowledged, however, that the local government has not yet fully discharged its responsibilities in regulating and overseeing waste management services.

While attributing much of the problem to the licensed company's poor performance, the mayor also acknowledged that stronger oversight and enforcement by the local government are necessary to ensure compliance with service standards. Effective regulation, rather than assigning blame alone, will be essential to improving waste management across the district.

The mayor also criticised some residents for disposing of waste in neighbourhood alleys rather than placing it in designated collection points outside their properties for collection by the licensed company.

Challenges Facing the Local Government

The mayor identified several challenges that constrain the local government's ability to fulfil its responsibilities, in addition to limited revenue generation and the absence of fiscal transfers from the Puntland state government. These include recurring clan conflicts, inadequate road infrastructure, persistent rainwater stagnation, and limited public compliance with local government authority.

1. Clan Conflicts

The mayor described recurring clan conflicts as one of the most significant challenges facing the district. He explained that the local government is frequently drawn into responding to these conflicts by facilitating mediation, convening elders, and supporting

reconciliation efforts. While these interventions often help reduce immediate tensions, they remain largely reactive and do not address the underlying causes of conflict.

According to the mayor, recurring clan conflicts affect the district in several ways. They disrupt revenue collection, consume a considerable share of the local government's limited budget, and discourage qualified professionals from working in the district due to security concerns. He also noted that responding to a single conflict can occupy local government officials for weeks, diverting attention from core administrative responsibilities and delaying service delivery.

2. Poor Road Infrastructure

Participants also expressed frustration with the poor condition of roads across the district, describing deteriorating infrastructure as a major obstacle to mobility and economic activity.

The mayor attributed the problem to two principal factors: the encroachment of residential and commercial buildings onto public roads and the limited rehabilitation and construction of road infrastructure. He argued that stronger enforcement of planning regulations, including the removal of structures built on road reserves, would help reopen blocked roads and improve traffic flow.

3. Rainwater Stagnation

Rainwater stagnation was another issue raised repeatedly during the dialogue. Participants noted that even relatively light rainfall often leaves roads flooded for prolonged periods, disrupting the movement of pedestrians and vehicles and creating significant inconvenience for residents.

In response, the mayor explained that the area's soil absorbs water poorly, contributing to the persistence of standing water after rainfall. While this may partly explain the problem, participants emphasised that inadequate drainage infrastructure remains a major contributing factor requiring government intervention.

The issue has become a persistent concern for residents, who have repeatedly appealed to the relevant authorities for action but continue to face the same challenges during rainy periods.

4. Limited Public Compliance with Local Government Authority

The mayor also expressed concern about limited compliance with local government authority among some residents. He argued that clan affiliations often undermine the enforcement of local regulations, as individuals may rely on clan networks to resist administrative decisions or avoid compliance with local government directives.

According to the mayor, these divisions weaken not only the authority of the local government but also broader governance and social cohesion within the district. He therefore called on residents to place greater emphasis on civic responsibility and cooperation with public institutions rather than relying on clan-based affiliations.

Local Government Priorities for 2026

Towards the end of the dialogue, participants asked the mayor to outline the local government's priorities for 2026. He acknowledged that he did not have the complete development plan with him but highlighted several key priorities currently guiding the administration.

These include:

- Improving cleanliness across the district;
- Categorising Bajaj (auto-rickshaw) into Groups A and B;
- Reopening roads that have been closed or obstructed;
- Initiating tree-planting initiative; and
- Addressing the district's streetlighting challenges.

Among these priorities, the mayor reported that the administration had made the most progress in regulating Bajaj operations. As part of broader efforts to improve security, the local government introduced a vehicle registration exercise and classified Bajajs operating on the Puntland-administered side of Galkacyo into two categories, marked with visible paint.

According to the mayor, the exercise identified approximately 900 vehicles that had been registered and taxed on the Galmudug-administered side of the city but regularly operated across both jurisdictions. He alleged that some of these vehicles had been involved in security incidents on both sides of Galkacyo.

The administration argued that the categorisation system has contributed to reducing security incidents while also increasing revenue generated from vehicle-related taxes.

However, the initiative has generated mixed reactions among residents. Bajaj drivers complained that the new system has reduced their daily income by limiting their ability to operate freely across both sides of the city.

Similarly, some residents criticised the measure for making travel more cumbersome, as passengers are often required to use two separate Bajajs when crossing between the Puntland and Galmudug sides of Galkacyo. Some participants also viewed the policy as reinforcing the city's historical division, despite improvements in movement and interaction between the two sides since 2017.

The mayor rejected this interpretation, maintaining that the categorisation is purely an administrative and security measure rather than a political one. He further stated that the Puntland administration has coordinated the initiative with its counterpart in Galmudug, which he said supports the arrangement.

Conclusion

The dialogue provided an important platform for citizens and the local government to engage constructively on key governance issues affecting North Galkacyo. Discussions focused on local revenue mobilisation, public expenditure, service delivery, budgeting, citizen participation, and the broader relationship between the local government and the communities it serves.

Participants also highlighted persistent concerns regarding rainwater stagnation, inadequate streetlighting, and poor waste management, calling on the local government to prioritise these issues as part of its service delivery agenda. The mayor, in turn, outlined the financial, institutional, and security challenges that continue to constrain the administration's ability to respond effectively to citizens' expectations.

Policy Considerations

1. **Improve Transparency in Public Financial Management:** The North Galkacyo local government should proactively publish key financial information—including annual budgets, revenue performance, expenditure reports, procurement information, and year-end financial statements. Making these documents publicly accessible would strengthen transparency, enable citizens to monitor how public resources are managed, and improve accountability. Greater financial openness could also increase citizens' willingness to pay taxes by demonstrating how locally generated revenue is being utilised.
2. **Institutionalise Regular Citizen Engagement:** The local government should establish regular and structured forums for dialogue with citizens beyond project-based or donor-supported initiatives. These engagements would provide opportunities for residents to raise concerns, contribute to local planning and budgeting processes, and receive updates on government priorities and performance. Institutionalising such platforms would strengthen trust, improve communication, and promote more participatory local governance.
3. **Strengthen Transparency and Accountability in Public Procurement:** The local government should ensure that procurement processes are transparent, competitive, and accessible to all qualified vendors. Publicly advertising tenders and applying clear and fair selection criteria would improve value for money while enhancing public confidence in procurement decisions. Stronger contract management and oversight mechanisms would also enable the administration to hold contractors accountable for delivering agreed services and standards.
4. **Revitalise Neighbourhood Committees:** The local government should reactivate and strengthen neighbourhood committees, which participants indicated have become largely inactive. These committees can serve as important channels for communication between residents and the local government, while supporting community mobilisation on issues such as sanitation, environmental cleanliness, public awareness, and neighbourhood security. Empowering these local structures would improve community ownership of local development initiatives and strengthen cooperation between citizens and the district administration.



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