SOMALI
PUBLIC AGENDA

ANNUAL REPORT
2019

somalipubagenda

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Letter from our Executive Director

2019 has been an exciting and productive year for Somali Public Agenda. It has been 'the year of production' for SPA team. It was truly a productive year. We published six quality governance briefs on youth unemployment, public schools in Mogadishu, power sharing in a federal Somalia, the electoral bill, re-institution of political parties, and land prices in Mogadishu and its impact to the urban poor and IDPs. We also published six commentaries on various governance and public service issues including the re-introduction of the Somali shilling in Beledweyne, the 2019 federal government budget, the 'NGO-ization' of the public sector, the problems of fused cabinet-parliament membership, dual citizenship, and harmonization of the legislative framework of elections in Somalia. Furthermore, we commenced a Podcast in the Somali language. We produced two podcasts discussing our election briefs. The Podcasts enabled us reach wider Somali audience who may not get the chance to read our work.

As we approach elections in 2020/21, at Somali Public Agenda, we have begun an Election Series of commentaries and briefs. We have already produced two briefs and one commentary on elections in 2019. Each commentary or brief analyzed election-related themes. We will continue to produce evidence-based analysis on elections in 2020.

Our audience increased exponentially in 2019. Our work has been found through online search 3,469 times in 2019. Over 720 people subscribed to our mailing list. Our twitter handle (@somalipubagenda) was followed by 2,044 Twitter users. Our Facebook page has garnered 14,555 likes.

Our three-year strategic plan (2020-2022) has been prepared. The strategic plan guides SPA work through three interlinked steps. First, SPA will undertake policy-oriented and evidence-based research. Second, based on the findings and policy recommendations of the studies, SPA will help design public policies, programmes and projects with the relevant authorities. Third, Somali Public Agenda will offer short training courses to contribute to the building of administrative cadres who can deliver public policies and programmes to the community.

We are grateful to the unwavering support of our distinguished fellows and Board members. Many thanks are also owed to our supporters and readers whose confidence and encouragement inspire us to do more work for the common good. As we enter our third year, we are looking forward to producing quality research output and help public institutions design human-centered public services.

Mahad Wasuge

Executive Director of Somali Public Agenda
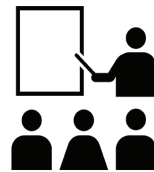
Highlights of 2019

We published six governance briefs, six commentaries in both English and Somali languages.

We interviewed 73 informants across Somalia to understand their views on youth employment, public schools, federalism, political parties and land prices in Mogadishu.

We produced two Podcasts on democratization and elections in Somalia.

We trained 29 young researchers in Mogadishu.

Since January 2019, the Somali Public Agenda website has been visited 29,705 times. We received visitors from 115 countries. The top three countries of our visitors were Somalia, Unites States of America and the United Kingdom.

We had more than 720 subscribers on our mailing list
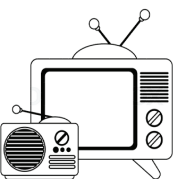
Our Facebook page has garnered 14,555 likes

Our Instagram page was followed by 350 users

Our YouTube channel has been subscribed to by 161 persons

Our work has been found through online search **3,469** times.
In **2018**, our work has been found **586** times through online search.

Our Twitter has 2,044 followers

Our researchers talked to international and local news radios and TVs seven times this year.

We presented our publications at five conferences

About SPA

Somali Public Agenda is a non-profit 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.

At Somali Public Agenda, we believe that all Somalis deserve better public services including access to affordable education, healthcare, housing, security and justice delivered via transparent and accountable authorities.

Our methods

In order to advance the understanding and improvement of public services and governance in Somalia, we apply policy-oriented and evidence-based research. We intend to design public programs and projects at both the service delivery and policy-making levels. We also expect to conduct practical and sustainable training on governance and service delivery.

Research: Somali Public Agenda contributes to the understanding and improvement of public administration in Somalia through research and analysis on various issues that affect public policies and provision of public services.

Somali Public Agenda focuses on seven thematic areas:

1. Decentralization, public bureaucracy, and local administration;

2. Democratization and elections;

3. Financial governance;

4. Security, justice, and rule of law;

5. Urban planning and land administration;

6. Employment;

7. Education system and health services

Public Service Design: Based on the findings and policy recommendations of our studies, we intend to shape public policies, programs and projects with the relevant authorities. In collaboration with policymakers, public administrators and the community, we will design knowledge based public services. Before government invest resources in the policies, programs and projects designed, we envisage to experiment the public service at a small-scale level to test the efficacy of the services designed.

Training: Based on the findings of our research, Somali Public Agenda will offer short training courses to contribute to the building of administrative cadres who can deliver public policies and programs to the community. SPA training will connect the administrative personnel with the community and provide the administration with the technical skills necessary for addressing of public service challenges.

Programs 2019

Research and Analysis

To improve understanding of governance and social services in Somalia, research and analysis is one of Somali Public Agenda's core programmes. SPA produce research reports, governance briefs and commentaries aimed at contributing to the understanding and improvement of public administration in Somalia.

Governance Briefs

SPA Governance Briefs are published regularly and are aimed to provide lucid and evidence based analysis on key governance issues in Somalia. in 2019, Somali Public Agenda published six Governance Briefs in both English and Somali languages. The briefs covered a wide range of governance and public service issues in Somalia. The briefs were disseminated through mailing list, printed hard copies distributed to conferences, and are downloadable freely from our website. Podcasts in Somali language were also produced to reach to the Somali people who may have not have the time (or are unable to) read the briefs.

Somali youth employment crisis

Our first governance brief discussed the causes of youth unemployment in Somalia. The country has a very youthful population. Fragile and weak public institutions, insecurity, poor infra-

structure and lack of decent employment opportunities have left many youths unemployed, underemployed or working in vulnerable conditions. Employment opportunities are limited, and selection is often not genuinely competitive or merit-based. This governance brief was based on discussions with youth in Mogadishu. It examined the causes of and consequences of the youth employment crisis and concluded with a number of policy options and recommendations.

Examining public schools in Mogadishu

In October 2018, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education of the Federal Government of Somalia took over the management of 24 public schools in Mogadishu. The government recruited and directly pays teachers, and no tuition fee is collected from students at any grade (1-12). The 24 schools are the first federal government-run schools in Somalia since the state collapse in 1991. This governance brief was based on school visits and interviews with different stakeholders in Mogadishu. It examined students, teachers, payment processes, curriculum, and the challenges schools face and concluded with policy options and recommendations.

Division of powers and responsibilities in a federal Somalia

Somalia adopted a federal system of governance in 2004, although the formation of regional states only began in 2013. Four states have been formed under the auspices of the provisional constitution, in which the separation of executive powers and responsibilities between the different tiers of government remains unclear. Amidst this state of constitutional ambiguity, power struggles between the federal government and regional states have been – and remain – persistent. The constitutional review commissions reviewed the power-sharing options and presented scenarios to the parliament in 2016, but they have yet to be adopted and offer only a limited solution. In response to this protracted absence of a clarified governance structure, this brief presented new options to distribute powers and responsibilities to the different levels of government.

Review of Somalia's draft national election bill

The National Electoral Bill will be the foundation for one-person-one-vote (OPOV) national elections scheduled to take place in Somalia. The bill discusses issues of electoral design, management processes, voter registration, candidate eligibility, regulations for election campaigning, voting processes and vote counting, among others. This governance brief critically reviewed technical issues of election design contained in the bill, including voter registration, seat allocation, announcement of election results, dispute resolution mechanisms, independence of NIEC, and election observation. It also made broader comment on the framework for democratic governance in Somalia (election of the President, election of the Upper House, and election delays) and put forward options for policy consideration.

Getting the party started: re-instituting political parties in Somalia

The pivotal political parties' law is under a pending amendment for the re-institution of long-lost multi-party politics in Somalia. The law, which consists of 38 articles and four schedules revolving around all issues relating to the regulation of modern political parties, was approved and ratified by the 9th Somali parliament and president respectively in 2016. This governance brief critically reviewed the relaxed provisional party registration process, highlighted the daunting challenges ahead for full party and voter registration hurdles. The brief also proposed alternative multi-party elections.

Land prices in Mogadishu and its impact on the urban poor and IDPs

Mogadishu is the capital city of Somalia and has the second highest urban population density of any city in the world with over 2 million residents. Land, housing and property prices in Mogadishu are the highest in Somalia. SPA found that the geographic location, security, investment, road infrastructure and availability of basic facilities and services determine the price of land in the city. Commercial banks, landlords, brokers, and IDPs also contribute and have different roles in the increase of land and property value. The government role is limited, and the upsurge of land prices drives (and is driven by) gentrification. Poorer communities can no longer afford to live in areas that have been gentrified and evictions of IDPs has intensified. This governance brief discussed the causes and contributors to the rise of land prices in Mogadishu and its impact on the vulnerable communities.

Commentaries

Since January 2018, SPA published regular commentaries on issues of public priorities. The aim of SPA commentaries is to provide a concise and lucid analysis of key public policy and administration issues in Somalia. In 2019, SPA published 6 commentaries on various issues.

Our first commentary discussed the currency crisis in Beledweyne. Mobile money and hard currency US dollars were the only acceptable modes of payment in the market in January 2019. Although the understanding and literacy of the majority of the residents in using mobile money is low, the community in Beledweyne had no other option but to use mobile technology and US dollars for daily transactions. The EVC Plus Service of Hormuud Telecommunications Company and E-Dahab of Somtel Telecommunications Company provided the only acceptable electronic money in the city. The commentary discussed how the Somali Shilling can be re-introduced in Beledweyne.

Our second commentary analyzed the 'NGO-ization' of the Somali public sector. NGO-ization is a global phenomenon attributable to the West's flawed 'Just-pump-more-aid' assistance model to 'less developed' countries, and their increasing focus on (ill-defined) 'civil society' as a target of funding. Somalia is a classic example of this, particularly because state institutions have either been non-existent or extremely weak. NGO-turned-public servants have brought a semblance of normalcy, capacity, and work ethics for rather weak and dysfunctional governments. However, they have also brought with them the NGO-Management mentality: of running public offices on project-based, short-term thinking, being mostly accountable to donors, not to the people they work for. The commentary discussed how to break the detrimental culture of NGO-ization in the Somalia public sector.

Our third commentary reviewed the 2019 federal government budget. On the last day of December 2018, the Somali Federal Parliament's House of the People approved the 2019 federal government budget prepared by the Ministry of Finance. The total budget appropriated for the 2019 fiscal year was $344 million, a $70 million increase on $274 million fiscal budget in 2018. It was significant compared to past increases: the 2018 budget was only $14 million higher than 2017's $260 million budget. The commentary analyzed the budget allocation for judiciary institutions, public services and economic development.

Our fourth commentary analyzed the problems of fused parliament-cabinet membership in Somalia. Parliaments are purported to give oversight to the implementation of executives' policies and programs, to represent the interests of common people, and prevent or mitigate excesses of the executive. But Somalia's parliament is mixed with and swallowed up by the

executive through the incorporation of MPs into the cabinet, which allows the executive to exercise free reign in its behavior. The commentary proposed the cabinet membership to be restricted to the competent and qualified individuals outside of the parliament until competitive multi-party elections can be held.

Our fifth commentary discussed dual citizenship and high-ranking political office in Somalia. The commentary contended that dual nationals in top political, diplomatic and security offices risk triggering crises, as leaders are forced to divide loyalty between two countries.

Our sixth commentary of 2019 analyzed the legislative framework for elections in Somalia that need harmonization. The commentary reviewed and discussed the conflicting provisions in the National Electoral Bill and the Political Parties Law. These included details of timelines, election campaign periods, election dispute resolution, and political parties registration, which all need harmonization.

Trainings

In 2019, Somali Public Agenda partnered with Smart Institute for Training and Consultancy (SITCO) to train 29 young Somali researchers in qualitative research methods. University graduates and professionals were given a week-long training on practical qualitative research in January and April 2019 respectively. A certificate was awarded to those who successfully completed the course. Eight of the 29 trainees participated and conducted interviews for Somali Public Agenda study on land prices in Mogadishu. Somali Public Agenda recruited one of the trainees as a full-time Research Assistant.

Impact and Feedback

Somali Public Agenda has increased its output in 2019. We published six governance briefs, six commentaries in both English and Somali languages in 2019. Our briefs and commentaries reached a bigger and wider audience. In 2019, SPA website has received over 29,705 visits. We received visitors from 115 countries. The top three countries of our visitors were Somalia, United States of America and the United Kingdom. Our work has been found through online search 3,469 times. In 2018, our work has been found 586 times through online search.

Our Governance Briefs and commentaries had an impact in Somalia and beyond. Our Governance brief on the National Electoral Bill was shared with the NIEC, and the ad hoc 15-member parliamentary committee reviewing the electoral bill, as well as with international partners such as UNSOM, and disseminated through SIPAM and SONSA's monthly Mogadishu Forum in efforts to ensure findings of the research were taken up. Abdirisak Omar, member of the parliamentary ad hoc committee that reviewed the NEB said in late July: "I have read your critical analysis of the electoral bill. Your analysis very objectively addressed some of the ambiguities of the bill, and I agree with the conclusions drawn from the analysis. When we start deliberations on the bill, we will contact you to get your insights and input to improve the bill with the intention of holding fair and free election that contributes to democracy and good governance." Most of the recommendations of the brief have been reflected at the parliamentary review of the electoral bill.

The SPA brief on power-sharing presented new options to distribute powers and responsibilities to the different levels of federal governance structure. The brief was shared with the Parliamentary Oversight Committee, the Independent Constitutional Review and Implementation Commission, and the Ministry of Constitutional Affairs. The SPA team met with and presented the brief to the Minister of Constitutional Affairs, and MoCA advisors and senior staff working on the constitutional review process. The paper was also presented at a consultation forum with youth on the reviewed chapters of the provisional federal constitution organized by the Independent Constitutional Review and Implementation Commission.

Our study on public schools in Mogadishu examined students, teachers, payment processes, curriculum, and the challenges schools face. The Brief was shared with the Minister of Education and the directors of the Ministry of Education, public school supervisors and teachers to maximize its impact. The brief was also shared with the World Bank, which sponsors the payment of hundreds of public school teachers.

Our study on the land prices in Mogadishu and its impact to the urban poor and IDPs was presented at Mogadishu Housing Conference held in Mogadishu.

Most of the feedback of our publications were positive. We received favorable and encouraging feedback from different segments of the society. Somali Public Agenda published papers on contentious issues including federalism, elections and land governance. The feedback we received was positive and highlighted the objectivity of our analysis. SPA is not affiliated with any political and religious association, and its employees are determined to produce high quality, evidence-based and balanced analysis on key governance and service delivery issues in Somalia.

Financial Overview

SPA was established without external financial support. SPA founded a profit-making subsidiary company called Tayo Translations. The translation company provide high quality translation services to clients. The profit generated from the translation services are directed towards and finance the SPA work. The funds cover some of our fixed costs and commission some of our governance briefs. In 2019, Tayo Translations helped Somali Public Agenda focus on its mission and produce self-funded quality publications. Our translation company is and will be one of our core sources of funding that will enable us sustain our work.

However, the profits from our translation work has not so far been enough and funding remains a key challenge. In 2020, we hope to secure core funding and project-based funding. We will seek direct project funds from donors who finance specific research and design projects in Somalia.

Further, through the network and support of our experienced and academic fellows and board members, SPA will apply for multi-year studies across Somalia. This will enable us cover our direct costs, achieve financial stability, sustain our work, and keep us focusing on our mission and outputs.

Future Outlook

Established in January 2018, Somali Public Agenda produced 6 governance briefs and 16 commentaries on issues of governance and public services in two years.

Thematic Research Programmes

In 2020 and beyond, Somali Public Agenda will focus on six key thematic areas:

Decentralization, public bureaucracy and local administration

Decentralization of public bureaucrats and local administrations has been instrumental in state and institution building in Somalia. The introduction of a federal system of governance reflects in part the need to decentralize governance and public services in Somalia. Understanding and improving governance and public services is the mission of Somali Public Agenda.

Democratization and elections

Democratic elections are among the most important of state building goals in Somalia. Peaceful political transition is at the center of efforts to strengthen and rebuild public institutions in the country. Although there have been no one-person-one-vote elections in Somalia (except Somaliland) since 1969, governments have handed over power peacefully in selection or indirect election processes in recent years. National elections are expected in 2020 and 2021. Understanding and studying challenges to holding national and local elections is among the priorities of Somali Public Agenda.

Financial governance

Somalia is considered as the most corrupt country in the world according to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. Mismanagement of public funds has crippled the proper functioning of public institutions in Somalia. Somali Public Agenda published a review and analysis of 2018 and 2019 federal government budgets. SPA also published commentaries on taxation and Somali shilling. SPA will continue to work on the improvement of accountability and transparency in Somalia through research and rigorous analysis of publicly available documents such as the annual budget. We will also embark on a study on fiscal federalism in Somalia in 2020.

Security, justice and rule of law

One of the fundamental causes of state collapse in Somalia is injustice. Access to fair judiciary is seen as main priority for the mainstream public. Social grievances and mistrust cannot be resolved without competent justice institutions. Access to justice is a main theme for SPA.

Urban planning and land administration

Addressing the issue of IDPs, returnees, refugees is a priority for millions of Somalis. Mogadishu hosts a huge number of internally displaced persons and still struggles to find ways to either integrate or relocate them. Furthermore, the booming of real estate businesses and investment in main cities such as Mogadishu resulted from a gentrification of a significant number of IDPs and urban poor to the peripheries. Public offices that are responsible for land management and town planning were significantly weakened by the decades of chaos and fragility in the country. Urban planning and land administration is a priority theme for Somali Public Agenda.

Education system and health services

Access to quality and affordable education and healthcare are among the most basic public services. Education and health provision has been almost entirely privatized over the past three decades in Somalia. Improving the quality and access to education and health facilities is and has been a main priority for Somalis. We will start a study on the state of higher education in Somalia in 2020.

Outreach and Impact Programmes

Somali Public Agenda does not only conduct studies and analysis. It also helps relevant government institutions design human-centered public services that respond to local needs and demands. SPA organizes workshops, dialogues and public design events through its Public Agenda Forum. Moreover, SPA provides professional training to public servants that equip them to deliver public services efficiently and professionally.

Public Service Design

Based on the findings and policy recommendations of our studies, Somali Public Agenda intends to help shape public policies, programmes and projects with the relevant authorities. In collaboration with policymakers, public administrators and the community, SPA will co-design knowledge based public services. SPA public service design work condition is to partner with a government entity and co-design public policy or service.

Before government invest resources in the policies, programmes and projects designed, SPA envisages to experiment the public service at a small-scale level to test the efficacy of the services designed.

While co-designing public services is new to Somalia (and Africa in general), SPA, through its advocacy and research publications, would aim to partner with government institutions in co-designing public policies and services in 2020.

Public Agenda Forum

Public Agenda Forum is a platform and space for discussions on governance and public service issues in Somalia. The Forum serves as an avenue for critical examinations of issues of public priorities. Different segments of society including researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners are invited to meet and discuss issues on equal terms.

The Public Agenda Forum convenes dialogue with policy-makers and public figures, and organizes workshops, policy design sessions, trainings, seminars and book/report launches. The Forum is designed as both a space for formulating citizen-centered public policies, programmes and projects, as well as avenue to conduct practical and sustainable training on governance and service delivery.

The Public Agenda Forum exists to initiate discussions and debates on governance and public service issues. Often the findings of the Forum discussions help inform Somali Public Agenda's Governance Briefs.

SPA plans to organize at least six forums next year. Some of the forums would be a platform to launch some of SPA reports and governance briefs.

Training

Based on the findings of our research, Somali Public Agenda will offer short training courses to contribute to the building of administrative cadres that can deliver public policies and programmes to the community.

SPA training will connect the administrative personnel with the community and feeds the administration with the technical skills necessary for the solution of public service challenges.

Staff

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Board of Advisors

Zainab Mohamed Hassan, Founder & Chairwoman of Somali Gender Equity Movement (SGEM)

Ahmed Yusuf, Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor for Somalia's National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC)