SOMALI PUBLIC AGENDA

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Table of Contents

Letter From The Executive Director

2020 has been a challenging but productive year for Somali Public Agenda. Despite the disruptions of the Covid-19 pandemic and other problems for Somalia this year, SPA was able to navigate through and managed to publish 16 papers in total, including reports, briefs, and commentaries. Our production was four publications higher than our 12 pieces in 2019. Of the 16 publications, 10 were commentaries, 4 were governance briefs, and 2 were research reports.

Elections and the Covid-19 pandemic were the focus of most of our publications. Although we did not include Covid-19 related analysis and studies in our initial yearly research plan, we re-adjusted our work with the outbreak of the devastating pandemic. We managed to produce three commentaries, one governance brief, and one research report on the Covid-19 pandemic. We analyzed Covid-19-related social stigma, its impact on the informal economy, its effect on higher education institutions, and how it was responded to by the different levels of government. These studies and analyses were all self-financed. Huge credit goes to the SPA team for their leading role in these publications especially at a time when they were working from home and doing most of the interviews over the phone.

Another theme SPA focused on in its publications in 2020 was the elections. Half of our publications (8 out of 16) were directly related to these. The election topics analyzed included: the First Past The Post electoral model, the approved National Electoral Law, the election regulations, a middle ground option, Dhusamareb's 'Electoral Constituency Caucuses', the Hirshabelle election conundrum, lessons from the 2016 indirect elections, and protecting stability and inclusivity in Somalia's indirect election process.

In August 2020, the foundations for operationalizing SPA's design and training portfolios were laid when SPA launched the Center for Public Policy and Service Design and Center for Learning and Development. Launching these centers that will exclusively work on two important SPA portfolios (co-designing and training) was a great milestone. On its own, publishing evidence-based analysis with a range of policy considerations is not enough in Somalia. The Center for Public Policy and Service Design aims to help public institutions design human-centered public policies and services. International consultants who have little or no experience in Somalia – and paid by international organizations – are hired to lead the design of government policies. I hope the SPA Center for Public Policy and Service Design will fill this void and will help government institutions design policies and services that reflect the experiences and needs of the public.

The Center for Learning and Development, on the other hand, complements the policy design work. Good policies and projects are doomed to fail if there are no administrative cadres that can deliver them effectively. The center's main mandate will be training public servants and equipping them with the skills necessary to implement public policies. Moreover, the center aims to train Somali researchers. In December, 13 female researchers were selected for training after online advertisement, and took part in a 6-days qualitative research course. SPA will increase its research training efforts in 2021.

In mid-2020, SPA has started 3-months Internship Programme. Two interns completed the internship and the third intern is currently working with SPA. The internship provides much-needed experience for fresh university graduates. The two who completed the internship programme wrote reflections (published in SPA website) about their internship experiences.

SPA's podcasts have also increased in 2020. During the year, 11 podcasts were produced. SPA also developed three podcast programmes: namely, the SPA Governance Podcast, SPA Public Service Podcast, and SPA Forums Podcast. There have been over 1,500 downloads of the podcasts. Moreover, SPA established a library. Over 55 quality and contemporary Somali studies books are now available here. Some of these were brought from the UK and Kenya. The goal is to collect as many Somali studies books as possible, and we hope that by the end of 2021, the library will be full of quality publications and will be a valuable resource of literature for the SPA team and a reading space for SPA friends.

Our Public Agenda Forum organized three events in 2020. Two of these forums were platforms for launching SPA publications. The other forum – youth participation in politics – was attended by about 70 young people. The Public Agenda Forum also started the **Gaxwo & Gorfeyn** monthly meet-up. Three successful Gaxwo & Gorfeyn events were held in 2020. We expect that the Public Agenda Forum will be a space for intellectual debate and critical examination of issues of public priorities in 2020.

We have developed a collaborative relationship with several institutions in 2020. We are currently working with the Rift Valley Institute's Somali Dialogue Platform on research and engagement related to contentious political issues in Somalia. We also established a working relationship with Interpeace, International Media Support (IMS), Radio Ergo, and some other international organizations. We became a member of the UKRI-funded research network on Datafication and Digital Rights in East Africa that brings together academic, civil society, and tech-sector partners in the region.

Our relationship with the media has become stronger. We were regularly interviewed by many international and local media outlets. We spoke to Al Jazeera, CGTN, VOA Somali, BBC Somali Service, and several local TV and radio stations including Goobjoog and Radio Himilo.

Moreover, we were invited to speak at forums and gave a briefing to policymakers. Our members were panelists at the Chatham House forum on Somalia elections, Rift Valley Forum, gave election briefing to the African Union leaders three times, and attended parliamentary hearings on the budget, Covid-19 impact on Somalia economy, and the audit bill. Our researchers also presented our publications on several online platforms to local and international audiences.

Our audience increased exponentially in 2020. Our work has been found through online search engines at 10,300 times; in 2019, our work was found online 3,469 times. Our mailing list subscribers are close to 1,000. Our Twitter handle (@somalipubagenda) has almost doubled it's number of followers since 2019 and now has close to 4000 followers. Our Facebook page likes increased from 14,555 in 2019 to close to 18,000 likes in 2020. Our website views increased from 29,705 in 2019 to over 45,000 in 2020.

Our work in 2021 will focus on peace, democratization, elections, and understanding contentious issues in Somalia. Studies on reconciliations in the Federal Member States, elections at local levels, and fiscal federalism among others will be the focus of our 2021 work.

It has been an honor for me to lead our talented, youthful, and competent SPA team. Despite the limited financial resources, the pandemic, security, and other challenges of 2020, SPA has been able to consistently produce quality papers and organize important discussions.

Finally, we are grateful for the unwavering support of our distinguished fellows and Board members. Special gratitude goes to Peter Chonka who spent many hours reading and editing our work. 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 fourth year, we are looking forward to producing quality research outputs, creating space for discussion on national issues, offer training, and help public institutions design human-centered public services.

Mahad Wasuge is the Executive Director of Somali Public Agenda.

Key 2020 Highlights

SPA managed to publish 16 papers in total, including reports, briefs, and commentaries in 2020, – four publications higher than our 12 pieces in 2019.

SPA produced three commentaries, one governance brief, and one research report on the Covid-19 pandemic.

Half of our publications (8 out of 16) were directly related to elections

In December, 13 female researchers were selected for training after online advertisement, and took part in a 6-days qualitative research course.

In August 2020, the foundations for operationalizing SPA's design and training portfolios were laid when SPA launched the Center for Public Policy and Service Design and Center for Learning and Development.

- In mid-2020, SPA has started 3-months Internship Programme. Two interns completed the internship and the third intern is working with SPA.

During the year, 11 podcasts were produced. SPA also developed three podcast programmes: namely, the SPA Governance Podcast, SPA Public Service Podcast, and SPA Forums Podcast. There have been over 1,500 downloads of the podcasts

Our Public Agenda Forum organized three events in 2020

The Public Agenda Forum started the *Gaxwo & Gorfeyn* monthly meet -up . Three successful Gaxwo & Gorfeyn events were held in 2020

SPA established a library. Over 55 quality and contemporary Somali studies books are now available at SPA library

We have developed a collaborative relationship with the Rift Valley Institute's Somali Dialogue Platform, Interpeace , International Media Support (IMS), Radio Ergo , and some other international organizations

We spoke to Al Jazeera, CGTN, VOA Somali, BBC Somali Service, and several local TV and radio stations including Goobjoog and Radio Himilo

Our work has been found through online search engines at 10,300 times; in 2019, our work was found online 3,469 times.

- Our mailing list subscribers are close to 1,000.

- Our Twitter handle (@somalipubagenda) has almost doubled it's number of followers since 2019 and has over 4000 followers.

- Our website views increased from 29,705 in 2019 to over 45,000 in 2020

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 programmes 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. SPA regularly publishes research reports, governance briefs and commentaries (always in both the Somali and English languages) on decentralization, public bureaucracy, and local administration; democratization and elections; financial governance; security, justice, and rule of law; urban planning and land administration; employment; and, education system and health services. These publications often inform citizens, policymakers, practitioners and the international actors on governance and public service issues in Somalia.

Dialogue: Public Agenda Forum is a platform and space for discussions on governance and public service issues in Somalia. The Forum (including Gaxwo & Gorfeyn monthly meetups) 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, seminars and book/report launches. Often the findings of the Forum discussions help inform Somali Public Agenda's governance briefs.

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

Training: Based on the findings of our research and our co-designing work, Somali Public Agenda through its Center for Learning and Development offers short training courses to contribute to the building of administrative cadres that can deliver public policies and programmes to the community. The Center for Learning and Development aim is to connect the civil servants, policy makers and non-profit sector workers with communities and provide administrations with the technical skills necessary to formulate and implement solutions for public service challenges. Moreover, the center offers training to Somali professionals who have desire and passion to join the public sector as well as professionals engaged in the civil service and non-profit sectors.

Research Output and Publications

2020 was a productive year for Somali Public Agenda. Despite the tough times that the pandemic ushered in, SPA has produced 16 publications in total.

Research Reports
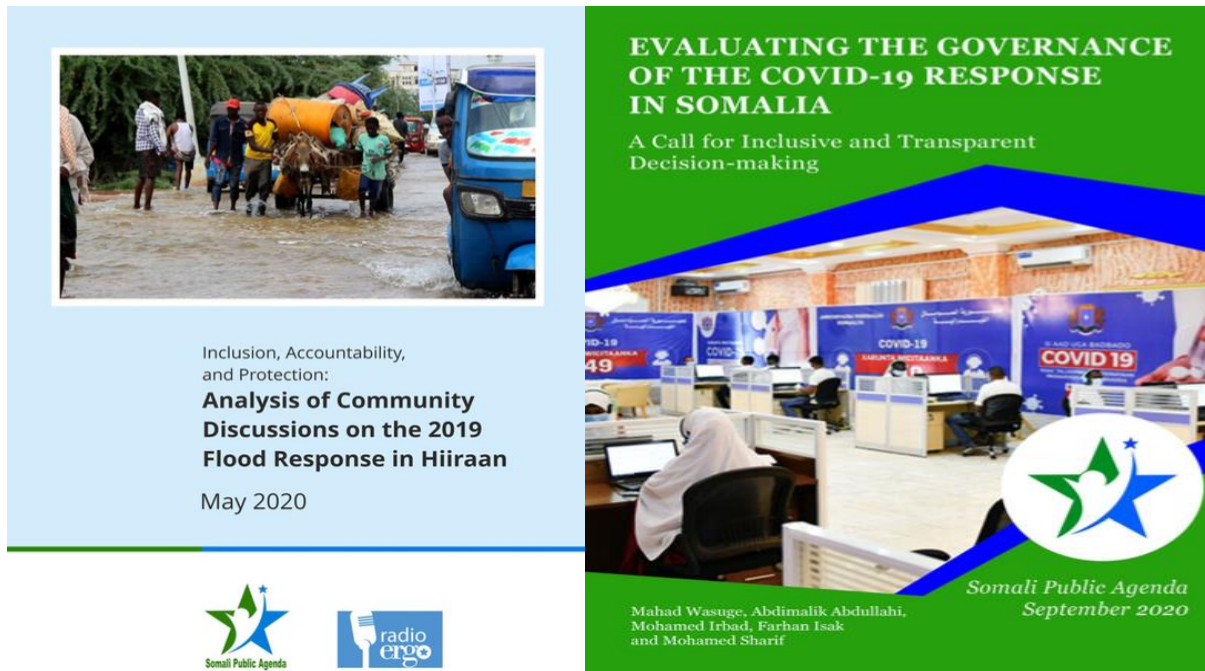
SPA published two research reports in 2020. Research reports require more time and resources than usual. The first report was done with support from Radio Ergo, and it was focused on analyzing the 2019 Flood Response in Hiiraan. The study findings revealed that there were a number of things that went wrong in the 2019 flood response. First, there was no reliable data on the number of people displaced by the flooding, or the locations from and to where they were displaced. Second, some local committees and individuals responsible for the distribution of the majority of the emergency relief used clan criteria for the selection of beneficiaries, which excluded important segments of the society such as IDPs, people with disabilities, and women. Third, there was disorganization among the multiple actors who were distributing aid. Fourth, there was a lack of awareness among both local people and volunteer responders of the physical risks presented by the flooded terrain. As a result, some people died in the water. Finally, there were no institutions or mechanisms formed before the flooding to handle the response. This led to disorganized multiple actors distributing aid based on the criteria they set themselves or directed by the groups that sent the assistance.

The second research report, which was 100% funded by Somali Public Agenda, was aimed at [evaluating the Governance of the Covid-19 Response in Somalia.](#) The Covid-19 pandemic spread across Somalia and again exposed the fragility of public institutions. The study found that there were limited laboratories that can be used to test the Covid-19 samples. The number of samples tested was minimal in number, and the positive, recovered, and death numbers reported likely did not reflect the actual number of people who contracted the virus and the actual deaths from the coronavirus. The national Covid-19 response was understandably minimal, and was/is only limited to Mogadishu, the seats of regional states, and few other major towns. Although some governance measures were employed by the federal government and federal member states, these measures were poorly enforced due to the weak enforcement capacity of public institutions. There have been some financial and in-kind support to Covid-19 response, but transparency and accountability mechanisms relating to how these resources have been used are not clear. The Covid-19 pandemic became one among many pressing priorities for the recovering public sector institutions in Somalia, and one key lesson from the pandemic relates to the need for investment in both governing institutions and the delivery of public services.

Governance Briefs

Key part of Somali Public Agenda's publication output are the Governance Briefs that shed light on contemporary issues. SPA has published 4 governance briefs in 2020. Three of these governance briefs analysed issues related to elections in Somalia and one related to the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on higher education.

Governance Briefs Published in 2020

1. The Road Ahead to Somalia's 2021 Elections: Prospects & Challenges
2. Examining the impact of COVID-19 on higher education in Mogadishu
3. What Lessons can be Learned from Somalia's 2016 Indirect Elections?
4. Protecting stability and inclusivity in Somalia's indirect election process

Summary

This is a crucial election year for Somalia as the national parliamentary and presidential elections are scheduled to happen in late 2020 and early 2021. The national electoral law – approved by the two chambers of parliament and signed into law by the president – is currently the basis for the design and implementation of national elections. This governance brief critically analyzes the limitations of the electoral design such as the lack of definition around constituencies, the ambiguity of election to the Upper House, and the clause enabling indeterminate extension. The brief also discusses the operationalization challenges of the elections, such as designating each seat to a geographic location; the election of Somaliland representatives; the women's quota; the rift between the center and the periphery; and insecurity. It puts forward a number of policy considerations to help address these issues.

About Somali Public Agenda

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.

www.somalipublicagenda.org

© 2020 Somali Public Agenda

Introduction

2020 and 2021 are election years for Somalia. The mandate of the members of the two chambers of parliament (the House of the People and the Upper House) expires in late December 2020; they were inaugurated on 27 December 2016. The term of the President also ends in early February 2021.

Despite Somalia's fragile and post-conflict setting, one distinctive feature of the country's recent political landscape has been peaceful political transition. Since 2012, this has involved selections and indirect elections. In 2012, 135 clan elders handpicked 275 members of parliament. In 2016, an indirect election was agreed where 51 sub-clan electoral college members selected by clan elders (s)elected 275 MPs who in turn – together with 54 senators elected by Federal Member State MPs – elected the president. However imperfect these fairly restricted processes were, they did facilitate the selection of parliamentarians and the peaceful handover of power from an incumbent President (Hassan Sheikh Mohamoud) following his defeat in the election.

The post-2016-17 aspiration was to hold one person one vote parliamentary elections in Somalia in late 2020. This was seen as a priority and entrusted to the incumbent administration to secure. Efforts were made to make this possible, including the provisional registration of political parties, mapping polling centers, revision of the political parties' law by the Council of Ministers and the draft and approval of the electoral law.

The electoral law provides the most important details for the upcoming Somalia elections. When the Proportional Representation – Closed List electoral model was agreed by the leaders of the Federal Government of Somalia and the Federal Member States in Baidoa in June 2018, the Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation drafted the bill and submitted it to the cabinet. The Council of Ministers approved the National Electoral Bill in early May 2019 and presented it to the House of the People of Somali Federal Parliament for approval (Wasuge & Moman, 2019). The Speaker of the House of the People appointed a 15-member parliamentary committee to review the bill. After consultations, the committee removed the Proportional Representation – Closed List electoral model and proposed First-Past-The-Post model based on Single Member Plurality. After weeks of parliamentary deliberation on the revised version, the House approved the bill on 28 December 2019. This was followed by the approval of the Upper House on 8 February 2020, and finally the president signed it into law on 20 February of this year. The international community has pressured the two chambers of parliament to expedite the review and approval of the electoral bill.

Unlike the previous political dispensations, the electoral law, which consists of 7 chapters and 58 articles, is currently a binding legal document that guides Somalia's national elections.

Limitations of the election law

Despite the approval and promulgation of the electoral law, the act has a number of limitations. Key substantial issues in the electoral law that require attention are: (i) the First Past The Post (FPTP) electoral model; (ii) the election of senators and the representation of Benadir region in the Upper House, (iii) the voter registration hurdles, and (iv) the looming possibility of extension of the process.

1. The electoral model

Article 10 of the national electoral law states that the electoral model will be a 'Majoritarian System' based on Single Member Plurality (SMP) or First Past The Post. The article also necessitates that each political party should have candidates for at least 50% of the seats of the two chambers of the parliament.

Summary

Soon after the first few cases of COVID-19 were confirmed in Somalia, schools and higher education institutions were forced to close down their campuses in a bid to reduce infections. Universities explored online teaching as an alternative approach to continue teaching and learning. This governance brief explores how COVID-19 impacted the higher education sector in Mogadishu. The brief puts special emphasis on universities' shift to online instruction; how the teaching of arts, social science as well as science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) disciplines are affected; issues around digital divides; financial hardships of universities; online teaching challenges; and exams integrity. The paper concludes with policy considerations including universities to invest in Edtech; observe exam integrity; and to look for other sources to reduce dependence on students' tuition fees and maintain operations.

About Somali Public Agenda

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.

www.somalipublicagenda.org

© 2020 Somali Public Agenda

Introduction

Somalia has been impacted significantly by the COVID-19 pandemic as soon as it reached its shores. The virus has further complicated the conditions of a country already affected by an ailing health system. Overall, there is a lack of effective government institutions and financial resources necessary for fighting the virus.

Following the first reported cases of the virus on 16 March, the federal government has taken measures to curtail the outbreak. The first of these measures was to suspend schools and universities as they could become potential hotspots for the outbreak. The country's Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khaire proclaimed on the midnight of 18th March 2020 a fortnight's suspension of the educational institutions, and a need to assess the developing situation. Schools and universities heeded the directive, but the cases kept increasing steadily.

On the heels of this development, the federal Minister of Education, Culture and Higher Education held a meeting on the 8th April 2020 with the leadership of the learning institutions – school umbrellas and universities – and federal and states' education ministers to decide what course of action would be taken. The minister came out with a statement in which he stipulated that schools would remain closed and the final exams for non-12th grade students would be cancelled. He also ordered school management to evaluate the students based on the results they gained in the midterm exams. Moreover, the national exam for school leavers was deferred in case the situation turns out normal.

Embracing virtual learning platforms

After the initial two weeks' closure of schools and universities, the transmission of the virus has soared, wearing thin the hope that students would be able to resume studies on campuses. The leadership of universities was compelled to come up with innovative solutions that could adapt to the crisis.

Universities resorted to alternative online learning platforms, which have become one of only ways to deal with these unprecedented circumstances. This is similar to steps taken by learning institutions all over the world. The universities previously relied solely on traditional physical classes to deliver their programs. Therefore, the online learning represents a new experience and venture for universities in Somalia. However, most African countries are in the same position, as online teaching is rare on the continent for reasons related to internet connectivity, high costs of internet data, and poverty.

The ICT infrastructure of Somalia's universities is either weak or non-existent on the account of a lack of investment and lack of government support for the higher education. Universities in the country prioritize their resources towards recurring operations and payment of staff. There is also a lack of subsidies from internal and external sources to embed ICT infrastructure in the sector. This presented an onerous challenge to the resource and skills-strapped universities when online learning became the only practical option and needed to be embraced quickly.

The different universities devised and/or adopted varying online learning platforms according to their available resources and their tech support staff. As such, they had different opportunities and constraints to overcome the dilemma presented by COVID-19. Universities mostly utilized three online meeting platforms namely Meet Google, Zoom and another platform designed by Somali Research and Education Network (SomaliREN), a non-profit higher education support group, to help its 20 member institutions.

Zoom meeting platform is the most commonly used online platform among universities because of its free-use availability. However, the duration of the session lasts for 40 minutes only, requiring classes to restart after this period. This disrupts the smooth running of the lecture and can only be avoided if a subscription of USD 15 per account is paid every month. This would obligate universities to subscribe dozens of accounts for the numbers of classes open and that will cost dearly to the

---

The Road Ahead to Somalia's 2021 Elections: Prospects & Challenges

The first 2020 Governance Brief was published in April 2020 and discussed the prospects and challenges of the 2021 elections. 2020 was a crucial election year for Somalia as the national parliamentary and presidential elections are scheduled to happen in late 2020 and early 2021. The national electoral law – approved by the two chambers of parliament and signed into law by the president – was the basis for the design and implementation of national elections. This governance brief critically analyzed the limitations of the electoral design such as the lack of definition of constituencies, the ambiguity of election to the Upper House, and the clause enabling indeterminate extension. The brief also discussed the operationalization challenges of the elections, such as designating each seat to a geographic location; the election of Somaliland representatives; the women's quota; the rift between the center and the periphery; and insecurity. It put forward a number of policy considerations to help address these issues.

Examining the impact of COVID-19 on higher education in Mogadishu

The second Governance Brief was published in July 2020 and examined the impact of COVID-19 on higher education in Mogadishu. Soon after the first few cases of COVID-19 were confirmed in Somalia, schools and higher education institutions were forced to close down their campuses in a bid to reduce infections. Universities explored online teaching as an alternative approach to continue teaching and learning. This governance brief explored how COVID-19 impacted the higher education sector in Mogadishu. The brief put special emphasis on universities' shift to online instruction; how the teaching of arts, social science as well as science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) disciplines are affected; issues around digital divides; financial hardships of universities; online teaching challenges; and exams integrity. The paper concluded with policy considerations including university investment in Edtech; observations of exam integrity; and for the search for other financial sources to reduce dependence on students' tuition fees and maintain operations.

What Lessons can be Learned from Somalia's 2016 Indirect Elections?

Our third 2020 Governance Brief was published in November 2020 and discussed various lessons that could be learned from the implementation of Somalia's 2016 indirect elections. In 2016, candidates for the House of the People of Somali Federal Parliament covered some important logistics, travel and accommodation costs for the electoral delegates (which in part is believed to have helped them get elected); there was no scheduled time for meetings between candidates and the voting delegates; and the date and time for voting of each seat of the House of the People was unilaterally decided by the state election implementation teams. In 2016, the proportion of women in parliament was increased from 14% to 24%, which was a significant rise. This brief analyzed the implementation process of the 2016 indirect elections and concluded with policy considerations. These included: prohibiting candidates to handpick electoral delegates; providing the necessary logistical and accommodation support to the delegates on time; arranging a formal campaign schedule for voters and candidates; publishing the election schedule for each seat of the House of the People in advance; allowing the media and election observers to be present during the voting, and monitoring and reporting irregularities and fraudulent practices throughout the election process.

Protecting stability and inclusivity in Somalia's indirect election process

Our last 2020 Governance Brief was a joint brief with the Somali Dialogue Platform. Published in December 2020, the brief discussed protecting stability and inclusivity in Somalia's indirect election process. This briefing provided an overview of the Mogadishu Model, including contentious political issues, and risks to the integrity and inclusivity of the process, as well as options for addressing both. It was intended to support Somalis to come together in dialogue around the process, with the aim of increasing its inclusivity and credibility. The issues laid out in the paper would be best managed if they are discussed regularly through high-level dialogue, including the leadership of the federal government and member states, opposition figures and civil society.

Governance Brief 09

What Lessons can be Learned from Somalia's 2016 Indirect Elections?

November 2020

Summary

Somalia is heading into another indirect election in 2020-21. It is a familiar process and one that was undertaken almost four years ago. Many lessons can be learned from the 2016 indirect electoral implementation process. In 2016, candidates for the House of the People of Somali Federal Parliament covered some important logistics, travel and accommodation costs for the electoral delegates (which in part is believed to have helped them get elected); there was no scheduled time for meetings between candidates and the voting delegates; and the date and time for voting of each seat of the House of the People was unilaterally decided by the state election implementation teams. In 2016, the proportion of women in parliament was increased from 14% to 24%, which was a significant increase. This was one of the positives of the 2016 indirect elections and similar efforts could be made this time around to raise this to the 30% female quota target. This brief analyses the implementation process of the 2016 parliamentary elections and concludes with policy considerations. These include: prohibiting candidates to handpick electoral delegates; providing the necessary logistical and accommodation support to the delegates on time; arranging a formal campaign schedule for voters and candidates; publishing the election schedule for each seat of the House of the People in advance; allowing the media and election observers to be present during the voting, and monitoring and reporting irregularities and fraudulent practices throughout the election process.

About Somali Public Agenda

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.

www.somalipublicagenda.org

© 2020 Somali Public Agenda

Background

The second indirect election is scheduled to happen in Somalia again in late 2020. As agreed by the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and the Federal Member States (FMS) leaders in Mogadishu on September 17, 2020, an indirect election will take place in two districts in each FMS where 101 clan-based electoral delegates will vote for each seat of the House of the People of the Somali Federal Parliament. The 54 members of the Upper House will also be elected by the FMS legislators, similar to the 2016 process.

In 2016, an electoral college of over 14 thousand citizens drawn from clans elected the 275 members of the House of the People of Somalia's 10th parliament. Their mandate will end on 27th December 2020. 2016 represented an improvement compared to the 2012 selections. In 2012, 135 traditional elders selected 275 members of the parliament (there was no Upper House at that time) after 825 constituency assemblies had adopted a new provisional federal constitution in August of that year.

Similar to hopes for 2020-21, the provisional constitution had envisaged one person one vote elections in 2016. The Vision 2016 roadmap, which was drafted in September 2013 by the Federal Government of Somalia, put forward a plan that guided the government functions until the end of its mandate in August 2016 (Vision2016, 2013). The Vision 2016 document highlighted three core goals to be achieved: federalization, constitutional review and ratification, and one person one vote elections in 2016. However, the impossibility to realize the aspiration to hold one person one vote elections was publicly announced by the Federal Government of Somalia in late July 2015.

National and regional leaders, alongside the international community, formed a National Consultative Forum (NCF) for the discussion of the 2016 political transition. The forum proposed four alternative options for 2016 parliamentary elections: a nationwide electoral college, a federal member state-level electoral college, a district-level electoral college and a clan-based electoral college (The Somali National Consultative Forum, 2015). Furthermore, the National Leaders Forum (NLF) — consisting of the federal president, prime minister and speaker and four regional presidents — was formed in late 2015 to streamline the electoral process. The forum agreed a clan-based electoral model for the 2016 political dispensation of April that year.

The members of the National Leaders Forum held several conferences in Mogadishu and other cities in Somalia. After several heated discussions, the Forum members agreed on a selection model for an Upper House, whose formation is stipulated in the provisional constitution of Somalia (for the first time in Somalia), and the House of the People. The model proposed holding the elections of the members of the two chambers of parliament in the capitals of the Federal Member States.

51 delegates of sub-clan members — of which 30% were women and 20% young people — were agreed to elect each Member of Parliament. The 135 clan elders that selected Somalia's 2012 legislators were given the mandate to submit the list of voters to the regional electoral team, which also send a copy of the list to the federal electoral body. Furthermore, the members of NLF agreed the 30% quota for women at the parliament (Somali National News Agency, 2016). Every citizen who held at least a secondary school certificate, was aged above 25 years and pays the registration fee of $5,000 (50% discount for women candidates) was eligible to compete for a seat in Parliament. Furthermore, the international community, which gave political, financial, security and logistical support to the process, played an essential role in both the design and implementation of the indirect (s)elections.

Moreover, the formation of the Federal Indirect Electoral Implementation Team (FIEIT) consisting of 22 members and the State Indirect Electoral Implementation Team (SIEIT) of 11 members in each state were agreed, i.e. seven electoral

SOMALI DIALOGUE PLATFORM BRIEFING
SOMALI PUBLIC AGENDA GOVERNANCE BRIEF NO 10
DECEMBER 2020

Protecting stability and inclusivity in Somalia's indirect election process

SOMALI DIALOGUE PLATFORM AND SOMALI PUBLIC AGENDA

Key points

- Key Somalia's federal and state leaders have agreed another indirect election model, which offers the prospect of increased participation and representation in the country's governance. This is an important step forward after a long period of heightened political tensions.

- The electoral model is similar in many respects to that used in 2016. Clan-based electoral colleges of 101 delegates will vote for each seat in the House of the People, while seats in the Upper House will be voted on by state assemblies. Voting will take place in eleven locations across the country and will be managed by federal and state election committees.

- There are several unresolved political issues. Disagreements on the credibility of election management bodies, conducting elections in Gedo, and the system to manage voting for the Somaliland seats, could derail the process. There is also a risk that the process becomes protracted, disputed, and even violently contested.

- The agreed model does not yet guarantee that the process will increase the inclusivity of institutions. The high fees set for candidate registration and lack of specificity on the women's quota may undermine previous progress. The practice of vote-buying will also likely persist, and its scale may further undermine the credibility and inclusivity of the process.

- These issues can be addressed by revitalizing the spirit of dialogue and collaboration that led to agreements in September. Regular monthly meetings between the leadership of the FGS, FMS, presidential contenders and civil society leaders may be one way to establish a mechanism to resolve differences.

- Compromises on political issues are needed. It would be valuable to revisit membership of election management bodies to ensure they comply with previously agreed criteria. Including opposition and civil society in selecting committee members may also improve trust in the process. Specific dialogue is likely needed on Somaliland seats. A compromise on seat allocation in Gedo is also needed that balances the interests of the federal government and Jubaland.

- The inclusivity and integrity of the process could be strengthened by a number of measures. Inclusion of women and youth can be increased by reducing candidates' fees and allocating specific seats to women, especially if there is determined advocacy by Somali civil society with elders and political leaders on this issue. Transparency and accountability can be enhanced if civil society play a role in oversight and monitoring

Commentaries

SPA has published 10 commentaries in 2020. Most of the commentaries were related to election issues and Covid-19 pandemic. We have published the following commentaries:

1. Youth inclusion and participation in Somali politics: challenges and opportunities
2. The Hirshabelle election conundrum
3. The 'Electoral Constituency Caucuses': Analysis of the new electoral model agreed in Dhusamareb
4. Between direct election and 2016 indirect election for Somalia: A middle ground electoral model
5. Direct election or 'enhanced indirect' election for Somalia? Analysis of the relevant regulations
6. The impact of Covid-19 on the informal economy of Mogadishu
7. How stigma is holding back the fight against Coronavirus in Somalia
8. Coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19): Why Somalia needs to institute a rigorous pandemic preparedness and response plans
9. Review of 2020 federal government budget for security, economic growth and public services
10. Review of the Proposed First Past The Post Electoral Model for Somalia

Programmes and Centers

In 2020, SPA has launched 2 centres and improved the Public Agenda Forum by introducing a new subsidiary- Gaxwo & Gorfeyn. An internship programme was also introduced. In August 2020, the foundations for operationalizing SPA's design and training portfolios were laid when SPA launched the Center for Public Policy and Service Design and Center for Learning and Development. Launching these centers, whichwill exclusively work on two important SPA portfolios (co-designing and training), was a great milestone.

Public Agenda Forum

Our Public Agenda Forum has organized three forums in 2020. Two of these forums were platforms for launching SPA publications. The proceedings of the forum was recorded, and highlights were shared with media outlets for dissemination. The overall objective of the Public Agenda Forum is to provide a platform for public discussion on matters of social and national interest and to present SPA publications to the public and give them an opportunity to share their reflections and thoughts on those specific thematic issues that we have published on.

The forums held in 2020 were:

1. Launch forum of Covid-19 Impact on Higher Education Institutions in Mogadishu (09 July 2020)
2. Launch forum of Covid-19 Governance Report (28 September 2020)
3. The role of Somali Youth in the upcoming parliamentary elections (12 November 2020)

The Public Agenda Forum have also started "Gaxwo & Gorfeyn" monthly meet-up. Three successful Gaxwo & Gorfeyn events were held in 2020.

Gaxwo iyo Gorfeyn is part of the Forum activities. We started in October 2020. The topics discussed were:

1. Youth participation in the upcoming parliamentary elections (28 October 2020)
2. Fiscal federalism in Somalia (26 November 2020)
3. What could happen in February 8 if there is no agreement on the federal elections (31 December 2020)

We expect that the Public Agenda Forum will be space for intellectual debates and critical examinations of issues of public priorities in 2021 and beyond.

Internships

In mid-2020, Somali Public Agenda started a 3-months internship programme aimed to give valuable experience in the field of research and writing to recent university graduates and current students in the last year of their studies. Since July 2020, two interns (one female and one male) graduated from the Internship Programme. The third intern who started the internship in November will graduate in early 2021.

SPA now asks interns to write a reflection blog, which is published on the SPA website, after their completion of the internship. So far this has been encouraging. Interns receive monthly transportation costs.

Center for Public Policy and Service Design

The Center for Public Policy and Service Design aims to help public institutions design human-centered public policies and services. All too often international consultants who have little or no experience in Somalia – and paid by international organizations – are hired to lead the design of government policies. The SPA Center for Public Policy and Service Design will fill this void and help government institutions design policies and services that reflect the experiences and needs of the public.

To do this, SPA design researchers envisage talking to the people directly affected by the policy and/or service, document their own experiences, and co-design with policymakers using primary data. This means translating primary data from citizens into a tangible government policy or service. SPA's co-design work will help the government design and deliver citizen-centered public services.

Center for Learning and Development

The Center for Learning and Development, which we founded in 2020, complements the policy design work. SPA believes that good policies and projects are doomed to fail if there are no administrative cadres that can deliver them effectively. The Center for Learning and Development main mandate will be training public servants and equipping them with the skills necessary to implement public policies.

Moreover, the center aims to train Somali researchers. In December 2020, 13 female researchers were selected for training after a competitive process, and took part in a 6-days qualitative research course.

Outreach and Impact

SPA's online audience has considerably increased in 2020. Our work was found online 10,300 thousand times. Our mailing list subscribers have blossomed and are close to 1,000. We had several media interviews, our social media sites were all active, and we increased our production in terms of podcasts.

Our relationship with the media has grown and become stronger. We were regularly interviewed by various local and international media outlets. We spoke to BBC Somali, CGTN, Al Jazeera, Radio Himilo, Goobjoog TV, VoA Somali. We also spoke at Chatham House, Rift Valley Forum, and three Parliamentary Hearings.

Our website views increased from 29,705 in 2019 to over 45,000 in 2020. Our Social Media presence has increased in 2020 and so has our fan base. Our Twitter handle-@somalipubagenda -was followed by almost double the number of accounts compared with 2019 and has gone beyond 4000 followers. Our Facebook page likes have increased from 14,555 in 2019 to close to 18,500 likes and we reached 19,000 followers in 2020. SPA is also active on Instagram. Our Instagram page has over 700 followers and about 165 posts. Our YouTube subscribers increased from 161 to 300. Our LinkedIn followers in 2020 increased to 200. Our Mailing list also reached 976 emails from 720 in 2019. In 2019, our work was found from online searches 3,469 times. In 2020, the online search returns increased to 10,300 thousand times. Other areas where people found our work most in 2020 were: Twitter (6,675 times), Facebook (3,716)

The SPA podcasts have also increased in 2020. 11 podcasts were produced. SPA also developed three podcasts programmes namely SPA Governance Podcast, SPA Public Service Podcast, and SPA Forums Podcast. Our podcasts were downloaded over 1,550 times in 2020.

2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

THE SOMALI PUBLIC AGENDA PODCAST

11 EPISODES PUBLISHED

325 MINUTES OF CONTENT

1,552 TOTAL DOWNLOADS

With the the Covid 19 pandemic, most work activities across the globe took an unprecedented shift to online channels. SPA as a research organization was invited to speak at forums and gave a briefing to policymakers. Our members were panelists at the [Chatham House forum on Somalia elections](#), Rift Valley Forum, gave election briefing to the African Union leaders three times, and attended parliamentary hearings on the budget, Covid-19 impact on Somalia economy, and the audit bill. Our researchers also presented our publications on several online platforms to local and international audiences.

Moreover, we started to document our impact. We created an impact page on the SPA Website documenting success stories, testimonials (What People Say About Us) and reflections from our team.

We wrote two success stories. One success story was about how our Election Series programme impacted and informed election discourse. The second success story was the qualitative research training for female researchers conducted in December 2020. If our work impacts policy-making, and we have evidence for that, we write this up as a success story.

The former UNDP Portfolio Manager for Economic Recovery and Institutional Development Albert Soer shared our report on Beledweyne floods with his wider mailing list in May 2020 and said: "Somali Public Agenda, in collaboration with Radio Ergo, issued a quite rare report on the distribution of aid following the floods in Hiiraan. The report highlights challenges regarding coordination, accountability, transparency and inclusion concerning the distribution of aid in the flood affected areas. While the respondents and debaters were quite limited in number, the findings have a kind of 'truth value' that merits attention."

After an election briefing to the AU senior leadership in February 2020 on Somalia elections, Simon Mulongo, the Deputy Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia said: "Development doesn't come by accident. It's based on research, deeper understanding of the issues/challenges and well thought-through solutions that is acceptable and workable to all stakeholders. Your research institution comes in handy in terms of helping members of the public, civil societies and the government to find solutions to key governance challenges in Somalia."

The reflections page is an opportunity for SPA team to share the insights and experiences they gained from SPA projects and work to the public. The two interns who graduated from the SPA Internship Programme published their intern reflections. The SPA Executive Director also wrote two reflections on the introduction of design and learning centers as well as a review of the SPA 2020 work.

Most of the feedback we received on our 2020 publications has been positive. We received favorable and encouraging feedback from different segments of the society. Somali Public Agenda published papers on contentious issues. 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.

Partnerships and Collaborations

We developed collaborative partnerships and working relations with several institutions in 2020. We are currently working with the Rift Valley Institute's Somali Dialogue Platform on research and engagement related to contentious political issues in Somalia. The Somali Dialogue Platform (*Madasha Wadahadallada Somaaliyeed*) is a programme, implemented by the Rift Valley Institute, that works to facilitate agreement amongst Somalis on contentious political issues. It is supported by the FCDO, DANIDA, USAID and BUILD.

We have also established a working relationship with a number international NGOs including: Interpeace, International Media Support (IMS), and Radio Ergo.

SPA collaborated with Radio Ergo on a study that examined what went wrong with the 2019 humanitarian response and what lessons can be learned from it. A report titled 'Inclusion, Accountability, and Protection: Analysis of Community Discussions on the 2019 Flood Response in Hiiraan' was published in May 2020.

In 2020, SPA collaborated with Interpeace, an international organization for peacebuilding that has been working in Somalia and Somaliland for over 25 years supporting peacebuilding and democratization processes,. Our joint study on understanding Galmudug reconciliation provides a deeper understanding of this complex and protracted process and the factors behind its apparent success.

We also signed a trilateral collaboration with Interpeace and The Kalfadhi platform, supported by International Media Support (IMS) on a comparative review of the controversial Sexual Offences Bills. The aim of the collaboration was to clearly explain the complexities and ramifications of both bills and create dialogue and discussion on the subject.

The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) has for the first time given a grant to SPA for a fiscal federalism in Somalia study. The study findings will be published in mid-2021.

Moreover, we became a member of the UKRI-funded research network on Datafication and Digital Rights in East Africa, bringing together academic, civil society, and tech-sector partners in the region.

Financial Highlights

Somali Public Agenda is in much better financial status than it has been over the last two years. In 2019, the profit generated from the translation services of Tayo Translations were directed towards and finance the SPA work.
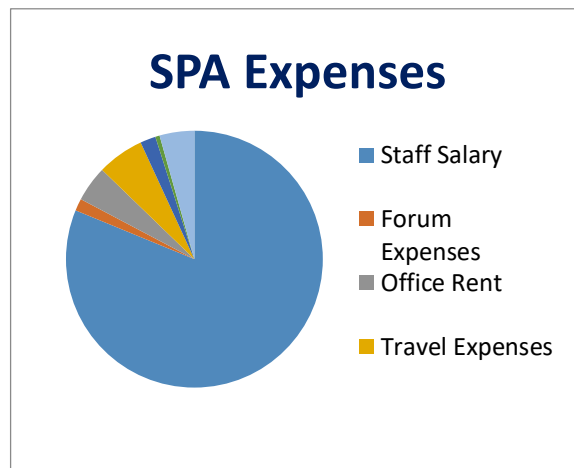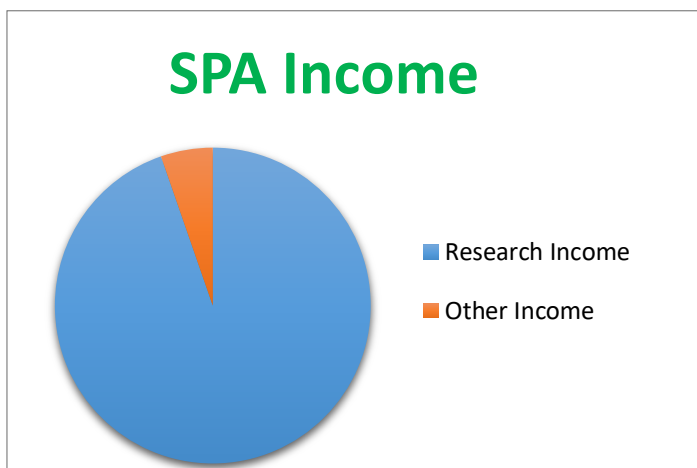
In 2020, Somali Public Agenda secured project-based funding from a number of institutions. Somali Public Agenda has secured funding from various sources- Including the Rift Valley Institute's Somali Dialogue Platform, International Organization for Peacebuilding (Interpeace), International Media Support (IMS) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

We adopted an international accounting procedure and reliable accounting system that we can record our daily financial transactions with the aim of conducting the best financial practice in our organization. A professional consultant trained and mentored our finance officer on how to record daily financial transactions and prepare the organization's monthly bank reconciliation.

SPA strictly adheres to transparency and accountability standards in the organisation's financial activities. As a result, we successfully passed an external audit conducted by an international auditing company based in Nairobi, Kenya.

Our Board of Advisors has reviewed and approved the SPA 2020 financial audit report, and we are planning to continue annual financial auditing.

In 2021, we are planning to improve our key financial and managerial weaknesses to maintain smoothness and stability in our finance system.

SPA Income
- Research Income
- Other Income

SPA Expenses
- Staff Salary
- Forum Expenses
- Office Rent
- Travel Expenses

2021 Projections and Priorities

As we enter our fourth year, we are looking forward to producing quality research output, creating space for discussion on national issues, offer training, and help public institutions design human-centered public services.

Our work in 2021 will focus more on the following thematic issues:

1. Peacebuilding and transitional justice
2. Elections and democratization
3. Understanding contentious issues in Somalia including fiscal federalism, status of Mogadishu city, and citizenship
4. Studies on reconciliations in the Federal Member States and elections at local levels
5. State of public services; education, health, land and housing.

In 2021, SPA will start a **Legal Analysis Series** program that will produce series of analysis on bills and legislations.

The Center for Learning and Development will hire a director whose core mandate will be to lead and coordinate the training work. The center plans to design a bi-monthly 3-months long research training where participants will have the opportunity to do actual research.

The SPA Center for Public Policy and Service Design will also appoint a director whose core mandate will be to lead and coordinate the design work.

The Public Agenda Forum will continue the Gaxwo iyo Gorfeyn series. We will also plan to convene 6 forums in 2021, one every two months. We are also planning to convene one national conference on governance and democratization once every year.

SPA will continue the podcasts programme. We will aim to produce a podcast from every publication we make. We will also prepare podcasts from pressing issues.

Appendices

Staff

Mahad Wasuge, Executive Director

Abdimalik Abdullahi, Programme Coordinator and Researcher

Mohamed Irbad, Researcher

Farhan Isak Yusuf, Researcher

Mohamed Isack Ahmed, Researcher

Fartun Sharif, Finance and Administration Officer

Farhia Mohamud, HR Officer and Researcher

Fellows

Peter Chonka, a Lecturer in Global Digital Cultures at King's College London (UK)

Mohamud Garre, Director of Research and Head of Department for Social Work at City University of Mogadishu

Partha Moman, Research Manager, Platform for Political Dialogue, Somalia

Tobias Hagmann, associate professor of international development at Roskilde University in Denmark

Sahra Ahmed Koshin, the Founder and Director of the Somalia Gender Hub and the Puntland Women Writers Association

Ahmed Muse, postdoctoral researcher at the *Diaspora Humanitarianism in Complex Crises* research project.

Board of Advisors

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

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

Ahmed Elmi, an Independent Senior Strategist and Private Sector Development Specialist

www.somalipublicagenda.org

info@somalipublicagenda.org