



## **Decentralized but contested:**

# **Examining the federal government's decentralization of educational services in Mogadishu to the Benadir Regional Administration**

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Somali Public Agenda is a non-profit public policy and administration research organization based in Mogadishu, Somalia. 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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## Executive Summary

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Various ministries of the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) have been responsible for determining and administering services in the Benadir region since 2012 when Somalia moved to a federal form of governance. Federal Member States (FMSs) were established in all regions between 2013 and 2016 except Puntland (it pre-existed the federal arrangement and was recognized as FMS) and the Benadir region whose status remains undefined. This exception arose from a condition in the provisional federal constitution (adopted in 2012) on the fate of Somalia's capital, Mogadishu.

Benadir region became a captive to this situation where the definition of its status was deferred to legislation, as per article 9 of the provisional constitution, to be issued by both houses of federal parliament. This pending legislation justified the FGS's maintenance of control over Benadir. In the meantime, while this continued to be untenable, the FGS Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education (MoECHE) started to decentralize educational services to the Benadir Regional Administration (BRA) in August 2020 following a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) the two parties signed in Mogadishu. The MoU was produced by a committee of eight members representing both sides and divided certain education responsibilities between the Ministry of Education and Benadir Education Directorate while listing certain concurrent powers.

The initiative and negotiations that followed occurred at a time Benadir region saw a massive student failure in the 2019/2020 national secondary school examination. Of the roughly thirty thousand students who took the exam across FMSs and Benadir (save for Puntland), eight thousand students from Benadir failed that exam. This provoked uproar and critical questions among the students, parents, school administrators, and the general public, and its discussion dominated the public space for the following weeks.

This study has found that due to the decentralization, the BRA Education Directorate now administers over 600 schools, both private and public in the Benadir region with approximately three thousand students. It is responsible for the grade 8 examination and certification and collects and stores Benadir region education data in its Educational Management Information System (EMIS).

The education decentralization to Benadir Regional Administration has achieved some success. Nonetheless, the implementation of the MoU has not gone smoothly. It has been beset by problems mainly stemming from public school expenditure and administration. The dispute continues unresolved though parties have made unsuccessful efforts to bring it to an end.

The study recommends, *inter alia*, that the incumbent FGS administration establish legitimate and accountable administration through forming an elected local council that in turn will elect a mayor and governor; that the parties of MoU undertake a review of the MoU to further clarify the provisions that invited the existing ambiguity; and that FGS to allocate an appropriate budget for BRA to cover public schools expenditure.

## Introduction

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During the civilian administrations (1960-1969) and the subsequent military regime (1969-1991), services provision, including education and health, and their expenditure across the country was the sole responsibility of the central government owing to the centralization of all powers in the hands of the government in Mogadishu. Consequently, citizens suffered from a lack or inadequacy of services. However, the whole system collapsed in January 1991, and catastrophic chaos ensued. The public services provision disappeared as a corollary of state collapse. In the middle of this stormy period, the services provision lacuna resulting from the state collapse was filled up, albeit insufficiently, through community, charity, and civil society organizations-led initiatives.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, different efforts were made to resuscitate the Somali state, though most of them failed. Weak transitional administrations were installed, namely the Transitional National Government (TNG) (2000-4, Arta, Djibouti), and the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) (2004-8;2008-12). In 2012, a permanent Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) was installed after the adoption of a provisional federal constitution in August 2012 by an 825-member constituent assembly.

The federal government led by current president Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who was also in the office at the time, formed four new Federal Member States (FMSs) – Jubaland (2013), South West (2014), Galmudug (2015), and Hirshabelle (2016) – although the formation process of these new administrations varied. Puntland pre-existed the arrangement and was recognized as a full member for fulfilling the constitutional requirement of forming an FMS.

Following the formation of the new FMSs, their administrations began taking up the responsibilities of their jurisdictions. The new FMSs gradually took on the mantle of policy formulation and implementation at different policy areas at the state level in liaison with federal line ministries. Sometimes, however, the constitutional cooperation required between the state line ministries and the center on policy matters has been ignored. Due to the status that the newly formed states acquired, the FMS executive institutions became responsible for the provision of services in their territories that are being funded through paltry revenues raised from their states, FGS fiscal transfers, or donor grants/supported projects.

Benadir, – one of the 18 regions to form FMSs – diverted from this course and the FGS has controlled its affairs. This meant that the Benadir region has been deprived of the decentralization benefits other regions gained from the federal arrangement, including the provision of services. The unique case of the Benadir region is attendant to it being the capital seat of the FGS, and the provisional federal constitution spells out a different approach for determining the status of the capital city, Mogadishu. The constitution in article 9 outlines that the status of the capital city will be determined in the constitutional review process, and the two houses of the Somali federal parliament will make a special law regarding the Mogadishu issue (the Federal Republic of Somalia, 2012). However, this has not happened primarily due to the many controversies and sensitivities surrounding

the issue. Thus, the two successive federal governments since 2012 shirked engaging with this politically combustible issue, and it has remained a thorn in the sides of the last two governments.

However, the pending status of Mogadishu gave the FGS latitude in governing and deciding all the matters for the Benadir region, ranging from nominating regional administration to services provision. Benadir is the only region in Somalia where FGS raises revenues and has the ultimate say in the important decisions that directly affect the people in it.

Education was among the vital services the FGS was responsible for in the Benadir region. The region has the highest population and consequently what is likely to be the highest student population across the country, though no official figures are available. The FGS Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education was administering education in the Benadir region since 2014 while the other FMSs were independent in managing the education sector similar to other policy areas in their territories. The Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education has been administering the national secondary examination since its re-introduction in 2015 for the first time in 25 years after the state collapse.

The first national secondary school exam was sat by 3,522 students across all FMSs and Benadir, except Puntland which held the exam separately (Hiiraan Online, 2020). Benadir had the largest share of the students who sat for the exam, but the nominated administration in the Benadir region has never played a role in the national secondary examinations in Mogadishu. In the subsequent years, the number of students who have sat the exam has increased due to the decline of the al-Shabaab threat of possibly targeting exam centers, particularly in Mogadishu.

However, the 2019/20 national secondary exam results were shocking and upsetting for Benadir students and other stakeholders. Of the total 33,727 students who enrolled for the national exam, 8,550 failed. But strikingly, up to 7,873 of those students came from the Benadir region, 90% of all those who failed the exam, while the remaining failed students were distributed among the four FMSs – Galmudug, Hirshabelle, Jubaland, and South West. While Benadir had 25,000 students out of the total who took the exam, schools from Benadir did not appear among the top 10 performers (Hiiraan Online, 2020).

The massive student failure from the Benadir region in the 2019/20 exam sparked widespread anger, outcry, and many questions were asked among the education stakeholders in the Benadir region. Even some stakeholders went far in demanding an investigation be opened. However, Abdullahi Godah Barre, the FGS Minister of Education, Culture, and Higher Education at the time, blamed students for spending too much time on TikTok and teachers for poor quality tuition (Hiiraan Online, 2020).

Amid the heated discussions on the matter, some argued and appealed for transferring education responsibilities to the local authority, and for them to be held accountable for such results. After the public outrage subsided, the Minister of Education Abdullahi Godah Barre and the BRA initiated discussions over the transfer of education responsibilities to the latter and enabling the local authority to manage education similar to the other FMSs.

At last, the discussions culminated in handing down the education to Benadir regional authority according to a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) the parties agreed upon in August 2020. However, the full implementation of the MoU encountered a stumbling block following a rift that emerged between the signatories.

It is noteworthy that the decentralization of education services to the Benadir Administration set the stage for decentralizing essential public health services to Benadir by the FGS Ministry of Health on 7 February 2021.

This paper examines the process through which the FGS Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education decentralized education to the BRA; substantive provisions of the MoU; weaknesses of the MoU; BRA infrastructure for education administration; BRA educational responsibilities and services provision; progress(s) the decentralization yielded so far; and challenges that the BRA faces in taking on the new responsibilities. Finally, the paper presents policy recommendations to address the outstanding issues that impede bringing effective education services closer to citizens in Mogadishu.

## Methodology

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This paper draws on the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the FGS Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education and the Benadir Regional Administration, statements, media coverage on the decentralization and subsequent dispute between the two sides, and 10 key informant interviews with officials from the FGS Ministry of Education, the BRA and other education stakeholders in Benadir region.

Somali Public Agenda (SPA) conducted the interviews in the period between May and June 2022. It also benefits from Somali Public Agenda's forum, which deliberated the education decentralization to BRA. The forum, which was held on 16 June 2022, was attended by 28 participants who represented the Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education, Benadir Teachers' Syndicate, school teachers, students, and Somalia education researchers. At the time the forum was convened, the BRA, whose representative did not attend the meeting, was busy with the primary (grade 8) exam in the Benadir region.

## Contextualizing the decentralization process

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The initial steps towards decentralization in the Benadir region were taken back in 2019 when the late Abdirahman Omar Osman (better known as Eng. Yarisow) the governor of the Benadir region and mayor of Mogadishu started off discussions with the federal Minister of Education, Culture, and Higher Education Abdullahi Godah Barre .<sup>1</sup> Sadly, while the negotiations were ongoing, Eng. Yarisow died on 1 August 2019 in Qatar where he was hospitalized for critical wounds sustained from a suicide bombing at Mogadishu municipality the previous month.

Following this, Omar Filish was appointed as the mayor of Mogadishu and Governor of the Benadir on 22 August 2019. The discussion continued from there. According to a senior official from the Benadir Regional Administration (BRA), the regional authorities were touting a narrative about separating service delivery and the unresolved status of Mogadishu. This is a politically contentious issue and poses a challenge to the Benadir local administration exercising any real authority in the region.<sup>2</sup>

According to a source at the Ministry of Education, a catalyst for the transfer of education responsibility to BRA was the pressure and criticism that the Minister, Abdullahi Godah Barre, was receiving from the Federal Member States (FMSs) in their meetings on national education issues. FMSs accused the Ministry of Education of being biased toward Benadir. On the contrary, the BRA blamed the education minister for giving up more of the Benadir region's share of donor projects to other FMSs to satisfy them. Therefore, to reconcile this issue, the FMSs urged the Ministry to allow BRA to represent itself in the FGS-FMSs meetings.<sup>3</sup>

Another opportunity emerged from a meeting between the FGS and FMSs ministries of education along with the BRA held in Mogadishu in 2020. This concerned the primary (grade 8) exams that were to be administered by FMSs without the involvement of the private umbrellas<sup>4</sup> for the first time since 1991.<sup>5</sup> Officials at the meeting raised the question of which authority would be responsible for administering the BRA's grade 8 schools exam and issuing certificates since the FGS Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education (MOECHE) was only involved in grade 12 exams and certification there.<sup>6</sup>

In response to the question, the parties in the conference underlined the importance of having a structure subordinate to BRA that would handle this responsibility.<sup>7</sup> To move the initiative further, the Minister of Education stipulated that the BRA must show the financial and administrative capacity to shoulder the new responsibility. This led to the establishment of the Benadir Regional Administration Education Directorate in

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1 Interview with a senior official at BRA education directorate, 29 May 2022, Mogadishu.

2 Interview with BRA senior official, 10 June 2020, Mogadishu.

3 Interview with the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education officer, 18 June 2022, Mogadishu.

4 These are educational umbrellas that sprung up in the wake of the Somali state in 1991. These umbrellas were instituted to relatively fill the vacuum left by the ministry of education.

5 Interview with senior BRA Education Directorate officer, 27 June 2022, Mogadishu.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

February 2020. When the directorate was inaugurated, the Education Minister and BRA governor took a further step forward by forming an 8-member bipartisan committee of which 4 members were drawn from each side to deliberate and work out the process of decentralizing education. It was formed based on a decree that both parties issued.<sup>8</sup>

The Ministry of Education did not wait until the committee finished its business to present a framework for the decentralization scheme. It began to transfer some educational responsibilities to BRA gradually such as administering grade 8 exams and attendance of FMSs and FGS ministers of education meetings to train BRA on the new assignment.<sup>9</sup>

For the first time since 1991, the FGS Ministry of Education and BRA jointly administered grade 8 exams in 2019/2020. A 9-member committee from the Ministry and BRA was tasked with the grade 8 examination responsibilities.<sup>10</sup> Before this undertaking, private umbrellas that were overseeing schools in different FMSs administered the exams until the FMSs reclaimed that responsibility from them<sup>11</sup>. Furthermore, the FGS Ministry of Education trained BRA staff from the Education Directorate on exam coding and data entry.<sup>12</sup>

In April 2020, the 8-member committee that was established for the negotiations of the decentralization came up with a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which the Ministry of Education sent out to the State Attorney General, who then approved it. On the back of the State Attorney's endorsement, the Ministry of Education dispatched the MoU to the Office of the Prime Minister for approval to conclude the process. However, Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khaire kept the MoU until he was dismissed from the office unceremoniously in a vote of no confidence by the Lower House of the Somali Federal Parliament on 25 July 2020.<sup>13</sup>

On 2 August 2020, a grand ceremony to transfer the authority of education to BRA was held in Mogadishu where both parties signed the MoU. The signing ceremony was witnessed by the Deputy Prime Minister, Mahdi Guled (who also was the acting Prime Minister), members of the parliament, the State Attorney General, teachers, students, parents, and other education stakeholders. Abdullahi Godah Barre and Omar Filish signed the MoU at the event (Horn Cable TV, 2020).

Though a separate section is devoted to the details of the substantive provisions of the MoU, it is important to summarise here that according to the MoU, the Federal Ministry of Education transferred the responsibility for administering, supervising, supporting, registering, and controlling 24 public schools that the Ministry had hitherto overseen. Likewise, the Ministry of Education handed down to the BRA the administration, supervision, and registration of privately owned schools in the Benadir region. Along with this, it also transferred the management and control of Ministry-owned immobile

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8 Interview with BRA senior official, 10 June 2022, Mogadishu.

9 Interview with BRA Education Directorate officer, 14 June 2022, Mogadishu.

10 Ibid.

11 Puntland was an exception here, and had administered centralized exams for many years in its jurisdiction and continues holding parallel exams for grade 8 and grade 12.

12 Ibid.

13 Interview with BRA senior official, 10 June 2022, Mogadishu.

property in the Benadir region (Dowladda Federaalka Soomaaliya, 2020).

Stakeholders welcomed the move of transferring education responsibility to the Benadir region – which boasts the highest number of schools out of any FMS. Roughly 630 schools were registered at the BRA education directorate's Education Management Information System (EMIS), with approximately three hundred thousand students. It was seen as a move in the right direction for the empowerment of the local authority to manage essential services like this.

However, the realization of this agenda has been a difficult task, and it has encountered enormous challenges that could have aborted it at an early stage. Sources said that the senior level policymakers at the Federal Ministry of Education such as the deputy minister, the state minister, and the director-general at the time were not happy about pressing ahead with the decentralization scheme for political reasons related to Mogadishu/Benadir's pending status. Similarly, senior civil servants at the Ministry of Education feared that the Ministry would forfeit the financial resources they controlled and the influence they commanded in the Benadir region. Benadir is important because is the only region where all FGS ministries (including the Ministry of Education) exercise authority while FMSs ministries of education manage projects on behalf of their respective regions.<sup>14</sup>

Notwithstanding these difficulties, interviewees from the Ministry reported that the Minister of Education secured the backing of the federal president at the time, Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo. Nevertheless, a few months into the implementation of the MoU, the parties ran into a conflict that remains unresolved. This has resulted in the reversal of the few gains made from the education decentralization in the Benadir region and has sabotaged potential achievements. This is detailed in a following section.<sup>15</sup>

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14 Interview with the Ministry of Education officer, 7 June 2022, Mogadishu.

15 Interview with the Minister of Education officer, 18 June 2022.

## The substantive provisions in the MoU

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The MoU was signed on 9 August 2020 between the Ministry of Education and the BRA, who were represented by Abdullahi Godah Barre and Omar Mohamud Filish respectively. Although the FGS State Attorney General, Avv. Osman Elmi Guled was present in the ceremony, he later signed the MoU on 11 August 2020. Previously, the State Attorney General had assented to the MoU after the tasked committee finalized its drafting.

The MoU has 5 sections and 16 articles that deal with a variety of issues related to the education decentralization to the BRA. The MoU has an annex but Somali Public Agenda was unable to obtain the annex to scrutinize it. However, SPA asked the concerned parties for the annex that the MoU referred to in some provisions.<sup>16</sup>

The issues that the MoU outlines include: objectives and principles, exclusive and concurred responsibilities, BRA Education Directorate budget, international scholarships and BRA representation in educational councils, conflict resolution, MoU amendment, adherence to the implementation of the MoU provisions, and the MoU amendment procedure.

The MoU set out the exclusive and shared responsibilities between the parties. It divided responsibilities between the parties in articles 5, 6, and 7. As regards to FGS Ministry of Education's exclusive responsibilities, the MoU listed 11 responsibilities, under article 5, that the Ministry should perform. These responsibilities include:

- a. formulating policies, making laws and plans at the national level;
- b. setting educational standards at the national level such as curriculum for kindergarten, primary and secondary schools; higher education; technical and vocational schools and teacher training;
- c. setting and coordinating the implementation and taking matriculation exams for the national secondary schools' exams and technical and vocational schools;
- d. setting the standards and regulating universities education such as approving curriculums, and courses, and licensing higher education and professional institutions;
- e. mobilizing and facilitating financial resources and support to advance education in the Benadir region; and
- f. controlling and assessing the implementation of the educational policies and plans in the Benadir region similar to other regions of the country.

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<sup>16</sup> BRA key informants told the SPA researchers that the annex only deals with the matters such as names of the public schools transferred to BRA. However, when asked to share the annex with us, they promised to do so but did not fulfil this request.

On the contrary, the MoU conferred to BRA 11 exclusive responsibilities including:

- a. formulating and implementing educational laws and plans at the regional level consistent with the national educational law, policy, and plan;
- b. covering regional educational expenditure with the help of the Ministry and international organizations;
- c. administering and licensing the schools under the control of the administration per the educational policies and standards of the FGS;
- d. registering and controlling the educational activities of the educational institutions in the region;
- e. planning, administering the recruitment and payment of the BRA education staff;
- f. collecting and storing educational data of the region; and
- g. the setting, administering, holding, and announcing the results of the primary (grade 8) exams, and issuing the certificate of grade 8 with the support of the FGS Ministry of Education.

Although the MoU rendered virtually equal exclusive responsibilities to both parties, it narrowed the scope of the shared duties. It allocated just three responsibilities to be shared by the two parties. These are:

- a. registration and training of teachers;
- b. supervision and assessment of the educational centers; and lastly
- c. collecting educational data to be stored in the BRA educational directorate portal of the national educational database.

Moreover, the MoU spelt out in article 9 the budget of the Benadir Regional Education Directorate, and how it would be paid. The article specifies how the expenditure of the 24 public schools in Mogadishu whose responsibilities were transferred to BRA would be covered. The parties agreed that the FGS Ministry of Education would pay teachers' salaries of the 24 public schools transferred to BRA until July 2020, the month before the MoU signing and handing over Benadir education to BRA. From August to December 2020, each party will pay 50% of the total US \$283,255 monthly budget for the 24 public schools transferred to BRA.

The MoU pointed out that the new year, 2021, would see the start of a new scheme for sharing the burden, though unequal. It stipulated that from January 2021 up until December 2022, the Ministry of Education would pay 30% of the teachers' salary per month while BRA pays the remaining 70% per month of the total US \$283,255 for the 24 public schools. From December 2022, BRA would be fully responsible for covering the expenditure for the 24 public schools in Mogadishu at the time (now the public schools in Mogadishu are 25).<sup>17</sup>

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17 The new school which makes up the total public schools twenty-five (25) is the Howlwadaag Sare (Howlwadaag secondary school) in the Howlwadaag district. The school was rehabilitated and reopened in 2021 to admit students who finish grade 8 at the nearby two public schools; Hassan Kharidi and Howlwadaag primary schools. The school provides inclusive education for able-bodied students and students with disabilities.

To be able to fund school expenditures, the parties agreed that the BRA should allocate 15% of its 2021 budget for Benadir educational services. Keeping in mind that a 15% budget allocation for education is not adequate, the parties agreed that Benadir shall increase the budget allocation for education every fiscal year per the demands and developments of educational services in the Benadir region. Moreover, the parties agreed that the BRA shall open a new bank account separate for the BRA Education Directorate to manage the budget allocated for education. Finally, both parties agreed that the Education Ministry shall transfer budgetary allocation, such as teachers' salaries allocated to the 24 public schools under the control of the Ministry at the time.

The decentralization allowed the BRA to be a member of both the FGS and FMS Educational Council and Technical Committee<sup>18</sup>. These were both established on 19 September 2016 based on an MoU signed by those parties.

Pertinent to the management of international scholarships, the FGS Ministry of Education reserved that right for itself. In article 10, the MoU exclusively gave the Ministry of Education the responsibility of soliciting and distributing the scholarships. To this end, the Ministry puts in place a procedure that will guide the distribution of the scholarships among FMSs. The BRA allocation of the received scholarships and the selection of eligible students will be determined based on this procedure.

As stipulated in article 10 (4), scholarship allocation for each FMS will be proportional to its secondary graduating students. This gives Benadir region students an advantage as Benadir has the highest student population in the country. However, the realization of this right hinges on having a legitimate and accountable administration in the Benadir region (not in place so far), commitment from the Ministry of Education, and a lack of obstruction from FMSs in allowing the Benadir region its share instead of demanding it to be divided equally.

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18 Inter-governmental Education Forum is a forum where the federal education minister and the FMS education ministers along with BRA meet and discuss issues pertinent to education whereas the technical committee comprises director generals responsible for setting the agenda and working out issues in advance before presenting them to Educational Council for further deliberations. Both were established in 2016.

## Limitations of the MoU

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In general, the MoU laid the cornerstone for the decentralization of educational services to the BRA. Benadir is the only region that had no authority to exercise the administration of the delivery of essential services such as education due to its undefined status under the federal arrangement. Nevertheless, the MoU has limitations.

First, relevant stakeholders were not sufficiently engaged in the process of drafting the MoU. Concerning this matter, a Somalia education researcher who participated in the Somali Public Agenda's forum held in Mogadishu in June this year claimed that one particular private umbrella organization had undue influence on the drafting of the MoU through a representative within the BRA who had previously worked for them and was biased towards that group. The education researcher stated that this "irritated other rival umbrellas, and it resulted in their denouncement of the MoU later".<sup>19</sup> However, an important reason that many private umbrellas were dissatisfied with the powers given to the BRA was the fact that the MoU removed the authority they had exerted over the private schools since their establishment in the 1990s. The MoU also dried up the financial resources that they had access to from the schools in different forms.

Second, some stakeholders criticized the expertise of the members who drafted the MoU. An advisor for the BRA Education Directorate accused some of the 8-member committee of lacking needed expertise and adequate understanding of the Benadir education landscape to contribute effectively to the drafting.<sup>20</sup>

Third, the MoU left some provisions ambiguous, a situation that has been a source of contention due to the contradicting interpretations that different parties use. Although each of the equivocal provisions in the MoU cannot be addressed in detail here, one limitation obvious to anyone who gives a cursory look at the MoU lies in article 9, the budget of the BRA Education Directorate.

The Ministry of Education committed itself to paying the salary of the teachers of the 24 public schools until 31 July 2020, the period that preceded the signing of the MoU, while from August to December 2020 the Ministry and BRA each would pay 50% of the monthly budget (the US \$283,255). The criticism here is that the FGS budget for the 2020 fiscal year included a budget for the 24 public schools from the allocation for the Ministry of Education. The MoU obliges the Ministry to pay 50% of schools' expenditure while the rest is paid by BRA from August 2020. What the MoU did not make clear here was where the public schools' allocation in the FGS budget would be diverted as schools were transferred to BRA. Would the Ministry keep that money itself or transfer it to BRA?

Likewise, the MoU did not stipulate which party would manage donor-funded projects and support received by the public schools and education in the Benadir region. The MoU left these and many other questions unanswered. Leaving this hanging in balance would

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19 Somali Public Agenda Forum participant, Somalia education researcher, 16 June 2022, Mogadishu.

20 Interview with an advisor to BRA education directorate, 19 July 2022, Mogadishu.

later trigger conflict, as will be illustrated in the subsequent sections.

Fourth, it seems that the drafters of the MoU did not take into account how the BRA would be able to make readily available the monthly US \$283,255 budget for the then 24 (now 25) schools given that the FGS controls the major revenue sources in the Benadir region and FGS gives the BRA a mere 15% allocation from the Mogadishu port and airport revenues. Similarly, the parties did not envisage a mechanism to fund the schools if the BRA defaults on the payment of the required expenditure. Therefore, this defect in the school budget shows that the process was exclusive to the two parties and lacked insight and input from other relevant FGS Ministries, most importantly the FGS Ministry of Finance.

## BRA institutional and human infrastructures for education administration

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Before the decentralization of education, the BRA had a limited role to play in the educational services delivery in the Benadir region. However, the BRA had an education department subordinate to the office of the BRA deputy governor for social affairs.

Nevertheless, in February 2020, the regional administration instituted the Benadir Regional Education Directorate. The establishment of this new structure sprung from the decentralization discussions that began between the then FGS Minister of Education, Abdullahi Godah Barre, and BRA governor Omar Mohamud Filish. While the discussions were at their early stage, the then Minister of Education attached the BRA's establishment of a structure (to be charged with the new responsibilities) as a condition for decentralization.<sup>21</sup>

In line with that pre-condition, the parties started mulling over the nature of this new institution for a region with no defined status in the federal arrangement. According to an informant interviewee who was involved in the matter, the objective was to have an institution that in the sense of the administrative hierarchy is superior to a department but does not reach the authority of a ministry.<sup>22</sup> With that in mind, the parties agreed to create a directorate. This was justified administratively: a directorate title has a status superior to the department but is not the same level as a ministry and thus does not create sensitivity in the case of the Benadir region, whose status remains undefined.<sup>23</sup> The parties agreed that the new administrative structure would carry out similar functions to other FMSs education ministries. It also takes part in the FMSs and FGS education ministers' meetings.<sup>24</sup>

The structure of the Benadir Regional Education Directorate includes a headquarters office, near Mogadishu Municipality, and four Regional Education Offices (REOs). At its establishment, the Directorate had 6 departments notably planning, educational services, finance, examination and certification, quality and oversight, and human resources. But later, three new departments – higher Education, construction, and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) – were added to the Directorate. Now, with 9 departments, the Directorate operates in all the 17 districts<sup>25</sup> of the BRA along with three residential areas: Gubudley, Daarusalam, and Garasbaaley on the outskirts of the Benadir region.<sup>26</sup>

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21 BRA senior official, 10 June 2022, Mogadishu.

22 Senior BRA education directorate, 29 May 2022, Mogadishu.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 The directorate does not have offices in every district but each Regional Education Office provides services for certain districts.

26 BRA Education Directorate officer, 27 June 2022, Mogadishu.

The BRA Education Directorate has 92 permanent staff that are on BRA payroll. But there are 42 additional staff who work with assistant status and are assigned to undertake quality assurance and supervision activities at the directorate. This category of staff is being paid under the World Bank's Recurrent Cost & Reform Financing (RCRF) and Global Partnership for Education (GPE) projects. The directorate operates on about 23 procedures that are developed from the federal Ministry of Education's national education policy.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> BRA Education Directorate officer, 27 June 2022, Mogadishu.

## BRA educational responsibilities and services provision

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Before the decentralization, BRA's responsibilities for education in the region were almost nonexistent, and these instead lay with the FGS Ministry of Education. Despite this, it had been supporting schools for orphans and one TVET in the Benadir region, which was established by European Union in 2014. The TVET school was closed after the funding ended.<sup>28</sup>

Following the signing of the MoU,<sup>29</sup> the responsibility for education, particularly, schools in Benadir fell to the BRA. However, this was not meaningfully effective as was hoped for and envisaged in the MoU. The BRA Education Directorate took over 24 (now 25) public schools that employ roughly over 900 employees ranging from principals and deputy principals to teachers, guards and cleaners. Similarly, it assumed responsibility for regulating private schools in the region.<sup>30</sup>

According to figures this study obtained from the BRA education directorate, there are currently over 600 private schools and 25 public schools that are now registered in the Education Management Information System (EMIS). The number of private schools is higher than the current figure, but some schools did not come forth for registration at the BRA Education Directorate. The current schools, including the 25 public schools, has an approximately three hundred thousand (300,000) student population and nearly ten thousand (10,000) teachers. These numbers are not certainly conclusive but reflect only schools, students, and teachers that have so far registered in the database. The number could also be higher in the coming years.<sup>31</sup>

To collect school data, the FGS Ministry of Education handed over the EMIS to the BRA following the signature of the MoU. The database system was developed by the Ministry to register and maintain all educational data in all FMSs along with the BRA. Each FMS has a portal in the system that stores data from its area. Before the handover, the FGS Ministry of Education controlled the BRA portal, but following the MoU, BRA took over the responsibility of collecting and storing BRA education-related data.<sup>32</sup>

The registration of the schools in the system precedes the registration of their respective students. Thus, the system uses standards to determine whether a given school meets the requirements for registration such as safety measures, sanitation, and hygiene. Furthermore, schools cannot operate in a corrugated iron sheet building; and the classroom capacity must be greater than 8 x 8 or 8 x 7 meters. However, these pre-registration criteria have been shelved for the time being because no school would meet the criteria if they were applied rigidly in the current circumstances.<sup>33</sup> The registration of

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28 Interview with BRA senior official, 10 June 2022.

29 Before the establishment of the BRA education directorate, BRA has an Education Directorate with no staff as one interviewee told us.

30 Interview with BRA Education Directorate officer, 27 June 2022, Mogadishu.

31 Ibid.

32 Interview with BRA Education Directorate officer, 16 June 2022, Mogadishu.

33 Ibid.

schools was followed by the registration of students and teachers.

Similarly, the BRA took charge of administering the primary (grade 8) exams in the Benadir region and the issuance of the grade 8 certificate. FMSs, except Puntland, began taking the grade exams in the 2019/2020 school year while the FGS Ministry of Education and BRA jointly oversaw the exam in the Benadir region. This exercise came ahead of MoU finalization and represented a training gesture for preparing BRA to pick up this responsibility.<sup>34</sup>

In the subsequent year, 2020/2021, the year in which the education responsibility was assigned to BRA according to the MoU, the BRA facilitated the primary (grade 8) exam with the help of the Ministry of Education. As many as 25,885 students sat for the exam, which took place at 72 examination centers in the Benadir region (Wakaaladda Wararka Qaranka Soomaaliyeed, 2021).

Furthermore, since the transfer of education to BRA, the Directorate has begun providing services, though limited, to students and schools. By the virtue of decentralization, BRA issues grade 8 certificates for those who pass the exam. For this, it collects \$15 fees from each student. Further, it issues student transfer, student authentication certificates, and transcripts. For each of these services, students pay a \$10 fee.<sup>35</sup> Apart from the fee-paying services, the BRA Education Directorate also provides training to school teachers and principals.<sup>36</sup>

Notably, the aforementioned figures make Benadir the only region with such a high level of the student population in contrast to the FMSs. Yet, it has tenuous authority and control over the sector, and this is partly because the FGS Ministry of Education still retains the administration and finance of the public schools. The latter situation created a rupture in the relations between the two parties and subsequently fully derailed the implementation of the MoU as will be examined later in a subsequent section. In a similar vein, the private schools and private educational umbrellas in Benadir have vested interests and are resistant to the change and inclined to the continuation of the status quo.

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34 Ibid.

35 Interview with BRA Education Directorate officer, 27 June 2022, Mogadishu.

36 Ibid.

## The initial success of decentralization

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It is too early to fully evaluate the success of the decentralization of educational services to Benadir Regional Administration as only two school years have passed since the signing of the MOU and this period has been characterized by conflict between the signing parties. However, officials from both the Ministry of Education and the BRA noted certain laudable (albeit limited) achievements since then.

A senior member of the Benadir Regional Education Directorate who was interviewed stated that due to the decentralization of education to BRA, the student failure rate has dropped dramatically to 50% in the 2020/2021 national secondary schools examination. In the 2019/2020 exams, approximately 8,550 students-(accounting for 25% of the 33,727 students who undertook the exam)-from the Benadir region failed, causing rancorous debates in Mogadishu.<sup>37</sup>

To deal with the grave Benadir students' failure rate in the national secondary exam, the Benadir Regional Education Directorate claims that it conducted awareness among students, parents, teachers, schools, and principals on the importance of completing the curriculum and competing with other FMSs. In that regard, it undertook supervision to ensure that the curriculum and work plans in place are completed accordingly.<sup>38</sup>

Another area that witnessed improvement is the Education Management Information System (EMIS). A senior member of the Benadir Regional Education Directorate said that "when EMIS was handed over to BRA, it only contained 12% of Benadir schools data. Entry of school data was increased from 12% to 40%. This was a result of an assessment conducted in 2020. In 2022, the data is more than that".<sup>39</sup>

A similar achievement was that the BRA decentralized the services to districts and enabled citizens to access these services without needing to go to the central BRA headquarters. For this, the Education Directorate introduced four Regional Education Offices (REOs). The 17 districts together with the three residential settlements (Gubadley, Daru-salaam, and Garasbaley) in the Benadir region are banded together under these four REOs accounting for their geographical proximity to each other. These REOs are called Eastern, Northern, Western, and Central REOs. The REO is responsible for the educational services provided to a group of districts.

To further bring services closer to the citizens, the BRA Education Directorate said it was planning to open District Education Offices (DEOs). However, these have not yet materialized for reasons they linked to the conflict that emerged between the FGS Ministry of Education and BRA not long after the MoU was signed.

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37 Senior BRA education directorate, 29 May 2022, Mogadishu.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

The following table shows the number of districts and schools under each REO.

No	REO	Districts and Residential settlement	Number of Schools
1	<b>Eastern</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kaaraan</li> <li>• Yaaqshiid</li> <li>• Hiliwaa</li> <li>• Shibish</li> <li>• Gubadley</li> <li>• Darusalam</li> </ul>	180
2	<b>Northern</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hodon</li> <li>• Howlwadaag</li> <li>• Deynile</li> <li>• Garasbaaley</li> </ul>	200
3	<b>Western</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kaxda</li> <li>• Dharkenley</li> <li>• Wadajir</li> <li>• Waberi</li> </ul>	200
4	<b>Central</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Xamar Jajab</li> <li>• Xamar Weyne</li> <li>• Shingani</li> <li>• Abdiaziz</li> <li>• Warta Nabbadd</li> <li>• Boondheere</li> </ul>	62

**Source:** Figures in this table were compiled from the interviewees with some members of the BRA Education Directorate

## Challenges for the BRA in assuming new education duties

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The Benadir Regional Administration (BRA) encounters multiple challenges from different sources that together hamper it from taking hold of the education sector. Some of the salient problems are identified here.

**Undefined status:** this issue has blocked – and continues to block – the Benadir region’s population access to an administration that serves their needs. Elsewhere other regions have FMSs that exercise powers derived from the federal dispensation. Benadir’s constitutional status is still uncertain and has been deferred to the two houses of the federal parliament. Thus, the ambiguous status quo in the Benadir region has given the federal government the power to assume authority in Mogadishu that regional administration in a federated country should exercise.

Under the disguise of Benadir’s undefined status, the federal government has been controlling major services, including education and health, and appointing the administration of the Benadir region, which has the largest population in the country. Due to this situation, the BRA has no power to raise revenues. Most of the revenues are instead collected by the FGS to fund services, while other FMSs raise and manage different types of revenue from their respective regions. Thus, under the pretext of its undefined status, the FGS still runs the affairs of the Benadir region and appoints an administration that is really only answerable and loyal to the center.

**Entrenched private umbrellas’ influence:** Private umbrellas emerged following the collapse of the Somali state to fill the vacuum left by the government educational institutions. They played a praiseworthy role during the chaotic situations that the south and central regions experienced. However, after FGS re-introduced the unified national secondary exam in the FMSs in 2015 (except Puntland) and standardized national curriculum, the umbrellas felt threatened by the changes and began resisting. As a senior BRA Education Directorate official alleges, schools’ umbrellas became even more restless when education was transferred to the BRA. The official further said that umbrellas are rivals to the Education Directorate and try to challenge its authority. Therefore, they incite schools and students to disobey the instructions from the Directorate to maintain their previous authority over schools.<sup>40</sup> This challenge exists because there are no acts or regulations from the FGS Ministry of Education that have dissolved the umbrellas or regulate their continued role as non-state actors involved in schooling.

**Lack of adequate staff, training, and experience:** the Benadir Administration Regional Education Directorate, which is responsible for the educational services of a city with over 2 million people and over 600 schools, has, at the time of writing this study, roughly a hundred staff. This indicates that the Directorate is understaffed according to its significant responsibilities. Compounded by this personnel shortage is the lack of training for the staff. Those from the Directorate who were interviewed for this study emphasised

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40 Senior BRA education directorate, 29 May 2022, Mogadishu.

the fact that the staff has no training that would have helped them perform their duties effectively. Besides the inadequate number of staff and training, the interviewees from the directorate further pointed out that the staff is not recruited properly; an outcome that exacerbates the situation. Clan affiliation and patronage allegedly dominate the process and this compromises the suitability of recruited staff for the requirements of the position and undermines the fledging institution. In addition, most staff have had no prior work experience in similar institutions.

**Lack of MoU implementation:** the MoU between BRA and the Ministry of Education fell apart not long after its signature mainly due to disputes over the public schools' expenditure, administration, and management of donor projects. This culminated in a lack of realization of decentralization as most of the responsibilities to be given to the BRA remain in the hands of the FGS Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education.

## The triggers and consequences of the dispute over the dispensation

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According to the different sources interviewed for this study, two factors represent the triggers of the dispute while a third has contributed to the continuation of the conflict at the time of writing. The first two factors are financial and administrative whereas the third one is political.

After taking office in October 2020, the FGS Minister of Education Eng. Abdullahi Abukar Haji demanded that the BRA pay its financial obligations to the 24 public schools as set out in the MoU, and in order to get the agreement implemented on the ground. As discussed above, the parties agreed on the percentage allocation each is required to pay until BRA fully takes over the budget of the public schools. The first round of the dispute broke out after BRA failed to pay the allocated percentage (50%) of the teachers' salaries of the 24 public schools in the first month (August 2020) of the MoU implementation. A BRA senior official explained that this failure resulted from the BRA 2020 budget being approved before the signing of the MoU. The 2020 budget had no allocation for education, and this was only added in the following fiscal year (2021). Yet, this allocation was not paid because the BRA budget suffered a deficit due to the Covid-19 pandemic and ambiguities that surrounded the MoU as well.<sup>41</sup>

In 2022, the BRA approved the US \$53 million budget, and it did not include an allocation for public schools because of the continuing conflict between the BRA and the FGS Ministry of Education.<sup>42</sup> Donor projects that were intended to support education in Benadir represented the bone of contention. Different projects are implemented at public schools such as feeding programs, which provide breakfast and lunch for the public schools' students; construction projects; teacher and principals training projects; community education committees; schools materials brought by donor organizations; alternative basic education (ABE), and the Teach or Learn (Bar ama Baro in Somali) programme.<sup>43</sup>

Citing the MoU, the BRA demanded to have the money earmarked for the development of Benadir education transferred to it since the educational services was now decentralized. However, the Ministry of Education argued that BRA failed to pay its allocation of the public schools' expenditure in the first year to implement the MoU. This provided the Ministry with an excuse to say that the BRA was not ready to take over its responsibility in the MoU.<sup>44</sup>

On 7 July 2021, the Benadir Regional Education Directorate issued a decree that imposes new service fees to create sources that generate revenue. The decree contained 19 service types that are due to be taxed. The new tariffs targeted students, schools, universities, educational organizations, and teachers (Hiiraan Online, 2021)

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41 Interview with BRA senior official, 10 June 2022, Mogadishu.

42 Ibid.

43 Interview with BRA Education Directorate officer, 16 June 2022, Mogadishu.

44 Ibid.

Following this, different concerned stakeholders in the Benadir region - including Benadir schools associations, teachers' unions, and university associations - held meetings and strongly denounced the tariffs on the new services and described how the new fees put a further burden on the back of already financially struggling families and institutions. The protests intensified the dispute and provided further ammunition to the FGS Ministry. Seizing this opportunity, the Ministry of Education annulled the fees in a press release on 8 November 2021. According to the press release, the Ministry said: "it took this move after it received complaints from the wider education stakeholders in Benadir concerning the high fees the Benadir Regional Education Directorate imposed on students, schools, and essential educational services" (GoobJooqe, 2021).

Subsequently, the BRA issued a counter-press release on 9 November 2021 just a day after the Ministry's. The BRA reiterated that it is responsible for education in the Benadir region as per the signed MoU. The press release said that the Ministry of Education cannot cancel the services fees imposed by the BRA mayor and governor in compliance with the national laws that give such power to the mayor of Mogadishu (who is also the governor of the Benadir region) (Jowhar, 2021).

Barely two days after BRA's press release, Benadir traditional elders convened a gathering in Mogadishu on 11 November and issued a press release in which they called on the Ministry of Education to give autonomy to BRA in the administration of education similar to other FMS and stop flagrant interference (Qaranimo Online, 2021). To exert pressure on the Ministry, according to BRA officers, the BRA mobilized traditional elders and organized the gathering for them to show that elders are on its side.<sup>45</sup> The dispute over the payment of the public schools' expenditure evolved into an administrative hurdle. Despite the BRA's failure to pay its percentage allocation, it began exercising its authority over the public schools using the MoU as justification.

In the meantime, the Benadir Regional Education Directorate introduced a reshuffle of the principals and deputy principals at 7 public schools, purportedly to improve the quality of education. This came out from recommendations, that the BRA Education Directorate established, to assess the performance of the public schools. Its recommendations included discharging some principals from their responsibilities and transferring some others to the Directorate.<sup>46</sup>

Most of the schools complied with the new order but two – Bartamaha in Shingani district and Mohamud Mire in Waberi district – allegedly made an objection. Students were mobilized and demonstrations took place against the new principals appointed to these schools. Bartamaha school administrators later accepted the changes. Yet, Mohamud Mire stood defiant to the order, and this is primarily because the school principal, a woman, allegedly had social connections in the neighbourhood of the school and political connections, too, with politicians from her clan. Owing to these resources, she has remained in her position.

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45 Interview with BRA education directorate, 16 June 2022, Mogadishu.

46 Interview with senior BRA official, 10 June 2022, Mogadishu.

The attempt to apply the new orders brought about violence. For instance, at Mohamud Mire school, students hurled stones at a vehicle for the Director-General of the Benadir Regional Education Directorate. But no casualty was reported. Likewise, Bartamaha school students staged a demonstration, which was accompanied by a major disturbance. Nonetheless, the BRA accused the Ministry of Education of interfering with the process and inciting school principals against the measures of the Directorate.<sup>47</sup>

The new changes met strong opposition and challenge from the FGS Ministry of Education. On 16 November 2022, the Ministry issued a statement addressed to the public schools to suspend taking orders from any other party except the Ministry. Though the statement implied the BRA it did not mention Benadir Regional Education Directorate by name. Nevertheless, the statement instructed the schools to cooperate with their immediate district administrations. It further said that school principals must only obey orders directly from the Ministry, which pays schools' expenditures and delegates to the principals the power they exercise in their schools (Wasaaradda Waxbarashada, Dhaqanka & Tacliinta Sare, 2021).

Under pressure from the contradicting commands from the conflicting parties, public school administrators formed a committee to seek an audience with the parties. The committee sat down with the FGS Minister of Education and the BRA mayor and governor but to no avail.<sup>48</sup> The situation escalated to the extent that BRA used district police to prevent public schools from taking orders from the Ministry. This limited the access of the Ministry to the public schools and also halted the ongoing projects in the schools.<sup>49</sup>

The restless retaliatory measures both parties resorted to had negative ramifications on education, particularly in public schools. It resulted in stopping the ongoing construction projects implemented by the FGS Ministry of Education. Subsequently, the Ministry announced that it would process the transfer of students free of charge.<sup>50</sup>

The Benadir Regional Education Directorate introduced the registration of teachers at public and private schools. The process required that each teacher pay \$61 (\$15 for a birth certificate, \$15 for a BRA ID card, and \$31 for Criminal Investigation Division (CID) clearance). However, the Ministry of Education cancelled the process.<sup>51</sup>

This study found that several incidents occurred as a result of the dispute. For instance, the Ministry of Education limited the access of the Benadir Regional Education Directorate to the Education Management Information System (EMIS). The Ministry explained this as a technical problem, and it later restored the access. Subsequently, the BRA downloaded students' data from the EMIS and developed a separate database that it manages and where it has re-stored the data.<sup>52</sup>

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47 Interview with senior BRA official, 10 June 2022, Mogadishu.

48 Interview with BRA Education Directorate officer, 16 June 2022, Mogadishu.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 Interview with BRA education directorate, 16 June 2022, Mogadishu.

Along with the financial and administrative factors that gave rise to the conflict, the third contributing factor was the heightened political tension between President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo and Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble over the indirect electoral process. The former BRA mayor/governor and the Minister of Education were both friends and allies to Farmaajo and Roble respectively and this situation prevented a settlement of the dispute. The conflict still prevails without any resolution. Although the parties appointed a 7-member -(3 from BRA and 4 from Ministry of Education)-committee in February and March 2022 respectively to iron out the differences and work out a solution this has not yet made any headway.

## Conclusion

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This study has investigated the FGS Ministry of Education's decentralization efforts of education management to the Benadir Regional Administration from the MoU of August 2020. Since then, decentralization has made some progress, notably in regards to increased registration of student, school, and teacher data at the Education Management Information System (EMIS), and the administration of grade 8 exams by the BRA.

Notwithstanding these developments, the Benadir Regional Education Directorate is being weighed down by multiple challenges; the undefined status of Mogadishu city, and the lack of adequate funding and human resources. However, much of the potential of decentralization has been hampered by a dispute that arose between the parties not long after striking the deal, focusing mainly on the public schools' expenditure and administration. To help alleviate this situation, this study suggests that until Mogadishu's fate in the federal system is finally determined the current FGS should establish a local council that will elect its mayor and governor instead of the former appointing this position directly. The study also suggests that FGS allocates funds to BRA to cover public school expenditures.

## Recommendations

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Having explored the educational services decentralization to the BRA, the study found that it faces numerous challenges that inhibit it from delivering the responsibilities it acquired. Among these obstacles, is the dispute that has stalled the implementation of the agreement. Accordingly, the study presents recommendations to overcome the challenges.

1. Benadir region lacks a legitimate administration to represent the needs and interests of the local people, deliver services, and be answerable to the people. Thus, to narrow that gap, the current FGS leadership should prioritize establishing a local council for the Benadir region to elect a competent, committed and accountable mayor and governor for the administration. To realize this, the FGS should not tie the formation of a legitimate and representative administration to the constitutional review process and a decision from both houses of the federal parliament. This is unlikely to come soon because of the intractability and sensitivity of the issue. The new administration to be formed would serve the people of the Benadir region until the status of Mogadishu is determined. The current status of Mogadishu is a predicament for those who reside there, and its continuation deprives the due rights of millions of Somali citizens, while their fellow citizens have FMSs that exercise constitutional power in their respective jurisdictions (albeit to varying degrees). A new BRA administration should exercise full authority on the provision of all services in the regions similar to the other FMSs.
2. The implementation of the MoU generated much controversy. Hence, to resolve the current undermining gridlock, parties should strive to review and refine the MoU to clarify ambiguous provisions with the counsel and help of legal experts who can identify gaps and contradictions.
3. To enable the Benadir Regional Administration to cover the expenditure of the 25 public schools, the FGS should appropriate budgetary support for the Benadir Regional Education Directorate. The FGS should not leave that responsibility to the BRA since it controls and collects revenue from the Benadir region's major sources of revenue. The budget allocation for BRA should be proportional to its population and resources. On the other hand, the BRA should commit itself to the 15% budget allocation for the education in Benadir as specified in the MoU. Showing commitment to this allocation will induce other parties such as donor organizations supporting education projects to inject more funds.
4. To enable the Benadir Regional Education Directorate to deliver its enormous duties effectively, the FGS Ministry of Education and relevant donor organizations should capacitate staff at the directorate who come from different backgrounds and lack the required credentials, skills, and experiences for working at such an institution. For the BRA to have capable staff who can diligently perform their responsibilities, it should not recruit staff based on clan considerations but rather on their suitability for the role. This is a missing quality across all FMS and FGS government institutions

and is crippling the efficiency and effectiveness of those institutions.

5. The role of the private educational umbrellas has been diminishing ever since the Federal Government of Somalia and the Federal Member States took over the responsibility for services, including education. This new shift alienated the long-time serving umbrellas and resulted in cold relations first between the Ministry of Education in Mogadishu and the umbrellas, and later between the Benadir Regional Education Directorate and umbrellas in the wake of education decentralization. To build a healthy and cooperative relationship that serves the advancement of the education in Benadir region, the Benadir Regional Education Directorate should engage with them to utilize their experience, and even accommodate them in the directorate in the future as they may be able to help fill certain capacity gaps within the BRA. Similar to the umbrellas, the Education Directorate should not antagonize the newly formed school associations and teachers' unions but view them through a positive lens. These new organizations are important stakeholders that have been absent from the education landscape of the country during the chaotic period of state collapse. Their rebirth serves the interests of the groups they represent and also checks the power of the directorate.

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## About Somali Public Agenda

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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.

### What We Do

**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 the 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 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 meet-ups) 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 SPA Policy Lab. In collaboration with policymakers, public administrators, and the community, we design knowledge-based public services. Before the government invests resources in the policies, programmes, and projects designed, we envisage experimenting 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's aim is to connect the civil servants, policymakers, 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 the desire and passion to join the public sector as well as professionals engaged in the civil service and non-profit sectors.



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