



# ANNUAL REPORT 2024



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# CONTENTS

<b>Letter from the Executive Director</b> . . . . .	<b>1</b>
<b>Key 2024 Highlights</b> . . . . .	<b>4</b>
<b>About SPA</b> . . . . .	<b>5</b>
Vision & Mission . . . . .	5
Our History . . . . .	5
Our Approach . . . . .	6
<b>Research Outputs and Publications</b> . . . . .	<b>8</b>
Research Reports . . . . .	8
Policy Papers . . . . .	11
Governance Briefs . . . . .	13
Commentaries . . . . .	17
<b>Programmes and Centers</b> . . . . .	<b>18</b>
SPA Policy Lab. . . . .	18
Centre for Learning and Development . . . . .	20
Public Agenda Forum . . . . .	23
Internships . . . . .	26
Podcasts . . . . .	26
<b>Outreach and Impact</b> . . . . .	<b>28</b>
<b>Partnerships and Collaborations</b> . . . . .	<b>35</b>
<b>Financial Highlights</b> . . . . .	<b>36</b>
<b>Institutional Capacity Development</b> . . . . .	<b>37</b>
<b>2025 Projections and Priorities</b> . . . . .	<b>38</b>
<b>Appendices</b> . . . . .	<b>39</b>
Staff . . . . .	39
Fellows. . . . .	39
Board of Advisors. . . . .	39

## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



2024 was another productive year for the Somali Public Agenda (SPA). We published 16 papers, held 19 forums, produced 24 podcast episodes, trained 42 bloggers and 23 early career researchers, engaged and talked to local and international media, attended conferences and workshops, trained 4 interns, and started working with other like-minded institutions.

In 2024, SPA conducted and published various extensive studies. Our 16 papers included four [research reports](#), three [policy papers](#), five [governance briefs](#), and four [commentaries](#). We undertook research and analysis on key governance and public service issues in Somalia, including security, local council formation and operations, Somalia's membership to the East African Community (EAC), civil society and the media's role in humanitarian accountability, elections, the constitutional review process, the federal government budget, and taxation. SPA also produced joint papers with other research institutions: two studies with the Rift Valley Institute (RVI) and a joint paper with the Puntland Development Research Center (PDRC) and Sababi Institute.

Moreover, SPA published three policy papers in 2024 on contentious issues on elections in the constitutional review process, Somalia's new electoral bill, and Somalia's new sales tax. SPA published five governance briefs on elections in Puntland, the Constitutional Amendment Procedure, the FGS annual budget, the UNSOM to UNTMIS transition, and insecurity in Beledweyne. SPA also published four commentaries on several governance and public service issues, including

the Ethiopia-Somaliland MoU, Somalia's election conundrum, and a review and analysis of two electoral bills.

Our [Public Agenda Forum](#) organized 19 events in 2024. Over 525 participants attended our in-person forums, while 1,200 turned in our X Spaces Discussions. Different governance and public service issues were discussed in these various forums, including elections, public land, regional developments, FGS-FMS relations, security, the constitutional review, accountability, and taxation.

In 2024, we produced and released 24 podcast episodes. The [Maamul Wanaag Podcast](#) produced 12 episodes, delving deep into various governance matters in Somalia. The guests of the Maamul Wanaag Podcast broadly discussed and analyzed governance topics, including accountability and transparency, stabilization, FGS and Puntland relations, local elections in Puntland, Ethiopia-Somaliland MoU, and the annual federal government budget. SPA also published 12 [Adeeg Wanaag Podcast](#) episodes. Adeeg Wanaag provides detailed discussion of public service matters in Somalia. The 12 episodes released in 2024 covered e-governance, disaster response, sales tax, media and civil society roles in humanitarian accountability, skin bleaching, sewage and drainage, the entertainment landscape in Somalia, the quality of primary education, mental health problems, football tournaments, and the impact of climate change in Somalia.

In 2024, our two podcasts were downloaded and listened to 9673 times. The full podcast videos published on YouTube in 2024 received over 19,960 views. The combined views of podcast short videos were 230,717 views. The podcast audio and videos were downloaded or viewed 250,680 times.

The [SPA Policy Lab](#) coordinated the first year of a 3-year EU-funded project to increase opportunities for Somali citizens and strengthen civil society's role in scrutinizing fiscal and financial governance within local government authorities. The SPA Policy Lab has also collaborated with similar organizations to address design issues and share experiences.

The [SPA Center for Learning and Development \(CLD\)](#) conducted two successful blog writing training in January-February and July-August 2023 for 42 talented young bloggers. During the two trainings, trainees wrote over 160 blog posts and shared them with their social media networks. Throughout the eight weeks of the 4-week training, renowned Somali bloggers mentored the trainees, shared their blogging journeys, and gave invaluable advice. Moreover, 23 trainees (18 males and 5 females) completed the SPA Center for Learning and Development 5-week-long research training course in 2024.

Four interns (one male and three female) completed three-month internships in 2024. The interns contributed to the work of the different SPA departments and research productions. The internship provides much-needed experience for recent university graduates. Four interns who took the three-month-long internship wrote reflections (published on the SPA website) about their [internship experiences](#).



SPA maintained a collaborative relationship with our partners and donors and started new relationships. We are currently working with the Rift Valley Institute's [Somali Dialogue Platform](#) on research and engagement related to contentious political issues in Somalia. In 2024, we continued our working relationship with [the Life and Peace Institute](#) (LPI), the [Overseas Development Institute](#) (ODI), and the [Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation \(CSV\)](#). In 2024, The European Union provided us with a multiyear grant to increase opportunities for Somali citizens' scrutiny of fiscal and financial governance. The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) supported an ongoing study on taxation in the Benadir region in 2024. We also strengthened our engagement and relationship with civil society organizations in Somalia; we became a member of the Somali Research and Education Network (SomaliREN) and Somalia Non-State Actors (SONSA) in 2024.

We maintained a good relationship with the media. International and local media outlets regularly interviewed us. Goobjoog Radio & TV, Voice of Banadir Region (Codka Caasimadda), Hiiran Weyn, Bilan Media, Mustaqbal Media, Dawan TV, Somali Cable TV, RTN Somali TV, BBC, Asal TV, Dalsan TV, Press TV, and VOA Somali were some of the media houses that regularly interviewed or invited our team members to participate in debates. Our researchers and analysts were invited to various forums, workshops, and conferences in 2024.

Our work also shaped policy-making in Somalia in 2024. Some of our election analysis recommendations were incorporated into the political parties law, such as reducing the prohibitive \$100,000 registration fees of political associations to \$10,000 and limiting the tenure of the three national political parties to 10-15 years.

Our work in 2025 will focus on elections, the constitutional review process, public finance management, accountability and transparency, taxation, reconciliation, transitional justice, urbanization, and education. Studies, briefs, policy papers, commentaries, forums, and podcasts on these issues will be our priorities in 2025.

It has been an honor for me to lead our talented, youthful, and competent SPA team. Despite the limited human capital and financial resources, security concerns, and other challenges of 2024, SPA has consistently produced high-quality papers and created a space for important discussions both online and in person.

Finally, we are grateful for the unwavering support of our distinguished Board members and our fellows. Special gratitude goes to Peter Chonka, who spends many hours reading and editing our work every year. 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 seventh year, we look forward to producing quality research outputs, creating space for discussion on key national issues, offering training, and helping public and civic institutions design human-centered public services.

[Mahad Wasuge](#) is the Executive Director of the Somali Public Agenda.

# KEY 2024 HIGHLIGHTS



SPA published 16 papers, including 4 research reports, 3 policy papers, 5 governance briefs, and 4 commentaries.



Our Public Agenda Forum organized 19 forums in 2024. Over 525 participants attended our in-person forums, while around 1,200 tuned in to our X Spaces Discussions.



We produced and released 24 podcast episodes. The podcast audio and videos were downloaded or viewed 250,680 times.



The SPA Center for Learning and Development (CLD) conducted successful blog writing training for 42 talented young bloggers and research methods training for 23 early career researchers.



Four interns (two male and two female) completed three-month internships in 2024.



Our researchers and analysts were invited to multiple forums, workshops, and conferences in Somalia and abroad.



Agence France-Presse (AFP), The National, and BBC Somali quoted our researchers in 2024.



We were regularly interviewed (24 times) by international and local media outlets, including Goobjoog Radio & TV, Voice of Banadir Region (Codka Caasimadda), Hiiran Weyn, Bilan Media, Mustaqbal Media, Dawan TV, Somali Cable TV, RTN Somali TV, BBC, Asal TV, Dalsan TV, Press TV, and VOA Somali.

## ABOUT SPA

Somali Public Agenda is a nonprofit, non-partisan, and independent public policy and administration research and action organization based in Mogadishu. It aims to advance understanding and improvement of public policy and services in Somalia through evidence-based research and analysis, dialogue, policy and service design, and training.

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.

### Vision & Mission

**Vision:** Somali citizens are able to access public services that are responsive, evidence-based, and inclusive.

**Mission:** To increase the capacity of Somali governance institutions, civil society, and international partners to deliver effective public services to Somali citizens.

### Our History

Somali Public Agenda is an independent, non-partisan, and nonprofit think and action tank based in Mogadishu, Somalia, that works to advance the delivery of responsive, evidence-based, and inclusive public services in Somalia. Founded on January 10, 2018, in Somalia, Somali Public Agenda's analytical work started with monthly commentaries published in both English and Somali languages in 2018.

SPA's work and focus has expanded gradually over the years. In 2019, Somali Public Agenda introduced Governance Briefs. In 2020, SPA started conducting in-depth studies across Somalia. In 2022, Somali Public Agenda introduced Policy Papers as the fourth type of publication. In seven years, between January 2018 and December 2024, SPA published 101 publications: 46 commentaries, 31 governance briefs, 8 policy papers, and 16 research reports.

To realize SPA's objective of co-designing policies and services with public and civic institutions as well as building capacity in the public sector, two centers were established in August 2020. The SPA Policy Lab was launched to become the action research center that helps public institutions design human-centered public policies and services. The Center has a director and has been doing action research and co-designing work on governance and service matters in Somalia.

Moreover, the SPA Center for Learning and Development was launched in August 2020. The Center has a director and introduced two flagship blog writing and research methods training for the Somali youth. The Center has started to build capacity in the public sector.

The Public Agenda Forum created a much-needed space for dialogue among Somali stakeholders. The Public Agenda Forum, together with Maamul Wanaag and Adeeg Wanaag podcasts, creates a space for discussions and dialogue on key governance and public service matters in Somalia. ‘SPA Podcasts’ were started in mid-2019. In August 2021, our podcasts were rearranged; the previous name was changed, and the new Maamul Wanaag podcast was launched. This podcast delves deeply into various governance matters in Somalia. On October 1, 2022, Adeeg Wanaag Podcast was launched. The Adeeg Wanaag Podcast’s episodes focus on discussions and analysis of service issues in Somalia.

The SPA team has been growing gradually. Several graduates from our flagship internship programme have become full-time members of the team. SPA’s work is primarily led by young people who studied and live in Somalia. Our headquarters is in Mogadishu. However, SPA’s work in Federal Member States has been increasing since 2020. The combination of research and analysis, dialogue, podcasts, co-design policies, and services with public and civic institutions, and providing training to workers in the public and nonprofit sectors is designed to amplify citizens’ voices and positively impact policy-making and service delivery across Somalia.

### Our Approach

To advance the understanding and improvement of public services and governance in Somalia, we apply policy-oriented and evidence-based research. We convene dialogue and podcasts and create a space to discuss key governance matters in Somalia. We co-design public programmes and projects at both the service delivery and policy-making levels with public and civic institutions. We also conduct practical and sustainable training on governance and service delivery for public sector institutions, youth, and civil society.

**Research:** Somali Public Agenda contributes to the understanding and improvement of public administration in Somalia by studying and analyzing various issues that affect public policies and the provision of public services. SPA regularly publishes research reports, policy papers, governance briefs, and commentaries (most of the time in both the Somali and English languages). These publications often inform and influence 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 meetups, bimonthly off-the-record discussions, on-the-record public forums, and dissemination forums) serves as an avenue for critical examinations of issues of public priorities. Different segments of society, including researchers, policymakers, and practitioners are invited to meet and discuss issues on equal terms. The [Public Agenda Forum](#) convenes dialogue with policymakers and public figures and organizes workshops, seminars, and book/report launches. Often the findings of the discussions help inform the Somali Public Agenda’s



research and analytical outputs.

**Podcasts:** Somali Public Agenda has two podcasts, namely Maamul Wanaag and Adeeg Wanaag. Somalia faces multiple governance challenges. The country is recovering from years of conflict, lawlessness, and weak administration. Understanding and improving governance in Somalia is one of the core missions of the Somali Public Agenda. Mahad Wasuge, SPA Executive Director, and his guests delve deep into governance issues in Somalia in the [Maamul Wanaag podcast](#).

Public services in Somalia are limited due to the weakness of government institutions that are struggling to recover from the destruction caused by conflict. However, even those government services that do exist fail to serve people effectively. Access to public services is a fundamental right for Somali citizens. Aweis Ahmed, the director of the SPA Policy Lab, and his guests discuss in depth public service matters in Somalia in the [Adeeg Wanaag podcast](#).

**Public Service Design:** Based on the findings and policy recommendations of our studies, we design public policies, programmes, and projects with the relevant public and civic authorities through our [SPA Policy Lab](#). We design knowledge-based public services in collaboration with policymakers, public administrators, and the community. 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 training courses to contribute to the building of administrative cadres that can deliver public policies and programmes to the community. Moreover, the Center provides training to Somali professionals who have the desire and passion to advance the art of writing and research as well as those interested in joining the public sector or are engaged in the nonprofit sector. The thematic areas for the professional training programmes are:

1. Leadership & Good Governance
2. Human Resources Management
3. Information Management and Data Science
4. Public Policy Planning
5. Public Budgeting
6. Public Finance Management
7. Planning and Programmes Management
8. Monitoring and Evaluations
9. Strategic Communication and Public Relations
10. Bespoke Courses for Public and Civic Institutions

# RESEARCH OUTPUTS AND PUBLICATIONS

2024 was a productive year for Somali Public Agenda. We published 16 papers. Our 16 papers included 4 research reports, 3 policy paper, 5 governance briefs, and 4 commentaries. We undertook research and analysis on key governance and public service issues in Somalia including the formation and operations of local councils, local council elections in Puntland, the constitutional amendment process, electoral bills, Somalia's membership to the East African Community, Somali civil society and media role in humanitarian accountability, annual budget, sales tax, security, and the controversial MoU between Ethiopia and Somaliland.

## Research Reports

In 2024, SPA produced four reports.

**Understanding the formation and operation of local councils in Southwest, Hirshabelle, and Galmudug states (January 31)**



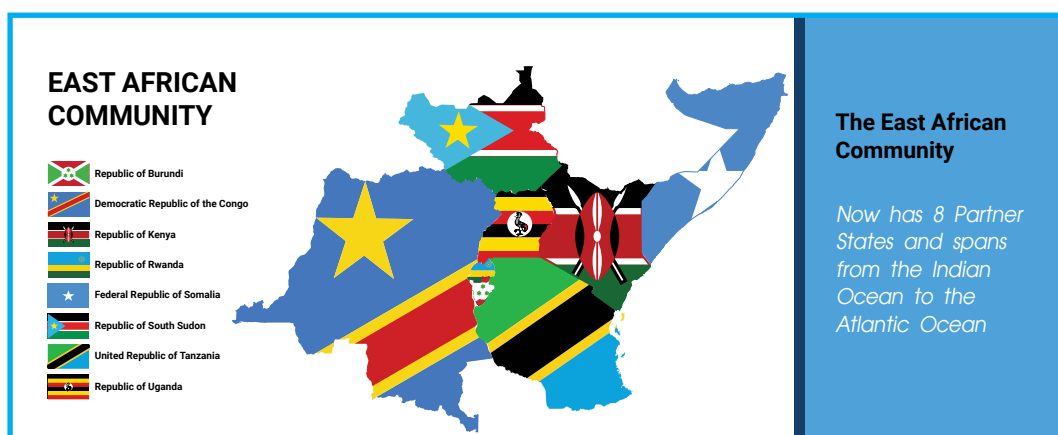
This study examines [district council formation \(DCF\) in three FMSs](#); Southwest, Hirshabelle, and Galmudug. In particular, it zooms in on the current status of the District Council Formation (DCF) at the FMSs, hindrances that the DCF process has faced in the districts where the process was implemented, obstacles underlying the functionality of the formed DCs; the ex/inclusivity of the process; and the challenges that hampered the launching and/or implementation of the DCF process in the main accessible districts in the three FMSs. The study aims to inform policymakers at state and federal levels, as well as DCF programming.

### Prospects for Somalia's transition from clan-based politics to multipartyism in the 2026 election (March 6)



The study examined [Somalia's shift from clan-based political authority to multipartyism](#). It indicated that a transition to multiparty elections in 2026 is unlikely due to insufficient legislation and institutions. Missing legislation includes an electoral model, citizenship, civil registration, a constitutional court, anti-corruption measures, and campaign financing. As of early 2024, the provisional Constitution is unfinalized, making timely implementation of a new constitution for the 2026 elections unlikely. This transition is hindered by challenges like insecurity, lack of political will, inadequate funding, insufficient civic education, and persistent conflicts between Somalia's federal government and its member states. Therefore, the study recommends that the Federal Government of Somalia expedite finalizing the provisional Constitution, implement legislative reforms on citizenship, and more. Additionally, local elections should be prioritized to pave the way for national multiparty elections.

### Opportunities and Challenges for Somalia's Membership to the East African Community (March 26)



Following Somalia's entry into the East African Community (EAC) on November 24, 2023, this paper analyses the [challenges and opportunities arising from its integration](#). It highlights profound challenges for Somalia's EAC membership,



including structural issues like insecurity, political discord, weak governance, and insufficient infrastructure. Additionally, cultural and skill disparities between Somalis and other EAC citizens present further barriers. Conversely, the paper identifies opportunities such as regional collaboration against insecurity, legal standardization, and improved adherence to international finance, economy, and technology systems. Integration can also enhance investment in the blue economy, fostering job creation. The study advises the Somali government to address these challenges thoughtfully.

### **The role of national civil society and media in supporting accountability around humanitarian interventions in Somalia (October 20)**



Over recent decades, accountability has become a key focus in the humanitarian sector, with increasing efforts to prioritize affected people. However, the sector has not fully achieved its goal of improving accountability to these communities. A core challenge is that much of the accountability discussion remains internal among humanitarian agencies and donors,

with limited attention to how accountability is understood and practiced locally in crisis-affected communities. The debate often excludes perspectives from local actors, such as national civil society, media, and advocacy organizations. Policy research has primarily focused on the views of humanitarian agencies and donors, particularly from the Global North, while perspectives from the Global South have been overlooked. This study aims to address this gap by [examining how domestic actors in Somalia, including local media, civil society organizations, and government institutions, view and engage with accountability](#). It identifies overlooked perspectives, examines how local stakeholders attempt to improve accountability to their communities, analyses the political economy dynamics shaping these efforts, addresses main challenges, and presents targeted recommendations to each stakeholder.



## Policy Papers

During 2024, SPA produced three Policy papers.

### **Addressing contentious issues on elections in the constitutional review process (March 25)**



This policy paper aims to contribute to a better informed, inclusive, and realistic discussion of Somalia's future elections. [In providing an analysis of the provisional federal Constitution's revised Chapter 4](#), it offers insights that parliamentarians and other stakeholders can make use of in debates concerning the constitutional review process and the core components of the National Consultative Council election agreement. The paper explores possible options regarding the system of government, the electoral model, political parties, and the election management body. Beyond this, it analyses the technical aspects and challenges of implementing the proposed electoral roadmap once it is agreed upon and voted for in Parliament. The paper is based on the revised version of Chapter 4 submitted by the parliamentary Oversight Committee (OC) and the Independent Constitutional Review and Implementation Commission (ICRIC) to Parliament on February 12, 2024. In addition, Somali Public Agenda (SPA) conducted a number of interviews with politicians and intellectuals in order to reflect their views on the proposed election arrangements.

### Somalia's new electoral bill: insights and implications (September 29)



On Thursday, August 8, 2024, the FGS Council of Ministers approved the National Electoral Bill and the Political Associations and Political Parties Bill. The two bills, along with the establishment bill of the election management body, approved by the cabinet on July 19, are the three primary pieces of legislation that would govern elections in Somalia. The three bills approved by the cabinet are primarily based on the recent amendments of the Provisional Federal Constitution and will go through parliamentary view before they are voted on. This [policy paper specifically analyzes the key contents of the National Electoral Bill](#).

### Examining Somalia's new sales tax (November 26)



This policy paper draws from a forum held by Somali Public Agenda (SPA) on September 3, 2024, following the introduction of the new sales tax, as well as existing literature and interviews with businesspeople, FGS Ministry of Finance, and the public. It seeks to provide [an analysis of Somalia's newly implemented 5% sales tax](#) and its

economic, fiscal, and social implications. It explores the problems that may impede its successful implementation and investigates the public response to the tax

from various socioeconomic viewpoints. Finally, the paper informs policymakers, stakeholders, and the general public by identifying opportunities and challenges and presents practical suggestions for balancing budgetary goals with economic stability and social welfare.

## Governance Briefs

SPA produced five governance briefs in 2024.

### **Mass Attitudes Toward ‘One Person, One Vote’ in the Wake of Puntland’s 2024 Electoral Crisis (February 15)**



The May 25 local government elections, while flawed in some ways, were widely seen as an important and positive step forward in the realization of democratization in Puntland. In light of events since then, it is reasonable to wonder whether Puntland’s democratization has stalled or if the failure to hold further One Person One Vote elections represents backsliding away from direct, democratic participation. Critical – and under-examined in the Puntland context – is the extent of popular support for OPOV elections. Similarly, throughout public and private discussions of the way forward in this election cycle, expert commentators, analysts, and citizens alike have had to grapple with the tangible tradeoffs between OPOV elections, on one hand, and enforcing other tenets of good governance – e.g., abiding by time-limited terms and respecting freedom of assembly – on the other. Missing from these debates is empirical evidence on the opinions of Puntland’s citizens and their views of these tradeoffs. Rigorous evidence of this kind is important for predicting the likely trajectory of Puntland’s democratization, insofar as citizen preferences are important here; it is also essential for understanding the depth of democratic principles held by citizens and how they view tradeoffs between beneficial but mutually exclusive ‘goods’ – tradeoffs that are unavoidable in any polity. [In this brief](#), we report the results of a survey conducted jointly by the Puntland Development Research Center (PDRC), the Sababi Institute, and Somali Public Agenda (SPA) during December and early January. The goal of the study was to understand citizen preferences regarding OPOV elections in Puntland.



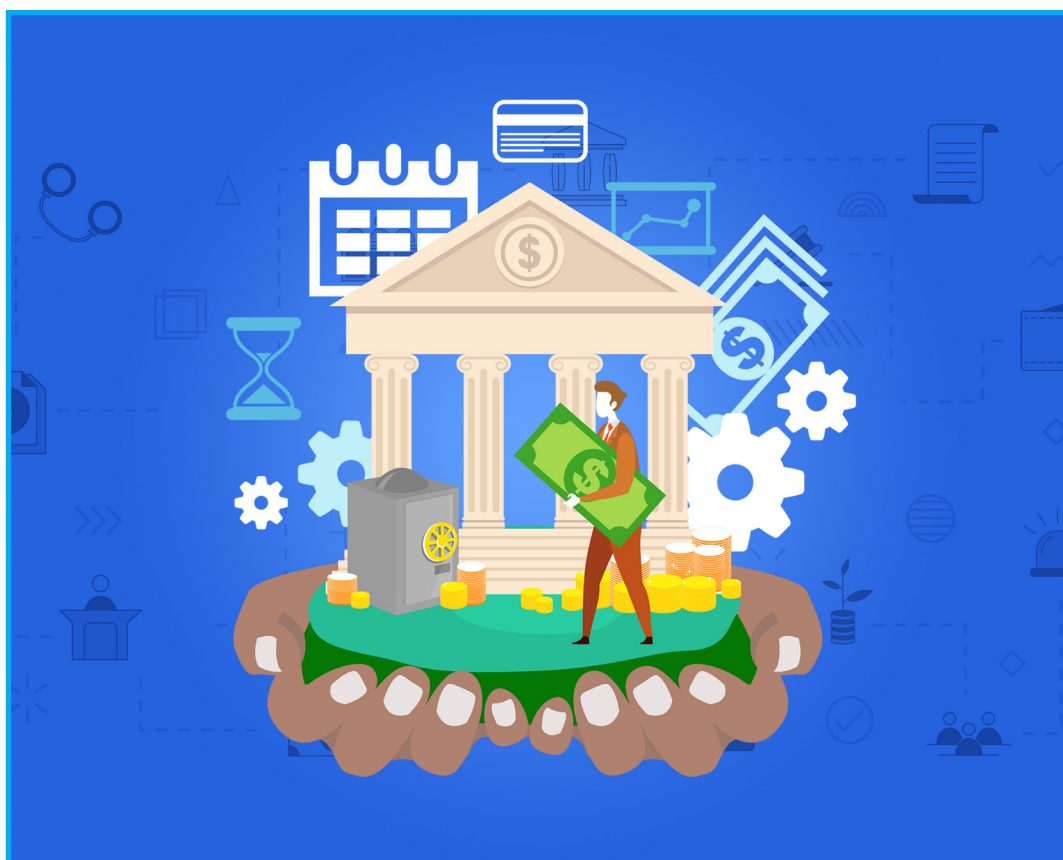
### **The Constitutional Amendment Procedure: Analysis of the Process and the Role and Participation of the Civil Society Introduction (February 29)**



On January 24, Somalia's Federal Parliament approved the 'Adoption Procedure for Constitutional Amendment' in a joint session of the House of the People and the Upper House. The five-page procedure consists of eight articles. Articles three, four, and five detail the three phases of the constitutional review and ratification process. The Independent Constitutional Review and Implementation Commission (ICRIC) uses the National Consultative Council (NCC) political agreements in its revisions of chapters of the Constitution. In phase one the revisions will be presented to Parliament and ten other offices. In phase two, the Parliament deliberates on the substance of the revisions and changes. And finally, in phase three, the Parliament will review the final incorporated version and endorse it with the required two-thirds majority. The process offers a level of participation and input for the Parliament, other government institutions, and civil society. However, some politicians opposed the procedure and how it was voted on in the Parliament. [This brief analyses the Adoption Procedure for the Constitutional Amendment](#) and the actors who opposed it. It explores ways in which civil society can contribute to and influence the constitutional review process and concludes with several policy considerations. These include the suggestions that the Parliamentary Oversight Committee (OC) and ICRIC engage multiple stakeholders, that the federal government involves other political stakeholders, and that civil society engages with policymakers and citizens in the constitutional review process.



## Review of the Federal Government of Somalia's First Billion-dollar Budget for 2024 (April 3)



The federal government of Somalia's budget for 2024 was approved by the Parliament in a joint session on December 9, 2023. The 2024 budget totals \$1,079,315,784, a 4 percent increase from last year's \$977 million budget. Even though the theme of this year's budget remains 'Relying on Our Domestic Revenue,' 66.7 percent of the appropriated budget (\$694.6 million) is expected from donors, while domestic revenue is \$346.2 million, or 33.3 percent. In the expenditure plan, the budget allocates 20 percent to social service delivery, 24.5 percent goes to defense and security sector institutions, and 22.3 percent is allocated to economic development institutions. This [brief analyzes the 2024 federal budget](#) and its main allocations for the administration, security, social services, and economic development sectors. Finally, the brief outlines key recommendations, including continuing accountability-strengthening measures to reduce corruption and the perception of corruption. The brief also recommends improving social services, including health and human capital, through quality education and an increased budget for health services. Finally, it calls for increasing domestic revenue and decreasing the reliance on donor support.

### **Analysis of the Federal Government's push to end the UN's Special Political Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) (June 27)**



On May 5 2024, the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) dispatched an official letter to the United Nations Secretary-General asking for the closure of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), which has been in operation for 11 years. This governance [brief analyses the FGS's demand to liquidate the special political mission](#), UNSOM. In so doing, it lays out brief context to the introduction of UNSOM in Somalia and proceeds to sketch out its role in Somalia's political settlement landscape. Further, the governance brief discusses the FGS' explanation of its demand and provides a snapshot of the reactions of opposition politicians and the wider implications of closing the UNSOM office. The brief concludes with recommendations for the concerned stakeholders, highlighting the importance of the FGS speaking openly to the public about why it wants the mission to end. The FGS should also publicly address concerns raised by politicians over this request and its underlying motives.

#### **Insecurity in Beledweyne: Context, causes, and the way forward (December 25)**

Residents in Beledweyne have been suffering from insecurity in recent months that has resulted from the coexistence of the Hirshabelle state and the self-proclaimed 'Hiiraan state,' both of which have parallel administrations in the town. The lack of a single government authority responsible for the security of the city has allowed an increase in the presence and activities of armed militias and vigilante groups, resulting in robberies, roadblocks, and a surge of violence. The parallel administrations' struggle to control the town has dented the trust of the local constituents. The rivalry between the two sides has disrupted economic activities with roadblocks set up out of the city, causing increases in commodity prices. This is affecting the daily lives of locals, particularly daily wage earners. This governance [brief puts forward several policy considerations](#) including, but not limited to, that the local elders lead reconciliation efforts to settle disputes and

rebuild communal trust; the federal government to intervene to reign in the armed militias that plague the city, re-establish order, and deal with mobilized Ma'awisley fighters, either through bringing discipline and remuneration or encouraging voluntary disarmament through skills injection.



## Commentaries

SPA published four commentaries in 2024. The SPA commentaries shed light on several governance and public service issues, including the Ethiopia-Somaliland MoU, Somalia's election conundrum, and electoral bills.

1. [\*\*The Ethiopia-Somaliland MoU: Implications and opportunities for national unity and political settlement in Somalia\*\*](#) (January 16)
2. [\*\*Somalia's \(eternal\) election conundrum: time for a realistic assessment\*\*](#) (May 28)
3. [\*\*Review of the new bill establishing the Independent National Electoral and Boundaries Commission\*\*](#) (August 25)
4. [\*\*Re-instituting Party Politics: An Analysis of the New Political Associations and Parties Bill\*\*](#) (September 11)



## PROGRAMMES AND CENTERS

### SPA Policy Lab



*SPA Policy Lab Director, Aweis Ahmed*

The SPA Policy Lab is a research and action center at the Somali Public Agenda (SPA). The Lab's main objective is to assist public and civic institutions in designing human-centered, evidence-based policies and services using context-specific design tools and primary data. Somalia's governance system has been recovering over the past decade, following the protracted civil war in 1991. Government institutions that provide public services have been reinstated gradually. However, public institutions still face significant challenges in designing effective policies due to a lack of human resources. Moreover, policies and services developed by the public sector in Somalia are seldom customized to meet the needs of citizens. The donors' interests and satisfaction play a significant role in shaping policies and service provisions, as they provide more than half of the government budget through project support.

Further, Somalia receives billions of dollars in official development assistance, most of which comes from projects run by international organizations. However, these projects are designed by foreign professionals who may not have a clear understanding of the local population's actual needs. Moreover, it is crucial to consider the social and cultural values of the community while designing these projects. Therefore, the SPA policy lab, with its diverse team of design researchers, strategists, and network of experts, was founded to help design policies and services for Somalia's public and civic institutions and international organizations in an innovative and contextually appropriate manner.



For the design of policies and services, the SPA Policy Lab coordinated the first year of a 3-year EU-funded project aimed at increasing opportunities for Somali citizens and strengthening civil society's role in scrutinizing fiscal and financial governance within local government authorities. The project provided Somali citizens within three targeted districts—Adado, Bosaso, and Jowhar— opportunities to express their views, priorities, and concerns to the District Councils (DC), thereby increasing their involvement in public financial management issues as well as the design and implementation of local government policies and intervention based on the citizen's voices.

The SPA Policy Lab has collaborated with the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSV) on a research project on transitional justice. The project examined formal and informal transitional justice case studies, including the national reconciliation framework and the youth forum in Galkayo. The findings and recommendations from this research initiative are expected to be used to design a human-centered and locally-owned transitional justice process.

The SPA Policy Lab has also collaborated with similar organizations to address design issues and share experiences. For instance, the Public Policy Lab, based in New York, cooperated with the SPA Policy Lab in developing design skills and shared their expertise in design tools. Besides this, the SPA Policy Lab has engaged with esteemed institutions that specialize in improving policy-making through design, innovation, and people-centered approaches, including the Policy Lab in the UK, the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the EU Policy Lab to explore potential opportunities for knowledge sharing and collaboration and build partnerships.

Apart from collaborating with like-minded organizations, the SPA Policy Lab has also engaged with various public and civic institutions, discussing the possibility of them working closely together and developing and designing policies and services jointly. Such public and civic organizations include the Somali Disaster Management Agency (SoDMA)'s Disaster Research and Training Center, Somali Civil Aviation Authority (SCAA), Adado Local Government, Bosaso Local Government, and Jowhar Local Government. This collaborative approach has allowed the Lab to gain a deeper understanding of the needs and challenges faced by these institutions and to create tailored solutions that address their specific needs.

The SPA Policy Lab aims to expand Somalia's understanding and expertise in policy and service design by providing citizens, policymakers, and international stakeholders with comprehensive knowledge and information on the latest developments in these fields. As a result, the SPA Policy Lab director has written a reflection on how to apply a human-centered approach to amplifying the voices of Somalia's internally displaced people, particularly those from minority groups.

The reflection was the outcome of a year-long project in which the SPA Policy Lab collaborated with the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS) to design human-centered and evidence-based solutions for displaced communities in Somalia.

The Lab has also produced a governance brief analyzing how human-centered design can address the most complex aspects of durable solutions for displacement. The brief identifies the significance of human-centered policy design that empowers communities to take the initiative in identifying and implementing durable solutions. The paper particularly digs deeper into the broader issues around access to and ownership rights of land. It emphasizes involvement at a grassroots level in decision-making processes, legal protection against land grabbing, and awareness campaigns that can be mobilized to build public support for the rights of IDPs.

Over the past few years, the SPA Policy Lab has worked tirelessly on a design tool to revolutionize how public and civic institutions approach policy and service design. This tool was also almost completed this year, and the Lab is preparing to test and implement it to create interventions that will benefit the Somali people. As part of its mandate, the lab plans to collaborate with government and non-governmental organizations to co-design policies, interventions, or services that will address critical issues affecting the country's citizens. This collaborative approach will ensure that the policies and services are specifically tailored to meet the needs of the people they aim to serve.

### Centre for Learning and Development



*Center for Learning and Development Director, Farhan Isak Yusuf*

The Center for Learning and Development is a training and capacity development facility run by the Somali Public Agenda (SPA). It aims to train civil servants, policymakers, youth, and nonprofit sector workers with the technical skills to

engage, formulate, and implement solutions to public service challenges. The Center was established in August 2020 to help bridge the capacity-building gap in public service. The Center for Learning and Development offers short training courses to help develop skilled and knowledgeable civil society, youth, and civil servants who can contribute to the discussions of key public policies and programmes. Since its inception, the Center for Learning and Development has designed and delivered vital training for Somali youth to enhance their skills.

### **Blog Writing Training**



In 2024, the Center for Learning and Development conducted three training sessions, including two blog writing trainings and one research methods training. 42 trainees graduated from our blog writing training programme in 2024. The first, blog writing training, took place twice: in January-February and July-August. During the initial session in January, 99 applicants applied for the training, and after screening, 26 candidates were shortlisted and accepted on the course. Finally, 13 trainees completed the one-month training, crafting four mandatory blog posts.

The second Blog Writing Training occurred between July 4 and August 22, 2024. Somali Public Agenda, in collaboration with Digital Shelter, conducted this training. The objective of the training was to enhance young Somali bloggers' writing skills



and understanding. 29 students, including 19 females and 10 males, attended this training. They published over 116 blog articles, displaying their improved writing abilities and confidence. The consistent practice and feedback of the teachers and mentors were essential for the students.

### Research Training



We advertised a research training course in September 2024. 44 applicants applied for the training, but 38 students were shortlisted. Finally, 23 trainees (18 males and 5 females) completed this course. All students were university graduates from various public and private institutions. The objectives of this program were to train qualified young Somali researchers who can positively contribute to Somali good governance and public services. Two students among the graduates have led research projects conducted by their institutions. Their research projects were published days after the graduation ceremony.



## Public Agenda Forum



*Public Agenda Forum Manager, Mohamed Adam*

The Public Agenda Forum (PAF) functions as a distinguished platform for discussion surrounding governance and public service issues in Somalia. PAF encompasses a wide array of topics, with a particular emphasis on public administration and services. It serves as a vital space for the examination of priority public issues, the dissemination of research and analyses conducted by the Somali Public Agenda (SPA), and the facilitation of dialogue among policymakers, civil society, and citizens. Furthermore, it produces insights and data that contribute to the comprehensive analyses and activities of SPA. The PAF operates through five principal dialogue platforms: On-the-Record Forums, Dissemination Forums, Gaxwo & Gorfeyn, X Spaces Discussions, and Off-the-Record Discussions.

2024 represents another successful period for the Public Agenda Forum, reinforcing its position as a cornerstone of SPA's initiatives. Throughout the year, 570 participants were involved in 18 in-person forums, public dialogues, and discussions. Over 1,200 also tuned in to X Spaces discussions. In 2024, a total number of 184 participants attended Gaxwo & Gorfeyn meetups. PAF convened eight Gaxwo and Gorfeyn meetups on the following topics:

1. Turkey-Somalia Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement
2. Managing Public Lands in Mogadishu
3. Corruption Cases at Benadir Regional Court
4. Road Sustainability During Rainy Seasons
5. Illegal Weapons Looted in Caabudwaaq
6. FGS-Southwest State Disagreement and its Political, Security, and Social Implications
7. Feasibility of One-Person, One-Vote Elections Amid FGS and FMS Tensions
8. Ankara Declaration: Prospects and Implications for Somali-Ethiopian Relations



We also convened six Off-the-Record Discussions, one every two months. 160 intellectuals, including civil society members and experts, attended these Off-the-Record Discussions. The topics discussed were the following:

1. Ethiopia-Somaliland MoU and Response Options for Somalia
2. The Closure of the UNSOM Office
3. ATMIS Transition and Post-ATMIS Mission
4. The Constitutional Review Process
5. Somalia's Oil Exploration Efforts
6. Somalia's New AUSSOM Mission

The guest speakers for the Off-the-Record Discussions included the State Minister of the Somalia Presidency Senator Abshir Mohamed Ahmed (Bukhari), Villa Somalia Chief of Staff Abdihakim M. Yusuf, Chairperson of the Independent Constitutional Review and Implementation Commission (ICRIC) Avv. Burhan Adan Omar, Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Abdirizak Omar Mohamed, and the Director of the Office of National Security Abdimalik Abdullahi.



The On-the-Record Forums have also enabled important dialogue that has sparked crucial debates in the public discourse during 2024. Over 100 participants attended these forums. We have convened three discussions:

1. The Review and Amendment Process of the Provisional Constitution
2. The Newly Introduced Value-Added Tax (VAT)
3. The Quest for a New Partnership Between Africa and Development Partners: The Somali Case



Moreover, we convened two Dissemination Forums in 2024. On February 15, SPA convened a dissemination forum for our recently published study on the formation and functioning of district councils in Southwest, Hirshabelle, and Galmudug states at the Jazeera Hotel, Mogadishu. The study's lead author, Farhan Isak Yusuf, presented the study's key findings to the forum participants. Local governance expert Said Omar was a panelist and reflected on the analysis. In November 2024, we convened a dissemination forum for our study on the role of national civil society and the media in promoting accountability in humanitarian interventions in Somalia. Media experts, researchers, and civil society representatives attended the forum, which we live-streamed on our social media platforms. Ibrahim Jibril, SPA researcher who led a study, and Abukar Albadri, a media expert, were panelists. 125 male and female intellectuals attended the two forums, including local governance experts, civil servants, civil society actors, media experts, humanitarian workers, and youth representatives.



*Understanding The Formation and Operation of Local Councils in Southwest and Galmudug States*



*The role of national civil society and media in supporting accountability around humanitarian interventions in Somalia*

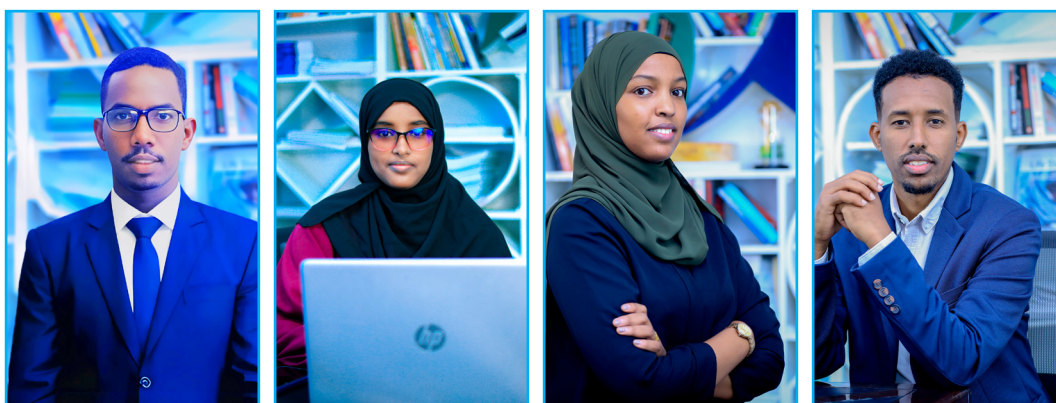
These various dialogue platforms have significantly enhanced public engagement and discourse, injecting a dynamic energy into the mission of the PAF to establish venues for citizens to participate in discussions on critical societal issues. Collectively, these platforms have been instrumental in raising awareness, promoting knowledge-sharing, and educating the public on essential social, economic, and political matters. Through its diverse platforms, the Public Agenda Forum has consistently served as a vital conduit for fostering dialogue, generating insights, and addressing significant public issues and concerns.

## Internships

Somali Public Agenda initiated a 3-month internship program in the middle of 2020. This internship aims to equip university graduates and enhance their skills and experience. In the past 4 years, 22 interns have completed their internship work at Somali Public Agenda. In 2024, four interns (two males and two females) completed three-month internships.

The interns played a vital role in various SPA departments and research projects. This internship offers essential experience for recent university graduates. 3 interns who took the three-month-long internship wrote reflections (published on the SPA website) about their internship experiences.

In August 2024, we held our third SPA Internship Alumni annual gathering. It was an opportunity for our SPA Internship Alumni to get to know each other, reflect on their internship experiences and how they helped them, and get updates about the new SPA Center for Learning and Development reforms for the internship program.



## Podcasts

In 2024, we produced and released 24 podcast episodes. The Maamul Wanaag Podcast produced 12 episodes. The Maamul Wanaag Podcast delves deeply into various governance matters in Somalia. The guests of the Maamul Wanaag Podcast broadly discussed and analyzed governance topics, including accountability



and transparency, stabilization, FGS and Puntland relations, local elections in Puntland, Ethiopia-Somaliland MoU, and the annual federal government budget.

SPA also published 12 Adeeg Wanaag Podcast episodes. Adeeg Wanaag delves into public service matters in Somalia. The 12 episodes released in 2024 discussed e-governance, disaster response, sales tax, media and civil society role in humanitarian accountability, skin bleaching, sewage and drainage, the entertainment landscape in Somalia, the quality of primary education, mental health problems, football tournaments, and the impact of climate change in Somalia.

In 2024, our two podcasts were downloaded and listened to over 9673 times. That is 1,333 times higher than the 8,340 times that our podcasts were downloaded and listened to in 2023. Since its introduction in mid-2019, our podcasts have been downloaded over 27,694 times.

Moreover, a video version of the podcasts was started in early 2023. The full podcast videos published on YouTube in 2024 received over 19,960 views, which significantly exceeds the slightly over 6,000 views of our podcasts on YouTube in 2023. We also shared short videos from the podcasts on social media primarily Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram. The combined views of these short videos were 230,717 (compared to 85,075 in 2023) including 151,105 views on TikTok (compared to 46,030 views in 2023), 11,110 in Instagram views (vs 1,792 views in 2023), and 63,145 views in Facebook (compared to 36,393 views in 2023), and 5,357 views on YouTube shorts (compared to 860 views in 2023). In total, the podcast audio and videos were downloaded or viewed 250,680 times. This was more than double the 100,000 times views/downloads in 2023.



## OUTREACH AND IMPACT

SPA's online audience has increased in 2024. We maintained a good relationship with the media. We were regularly interviewed by international and local media outlets. Our researchers and directors spoke with the media 24 times in 2024 and for a total of around 385 minutes. Goobjoog Radio & TV, Voice of Banadir Region (Codka Caasimadda), Hiiran Weyn, Bilan Media, Mustaqbal Media, Dawan TV, Somali Cable TV, RTN Somali TV, BBC, Asal TV, Dalsan TV, Press TV, and VOA Somali were some of the media houses that regularly interviewed or invited our team members to participate in debates. Local radio stations continued airing our podcasts in 2024.

The National quoted our director in an article on Türkiye's increasing influence in Africa. Agence France-Presse's (AFP) news article on Somalia parliament's approval of the amendments of the first four chapters of the Provisional Federal Constitution quoted our Executive Director Mahad Wasuge. BBC Somali quoted our researcher, Farhia Mohamud, in an article on the sales tax implemented by the federal government and its implications.

Our Public Agenda Forum Manager & researcher, Mohamed Adam, along with other young people, spoke to BBC World Service's Africa Daily Podcast on why it is so hard to find a job in Somalia. CIVICUS – a global alliance of civil society organizations and activists dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society throughout the world – published an interview with Mahad Wasuge, on how civic institutions in Somalia are engaging and contributing to the ongoing constitutional review and amendment process.

Our researchers and analysts were invited to forums, workshops, and conferences in Somalia and abroad.

- On May 7, our Executive Director, Mahad Wasuge, was a panelist for the Overseas Development Institute's Humanitarian Policy Group, which organized a panel discussion along with experts and practitioners on "Reconstructing accountability narratives to center the interests and priorities of affected communities" at the Humanitarian Network & Partnerships Week (HNPW2024) in Geneva.
- Also on May 7, our Executive Director, Mahad Wasuge, joined a CartONG-organized panel discussion on "Changing the outlook: for a local approach to data" at the Humanitarian Network & Partnerships Week (HNPW2024) in Geneva.
- Our researcher and Public Agenda Forum (SPA) manager, Mohamed Adam, participated in a public-private dialogue in Nairobi between 11 & 12 June

on improving the investment climate for refugees, returnees, and host communities. Organized by the UNHCR, the East African Community (EAC), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), senior public, civic, and private sector leaders attended and discussed potential policy reforms and actions benefiting refugees and host communities in Somalia.

- Our Deputy Director Farhan Isak Yusuf attended a high-level dialogue on deepening democracy, good governance, and inclusive political transitions in the Horn of Africa that took place in Addis Ababa between the 24th & 25th of June. This was organized by the African Union, the Office of the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, UNDP Africa, International IDEA & the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Farhan participated in a roundtable discussion on the ecosystem of engagement in democratization and political transitions in the Horn of Africa. In particular, he spoke on Somali CSOs' efforts in local peace-building, stabilization, elections, and constitutional amendments.
- On July 20, Mahad Wasuge, our Executive Director, spoke at the Astan Talk program. He presented a lecture on 'Embarking on a Research Career: Key Steps and Insights' to over 100 young people. Fresh university graduates and university students from various universities, researchers and other interested youth attended the lecture and asked questions.
- On 22-23 July, our Deputy Executive Director Farhan Isak Yusuf presented our policy paper titled 'Policy options for resolving the status of Mogadishu' at a two-day working session on the status of the capital city in the context of the constitutional review process organized by the FGS Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs.
- On July 25, Mahad Wasuge was a guest on the SitRep podcast. Mahad, Mohamed Hirmoge & Ali Halane discussed Somalia's path to democracy and the prospects of conducting One-Person-One-Vote elections in 2026.
- On July 31, Somali Public Agenda participated in the Jiilka Maanta Festival (Generation Now), a vibrant celebration of Somali youth culture and their potential to drive positive social change, organized by Elman Peace. We exhibited our studies, training, and impact in a booth in the Empowerment Zone. Our Executive Director, Mahad Wasuge, had an hour-long interactive workshop in the Pop-Up Talk zone in the evening where he discussed how SPA amplifies citizens' voices and influences public policies through evidence-based studies and analysis, dialogue, podcasts, human-centered policy and service design, and training.

- On October 2, our researcher, Farhia Mohamud, delivered a presentation on a research project we conducted with the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR), titled “Enabling Popular Participation in Formal and Non-formal Transitional Justice Processes in Africa,” at the African Union policy engagement workshop hosted by CSVR, Impunity Watch, and DPAPS in Addis Ababa. Her presentation highlighted the challenges and opportunities for participation in transitional justice across the African continent and drew important lessons from Somalia.
- On October 15, Our Executive Director, Mahad Wasuge, was a panelist at the National Economic Council’s National Economic Policy Forum 2024 alongside Hussein Sheikh Mohamud, Feysal Adan, Dr. Mohamud Ulusow, and Maluka Abdulkadir. Moderated by Mohamed Mukhtar, the panelists discussed the challenges Somalia faces in building a capable state and how to utilize home-grown solutions to address these issues.
- On October 13, our Deputy Director, Farhan Isak Yusuf, and SPA Policy Lab Director, Aweis Ahmed, participated in a half-day consultation session on the Somalia Higher Education Bill in Mogadishu. The session was organized by the Lower House Committee on Social Services, with representatives from universities, the Association of Somali Universities, and research institutions in attendance. The purpose of the session was to gather input from stakeholders on the bill before it proceeds to the next stage.
- On October 21-25, our researcher, Farhia Mohamud, participated in a capacity-building training on transitional justice and reconciliation for female practitioners in the East Africa and Great Lakes regions in Nairobi. The training was organized by the Life & Peace Institute, the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR), and the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR), with a focus on the African Union Transitional Justice Policy.
- Our Executive Director, Mahad Wasuge, attended the launch of the Somalia Open Budget Survey (OBS) 2023 results. He participated in a panel discussion with Senator Leyla Ismail, a member of the Upper House Budget and Finance Committee; Abdikarim Mohamed Hussein, Deputy Budget Director at the Ministry of Finance; and Mohamed Abduwahab, Secretary General of the Somali Media Association (SOMA). During the panel discussion, Mahad emphasized the limited access to budget information for citizens and the need for an enhanced role for civil society organizations and the media in promoting transparency and accountability.
- On November 5 to 7, 2024, our Deputy Director, Farhan Isak Yusuf, participated in a three-day workshop on digital democracy in Nairobi. Organized by Heinrich-Böll-Foundation (HBS) Horn of Africa, the workshop brought together peacebuilding and governance practitioners, as well as researchers, from countries in the Horn of Africa region.



- On November 14, Our Executive Director, Mahad Wasuge, attended a consultation meeting organized by the ad hoc parliamentary committee responsible for reviewing three election-related bills. The discussion focused on the political associations and parties bill. During the meeting, Mahad presented our recent publication on the parties bill and emphasized the need for the Parliament to reduce the registration fee and clarify the term limits for national political parties.
- On November 27, Somali Public Agenda (SPA) representatives attended a high-level discussion on “Building Social Contract and Domestic Revenue Mobilization in Somalia.” Our Executive Director Mahad Wasuge participated in a panel discussion on “Domestic Revenue Mobilization Reforms” alongside Faisal Hashi, Director of the FGS Revenue Directorate; Hassan Adan Hosow, Chief National Economic Advisor; Prof. Issa Mohamud Halane, Deputy Director of the Somali Chamber of Commerce; Rupert Bladon, PREMIS2 Team Leader; and Mohamed Hirmoge, Communications and Media Expert. During the panel discussion, Mahad presented key insights, findings, and messages from our recent policy paper on implementing the 5% sales tax.
- On December 5, 2024, Our Executive Director Mahad Wasuge moderated a discussion on the lessons learned from the review and approval of the first four chapters of the Provisional Federal Constitution. This discussion was organized by the constitutional review bodies – Independent Constitutional Review Commission- ICRIC Somalia, Constitutional Oversight & Implementation Committee & Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs – panelists, including the ICRIC Chair, the OC Secretary, members of Parliament, & Somalia Non-State Actors (SONSA) Chair, and participants deliberated on the key lessons learned from the review process of the Constitution’s first four chapters.
- On December 8-10, 2024, representatives from Somali Public Agenda participated in ‘The Civil Society Democratization Knowledge Sharing Workshop’ organized by the Heinrich-Böll-Foundation Horn of Africa & Puntland Development & Research Center (PDRC) in Machakos County, Kenya. The workshop served as an essential platform to reflect on lessons from Puntland’s recent local elections and develop strategies for strengthening electoral processes and peacebuilding in other parts of Somalia. Our Executive Director, Mahad Wasuge, delivered a presentation on the current political and electoral context at the federal level, highlighting the nexus between local, state, and federal elections.
- Our researcher, Farhia Mohamud, attended the official launch of the African Youth for Transitional Justice (AY4TJ) Platform at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa. Farhia Mohamud has also participated in Regional Conference on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Peacebuilding and Transitional Justice in the Horn of Africa in Addis Ababa.

- On December 10, 2024, our Deputy Director, Farhan Isak Yusuf, participated in a panel discussion on “Universities and Research Centers as Catalysts for Evidence-Based Public Policy: Addressing Needs, Overcoming Challenges, and Moving Forward” in Mogadishu. The panel was part of the 11th Annual Conference on Somali Studies, organized by the Institute for Somali Studies at Mogadishu University.

Our audience and outreach increased in 2024. Our website security was tightened, and the SPA work was widely found online through searches. Our Twitter followers increased to 8571 (from 7,981 in 2023). Our Facebook page followers increased from 39,181 in 2023 to 42,470 followers in 2024. The number of followers on our LinkedIn page risen from 5,502 in 2022 to 7,428 followers in 2024. The number of followers of our TikTok account increased from 2,544 in 2023 to 5,484 followers in 2024. Our Instagram followers reached 1,682 followers by the end of 2024 from 1,585 followers in 2023. Our YouTube channel subscribers increased to 2,107 in 2024 from 809 by the end of 2023. Our Threads account followers increased from 238 followers in 2023 to 329 followers in 2024. SPA Telegram account increased from 202 subscribers by the end of 2023 to 326 subscribers by the end of 2024. Moreover, the SPA podcasts also significantly increased in 2024. 24 podcasts were produced. Our podcasts were downloaded over 9673 times in 2024, and the full podcast videos published on YouTube in 2024 received over 19,960 views. We also started livestreaming our podcasts and forums.

We sent 12 monthly bulletins in 2024. The monthly newsletter covers SPA activities in the past month including reports, or briefs released, forums held, design projects worked on, important meetings or conferences participated, and the number of media appearances and SPA citations/quotes of that month.

In 2024, the IT Department undertook numerous initiatives aimed at strengthening SPA's technological capabilities, streamlining processes, and enhancing communication both internally and externally. We developed and upgraded our website. We added a new “News & Press” section into the website, providing centralized access to updates, media coverage, and communication channels. This section is further divided into four subsections namely News from SPA, Press Mentions, Newsletter, and Press Contact. We also expanded the “Programmes” section with detailed information on ongoing projects and initiatives, offering visitors a clearer understanding of SPA's work. We also migrated the website to a new, more robust server, addressing limitations such as frequent downtime, slow load times, and accessibility restrictions in certain regions.

Our work also shaped policy-making in Somalia in 2024. Somali Public Agenda wrote and published three pieces of analysis, each focusing on and analyzing the content and implications of the bills. When the Parliament approved all three bills, we engaged with policymakers and also reviewed the approved laws. We noted that a number of our recommendations were incorporated into the laws, particularly

on the political parties law. Some of the recommendations that were incorporated into the political parties law included reducing the prohibitive \$100,000 registration fees of political associations to \$10,000. Another key recommendation we suggested, which is reflected in the political parties law, particularly article 34, is limiting the tenure of the three national political parties to 15 years.

In November 2024, the Center for Learning and Development at Somali Public Agenda successfully concluded a 5-week research training program designed to produce qualified young researchers with certified skills and knowledge. While the training was valuable for all participants, it proved to be a life-changing opportunity for two trainees, Shukri Mahad and Jamal Abdinasir, who took on research roles at their respective institutions. Shukri was entrusted with leading a research project at her institution before joining the training program, marking her first research role. For her, the training provided a rare and essential opportunity to help her rise to the challenge. On the other hand, Jamal was assigned to lead a research project at his institution immediately after completing the course.

In 2024, four interns – Hawalul (January), Abdirizak (April), Hibaq (July), and Marwa (October) – wrote and published reflection blog posts on their internship experiences with the Somali Public Agenda. These blogs were published on the SPA website and were shared with the growing number of SPA social media followers.

Several SPA staff also published reflection blogs. On January 4, our researcher Farhia Mohamud flashed back to her 3 years at SPA. She reflected on her experiences as a researcher, particularly the experiences she gained during her fieldwork and direct engagement with research participants. On May 19, Aweis Ahmed, the Director of the SPA Policy Lab, penned a reflection piece titled “Applying SPA’s Human-Centred Approach for Amplifying the Voices of Somalia’s IDP Minorities: A Reflection.” The reflection delves into his experiences in leading a project that explored ways to empower displacement-affected and marginalized communities. On June 29, our Procurement and Logistics Officer Qamar Osman reviewed her 3 years at SPA. She reflected on how her experience leading the SPA logistics and procurement department has improved her skills and reinforced her passion for procurement, supply chain management, and logistics. On July 31, Bahja Ahmed Mohamed, our research assistant, concluded a year working with us. She wrote a reflection titled ‘A Farewell to Somali Public Agenda: Reflections on Growth and Impact’ on her time with us. We thank Bahja for her service at SPA. We appreciate her immense contributions to SPA.

On September 10, 2024, SPA started Video Commentary. Between September and December 2024, we published four Video Commentaries. This short video commentary will provide SPA researchers a space to provide quick insights and analysis on pressing governance issues in Somalia and the key insights from SPA’s research and analytical work.



Most of the feedback we received on our 2024 publications has been positive. We received favorable and encouraging feedback from different segments of society. Somali Public Agenda published papers on contentious political issues including elections, constitutional review process, and accountability. The feedback we received was positive and highlighted the objectivity of our analysis. SPA is not affiliated with any political association, and its employees are determined to produce high-quality, evidence-based, and balanced analyses on crucial governance and service delivery issues in Somalia.



## PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

In 2024, we strengthened our collaborative partnerships and working relations with several institutions. We continued our long-term partnership 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 to facilitate agreement amongst Somalis on contentious political issues. The SDP became part of the Somali Stability Fund (SSF) III in mid-2023.

We also strengthened our collaborative partnership with the Life and Peace Institute (LPI). We joined a consortium of organizations working on electoral support in Somalia, including Build Up, the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), Puntland Development Research Center (PDRC), Academy for Peace and Development (APD), and the Horn Centre Dialogue (HC). The European Union provided us a multiyear grant on a project that envision increasing opportunities for Somali citizens' scrutiny of fiscal and financial governance in 2024. The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) supported an ongoing study on taxation in the Benadir region in 2024.

Our Center for Learning and Development collaborated with Digital Shelter in training 29 youth on blog writing training. We also strengthened our engagement and relationship with civil society organizations in Somalia. We became a full member of Somalia Non-State Actors (SONSA) in 2024.

In 2024, we also started a new working relationship with new institutions. We became a full member of Somali Research and Education Network (SomaliREN) in May 2024. We signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Taloford Consulting. Somali Public Agenda and Taloford will collaborate on research and innovation, skills development and knowledge-sharing, institutional capacitation and joint program implementation. Somali Public Agenda signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Dawan in 2024. SPA & Dawan will collaborate on research & publications, dissemination of research findings, public dialogue & forums, media coverage, and knowledge-sharing.



## FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

In 2024, Somali Public Agenda experienced significant financial growth, receiving notable financial support from various institutions and donors. Somali Public Agenda succeeded in strong financial management and allocated resources effectively to achieve its mission.

In 2024, Somali Public Agenda secured project-based funding for research, forums, and training from the following various institutions and donors:

- European Union Commission
- Rift Valley Institute
- Life and Peace Institute
- National Endowment for Democracy
- Overseas Development Institute
- Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation
- Digital Shelter
- SPA Center for Learning and Development

The unwavering support from these partners has enabled SPA to implement sustainable programs and achieve impactful outcomes. Their collaboration has been fundamental in achieving our mission and delivering measurable outcomes.

In 2024, SPA implemented important measures for greater effectiveness in financial management. The measures were followed by recommendations for the organization's 2023 external audit and its 2024 internal audits. Finally, SPA remains committed to fostering financial sustainability and accountability while focusing on delivering impactful programs.



# INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

In 2024, the SPA Human Resource department recruited 12 individuals, including full-time staff, interns, consultants, and focal point persons, each contributing to the organization's mission, with staff playing their designated role, interns gaining hands-on experience while supporting the day-to-day operations of various departments, consultants offering a range of expertise, and focal points facilitating the SPA program team's fieldwork.

As part of the department's mission to enhance staff capacity, several training programs were delivered to the team. Our Operations team received a Procurement and Supply Chain Management training to strengthen their efficiency in resource management. Additionally, comprehensive first-aid training was delivered to all employees to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills needed to effectively respond to medical emergencies both in the workplace and in their personal life.

In addition to the capacity-building initiatives, the department also made significant improvements to the payroll system to enhance efficiency, transparency, and compliance. One of the key improvements is the introduction of new and essential documentation in the monthly payroll process to ensure accurate calculations, reduce errors, and enhance our employee satisfaction. Furthermore, the added documentation provides clearer records for auditing purposes, promotes accountability, and aligns with the department's commitment to adopting best practices in Human Resource management.

To foster accountability and promote a culture of continuous improvement within the organization, the HR department introduced and implemented a Performance evaluation system. This system, which incorporates input from employees, management, and the board of directors, helps to assess staff performance, highlight achievements, and identify areas for development.

SPA started monthly book presentations. Each month, an SPA member presents a summary of a book he or she read with the rest of the team. This is followed by a discussion. This is part of our plan to learn from each other and advance the culture of learning and reading within the institution.

## 2025 PROJECTIONS AND PRIORITIES

As we enter our 8th year, we look forward to producing quality research output, creating space for discussion on national issues, offering training, and helping public institutions design human-centered public services.

Our work in 2025 will focus on the following thematic issues:

1. National elections
2. Constitutional review process
3. Public finance management
4. Accountability and transparency
5. Taxation
6. Reconciliation
7. Transitional justice
8. Urbanization, and
9. Education.

The Public Agenda Forum will continue the Gaxwo iyo Gorfeyn series and the bimonthly off-the-record discussions with policymakers. We will also plan to convene 9 on-the-record and dissemination forums in 2024, one every 45 days. We will convene X Spaces discussions. We are also planning to convene an annual conference in mid-2025.

In 2025, the SPA Center for Learning and Development plans to conduct two blog writing training slots that will produce 15 graduates at least. Similarly, it will organize a five-week-long research methodology training in September for 20 trainees. The Center for Learning and Development will also start capacity building in the public sector.

The SPA Policy Lab plans to collaborate with government and non-government organizations to co-design policies or services that will address critical issues affecting the citizens of the country. The SPA Policy Lab will also finalize the development of a design manual that will become a guide for the co-designing work the Lab will do.

SPA will continue the two podcast programmes (Maamul Wanaag & Adeeg Wanaag) and will increase its outreach. We will aim to produce a podcast from our publications and invite guests to our podcasts on key governance and social service matters.

# APPENDICES

## Staff

**Mahad Wasuge**, Executive Director

**Farhan Isak Yusuf**, Deputy Executive Director, Director of SPA Center for Learning and Development

**Sadia Maow**, Finance Officer

**Idil Omar**, HR & Administration Officer

**Farhia Mohamud**, Researcher

**Qamar Osman**, Procurement & Logistics Officer

**Aweis Ahmed**, Director of SPA Policy Lab

**Mohamed Adam**, Forums Manager and Researcher

**Ibrahim Jibril**, Researcher

**Ibrahim Osman**, Learning & Communications Coordinator

**Jacfar Mohamed**, Communications Officer

**Abass Mohamed**, Multimedia Producer

**Ruweido Farah**, IT Officer

## Fellows

**Peter Chonka**, Senior 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**, Former Team Leader, Platform for Political Dialogue, Somalia

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

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

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

**Lisa Rudnick**, a strategic design consultant and Principal and Head of Research at The Policy Lab.

**Derek B. Miller**, the Director of The Policy Lab®

**Abdishakur Hassan**, founder and lead consultant of Abyane, an Urban & Geospatial consulting firm based in Somalia

**Mohamed Abdimalik**, data journalist and founder of Jaantus

**Manar Zaki**, Co-Founder, and Co-Director of the Sababi Institute

**Yasin Ahmed Ismail**, a researcher and policy analyst specializing in governance, security, and conflict issues

**Brenton D. Peterson**, Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Sababi Institute

## Board of Advisors

**Zainab Mohamed Hassan**, Founder & Chairwoman of the Somalia 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

**Hodan Hassan**, the executive director of Kulan Consulting





# SOMALI PUBLIC AGENDA



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