



PUBLIC AWARENESS OF LEGISLATIVE INSTITUTIONS IN SOMALILAND

Enhancing Citizen Understanding and Trust in Governance Reforms

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Hargeisa, Somaliland



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Executive Summary

Somaliland's de facto independence in 1991 set the stage for a unique experiment in post-conflict state-building. The self-declared republic has developed a written constitution, held multiple elections, and maintained relative peace in a turbulent region. Despite this, there is a growing recognition among policymakers and citizens that democratic governance requires more than stable institutions—it demands informed and engaged citizens who understand how their parliament functions and how they can influence decision-making. This study was commissioned to generate evidence on public awareness of legislative processes, identify citizen priorities for public services, and explore opportunities for more inclusive engagement between citizens and the bicameral Parliament: The Houses of Representatives and Elders (Guurti).

Mixed method approach was employed to capture different perspectives. Primary data were gathered through key informant interviews with Members of Parliament (MPs), civil society leaders, scholars, and governance experts; a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) that brought together participants from political parties, media, youth and women's groups; and an online survey that elicited responses from 404 citizens across all six regions. This triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data enabled a comprehensive understanding of public perceptions, knowledge gaps, and institutional barriers.

Key findings highlight significant deficits in legislative literacy. While most citizens are aware of the existence of Parliament, many cannot articulate the differences between the lower and upper chambers or describe how a bill becomes law. Confusion between legislative and executive roles is pervasive; findings from the survey have shown that MPs are often expected to deliver services rather than to make and oversee laws. Survey findings also show that peace and security, employment, education, and healthcare are the top citizen priorities. Institutional challenges identified include poor communication channels, limited resources for parliamentary committees, lack of regional offices, minimal public consultations and the dominance of clan elders and executive influence over the legislative agenda. Cross-cutting issues such as gender and youth exclusion, regional disparities and low trust in government institutions compound these challenges.

The study concludes that strengthening democratic governance requires a dual focus on building institutional capacity and expanding civic engagement. Recommendations call for comprehensive civic education initiatives, establishment of constituency offices in every region, regular public hearings on draft laws, improved transparency, and reforms to increase representation of women and youth. Enhancing parliamentary research support, decentralizing service delivery and promoting collaborative policy development between the executive and Parliament are also critical.

1. Introduction

Somaliland occupies a unique position in the Horn of Africa. A self-governed entity that has maintained peace and developed democratic institutions with limited (only Israel's recent recognition) international recognition. Since declaring independence from Somalia, Somaliland has crafted a republican constitution, established a bicameral Parliament, and held multiple presidential and parliamentary elections. Despite these achievements, the democratic experiment remains fragile, particularly in the realm of citizen engagement. Many Somalilanders lack a clear understanding of how laws are made, what their representatives are responsible for, and how they can influence governance. Against this backdrop, the current assessment was launched to bridge the knowledge gap and inform reforms that strengthen the relationship between citizens and legislative institutions. The topic is both timely and relevant. Effective legislatures are central to accountable governance, yet they cannot fulfil their mandate in isolation. Public awareness and participation ensure that MPs remain responsive to constituent needs and that legislation reflects the will of the people. In Somaliland, however, debates about democratic consolidation often overlook the importance of civic literacy and inclusive participation. As the country contemplates constitutional amendments, electoral reforms and new development strategies, understanding how citizens perceive their legislature and what they expect from it is essential. This study contributes evidence and insights that are crucial for policymakers, civil society organizations, development partners and the broader public.

2. Objective

The objectives of this assessment are threefold:

1) to evaluate the level of public awareness and understanding of legislative institutions, their procedures and responsibilities; 2) to identify citizen priorities regarding public services and governance at both national and regional levels; and 3) to examine institutional challenges and barriers that affect service delivery and citizen engagement. By pursuing these objectives, the study aims to generate practical recommendations that enhance legislative responsiveness, promote informed public discourse and support democratic governance reforms.

3. Methodology

The assessment employed a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative research. Primary data were collected through: (1) seven key informant interviews (KIIs) with members of parliament, scholars, civil society leaders and governance experts; (2) a focus group discussion (FGD) involving seven participants from political parties, civil society organizations, media and youth groups; and (3) an online survey that garnered 404 responses from all six regions of Somaliland. Respondents were recruited via purposive and snowball sampling to ensure representation of gender, age, profession and geographic diversity. The KIIs and FGD were conducted in Somali, recorded, transcribed and translated into English. Interview guides covered awareness of legislative institutions, perceptions of parliamentary performance, public participation

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mechanisms, service priorities and recommendations for reform. The survey contained closed-ended questions on demographics, knowledge of constitutional roles, satisfaction with parliamentary performance, service priorities and perceived barriers to participation. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were coded thematically to identify patterns, commonalities and divergent views. Findings from the three sources were triangulated to corroborate evidence and enrich interpretation.

4. Demographic Profile of Respondents

The online survey achieved 404 responses across the six regions: Maroodi-Jeex (32.4 %), Togdheer (27 %), Awdal (18.6 %), Sahil (8.4 %), Sanaag (11.4 %) and a small category labelled 'Option 7' representing 1 % of the sample. Men constituted 61.1 % of respondents while women accounted for 38.9 %.

The age distribution was heavily skewed toward youth and young adults: 30 % were aged 18–24, 46.3 % were 25–34, 15.6 % were 35–44, 7 % were 45–64 and just 1 % was 65 or older. The sample was also highly educated: 55 % held a university degree, 24.5 % had postgraduate qualifications, 13.1 % completed secondary education, 3 % possessed vocational or diploma certificates and smaller numbers had primary education or were illiterate. Occupationally, 23.5 % worked in the private sector, 14.1 % in government, 13.9 % in civil society or NGOs, 14.6 % identified as politicians or parliamentarians, 9.7 % were self-employed entrepreneurs and 17.6 % were students.

5. Findings

5.1 Legislative Awareness and Understanding

The findings reveal persistent gaps in public knowledge about the basic structure and functions of Somaliland's legislative institutions. Although the Constitution designates Parliament as the exclusive locus of lawmaking and empowers citizens to introduce bills with 5,000 signatures, many citizens are unaware of these provisions. Survey results indicate that 55.7 % of respondents claim to know the difference between the roles of the House of Representatives and the House of Elders, while 34.9 % have only a vague idea and 9.4 % do not know. A slight majority (65.1 %) reported awareness of the general procedure for a bill to become law, yet 30.2 % were unaware that citizens can sponsor legislation through popular initiative, suggesting that civic education on legislative procedures remains limited even among the more educated citizens. KII findings confirm that even some Members of Parliament lack a full understanding of their legislative and oversight roles, with one interviewee noting that MPs often view their job primarily as representing clan interests rather than formulating and scrutinizing laws. (KII, Hargeisa, 2025)

Focus group participants unanimously agreed that public awareness of legislative institutions is low. Many confuse the roles of parliament with those of the executive, believing that MPs should provide direct services such as infrastructure, employment or aid, which are in fact government responsibilities.

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Q7. Do you know the difference between the roles of the House of Representatives and the House of Elders (Guurti)?

404 Responses

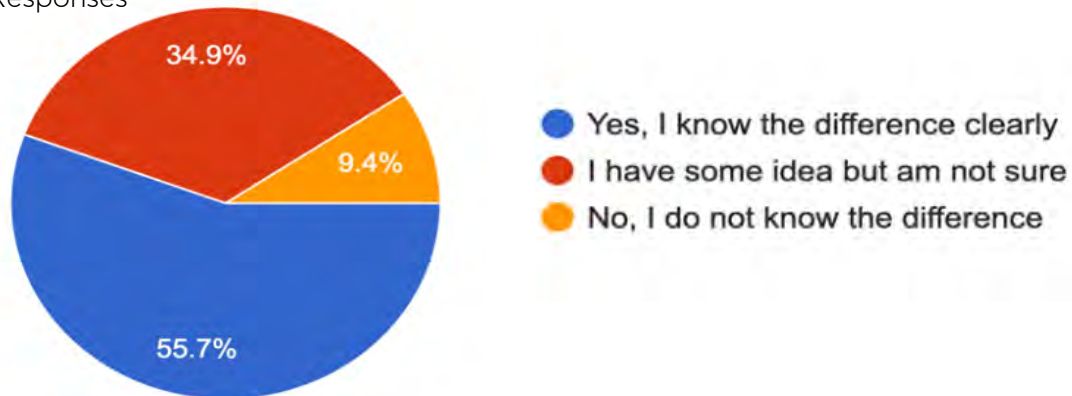


Figure 1. Understanding difference between the Houses

Participants reported relying on social media (Facebook) and private television stations for information about parliamentary activities. However, they described these sources as unreliable, partisan, or superficial. Official communication channels, such as government websites or the parliamentary press office, are little known. Respondents corroborated these observations: 74 % identified social media as their primary source of information about new laws (see below chart), compared with 38.6 % who follow television, 22.8 % who listen to radio, and 22.5 % who consult government websites

Q12. What is the primary way you learn about new laws or parliamentary debates? (Select all that apply)

404 Responses

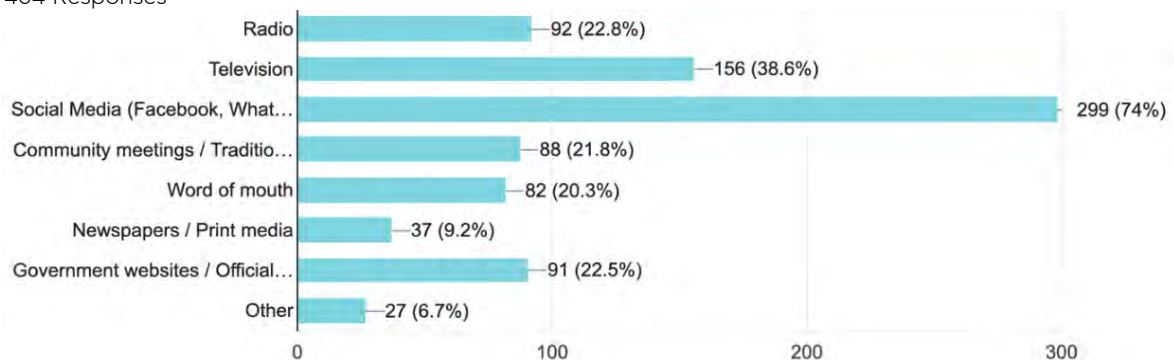


Figure 2- Source of news for information about the parliament

FGD participants lamented that parliamentary proceedings are rarely broadcast live and that there is no publicly accessible Hansard or record of debates. As a result, citizens cannot track how their representatives vote or hold them accountable.

It was noted that public consultations on draft laws are limited and highly centralized. One former parliamentary consultant explained that 90 % of bills originate from the executive and are simply endorsed by the House, while committees seldom hold hearings. Although Article 74 permits citizen initiatives, few people are aware of this mechanism, and there is no formal process to verify signatures or facilitate submissions. Women and youth face additional barriers: only one woman sits in the House of Representatives, and the age requirement for MPs (35 years) excludes a large portion of the population.

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Cultural norms and clan dynamics further limit the participation of young people and minorities. Interviewees emphasized that civic education is rarely taught in schools, and adult literacy programs do not address governance topics.

These findings highlight a fundamental disconnect between constitutional provisions and public understanding. The majority of the population is unfamiliar with how laws are initiated, debated, amended and passed, and even less aware of their rights to petition Parliament or introduce bills. Without broader civic education, accessible information and opportunities for engagement, citizens cannot effectively exercise their legislative rights or evaluate parliamentary performance.

A comment from a focus group participant illustrates the depth of misconceptions about the role of MP and the separation of powers: *"People do not clearly understand representation. They do not fully understand that the MP they elected represents them, their community and the area he comes from. They also do not understand that Parliament should follow up on government and create checks and balances."* (FGD, Hargeisa, 2025)

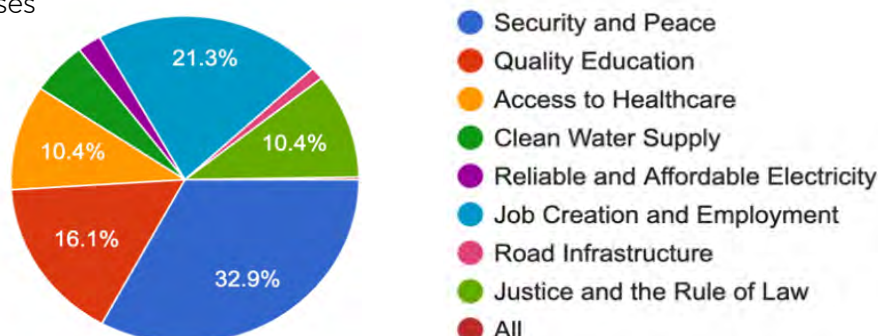
5.2 Public Service Priorities

Across all data sources, citizens prioritized tangible improvements in basic services over ideological or political considerations. The survey asked respondents to identify the most urgent issues requiring parliamentary attention. Peace and security topped the list (32.9 %), reflecting the public's recognition that stability underpins development and that unresolved conflicts can reverse the gains Somaliland has made in self-governance. Job creation followed at 21.3 %, signifying widespread concern about unemployment (esp. the 18–34 age group, which makes up over three quarters of the sample). The third and fourth priorities were quality education (16.1 %) and healthcare (10.4 %), underscoring demand for human capital development and better social services. Clean water supply and electricity each received 10.4 % and 3 % respectively, while road infrastructure and justice & rule of law scored below 5 %.

Focus group participants echoed these concerns but added nuance. They argued that peace must encompass not only absence of war but also social cohesion, equitable representation, and adherence to the rule of law. Youth participants emphasized the urgency of employment programs and entrepreneurship training, while women's representatives stressed the importance of maternal health services, girls' education and protection from gender-based violence. Several participants complained that parliamentary debates are dominated by power-sharing and clan politics rather than the pressing needs of constituents, leading to legislation that fails to address service delivery.

Q15. Thinking about your community, which of the following issues is the MOST URGENT priority for you? (Select only one)

404 Responses



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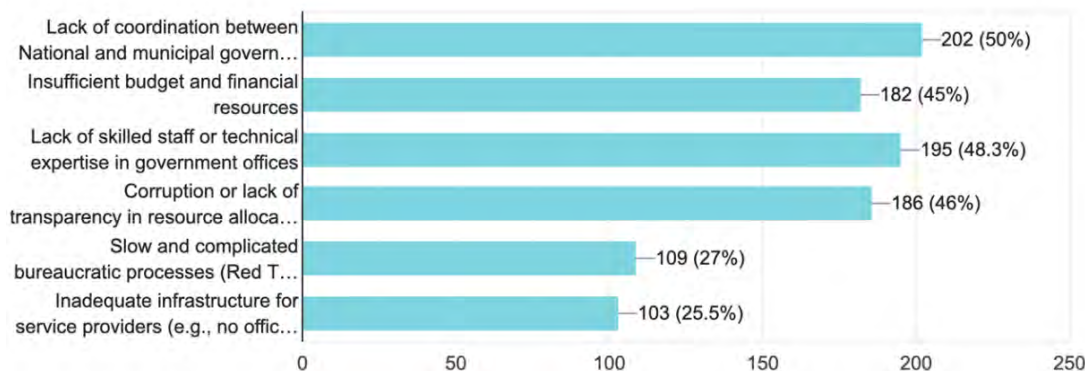
Key informants highlighted the misalignment between citizen priorities and the legislative agenda. They noted that Parliament spends disproportionate time on political party disputes, internal power struggles and issues driven by donor agendas. Respondents cited the recent passage of laws on national symbols and changes to the electoral system as evidence of priorities that do not directly impact everyday livelihoods. Meanwhile, long-standing drafts on education, health, environmental protection and gender-based violence remain stalled, largely due to lack of political will or resistance from influential interest groups.

5.3 Institutional Challenges and Barriers

Several structural and institutional obstacles hinder effective legislative functioning and citizen engagement. The survey asked respondents to select challenges that impede service delivery. The top three responses were lack of coordination between national and parliamentary (50%), lack of skilled staff and technical expertise (48.3%) and corruption or lack of transparency in resource allocation (46%). Other notable factors included insufficient budget (45%), red tape (27%) and inadequate infrastructure (25.5%). These figures corroborate qualitative accounts of weak institutional capacity and patronage networks.

Q23. Which of the following institutional challenges do you believe most significantly hinder the delivery of public services in your region? (Select all that apply)

404 Responses



Other factors derail effective legislative functioning and citizen engagement, notably, lack of fiscal capacity (13.9%), insufficient lawmaker expertise (10.9%), and executive de-prioritization (18.6%), which together account for over 43% of perceived legislative delay and collectively erode the institutional credibility upon which meaningful citizen engagement depends.

Q18. What do you believe is the main reason that new laws take a long time to be passed in Somaliland?

404 Responses



Figure 3 Challenges to pass new law

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Key informants described Parliament as under-resourced and poorly staffed. Committee clerks and researchers lack basic tools and training, and MPs have limited knowledge of lawmaking and oversight functions. Several interviewees lamented that the majority of laws originate from the executive, leaving parliamentarians little scope to draft, or amend legislation. Some committees rarely meet or have no permanent office space. One interviewee observed that the legislature receives only token budget support; field hearings and constituency visits cannot be conducted due to lack of funds. These narratives align with the constitutional provision that the legislative powers are vested solely in Parliament but highlight the gap between the *jure* authority and *de facto* capacity.

Poor communication and transparency compound these institutional weaknesses. The absence of a public record of parliamentary proceedings means citizens cannot hold representatives accountable. Some interviewees alleged that MPs do not return to their constituencies except during election campaigns and that they rarely report on their activities. Mistrust is further fueled by perceptions of corruption. Focus group participants recounted cases where MPs solicited bribes to push or delay bills, and survey respondents ranked corruption as a major obstacle to participation.

Clan dynamics and patronage politics present additional barriers. Many FGD participants believe that clan elders exercise undue influence over the House of Elders, which is selected rather than elected. This undermines accountability and perpetuates exclusion of women, youth, and minorities. Interviewees noted that some parliamentary decisions are made in consultation with clan leaders outside formal legislative processes. The requirement that MPs be at least 35 years old disenfranchises a large youth population and feeds perceptions that politics is the preserve of elders.

In addition, the legislative environment is constrained by broader political dynamics. The constitution prohibits the transfer of legislative powers outside Parliament and emphasises separation of powers, yet the government maintains significant control over the legislative agenda. Reports describe Parliament as a rubber stamp for executive proposals, and MPs rarely challenge the executive for fear of losing access to resources or political patronage.

One key informant underscored that capacity gaps within Parliament itself contribute to governance challenges: *"Even among the MPs themselves, awareness is low. They do not see their own powers. I think 99 percent do not apply what they were elected for; they are supposed to address what is happening in the country and what citizens need, but they do not."* (Key Informant Interview respondent, Hargeisa, 2025)^[2]

5.4 Cross-Cutting Findings

Several themes cut across the evidence:

Gender and youth exclusion – Women and youth are severely under-represented in formal political structures. Only one woman currently serves in the House of Representatives and none in the House of Elders; the constitutional age requirement for MPs and entrenched patriarchal norms hinder youth participation. Women activists interviewed highlighted that laws addressing gender-based violence and female genital mutilation remain stalled because male MPs either deprioritize them or fear backlash from conservative constituencies.

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"There is only one woman in Parliament, and no youth because the age requirement is thirty-five. The person sitting there cannot understand what youth need, and the man sitting there cannot fully put himself in the shoes of women." (Key Informant Interview respondent, Hargeisa, 2025)^[3]

Regional disparities – Public consultations and civic education efforts are concentrated in Hargeisa, leaving outlying regions such as Sanaag, Sool and Togdheer with minimal engagement. This centralization exacerbates feelings of marginalization and fosters narratives of 'two Somaliland's. Survey data show that regions outside Maroodijeeh have similar or greater interest in legislative awareness but significantly lower access to information. As one of the KII observed: "Consultations do happen, but they are often centralized in Hargeisa and not always accessible to ordinary citizens, especially women, youth, and rural communities." (Key Informant Interview respondent, Hargeisa, 2025)^[4]

Trust and participation dynamics – Low levels of trust in parliamentary institutions discourage active participation. Citizens believe their voices do not matter (18.3 % of survey respondents) and are fearful of social or political repercussions (11.9 %). Traditional elders often dominate decision-making and discourage younger or more progressive voices.

Q18. What is the biggest obstacle to people in your community participating in political decisions that affect them?

404 Responses

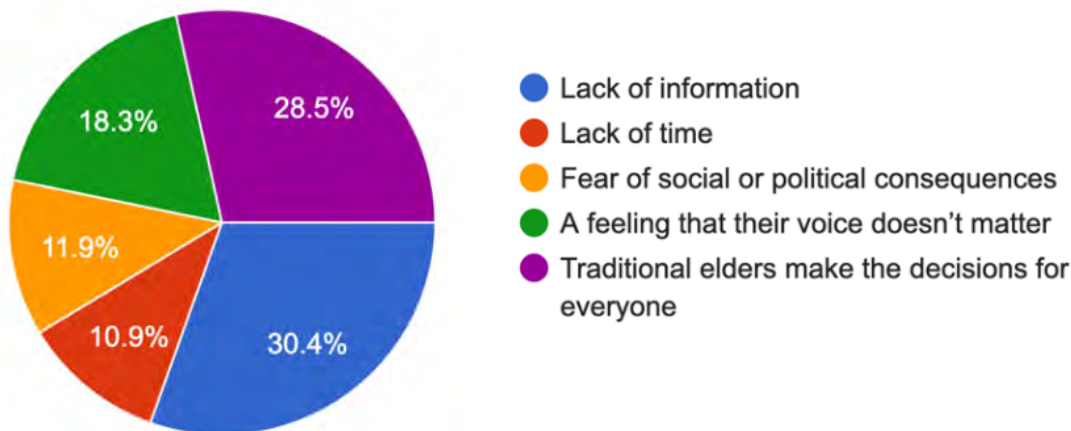


Figure 4 Obstacles to community participation

Sources of information – social media is the main channel for learning about legislation, yet it is also a vector for misinformation and polarization. Only a small proportion of respondents consult official sources, which are limited and not user-friendly.

6. Analysis and Discussion

The evidence paints a complex picture of democratic governance in Somaliland. On the one hand, the constitution articulates a clear separation of powers and provides mechanisms for legislative initiative and public participation. On the other hand, the practical realities of lawmaking, representation and oversight are severely constrained by institutional weakness, political dominance of the executive and socio-cultural norms. The mismatch between constitutional intent and actual practice generates confusion among

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citizens about who is responsible for what, fosters apathy and distrust, and impedes accountability.

6.1 Legislative capacity and independence

The legislative process is nominally participatory, but in practice, the executive dominates. Article 74 allows citizens and MPs to introduce bills, yet 90 % of laws originate from the Cabinet. Parliamentary committees are under-resourced, lack research support, and rarely draft legislation. The House of Elders serves as a review chamber but is composed of clan-appointed elders, many of whom have limited legal training. The interplay between these two houses often delays legislation and allows the executive to control the agenda, as bills cannot proceed without government approval.

6.2 Public awareness and civic education

There is a significant knowledge gap in understanding legislative processes. Most survey respondents claim familiarity with basic functions, yet the majority rely on social media for information and seldom read official documents. FGD participants underscored the absence of civic education in schools and adult education programs. Without structured, credible information, many citizens form opinions based on rumors or propaganda. Consequently, expectations of MPs are unrealistic as people demand direct service provision rather than lawmaking and oversight.

6.3 Participation and inclusivity

Although the constitution provides for public consultations, these are infrequent and often tokenistic. Centralized hearings in Hargeisa exclude rural populations who cannot travel due to distance and cost. Women and youth are systematically marginalized through both formal barriers (e.g., age requirement for MPs) and informal norms that elevate clan elders and male voices. Representation is skewed toward older men from dominant clans, which perpetuates patriarchal politics and stifles reform-minded voices.

6.4 Service delivery and legislative priorities

Citizens prioritize peace, jobs, education and health, yet Parliament focuses on issues that reinforce the status quo. The dominance of executive-sponsored bills means that economic and social legislation often languishes. Legislative oversight of service delivery is weak: committees rarely summon ministers or investigate poor performance. The absence of constituency offices means MPs are detached from local service concerns.

6.5 Accountability and transparency

Trust in Parliament is low partly because proceedings are opaque. Without public records, citizens cannot track votes or hold MPs accountable. Media coverage is inconsistent and often sensationalist. Transparency is further undermined by allegations of corruption, nepotism and patronage. The legal requirement for MPs to be at least 35 years old and hold secondary education qualifications may be intended to ensure competence but has the effect of excluding the majority of the population, including women and youth, from candidacy.

The findings align with broader research on participatory deficits in hybrid or emerging democracies. Studies of Somaliland and Somalia note that political decision-making is dominated by elders and elites, civic education is limited, and public trust in institutions

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is fragile. Recommendations to expand civic education, strengthen media capacity and build civil society organizations are seen as key to more inclusive governance. The present assessment confirms these observations and underscores the need for context-specific reforms that empower citizens and build institutional capacity.

7. Conclusions

The assessment reveals that public awareness and understanding of Somaliland's bicameral legislative institutions remain limited and uneven. While the Constitution clearly assigns law-making powers to the House of Representatives and the House of Elders, most citizens cannot explain the difference between these chambers or outline the process by which a bill becomes law. Many people confuse parliamentary roles with executive functions and expect MPs to deliver services. Media coverage of legislative proceedings is intermittent, and official channels for information dissemination are virtually non-existent. These knowledge gaps are exacerbated by low levels of civic education and lack of regional parliamentary offices, preventing rural populations from accessing legislative information.

Citizens' service priorities focus on security, employment, education and healthcare. Survey respondents ranked peace and security as the most urgent issue, followed by job creation and quality education. These priorities reflect a desire for stability and socioeconomic development, especially among young adults who comprise the majority of the population. There is a sense that Parliament has not adequately addressed these issues because its agenda is dominated by political quarrels, clan interests and donor-driven initiatives. Delays in passing critical social legislation on health and education further erode public trust.

Opportunities for citizen engagement with legislative institutions are currently constrained by centralization, weak communication and limited resources. Public consultations are rare and usually held in the capital. Women, youth and regional communities remain marginalized because of formal barriers such as age requirements for MPs and informal norms that prioritize elder and clan voices. However, the Constitution's provision for citizen-initiated bills and the public's growing interest in governance issues provide entry points for reform. Establishing constituency offices, holding public hearings across regions and leveraging digital platforms can create more inclusive pathways for citizen participation.

These findings have significant implications for democratic governance and legislative reform in Somaliland. The gap between constitutional theory and legislative practice undermines accountability and fosters disenchantment with state institutions. To build trust and legitimacy, Parliament must strengthen its legislative and oversight capacity, diversify representation and improve transparency. Civic education campaigns should be integrated into formal and informal education systems, and media organizations should produce balanced coverage of parliamentary activities. Looking ahead, fostering a mutually reinforcing relationship between citizens and their legislature will require sustained commitment from parliamentarians, government agencies, civil society and development partners. By creating avenues for meaningful public engagement and prioritizing citizen-defined agendas, Somaliland can move closer to its democratic aspirations.

8. Recommendations

The following recommendations are evidence-based, actionable and prioritized to enhance legislative responsiveness and citizen participation. They target Parliament, government ministries, civil society organizations, media and development partners.

8.1 Parliament and Legislative Institutions

Strengthen Committee Capacity – Establish a parliamentary research service and recruit qualified technical staff to support committees in drafting, reviewing, and analyzing legislation. Provide regular training for MPs on constitutional roles, legislative drafting, oversight techniques and gender-sensitive lawmaking.

8.2 Government Ministries and Agencies

Collaborative Policy Development – Engage Parliament early in policy formulation to reduce executive dominance. Provide draft bills with explanatory memoranda and allow adequate time for parliamentary review.

8.3 Civil Society Organizations

Civic Education Campaigns – Design and implement civic education programs in schools, universities, mosques and community centers. Use local languages and culturally appropriate messaging to explain the roles of Parliament, citizens' rights and how to engage.

8.4 Media Organizations

Professionalize Political Reporting – Train journalists on parliamentary procedures, legislative analysis and responsible reporting. Avoid sensationalism and verify information before publication.

8.5 Development Partners

Capacity Building – Fund training for parliamentary staff, committee clerks and research departments. Provide technical assistance for establishing digital platforms and data management systems.

8.6 Civic Education Actors

1. **Integrate Civic Education into Curricula** – Work with the Ministry of Education to integrate civic education into primary and secondary school syllabi. Focus on the constitution, parliamentary functions, human rights and citizen responsibilities.

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Annexes

Annex I Survey

Google Form Survey

Dear participant

This survey, conducted by the Institute for Strategic Insights and Research (ISIR), aims to gain a deeper understanding of citizens' views on legislative institutions, public services, and governance in Somaliland. The information gathered will serve as evidence to support improved public engagement, policy dialogue, and enhanced service delivery.

Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary, and your responses will remain confidential. The survey is designed to be completed in approximately 15–20 minutes. We value your honest opinions and experiences, as we are interested in understanding your perspectives.

The questionnaire comprises four sections :

1. Background Information (Demographics)
2. Public Awareness of Legislative Institutions and Processes
3. Citizen Priorities for Public Services and Governance
4. Perceived Institutional and Legislative Challenges

Your responses will significantly contribute to a comprehensive understanding of citizens' viewpoints and will inform future policy discussions and public education initiatives.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey.

SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please select the option that best describes you.

Q1. In which region do you currently reside?

1. Awdal
2. Sahil
3. Maroodi-Jeex
4. Togdheer
5. Sanaag
6. Sool

Q3. What is your gender?

1. Male
2. Female

Q4. What is your age group?

1. 18 – 24 years
2. 25 – 34 years
3. 35 – 44 years
4. 45 – 64 years
5. 65 years and above

Q5. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

1. No formal education
2. Primary school
3. Secondary / High school
4. Vocational training / Diploma
5. University degree (Bachelor's)
6. Postgraduate degree (Master's or PhD)
7. Quranic school / Religious education only

Q6. What is your primary occupation or source of income?

1. Government Employee (Public Sector)
2. Private Sector Employee
3. Civil Society/NGOs
4. Politicians/MP
5. Self-employed / Small Business Owner
6. Livestock herder / Pastoralist
7. Farmer / Agriculture
8. Student
9. Unemployed
10. Others

SECTION 2: LEGISLATIVE AWARENESS

Q7. How familiar are you with the Somaliland Constitution?

1. Very familiar
2. Somewhat familiar
3. Not familiar at all
4. I have heard of it but do not know its contents

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Q8. Do you know the difference between the roles of the House of Representatives and the House of Elders (Guurti)?

1. Yes, I know the difference clearly
2. I have some idea but am not sure
3. No, I do not know the difference

Q9. To your knowledge, which house of Parliament is responsible for passing laws related to the national budget and taxes?

1. House of Representatives
2. House of Elders (Guurti)
3. Both houses equally
4. I do not know

Q10. Are you aware of the procedure for a bill to be approved in parliament?

1. Yes, I'm aware
2. No, I'm not aware

Q10. Are you aware that citizens can introduce a new bill to Parliament if they collect the signatures of 5,000 eligible voters?

1. Yes, I was aware
2. No, I did not know this was possible
3. Somehow aware of it

Q11. Have you ever seen or heard about a bill (draft law) being debated in the media or your community before it became a law?

1. Yes, frequently
2. Yes, sometimes
3. Rarely
4. Never

Q12. What is the primary way you learn about new laws or government policies?

1. Radio
2. Television
3. Social Media (Facebook, WhatsApp)
4. Community meetings / Traditional elders
5. Word of mouth

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Q13. How would you rate the performance of the current Parliament in representing the interests of the people?

1. Excellent
2. Good
3. Fair
4. Poor
5. Very Poor

Q14. What do you believe are the primary responsibilities of the Parliament?

(Short answer)

SECTION 3: PUBLIC SERVICE PRIORITIES

Q15. Thinking about your community, which of the following issues is the MOST URGENT priority for you? (Select only one)

1. Security and Peace
2. Quality Education
3. Access to Healthcare
4. Clean Water Supply
5. Reliable and Affordable Electricity
6. Job Creation and Employment
7. Road Infrastructure
8. Justice and the Rule of Law
9. Others

Q16. On a scale of 1 to 5, how effectively do you feel the government (National and Municipal) manages public resources to meet the needs of your community?

1. Very Ineffective (Resources are poorly managed)
2. Ineffective
3. Neutral
4. Effective
5. Very Effective (Resources are managed well)

Q17 At which level of government do you believe improvements in public services are most needed?

1. National government
2. Local/district government
3. All levels equally

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Q18. What is the most important public service issue affecting your community right now?

(Short answer)

SECTION 4: INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

Q19. What do you believe is the main reason that new laws take a long time to be passed in Somaliland?

1. Disagreements between political parties
2. Influence of powerful clan leaders
3. Lack of money to implement the laws
4. Lack of expertise among lawmakers
5. The government does not prioritize these laws

Q20. When you have a problem with a government service, do you know where to go to make a formal complaint?

1. Yes, and I have done so
2. Yes, but I do not think it would help
3. No, I do not know where to go

Q21. Do you believe that the central government provides enough support and resources to your local district administration?

1. Yes, more than enough
2. Just enough
3. Not enough
4. Almost no support

Q22. What is the biggest obstacle to people in your community participating in political decisions?

1. Lack of information
2. Lack of time
3. Fear of social or political consequences
4. A feeling that their voice doesn't matter
5. Traditional elders make the decisions for everyone

Q23: In your opinion, what is the main challenge within government institutions that affects the delivery of public services? (Select one)

1. Lack of transparency and accountability
2. Weak coordination between government institutions

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3. Corruption or misuse of public resources
4. Limited financial or human resources
5. Weak implementation of laws and policies
6. Other (please specify)

Q23: Do you think the central government has access to the same information on public service that citizens can easily obtain?

1. Yes, they have the same information
2. No, they have not the same information

Q23: What institutional barriers make it difficult for citizens to access public services in your area?

(Short answer)

Q24: Which of the following institutional challenges do you believe most significantly hinder the delivery of public services in your region? (Select all that apply)

1. Lack of coordination between National and municipal government
2. Insufficient budget and financial resources
3. Lack of skilled staff or technical expertise in government offices
4. Corruption or lack of transparency in resource allocation
5. Slow and complicated bureaucratic processes (Red Tape)
6. Inadequate infrastructure for service providers (e.g., no office space, no transport)

Annex II KII and FDG Guides

Key Informant Interviews (KII) & Focus Group Discussions (FDG)

This KII and FDG component complements the survey by providing deeper qualitative insights and validation of findings. Eight Key Informant Interviews will be conducted in Hargeisa with government officials, parliamentarians, civil society leaders, policy experts, and academics to explore legislative processes, institutional challenges, and governance improvements.

Two Focus Group Discussions will be held with diverse participants, including community members, youth, women, and civil society representatives. These discussions will validate survey results, capture citizen perspectives and priorities, and identify key barriers to public engagement.

Public Awareness of Legislative Institutions in Somaliland

1. Awareness & Knowledge of Legislative Processes

Question:

How would you describe the current level of public awareness about the roles and functions of Parliament and the legislative process? What are the main gaps in understanding?

Purpose:

Validates survey findings on awareness levels and explores why gaps exist.

Reference from Survey:

Survey indicates **low to moderate awareness levels** of parliamentary roles.

Many respondents **confuse legislative vs executive functions**.

Awareness is **higher among educated/urban groups**, lower among rural/youth segments.

👉 Field prompt: *"Our survey shows limited understanding of Parliament's role—does this reflect your experience?"*

2. Access to Information & Communication Channels

Question:

What are the main ways citizens currently receive information about laws, policies, and parliamentary activities? How effective and accessible are these channels?

Purpose:

Expands survey data on communication sources (media, social media, community channels).

Reference from Survey:

Majority rely on **social media and informal networks**.

Limited use of official parliamentary communication channels.

Traditional media (TV/radio) remains relevant but **less dominant among youth**.

👉 Field prompt: *"Survey shows social media is the main source—do you think it is reliable?"*

3. Public Participation & Engagement

Question:

To what extent do citizens feel they have opportunities to participate in legislative processes (e.g., consultations, feedback, public hearings)? What works and what does not?

Purpose:

Triangulates participation rates and perceived inclusiveness.

Reference from Survey:

Low participation levels in formal legislative processes.

Majority reported **never being consulted** on laws or policies.

Engagement opportunities seen as **limited or inaccessible**.

👉 Field prompt: *"If opportunities exist, why are people not participating?"*

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4. Trust in Institutions

Question:

How would you assess the level of trust between citizens and legislative institutions? What factors are driving trust or distrust?

Purpose:

Deepens survey findings on institutional credibility.

Reference from Survey:

Mixed to low trust levels in Parliament.

Key drivers of distrust include:

Lack of transparency

Weak communication

Perception of **elite-driven decision-making**

👉 Field prompt: **"What would realistically increase trust?"**

5. Barriers to Engagement

Question:

What are the main barriers preventing citizens—especially youth and women—from engaging with legislative processes?

Purpose:

Identifies structural, social, and informational barriers behind survey trends.

Reference from Survey:

Major barriers include:

Lack of awareness/information

Limited access to engagement platforms

Cultural/social constraints (especially for women)

Belief that participation **does not influence outcomes**

👉 Field prompt: **"Which of these barriers is most critical?"**

6. Representation & Inclusivity

Question:

Do you think current legislative processes adequately represent the interests of different groups (youth, women, regions, marginalized communities)? Why or why not?

Purpose:

Explores inclusivity beyond numeric survey indicators.

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Reference from Survey:

Concerns about:

Underrepresentation of youth and women

Regional inequalities

Perception that policies do not reflect **grassroots priorities**

👉 Field prompt: **"Who is most left out, and why?"**

7. Effectiveness of Current Legislative Processes

Question:

From your perspective, how effective are current legislative processes in addressing citizens' needs and priorities? Where are the main institutional challenges?

Purpose:

Links survey perceptions to governance and policy effectiveness.

Reference from Survey:

Moderate to low satisfaction with legislative effectiveness.

Key issues:

Slow processes

Weak implementation of laws

Limited feedback mechanisms to citizens

👉 Field prompt: **"Is the problem capacity, process, or political will?"**

8. Recommendations for Improvement

Question:

What practical steps would you recommend to improve public awareness, participation, and trust in the legislative process?

Purpose:

Converts findings into actionable policy recommendations.

Reference from Survey:

Suggested improvements include:

Civic education programs

Better communication and transparency

Use of **digital engagement platforms**

Regular public consultations

👉 Field prompt: **"Which recommendation can be implemented immediately?"**

PUBLIC AWARENESS OF LEGISLATIVE INSTITUTIONS IN SOMALILAND

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07 June 2026

Hargeisa, Somaliland