

Participatory Poll on Prospects of Democratization in Puntland



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, we would like to thank “Allaah”, the Almighty and Merciful, who made this publication possible.

This report presents the overall findings of a participatory poll conducted by Puntland Development Research Centre in March 2014 along with analyses of issues concerning the democratization process and recommendations for the way forward. PDRC hopes that the results of this poll will stir policy debates that will influence the reactivation of the democratization process and will educate policy makers on pitfalls along the road to democracy.

Basically, any accomplishment requires the joint effort of many people and this work is no different. This work was accomplished with the shared thoughts and wisdom of many committed and dedicated persons working to both PDRC and its principal partner, Interpeace. Thus, PDRC should be very indebted to Interpeace Somali Programme team, who was always available to provide technical inputs and guidance throughout the polling and analysis processes.

In particular, we would like to thank Jessamy Garver-Affeldt, Peter Nordström, Ulf Terlinden, Abdirahman Raghe and Peter Wade Mackenzie for their diligent effort and valuable inputs. We also express our gratitude and appreciation to Helena Puig Larrauri and Michaela Ledesma from Interpeace Geneva office, whose technical support and guidance has been instrumental in accomplishing this task.

PDRC is also very grateful to its staff who diligently contributed to bring this poll from concept to fruition. If we have inadvertently missed out acknowledging our contributors, future publications will give due credit to those who contributed to this work even partly.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2011, Puntland has pursued a transition to democratic elections and away from the longstanding clan-based political system. The formation of Puntland's first transitional electoral commission in July 2011 by the then-administration was a crucial landmark and stepping stone towards the accomplishment of the democratization process.

In line with the electoral roadmap, the Transitional Puntland Electoral Commission (TPEC) facilitated the adoption of the Constitution of Puntland in April 2012 and subsequently promulgated the electoral laws on the establishment of political associations and the implementation of local government elections. The emergence of six political associations in February 2013 and the subsequent politicking marked the advent of a long-awaited democratic system with prospects for delivering better governance to the people of Puntland.

Despite all efforts made to bring the democratization process to fruition, the process was suspended on July 14th by then-president Abdirahman M. Faroole, to defuse widespread electoral violence and anti-election uprisings in Gardo district and parts of Mudug and Bari regions. The suspension of the first Puntland local elections, however, did not terminate Puntland's democratization aspirations. Rather, it was perceived as a conciliatory gesture and precursor to successful elections in the future.

In the aftermath of the suspension, Puntland relapsed to the clan-based political system¹. This marked the beginning of a tough political contest between aspirants to the Puntland presidency. Meanwhile, controversies over the selection, vetting and validation of members of the new parliament raised in the lead up to the presidential elections, whilst the Puntland titled elders endured to create a lasting peace which enables a peaceful transition of power.

Notwithstanding with the above, the newly-elected President Abdiweli Mohamed Ali established a cabinet ministry for constitution, federal affairs, and democratization upon his election in January 2014. The president – in a consultative meeting with civil society representatives – prioritized the resumption of the democratization process, promising the immediate implementation of the democratization roadmap in the initial months of his presidency.

On this premise, the Puntland Development Research Centre (PDRC) conducted a participatory poll from March 20th to 31st 2014. The primary objective of the polling exercise was to gauge public perceptions and support for the revival of the democratization process as well as to explore the potential

¹ On 24th July 2013, Puntland parliament voted unanimously to return to the clan-based electoral modal of selecting new members of parliament who in turn will elect the next president of Puntland on January 8th 2014

challenges that could face this process. The study was also prompted by the need to inform policy review and formulation for the democratization process in Puntland. 1,525 randomly selected persons of voting age in the districts of Garowe, Gardo, Bosaso, Bargaal, Uffay, Badhan, Dhahar, Boame, Buhodle, Galdogob, Galkayo, and Eyl were included in the poll.

The poll showed that 85.8% of respondents were in favor of the early re-establishment of the transitional electoral commission within the first six months of the incumbent administration's term. **The findings also suggest that 91% of respondents** intend to cast their votes in future elections. This implies that the majority of Puntlanders are supportive of a democratic system of governance in Puntland. Only a small percentage (7.8%) do not intend to vote in future elections, mainly because they either oppose the multi-party system, have no time to vote, or see holding elections as infeasible².

In trying to identify potential impediments that could inhibit the forthcoming democratization process, the findings suggest that the potential for flare-ups of insecurity is considered the most threatening challenge, followed by low public awareness and understanding of the electoral process.

Responding to how women's political participation can be further strengthened, the findings showed that awareness raising, mobilization of women's potential³ and one-person-one-vote elections are the top three choices to advance women's political participation and representation. **with respect to this, 31.5% of respondents regarded public awareness raising as optimal approach to advance women's political involvement while 22.3% of respondents said mobilization of women's potential and 18.3% said popular elections is the key to advance women's political involvement.**

Of the 959 male respondents only 16.5% did not see women's inclusion in government as an important issue. Positive though it is, this could call into question the commonly held perception that most men oppose women's political involvement.

The poll also revealed that the large majority of women and men intend to vote in the next elections. 90.9% of male respondents and 91% of female respondents intend to vote in future elections. Similarly, the poll results showed that there is no significant difference in intentions to vote between urban and rural constituents at 91.1% and 90.3% respectively.

Lastly, this report presents the overall findings of the participatory poll along with analyses of issues concerning the democratization process and recommendations for the way forward. PDRC believes that

² This marks a significant increase as compared to the results of a straw poll conducted in three cities in June/July 2013, in the middle for the electoral crises. 56% of respondents in Bosaso, 72% of respondents in Garowe and 56% of respondents in Galkayo said they intended to vote in the planned 15 July 2013 elections.

³ **Women in Puntland can strive to participate in the political arena since they possess necessary sources of power (resources and education) but are unable to use these strengths to their full potential.**

the results will stir policy debates that will influence the reactivation of the democratization process. We also hope that the results will educate policy makers on pitfalls along the road to democracy and will contribute to the formulation of conscious and proactive strategies to forestall a possible blow to the forthcoming democratization process in Puntland.

INTRODUCTION

PDRC employs participatory action research (PAR) methodology in all its programs. The PAR methodology provides all stakeholders the opportunity to participate in processes aimed at addressing issues of common concern: from identifying the nature of issues, analyzing the factors underlying those issues, and even recommending ways to deal with them.

Even though this research approach proved expedient over time, it became necessary to take advantage of the technology available in Puntland for the purpose of improving the overall efficacy of the research. Despite limitations, Puntland enjoys its share of information technology, particularly in terms of telecommunications and the Internet, both being practical tools in reaching more people in a relatively short time.

In June and July of 2013, PDRC conducted a straw poll⁴ in which 8,600 Puntlanders were interviewed. The objective of the poll was to study people's willingness to vote and their level of awareness of the democratization process going on in Puntland at the time. Using simple graphic presentations, the poll result data revealed findings of tremendous significance in understanding people's perceptions of elections and the democratization process. Though it was an eye-opening experience for PDRC, the outcome of the straw poll encouraged another initiative - to utilize available technology in conducting a participatory pilot poll⁵. This second poll was conducted in March 2014 to explore prospects of democratization in Puntland.

In this polling exercise, PDRC adopted innovative approaches in collecting and analyzing the poll data. The data was collected using a combination of smartphones and paper questionnaires, and then analyzed using an online platform called FirstMile Geo⁶, an interactive data analysis and visualization tool which allows for geographic representation of data.

Purpose and Objectives of the Poll

⁴ A straw poll is a survey of public's views used to explore the likely result of an election or the tendency of public opinion regarding an issue.

⁵ Participatory polling is an action research methodology through which the general public is consulted on policy-related issues.

⁶ <https://www.firstmilegeo.com/>

Participatory polling is an innovative action research methodology for public consultation, using a questionnaire that has been designed with the contribution of societal and political stakeholders. The results then serve as a basis for public dialogue and in support of the policy-making process.

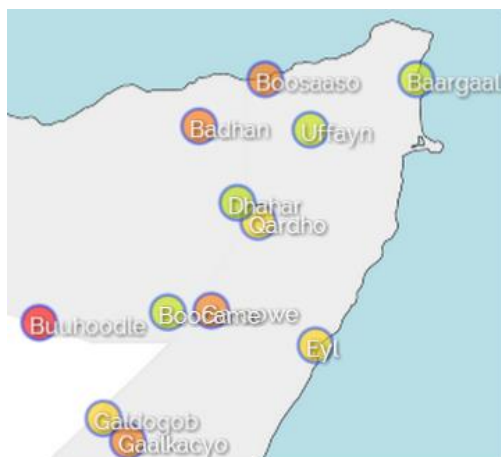
This poll was confined to examining public perceptions and support for the revival of the democratization process, perceived potential challenges to the forthcoming democratization process, reflections on the suspended local elections, and views on women’s participation in decision making.

The specific objectives of the poll were the following:

- ✎ To gauge public perceptions on the resumption of the democratization process
- ✎ To explore the potential challenges to the forthcoming democratization process
- ✎ To assess the public’s willingness to participate in the future elections
- ✎ To weigh possible strategies that could strengthen women’s inclusion in government.

Methodology

A team of 16 graduates from Puntland universities were recruited and trained on data collection skills with PDRC taking the lead role in facilitating and guiding the data collection process. A structured questionnaire validated by a group of political and societal stakeholders was administered by the 16 enumerators through face-to-face interviews with 1,525 persons of voting age.



Poll Target Districts

In order to ensure that views of all communities across Puntland are duly reflected in the poll findings, PDRC employed a convenience sampling method for the selection of target districts. 12 out of the 42 districts of Puntland were purposely selected since they accommodate a cross section of Puntland communities and their convenient accessibility. The districts also represented important demographic characteristics of Puntland communities, including location and type of community (such as urban, rural, and nomadic rural populations).

To select the sample size, PDRC used a standard sample size calculator⁷ which systematically determines the sample size of any target population. According to the model, a population of 3,000,000⁸ people can be represented by a sample size of 384 respondents. However, it was crucial to scale up the calculated sample size to compensate for the possible design effect caused by the use of a convenience sampling

⁷ <http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>

⁸ 3,000,000 persons: is rough estimate of Puntland population by the Puntland Government

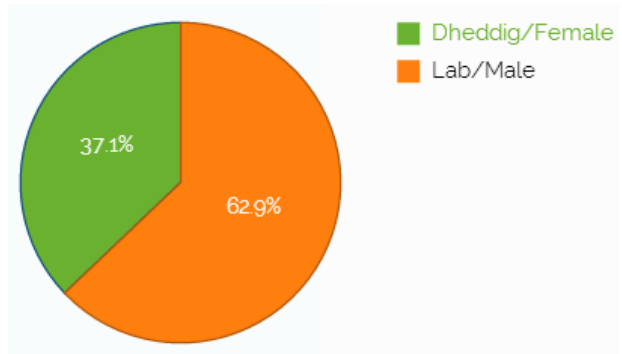
method. As regards, PDRC decided to reach as many people as possible to ensure precision and coherence. As a result, 1,525 persons were interviewed during the polling.

With the sample size and district selection, PDRC enumerators went to each district capital. Without an up to date census, selecting individuals for interviews using random sampling is not straightforward. In each capital, the enumerators each walked in a different direction from the town center. They then interviewed every other person they encountered on the street, introducing some randomness into the selection process.

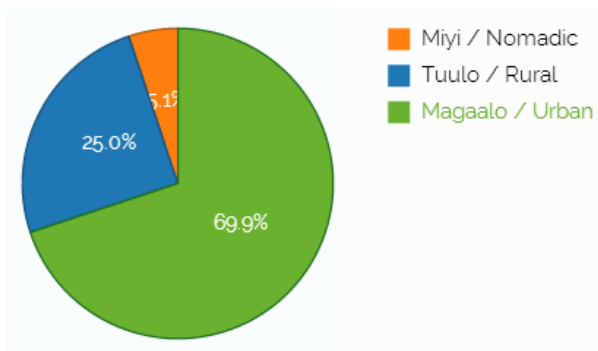
Demographics

Of the 1,525 polled persons, 62.9% were men and 37.1% were women.

However, both genders were not equally represented in this poll for various reasons. Firstly, nine out of the 16 enumerators were men and due to their personal inclination they tended to interview more men than women despite the given instructions. Secondly, the poll was not of household nature and hence majority of respondents were men on the streets.



Gender composition of respondents



The poll respondents were also composed of urban and rural people. The inclusion of both categories was crucial to establish possible different viewpoints and mindsets between the two groups, as well as to identify priority challenges each group perceives in relation to the democratization process.

As this chart depicts, 69.8% of respondents were urban inhabitants and 30.2% were rural inhabitants (village dwellers and pastoralists). This does not necessarily reflect the overall population distribution of Puntland. According to rough estimates, more than half of the Puntland population is nomadic. However, PDRC has been unable to reach a great number of pastoralists since the poll coincided with a dry season (end of March) and hence all nomadic communities were on the move in search of pasture and water- usually in inaccessible areas.

It should be noted though that the principle views towards the democratization process do not seem to differ very much between rural and urban areas – as mentioned above, the poll results showed that there is no significant difference in intentions to vote.

The poll respondents also represented different age groups and had different education levels and socio-economic statuses.

PDRC also conducted twelve focus group discussions in parallel to the individual interviews and a total of 72 well-informed personalities representing the different chapters of society (youth, women, community-based organizations, government officials, minority groups, traditional and religious leaders, professionals, and businesspeople) partook in moderated discussions and answered a set of questions pertinent to the forthcoming electoral process.

The FGDs were used to collect qualitative information so as to supplement the quantitative findings of the polling as well as to substantiate the information given by the poll respondents.

Survey Questions

a. Poll Questions

- How important is it that the government establishes a new transitional electoral commission within the first 6 months of this year?
- Do you intend to vote in the next election? If no, why not?
- Which priority challenges must be addressed before future elections?
- Only 2 of the 66 current Members of Parliament are women. What do you believe should be done to improve women representation in local councils and in the Puntland Parliament?

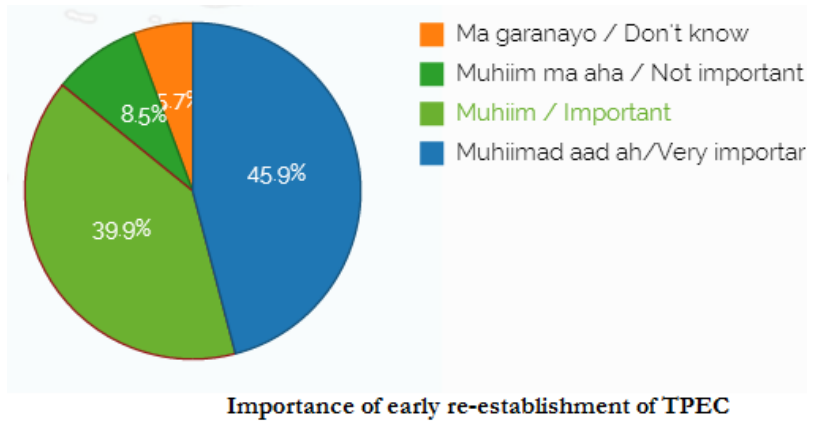
b. Prompts for the FGDs

- What would strengthen your trust in the future transitional electoral commission?
- What priority challenges must be addressed before future elections?
- How can women participation in the democratization process be strengthened?
- What should the government do to make successful elections possible in the future?
- What should civil society do to make successful elections possible in the future?
- What role should political associations play to contribute to successful elections in the future?

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE POLL

Views on the re-establishment of the Transitional Electoral Commission

The first question of the poll was “in your opinion, how important is it that the government establishes a new transitional electoral commission within the first 6 months of this year?” The implicit answers of which were as follows: a) Very important, b) Important, c) Unimportant, d) I don't know.



Of the 1,525 respondents, 85.8% saw the early re-establishment of TPEC as important. A mere 8.5% of respondents saw the early formation of TPEC as unimportant.

Also, and in relation to TPEC, the FGD participants were asked to discuss what would strengthen each citizen's trust in the future electoral commission. According to their propositions, members of the future TPEC should have the following qualifications:

- They should be knowledgeable of the local context and pertinent political and social dynamics. They should also possess substantial experience in dealing with complex issues of a similar nature.
- They should be equipped with necessary knowledge, technical capacities, and acumen to effectively spearhead the democratization process. They should be vetted according to agreed upon criteria.
- Regional representation and gender balancing should be given due consideration during the selection process and thorough consultations and consensus-building efforts should be made prior to the establishment of TPEC.
- They must enjoy the trust of the public and should be known for their morality, integrity, personal credibility, and patriotism.
- They should be as neutral as possible and they must exercise political impartiality and fairness.
- They should be economically self-sufficient, resistant to any influence and independent from any interference.
- They should be familiar with Islamic teachings and Somali culture.

Possible Challenges to the Future Democratization Process

The poll respondents were explicitly asked to identify the biggest threats to the renewal of the democratization process and according to the analysis made,

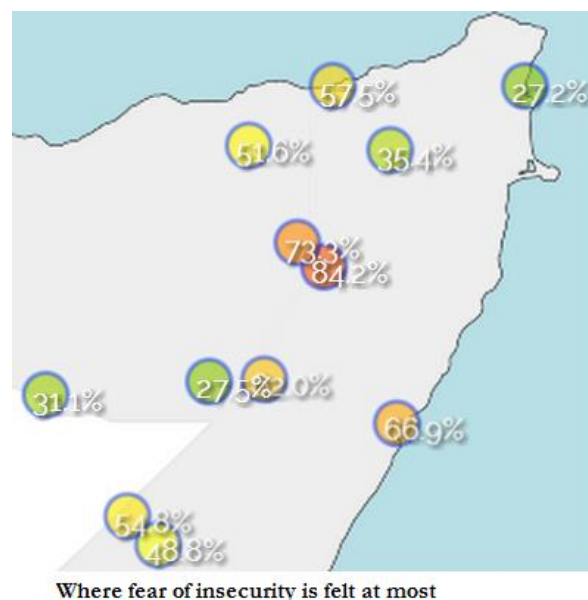
Rank	Answer	Amount	Percentage
1.	Amniga / Insecurity	792	24.12%
2.	Wacyigelinta dadweynaha / Low Public Awareness	678	20.65%
3.	Tiro-koob dadweyne / Lack of Population Census	280	8.53%
4.	Wakhtiga / Time Misuse	257	7.83%
5.	Maxkamad Dastuuri ah / Nonexistent Constitutional Court	218	6.64%

Possible challenges to the forthcoming democratization process - Top 5
 insecurity emerged as the most threatening challenge (mentioned by 1 in 4), followed by low public awareness (mentioned by 1 in 5), lack of population census (mentioned by 1 in 12), inept use of time, and the nonexistent constitutional court.

Again, in the FGDs participants were asked to thoroughly debate and put forward the priority challenges that could derail the forthcoming democratization process. The majority of respondents stressed that the previous challenges⁹ that contributed to the suspension of the 2013 local elections are still imminent and need to be addressed to ensure successful elections in the future.

In this respect, most FGD participants agreed that maintaining electoral security is of paramount importance and that security lapses and political turmoil amid elections could result in another blow to the democratization efforts.

Respondents in Gardo, Dhahar and Eyl had the greatest fear of possible insecurity in the lead-up to the elections. It is of importance to mention that discontented communities in Gardo and Galkayo towns had opposed the 2013 local elections and were involved in deadly confrontations with the government, which led to the suspension of the planned local government elections. The FGD participants also shared the same viewpoint in regard to proliferation of small arms and light weapons. According to their view, uncontrolled arms will remain an acute menace to national and electoral security.



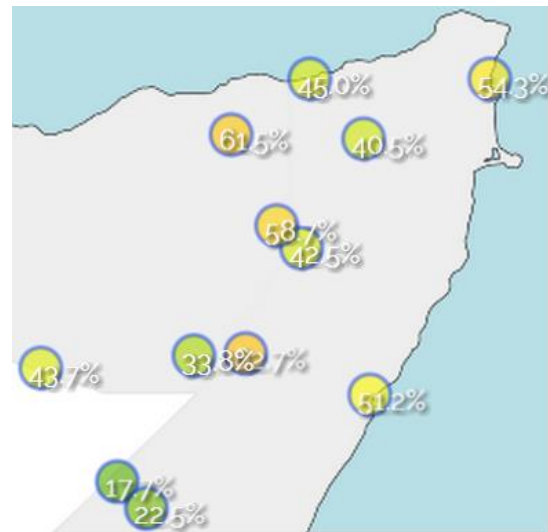
⁹ Low public awareness, lack of an outreach plan for discontented political and traditional leaders and resultant violent opposition were the main challenges encountered during the planned 2013 local elections.

The FGD participants also mentioned that the majority of the general public has little understanding of the democratization process and related electoral procedures.

The poll mapped the intensity of the need for awareness raising campaigns in each poll location. The findings show that the perceived need intensifies with increased distance from urban centers.

However, the case of Garowe was so exceptional since 62.7% of respondents felt that low public awareness of the electoral process could imperil the forthcoming democratization process.

The FGDs also mentioned several highly important points not highlighted in the poll:



Where civic/voter education is needed at most

- The issues of voter registration and district demarcation were thoroughly debated and most FGD participants pointed to the need for earlier delineation of old and new district¹⁰ boundaries as well as voter registration to avoid election irregularities.
- There is a need for free and fair political space as well as unrestricted media coverage. All actors should duly respect the public and private rights of all citizens as enshrined in the constitution, including freedoms of association and expression.
- Election funds should be secured in a timely manner. Donor dependency should be minimized and the process should be locally owned and driven.

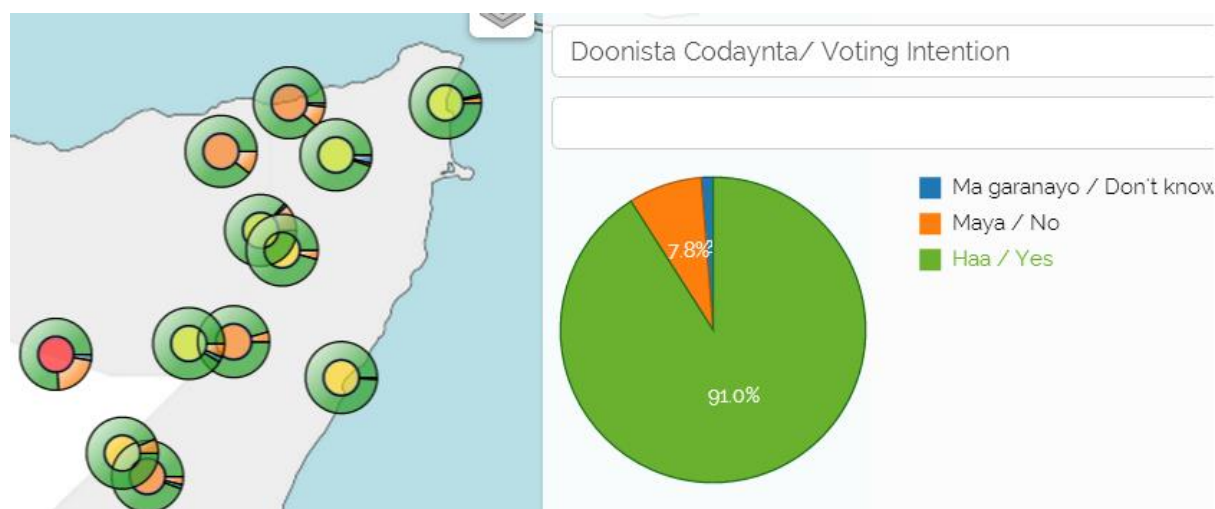
Moreover, the participants in the FGDs held in Buhoodle and Bo'ame mentioned that communities in Sool and Ayn regions are deeply divided between the rival administrations of Puntland and Khaatumo and entirely discontented about miserable living conditions and the poor delivery of services by both administrations.

Many of the FGD participants in these two districts perceive elections as superfluous and wished for decentralized and equitable access to services and political reconciliation processes between Puntland and Khaatumo to end the stalemate.

Intent to Vote in Future Elections

¹⁰ There is a pervasive multiplication of districts in Puntland. Of the 42 districts of Puntland only 18 existed before 1991 and the newly established ones have no clearly demarcated boundaries.

One of the primary aims of this poll was to gauge people’s intention to participate in future elections. And hence the second question of the poll was framed as “do you intend to vote in the next election?” while the implicit answers of the question were a) Yes, b) No, c) I don’t know.



As the above chart depicts, an overwhelming majority of respondents (91%) intend to vote if elections are held in the future. Only 7.8% say they will stay away from the polls. The left-hand map also shows the intention to vote by district. The green part of the upper circle stands for those intend to vote and the orange part stands for those intend to abstain from future elections. However, most of those intending to abstain are concentrated in Buhodle, Badhan, Dhahar, Bosaso and Galdogob.

According to the main reasons given by those intending to abstain in future elections, they will do so simply because they don’t support democracy, have no time to vote or perceive that elections will not happen.

Ma taageersani xisbiyada / Don't support democracy	38	2.49%
Wakhti uma hayo / Don't have time	34	2.23%
Doorasho dhici mayso / Elections won't happen	20	1.31%

Three main reasons for abstention to vote in future elections

Women’s Political Participation and Representation

Though women constitute a majority of Puntland’s population, they are socially marginalized and politically underrepresented. This is attributed to the traditional Somali patriarchal system, a lack of policies for women’s empowerment, and the outward disinclination of traditional and political actors to effectively engage women in decision-making processes. Of the 66 members of parliament, only two are women. There are only five female ministers and deputy ministers out of the 47-member cabinet.

A 2007 presidential decree that earmarks 30% of local government seats to women is far from being fulfilled.¹¹ This is mainly due to a lack of enforcement mechanisms and a traditional system of

¹¹ [The Decree was issued by President Adde Muse \(2005-2009\) to increase women representation in local government.](#)

governance that has always been biased towards men. The prevailing clan-based political system discounts women's role and prevents them from holding positions of power since they belong neither to their paternal clans nor to their matrimonial clans. Due to this perceived lack of clan identity, women waver between the two camps, belonging to neither.

Poll respondents were asked to mention possible strategies that could strengthen women's representation in local councils and in the Puntland Parliament. However, the question was framed as "only 2 of the 66 current Members of Parliament are women. What do you believe should be done to improve women's representation in the local councils and in the Puntland Parliament?"

As the table illustrates, the poll respondents believed that awareness raising, mobilization of

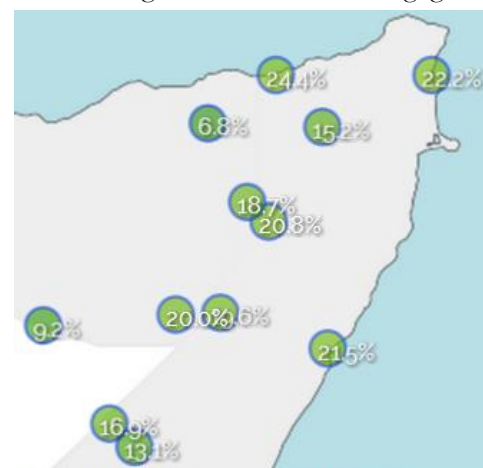
Rank	Answer	Amount	Percentage
1.	Wacyi-gelin Bulsho / Public Awareness Raising	652	31.51%
2.	Abaabul Dumar / Mobilization of Women	462	22.33%
3.	Doorasho hal qof hal cod / One person one vote	378	18.27%

Top three choices to advance women's political participation

women's potential, and one-person-one-vote elections are the best strategies to address the negligible participation of women in politics.

Of the 959 male respondents only 16.5% did not see women's inclusion in government as an important issue. However, this could call into question the commonly held perception that most men oppose women's political involvement.

Correspondingly, the participants of the FGDs were asked to discuss and explore possible avenues for increasing women's involvement in politics in general and that of election processes in particular. The following is a summary of their responses:



Percentage of male respondent in each location who did not see women's inclusion in government as an important issue

- Women have to consciously strive to bring a change in the cultural attitude of traditional and political leaders through debate and sensitization programmes. The elimination of traditional and religious prejudices is crucial to counter the arguments of those opposing women's inclusion in government.
- Capacity and consensus building programmes for women are needed to enable them to better understand their civic roles and responsibilities as well as to reinforce harmony and unity among women.
- Mobilization and awareness raising campaigns targeting women should be initiated prior to the local government elections to streamline their participation in the electoral processes.

- Women’s empowerment and gender-responsive policies should be enacted whilst combating men’s perception that women are inferior.
- Women should promote the renewal of the democratization process in Puntland and should organize themselves in a pro-women’s political party.
- **The 30% quota should be fully enforced. However, there was a noticeable controversy over this issue. Some people perceive that earmarking only 30% for women who constitute more than half of the population is an outright contempt against women. They also argue that the quota is nominal rather than a government policy to empower women’s political participation.**
- Women should have specific quotas in all electoral/party lists during local and parliamentary elections and should compose at least 30% of the future TPEC.
- Successful women in Puntland society should be showcased and women champions identified; their roles should be to mobilize women’s potential and advocate for greater women rights.

Intention to Vote by Gender

91% of female respondents intend to vote compared to 7.4% that are not planning on doing so. For male respondents 90.9% intend to vote in the upcoming elections while 8% are not planning to vote.

Doonista Codaynta/ Voting Intention		Haa / Yes	Ma garanayo / Don't know	Maya / No	Totals
Jinsiga / Gender					
Dheddig/Female		90.99%	1.59%	7.42%	100.00%
Lab/Male		90.93%	1.04%	8.03%	100.00%
	Totals	90.95%	1.25%	7.80%	100.00%

Intention to vote by gender

Intention to Vote by Age Group

Doonista Codaynta/ Voting Intention		Haa / Yes	Ma garanayo / Don't know	Maya / No	Totals
Da'da / Age					
18-24		93.48%	0.62%	5.90%	100.00%
25-44		91.26%	1.39%	7.35%	100.00%
45-64		89.36%	1.49%	9.16%	100.00%
65+		85.90%	1.28%	12.82%	100.00%
	Totals	90.95%	1.25%	7.80%	100.00%

Intention to vote by age group

As the above table depicts, there is an inverse relationship between age and the willingness to vote - as age increases the willingness to vote slightly declines. However, the most important conclusion to be made from these findings is that although younger citizens are most eager to vote, the difference between age groups is negligible. This indicates strong support for elections across the age spectrum.

Intention to Vote by Settlement

91.1% of urban dwellers of voting age are willing to vote while 90.8% of the interviewed rural respondents are willing to vote in the upcoming elections. Moreover, 89.7% of polled pastoralists are willing to show up for future elections. This illustrates that the previously held belief that pastoralists were less likely to vote does not hold true according to the poll results.

Doonista Codaynta/ Voting Intention		Haa / Yes	Ma garanayo / Don't know	Maya / No	Totals
Nooca Degaanka / Location					
Magaalo / Urban		91.09%	1.22%	7.69%	100.00%
Miyi / Nomadic		89.74%	2.56%	7.69%	100.00%
Tuulo / Rural		90.81%	1.05%	8.14%	100.00%
Totals		90.95%	1.25%	7.80%	100.00%

Intention to vote by settlement

Intention to Vote by Education Level

Doonista Codaynta/ Voting Intention		Haa / Yes	Ma garanayo / Don't know	Maya / No	Totals
Heerka Waxbarashada / Education Level					
Dugsi Hoose/Dhexe / Primary		91.14%	1.70%	7.16%	100.00%
Dugsi Sare / Secondary		96.62%	0.28%	3.10%	100.00%
Jaamacad / University		91.77%		8.23%	100.00%
Ma leh / None		84.38%	2.27%	13.35%	100.00%
Totals		90.95%	1.25%	7.80%	100.00%

Intention to vote by education level

91.1% of respondents who have only received primary education intend to vote while 96.6% of high school level respondents plan to vote in future elections. Also, 91.8% of those who have received higher education intend to vote whilst 84.4% of illiterate respondents intend to vote in future elections. In a nutshell, the support for elections is overwhelming across the different educational groups.

ROLES OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS OF THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS

The Role of Government

Governments usually play a pivotal role in advancing democratization processes without transcending the jurisdictions given to electoral bodies. In the case of Puntland, many people perceive that successive administrations (1998-2014) have been deliberately downplaying the democratization process in order to secure their grip on power. Nonetheless, the government's efforts and buy-in will be essential in bringing the democratization process to fruition.

The FGD participants were asked to debate the government's role in the electoral process. According to their responses, the government should take on the following:

- Resume the democratization process and establish the electoral commission as soon as feasible.
- Come up with a credible electoral roadmap and engage relevant actors in the democratization process.
- Take responsibility for the overall democratization process and guarantee the security of the process.
- Assure that public assets and resources (funds, facilities, and security apparatuses) are not used for political party purposes.
- Develop an outreach plan for the contested areas and address the underlying grievances of Sool, Sanaag, and Ayn communities.
- Demarcate electoral districts/constituencies prior to the elections and carry out voter registration and education programmes.
- Establish the constitutional court to ensure proper arbitration of constitutional and electoral disputes.

The Role of Civil Society

In countries where systems of democratic governance prevail, civil society plays a significant role in creating public platforms, influencing decision making processes and observing implementation of government policies and programmes. With respect to this, participants in the FGDs were asked to thoroughly discuss and explore the possible roles that Puntland civil society could play in the future democratization process. According to the views of the FGD participants, civil society should take on the following key roles during the upcoming democratization and election processes:

- Educate their constituencies on the electoral process, its civic importance (in terms of rights and responsibility), ways of participating in the political debate, and voting procedures and practices.
- Promote and support security initiatives and arrangements to maintain peace and stability during the electoral process.
- Traditional leaders should keep clan agendas out of the electoral process and should encourage the process to flourish.

- The media should inform and help the public to understand better the most important political issues in the electoral process and should maintain fair and responsible reporting.
- Religious groups should promote public participation in the process and dispel the fallacies around democratization and democratic system of governance.
- Youth, women, and minorities should promote their social and political issues of concern and mobilize their constituencies for the election.
- Civil society must advocate for voiceless communities including minorities, people with disabilities, and **other marginalized groups**.

The Role of Political Associations

Lastly, participants in the FGDs were asked to discuss what role political associations should play to contribute to successful elections in the future. Participants in the FGDs commonly agreed that the future political associations should have the following characteristics:

- Political associations should fully comply with electoral laws, code of conducts, and other legal frameworks established for the electoral process.
- The political associations should be established based on democratic principles and shared political ideologies, rather than being based on clan or group interests.
- Political associations should have clearer visions and political programmes that respond to public needs.
- Political associations should have solid foundations and structures and should represent a broad swathe of Puntland society. They should have outreach and citizen engagement programmes.
- Members and candidates of political associations must enjoy the trust of the public and should have reasonable knowledge and ample experience **and should demonstrate political maturity and tolerance**.

CONCLUSION

- ⇒ The democratization process is not a simple undertaking and it requires considerable time and resources to bring it to fruition. A significant majority of poll respondents (85.8%) perceive that early re-establishment of TPEC is important to ensure timely implementation of the electoral roadmap. Furthermore, the findings show that support for the democratization process and future elections is significant across the different demographic groups in Puntland.
- ⇒ According to poll respondents, insecurity and low levels of civic awareness about the democratization process are the biggest possible challenges to the future democratization

process. Meanwhile, FGD participants felt that insecurity amidst elections, undefined district boundaries, and the lack of voter registration are the biggest threats to the process.

- ⇒ Participants in the FGDs conducted in Buhodle and Bocame stressed the need for reconciliation processes prior to the elections to address the outstanding resentments of Sool and Ayn communities as well as to end the stalemate between Puntland and Khatumo.
- ⇒ Though women constitute the majority of the Puntland population, they are socially marginalized and politically underrepresented. The poll respondents felt that awareness raising, mobilization of women's potential, and one-person-one-vote elections are the best strategies to address the low participation of women in politics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from the poll and the FGDs, PDRC makes the following key recommendations to the Government of Puntland and civil society:

- ⇒ The government should lead the democratization agenda and maintain continuous outreach and engagement of traditional, religious, and political actors, peripheral communities, and the general public at large.
- ⇒ The government should resume the democratization process in the earliest feasible time and should pursue participatory and merit-based processes for the formation of the forthcoming Transitional Electoral Commission. The government should also provide necessary support to the newly formed Ministry of Constitution, Federal Affairs, and Democratization to effectively execute its mandate.
- ⇒ The government should introduce a credible security plan in good time before the start of the electoral process. The plan should address security-related challenges to holding peaceful elections and ensuring a smooth transition of power.
- ⇒ The government (**represented by TPEC**) and concerned stakeholders – primarily civil society – should implement a comprehensive voter education and awareness raising campaign to inform the population about their roles and responsibilities in the democratization process and future elections. Targeted interventions for nomadic communities, older people, and illiterate people are needed to ensure their participation. Special consideration should be given to people living in remote areas.
- ⇒ The government should introduce credible measures that prevent electoral fraud and enable free and fair elections. Among the necessary measures is the need to demarcate the electoral districts and constituencies, carry out voter registration, and establish the constitutional court prior to elections.

- ⇒ The government should introduce gender-responsive and women’s empowerment policies and should enforce the existing frameworks **including the 30% quota and the Gender Policy**. The government should also cooperate with concerned stakeholders – particularly civil society and women’s groups – in mobilizing and initiating awareness raising, consensus and capacity-building programmes for women.
- ⇒ The government should initiate processes to reconcile with discontented communities and political and traditional elders in the Sool, Sanaag, and Ayn regions, and should engage civil actors involved in social reconciliation and peace-building processes in Puntland.
- ⇒ **Civil society should advocate for the resumption and advancement of the democratization process, and should create neutral platforms for public debate and consultation. They should also come up with a cohesive and clear-cut strategy that defines their roles and responsibility throughout the electoral process and should always oversee the progression of the process and provide any necessary help as needed.**

-THE END-

